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# REASON, EXPERIENCE, AND THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Daniel C. Peterson

*Abstract: Both reason and experience are essential to religious life, which should be neither completely irrational nor entirely cerebral. But surely, of the two, the experience of direct and convincing revelation would and should trump academic debate, and most obviously so for its recipient. The Interpreter Foundation was established in the conviction that reasoned discussion and analysis necessarily have a place in faithful discipleship, but also in the confidence that divine revelation has genuinely occurred. The role of reason, accordingly, is a helpful one. It serves an important ancillary function. However, it does not supplant experience with God and the divine and must never imagine that it can. Academic scholarship can refine and clarify ideas, correct assumptions, defend truth claims, generate insights, and deepen understanding, but, while human inquiry sometimes creates openings for revelation, it will never replace direct divine communication. Interpreter knows its place.*

**I**n my experience and judgment, some of the most fruitful academic research and writing occurs when two normally distinct fields of inquiry are brought together — just as some of the most dynamic geological activity occurs along the intersection of two tectonic plates. Literary studies and statistical analysis, for example. Biomedical engineering. Textual studies and archaeology. Geophysics. Or the entire and still comparatively new discipline of biochemistry.

Certainly, on a much less grand scale, this has been true in my own life. My research on “Nephi and His Asherah,” for instance, grew out of the fact that, at one point, I was simultaneously working through 1 Nephi and the first edition of

Mark Smith's *The Early History of God*.<sup>1</sup> Had I not been reading these two texts at the same time, I doubt that the central idea of my work in that area would ever have occurred to me.

Recently, I was reading Robert Reilly's provocative book, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*, but also happened to pick up Michael Lemonick's article in the July 2014 issue of *National Geographic* on "The Hunt for Life Beyond Earth."<sup>2</sup> These are pieces of writing about such disparate topics that one might well expect that "never the twain shall meet."<sup>3</sup>

The thesis of *The Closing of the Muslim Mind* is that the collapse of the early Muslim rationalist movement known as the Mu'tazila and the triumph, instead, of the Ash'arites were not only catastrophic for philosophy and science in the Islamic world but led, in linear fashion, to today's political dysfunctions throughout the Middle East and beyond.<sup>4</sup> Robert Reilly's

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1 Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990). Out of this emerged Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23," in Davis Bitton, ed., *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 191–243, and a much condensed version of that article, Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/2 (2000) 16–25.

2 Robert R. Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind: How Intellectual Suicide Created the Modern Islamist Crisis* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2010); Michael D. Lemonick, "The Hunt for Life Beyond Earth," *National Geographic* 226/1 (July 2014): 26–45.

3 The quoted phrase comes from Rudyard Kipling's 1892 *Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses* (London: Methuen & Co., 1892), 75: "Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." He was lamenting the gulf of misunderstanding that, in his day, divided the British from their subjects on the Indian subcontinent. It would be nice to say that East/West cultural differences have been overcome in the nearly 125 years since Kipling penned those words, but, in many ways, they seem worse today than ever.

4 Reilly's book is, as I say, very thought provoking. I think it has merit, but I also think that it goes much too far in its implicit assumption that Thomistic rationalism is the Platonic ideal of Christianity and of religious faith in general. I also believe that it needs to be corrected by opposing views, such as that expressed by Frank Griffel in *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 28/4 (2011): 124–127, and in my friend John Walbridge's *God and Logic in Islam: The Caliphate of Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Graham E. Fuller's brilliant book *A World Without Islam* (New York: Little, Brown, & Co., 2011) argues, in direct contradiction to Reilly though probably unaware

particular *bête noire* is the enormously influential Muslim theologian al-Ghazali (d. 1111).

Very soon, while reading *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*, I was struck by Reilly's strong emphasis on the primacy of reason in religious matters. A senior fellow of the American Foreign Policy Institute and a former director of the Voice of America, he is also a committed Catholic, and, it seems, a Thomist, an admirer of St. Thomas Aquinas.<sup>5</sup> Toward the end of the book, he expressly cites the extraordinarily rational philosophical theology of St. Thomas as a model for a fundamental theological reform within Islam.

Already on page 21, though, he approvingly cites the *Book of the Five Fundamentals*, by the Egyptian Mu'tazilite theologian Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar (d. 1025):

If it is asked: What is the first duty that God imposes upon you? Say to him: Speculative reasoning which leads to knowledge of God, because He is not known intuitively or by the senses. Thus, He must be known by reflection and speculation.<sup>6</sup>

Now, Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar's answer to his own question is, frankly, a surprising one to me. Overwhelmingly, I would guess, those who have read the Qur'an, the scriptural text at the foundation of Islam, would never choose "speculative reasoning" as the "first duty" imposed by it upon the faithful.

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of him, that theology, Islamic or otherwise, is essentially irrelevant to today's conflicts between the Islamic world and the West.

5 I too am a fan of Thomas Aquinas, but, as will become clear, not entirely in the same way as Robert Reilly. For that and for another very specific reason, one of my sons derives his middle name from St. Thomas.

6 Cited at Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*, 21. I myself have done a bit of work, though not much, on Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar: See my translation of selections from his *Al-Mughni fi abwâb al-tawhid wa'l-'adl* in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mehdi Aminrazavi, eds., *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia, Vol. 3: Philosophical Theology in the Middle Ages and Beyond* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 40–51.

Nor, I think, would they identify it as the fifth or the sixth ... or the fifteenth.

Neither would most ordinary, non-Thomistic Christians have answered that question in the same way. There is, after all, an authoritative answer already contained in Christian scripture on the very topic:

But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, it was quite surprising to see Reilly's strong endorsement of Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar's position. But endorse it he does:

Therefore, reason logically precedes revelation. Reason first needs to establish the existence of God before undertaking the question as to whether God has spoken to man. Natural theology must be antecedent to theology.<sup>8</sup>

Really? If God were to appear to you and reveal a message, would you, before acting upon what he had said, first need to work your way through St. Thomas's "Five Ways" of demonstrating his existence?

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7 Matthew 22:34–40.

8 Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*, 21.

Apparently so, because Reilly then quotes Qadi ‘Abd al-Jabbar again, as saying that “the stipulates of revelation concerning what [we should] say and do are no good until after there is knowledge of God,” which knowledge, both the Qadi and Reilly agree, comes from reason.<sup>9</sup>

But how does reason establish a knowledge of God? It does so, Reilly says, via thoughtful observation of natural phenomena and by inferring his existence and at least something of his nature from them. And, in support of this, Reilly adduces a number of Qur’anic exhortations to learn from the world around us.<sup>10</sup>

“It is, therefore,” Reilly writes, “the exercise of reason that creates the opening to the possibility of revelation.” Thereupon, “After determining that God exists, one can then reasonably ask whether God has spoken to man. Has revelation occurred? How would one know if it is genuine?”<sup>11</sup>

Surely, in this rather restricted sense, Reilly is on solid ground in saying that reason must be employed in order to authenticate revelation. But it seems to me that he goes too far when he cites Qadi ‘Abd al-Jabbar in support of that claim:

Knowledge of God can only be gained by speculation with rational argument, because if we do not [first] know that He is truthful we will not know the authenticity of the Book, the Sunna and the communal consensus.<sup>12</sup>

For the Muslim Qadi ‘Abd al-Jabbar, “the Book,” of course, is the Qur’an. And, by “Sunna,” he is referring to the so-called *hadith*, the authoritative traditions from and regarding the Prophet Muhammad and the earliest Muslim believers, his “Companions.” The “communal consensus” of the Muslim

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9 See Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*, 21–22.

10 See Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*, 22–23. There are many such passages in the Qur’an. I am, at this very time, completing a manuscript of which the concluding third section will focus on such Qur’anic texts.

11 Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*, 23.

12 Cited at Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*, 24.

*umma* or community after that time is, in the view of mainstream Sunni Islam, divinely protected from major error.

Thus, transposed into analogous Christian terms, Reilly is using Qadi ‘Abd al-Jabbar to say that, lacking “speculation with rational argument” — a particular kind of philosophical, even metaphysical, reasoning — one would be unable to know whether the Bible, Christian tradition, and the teachings of the Church are true. Not just in doctrinal detail, mind you, but at *all*.

Surely, though, whether or not we’ve received such a revelation ourselves, and perhaps even if we doubt that such a revelation has ever actually been received by anybody anywhere, we can easily conceive (at least in principle) of a divine self-disclosure so powerful that it would eliminate all doubt and essentially, at least for the recipient herself, render further intellectual investigation of the question of God’s existence rather frivolous. In C. S. Lewis’s *The Great Divorce*, there are still theological discussion groups in the afterlife. But, by the end of that brilliant little book, readers understand that their debates occur in Hell.

Consider the case of Abraham, whose direct personal experience with God would, I suspect, have left him feeling no particular need to use speculative reasoning in an attempt to deduce from the phenomena of nature whether or not God exists:

Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee.<sup>13</sup>

Consider, too, the case of the great mathematician, philosopher, and mystic Blaise Pascal. Shortly after his death in 1662 at the age of 39, a servant, sorting through his clothes, noticed something sewn into a coat that Pascal had often worn.

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13 Abraham 2:12.

Curious, the servant cut the cloth open and found a parchment inside, containing, among others, these words:

The year of grace 1654  
Monday, 23 November, feast of St. Clement ...  
From about half-past ten in the evening  
Until about half-past midnight.  
Fire.  
The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the  
God of Jacob.  
Not of the philosophers and intellectuals.  
Certitude, certitude, feeling, joy, peace.<sup>14</sup>

“The heart has its reasons,” Pascal famously wrote, “which reason does not know.”<sup>15</sup>

And we must not forget the case of the apostle Peter, as well as the approving response of the Savior himself to Peter’s affirmation:

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath

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14 For the English translation, see Marvin O’Connell, *Blaise Pascal: Reasons of the Heart*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 95–96.

15 “*Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point.*” Stanley Appelbaum, ed., *Selected “Pensées” and Provincial Letters/Pensées et Provinciales choisies: A Dual-Language Book* (Mineola NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 166, 167.

not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.<sup>16</sup>

Peter didn't arrive at his conclusion via demonstrative syllogisms, any more than he and his brother Andrew had prefaced their initial commitment to Jesus with attendance at a course of catechetical theology, Aristotelian logic, and speculative reasoning:

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.<sup>17</sup>

The fact is that speculative reasoning in the style of medieval Catholic scholasticism is simply not within reach of most ordinary believers. They lack the training for it, and, in not a few cases, the capacity. Requiring facility with it and a mastery of it would mean that proper faith would be available only to a small, highly educated elite. And surely this is not, and cannot be, the divine plan.

Moreover, there is no agreement, even among believing philosophers, that any of the multitude of attempts to prove the existence of God by means of human reason alone have been successful. The history of philosophy in general, and of philosophical theology in particular, is littered with "demonstrative" arguments that no longer move or convince us. Keenly aware of this, the great Harvard psychologist and philosopher William James (d. 1910) commented that

as a matter of history [philosophy] fails to prove its pretension to be "objectively" convincing. ... It

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16 Matthew 16:13–17.

17 Matthew 4:18–20.

does not banish differences; it founds schools and sects just as feeling does. The logical reason of man operates, in short, in this field of divinity exactly as it has always operated in love, or in patriotism, or in politics, or in any other of the wider affairs of life, in which our passions or our mystical intuitions fix our beliefs beforehand. It finds arguments for our conviction, for indeed it *has* to find them. It amplifies and defines our faith, and dignifies it and lends it words and plausibility. It hardly ever engenders it; it cannot now secure it.<sup>18</sup>

It's certainly wise, in this context, to remember and to reflect upon David Hume's notorious comment, in his 1738 *Treatise of Human Nature*, that "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."<sup>19</sup>

Latter-day Saints might be especially struck by one instance of giving supposedly pure and disinterested reason priority over revelation that Robert Reilly singles out for particular mention in *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*: Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar, Reilly says, offers an illustration of the utility of reason in adjudicating what does and what doesn't constitute revelation: "By this means," he says with implicit approval,

the Mu'tazilites overcame such obstacles as the anthropomorphisms in the Qur'an, which speaks of God's "hands" (38:75), "eyes" (54:14), and "face" (55:27). The traditionalists [major adversaries of the Mu'tazilites] were forced into a conundrum by their literal reading of these passages, which confounded the doctrine that God was an incorporeal spirit. In particular, they bitterly contested the Mu'tazilite

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18 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 344-345,

19 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2.3.3, eds. David F. Norton and Mary J. Norton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 266.

spiritual interpretation of the text in verse 75:23 that those in paradise will actually “see” God.<sup>20</sup>

The famed Christian apologist C. S. Lewis, who taught at both Oxford and Cambridge and who frequently participated in debates on the subject with the leading thinkers at the two elite British universities, will serve as an example of the doubts that even a famed and vocal believer had about such arguments:

I do not think there is a *demonstrative* proof (like Euclid) of Christianity, nor of the existence of matter, nor of the good will and honesty of my best and oldest friends. I think all three are (except perhaps the second) far more probable than the alternatives. The case for Christianity in general is well given by Chesterton; and I tried to do something in my *Broadcast Talks*. As to *why* God doesn't make it demonstratively clear: are we sure that He is even interested in the kind of Theism which would be a compelled logical assent to a conclusive argument? Are *we* interested in it in personal matters? I demand from my friend a trust in my good faith which is *certain* without demonstrative proof. It wouldn't be confidence at all if he waited for rigorous proof. Hang it all, the very fairy-tales embody the truth. Othello believed in Desdemona's innocence when it was proved: but that was too late. Lear believed in Cordelia's love when it was proved: but that was too late. “His praise is lost who stays till all commend.” The magnanimity, the generosity which will trust on a reasonable probability, is required of us. But supposing one believed and was wrong after all? Why, then you would have paid the universe a compliment it doesn't deserve. Your error would even so be more interesting and important than the reality. And yet how could that be? How could

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20 Reilly, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*, 25.

an idiotic universe have produced creatures whose mere dreams are so much stronger, better, subtler than itself?<sup>21</sup>

Please recall, at this point, my statement earlier in the essay that al-Ghazali is Robert Reilly's candidate for the leading villain in Islamic intellectual history. In his famous intellectual autobiography, *Al-munqidh min al-dalāl* ("The Deliverer from Error"), al-Ghazālī recounts his futile search for spiritual certainty among theologians, philosophers, and what he calls "the people of authoritative instruction" (essentially the Ismā'īlī sect of Shī'ism, with its purportedly infallible imams). He then tells his readers that he finally found in personal religious encounter with the divine the certainty for which he had sought, which he compares to the ineffable experience of *dhawq* or "taste."<sup>22</sup>

As I've said elsewhere, al-Ghazali's method of achieving religious confidence is notably similar to that outlined in Moroni 10:4–5 — a method that, while nontransferable, is proportioned to the needs and capacities of all and is not restricted to a specially trained intellectual elite.

This method should not be misunderstood as anti-intellectual. I'm not arguing for the priority of irrationality over disciplined reason. My discomfort with Robert Reilly's argument isn't so much that he privileges reason over revelation, although I definitely think that, if one has to err, it would be best to err in the opposite direction. My fundamental objection is that he wants to separate them at all, and to privilege one — whichever one it be — over the other. No sentient, properly functioning, mature human being is without reason, and reason should constantly organize and evaluate experience, just as experience should inform and guide reason. Revelation, in my judgment, should never be detached from rationality, but

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21 C. S. Lewis, letter to Sheldon Vanauken (23 December 1950), *A Severe Mercy* (Great Britain: Spire, 1989), 91–92 (with contractions spelled out).

22 *Al-munqidh min al-dalāl* is translated in W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1982).

rationality shouldn't be divorced from empirical experience, either, not even if it's experience with God and the divine.

Now, at this stage you may be wondering whether I've altogether forgotten about Michael Lemonick's *National Geographic* article on "The Hunt for Life Beyond Earth."

I haven't.

The scientific attempt to locate life beyond our planet — or, as it's often known, the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, or SETI — can plausibly be said to have begun with a meeting in November 1961. That meeting was convened and organized by a young radio astronomer named Frank Drake, who was intrigued by the possibility of receiving and identifying alien radio transmissions. A small number of biologists, engineers, chemists, and astronomers (including a newly minted planetary scientist named Carl Sagan) came together to discuss whether it was worthwhile to devote valuable time with a radio telescope to a search for radio broadcasts from potential other planets, and, if so, how best to do it.<sup>23</sup>

In preparing for the meeting, Drake wondered how many civilizations might be out there among the stars. So he scribbled an equation — now famous as "Drake's equation" — on the blackboard:

$$N = R^* x f_p x n_e x f_i x f_c x L$$

Reading from left to right, Michael Lemonick explains the equation as follows:

You start out with the formation rate of sunlike stars in the Milky Way, then multiply that by the fraction of such stars that have planetary systems. Take the resulting number and multiply that by the number of life-friendly planets on average in each such system — planets, that is, that are about the size of Earth and orbit at the right distance from their star to be hospitable to life. Multiply that by the

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23 A very brief account, covering essentially what I've provided here, is given by Lemonick, "The Hunt for Life Beyond Earth," 30–32.

fraction of those planets where life arises, then by the fraction of those where life evolves intelligence, and then by the fraction of those that might develop the technology to emit radio signals we could detect.

The final step: Multiply the number of radio-savvy civilizations by the average time they're likely to keep broadcasting or even to survive. If such advanced societies typically blow themselves up in a nuclear holocaust just a few decades after developing radio technology, for example, there would probably be very few to listen for at any given time.<sup>24</sup>

Only a few months before, on 25 May 1961, President John F. Kennedy had stood before the United States Congress to announce that "this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to earth."<sup>25</sup> It was a heady time, and Drake and his friends were optimistic.

"The equation made perfect sense," writes Lemonick,

but there was one problem. Nobody had a clue what any of those fractions or numbers were, except for the very first variable in the equation: the formation rate of sunlike stars. The rest was pure guesswork. If SETI scientists managed to snag an extraterrestrial radio signal, of course, these uncertainties wouldn't matter. But until that happened, experts on every item in the Drake equation would have to try to fill it in by nailing down the numbers — by finding the occurrence rate for planets around sunlike stars or by trying to solve the mystery of how life took root on Earth.<sup>26</sup>

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24 Lemonick, "The Hunt for Life Beyond Earth," 32.

25 John M. Logsdon, "John F. Kennedy's Space Legacy and Its Lesson for Today," *Issues In Science & Technology* 27/3 (2011): 29.

26 Lemonick, "The Hunt for Life Beyond Earth," 32.

Some progress has been made over the intervening decades. Scientists now have much clearer ideas about some of the values for the variables in the Drake equation.

But it's been nearly sixty years since that hopeful meeting was convened, and no radio transmissions have yet been detected from beyond our planet, except those from astronauts and space probes that we ourselves have sent out. The search for extraterrestrial life is now focused less on signals from ET and on hopes of making contact with superintelligent alien scientists than on exobiology, on places where relatively primitive extremophiles might have eked out a survival niche — or, at least, where they might once have existed. And, to complicate things, there's talk about viruses or bacteria being carried from earth to Mars, or from Io to Europa, by material ejected from volcanos or blasted out into space by meteor impacts.<sup>27</sup>

This, I think, is closely analogous to the use of inferences from nature, speculative reason and induction, in an attempt to build a case for the existence and nature of God — in a sense, the ultimate extraterrestrial.

But note Michael Lemonick's significant phrase, quoted just above: "If SETI scientists," he said, "managed to snag an extraterrestrial radio signal, of course, these uncertainties wouldn't matter."

Frank Drake's dream from the first, as a radio astronomer, wasn't to detect obscure traces of the past activity of extinct microbes on a Jovian moon. It was to receive, identify, and understand deliberate transmissions from intelligent extraterrestrials. And today, in his mid-eighties, he's still at it: "Although he's technically retired, Frank Drake is still looking for extraterrestrial signals — a discovery that would trump everything else."<sup>28</sup>

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27 In addition to Lemonick, "The Hunt for Life Beyond Earth," see Christopher P. McKay and Victor Parro García. "How to Search for Life on Mars," *Scientific American* 310/6 (June 2014): 44–49.

28 Lemonick, "The Hunt for Life Beyond Earth," 44.

And, truly, it would. Just as an unmistakable revelation directly from God would render every debate about his existence moot, at least from the standpoint of the recipient of that revelation.

Must the revelation be spectacular? Not necessarily. At least, Pascal didn't think so. "Those to whom God has given religion through the feelings of the heart," he wrote, "are fortunate and of a truly legitimate persuasion; but to those who do not possess this, we can give it only through reasoning, while waiting for God to give it to them through the feelings of their heart."<sup>29</sup>

But certainly an indubitable and spectacular revelation would obviate the need for secular, rational proofs. "Could you gaze into heaven five minutes," Joseph Smith famously said, "you would know more than you would by reading all that was ever written on the subject."<sup>30</sup>

There is a memorable story about St. Thomas Aquinas, who is plainly Robert Reilly's intellectual hero in *The Closing of the Muslim Mind* and who is, very arguably, the greatest of all systematic theologians: One day, on 6 December 1273, while he was celebrating Mass in the chapel of Saint Nicholas at the Dominican monastery in Naples, he paused for a very long time, such that the congregation became nervous. Finally, he resumed his liturgical functions and completed the service.

But a great change had come over Thomas. From that moment, although he had been a legendarily prolific author, he never again wrote or dictated anything. When his companion or *socius*, Reginald of Piperno, complained that there remained much work to be done, Thomas replied, "I can do no more." Still, the other man insisted. "Reginald," Thomas finally answered, "I can do no more; such things have been revealed to me that

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29 "Ceux à qui Dieu a donné la Religion par sentiment du coeur sont bienheureux et bien légitimement persuadés; mais à ceux qui ne l'ont pas, nous ne pouvons la donner que par raisonnement, en attendant que Dieu la leur donne par sentiment de coeur." Appelbaum, *Selected "Pensées" and Provincial Letters/Pensées et Provinciales choisies*, 114, 115.

30 Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 324.

all that I have written seems to me so much straw [*mihi videtur ut palea*].” And he died about four months later.<sup>31</sup>

It seems clear that Thomas, a good, sincere, and devout man, had experienced some kind of profound revelation while ministering at that Neapolitan altar. And what he had just seen, in his own judgment, trumped everything that he had ever written.

The Interpreter Foundation was established on the premise that both reason and revelation have their place in determining religious truth. We believe reasoned investigation to be essential, but we will not discount revelation.

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31 The story has been retold at a number of places. See, for instance, Jacques Maritain, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Joseph W. Evans and Peter O'Reilly (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1958), 54, 56.

## THE BOOK WITH THE UNINTENTIONALLY SELF-REFERENTIAL TITLE

Brant A. Gardner

Review of Earl M. Wunderli, *An Imperfect Book: What the Book of Mormon Tells Us about Itself* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2013), 328pp + Appendices, Maps, and Index.

*Earl M. Wunderli has written a book that works through the reasons he fell out of belief in the Book of Mormon. These are combined with issues that he has added to his original reasons. His presentation is clearly intended to suggest that what he found compelling will also be compelling to other readers. Should it? This review looks at how his arguments are constructed: his methodology, the logic of the analysis, and the way he uses his sources. Although he argues that it is the Book of Mormon that is the imperfect book, his construction of the arguments makes that designation ironic.*

*A*n *Imperfect Book* is Wunderli's footnoted untestimony of the Book of Mormon. He places it in that context with the very first sentence of his Introduction: "Like others born into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I wondered, as a young adult, whether my church — known informally as the Mormon or LDS church and headquartered in Salt Lake City — was what it claimed to be. And like many other Mormons, I eventually found my answer in the Book of Mormon" (p. 1). It is an opening sentence designed to mimic what might have

been the opening line of a book of faithful testimony.<sup>1</sup> The entire book may be read as Wunderli meticulously bearing that untestimony. As an intellectual autobiography it tells us about the author, but it is not really intended to be an autobiography. Wunderli presents his intellectual journey in the expectation that his readers will come to the same conclusions as he does.

It is inappropriate to review Wunderli's personal conclusions about the Book of Mormon. Everyone must approach religious belief individually, and their personal determinations ought to be respected. However, the intent that others might adopt his conclusions requires examination. How well does he present his thesis? Is there a methodological model that provides sufficient foundation for the conclusions? How well does the data examined establish his conclusions? How well grounded are his arguments in the larger literature on the subject? These are the kinds of questions I propose to examine.

### Wunderli's Thesis

The subtitle of the book is: *What the Book of Mormon Tells Us about Itself*. It is in the title because it is a concept that informs his approach to the text. He believes that "the value of internal evidence is that it is accessible and verifiable by anyone. It does not change, and is fairly understandable" (p. 9).<sup>2</sup> Thus he

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1 For example, the preface to Vaughn E. Hansen, *Cumorah: Great Lakes Region — Land of the Book of Mormon* (Springville, Utah: CFI, an imprint of Cedar Fort, Inc., 2011) has this first sentence: "All my life, I have cherished the record compiled and written by the prophet Mormon about AD 375. I have searched intently to understand the precious doctrine in his book and also to know where he lived" (p. xi). Also, Tom G. Rose, *Proof: How to Know the Book of Mormon is True* (Springville, Utah: CFI, an imprint of Cedar Fort, Inc., 2011) in his Introduction: "To those who have prayerfully studied it, as I have, has come a personal witness that the Book of Mormon is exactly what Joseph Smith said it is" (p. 2).

2 It is a proposition he has previously used to ground an interpretive theory about Book of Mormon geography. Earl M. Wunderli, "Critique of a Limited Geography for Book of Mormon Events," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35 (Fall 2002): 161–62; "We can examine ... what the Book of

sets up his book as an obvious display of data from the text from which perhaps any reasonable researcher would come up with the same conclusions that he has, because the data don't change and are "fairly understandable." Unfortunately, that is a completely untenable hypothesis.

Pure coincidence had me reading E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*,<sup>3</sup> about the same time as I was reading Wunderli's book. So much of what I really loved in Richards and O'Brien's book explains many of the difficulties I find in Wunderli. Specifically, their entire book refutes Wunderli's hypothesis about self-explanatory data.

An important illustration of this principle comes from a story they tell of about a teacher in a Christian seminary. He asked a number of students to read the story of the prodigal son, close their Bibles, and then recount the story to another student. None mentioned the famine in Luke 15:14, which was the event that precipitated the prodigal's return. He tried the experiment with 100 people. Only six mentioned the famine. What he realized was that one thing that all of the participants had in common was that they were in the United States. He had the opportunity to perform the same experiment in St. Petersburg, Russia, where 42 of the 50 participants mentioned the famine.<sup>4</sup> Famine had been a terrible reality for those interviewed in St. Petersburg. Those in the United States had never known famine. Richards and O'Brien conclude: "Based

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Mormon itself says. One advantage of this approach is that this internal evidence is fixed, readily available, and easily verifiable."

3 See Brant A. Gardner, "I Do Not Think That WORD Means What You Think It Means," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 7 (2013): 49–55 for a review of Richards and O'Brien's book.

4 E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 14.

solely on cultural location, people from America and Russia disagreed about what they considered the crucial details of the story.”<sup>5</sup>

Wunderli’s “internal evidence that is accessible and verifiable by anyone” was the same for both groups. What differed was the life experiences of the interpreters of the data. Those external factors could not help but influence the way the groups saw the data in the text. Richards and O’Brien explain: “We instinctively draw from our own cultural context to make sense of what we’re reading.”<sup>6</sup> It is a conclusion that Wunderli also discovered: “I wanted as much as possible to deal with simple facts and what they meant. My quest has not been completely realized because judgments must be made about what the facts mean, and such judgments are not made in a vacuum” (p. 12). Only 12 pages into his book and Wunderli realizes his underlying assumption is invalid.

Nevertheless, he will conclude at the end of the book: “The contents of the Book of Mormon speak for themselves, some quite obviously, like the many curiosities or the overlong lives, and some, after careful study, become more apparent, like the common idiom used throughout the book” (p. 328). In spite of his admission that the data cannot speak for themselves, he persists in that assumption to the end of the text. I am unable to determine why he spends so much time setting up his thesis when he knew it was invalid by the time he wrote.

He creates a similar situation in the section of the introduction entitled “In Defense of Evidence.” The very title suggests that Wunderli’s will be an evidence-driven approach. He spends pages supporting his suggestion about the defenders’ preferences for faith, even invoking William James to support the idea that prayers or visions are unreliable gauges of truth. He makes the issue clear: “Critics prefer evidence and reason

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5 Richards and O’Brien, p. 14.

6 Richards and O’Brien, p. 11.

over faith and prayer as the method for testing truth” (p. 3). Unfortunately for his absolute declaration, he admits that it is a false dichotomy: “Defenders examine the evidence extensively and deeply even though it remains for them secondary to a witness of the Holy Ghost” (p. 6). “In other words, both defenders and critics of the Book of Mormon rigorously engage the evidence” (p. 7). Wunderli spends most of the section creating a firm (but false) dichotomy that places himself and all other reasonable people on the side of evidence and defenders in a position where they would ignore evidence. Then he admits that defenders engage evidence “extensively and deeply.” He has spent a lot of ink setting up a position he knew, and admitted, was incorrect.

### Joseph Smith, Translation, and English

The first problem any serious examination of the Book of Mormon must face is how we should read the text. That might seem trite, but it is a serious issue precisely because a major claim of the text is that it is a translation from an ancient record. Even though Wunderli clearly wrote his book from the perspective of Joseph as author rather than translator, he does understand that some discussion of what kind of a translation it was has relevance to the answers to the questions asked of the text.

Similar to his approach to the self-explanatory text and the evidence vs. prayer dichotomy, Wunderli will spend time setting up his preferred explanation of the translation and come to conclusions that he knows are not shared by the LDS scholars who have looked at the issue.

His preferred thesis is stated early: “Critics countered that if the widely accepted account of the translation process was true — that Joseph Smith would bury his head in a hat with a seer stone and dictate to his scribe the translated words as they appeared to him, which would not disappear until they

had been transcribed correctly — there was no room for *any* change, let alone changes that altered the meaning of the text” (p. 8). He elaborates in a section entitled “The Uncertain Translation.”

The section begins with statements by Martin Harris and David Whitmer, two of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. Each indicates that Joseph saw the words that were to be written and that there was some mechanism that would assure that the translation occurred perfectly. He bolsters that position by citing a scholar (identified as Edward H. Ashment only in the footnote): “As summarized by one scholar’s conclusion, the Book of Mormon claimed to be ‘a literal, word-for-word translation of characters from the ancient gold plates.’” (p. 35). Important to Wunderli’s thesis is his indication that the scholar’s conclusion is only what “the Book of Mormon claimed.” Wunderli is consistent in applying his assumption that the Book of Mormon clearly affirms the very positions for which he hopes to argue.

Unfortunately, what Wunderli doesn’t mention is that Edward H. Ashment doesn’t believe that the Book of Mormon was a translation and was simply offering his own interpretation of what the data meant. Rather than evidence from the Book of Mormon, he cites someone else’s opinion about the text that happens to agree with his own. His next source to bolster this idea is Grant Palmer, another author who does not believe that the Book of Mormon was a translation.

Finally, Wunderli appears to have Royal Skousen’s agreement. That would be important because it would be difficult to argue that anyone is more familiar with the text of the Book of Mormon and its variants over time than Royal Skousen: “Royal Skousen points out that the Whitmer and Harris testimonies assume ‘iron-clad control’ by God over the Book of Mormon dictation. Yet few, if any, LDS scholars today accept these versions of the process, primarily because they do

not account for all the changes in the Book of Mormon, ‘some with doctrinal import’” (pp. 36–37).

This sentence is fascinating because it appears to invoke Skousen’s agreement with the iron-clad translation hypothesis, although Wunderli knows that Skousen disagrees that it represents the way the Book of Mormon was translated.<sup>7</sup> The next sentence provides the accurate statement that “few, if any, LDS scholars today accept these versions of the process.”<sup>8</sup> However, Wunderli ends with an explanation of the reason why they do not: “primarily because they do not account for all the changes in the Book of Mormon.” On that point, Wunderli is less than correct. The reason is not that the hypothesis doesn’t account for the changes but rather that the data from the original and printer’s manuscripts contradict the hypothesis. Were it as Wunderli argues, one might believe that the defenders adopted their position only because they couldn’t defend the *iron-clad* theory. The fact of the matter is that it is the result of the careful examination of evidence, the method that Wunderli suggests should be used. Wunderli does not explain why Skousen’s examination of the evidence does not lead to clear and self-explanatory explanations but Wunderli’s examination of the evidence will.<sup>9</sup>

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7 Wunderli later cites articles where Skousen has laid out his opinions. Assuming Wunderli has read the entire article, he cannot be unaware of Skousen’s opinions.

8 This sentence is footnoted, but rather than to an appropriate discussion, he cites an article by Noel B. Reynolds and Royal Skousen that doesn’t discuss the hypothesis at all, though perhaps Wunderli sees that as a conclusion to be drawn from the evidence in the article. It is possible that this is simply a misplaced reference because Wunderli does cite appropriate articles later in the book.

9 There are several sources cited in the footnote to this statement. Oddly, none of them are to Skousen’s extremely detailed explanation of the data from the manuscripts.

The first citation is to Marvin Hill, LDS historian. Hill’s article, on the page cited, tells us nothing about Hill’s ideas about the topic at all. Hill described Richard Howard’s conclusion. Howard was the RLDS Church Historian and Hill

Wunderli provides brief overviews of the other two types that Skousen mentions, *tight control* and *loose control*. He provides his opinion about the nature of *loose control* without any analysis of the way Skousen presents it or the types of evidence that might support it: “But a loose translation is barely distinguishable from composition” (p. 38). Wunderli enlists B. H. Roberts in support of that statement, but my reading of Roberts tells me that he would strongly disagree that what he suggested would be “barely distinguishable from composition.”

As a linguist, Skousen knows that the *loose translation* methodology is a legitimate method of translation that is employed by professional translators in certain circumstances.<sup>10</sup>

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does specifically say that the textual evidence that he had seen did not support the Whitmer and Harris iron-clad statements. Hill indicates that Howard did not accept the iron-clad method because “Howard concluded that the texts do not support the David Whitmer, Martin Harris, and William Smith contention that Joseph received a word-by-word translation by inspiration which required none of his own conceptualization.” Marvin Hill, “The ‘New Mormon History’ Reassessed in Light of Recent Books on Joseph Smith and Mormon Origins,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 21/3 (Autumn 1988): 122. This is the page Wunderli cites.

His second citation is to Robert J. Matthews’ review of Howard’s book. Matthews reports: “Howard’s presentation of excerpts from pre-publication manuscripts seems to be ample documentary evidence to refute the David Whitmer — Martin Harris — William Smith reports that the act of translation of the Book of Mormon was a visually projected experience in which Joseph is said to have actually seen the words in the Urim and Thummim and merely copied them.” Robert J. Matthews, Review of Richard P. Howard, *Restoration Scriptures: A Study of Their Textual Development*, *BYU Studies*, 10, no. 2 (1970): 246. This is one of the two pages Wunderli cites.

So we have three citations that really all refer to a single source. The other two reference the source favorably. The conclusion Howard comes to is based on precisely the type of evidence that Wunderli believes should be examined. Wunderli does not explain why they came to a different conclusion based on self-explaining data.

10 I review this methodology in Brant A. Gardner, *Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), 137–46. In pp. 147–56 I review the types of translations that have been used to explain how the Book of Mormon’s English text might be seen as a translation. Wunderli is aware of my book, but references it only for a quotation from Brigham Young

The professional translators would hardly see their job as one of composition. A misunderstanding of the implications of the idea of translation underlies Wunderli's examination of the meaning of certain words and phrases in the text.

Wunderli's conclusion to his discussion of the various theories of translation is that, "Indeed, composition, rather than translation at all, would account for all the facts" (p. 41). Regardless of the evidence he has presented, Wunderli proceeds under the assumption with which he began the analysis. Nothing in the section on translation provided any means of adequately judging any of the possible opinions, let alone justifying his conclusion that they don't matter at all.

### Joseph as Author

Evidence about the nature of the translation is a difficult basis upon which to determine if Joseph was an author rather than a translator. Wunderli presents the evidence for his conclusion in his section entitled "Joseph Smith as Author." One of the ways to discover whether a document is a translation of an older text or a modern production is to compare it to the milieu in which it was purported to have been written. That is a complex issue for the Book of Mormon, and Wunderli has already told us that he has no expertise in that field to make such an assessment.

The closest he can come to his stated goal of letting the text speak for itself is to shift from a historical focus on the proposed time and place of authorship and examine Joseph himself. Of course, that is necessarily outside of what the text tells us about itself, so this time Wunderli implicitly shows the weakness of his original hypothesis by going away from the text and into information about Joseph Smith. Wunderli's set-up for this section is to declare: "Defenders of the Book of

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that was included. For the record, while Skousen champions a *tight control* over the translation, I suggest that the data demonstrate more of a *loose control*. Both are interpretations of data rather than simple assertions.

Mormon continue to say that Joseph could not have written it” (p. 50). There are numerous arguments where that statement has been invoked, but Wunderli is really not interested in them. His foil is simply the idea that “Joseph could not have written it.” Against that simple statement, Wunderli assembles opposite opinions. His conclusion is, of course, that Joseph could have written it.

How well does he make that argument? One suggestion is that, contrary to defender claims, Joseph had sufficient imagination to create the text. He hypothesizes: “Joseph’s preparation would have included his experience telling stories to his family. His mother wrote that he was spinning tales about prehistoric Mound Builders before he was twenty” (p. 55). He then provides Mother Smith’s statement. Except she doesn’t say that Joseph spun tales about the Mound Builders at all. Why does Wunderli believe that Joseph was telling tales about the Mound Builders when his evidence doesn’t say that? Actually, it sort of did. Wunderli cites Fawn Brodie’s *No Man Knows My History* rather than any edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s recollection (p. 55). Brodie introduced the idea of the mound builders right before citing Lucy Mack Smith’s recollection.<sup>11</sup> Since Wunderli used Brodie rather than Mother Smith, he simply repeated the assertion even though there is no evidence at all that the stories recounted had anything to do with Mound Builders. Lucy Mack Smith does provide some context: “From this time forth Joseph continued to receive instructions from time to time and every evening we gathered our children together and gave our time up to the discussion of those things which he imparted to us.”<sup>12</sup>

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11 Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 35.

12 Lucy Mack Smith, *Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s Family Memoir*, ed. Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 344 (following the 1844–45 version). The paragraph Wunderli references is two paragraphs later.

Of course one might still suspect that Joseph made up stories based on the Mound Builders, but that is an interpretation laid over the evidence, not a conclusion that flows from it. Wunderli does footnote that statement, but rather than the source, which was Brodie, he cites Terryl Givens' *By the Hand of Mormon* (p. 93). Although it is true that Givens discussed the general availability of the Mound Builder ideas, Givens described the general atmosphere ascribing the mounds to Indian ancestors, noting that it was an opinion Jefferson held. If one were to simply assume that a footnote supported the conclusion to which it is attached, one might believe that Givens endorsed Wunderli's conclusion about Joseph. Actually examining the footnote shows that Givens is talking about the subject, but certainly not supporting Wunderli's thesis.

What happens when Wunderli attempts to use the text itself to determine whether Joseph was translator or author? The first suggestion is that many sentences are "awkwardly long and rambling" (p. 57). He concludes, after a particularly egregious 392 word long sentence: "It seems more likely that Joseph Smith is the author of this monstrous sentence than the Jesus portrayed in the Bible" (p. 58). Apparently, that sentence is supposed to be self-evident, as Wunderli provides nothing more than his conclusion, which begins with "it seems more likely." Clearly it seemed more likely to Wunderli, but there are more data to consider.

The unexplained problem with Wunderli's analysis is that he lays the responsibility for this sentence at Joseph's feet. Joseph was not responsible for the way any sentence was punctuated. Neither the original nor printer's manuscripts had any punctuation. It was added by John Gilbert, the compositor for Grandin Press. Gilbert generally did an excellent job interpreting the manuscript, but his conclusions are not part of the translation and a different compositor might have made some different decisions. I can see several ways to break that

massive sentence into smaller sentences through simply adding periods and subsequent capitalization. Using choices that Gilbert made to claim that Joseph had to have been the author of the text far exceeds the evidence.

### Problems with the Bible in the Book of Mormon

The second chapter (pp. 65–95) begins the examination of the data in earnest. In this chapter, Wunderli looks at the presence of language and passages in the Book of Mormon from the King James Version of the Bible. Beginning with the data, is it self-evident that we will arrive at Wunderli’s unargued conclusion: “It *seems unlikely* that Joseph Smith’s independent translation would be virtually identical to that of the King James translators who 200 years earlier rendered the book of Isaiah into early seventeenth-century English. More modern translations correct the KJV or differ from it” (italics added, pp. 68–69).

First, as with most of his conclusions, they stem from his worldview more than the data. The data say that there are passages in the Book of Mormon that appear either exactly as they do in the King James Version of the Bible or are very close to the KJV model. Wunderli believes that asserting what “seems unlikely” to him will be a sufficient explanation. That is a point where appeals to external information would save Wunderli from unwarranted assumptions. Joseph Smith isn’t the only translator of scripture who has been influenced by KJV language. Walter W. Wessel describes his personal experience as a Bible translator: “In 1967 I joined a group of scholars who were invited to participate in a translation of the Bible that ultimately became known as the New International Version (NIV). We were not far into this project before most of us, especially the older members of the group, became keenly aware of how much we had been influenced by the wording of

the King James Version. It took considerable effort and much vigilance to purge our minds of its antiquated language.”<sup>13</sup>

If modern, trained translators admit to the overarching influence of the KJV language, we shouldn’t be so quick to assume that Joseph as a translator should have been immune to the KJV’s influence. The opposite is surely true. Lavina Fielding Anderson asserts that KJV language informs various texts available from members of Joseph Smith’s family. These examples are important because they are not intentionally imitating the KJV language, but rather incorporating that language more naturally in their discourse. She concludes

that the Smith family’s oral culture was so thoroughly imbued with biblical language, both the Old and New Testaments, that its use was fluent, easy, and familiar. When they reached for a colorful phrase, searched for a simile, or stressed a point, the vocabulary that their minds offered readily was an appropriate and often vivid phrase from the Bible. Seldom did the context of secondary use relate to the biblical context. It also seems likely that this easy familiarity with KJV language made it possible for them to quickly adopt and incorporate images and phrasing from specifically Mormon scriptures.<sup>14</sup>

More than just the language, Wunderli suggests that the Book of Mormon imitates the Bible in overall organization: “At a macro level, the Book of Mormon resembles the Bible as a history of a people favored of God. It is divided into books

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13 Walter W. Wessel, “A Translator’s Perspective on Alister McGrath’s History of the King James Version,” in Glen G. Scorgie, Mark L. Strauss, Steven M. Voth, eds., *The Challenge of Bible Translation: Communicating God’s Word to the World*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 199.

14 Lavina Fielding Anderson, “Mother Tongue: KJV Language in Smith Family Discourse.” Paper read at the Mormon History Association, May 22, 2009. Copy in my possession courtesy of Anderson. 4.

named after prophets” (p. 85). This would certainly appear to be a self-evident observation. However, in stating the simple parallel Wunderli entirely ignores the ways in which the Book of Mormon’s naming system is dramatically different from the simple model he suggests. Biblical books named for the prophets are assumed to have been written by those prophets. In the Book of Mormon, the situation is much more complex, with multiple prophets writing in the same named book, and books such as Alma and Helaman being named for the second prophet of that name, not the first. There is a complex logic discernible behind the changing of book names, but it is lost in Wunderli’s simple pronouncement.<sup>15</sup>

The vast majority of the data presented in this chapter may be used to discuss how Joseph translated,<sup>16</sup> but to use it as evidence that he did not translate at all requires the presumptive conclusion that he was the author. In this case, the interpretation precedes the evidence because it governs the evidence selected; therefore the assumption also guides the conclusion. Wunderli isn’t following the evidence, he is leading it.

## Words and Phrases

Chapter 3 (pp. 97–148) is the first time that Wunderli presents his own research rather than summarized discussions that have gone on for years. The genesis of this chapter is probably as old as the process by which Wunderli gained his untestimony:

My own entry into Book of Mormon research began quite innocently. As a young lawyer, I acquired a reproduction of the first edition of the Book of

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15 Brant A. Gardner, “Mormon’s Editorial Method and Meta-Message,” in *FARMS Review* 21/1 (2009): 87–90.

16 Brant A. Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), 192–96, chapter 18 “Joseph’s Translations Involving Biblical Texts.”

Mormon. One issue in the air at that time was the significance of the changes in the book between the first edition and the 1920 version. Critics argued that changes discredited the book since it was supposed to have been translated by the gift and power of God. Defenders maintained that changes only corrected typographical errors or improved grammar and meant nothing. Critics countered that if the widely accepted account of the translation process was true — that Joseph Smith would bury his head in a hat with a seer stone and dictate to his scribe the translated words as they appeared to him, which would not disappear until they had been transcribed correctly — there was no room for *any* change, let alone changes that altered the meaning of the text. Defenders insisted that our knowledge of the translation process is sketchy and that the prophet who translated the book approved the changes.

With copies of the first and current edition in hand, I set out to find what the changes were and to determine whether the critics or defenders of the Book of Mormon were right. I read the current edition aloud while my wife noted each change in the first edition. When we finished, we had the facts (pp. 8–9).

Of this careful comparison of two versions of the text, he remembers: “So far as I knew, no one else had done such an analysis, and as far as I know, no one has yet” (p. 11). He doesn’t tell us when this was, but it was when he was a young lawyer and he is now retired.<sup>17</sup> It could well have been true at the time.

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17 Other than the indication that this occurred when he was a young lawyer, Wunderli doesn’t tell us when this particular analysis occurred. Whenever it was, it was apparently gathered into an early manuscript form by 1976 under the

However, it is puzzling that he adds “as far as I know, no one has yet.” Wunderli cannot have missed Royal Skousen’s meticulous work analyzing all variants from the manuscripts through all published materials, a work that covers six volumes.<sup>18</sup> It most certainly has now been done, and to a much greater extent than Wunderli’s decades-old experience.

At the beginning of the chapter Wunderli lays out what he expects his data to show. On the one hand, “Defenders of the Book of Mormon believe the book is exactly what it purports to be, a history written by several men. . . .” (p. 97). This gives him a testable hypothesis: “If several writers contributed to the book, differences in their vocabularies should be noticeable” (p. 97). Thus the thrust of his analysis will be to show ways in which the language of the text appears to point to a single “author,” Joseph Smith. Wunderli is not recreating stylometric analyses, or even mentioning them. Stylometrics attempts to look at authorship through statistical analysis of unconscious aspects of speech that are claimed to be determinative for an author.<sup>19</sup> It has not been a methodology that provides universally acceptable results.<sup>20</sup>

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title *Internal Evidence on the Origin of the Book of Mormon*. This was followed by a paper entitled “The Book of Mormon Speaks on its Own Origin” in 1979. Both of these manuscripts are housed at the University of Utah and I have not consulted them. Wunderli confirms this approximate dating for his original study by noting that he used the 1920 edition rather than the more recent 1981 edition (p. 32).

18 See Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*. The Critical Text of the Book of Mormon, vol. 4, 6 parts (Provo, Utah: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies), 2004–2009.

19 Wayne A. Larsen and Alvin C. Rencher, “Who Wrote the Book of Mormon? An Analysis of Wordprints,” in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, edited by Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1982): 157–88.

20 For example, the application of the technique to Isaiah has yielded different results. See L. LaMar Adams and Alvin C. Rencher, “A Computer Analysis of the Isaiah Authorship Problem,” *BYU Studies* 15, no. 1 (Autumn 1974–75): 95–102; L. LaMar Adams, “A Scientific Analysis of Isaiah Authorship,” in *Isaiah and the Prophets: Inspired Voices from the Old Testament*, edited by

Nevertheless, that isn't what Wunderli proposes at all. What he will do is present lists of words and frequencies and then suggest that they support his contention that Joseph was author rather than translator. The methodology in this particular case fails because Wunderli does not take translation into account at all. The clearest example comes from a problem he sees in the way Jesus is quoted in the Book of Mormon and in the Bible. "Looking further at Jesus's use of words, the biblical Jesus uses *exceeding* only once, and the Book of Mormon Jesus not at all" (p. 108).

Actually, the biblical Jesus never used *exceeding*. The Book of Mormon Jesus could not have used the word *exceeding*. It is an English word. Wunderli's comparisons implicitly assume that not only is English the original language of the Book of Mormon, but that English is an accurate depiction of what Jesus might actually have said. He makes this assumption even though he knows that different translators translate differently, a point he used earlier to suggest that Joseph didn't translate any section that replicates the KJV.

Unfortunately, he also appears to believe that what he reads in an English Bible can be determinative of Jesus's language patterns which were not only not English, but were unlikely to have been in Greek (the language into which they were first translated). By not accounting for issues of translation Wunderli assumes that any similarities he finds across authors points to Joseph Smith as an author. However, that very same evidence may just as easily point to the same person, Joseph Smith, as the translator. Wunderli never makes that distinction nor provides any indication that he is aware that a very simple

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Monte S. Nyman (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1984):151–63; Yehuda T. Radday, *The Unity of Isaiah in the Light of Statistical Linguistics* (Hildesheim, Germany: Dr. H. A. Gerstenberg, 1973); Paul J. Fields, G. Bruce Schaalje, and Matthew Roper, "Examining a Misapplication of Nearest Shrunken Centroid Classification to Investigate Book of Mormon Authorship," *Mormon Studies Review* 23/1 (2011): 87–111.

shift in underlying assumption invalidates virtually every argument he makes in the chapter. It is a problem that Richards and O'Brien warn about: "It is important for us to remember that when we read the Bible in our native language, mostly what has been changed is the words. Behind the words, now in a language we understand, remains that complex structure of cultural values, assumptions and habits of mind that does not translate easily, if at all. If we fail to recognize this — and we very often do — we risk misreading the Bible by reading foreign assumptions into it."<sup>21</sup> In this case, Wunderli misreads the Book of Mormon by reading foreign assumptions into the words themselves.

Wunderli summarizes one argument:

Embellishing the wording for passages quoting Isaiah and Jesus, like adding *behold*, has not added anything of substance to the Book of Mormon. The easiest explanation for these additions is that they came from Joseph Smith, who borrowed from the Bible to sound scriptural but wanted to add to the quotations to make them sound like an independent translation. As a summary of the evidence, the four Nephite writers cannot be distinguished from each other or from the Book of Mormon Jesus, who is clearly distinguished from the biblical Jesus. If the Book of Mormon were ancient, it seems unlikely that these words would have retained the same degree of prevalence and stylistic usage over the space of 1,000 years. In addition, because some of the words are superfluous, it seems unlikely that they would have persisted as Nephite idioms, especially if engraving them on metal plates was difficult. (p. 103)

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21 Richards and O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*, 72.

There is enough here to examine the nature of the data Wunderli is consulting and the way that he uses it. First, the data are in English. That is hardly surprising. However, all of the conclusions drawn from the English text have implications for authorship if and only if we assume authorship to begin with. Wunderli suggests, “The easiest explanation for these additions is that they came from Joseph Smith” (p. 103). Frankly, it is equally easy to explain them with Joseph as the sole translator. Confirmation that this is a problem in Wunderli’s analysis comes from Richard Packham, who reviewed *An Imperfect Book* for the Association for Mormon Letters. As part of a generally favorable review, Packham notes:

I did not find his linguistic arguments convincing. They are interesting observations but hardly the basis for determining the authenticity of the Book of Mormon text. Like other critics and defenders of the Book of Mormon, Wunderli does not take into consideration the fact that both the Bible and the Book of Mormon are translations, and translations from different languages. The Bible’s original languages were Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. The language of the plates from which Smith claimed to have translated the Book of Mormon was “reformed Egyptian.” Any similarities or differences between translations of such dissimilar languages must be quite irrelevant. The similarities at most would indicate copying and the differences either careless copying or an attempt to conceal the copying. Even if the Book of Mormon were admitted to be a translation of an ancient record, the fact that sometimes the original was translated with a “therefore” and sometimes with a “wherefore” (which Wunderli seems to think is significant) says

nothing about the original, only that the translator had two choices to translate one word.<sup>22</sup>

## The Second Half of the Book

The second half of the book covers the topics “Prophecies, Curiosities, LDS Scholarly Defenses, and Political, Scientific, and Religious Ideas.” In each of these Wunderli completely abandons all suggestion that he is letting the data speak for itself. What we get is his presentation of issues in the Book of Mormon that show the issue in the light in which he desires it to be seen, and then his discussion of the inadequate response, again according to his judgment. There isn’t really any subject that he raises that hasn’t had treatment at the hands of defenders of the Book of Mormon that cast the issue in an entirely different light.

For example, Wunderli expounds:

In the Book of Mormon, Native Americans are Israelites, specifically descendants of the family of Lehi who have been cursed with a dark skin because they rebelled against the righteous Nephi. Initially they follow Nephi’s brother Laman and are called Lamanites. Nephi foresees that after the final civil war, his brother’s descendants will become “a dark, and loathsome, and a filthy people, full of idleness and all manner of abominations.” Fast-forward 1,000 years and Mormon sees the same future for the descendants of Laman as “a dark, a filthy, and

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22 Richard Packham, review of *An Imperfect Book* for the Association for Mormon Letters, posted June 20, 2013, [http://forums.mormonletters.org/yaf\\_postst1489\\_Wunderli-An-Imperfect-Book-What-the-Book-of-Mormon-Tells-Us-About-Itself-reviewed-by.aspx](http://forums.mormonletters.org/yaf_postst1489_Wunderli-An-Imperfect-Book-What-the-Book-of-Mormon-Tells-Us-About-Itself-reviewed-by.aspx) (accessed June 2014). He concludes: “On the whole, this book is a valuable addition to the many volumes written about the Book of Mormon, if only for its excellent summary of the many arguments of critics and defenders.”

a loathsome people” who, because of their “unbelief and idolatry,” are “beyond the description” of anything ever seen among the Book of Mormon peoples. (pp. 181–82)

There are several problems with this paragraph. The first is that the data are incorrect. The Book of Mormon specifically includes the descendants of Mulek (represented by the people of Zarahemla) as part of the Israelite promise. Secondly, very early we are told that Nephite and Lamanite are demonyms (names for a people) rather than patronyms (lineage names). Jacob clarifies usage that is also clearly in use in Nephi’s writing:

Now the people which were not Lamanites were Nephites; nevertheless, they were called Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites.

But I, Jacob, shall not hereafter distinguish them by these names, but I shall call them Lamanites that seek to destroy the people of Nephi, and those who are friendly to Nephi I shall call Nephites, or the people of Nephi, according to the reigns of the kings. (Jacob 1:13–14)

Then we come to the issue of the dark skin. Rather than examine the textual evidence for the way “skin of darkness” is used in the text, Wunderli accepts the external interpretation that it means a pigmentation change. I have made just such an internal analysis of the meaning of the phrase according to the text. I come to a very different conclusion.<sup>23</sup> Wunderli does obliquely examine the *skin of blackness* as a metaphor but

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23 Brant A. Gardner, “What Does the Book of Mormon Mean by ‘Skin of Blackness’?” *FairMormon* <http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/publications/what-does-the-book-of-mormon-mean-by-skin-of-blackness>. The online article is excerpted from Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 2:108–22.

dismisses it with a single sentence: “However well-intentioned this interpretation might be, it retains a tinge of racial discrimination” (p. 184).

This dismissal doesn’t deal with the argument at all. It simply shifts the discussion away from what the text says (ironically for Wunderli’s primary thesis that one should examine data). Wunderli declares that the Book of Mormon has racial overtones. Of course, that is unacceptable in terms of our modern culture 180 years after the publication of the text. Without making it clear, Wunderli is suggesting that the failure of the text to conform to modern mores means that it was written in the 1830s rather than anciently.

Unfortunately for modern sensibilities, if we assume that the text really is ancient, then it would be highly unusual if the writers were not prejudiced. The major difference is that our modern assumptions about prejudice revolve around skin color, and those words in the text hijack our interpretations into modern assumptions. The text itself exhibits the type of ancient prejudice that we see virtually universally. Anyone not part of one’s people were not considered to be as good. In many cases, they were *barbarians*, the term the Greeks used for non-Greeks. Prejudice existed, but was based on something other than pigmentation. Similarly in the Book of Mormon, the prejudice covers out-groups. Once any outsider, any Lamanite, became “Nephite,” he or she were accepted. Although much of that understanding does require an understanding of history and anthropology, the primary data to which it is applied for the Book of Mormon is precisely the kind that Wunderli suggests that he wants to examine. In this case, he ignores it entirely.

The Great and Abominable Church receives the same assumptive treatment. Wunderli begins: “There is even harsher invective in store in the Book of Mormon for Catholics, who are characterized as members of a ‘great and abominable church.’”

It is true that the first edition of Bruce R. McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine* had that assertion. It is also true that he was required by superiors in the Church to change it (which Wunderli acknowledges on p. 189).

Wunderli notes that there isn't universal agreement on that reading, but comments: "Some writers deny the original intent of the Book of Mormon, possibly more from a sense of civility than real conviction" (pp. 189–90). Aside from his implied ability to read minds,<sup>24</sup> Wunderli continues to prejudice his readers' interpretation by suggesting that the Catholic Church is "the original intent of the Book of Mormon," this in spite of his acknowledgement that leaders of the church corrected that misunderstanding in McConkie's book.

This type of argumentation continues in the section on "Curiosities." Wunderli exposes what he believes to be an unbelievable situation: "The people who gather to hear Benjamin's sermon cry aloud 'with one voice' for mercy, declaring their belief in this Savior. Benjamin expands on the means to salvation, and the people cry again 'with one voice' saying they believe in god and will covenant to obey him. What is remarkable about this is that everyone speaks 'with one voice' but not in a short exclamation: rather, they go on for about fifty words in one instance and almost 200 words in another" (p. 200).

Wunderli's criticism of this event is essentially that he cannot understand it. His decision to avoid external evidence kept him from understanding, not anything inherent in the text. Historian Ramsay MacMullen describes multiple occasions of what he calls "lung power" operating in large public settings. Specifically, he notes that there would be a leader who would

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24 I have written on the topic and can confirm that his description does not at all represent my reasons for the reading I give the text. See Gardner, *Second Witness*, 1:228–31.

pronounce the phrase the group would repeat in unison.<sup>25</sup> Thus there were many occasions in the ancient world where people spoke with one voice — although it was a coached voice. There is no reason to assume that it would have been different in the Book of Mormon. There is no reason to assume that an ancient writer would have thought the process unusual and therefore in need of explanation.

When Wunderli attempts to interpret the Book of Mormon against historical evidence, he gets it wrong. One of the curiosities: “During an ensuing battle, an intrepid Nephite charges the general and takes off “his scalp” with a sword, the scalp falling “to the earth.” It is, of course, an Indian scalping. It is doubtful Joseph Smith would have known what Professor Ludlow offered, that scalping was actually invented by the British” (pp. 210–11). There are two problems with Wunderli’s presentation of this curiosity. The first is that it really doesn’t describe scalping as was practiced by the British or American Indians. Those were scalps taken to show dominance and, at least in the case of the British, to show a count. None of those aspects appear in the Book of Mormon account. The second problem is even greater. Scalping was much older than the American colonies or even the British as a nation. Historian David Drew describes ways that Mesoamerican victims were treated: “men could be disemboweled, scalped, burnt, strapped to wooden scaffolds and shot with arrows.”<sup>26</sup> If Wunderli is going to allow an appeal to history, there is a perfectly acceptable history in what many LDS scholars believe was the right place, and the right time.

Wunderli finds it a curiosity that “when Jesus appears, he invites the multitude to thrust their hands into the sword

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25 Ramsay MacMullen, *Voting About God in Early Church Councils* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 12–16.

26 David Drew, *The Lost Chronicles of the Maya Kings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 313.

wound and in his side and feel the nail holes in his hands and feet. How Nephites would know the significance of the wounds is a question” (p. 217). It is true that they would not understand that Christ had been crucified, but that wasn’t the reason for the exercise. The point was that the very living Messiah before them had *died* and yet lived. If we place the event in the appropriate time in Mesoamerica, they would understand the wounds in the palms and feet as some form of humiliating torture — though not one that they practiced. However, the spear injury in the side they would recognize as fatal. A Mesoamerican population would have had knowledge of deadly wounds. Mark Wright has noted the difference between Christ’s presentation of his wounds in the New and Old World. In the New, “He bid them first to thrust their hands into his side, and secondarily to feel the prints in his hands and feet (3 Nephi 11:14). This contrasts with his appearance to his apostles in Jerusalem after his resurrection. Among them, he invited them to touch his hands and his feet (Luke 24:39-40).”<sup>27</sup> The point of Christ’s appearance wasn’t crucifixion but resurrection. In the Old World they knew he had died, and Christ had to demonstrate that the Christ who appeared was the very one who had died. In the New World they could see that he was alive. He had descended from the heavens. There was no question but that he was their Messiah. What they needed to know was that he had been dead and had resurrected (a concept with which Mesoamericans were familiar in their pagan religions).<sup>28</sup> That Wunderli does not understand an event

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27 Mark Alan Wright, “Axes Mundi: A Comparative Analysis of Nephite and Mesoamerican temple and Ritual Complexes,” 7. Author’s draft of the paper read at the Temple on Mount Zion Symposium, September 22, 2012. Used with permission.

28 Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 108–109. The Mesoamerican maize god spans multiple cultures and virtually the entire timespan of Mesoamerican civilization. The essential element is the dying

in the Book of Mormon does not create evidence that it is a “curiosity.”

Wunderli includes a critique of the Limited Geography Theory, which is the theory most often accepted among LDS scholars with training in anthropology or archaeology. Wunderli greatly abbreviates arguments he made against that geographic setting for the Book of Mormon in an earlier article in *Dialogue*.<sup>29</sup> I have responded to the points in that article and will not cover those points again.<sup>30</sup>

As with other issues, my interest in this review isn't the point and counterpoint, but the examination of the methodology Wunderli employs to arrive at his conclusions. As part of his introduction to this section he states: “John Sorenson's interest has been in locating where the Book of Mormon events might have taken place. One might think this search would rely on external evidence, but in fact it relies on clues within the text and comes a result of the fact that the traditional hemispheric geography has found little or no support in the archaeological, biological, and linguistic records” (pp. 254–55).

That Sorenson should base his analysis on internal evidence ought to be praised in Wunderli's methodological scheme. Instead, Wunderli implies that Sorenson should have relied on external evidence. In fact, Wunderli will note: “We should keep in mind that there is not a country, city, sea, or other geographical or political designation we would recognize in the Book of Mormon, outside of a few references to biblical sites” (p. 238). Wunderli remarkably suggests that external evidence might be valuable. Without noting my specific disagreements

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and rising of the god, paralleling the planting of the corn seed and its subsequent growth from the “dead” seed.

29 Earl M. Wunderli, “Critique of a Limited Geography for Book of Mormon Events,” *Dialogue* 35/3 (2002): 161–97.

30 Brant A. Gardner, “An Exploration in Critical Methodology: Critiquing a Critique,” *FARMS Review* 16/2(2004): 173–223. There is no indication in *An Imperfect Book* that Wunderli has seen that review.

with his generalization, it is the fascinating paradox of his methodology that I find most interesting.

Wunderli also tells us why Sorenson does not provide that external evidence. The reason is that “traditional hemispheric geography has found little or no support.” This is a problematic statement. First, it is entirely untrue that Sorenson does not use external evidence. It is true that the initial construction of the relationships of cities and events comes from the text, but Sorenson adds to that a correlation to the real world at the appropriate time and presents external information to bolster his assertion about where the text took place.<sup>31</sup>

The next problem comes with the way Wunderli supports this statement. One reference in the footnotes is to Simon G. Southerton’s *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church*. This is to support the lack of biological support for the hemispheric hypothesis. What Wunderli does not tell his readers is that the majority of LDS scholars currently defending the Book of Mormon agree that there was no hemispheric location and that DNA evidence would preclude the assumption that all Amerindians descended from Book of Mormon peoples. This is a much more widely discussed topic than the quick relegation in an unexplained footnote can cover. Without more background there is no way a reader would be able to assess this statement in spite of the fact that Wunderli can marshal someone in support of it.

More difficult is the citation he uses to demonstrate that there is no archaeological evidence. He cites Raymond T. Matheny, a retired archaeologist from Brigham Young University. Matheny gave a presentation at a Sunstone Symposium in

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31 See John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book and the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1985); and John L. Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex: An Ancient American Book* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company and the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2013).

1984, and it is that presentation that Wunderli references. That would appear to be a serious condemnation, if a believing LDS scholar undermined the archaeological compatibility of the Book of Mormon with the real world. Wunderli clearly doesn't know the backstory for that presentation. William J. Hamblin provides the text of a letter that Matheny wrote:

In 1984 I was asked by Sunstone to give a talk, which I refused. They persisted by calling and asked if I would be willing to sit on a panel and comment on papers that would be given on archaeology at the upcoming symposium. To this request I consented. However, when I arrived for the symposium, much to my surprise I was listed as a speaker. I objected and said that I had not prepared a paper. The Sunstone people then handed me a card with a question on it and asked if I would comment on the question. The question dealt with how does a non-Mormon archaeologist evaluate the Book of Mormon in terms of its cultural content and claims. My answer to the question was an *ad hoc* response where I tried to put myself in a non-Mormon's professional shoes and talked about the nature of the problems that the Book of Mormon poses for the archaeologist.<sup>32</sup>

Importantly, Wunderli does not engage the internal evidence. He even agrees: "For our purposes, we can agree with Sorenson's finding that the Nephite history takes place mostly within a relatively confined area south of the narrow neck" (p. 258). In other words, Wunderli is willing to concede that Sorenson works with internal evidence and has generally

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32 Ray T. Matheny, Letter dated 18 November 1992, as quoted in William J. Hamblin, "Basic Methodological Problems with the Anti-Mormon Approach to the Geography and Archaeology of the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 1 (1993): 190.

interpreted it correctly. What is wrong with Sorenson's analysis then? Wunderli tells us: "The issue is not whether most of the Nephite history takes place within a limited geographical area but whether the rest of the western hemisphere is presented as standing empty until the expansion at the end of the book and the Lamanite possession thereafter. The internal evidence favors a hemispheric model and poses severe challenges for the proponent of any limited-geography model" (p. 259).

After admitting that Sorenson's work is based on internal evidence, Wunderli criticizes Sorenson's conclusions with two statements, neither of which have been given any support whatsoever in Wunderli's book. He simply asserts that there is a problem with a land standing empty (with which Sorenson — and others — thoroughly disagree) and that the "internal evidence favors a hemispheric model." That is precisely the evidence Sorenson used, and Wunderli accepted, that did not favor the hemispheric model. Sorenson's geography of Book of Mormon events places all events in a distance perhaps no more than 600 miles long at the longest, absolutely precluding a hemispheric reading. Somehow, Wunderli expects his readers to dismiss Sorenson solely on Wunderli's unsupported statement about what the text requires — a statement that stands in opposition to Sorenson's supported internal evidence of what the text requires.

### **Fading to Black**

Of course there is much more in the book, and virtually every point has a counterpoint other than the one(s) that Wunderli offers. The responses would be in such a similar vein to those I have already looked at. This review would have to be book-length to examine every claim Wunderli makes. He asks some questions that, although they have been discussed, remain topics of debate. He notes the presence of Deutero-Isaiah in the Book of Mormon (pp. 79–83). Wunderli has nothing new

to add to the discussion and is simply reviewing the literature from his perspective. There are some life spans in the Book of Mormon that are difficult to reconcile (pp. 199–200). Wunderli is certainly not the first to notice them. It is true that there is much about the content of the Book of Mormon that is still the subject of active scholarly debate.

Has Wunderli added to the scholarly discussion? He has proposed an interpretive thesis that scholars of texts know to be wrong and which even Wunderli admits cannot be used as he intended it. Nevertheless he continues to use that interpretive methodology throughout the book. Hypotheses that are built upon incorrect theses are rarely useful.

Wunderli has not shown himself to be an impartial judge of evidence. When presenting evidence contrary to his accepted position he often presents only part of the range of LDS scholarly interpretations, assiduously avoiding those that most directly contradict his position. At least in some of the footnotes I checked, the citations did not support the point he was making.

He is willing to cite LDS authors but spends more time on sections where they agree with the proposal Wunderli wants to establish, and then he ignores the very same article when it contradicts his position. The most significant of these is when he uses an article by Richard L. Bushman to bolster his premise that Joseph used his patriotism as an underlying platform for the way in which king Mosiah shifted the political scene. Bushman's entire point in the article was that while he originally believed he could show how the Book of Mormon fit as a Republican document, he found (based on evidence!) that it was a very different book. Wunderli does nod to that conclusion: "Several LDS scholars have challenged critics for contending that Joseph Smith copied the American system of government, and have gone out of their way to find differences

between it and the Nephite government. For example, the chief judge behaves more like a king than a president” (p. 283).

Rather than “going out of his way,” Bushman indicates that his conclusions are based on internal evidence, which should be the kind of internal evidence Wunderli believes is fixed and evident. Bushman concludes:

Scholars confine themselves unnecessarily in deriving all their insight from the maxim that Joseph Smith’s writings can best be explained “by his responsiveness to the provincial opinions of this time.” That principle of criticism obscures the Book of Mormon, as it would any major work read exclusively in that light. It is particularly misleading when so many of the powerful intellectual influences operating on Joseph Smith failed to touch the Book of Mormon, among them the most common American attitudes toward a revolution, monarchy, and the limitations on power. The Book of Mormon is not a conventional American book. Too much Americana is missing. Understanding the work requires a more complex and sensitive analysis than has been afforded it. Historians will take a long step forward when they free themselves from the compulsion to connect all they find with Joseph Smith’s America and try instead to understand the ancient patterns deep in the grain of the book.<sup>33</sup>

By setting up the hypothesis that he was dealing only with internal evidence, Wunderli can ignore the large body of work LDS scholars have amassed setting the Book of Mormon in a historical context. Convincing or not, it is not entered into the equation. His initial reason was: “I felt unable to rely

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<sup>33</sup> Richard L. Bushman, “The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution,” *BYU Studies* 17, no. 1 (Autumn 1976): 20.

on historians, archaeologists, linguists, or others for sure knowledge about the Book of Mormon and turned to the book itself for what it could reveal about itself” (p. 10). However, he is comfortable with those experts in the second half of his book. Nevertheless, he still does not engage the evidence that many LDS scholars would indicate to be some of the stronger evidence in favor of the Book of Mormon as the translation of an ancient text.

Historian G. J. Renier quoted the French historian Fustel de Coulanges as saying, “If we approach a text with a preconceived idea we shall read in it only what we want to read.”<sup>34</sup> However openly Wunderli made his first incursion into these questions, this book is clearly written from so strongly a preconceived idea that he doesn’t even notice that he has seen only what he wanted to see as he selected what to examine and how to examine and present it.

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34 G. J. Renier, *History: Its Purpose and Method* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 219. John Gee says the same thing in the context of Book of Mormon research, John Gee, “La Trahison des Clercs: On the Language and Translation of the Book of Mormon,” *FARMS Review of Books*, 6, no. 1 (1994): 54, “As anyone who has studied geometry since Nikolas Lobatchewsky knows, the entire shape of your geometrical system depends on your assumptions. So, too, with Book of Mormon scholarship: the shape of the resultant system depends upon the assumptions brought to bear on the text.”

# INATTENTIONAL BLINDNESS: SEEING AND NOT SEEING THE BOOK OF MORMON

Robert A. Rees

Review of Earl M. Wunderli, *An Imperfect Book: What the Book of Mormon Tells Us about Itself* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2013), 328pp + Appendices, Maps, and Index.

*Earl Wunderli, an attorney who has made a lifelong study of the Book of Mormon, concludes that the book is a product of Joseph Smith's mind and imagination. In doing so, Wunderli marshals evidence and presents his argument as if he were an attorney defending a client in court. Unfortunately, Wunderli's case suffers from the same weaknesses and limitations of other naturalist criticism in that it exaggerates Joseph Smith's intellectual and cultural background and compositional skills while ignoring the Book of Mormon's deep structure, narrative complexity, and often intricate rhetorical patterns.*

Emerson said, "Tell me your sect and I'll tell you your argument." Having had a number of casual conversations with Earl Wunderli over the years about the Book of Mormon, I could have predicted the kind of study he has produced. I don't say that in a pejorative or demeaning way but rather to clarify that the different ways the two of us have approached the book give clues as to how differently we see and read it (at least in some ways). Had someone asked me to describe Wunderli's study before I read it, I would have said something like the following: "Earl is a smart guy, and he is very serious about the kind of research and analysis he does. My guess is that he has

examined the Book of Mormon over a period of years with a sincere attempt to understand it — or at least a sincere attempt to get to the bottom of a number of questions he and others have raised about it. I predict that his conclusion will be that the book is not an ancient document but rather was written by someone (or several someones) living in nineteenth-century America.” That’s not a condemnation since it matches the point of view held by a number of scholars and lay people. Frankly, I’m impressed with Earl’s thoroughness and the nearly exhaustive (if somewhat narrow) scope of his research. He seems to have read the Book of Mormon seriously and extensively and read voluminously on Book of Mormon criticism and commentary (with what I consider some serious exceptions, which I share below).

I would also have predicted that Earl would approach the book as if he were cross examining it and its defenders in a court of law. Like any good lawyer defending his client or arguing a case, he calls witnesses from both sides and engages in a sort of interrogation — even though I think he has been selective in his choice of witnesses — (none of whom, of course, is in the courtroom to affirm or defend his or her scholarly writings). Again, this is not surprising since Wunderli has years of training and professional experience in the law. Judging from his thoroughness, I conclude that he is a very good lawyer. But as every lawyer knows, in defending a client or point of view, it is not requisite to give a balanced presentation, perhaps only the impression that you are trying to. That is, Wunderli is defending his client (himself and naturalist criticism), and his primary motive is in making a convincing case.

Wunderli raises (or repeats) a number of important questions about the Book of Mormon, with most of which those who have studied the book and followed the debate about its claims over the years are familiar. They include questions about such things as the use of KJV Bible, internal stylistic consistency,

geography, Egyptian and Hebrew influences, anachronisms, character development, scientific understanding of ancient and modern peoples, and mythology.

Like almost everyone who approaches the Book of Mormon from a scholarly point of view, Wunderli sees himself and those who agree with him as being on the side of reason, science, and truth, whereas those who see the text differently, who find evidence of an ancient text composed by a disparate group of writers, and who may rely on spiritual as well as rational and scientific means to “sound” the book, he sees as unreasonable, unscientific, and inclined to believe in myths and falsehoods. As he states in his Introduction, “Critics prefer evidence and reason over faith and prayer as the method for testing truth” (p. 3). What Wunderli doesn’t seem to acknowledge is that there are scholars who don’t accept such a Manichean epistemological divide in the approach to discovery. That is, some scholars, to use Lowell Bennion’s metaphor, “carry water on both shoulders,” studying, weighing, pondering, considering alternate/opposing views, and, yes, also being open to intuitive and spiritual ways of knowing.

The scriptures suggest that we use both approaches. In Isaiah, the Lord invites us to “reason together” with him, and the Book of Job reminds us that “there is a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding” (Job 32:8 KJV). Based on my own experience, I believe that those who use both of these approaches see differently from those who use only one. Wunderli’s “critics” may tend to miss the intuitive, poetic, and deep structural complexities of the text, whereas those who rely solely on the spirit generally are indifferent to any evidence, internal or external, that challenges their absolute conviction. In my experience in reading Book of Mormon scholarship over the years, I don’t think it is fair or helpful to stereotype those in either group — or in any group for that matter.

Wunderli sees himself (and his fellow “critics”) as objectively examining a set of fixed facts: “The value of internal evidence is that it is accessible and verifiable by anyone. It does not change, and it is fairly understandable.” Such “internal evidence” is set off against “historical, linguistic, archeological, and other external evidence ... which is incomplete, hard to access, or difficult to understand” (p. 9). He says, “I wanted as much as possible to deal with the simple facts and what they meant” (p. 12).

I applaud Wunderli for wanting to focus on the internal evidence of the book, on “the simple facts,” but as a longtime student of the book, I find the facts anything but simple and the internal evidence anything but obvious. In his poem, “Introduction to Poetry,” Billy Collins writes of trying to get his students to look deep into a poem to unravel its revelations:

I ask them to take a poem  
and hold it up to the light  
like a color slide  
or press an ear against its hive.  
I say drop a mouse into a poem  
and watch him probe his way out,  
or walk inside the poem’s room  
and feel the walls for a light switch.

He laments,

But all they want to do  
is tie the poem to a chair with rope  
and torture a confession out of it.<sup>1</sup>

That’s the impression I had with much of Wunderli’s examination of the facts and internal evidence of the

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1 Billy Collins. “Introduction to Poetry.” *The Apple that Astonished Paris*. (University of Arkansas Press, 1996). <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/176056>

Book of Mormon. In fact, early on in speaking about his wish to catalogue and compare “every word and phrase used by every author,” he confesses, “This is as far as my imagination carried me” (p. 11). The fact is, those who write rationalist criticism themselves operate within the context of myth, whether they recognize it or not. As Jack Whelan observes, “Rationalists are wrong if they think that they have no need of myth. If they think so, they are almost certainly unconscious of the mythic structure that undergirds their worldview. They think they are being rational when in fact all they have done is substitute a new mythic or ideo-mythic narrative for an older one.”<sup>2</sup>

At times Wunderli’s approach to the Book of Mormon reminds me of Gradgrind, the teacher in Charles Dickens’s *Hard Times* who asks a student (“girl number twenty”) to give a definition of a horse. When she is unable to do so, Gradgrind says, “Girl number twenty possessed of no facts, in reference to one of the commonest of animals!” He then calls on another student, Bitzer, to do so. Bitzer responds: “Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth.” Gradgrind says triumphantly, “Now girl number twenty, you know what a horse is.” As my BYU Bible as Literature teacher Robert K. Thomas observed, Bitzer would have given a better answer (but nevertheless failed Gradgrind’s expectations) if he had instead quoted from the book of Job:

Do you give the horse his strength or clothe his neck  
with a flowing mane? Do you make him leap like a  
locust, striking terror with his proud snorting? He

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2 Jack Whelan. “The Power of Myth.” *After the Future Blog*. September 15, 2010. <http://afterthefuture.typepad.com/afterthefuture/2010/09/the-power-of-myth.html>

paws fiercely, rejoicing in his strength, and charges into the fray. He laughs at fear, afraid of nothing; he does not shy away from the sword. The quiver rattles against his side, along with the flashing spear and lance. In frenzied excitement he eats up the ground; he cannot stand still when the trumpet sounds. At the blast of the trumpet he snorts, “Aha!” He catches the scent of battle from afar, the shout of commanders and the battle cry. (39:19–25)

Another way of putting this is that I feel Wunderli’s approach seldom gets beyond the book’s details. He tends to skim along the surface of the narrative or stay in the rhetorical shallows when, at least in my reading, the text invites a deeper seeing, a more profound probing, a greater attention to its density, patterns, and complexities. That doesn’t by any means imply that one should ignore facts, only that one should try to see through, beneath, and beyond them. That involves not simply managing the text, as it seems to me Wunderli does, but rather submitting to it. By that I don’t mean being seduced by the text but rather imaginatively and intuitively engaging it and therefore being open to what is not obvious, what cannot be easily catalogued or put into lists. As Rabbi David Wolpe says, “A God who encompasses all things must have poetry, too.”<sup>3</sup>

Speaking of lists, Wunderli has four appendices devoted to them: “Names for Deity, and Derivatives, in the Book of Mormon”; “Nephite, Jaredite, and Biblical Names”; “Nephite and Jaredite Names Found in the Bible”; and “Possible Derivation of Names.” The cumulative effect of these lists is to make one wonder how Wunderli could have seen so much and missed so much! It reminds me of Edgar Allen Poe’s story, “The Purloined Letter” (one of Poe’s “stories of ratiocination”) in

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3 David Wolpe. *The Healer of Shattered Hearts: A Jewish View of God*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1991), 47.

which the police, systematically but unsuccessfully search the residence of the prime suspect for a letter stolen from the royal apartments. Even with the reward doubled and another month of searching in all of the places a thief might be expected to hide stolen property, they are unsuccessful. Finally, the master detective, C. Auguste Dupin, reveals to the prefect of the Paris police that the letter had been hiding in plain sight all along! Thus, focusing on the trees of individual lists of words, phrases, names, etc., seems to prevent Wunderli from seeing the interpretive forest that comprises much of the Book of Mormon.

For me an example of something that is not easily seen in the Book of Mormon is the use of irony. In a paper I published on the subject, I tried to demonstrate that the Book of Mormon contains numerous examples of rhetorical and dramatic irony similar to that found in the Bible and other texts, ancient and modern.<sup>4</sup> One example of what I consider a conscious and complex ironic composition is found in 1 Nephi 16 & 17. These chapters contain a sophisticated play on the words “to know,” showing how Nephi very cleverly uses repetition to turn the epistemological tables on his older brothers. It is a brilliant tour de force, one that is all the more successful because Laman and Lemuel unknowingly set themselves up for it. As I summarize, “Nephi uses the word *know* eleven times [in these chapters], each to deliberate effect.” I also point out how this episode, like many in the Book of Mormon, foreshadows a later episode or episodes (as with the epistemological conflicts between Gideon

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4 Robert A. Rees, “Irony in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/2 (Fall 2003), 20-31. As I point out, “In terms of verbal irony, the Nephite text contains examples of most of the kinds distinguished by Classical rhetoricians, as outlined in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetics*, including—“meiosis and litotes (understatement), hyperbole (overstatement), antiphrasis (contrast), ... chleuasm (mockery); mycterism (the sneer); and mimesis (imitation, especially for the sake of ridicule).”

and Nehor, Amulek and Zeezrom, and Alma and Amlici--all found in the book of Alma).<sup>5</sup>

The kinds of irony one finds in the Book of Mormon are not accidental nor the kind that any writer might see in or pull out of a hat. Rather they require a highly sophisticated compositional skill, a skill that seems significantly beyond the literary capacity of Joseph Smith at the time he supposedly wrote the Book of Mormon. Such irony cannot be made up on the spot nor composed beforehand and dictated at will. Rather, it requires time, care, and deliberation to produce. Also, it is not a figment of the critic's imagination but rather demands some understanding of the nature of irony and experience in analyzing ironic texts. As Mormon scholar and specialist in irony Wayne Booth states, "Every good reader must be ... sensitive in detecting and reconstructing ironic meanings."<sup>6</sup> Thus, what Wunderli lacks in his thorough and exhaustive discussion of the "facts" (many of which are undisputed) is the ability to see the often intricate, complex and highly sophisticated elements in the Book of Mormon, what the novelist Henry James called "the figure in the carpet."<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, anyone has to be impressed by the extent of Wunderli's decades-long study of the Book of Mormon. It says something about his seriousness that he did much of this before modern computer-based analytical tools were available. And some of Wunderli's lists are helpful in allowing us to see how such an approach to textual analysis opens us to see usages, patterns, and apparent anomalies. What is lost in such details and technicalities, however, is the *meaning* produced when these words are put back into their context with other words.

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5 Rees, 29–31.

6 Wayne C. Booth. *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1.

7 See Robert A. Rees, "The Figure in the Carpet: Grant Hardy's Reading of the Book of Mormon," *The John Whitmer Association Journal* (Fall 2011), 132–143.

That is, the rhetorical tone, patterns, styles, images, symbols, and other elements that make up the whole of a text or segment of text ultimately show us what is possible to see.

A weakness of Wunderli's approach is that it can lead the critic to overemphasize errors in the text while ignoring the substantial corresponding consistencies. For example, he refers more than once (pp. 211 & 323) to the Alma 51:26 misidentification of Nephihah as a city captured by the Lamanites and the misattribution of the city of Mulek as being in "the land of Nephi" at Alma 53:6 (pp. 212–13), but ungenerously fails to mention anywhere that: (1) these two errors are the *only* inconsistencies in over four hundred geographical references in the book (an astonishing feat for a written text, let alone a dictated one), or (2) that both of these errors occur in a section that Mormon apparently compiled from primary source documents rather than from a previously composed narrative (that is, the kind of error more likely made by an editor than an author).<sup>8</sup>

Another shortcoming of Wunderli's selective reading is his tendency to focus on individual words rather than on the deliberate, longer allusions (as evidenced by some combination of their explicit attribution, length, context, or clustered borrowing). An example is Alma 36:22 quoting 1 Nephi 1:8, or Helaman 5:9 quoting Mosiah 3:17. Wunderli also makes repeated mention of the Mosiah-first translation theory, but only to buttress his claims for Joseph Smith as the sole author (pp. 112–13, 317) and never as a potential counter to this theory, as when narrators allude to source texts not yet quoted (for example, Moroni at Ether 12:41, alluding to a phrase from his father's epistle produced in Moroni 9:26, or his "curtain call" in

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8 See Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 102 and 142–44. Grant Hardy graciously acknowledges the substantial contribution to his work by his wife, Heather, who chose not to be listed as co-author but deserved to be.

Moroni 10 alluding, in turn, to the farewell comments of each of the small plates' authors in 2 Nephi–Omni *that had not yet been dictated*).<sup>9</sup>

At a session at the 2013 Sunstone Symposium dedicated to proving that Joseph Smith was the author of the Book of Mormon, as an audience member I made the following statement: “If Joseph Smith composed and then dictated the Book of Mormon as he and other eyewitnesses attest and under the circumstances that seem firmly established and which you seem not to question, then please explain how he did it.” To dictate such a narrative hour after hour, periodically over a three-month period with frequent interruptions, personal crises, and abundant stressful episodes — and with no discernable manuscript, notes or other means of assisting the process of anamnesis — seems not merely superhuman but humanly impossible. At the very least Joseph Smith’s critics must be compelled to agree that in the long history of narrative composition, no one has accomplished a similar task. While ancient poets memorized catalogues of formulae that they used for improvisational tellings of such epics as *The Illiad*, *The Odyssey*, and *Beowulf*, and while some authors have used a process called automatic writing to dictate a wide variety of texts, there is no evidence either that Joseph Smith had the gift of voluminous memorization (especially dictated seamlessly over a period of months with numerous interruptions) or that his book was a product of automatic writing, as I tried to demonstrate in an article on the subject written a number of years ago.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to point out that Wunderli’s approach to the Book of Mormon does not differ in kind from that of some scholars on the other side of the ideological/interpretive

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9 Again, see Hardy, 262–64.

10 “The Book of Mormon and Automatic Writing,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15/1 (Spring 2006), 4–17, 68–70.

divide. That is, like Wunderli, such scholars tend also toward lists, minutiae, and technical elements in proving their points — and they seem unable or unwilling to grant the legitimate problems that some have with the book or to be truly open to any evidence that challenges their axioms.

It isn't that this is unusual even in scientific circles. Neurologists resisted the idea of the plasticity of the brain for a long time, even with the evidence staring them in the face. That is also true of geologists and paleontologists who refused for decades to believe the fossil texts that proved that evolution was a natural process or that some animals had become extinct. It is also true of the Climate Change deniers today. As the novelist Barbara Kingsolver observes, "We take in evidence only from sources we trust, whether that's Rush Limbaugh or NPR or a church pastor [or prophet]. We make these sort of animal decisions about who's on our team, and then we pretty much believe what they say."<sup>11</sup>

My own personal view is that the greatest hindrance to reliable Book of Mormon scholarship has been the Latter-day Saint tendency of proof-texting. Another has been the unavailability of a clear, readable text — that is, until Grant Hardy's very useful *Reader's Book of Mormon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005). Hardy certainly helped me to see the text without all of its encumbrances — glosses, footnotes, arbitrary verse divisions, etc. Until Hardy's text was available, I preferred Eldin Ricks's wide margin edition (Provo, UT: Mountain West, 1987) because it gave me space to both read and take notes. When I first read Hardy's text, I felt as if I were reading the Book of Mormon for the first time. The most significant contribution of Hardy's text is that it has rescued the history of the Book of Mormon peoples from format captivity.

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11 Barbara Kingsolver, "The Moral Universe: Barbara Kingsolver on Writing, Politics, and Human Nature." Interview by Jeanne Supin. *The Sun* 459 (March 2014), 7.

I wish Wunderli had used Hardy's text when he was preparing to write his book, but most of all I wish he had read Hardy's *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, a study I personally consider the most important and insightful book ever written on the Book of Mormon. It is puzzling why Wunderli doesn't refer to Hardy at all, given his rather exhaustive reading of Book of Mormon scholarship. *Understanding the Book of Mormon* was published in 2010, three years prior to Wunderli's, so it seems there is no excuse for his having neglected so important a work of scholarship.

Had Wunderli read Hardy, it is unlikely he would have come to some of the conclusions he does. For example, Wunderli argues that because "there are upward of 960 words and word combinations shared by two or more Book of Mormon writers, ... the stamp of a single writer seems all but certain" (p. 122). Later, he argues, "The four major writers in the Book of Mormon are nearly indistinguishable from each other" (p. 318). Hardy's much deeper, more careful and more precise analysis makes a convincing argument that there are three major narrators of the text — Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni — and that each has a distinctively different style. As Hardy writes, "Nephi's favorite themes and primary literary techniques are not those of Mormon or Moroni, and Joseph Smith's own opinions on such matters are perhaps still more difficult to ascertain, whether one regards him as a translator or an author who deserves a degree of separation from the inferred author and narrators of his book. But the narrators are explicit, self-disclosing presences in the text in a way that Joseph Smith never is."<sup>12</sup>

For all of Wunderli's criticism of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon as "imperfect," his own study contains a number of mistakes and careless errors. Here are a few examples:

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12 Hardy, 23.

p. 21, *Assertion*: “It is unclear why the Book of Mormon includes the book of Ether and the story of a people called Jaredites.” *Response*: Mormon promises a forthcoming account at Mosiah 28:19.

p. 21, *Assertion*: “Defenders have argued that its message is that those who possess the promised land ‘shall serve God or be swept off,’ but this does not explain why the later unrighteous Lamanites were not so removed.” *Response*: Samuel the Lamanite does explain the reason at Hel. 15:10–13.

p. 27: An angel, not Joseph Smith, showed the plates to the three witnesses.

p. 78: The KJV is not based on the Greek texts of Isaiah.

p. 87: “Abinadi” should be “Aminadi.”

p. 88: Mark Thomas was never a professor at BYU.

p. 323: Micah is an eighth-century BCE prophet, not a “late Old Testament author” anachronistic to the brass plates (besides, he is being quoted by the resurrected Jesus for whom he would not have been anachronistic).

p. 324: 2 Nephi 11:3 is not about latter-day witnesses to the Book of Mormon. Nephi here is speaking explicitly of himself, Jacob and Isaiah as being witnesses of Christ.

At other times, Wunderli seems deliberately unfair to Joseph Smith. For example, in referring to his list of “curiosities” as “thoughtless mistakes in an unedited manuscript,” Wunderli seems to forget, as he has observed earlier (e.g., pp. 28 and 173–74), that the Book of Mormon is in fact an undisputed *dictated* (and therefore unedited) text! If Wunderli had decades to study, prepare for, write, and edit his book and yet be unable to avoid “thoughtless mistakes,” it seems a bit petty for him to speak of such mistakes in a volume dictated sporadically over a three-month period — and by someone with far less education and written/oral experience than he has.

Wunderli’s extensive reading of the critical literature should have led him to see that in many instances he rejects the

evidence of those who read the book differently from the way he does. As with many areas of human inquiry, what one scholar finds convincing and even compelling, another dismisses as untrue or irrelevant. This is, as Barbara Kingsolver argues, a natural human inclination/proclivity: “We believe we collect evidence and then use it to make up our minds, but in fact we make up our minds and then collect evidence to support our beliefs.”<sup>13</sup> As I say, this is what nearly all critics of the Book of Mormon (believers and nonbelievers) do. There are exceptions, thankfully, among whom are Grant and Heather Hardy.

Of all the virtues of Grant (and Heather) Hardy’s *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, the one I admire and appreciate most is their willingness to present the evidence and leave the ultimate decision as to the Book of Mormon’s provenance and authenticity to the reader. Thus, they provide both argument and counterargument, showing that neither side of the interpretive divide is completely settled. And, unlike most critics (perhaps even myself at times) they do it with charity which, as Paul and Moroni tell us, “never faileth.”

I noticed an unexpected and therefore surprising shift in Wunderli’s tone from the Introduction to the Conclusion. In the beginning, he sounds somewhat like an academic. Although he has an agenda, he seems to be striving for a fair, objective, and respectful perspective. By the end of his book, however, he is more like a lawyer making a closing argument: a bit shrill in places, layering on the legal rhetoric, leading the jury to what he thinks they should see as an inevitable conclusion. As he goes along, Wunderli’s tone becomes both less neutral and less charitable. For example, his “defenders” at the beginning become the more pejorative “literalists” at the end.

In conclusion, I appreciate Earl Wunderli’s attempt to come to terms with the Book of Mormon. In our discussions over the

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13 Kingsolver, 7.

years, I have found him to be a person of integrity. While I disagree with his basic approach to the Book of Mormon and his critical *modus operandi*, I understand how he can come to the conclusions he does. That is, the agnostic position is not a mindless way of viewing the world, and legalistic, rationalist criticism is defensible within the context and confines it defines for itself. Any work of scholarship that makes me think and causes me to challenge my own imperfect way of understanding the Book of Mormon is one that I can appreciate, even if it is imperfect — as this one is and as are all of the studies that have been written or will yet be written on this remarkable book.

This paper was first delivered at the FairMormon Conference on August 7, 2014, <http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/fair-conferences/2014-fairmormon-conference/earl-wunderlis-imperfect-book>.

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# NEPHI: A POSTMODERNIST READING

Benjamin L. McGuire

*Authors inevitably make assumptions about their readers as they write. Readers likewise make assumptions about authors and their intentions as they read. Using a postmodern framing, this essay illustrates how a close reading of the text of 1 and 2 Nephi can offer insight into the writing strategies of its author. This reading reveals how Nephi differentiates between his writing as an expression of his own intentions and desires, and the text as the product of divine instruction written for a “purpose I know not.” In order to help his audience understand the text in this context, Nephi as the author interacts with his audience through his rhetorical strategy, pointing towards his own intentions, and offering reading strategies to help them discover God’s purposes in the text.*

## Introduction

Nephi, of course, could not have been a postmodernist. No matter what conclusions we may draw from the text, even from the perspective of a book published in 1830, his work simply stands outside the postmodern time period.<sup>1</sup> Yet as I, a postmodernist, read Nephi,<sup>2</sup> I find that he reflects that

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1 The term *postmodern* seems to have been first used in the 1870s; although in the sense used here, the term more specifically reflects shifts in philosophy and critical theory beginning in the 1950s.

2 Over the course of this essay, I will use the name *Nephi* to refer to both the writing character in 1 and 2 Nephi in the Book of Mormon and the author of

perspective. In this sense, I am providing both a postmodern reading of Nephi and illustrating how Nephi anticipates that reading. My goal in this essay is to offer a new perspective on the narrative of the Book of Mormon — a perspective that changes not only the way we read the text but also the way the text changes us and our perceptions of our faith.

Nephi is a character in his own book. Although he exists for us primarily through words on the printed page, the way that we understand him is shaped by the ways in which we experience reality. As Wolfgang Iser explains:

The manner in which the reader experiences the text will reflect his own disposition, and in this respect the literary text acts as a kind of mirror; ... Thus we have the apparently paradoxical situation in which the reader is forced to reveal aspects of himself in order to experience a reality which is different from his own. The impact this reality makes on him will depend largely on the extent to which he himself actively provides the unwritten part of the text.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, what the text doesn't tell us (and perhaps cannot tell us) must be drawn from our own experience and understanding. Reading in this sense creates meaning that is somewhere in between the experience of the writer and the experience of the reader. And in turn as we read, this character Nephi, found in the pages of the Book of Mormon, shapes our future reality.<sup>4</sup> Every reader encounters Nephi differently — he

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that text without always trying to distinguish between the two.

3 Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," from *The Implied Reader*, in *Reader-Response Criticism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980), 56–57.

4 As Iser explains: "Whatever we have read sinks into our memory and is foreshortened. It may later be evoked again and set against a different background with the result that the reader is enabled to develop hitherto unforeseeable connections. The memory evoked, however, can never reassume its original

is real in a way that reflects that reader's individuality<sup>5</sup> although these differences don't necessarily make him more real (or less real) for some than for others.

Nephi, as the character in the text, resembles in many ways an archetypal character found in postmodern literature:

Postmodernism is not about the end of the story but, rather, about the story of the story. Curiously, one of those stories that pervades this movement is the one that figures an author. The prevalence of this theme is fascinating, even when not counting the numerous appearances of the writing self, the writer doubling as character. Where, in earlier literary movements, a character is only occasionally based on the biography of a real author, without any serious impact on that movement's general aspect, real-world authors appear abundantly as characters in postmodern fiction. They are the flesh and bones, so to speak, of postmodernism, embodying its major

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shape, for this would mean that memory and perception were identical, which is manifestly not so" (p. 54). Reading a text changes us at the very least as the text becomes a part of our experience, and recalling that text shapes how we read future texts.

5 Different readings are not caused simply by different readers. The same reader can encounter multiple readings over time. Iser explains: "With all literary texts, then, we may say that the reading process is selective, and the potential text is infinitely richer than any of its individual realizations. This is borne out by the fact that a second reading of a piece of literature often produces a different impression from the first. The reasons for this may lie in the reader's own change of circumstances; still, the text must be such as to allow this variation. On a second reading, familiar occurrences now tend to appear in a new light and seem to be at times corrected, at times enriched. ... It is a common enough experience for a person to say that on a second reading he noticed things that he had missed when he read the book for the first time, but this is scarcely surprising in view of the fact that the second time he is looking at the text from a different perspective" (pp. 55-56).

themes: concern with writing, origin and loss, the question of representation.<sup>6</sup>

In Nephi, we have an author who is preoccupied with texts — with reading texts, with writing texts, and with these other themes of postmodern literature: origin, loss, and questions of representation. This essay additionally aims to take a closer look at these often neglected aspects of his writings. It does this through the lens of narrative theory, in particular the work of Peter J. Rabinowitz, outlined in his essay “Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences.”<sup>7</sup> In doing so, it looks at Nephi as the narrating character in a book authored by Nephi, it looks at the audiences that Nephi writes for (and writes about), and finally it looks at our reading and response as the real readers.

### The Author and the Audience

Rabinowitz distinguishes between four different audiences that exist conceptually for an author writing a text. He labels them 1) the *actual audience*, 2) the *authorial audience*, 3) the *narrative audience* (sometimes called the “implied audience of the text”), and 4) the *ideal narrative audience*.<sup>8</sup> Rabinowitz’s *actual audience* is the only real audience of the group — that

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6 Aleid Fokkema, “The Author: Postmodernism’s Stock Character,” in *The Author as Character Representing Historical Writers in Western Literature*, ed. Paul Franssen and Ton Hoenselaars (Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1999), 41.

7 Peter J. Rabinowitz, “Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences,” *Critical Inquiry* 4/1 (Autumn 1977), 121–41.

8 Although Rabinowitz was primarily writing about fiction, much of what he produces can be applied to non-fiction, particularly since we see texts (even non-fiction texts) as a representation of reality and not as reality themselves. Rabinowitz is also aware that the lines between fiction and non-fiction are blurred — especially where fictional and non-fictional accounts exist within the same genre: history, biography, and autobiography. Writing of William Demby’s *The Catacombs*, Rabinowitz suggests that “The work is deceptive, however, and the implied author (indeed, the “real” author as far as I can tell from the little I know of Demby) and the narrator are all but indistinguishable.” For his discussion of the issue, see “Truth in Fiction,” 126.

is, it is the only audience that actually exists and reads the text — and in fact, the only audience “over which the author has no guaranteed control.”<sup>9</sup> The other three are constructs. And while I return to the actual audience shortly, I first want to explore Nephi’s awareness of these other audiences and how he shapes his text with this awareness.

Rabinowitz describes the second audience more as a function of assumptions on the part of the author:

Second, the author of a novel designs his work rhetorically for a specific hypothetical audience. Like a philosopher, historian, or journalist, he cannot write without making certain assumptions about his readers’ beliefs, knowledge, and familiarity with conventions. ... But even if an author makes a serious attempt to write for the “real people out there,” the gap between the actual and the authorial audience will always exist. And since all artistic choices, and hence all effects, are calculated in terms of the hypothetical knowledge and beliefs of the authorial audience, this gap must be bridged by readers who wish to appreciate the book. The greater the distance — geographical, cultural, chronological — between the author and his readers, the more of a challenge this is to provide.<sup>10</sup>

Writers assume a certain amount of knowledge on the part of their audience. Where they believe that this knowledge will not be present, they must provide it. Nephi shows a keen awareness of the necessity of knowledge for understanding. He discusses it with us (his hypothetical audience) when he explains his reasons for his inclusion of Isaiah. In fact, Nephi

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9 Rabinowitz, “Truth in Fiction,” 126.

10 Rabinowitz, “Truth in Fiction,” 126–127.

and Rabinowitz describe this awareness in very similar ways. First Rabinowitz:

If historically or culturally distant texts are hard to understand, it is often precisely because we do not possess the knowledge required to join the authorial audience.<sup>11</sup>

Nephi, in similar fashion, tells us this:

Now I, Nephi, do speak somewhat concerning the words which I have written, which have been spoken by the mouth of Isaiah. For behold, Isaiah spake many things which were hard for many of my people to understand; for they know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews. (2 Nephi 25:1)

Nephi describes for us this body of necessary knowledge since without it Isaiah is hard to understand. This situation can be mitigated; Rabinowitz tells us that “even such things as the belief structures of a society must often be ‘explained’ to the reader before he can fully understand the text.”<sup>12</sup> And Nephi suggests that his own understanding comes from this sort of experience and learning; he tells us:

I know that the Jews do understand the things of the prophets, and there is none other people that understand the things which were spoken unto the Jews like unto them, save it be that they are taught after the manner of the things of the Jews. ... but behold, I, of myself, have dwelt at Jerusalem, wherefore I know concerning the regions round about. (2 Nephi 25:6–7)

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11 Rabinowitz, “Truth in Fiction,” 127.

12 Rabinowitz, “Truth in Fiction,” 127.

If Nephi is aware that certain knowledge is necessary to understand Isaiah, and is in possession of that information, then he as an author would be expected to provide that knowledge so that his text too could be understood. Rabinowitz explains that a novel dealing with the political environment of the 1960s might achieve its intended “sense of impending doom only if the reader knows that John F. Kennedy will be assassinated when the events of the novel reach 22 November 1963.” The effect would be lost on an audience unfamiliar with that history, and if the author anticipated this in an audience, he would need to “rewrite the book accordingly.”<sup>13</sup> Nephi, on the other hand, while recognizing this issue, takes us in the opposite direction:

For I, Nephi, have not taught them many things concerning the manner of the Jews; ... But behold, I, Nephi, have not taught my children after the manner of the Jews. (2 Nephi 25:2, 6)

Nephi has deliberately prevented his *authorial audience* from being able to understand Isaiah in the same way that Nephi understands Isaiah, and at the same time, he is letting that audience know that this step in his writing is not merely accidental, or caused by Nephi’s own flawed assumptions in creating his *authorial audience*. This development is deliberate. What remains is something even more radical. The *authorial audience* is an audience that doesn’t have this social and cultural knowledge and, in fact, that may have no recourse to receive it. Nephi withheld this information from the authorial audience.

Nephi presents his authorial audience with a new tension. If reading Isaiah without a proper context and knowledge makes it hard, we would think that providing that context and

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13 Rabinowitz, “Truth in Fiction,” 126.

knowledge would make it easy (or in Nephi's words "plain"). But this isn't how Nephi envisions it: "for because the words of Isaiah are not plain unto you, nevertheless they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy" (2 Nephi 25:4). Nephi has proposed a radically different strategy for reading — to read the text plainly, Nephi suggests, we must read with the Spirit.<sup>14</sup>

### The Narrative Audience

Rabinowitz describes for us his third audience — the *narrative audience* — by suggesting that this is an imaginary audience to whom the narrator is writing, characterized not so much by its knowledge, but by its beliefs. Rabinowitz suggests:

"What sort of person would I have to pretend to be — what would I have to know and believe — if I wanted to take this work of fiction as real?" Normally, it is a fairly simple task to pretend to be a member of the narrative audience: we temporarily take on certain minimal beliefs in addition to those we already hold.<sup>15</sup>

The narrative audience and the authorial audience don't have to believe the same things (although within non-fiction, this is usually the case). To use an example from Rabinowitz, if we read *Cinderella* without participating in the narrative audience, we end up reading the story of a "neurotic, perhaps psychotic, young woman subject to hallucinations" instead of a children's fairy tale.<sup>16</sup>

On the surface, the distinction between a narrative audience (an implied audience) and an authorial audience isn't always

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14 Having knowledge doesn't prevent reading with the Spirit; hence, these are not mutually exclusive propositions.

15 Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction," 128.

16 Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction," 129.

as useful when looking at non-fiction, particularly within autobiography where the narrator is usually presumed to be the author, and the narrator's audience is the author's audience. However, there is always a difference between the author and the narrator. While the narrator represents the author, the author exercises complete control over the representation seen in the narrator.<sup>17</sup> In this way, the character of the narrator is in some sense fictional. Rabinowitz illustrates this by suggesting that "the implied author is often a person ethically superior to his flesh-and-blood counterpart,"<sup>18</sup> and Nephi seems to be no different.<sup>19</sup>

Nephi takes care to describe his *authorial audience* in some detail, providing us with room to discuss his *narrative audience* even in work of non-fiction. Given Nephi's description, our interest is not where the narrative audience knows (or believes) more than the authorial audience; it is where it knows less. Rabinowitz explains:

Sometimes, however, we must go even further, and pretend to abandon our real beliefs and accept in their stead "facts" and beliefs which even more fundamentally contradict our perceptions of reality. In much science fiction, for instance, the narrative audience accepts what the authorial audience knows to be false scientific doctrine. And the process can

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17 Grant Hardy notes: "In the case of Nephi, we can see him shape the narrative for certain ends and we can form a picture of his character and personality, his biases, and blind spots. If he employs literary devices, he does so for his own purposes" *Understanding the Book of Mormon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 14.

18 Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction," 126.

19 Only in 2 Nephi 4 does he apparently admit to weaknesses and imperfections. See also the discussion by Hardy (*Understanding*, 45), where he notes: "It might be tempting to dismiss Nephi as a biased, self-aggrandizing character, but that would be a mistake. Instead we ought to ask why he writes the way he does."

become more complex still. Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* has obviously lost much of its impact as science fiction now that moon voyages have become a part of our lives. If we wish to read it and get anything like the intended effect, we must first, as authorial audience, pretend *not* to believe in moon travel so that we can then, as narrative audience, pretend to be convinced that it *is* possible.<sup>20</sup>

Returning to 2 Nephi 25, we find that Nephi describes his intended audience by what they don't know rather than what they do: "for they know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews" (2 Nephi 25:1). The narrative audience that Nephi is addressing seems to know little about the Jews — "their manner of prophesying," "the manner of the things of the Jews," and even "concerning the regions round about." The suggestion here is novel. While we might be interested in studying language, history, culture, and other features of Israelite (and Jewish) society to help us understand Isaiah as he intended his writings to be understood, we may need to suspend what we know of the Jews, their manner of prophesying, even their regions and history to appreciate Isaiah as Nephi intended.<sup>21</sup> Nephi's approach to understanding Isaiah

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20 Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction," 128.

21 Nephi may describe his motivations for not giving his people this knowledge in 2 Nephi 25:2: "For I, Nephi, have not taught them many things concerning the manner of the Jews; for their works were works of darkness, and their doings were doings of abominations." Reading Isaiah as an audience that had access to this knowledge did not prevent them from falling into apostasy and experiencing the judgments of God. At the same time, it is clear that Nephi does teach his people many things from the political and religious context of the Jews at Jerusalem. They practice the Law of Moses, and we have some elements in the departure narrative relating to the wilderness and its relationship to Jerusalem, and so on. The suggestion seems aimed more at allowing Nephi's strategy of likening the text to move forward, and to prevent our understanding of Isaiah in its original context to take precedence over Nephi's use of that Isaiah text within his new context.

outlines a method in which that knowledge is conspicuously absent. For us to read the Book-of-Mormon Isaiah with that sort of knowledge is to avoid participating in the narrative audience. It is akin to reading *Cinderella* only to find a psychotic, paranoid young woman.

### The Unreliable Narrator

This difference between the narrator and author — and subsequently between the authorial audience and the narrative audience — leaves room for the notion of the unreliable narrator:

I do not wish to imply that in order to become members of the narrative audience, we must pretend to accept *everything* that the narrator tells us. There *are* unreliable narrators. ... The narrative audience believes the narrator is a real, existing historian. But it does not automatically assume that he is an accurate historian any more than in reading a work of history we automatically assume the author to be accurate and truthful.<sup>22</sup>

Being an unreliable narrator does not mean, of course, that the character Nephi in his text is speaking untruths. What it means is that he has not necessarily told us everything — and we discover the unreliability in the contradictions and motivations presented to us in the text.<sup>23</sup> For example, Nephi, in telling us of his encounter with Laban early in his record,

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22 Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction," 133–34.

23 Grant Hardy asks, "Why did Book of Mormon prophets write the way they did? What kinds of experiences, motivations, and personalities might have resulted in the narrative as it is presented? How did they perceive their lives and work? What did they choose to omit from their record?" (*Understanding*, xix.) In Nephi's case, a contributing factor to his omissions lies in the experiences of forty years that occur between some of these events and the time in which he records them.

notes that he “was led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which I should do.” Written as this is, in the first person, his portrayed surprise over what transpires next confronts two earlier comments: the first in 1 Nephi 3:29, “the Lord will deliver Laban into your hands,” followed by Nephi’s own assertion to his brothers in 1 Nephi 4:3, “Lord is able to ... destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians.” Nephi the author knows what is happening (what has in fact already happened), even while Nephi the character is presented to us as being unprepared for the events about to unfold. The resulting disconnect in the narrative invites us to engage the narrative in further examination.<sup>24</sup>

Along these same lines, a highlight of Nephi’s writings (and perhaps a description of an event that was instrumental in Nephi’s developing perspective) is his vision of the Tree of Life. The vision is filled with a language of *looking* and *seeing*; in fact, in his description he tells us “I looked” sixteen times, and “I saw” thirty-five times. This way of describing coincides with his early views on what it means to write and to be an author. Within this narrative section of his writings, however, we discover a hidden tension that encourages us to look again.

The narrative unit in which this vision occurs begins with Lehi’s having a dream and sharing it with his family.<sup>25</sup>

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24 See the discussion in Ben McGuire, “Nephi and Goliath: A Case Study in Literary Allusion,” *Journal of The Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 18/1 (2009): 26–27. When Grant Hardy deals with this episode, he also notes several key elements in the text indicating these disconnects exist: “we have seen (1) a narrative gap, (2) the narrator’s attempt to disguise it, (3) a chronological disjunction, (4) a deviation from narrative convention, ... (5) shifts between paraphrase and direct discourse, (6) significant repetition, (7) the demarcation of a literary unit, (8) the balancing of key phrases, (9) strong characterization, and (10) an illustration of a theological issue of urgent importance to the narrator” (*Understanding*, 22; but see also the more complete discussion illustrating how these details create the literary tension in the text, pp. 16–23).

25 The narrative unit starts in 1 Nephi Chapter 8 but is then interrupted by Chapter 9, where we have a third narrative beginning of the text. Nephi

Following that dream, two responses are presented. One is the response of Nephi and the other comes from his brothers Laman and Lemuel. The first is given in this way:

For it came to pass after I had desired to know the things that my father had seen, and believing that the Lord was able to make them known unto me, as I sat pondering in mine heart I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceedingly high mountain, which I never had before seen, and upon which I never had before set my foot. And the Spirit said unto me: Behold, what desirest thou? And I said: I desire to behold the things which my father saw. And the Spirit said unto me: ... wherefore, thou shalt behold the things which thou hast desired. (1 Nephi 11:1–6)

Laman's and Lemuel's approach is portrayed in this way:

And it came to pass that I [Nephi] beheld my brethren, and they were disputing one with another concerning the things which my father had spoken unto them. ... I spake unto my brethren, desiring to know of them the cause of their disputations. And they said: Behold, we cannot understand the words which our father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive tree, and also concerning the Gentiles. And I said unto them: Have ye inquired of the Lord? And they said unto me: We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us. (1 Nephi 15:2, 6–9)

The two approaches deal with discovering meaning in the vision. In the first potential response to the vision, Nephi goes

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apparently wanted his audience to have a different set of instructions on how to read the text that is brought on by this narrative.

to the source and asks to receive this vision for himself. Laman and Lemuel on the other hand take a more traditional approach and argue with each other over what the vision that their father had described meant. After the failure of the second approach, a third is offered, with Nephi (who has now seen the vision and can be considered its oracle) explaining it to his brothers. It is in his explanation that we see an admission of the unreliable narrator:

And they said unto me: What meaneth the river of water which our father saw? And I said unto them that the water which my father saw was filthiness; and so much was his mind swallowed up in other things that he beheld not the filthiness of the water.  
(1 Nephi 15:26–27)

True to the words of the Spirit, Nephi is shown the same thing that his father saw. But, as Nephi tells us with his pervasive language of *looking* and *seeing*, the vision is something that is experienced. Lehi missed some details of the vision that Nephi saw because he was paying attention elsewhere. Lehi then (apparently) could not answer Laman and Lemuel's question about the river. What Nephi does not tell us explicitly is that while his mind was swallowed up looking at the river of filthy water, he inevitably missed some details that his father saw.

Seen in this way, this revelation by vision is a personal experience. Since we are all different people, our interactions will not conform to some universal standard — our individual experience of the vision will be different from everyone else's. While we may have greater overlap with those who share our backgrounds and knowledge, the experience may be quite different when compared with those who don't. The narrator can only provide us with the details that he is aware of. He cannot give us the details of his father's vision that he missed.

And he certainly cannot provide us with a reasonable telling of the vision as we might experience it.

The inclusion of this narrative of the vision within Nephi's book, along with an interpretation, isn't an invitation to stop. In fact, in following Nephi's explanation, if we stop with his text, we have in fact become no better than Laman or Lemuel asking Nephi for meaning (or, since we really cannot ask a text anything, we are left to dispute one with another as to its meaning). Even if we look to authoritative sources for interpretations (including the interpretation provided by Nephi himself), we are left with something that is best used only if the "Lord maketh no such thing known unto us."

The underlying message is that only in receiving the vision for ourselves can we approach the revelation of God. Only in our experience can we find greater understanding (even while we recognize that our own vision may be different and potentially even contradictory to what others have seen). Nephi cannot give us the vision; he can only reflect on its meaning and interpret it for us.

What is the tension that we see? Nephi is both providing us with a text that is true, based on his experiences — the things which he saw and heard — and yet at the same time, at least from a postmodernist perspective, Nephi is undermining the authority and the value of his experience as truth: namely, he cannot present us with his vision and he cannot give us his experience. What he does give us is woefully incomplete and potentially misunderstood and misinterpreted by those who do not seek the revelation for themselves (either by pursuing the vision as Nephi did or by reading with the Spirit as Nephi later explains). From a postmodernist perspective, Nephi unveils himself as the unreliable narrator as he begins to dismantle the assumptions he brought with him as he began his text.

## Narrative Beginnings

Most authors provide us with an introduction that helps provide the reader with some basic understanding of the text they are about to read and how to make sense of it. Brian Richardson describes the traditional beginning in this way:

Before the rise of modernism, most authors discursively framed the opening of the text and ensured that the first pages conveyed a sense of the beginning. The more a work aspired to a totality, the more natural and definitive the beginning would be made to appear. ... the author's address to the reader concerning the appropriate expectations of the narrative that follows.<sup>26</sup>

Nephi seems at first glance to follow this pattern. He wants us to understand that he has made a beginning. And so he introduces his narrator character (himself):

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

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<sup>26</sup> Brian Richardson, "Narrative Beginnings," in *Narrative Beginnings: Theories and Practices*, ed. Brian Richardson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 4.

Here Nephi gives us what we might see as appropriate expectations for reading his text. Just as importantly, we start with a sense of totality. This is a record of his “proceedings in [his] days.” Nephi also tells his audience that he is not just an author of this text; he is the authority behind it. It is his knowledge that is conveyed in his text, and he offers us his testimony of its being in some way “true.”

As we proceed through the text, we encounter a sequence of narrative beginnings,<sup>27</sup> as Nephi, unexpectedly, addresses his audience (the readers) directly about an appropriate set of expectations for his narrative. First, he tells us that what we might have been expecting (perhaps what we should be expecting, given his first beginning) is not what we will find:

And now I, Nephi, do not give the genealogy of my fathers in this part of my record; neither at any time shall I give it after upon these plates which I am writing; for it is given in the record which has been kept by my father; wherefore, I do not write it in this work. ... And it mattereth not to me that I am particular to give a full account of all the things of my father, for they cannot be written upon these plates. (1 Nephi 6:1, 3)

Our expectations, given the time and distance that separates the modern reader from the text, do not necessarily match up to Nephi’s presuppositions about his audience. But

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27 Terry Givens suggests that this displays a development in Nephi’s awareness of the specific audience he is writing to: “When Nephi addresses a reading audience directly, that audience is at first undefined. ‘I would that ye should know’ of his father’s faithfulness, he writes only eighteen verses into his record, and then a few verses later, ‘I will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen’ (1 Nephi 20). But not until near the end of his record does he specify more exactly whom he has in mind” *The Book of Mormon: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 85. Grant Hardy suggests that these narrative beginnings describe Nephi’s “methods” (*Understanding*, 44).

some of these expectations seem clear. We should have been expecting the same sorts of content that were included in his father's autobiography. Unlike his father's writing, Nephi writes that he is not going to include this genealogy that we should have been looking for.<sup>28</sup> What does he replace these expectations with?

For I desire the room that I may write of the things of God. For the fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved. Wherefore, the things which are pleasing unto the world, I do not write, but the things which are pleasing unto God and unto those who are not of the world. (1 Nephi 6:3–5)

Shortly after this, Nephi returns again to his audience, with yet another set of expectations (and potentially, a third beginning). Similar to the last one, he again explains what we aren't going to find in this text — and this time he makes a more significant dent into that totality he started with:

And now, as I have spoken concerning these plates, behold they are not the plates upon which I make a full account of the history of my people; ... Upon the other plates should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people; wherefore these plates are for the more part of the ministry; and the other plates are for the more part of the reign of the kings and the wars and contentions of my people. (1 Nephi 9:2, 4)

Once more, Nephi adjusts the expectations of his audience:

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28 Nephi explains that not only will the genealogy not appear at the beginning where we might have expected it to be, but he isn't planning on including it at all.

Nevertheless, I have received a commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates, for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people. ... Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me to make these plates for a wise purpose in him, which purpose I know not. (1 Nephi 9:3, 5)

Finally, at the very end of his text, Nephi provides us with a final beginning — another reversal of past expectations along with a new set of appropriate expectations.<sup>29</sup>

And now I, Nephi, cannot write all the things which were taught among my people; neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking; for when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost, the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men. But behold, there are many that harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit, that it hath no place in them; wherefore, they cast many things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught. But I, Nephi, have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth, and especially unto my people. ... And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them. (2 Nephi 33:1–4)

In many ways, this end to his writing stands in contrast to his first beginning. Over the course of Nephi's literary journey, there is a profound change in the outlook on the text

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29 This corresponds to Givens's suggestion that the most explicit formulation of an audience comes from Nephi at the end of his text: "As he bears final witness, he prays that his words will 'be made strong unto them.' Seen in this light, his final farewell to 'my beloved brethren, and also Jew, and all ye ends of the earth' is formulaic (2 Nephi 33:4, 10). Nephi is writing to Nephites" (*Very Short Intro*, 86).

and its contents. In its first beginning, the text identifies itself as “true” (1 Nephi 1:3). By its last beginning, the text labels itself as weakness. In each iteration, the text’s self identification changes. It goes from truth to desire and intention, to a state of representing an unknown purpose, and finally at the end, to weakness. And with each change of the text, our investment as its audience changes as well.

### Nephi Reading

Nephi does provide his audience with two interpretive strategies. The first is described near the beginning of the lengthy excerpts from Isaiah:

But that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning. (1 Nephi 19:23)

If Nephi has invited his audience to read without the special knowledge needed to understand the texts as their authors intended, he does explain that they can re-contextualize them within their own communities. His second interpretive strategy appears near the end of the Isaiah excerpts:

For because the words of Isaiah are not plain unto you, nevertheless they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy. (2 Nephi 25:4)

Perhaps the most interesting example of Nephi’s interpretive strategies in action occurs in 2 Nephi 26–27. There we have much of Isaiah 29 incorporated into Nephi’s text. However, Nephi’s rendition changes several parts of Isaiah and intersperses it with additional text and commentary. In many

ways, Nephi's presentation resembles a *peshet* on Isaiah.<sup>30</sup> But, when we see where Nephi is pulling the rest of his text from, our perspective changes: Nephi remakes Isaiah's words into his own prophecy. The narrative unit begins with Nephi's description in verse 14: "But behold, I prophesy unto you concerning the last days; concerning the days when the Lord God shall bring these things forth unto the children of men." It's easy to see the entire verse as an introduction of sorts. It is certainly punctuated that way. However, Nephi has already started the presentation of his prophecy which begins with "Concerning the days when ... ." Nephi continues with this passage in verse 15:

After my seed and the seed of my brethren shall have dwindled in unbelief, and shall have been smitten by the Gentiles; yea, after the Lord God shall have camped against them round about, and shall have laid siege against them with a mount, and raised forts against them; and after they shall have been brought down low in the dust, even that they are not, yet the words of the righteous shall be written, and the prayers of the faithful shall be heard, and all those who have dwindled in unbelief shall not be forgotten. (2 Nephi 26:15)

After the first bit, the text is modified and taken from Isaiah 29:3–4a. And while much of this text comes from Isaiah 29, the rest comes from 1 Nephi 13:34–35, and it progresses through that text:

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30 See for example: Brant Gardner, "Nephi as Scribe," in *Mormon Studies Review*, 23/1 (2011): 45–55. A *peshet* is an interpretative commentary on scripture. Grant Hardy suggests something similar when he notes that "Nephi's general pattern for interpreting scripture is to follow a direct quote — often rather lengthy — with a discussion that incorporates a few key phrases fit into a fresh prophecy that recontextualizes and expands the meaning of the original" (*Understanding*, 65.) In my analysis, the process is seen in reverse, and the material is not a "fresh prophecy."

the Lord God shall bring these things forth (2  
Nephi 26:14)  
I will bring forth unto them (1 Nephi 13:34)

After my seed and the seed of my brethren shall  
have dwindled in unbelief (2 Nephi 26:15)  
after thy seed shall be destroyed, and dwindle in  
unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren (1 Nephi  
13:35)

and shall have been smitten by the Gentiles (2  
Nephi 26:15)  
and smitten them by the hand of the Gentiles (1  
Nephi 13:34)

They shall write the things which shall be done  
among them (2 Nephi 26:17)

they shall write many things which I shall minister  
unto them (1 Nephi 13:35)

In recognizing the earlier text from Nephi being used here, our perspective shifts. We are no longer reading just a commentary on Isaiah. Rather, we are reading a commentary on Nephi's prophecy. Instead of Nephi's using his own language to comment on Isaiah, he uses the language of Isaiah to comment on his own earlier text. Nephi understands that his own prophecy is not about Jerusalem (as Isaiah 29 is). He even perhaps recognizes that the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy may never be verified for many of his descendants (they don't get confirmation of the fall of Jerusalem until the Nephites discover Zarahemla and the Mulekites). In using Isaiah to interpret his own text, Nephi has given them an entirely different framework for understanding Isaiah — one based on the premise of likening the scriptures unto themselves. And this happens not in a rather simple way but in a radical repurposing

of Isaiah's text.<sup>31</sup> What Nephi does in this narrative unit is to give us an example of reading, both by likening the scriptures unto himself and by invoking the spirit of prophecy.

### **Truth, Intention, Purpose, Weakness: Nephi Deconstructing Nephi**

There is a subtext to Nephi's reading strategies. In his second beginning, Nephi tells us of his desire and his intention:

I desire the room that I may write of the things of God. For the fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved. (1 Nephi 6:3–4)

As we just noted, he explains that he likens scripture unto his community to "more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord." And he justifies this by suggesting that the Jews "works were works of darkness, and their doings were doings of abominations" (2 Nephi 25:2). The Jews had Isaiah, they had read Isaiah (in the manner in which Nephi had been taught) and yet this scripture didn't (apparently) persuade the Jews to come to God and be saved (as evidenced by their impending doom).

In his third beginning, Nephi tells us that he was making this record "for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people." His desire and intention from his second beginning is seriously questioned:

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31 Instead of quotation, then, Nephi's use of Isaiah here is closer to reinscription, a practice which has been described as textual cannibalism. For additional discussion and some useful examples, see Felisa Vergara Reynolds, "Literary Cannibalism: Almost the Same, But Not Quite/Almost the Same But Not White" (PhD diss. Cambridge: Harvard University, 2009).

Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me to make these plates for a wise purpose in him, which purpose I know not. (1 Nephi 9:5)

While Nephi may have some idea how to move his desire into an intention and carry out that intention in his text, here he recognizes that despite his understanding that God has asked him to create this record, he has no idea what God's intentions or desires are for Nephi's text. And he is left to wonder how he can fulfill God's purposes when he does not know what they are. He cannot move an unknown intention into the text.

When we arrive at his final beginning, it comes as no surprise that he first apologizes to us: "And now I, Nephi, cannot write all the things which were taught among my people" (2 Nephi 33:1). After all, more than two thirds of his text, following his statement about the ministry of his people, has been filled with the writings of Isaiah and Nephi's interpretations and reading strategies for those writings. And despite having once again gone a bit off course, he tells us: "I, Nephi, have written what I have written, and I esteem it as of great worth."

Nephi starts his text by lending his presence: he stands behind his text, he declares it to be "true" (1 Nephi 1:3). On the journey of his writing, he discovers that it is true only in a uniquely personal way. His audience, should they follow his suggestions, will discover their own revelation, their own experience, and their difference from his. Nephi has come to the realization that you cannot write a text that will mean the same thing to everyone; and more importantly, just as with Isaiah's writings when read by the Jewish people he left behind, his own writings will not cause someone to come to the Lord (despite his own desires and his intentions):

But behold, there are many that harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit, that it hath no place in them; wherefore, they cast many things away which are

written and esteem them as things of naught. (2 Nephi 33:2)

In the end, Nephi's writings go from being "the record which I make [that] is true" to "the words which I have written in weakness." I find a related theme in Jacques Derrida's discussion of *Le Livre des Questiones* by Edmond Jabès. Jabès writes: "Little by little the book will finish me." Derrida replies:

This movement through which the book, *articulated* by the voice of the poet, is folded and bound to itself, the movement through which the book becomes a subject in itself and for itself, is not critical or speculative reflection, but is, first of all, poetry and history. For in its representation of itself, the subject is shattered and opened. Writing is itself written, but also ruined, made into an abyss, in its own representation.<sup>32</sup>

Derrida's words, written of another text seem to apply equally well here to Nephi. As Nephi writes about his writing, as Nephi explores in his text the meaning of his experiences — his visions and his reading, he shatters the subject of his writing. But Nephi also finds a way to save it, just as he found a way to save Isaiah. If God has a purpose for Nephi's writings, then what is left — after we take away Nephi's truth, after we strip out Nephi's desire, after we remove Nephi's intentions — what is left is that purpose of God. And while Nephi writes in weakness, in reading with the Spirit, the text is made new:

And I know that the Lord God will consecrate my prayers for the gain of my people. And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them. (2 Nephi 33:4)

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32 Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 65.

## The End as a Beginning

It may seem a bit odd perhaps to end a text with a beginning. I began the discussion on beginnings with a description of the pre-modern narrative. By the time we finish Nephi's texts (at least for the first time), we have journeyed through four narrative beginnings. At each step we are encouraged to change both our understanding of the text and the way in which we read it.

Whatever knowledge and beliefs we bring as we read, the text challenges our expectations. For Wolfgang Iser, this is part of the nature of literary texts:

For this reason, expectations are scarcely ever fulfilled in truly literary texts. If they were, then such texts would be confined to the individualization of a given expectation, and one would inevitably ask what such an intention was supposed to achieve. ... For the more a text individualizes or confirms an expectation it has initially aroused, the more aware we become of its didactic purpose, so that at best we can only accept or reject the thesis forced upon us. More often than not, the very clarity of such texts will make us want to free ourselves from their clutches.<sup>33</sup>

This is the appeal of ending a text with a beginning. We see a text, fully realizing its own paradox only in its concluding moments. Nephi's text invites us to read again, from the first beginning (again and again). And each time, the memory of the text and what it meant to us becomes the new background from

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33 Iser, "The Reading Process," 53.

which we start.<sup>34</sup> The loss of expectation also helps us commit to Nephi's strategy for reading — to read with the Spirit.

*"Ehyeh imach,"* says God to Moses out of the Burning Bush, "I will be with you"; and being-with is a postmodern theme, in three senses: We don't read alone. This means, first, that the text we read is not a naked text whose meaning displays itself to anyone who would see it. It is a text that speaks in certain ways to a certain groups of people. We read with-others as part of some groups. That is a rabbinic rule of reading that is being repossessed by postmodern scholars. A second meaning is that, even when reading individually, we read-with. As shown by late modern analysts of interpretation theory, we read with presuppositions. A text doesn't simply mean something, but means something with respect to the beliefs and pre-understandings we bring to the text. Postmodern reading may be distinguished from modern reading, however, by its assumptions that there is an ultimate presupposition without which reading is not the reading we have in

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34 As Iser notes: "The new background brings to light new aspects of what we had committed to memory; conversely these, in turn, shed their light on the new background, thus arousing more complex anticipations. Thus, the reader, in establishing these inter-relations between past, present, and future, actually causes the text to reveal its potential multiplicity of connections. These connections are the product of the reader's mind working on the raw material of the text" (p. 54). Grant Hardy proposes a similar idea when he notes that in 2 Nephi 5, we learn for the first time that this is a text that is produced decades after the events it describes: "We are reading a second version of his memoirs, based in part on writings of his father and focusing particularly on spiritual matters ... This information is crucial in trying to sort out the narrator's attitudes and perspectives, but because it is mentioned only in passing much later in the text, few readers of First Nephi realize that their conception of Nephi is still incomplete" (p. 13). Re-reading Nephi after we learn this important information results in a different perspective of both text and author.

mind: namely, that we are reading with-God (even if Jewish readers are not accustomed to enunciating this partnership so explicitly). This third meaning, we might say, is the biblical assumption recovered by postmodern readers. We read with others, we read with our assumptions, and we read with God's presence.<sup>35</sup>

Reading-with becomes a dominant theme of Nephi's text. Despite his best efforts, and his own declaration at the end that "what I have written ... I esteem it as of great worth," there is the recognition that for those who cannot read-with, "they cast many things away which are written and esteem them as things of naught" (2 Nephi 22:2–3). The Book of Mormon is something to be read-with: read-with ourselves, read-with our community of faith, and (perhaps most importantly) read-with the Spirit.

In order to shift the way we read — from centering our reading on Nephi (from reading-with Nephi) to reading-with ourselves and reading-with the Spirit, Nephi has to liberate the text from himself. As Roland Barthes suggests:

To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing. Such a conception suits criticism very well, the latter then allotting itself the important task of discovering the Author (or its hypostases: society, history, psyche, liberty) beneath the work: when the

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35 Peter Ochs, "Foreward," *The Postmodern Jewish Philosophy Network* 4/1 (February 1995), downloaded from the online source [http://etext.virginia.edu/journals/tr/archive/pmjp/pmjp4\\_1.html](http://etext.virginia.edu/journals/tr/archive/pmjp/pmjp4_1.html) (accessed 15 August 2012). In 1996, this journal was renamed *The Journal of Textual Reasoning*, and this issue was renumbered as Vol. 5.

Author has been found, the text is “explained” — victory to the critic.<sup>36</sup>

We might just as well substitute “interpreter” here for Barthes’s critic. The reading strategies Nephi offers us are lost when we settle on a final interpretation — a basis for the meaning of the work. Nephi’s strategies intentionally leave the work open to us as readers. We can approach the text multiple times, each time coming away with a different but valid understanding. Reading in this way means that we, in a sense, lose Nephi the author, but not necessarily Nephi the narrator. That character in the text remains and teaches us. But for us to relate to Nephi as narrator, we have to join that narrative audience. We have to adopt his strategies of reading-with. We have to be open to the Spirit, and we have to liken the text to ourselves.

It is this openness of the text that also appeals to us. The text makes no special demands on us; it does not require that we possess some esoteric knowledge to uncover the “real” meaning. Just as Nephi’s vision of the Tree of Life complements his father’s vision (by adding a different experience; a different awareness of its details) so do our various readings complement each other. We want to see interpretations for every individual and every community; we want men’s readings and women’s readings; we want approaches from different ethnicities; we need interpretations from the spectrum of economic strata. All of these readings combine to complement each other. Singularly and collectively, as we read-with, we unfold the purpose of God. As we read and then re-read, we like Nephi, can deconstruct our own preconceptions of the text.

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36 Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image-Music-Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 147.

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# AXES MUNDI: RITUAL COMPLEXES IN MESOAMERICA AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

MARK ALAN WRIGHT

*Places are made sacred through manifestations of the divine or ritual activity. The occurrence of a theophany or hierophany or the performance of particular rituals can conceptually transform a place into an axis mundi, or the center of the world. A variety of such axes mundi are known from the archaeological record of Mesoamerica and the text of the Book of Mormon. I compare and contrast several distinctive types of such ritual complexes from Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon and argue that they served functionally and ideologically similar purposes.*

**A**n *axis mundi* is a sacred place that connects heaven and earth and is believed to be the center of the world, even the cosmos. Mircea Eliade notes that such places are made sacred either through ritual consecration or through a manifestation of the divine known as *hierophany*, which “results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different.”<sup>1</sup> Countless cultures, ancient and modern, use *axes mundi* as ideological and ritual foci. Eliade explains:

Where the break-through from plane to plane has been modified by a hierophany, there too an opening has been made, either upward (the divine world) or downward (the underworld, the world of the dead). The three

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1 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1959), 26.

cosmic levels — earth, heaven, underworld — have been put in communication ... this communication is sometimes expressed through the image of a universal pillar, *axis mundi*, which at once connects and supports heaven and earth.<sup>2</sup>

The sacred architecture of Mesoamerica was designed according to cosmological principles, establishing specific locations within their polities as an *axis mundi*. Their pyramids, topped by temples, were man-made sacred mountains, representing the first mountain that rose from the primordial waters of creation. Mesoamerican scholar Julia Guernsey noted that even comparatively early Mesoamerican cities, such as Izapa, “created a dynamic environment in which primordial time and the present were seamlessly woven together, creating a veritable web of politics and cosmogenesis.”<sup>3</sup> Concerning specific ritual *loci* [sacred places] established by such communities, Pamela L. Geller notes, “Fraught with liminal connotations, *axes mundi* mediate between past and present, natural and supernatural arenas.”<sup>4</sup> The rulers and ritual specialists used a variety of complex rituals in an effort to bring the past into the present.

A modern analogy might be drawn with Latter-day Saint temples. Prior to their dedication, they are merely beautiful buildings that can be entered by anyone during the “open house” period. Once they are dedicated through ritual action, however, they become an *axis mundi*. Ancient Maya temples similarly had dedicatory rituals for their temples. The most common was the “fire-entering” ritual, wherein incense was

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2 Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 36.

3 Julia Guernsey, *Ritual & Power in Stone: The Performance of Rulership in Mesoamerican Izapan Style Art* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 120.

4 Pamela Gellar, “Maya Mortuary Spaces as Cosmological Metaphors,” in EC Robertson, JD Seibert, DC Fernandez, and MU Zender, eds *Space and Spatial Analysis in Archaeology* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006), 38.

burned inside of a sacred building to dedicate (or rededicate) it. Such rituals are recorded in the hieroglyphic texts as *och k'ak' ta-y-otot*, “the fire enters into his house.”<sup>5</sup>

Many types of axes mundi existed in ancient Mesoamerica, both natural and man-made. The structural form of these supernaturally-charged locations was virtually irrelevant; what mattered was the symbolic function. Mountains, caves, temples, altars, performance platforms, the central hearth of a home, portable objects such as censers for burning incense, and even the human body (when adorned with sacred regalia) could all function as portals of communication between the human and divine realms. Likewise, in the Book of Mormon there are countless places where ritual activity was performed that opened the portal between earth and heaven. Some of these are obvious, such as temples, synagogues, and sanctuaries, but we also read of ritual activity at royal palaces, in mountains, the wilderness, fields, and even homes. Such ritual complexes are not limited to faithful Nephites; the Book of Mormon explicitly mentions them among other groups such as the Lamanites, Nehorites, Amalekites, and Zoramites (Alma 23:2; 26:29).<sup>6</sup>

The most conspicuous type of *axis mundi* in the Book of Mormon and ancient Mesoamerica is the temple. Nephi tells us that he built a temple “*after the manner* of the temple of Solomon,” but is quick to qualify that statement by noting that “it could not be built *like unto* Solomon’s temple” because they

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5 David Stuart, “‘The Fire Enters His House’: Architecture and Ritual in Classic Maya Texts,” in Stephen D. Houston, ed., *Function and Meaning in Classic Maya Architecture* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998): 373–425.

6 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*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 348; William J. Adams, Jr., “Synagogues in the Book of Mormon,” in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000): 4–13.

lacked “precious things” (2 Nephi 5:16).<sup>7</sup> What is the difference between “after the manner of” and “not ... like unto”? In essence, it differed from Solomon’s temple cosmetically but not cosmologically. We might draw an analogy between the temples in San Diego, California, and Provo, Utah. Stylistically, the two buildings are quite distinct, but functionally they are identical. The same might be said for comparing the temples described in the Book of Mormon with what is known of those found in ancient Mesoamerica. Although they were superficially different, they may have had similar functions. This study will explore the functions of temples and other ritual locations in both the Book of Mormon and Mesoamerica and draw comparisons between the ways these *axes mundi* were used. Methodologically, I will rely on epigraphic, iconographic, ethnographic, ethnohistoric, linguistic, and archaeological sources of data from Mesoamerica and compare them to relevant passages from the Book of Mormon.

John Welch’s careful analysis of Nephite temple worship highlighted a number of functions that Nephite temples served.<sup>8</sup> In them, kings were crowned, religious teachings were dispensed, the plan of salvation was taught, the people were exhorted to proper behavior, sacrifices symbolizing the atonement of Christ were performed, religious and legal covenants were made and renewed, and the resurrected Jesus appeared to His faithful people as their God. Though clearly not identical, I argue that Mesoamerican ritual loci — *axes mundi* — served functionally and ideologically similar purposes.

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7 1 Kings 5:17 notes that Solomon’s temple was built with “great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones.” The “precious things” that were “not to be found upon the land” likely refer to the types of stones used in construction and other types of “precious stones” used to garnish the temple in 2 Chronicles 3:6.

8 Welch, “Temple in the Book of Mormon.”

### The Temple as a Place of Ritual

Temples were typically the most prominent and grandiose structures in Mesoamerican cities. Although the ancient term for them has thus far resisted translation, among modern Maya speakers they are referred to as *k'uh na*, or “god house.”<sup>9</sup> At any given Maya city, temples and royal palaces anchor the site core. Maya scholars use term *temple* in reference to buildings whose primary function is assumed to be religious, whereas *palaces* are structures that appear to have been loci of political activity. However, the religious and political realms are not necessarily distinguishable among the Classic period Maya ruins, so a strict delineation between them is an imposition of our own modern perspective. Admittedly, the precise function of these structures is not clearly understood; the epigraphic and iconographic records contain precious few clues as to their use. It is common for large sites to have multiple temples, even within a single site core, each of which may have served different religious or political purposes.<sup>10</sup>

There was a shift in the manner of temple construction from the Preclassic to the Classic periods in the Maya lowlands.<sup>11</sup> Preclassic temples typically were not intended to aggrandize individual rulers; rather, their architecture and

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9 John S. Justeson, “Appendix B: Interpretations of Mayan Hieroglyphs (1984:351),” in John S. Justeson and Lyle Campbell, eds. *Phoneticism in Mayan Hieroglyphic Writing*. Publication 9 (Albany, NY: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, State University of New York at Albany). While the term *k'uh nah* “god house” in modern Mayan language calls to mind the Hebrew *beit el* or *beit elohim*, we must be cautious in drawing analogies since the ancient Maya glyph for temple has not yet been deciphered phonetically (although the conceptual meaning of the logograph is clearly understood to be a temple structure).

10 Lisa Lucero, “Classic Maya Temples, Politics, and the Voice of the People” *Latin American Antiquity* 18/4 (2007): 407–427, esp. 407.

11 Chronologically, the Book of Mormon falls roughly within the Late to Terminal Preclassic Maya eras (400 BC–AD 250), although the precise geography is still a matter of intense debate, even among those who hold to a limited Mesoamerican setting.

iconography tended to highlight specific deities and reflect grand cosmologies.<sup>12</sup> Since the focus of Preclassic period temples was typically not on specific rulers, it is unsurprising that few of them have been shown to contain royal tombs.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, in the Book of Mormon the focus of temple rituals was on their deity rather than their rulers. King Benjamin seemed concerned that because of his exalted office his people might believe him to be more than a mortal man, perhaps even a divine king. Ironically, by informing his people that the words he was delivering to them were given to him by an angel who literally “stood before” him (Mosiah 3:2), he confirmed that he was in fact an intermediary between the human and supernatural realms, a defining characteristic of divine kings in the ancient world.

### The Temple as a Place for Coronation

The most well-documented coronation in the Book of Mormon takes place at the temple in Zarahemla, when King Benjamin gathers his people together to declare that his son Mosiah was to be “a king and a ruler over” them (Mosiah 2:30). Benjamin ritually presents Mosiah with the royal paraphernalia: the plates of brass, the plates of Nephi, the sword of Laban, and the Liahona (Mosiah 1:16). The presentation of royal regalia was likewise an important aspect of accession among the Maya. On

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12 Linda Schele, “The Iconography of Maya Architectural Facades During the Late Classic Period,” in *Function and Meaning in Classic Maya Architecture*, 479–517.

13 Richard Hansen, “Continuity and Disjunction: The Pre-Classic Antecedents of Classic Maya Architecture,” in *Function and Meaning*, 89. Hansen cautions, however, that the scarcity of royal tombs that have been identified from the Preclassic period may simply be the result of inadequate testing in structures. Nonetheless, when Preclassic temples are adorned with stucco facades they consistently portray supernatural entities rather than historical rulers.

the murals of San Bartolo, Guatemala (ca. 100 BC)<sup>14</sup> we see an enthronement ceremony wherein the ruler sits upon a wooden tower or scaffold to receive the emblems of rulership.<sup>15</sup> The coronation and presentation of a new king to his subjects would have been an occasion of much pomp and circumstance. Maya temples form part of the site core, and were designed with public spectacle in mind.<sup>16</sup> They were typically the tallest building in the central precinct and always faced a large plaza that would accommodate thousands of people. The architectural layout of temple complexes effectively maximized acoustics, enabling speakers atop a temple to be seen and heard clearly throughout the plaza.<sup>17</sup> Nephites temples may have had similar acoustic properties (cf. Mosiah 1:18; 2:1, 5-6; 7:17).

### The Temple as a Place for Religious Instruction

Throughout the Book of Mormon we read of religious instruction being given at the temple: by Jacob, Benjamin, and even the Savior. Among the Maya, we turn again to the murals of San Bartolo for a comparison. The murals were likely didactic, meaning they were used for religious instruction. Elaborate imagery was used in lieu of writing to teach those

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14 William A. Saturno, Karl Taube, and David E. Stuart, *The Murals of San Bartolo, El Petén, Guatemala: Part I: the North Wall* (Barnardsville, NC: Center for Ancient American Studies, 2005); Karl A. Taube, William Andrew Saturno, David Stuart, and Heather Hurst, *The Murals of San Bartolo, El Petén, Guatemala: The West Wall* (Barnardsville, NC: Boundary End Archaeology Research Center, 2010).

15 As it happens, the date of the San Bartolo murals falls squarely in the time of Mosiah II, who reigned from ca. 124–91 BC, and whose reign was pronounced upon a tower by his father Benjamin.

16 Takeshi Inomata, “Plazas, Performers, and Spectators,” *Current Anthropology* 47/5 (2006): 805–42.

17 Although this seems obvious to modern visitors of Classic Maya sites, to date, there have been no serious academic studies concerning the acoustic properties of Maya plazas. See Stephen Houston and Karl Taube, “An Archaeology of the Senses: Perception and Cultural Expression in Ancient Mesoamerica,” *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 10/2 (2000): 280–81.



Figure 1: Flower Mountain, the paradise of creation, from the murals of San Bartolo, Guatemala (ca. 100 BC). (Drawing by Traci Wright after Heather Hurst from *The Murals of San Bartolo, El Petén, Guatemala Part 1: The North Wall*, 2005:8)

who may have been illiterate, similar to the art that adorned Medieval churches.<sup>18</sup> The San Bartolo murals were found in a comparatively small room that juts out from the base of a much larger temple structure. The two entry doors are low — about four feet high — which would require those who enter to lower their heads and bow deeply in order to gain access. Once inside, the initiates would stand upright and find themselves surrounded by beautiful murals running along the upper portion of each of the walls, composed of elaborately painted mythological scenes. Questions remain as to where the visual narrative begins and ends, and some of the iconography remains difficult to interpret. Stephen Houston describes it as

<sup>18</sup> The 12th century Christian theologian Honorius of Autun declared that “Painting ... is the literature of the laity” (*Gemma Animae*, chap. 132 [PL, 172, col. 586]).

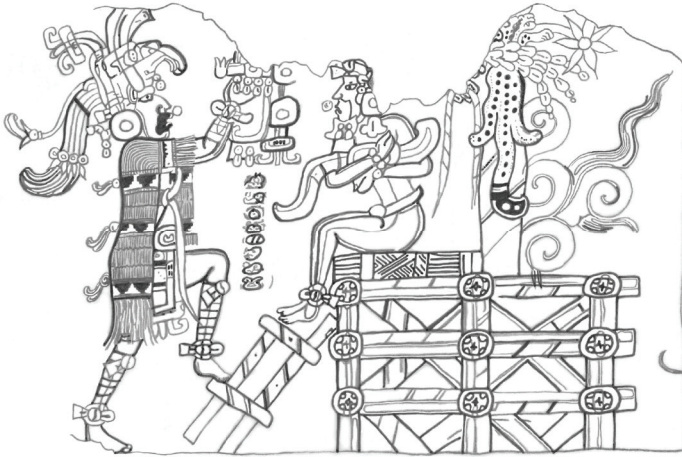


Figure 2: Early Classic Maya ruler being enthroned in emulation of the accession of the Maize God, from the murals of San Bartolo, Guatemala (ca. 100 BC) (Drawing by Traci Wright after Heather Hurst from *The Murals of San Bartolo, El Petén, Guatemala Part 2: The West Wall*, 2010:59)

“a room of ‘mysteries’ for initiates, sequestered in an unusual location at the back of a temple.”<sup>19</sup>

In the most general of terms, the murals of San Bartolo depict the moment of creation — the ordering of the cosmos, the establishment of the primordial *axis mundi*. It is followed by a paradisiacal scene, Flower Mountain, and the ensuing emergence of the first humans. Next are scenes of sacrifice, leading up to a scene of resurrection of the Maize God and his subsequent enthronement. The murals culminate with a human ruler being enthroned in the exact same manner as the Maize God — his accession to an earthly throne mimicking that of the Maize God’s ascension to a heavenly throne.

19 Stephen Houston, “A Splendid Predicament: Young Men in Classic Maya Society,” *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 19/2 (2009): 171.

In sum, the murals may depict a premortal existence; the ordering of the cosmos; a paradise of creation and the emergence of mankind; instruction on proper sacrifice; and the heavenly enthronement of the god of resurrection, culminating in a scene where a human accedes to a throne identical to the one used by the god of resurrection. It explains where humans came from (Flower Mountain); why they are here (to worship the gods), and where they are going (to the solar paradise of the sun where they will ultimately sit upon a celestial throne).

When we refer to the “plan of salvation,” we are essentially referring to the underlying mythology that answers our favorite questions as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? These answers are provided in the Book of Mormon and clearly center on Christ; that He was born, was crucified, and rose on the third day, enabling us to resurrect and return home to God the Father. How can we relate this to Mesoamerica? Here I wade into some extremely speculative waters. To be clear, I am not postulating that the Preclassic Maya of San Bartolo were Nephites or that they maintained a belief in the plan of salvation,<sup>20</sup> but I am suggesting that some of the underlying themes on the murals of San Bartolo may be an indication as to how the Preclassic Maya attempted to answer those same questions.

### Temple as a Place of Sacrifice

Ancient Mesoamerican temples were the epicenter of royal sacrifice. Blood was the most sacred of substances, and Mesoamerican cultures engaged in both human and animal sacrifice. The typical method of human sacrifice was to stretch the victim across a stone altar and have his hands and feet held down by four men. A priest would then make a large incision

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20 The Nephites, for that matter, had an incomplete understanding of the plan of salvation as well (cf. D&C 128:18).

directly below the ribcage using a knife made out of razor-sharp flint or obsidian, and while the victim was yet alive the priest would thrust his hand into the cut and reach up under the ribcage and into the chest and rip out the victim's still-beating heart. Among the Aztec, the body of the victim would then be rolled down the precipitous front stairway of the temple. Accounts by the early Spanish conquerors who witnessed such events claimed that the Aztecs would do such sacrifices by the thousands and the bodies would literally pile up at the base of the temple. The numbers are likely exaggerated, and little evidence from the earlier Maya periods suggests that human sacrifice was performed on a grand scale, but the evidence is clear that it was in fact performed.<sup>21</sup>

The peoples of the Book of Mormon would have been familiar with the types of sacrifices being offered by their surrounding Mesoamerican neighbors, which often comprised burnt offerings of animals, such as deer or birds. The righteous would have interpreted such sacrifices as a means to point their souls to Christ (Jacob 4:5; Alma 34:14). Yet Amulek prophesied that "it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a *human sacrifice*; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice" (Alma 34:10). It is significant that the three things that Amulek is expressly telling the apostate Zoramites *not* to sacrifice are the three most common things that were offered by Mesoamerican worshipers: human, beast, and fowl.

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21 Linda Schele, "Human Sacrifice among the Classic Maya," in *Ritual Human Sacrifice in Mesoamerica* (1984): 7 — 48; Carrie Anne Berryman, "Captive Sacrifice and Trophy Taking among the Ancient Maya," in *The Taking and Displaying of Human Body Parts as Trophies by Amerindians* (2007), 377–99.

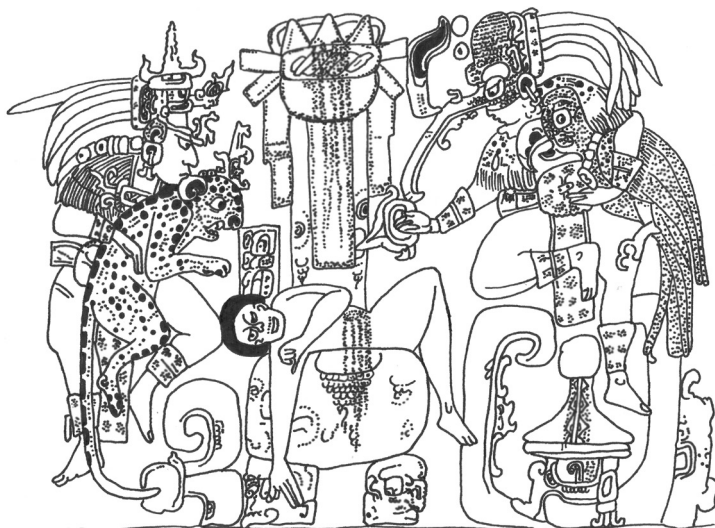


Figure 3: Classic Maya scene of sacrifice involving human, beast, and fowl. (Drawn by Traci Wright after Alexandre Tokovinine from *Reading Maya Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Maya Painting and Sculpture*, 2011:92)

It stands to reason that the Zoramites, in rejecting Nephite religion, would embrace the cultural practices of the more dominant culture, as would be expected of an apostate group.<sup>22</sup>

The faithful in the Book of Mormon looked forward to the day when Christ would offer himself as sacrifice in their behalf. However, having no point of reference with regard to crucifixion in their own history, they may not have had a clear understanding of what such a death entailed. Nephi explained that the Lord speaks to us “according to our language, unto our understanding” (2 Nephi 31:3). Correspondingly, cultural context directly impacts the way people interpret manifestations of the divine.<sup>23</sup> Thus, when Christ appeared to the Nephites, he

22 Mark Alan Wright and Brant Gardner, “The Cultural Context of Nephite Apostasy,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 1 (2012): 25–55. <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/the-cultural-context-of-nephite-apostasy/>

23 Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 11.

may have been communicating with them according to their cultural language when he invited them to come and feel for themselves the wounds in his flesh. He bade them first to thrust their hands into his side, and secondarily to feel the prints in his hands and feet (3 Nephi 11:14). This contrasts with his appearance to his apostles in Jerusalem after his resurrection. Among them, he invited them to touch solely his hands and feet (Luke 24:39–40).<sup>24</sup> Why the difference? To a people steeped in Mesoamerican culture, the sign that a person had been ritually sacrificed would have been an incision on their side — suggesting they had had their hearts removed<sup>25</sup> — whereas for the people of Jerusalem in the first century, the wounds that would indicate someone had been sacrificed would have been in the hands and the feet — the marks of crucifixion.

### Temple as a Place to Enter Divine Presence

In both Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon, the temple is a place where worshipers go to enter into the presence of the divine. It was at the temple in Bountiful where Christ appeared in a grand theophany to the gathered Nephite survivors. The Maya believed they could evince the presence of gods and other supernatural beings within their sacred spaces through ritual activity. This was oftentimes done through incense or burnt offerings, wherein it was believed the billowing smoke effectually created a screen or portal through which supernatural beings could manifest themselves. On Lintel 25 from Yaxchilán, for example, a noblewoman named *Ix K'abal Xook* burns strips of paper that are soaked with her own blood.<sup>26</sup> From the smoke of

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24 In John 20:19–20, 26–27, Christ invites His apostles to touch His hands first and secondarily His side.

25 We might speculate that the expression broken heart may have had a much more literal connotation in their cultural context.

26 On Lintel 24 from Yaxchilan, *Ix K'abal Xook* is shown pulling a thorny rope through her tongue, and the ensuing blood drips onto the paper that she burns on Lintel 25.



Figure 4. A Maya noblewoman conjures a supernatural being through a sacrificial burnt offering of her own blood. Lintel 25 from Yaxchilán (Photograph by William Hamblin).

the sacrificial bowl issues forth a vision serpent, out of whose jaws emerges a patron deity of her city.

Within their temples, the Maya placed effigies that they believed were physical manifestations of their gods. Iconographically, there are only a handful of depictions of such deity effigies — idols, as the authors of scripture would call them — that are housed within temples. Although no direct evidence survives from the Preclassic or even the Classic periods, in the Postclassic these effigies were

carved by priests out of cedar, called *k'u che*, which literally means “god tree” or “holy tree.”<sup>27</sup> The priests had to engage in rituals of purification in order to produce these effigies, and it was a fearful act. To be clear, these effigies were not merely representations of the gods, they *were* the gods. Once the priest finished carving one, it would be ritually activated and placed within the temple. In the Classic period, only Maya rulers and priests could enter into the inner sanctuary where these effigies were housed. To enter into the room would literally be to enter into the presence of the god. Perhaps notably, the rooms that housed these effigies within the temples were typically covered with a curtain. Mesoamerican scholar Karl Taube notes, “Just as a covered household doorway could signal for privacy, the temple curtains probably were also used to indicate states of the god housed within.”<sup>28</sup> This curtain may be conceptually similar to Latter-day Saint beliefs concerning the “veil” that separates humanity from the presence of the Lord in the celestial realm.

### Other Ritual Locations

Temples were not the only places for ritual activity. Among the Maya, rituals and prayers were frequently performed in the forest, in *milpas* (cornfields), and in homes. The home is considered an especially sacred place, the center of which has a hearth comprising three stones at its center. As Taube explains,

As the first central place, the simple three-stone hearth may well constitute the original construction of creation ... According to Post-Classic Central Mexican thought, the old fire god *Xiuhtecuhtli-Huehuateotl* resides in a hearth at the world center. The *Anales de Cuauhtitlan*

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27 Alfred M. Tozzer, *Landa's relación de las cosas de Yucatán*, Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology 18 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1941), 159–60

28 Karl Taube, “The Jade Hearth: Centrality, Rulership, and the Classic Maya Temple,” in *Function and Meaning*, 429.

explicitly defines this place as three sacred hearthstones, each personified by a specific god (Bierhorst 1992:23).<sup>29</sup> The Florentine Codex describes this locus as the circular earth navel, or *tlalxicco*: “mother of the gods, father of the gods, who resideth in the navel of the earth, who is set in the turquoise enclosure, [enclosed] with the waters of the lovely cotinga, enclosed with clouds — Ueueteotl, he of Ayamictlan, Xiuhtecuhtli” (Sahagún 1969, Book 6: 88–89).<sup>30</sup> In this account, the earth navel is a place of duality, embodying both the male and female creative principles ... This evocation of dualistic principles seems to describe the hearth as a place of creation. However, as the *axis mundi*, the hearth is also a conduit between the levels of earth, sky, and underworld.<sup>31</sup>

In the Book of Mormon, the Zoramite proletariat complained to Alma and Amulek that they had labored abundantly to build all of the synagogues in Antionum but were subsequently forbidden to worship there due to the coarseness of their apparel (Alma 32:5–9). They believed they could only worship in the synagogue and seemed genuinely distraught that they were being denied entry. Alma recited the words of Zenos to them to assure them that they could worship anywhere and their petitions would be heard: wilderness or field, house or closet. In essence, they could connect heaven and earth wherever they worshipped in faith, effectively creating their own *axis mundi*.<sup>32</sup>

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29 John Bierhorst, *History and Mythology of the Aztecs: The Codex Chimalpopoca* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1992), 23.

30 Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*. 1555–79. Translated by Arthur J.O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble. 12 Vols. (Santa Fe: School of American Research; Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1950–82).

31 Taube, “Jade Hearth,” 432–33.

32 Alma and Amulek were speaking from experience, as they had both had powerful hierophanic experiences in the form of angelic visitations while out

### Cultural Diversity in Mesoamerica

A common misconception is that Mesoamerica was a relatively homogenous area, beginning with the Olmec in the Formative period, moving on to the Maya in the Classic period, and culminating with the Aztec during the Postclassic prior to the arrival of the Spanish. In actuality, there were scores of different cultures that inhabited Mesoamerica anciently, co-existing in space and time.<sup>33</sup> Cultures that modern scholars sometimes lump together were in fact quite distinct from each other. The hundreds of cities that we identify as Maya, for example, would not have identified themselves as belonging to the same culture. They were never unified under a single leader, such as the Pharaohs of Egypt. Rather, each city conceptualized themselves as a unique nation, with their own particular pantheon of gods and ritual complexes. Evidence from several major polities (such as Tikal, Caracol, and Naranjo) indicates that each city had its own distinctive triad of patron deities, along with a rich pantheon comprised of many other gods and supernatural beings.<sup>34</sup> There were even distinctions in the rituals each polity would perform. The accession rituals of kings, for example, varied from site to site in terms of the regalia that was worn and the specific ritual actions that were done to enthrone them.<sup>35</sup> The Mesoamerican landscape was extremely heterogeneous, both between and within cultures. Yet each had their unique *axes mundi* that made their cities sacred to them.

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journeying rather than in a structure dedicated to worship (Mosiah 27:11; Alma 10:7).

33 Mark Alan Wright, "The Cultural Tapestry of Mesoamerica," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 23/2 (2013): 4–21.

34 David Stuart, *The Inscriptions of Temple XIX at Palenque*. (San Francisco: Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute. 2005), 160.

35 Mark Alan Wright, *A Study of Classic Maya Rulership*, PhD diss. (University of California, Riverside, Department of Anthropology, 2011). Accessible at <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/6pb5g8h2>.

Without question, the specific rituals and sacred locations of righteous Nephites would have been different from those of their neighbors, but enough variation existed across the culturescape that the Nephites may have effectively fallen within the margin of acceptable diversity. But, as demonstrated above, the overlapping form and function of many of their rituals and sacred architecture may have enabled them to blend in better than we might suppose: temples and altars, sacrifices and burnt offerings, prayers and supplications, and belief in and emulation of a dying and resurrecting god. These rituals took place at their individual *axes mundi* — their own sacred centers of the world — and served to bridge the gap between the human and divine realms.

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# THE MĀORI STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

Louis Midgley

A review of Jason Hartley. *Ngā Mahi: The Things We Need to Do; The Pathway of the Stars*. n.p.: Xlibris, 2013. 264 pp., no index. \$23.00AUD (softcover).<sup>1</sup>

*Jason Hartley's book manifests a passion for alleviating the problem of Māori surging into the prisons of Aotearoa/New Zealand<sup>2</sup> by restoring their old, traditional religious ethos and the social control that hinges on the recovery of the old belief that they are potentially noble children of God. In setting out his own disappointing discovery of the roots of both a growing problem and what he believes is the solution, he describes how he came to learn the arcane moral teachings, or old stories, that once buttressed Māori social order. For Latter-day Saints, he also demonstrates that for some Māori, despite much degradation, the Heavens are still open, just as they were when Latter-day Saint missionaries first encountered a people prepared for them and their message by their own seers, thus also implicitly challenging recent efforts to downplay or explain away the old stories as mere embellishments, wishful thinking, or an implausible founding mythology.*

Jason Hartley has both training and wide experience in criminology and criminal justice systems. He is, among other

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1 *Ngā Mahi* can be ordered at [www.ngamahi.com](http://www.ngamahi.com). This is a corrected edition of the one first published in 2010 (with a slightly different subtitle).

2 Though I have not used the name Aotearoa/New Zealand, I always have it in mind, since Aotearoa is the Māori name for this beautiful land.

things, an expert on Asian gangs in Australia.<sup>3</sup> *Ngā Mahi* is an account of how he came to be employed for a decade seeking ways, other than merely building more prisons, of stemming Māori degradation and the resulting flow into prisons. He came to believe that what is required is the recovery of the traditional, ancient Māori moral teachings and the related power and authority of traditional social controls. *Ngā Mahi* sets out what these moral teachings are and why he believes they constitute the proper recipe for resolving the most pressing problems facing the criminal justice system in New Zealand.

*Ngā Mahi*<sup>4</sup> is also, among other things, an account of Hartley's own journey of discovery — a striking spiritual odyssey — among the Māori in New Zealand. His first encounter with Māori was in 1988–1990, when he served as an LDS missionary in the New Zealand Christchurch Mission. He later found it difficult to reconcile his earlier experience with Māori Latter-day Saints with what he encountered in the New Zealand criminal justice system. In *Ngā Mahi* he calls attention to the malaise and turbulence that troubles the contemporary Māori world. Stated bluntly, an increasing number of Māori are unable to win the battle against the blandishments of attractive/addictive European vices that are sending large numbers of them to prison.<sup>5</sup> They often find themselves in the

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3 Hartley was the officer in charge of the Asian Specialist Unit for Queensland, Australia Police. He also has extensive training as a linguist. For more information, see <http://www.ngamahi.com/author>.

4 *Ngā Mahi* is Māori for “the (plural) work,” and in this instance those things that must be done or performed to accomplish or fulfill the purpose of our probation here in mortality, hence the subtitles.

5 Alan Duff begins his chapter on “Crime” in *Maori: The Crises and the Challenge* (Auckland, New Zealand: Harper/Collins, 1993), 17, with the following bleak statement: “The most telling fact of Maori society not having the means to cope with modern times can be seen in the tragic figures on crime. The Maori offending rate is about six times that of European and any other ethnic group.” Hartley estimates that in the general population about 3% and among the Māori about 10% will be in and out of prison. (Personal communication

clutches of alcoholism,<sup>6</sup> drug addiction, and resulting violent criminal activity. They are also addicted to gambling, tobacco,<sup>7</sup> casual sex (resulting in a flood of irresponsible fathers and often indifferent single mothers), increasing domestic violence, etc. In one way or another this is the story of indigenous and other peoples elsewhere.

Hartley attributes this tragic debasement to the loss of the beliefs and actions that once morally sustained a noble social order. This degradation has resulted in an ever greater flow of Māori, who have lost their moral bearings, into crime and hence made them the clients of New Zealand's criminal justice system. The often well-meaning government efforts to stem the tide of debasement have failed, while increasing the tax burden to finance and maintain prisons.<sup>8</sup>

Hartley argues that the Māori have within their oldest traditions the cure for the malady that afflicts them. Given the challenges they face, he argues that their own old stories — their traditional, arcane teachings — (see pp. 180–230) have the power to ameliorate their lives by giving them a moral anchor to help them avoid the allure of very attractive European vices. Hartley argues the flow of Māori into prison can be stemmed,<sup>9</sup> if they recover their traditional moral bearings, and thereby overcome what he calls “the senseless disregard of sacred things” (p. 226). Māori must turn back to their old beliefs — to ancient sacred teachings about human and divine things. They

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from Jason Hartley, dated 7 July 2014). The same criminal temptations are at work in both instances, but they have a somewhat greater impact on the Māori.

6 There is reason to believe fetal alcohol syndrome is producing a host of damaged human beings).

7 Māori women have the highest lung cancer rate in the world.

8 According to Hartley, in one decade New Zealand spent “over 1.2 billion dollars building new jails,” but still cannot keep up with the incoming prisoner population (see p. 14).

9 Hartley describes *Ngā Mahi* as his final report on the work he did for the decade he worked for the New Zealand prison system (see pp. 246–253).

must do the works (*ngā mahi*) necessary to climb the steps to the highest heaven (see p. 226),<sup>10</sup> or “pathway of the stars.”

### An Encounter – “It Started in 1990”

Hartley’s odyssey began in 1990, following a visit to his future wife and her family in Whangarei, the provincial center of the area north of Auckland known as the Northland. Hartley served his LDS mission on the South Island of New Zealand. They had met when they were both serving missions on the South Island.<sup>11</sup> This explains why he was in Whangarei and also why and how he came to work as an advisor for the New Zealand criminal justice system among his wife’s people.<sup>12</sup>

Hartley’s future wife made it possible for him to spend the night in Auckland (in the home of the manager of the Mount Eden Prison) so that he could catch an early flight back to Brisbane, Australia (see p. 5 for details). During that night he had an encounter with a long dead Māori (pp. 6–7). His night-visitor turned out to be Mokomoko, a Māori from the small *Whakatōhea* tribe, who had been falsely accused of killing a Protestant preacher. He was arrested, tried, and then later executed. (For details, see pp. 27–37.) On 17 May 1866, Mokomoko was hanged, and his body was buried at the Mount Eden Prison (p. 32). The Crown then seized 173,000 acres of

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10 In Māori this is sometimes called *te ara poutama*, which means something like “an awakening to the stairway back to the highest heaven.” Hartley translates this phrase slightly differently as the “pathway to heaven” (see p. 226). This is sometimes visually represented in the stepped pattern of one of the woven designs (*tukutuku*) found between the carved wooden genealogical slabs that decorate carved houses on Māori *marae*. It is not uncommon to see this design in reversed directions at the back of those houses.

11 Hartley has a diploma in Māori Studies and is fluent in the Māori language.

12 Hartley’s work in New Zealand was essentially among the Ngā Puhi *iwi* (tribe), which is one of the largest Māori tribes. His experience as a police officer in Australia qualified him for the position he took in the New Zealand criminal justice system.

*Whakatōhea* land (p. 32). Mokomoko's descendants were eventually able to prove his innocence, and in 1993, he "was officially exonerated by the New Zealand Department of Justice" (p. 33). Over 123 years later, his body was exhumed and taken back to tribal lands to be properly buried. Hartley indicates that "it was between his exhumation and his exoneration that Mokomoko appeared to me at the Mount Eden Prison" (p. 33).

Hartley states: "In colonial times, the Mount Eden Prison was a holding yard for certain Māori leaders who failed to submit to British rule. Having dared to resist crown authority, many of the leaders were treated as criminals and sent to 'the Mount'" (p. 7). The terrible, "tragic irony" is that this prison was once "part of the mechanism to dismantle the social controls and leadership of Māori," while it is now being "used to incarcerate their descendants who are very much the product of too little social control and not enough leadership" (pp. 7–8).

The desire to know the identity of his night-visitor began Hartley's quest for the causes — and a real remedy — for the growing degradation of the Māori, who have clearly ceased to know or follow their own traditional ways. Instead, they have become addicts of alcohol, violence, drugs, casual sex, and hence also violent criminal activity. He tells how he came to see that the reconnection of the Māori people to the highest and best in Māori traditions is the answer to the flood of Māori into prison.

He states:

Although not widely understood, the Māori say there is a divinity to humankind, a heavenly potential that gives life dignity and deeper meaning. In fact, the Māori explain our troubled, struggling world through the uncomplicated assertion that we have lost our ability to unleash that divinity, and so we are left to reap the consequences. In simple terms, our modern societies and our busy lifestyles

have distracted us from who we truly are so we have  
lost sight of what we can truly become. (p. 4.)

Hartley also describes the way he came to know of the identity of the night visitor, and his tribe, the recovery of his remains and their eventual interment on his tribal land, with an apology from the New Zealand government. And then he sets out his desire to listen to those he describes as “scruffy” Māori so he could hear their stories and better understand their blighted world.

*Ngā Mahi* also provides evidence that, despite the degradation taking place among Māori, and hence what must be called the decline of Māori “spirituality,” the memories of those original and subsequent encounters with the divine that buttress the faith of Māori Latter-day Saints<sup>13</sup> are still present, though for the very reasons that send Māori to prison, they are in decline. Without intending to do so, *Ngā Mahi* demonstrates that those famous accounts of Māori seers, and other similar and closely related stories of signs, wonders, dreams, and heavenly visitors are not to be brushed aside as mere legends or myths, wishful thinking, or mere embellishments of ordinary events.<sup>14</sup> They are still taking place. The evidence, of course, cannot be examined in this brief review of Hartley’s spiritual odyssey.

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13 For a brief mention of the recent efforts of Māori Saints to teach the old Māori traditions and link them to the messages of the Restored Gospel, see Midgley, “Māori Latter-day Saint Faith: Some Preliminary Remarks,” *Interpreter* 8 (2014): 45–65 (hereafter cited as Midgley).

14 Unfortunately, one of two writers gloss over or debunk key elements in the traditional faithful accounts of Māori spirituality. It is, for instance, disheartening to see Gina Colvin mocking the grounds and contents of the faith of Māori Saints on her blog. Her perspective is essentially a foreign, European/Pākehā secular ideology.

## A Personal Excursus

When it arrived unannounced in the mail in February 2013, the first thing I noticed about *Ngā Mahi*, were the names of Latter-day Saints my wife and I knew while serving as missionaries in New Zealand in 1999 to 2000 — such as Cleve Barlow and Wallace Wihongi. Hartley also mentions some of the same *whanau* (extended families) I knew in 1950.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, I also immediately noticed the following statement:

I have been to prisons many times and have always had the most amazing, even powerful experiences. I have found that when the focus becomes greater than self; hope moves in the forefront, while race and hatred seem to take a backseat. (p. 49)

In 1999–2000, my wife and I became somewhat familiar with the New Zealand criminal justice system, since for most of two years we visited a prison one afternoon each week. In addition, we also became aware of Māori Saints who for many years performed extraordinary services in New Zealand prisons.<sup>16</sup> Hence I was intrigued and then overwhelmed by what I read of Jason Hartley's experiences with the Māori in New Zealand. His recipe for stemming the tide of degradation leading to criminal activity and then prison rang true to me.

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15 I share with Hartley a fascination with the Māori and some, but not all, of their traditional ways. We also share a profound disappointment at the deracinating forces that send too many Māori into a life of violence and crime.

16 I have in mind Heriwini Jones — and his various companions — who have for more than a decade done remarkable work in very tense situations in New Zealand prisons. And I also have in mind Mutu Wihongi, who had been called by an Auckland New Zealand Mission President to visit the two prisons in Auckland. When the Mission President was replaced, he forgot to release Mutu, who continued to do the job he had been called to do until his age made it impossible for him to continue.

When I opened *Ngā Mahi*, it was immediately apparent to me that Hartley had to be a Latter-day Saint. Hartley's being a Latter-day Saint was not, however, directly relevant to his "final report" on his decade of work. However, being an Australian and involved with the police, seems to have been a handicap with non-LDS Māori — one he had to endure and strive to overcome. However, being a Latter-day Saint, I believe, was very helpful in his work, though it was not, of course, directly relevant to his "final report" on his decade of work in Whangarei.

Much of what Hartley describes of arcane Māori traditions seems to have been derived from or with the help of Māori Latter-day Saints in the Northland. This involved friendship with some of same extended families I encountered in 1950–52, while I served in the area around Whangarei.<sup>17</sup>

### **Are the Māori Heavens Still Open?**

Much like many LDS missionaries called to New Zealand, I saw evidence from 1950 to 1952 — and on subsequent visits — of a special openness to the divine among the Māori Saints. And in 1999–2000, while my wife and I were serving as missionaries in New Zealand, we were privileged to witness the continued presence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit among the Saints in New Zealand. Despite portions of the larger Māori world being in turmoil and though they have unfortunately diminished, spiritual gifts have not disappeared among the Māori.

The despoiling of the best of Māori traditions has yielded a host of evils. These include prisons packed with Māori driven to excess and despair by, among other things, the temptations

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17 I am fond of New Zealand, especially the Northland. I began my mission in 1950, plump in the ignorance and arrogance of youth, in Whangarei and the Bay of Islands. My brother, Rushby C. Midgley, Jr., also served his mission to New Zealand (1938–40), first under Charles Woods, my uncle, and then for a short time under Matthew Cowley, who was a family friend. Much of my brother's mission was also in the Northland.

(and the allure) of the worst elements of the now dominant European civilization. This is a familiar story. European “discovery” often tears apart the social order of indigenous peoples. These evils, in addition to diseases for which they tend to lack immunity and vices to which they often become addicted, which include alcohol, drugs, casual sex (and hence the unraveling of the family), gambling, and dependence on welfare, all of which lead to violence and crime. Hartley has sought a way out of the current malaise among the Māori if only the secular authorities, including Māori opinion leaders, will pay attention. “It would have been a gross error” on his part, he indicates, “to have published a book concerning the life and circumstances of the Whakatōhea Chief Mokomoko without first seeking the consent of Mokomoko’s living descendants” (p. 35). Why? In the Māori world it is wise to have permission to tell sacred stories, and one must be truthful in the stories one tells.

Hartley tells of some of his own experiences with signs, wonders, and divine things. His book is an account of his own remarkable awakening to the importance for the Māori of a return to the highest and best in their traditional culture. Māori Latter-day Saints will not find his remedy objectionable. Those who have served missions in New Zealand will probably be at least somewhat familiar with the kinds of stories that he tells. It is also very likely that they will have come to love the Māori, including those who might have had their moral world blunted with addictive vices and excesses by having been “discovered” and “civilized” by Europeans. His book should be valuable to Latter-day Saints who have served missions in New Zealand. Those who would care to probe the heart of the Māori world, despite whatever flaws there are in *Ngā Mahi*, will be both edified and inspired by its life-affirming messages. Even those unfamiliar with both New Zealand and the Māori can be instructed by his encounter with the remnants of the older

world of the Māori and by the hope it offers. If it is not already clear, I highly recommend *Ngā Mahi*.

### Addenda: Some Polemical Notes

When Latter-day Saint missionaries to New Zealand made the first significant contact with the Māori in 1882, they found some who were prepared for both them and their message. Even secularized skeptics or the disaffected tend to grant that this is true. They sometimes ask: why has all that ended? Or where did all the Māori go? Put another way, various explanations have been proposed by secularized academics who challenge the traditional Māori/Mormon “faithful history.” They see the stories as mythical and hence seek to demythologize what they consider a naive understanding of the real Māori Latter-day Saint past. Critics tend to turn to half-understood categories and also the explanations of revisionist historians to fashion a secular and presumably “objective” account.<sup>18</sup>

Some critics imply that the Māori were and still are a superstitious lot and, therefore, vulnerable to the kinds of beliefs held by Latter-day Saints. Put bluntly, the argument is that some Māori, with the collusion of naive, uncritical LDS missionaries, fashioned stories that both include and manifest Māori superstition and wishful thinking. These critics assume that naive missionaries were in thrall to these stories, which they then embellished. They grant that something happened, but they then ignore the accounts they think have been embellished and turned into a sort of founding myth by both the Māori Saints and their American comrades. An example of this is the claim that what the American LDS missionaries offered was the

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18 For example, see Marjorie Newton's *Mormon and Maori* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014), for what I see as, despite some new information on several side issues, as an unfortunate and unnecessary debunking, for example, of the accounts of Māori seers opening the way for LDS missionaries (see pp. 2–3).

opportunity for some Māori to forge a new, more noble identity separate from the forms of the rather despised Christian faith of the increasingly dominant, land-hungry British colonizers, whose hypocrisy and duplicity tended to make them and their message increasingly distrusted and even despised.

My own position is that some but not all Māori were prepared by what were authentic divine special revelations by their own *matakite* (seers)<sup>19</sup> for both the authority and message of Latter-day Saint missionaries.<sup>20</sup> These “prophets,” including Arama Toiroa, have drawn considerable attention among both Māori Saints, and LDS scholars.<sup>21</sup> In addition, many Māori Saints still treasure their own accounts of how some of their own ancestors became Latter-day Saints as a result of truly remarkable divine manifestations. I have called attention to all of this elsewhere.<sup>22</sup>

In setting out some of the relevant details, I did not, of course, plow entirely new ground. I did not begin with the well-known stories of Māori seers. Instead, I focused on the much less well known initial LDS missionary encounter with the Māori. This took place while William Michael Bromley

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19 The authentic Māori word *matakite* was eventually supplemented and then replaced by the English loan word *poropiti*, which is “prophet” spelled in the Māori alphabet. The most accessible older account of Māori “prophets” can be found in the chapters New Zealand in R. Lanier Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea: A History of the Latter-day Saints in the Pacific* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 253–245.

20 See Midgley, 45–65.

21 For a new and more richly detailed account, see Robert Joseph, “Intercultural Exchange: Matakite Māori and the Mormon Church,” *Mana Māori and Christianity*, ed. Hugh Morrison, Lachy Paterson, Brett Knowles and Murray Rae (Wellington, NZ: Huia Publishers, 2012), 43–72. Though Marjorie Newton (in her *Mormon and Māori*) quotes from the opening paragraph of Professor Joseph’s essay (159) to make some point unrelated to its substance, she merely mentions Paora Potangaroa (see 2–3) and ignores much new information on Arama Toiroa, who was the first and, I believe, most important of the Māori seers.

22 For my own position, see Midgley, 51–53.

was serving as New Zealand Mission President. His fine diary, which covers his service from 10 December 1880 through 9 August 1883, when he reported back to President John Taylor, provides a carefully written, detailed account of the first of the fruitful LDS missionary endeavor among the Māori.<sup>23</sup> This took place, it seems to me, in part because of an openness at all levels in the traditionally aristocratic Māori society to divine providence and the work of the Holy Spirit. The Māori were not hampered by post-enlightenment distrust of divine things, which tended to make them seem superstitious to some *Pākehā* (European) observers, including even Christian clergy.

I have sought to call attention to an interesting and important Māori institution — to *whare wānanga* (special schools for elite Māori) — where an esoteric understanding of human and divine things was taught to an aristocratic elite. Secularized critics have ignored such things and hence have missed the point of what took place in what they call “top down” conversions — that is, the conversion of a Māori tribal leader that opened the way in an aristocratic society for many conversions. They have not addressed the question of exactly what LDS missionaries taught that attracted the attention of those tribal leaders, or how those teachings were understood by those who had been initiated in those *wānanga*.

The European focus on “top down” conversions does not address the fact that common Māori also experienced divine special revelations. Bromley provides an elegantly written, contemporary account of the initial, fruitful encounter of him and his two companions (William John McDonnell and Thomas Levi Cox) with Hari Teimana, who does not seem to have had any special status in the Māori world. Instead, he seems to have been a rather ordinary Māori who was prepared by a special divine revelation from the Apostle Peter for the arrival of these

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23 See *None Shall Excel Thee: The Life and Journals of William Michael Bromley*, ed. Fred Bromley Hodson (n.p., privately printed, 1990).

three Latter-day Saints and also for their priesthood authority and message.<sup>24</sup>

This encounter led immediately to a series of baptisms and then, in 1882, to the establishment of the first Māori LDS branch. This was the first of a series of similar and related stories,<sup>25</sup> only some of which included traditional Māori seers. Both *Pakeha* and Māori critics, often drenched in post-enlightenment skepticism of fanaticism, tend to ignore these Māori encounters with the divine. They do this by pointing to what they consider Māori/Mormon superstition and myth-making that somehow helped make possible (or flowed from) the positive reception of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ among the Māori.

In addition, the Māori arcane teachings, which constitute much of the contents of Hartley's *Ngā Mahi*, about which Latter-day Saint missionaries were mostly unaware, seem to fit rather snugly with beliefs of Latter-day Saints that are simply not typically found among either Protestant or Roman Catholic clergy.<sup>26</sup> However, as far as I can see, there is no evidence that Teimana or his associates were known as *matakite* (seers) or that they had been initiated in the arcane Io cult in a *Whare Wānanga*. The conversion of those elite Māori that had considerable lasting impact on the community of Saints in New Zealand only came later.

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24 On 5 April 1881, Bromley called William John McDonnell, then a member of the Auckland Branch, to serve as a missionary to the Māori. McDonnell set about to learn the Māori language. He soon learned to speak Māori and to serve as translator for Bromley and others (see *None Shall Excel Thee*, 113, 309–310, 331). Bromley, with McDonnell and Cox, witnessed the events that began on 24 December 1882 near Cambridge, a small provincial town 14 miles from Hamilton (*None Shall Excel Thee*, 293–296, 311).

25 See Bromley, *None Shall Excel Thee*, 293–297, and for a summary, see Midgley, pp. 51–53.

26 See Midgley, pp. 55–63, for some details.

## Concluding Remarks

If one believes that Māori seers once received important divine revelations and other remarkable manifestations of divine providence, do these continue to take place now? It seems to me that *Ngā Mahi* provides a qualified but affirmative answer to this question, providing an answer to those skeptics who seek to downplay the role played by the traditional *matakite Māori* or to ignore the other remarkable stories treasured by Māori extended *whanau* (families). *Ngā Mahi* shows that the door has not been closed on the kinds of real-world, yet extraordinary, events that once captured the hearts and minds of Māori Saints as well as those of some of their American LDS missionaries associates.

*Ngā Mahi* shows that among the Māori the old stories of divine dealings with the Māori people have not ceased. There is solid evidence that signs and wonders are still taking place among the Māori. Those not already inclined to brush aside such things will relish Hartley's witness to the opening of the heavens.

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“WHAT THANK THEY THE JEWS”?  
(2 NEPHI 29:4):  
A NOTE ON THE NAME “JUDAH”  
AND ANTISEMITISM

Matthew L. Bowen

*The Hebrew Bible explains the meaning of the personal and tribal name “Judah”—from which the term “Jews” derives—in terms of “praising” or “thanking” (\*ydy/ydh). In other words, the “Jews” are those who are to be “praised out of a feeling of gratitude.” This has important implications for the Lord’s words to Nephi regarding Gentile ingratitude and antisemitism: “And what thank they the Jews for the Bible which they receive from them?” (2 Nephi 29:4). Gentile Christian antisemitism, like the concomitant doctrine of supersessionism, can be traced (in part) to widespread misunderstanding and misapplication of Paul’s words regarding Jews and “praise” (Romans 2:28-29). Moreover, the strongest scriptural warnings against antisemitism are to be found in the Book of Mormon, which also offers the reassurance that the Jews are still “mine ancient covenant people” (2 Nephi 29:4-5) and testifies of the Lord’s love and special concern for them.*

Despite the horrors of World War II, the Holocaust, and the resultant deaths of tens of millions including approximately six million Jews, the last several decades have seen a resurgence of virulent antisemitism.<sup>1</sup> The strongest

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1 See, e.g., Peter Kenez, “Antisemitism in post World War II Hungary,” *Judaism* 50/2 (Spring 2001): 144-157; Robert Fine, “Fighting with Phantoms: A Contribution to the Debate on Antisemitism in Europe,” *Patterns of Prejudice*

scriptural warnings against antisemitism come from the Book of Mormon.<sup>2</sup> Since the Book of Mormon “was written for our day”<sup>3</sup> (cf. Mormon 8:35), I do not believe this to be a coincidence.

The Book of Mormon not only manifests the Lord’s love and special concern for the Jews, but also an awareness of the traditional meaning of the name “Judah” (“praise,” i.e., one who is to be “thanked”) and the derived gentile designation “Jews” as those who are to be “praised” or “thanked.” In this article I wish to examine several passages in the Book of Mormon in which the connotation of “Judah” and “Jews” as those who are to be “praised” or “thanked” appears to be relevant, including a direct wordplay on “Jews” in 2 Nephi 29:4, and awareness of the meaning of this term in 2 Nephi 33:14 and 3 Nephi 29:8. To contextualize these passages, I will first examine a pair of Genesis texts which etiologize<sup>4</sup> “Judah” and “Jews” in terms of the verb *\*ydy* (or *\*ydh*, to “praise,” “thank,” or “acknowledge”). Next, I will examine Paul’s wordplay on “Jews” in terms of

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43/5 (2009): 459–479; Andrew Higgins, “Jews in Europe Report a Surge in Anti-Semitism,” *New York Times*, Friday, November 8, 2013 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/09/world/europe/jews-in-europe-report-a-surge-in-anti-semitism.html>). Recent antisemitic incidents include the distribution of a leaflet, as a political ploy of some kind, in troubled pro-Russian east Ukraine (a region with a history of strong antisemitism) mandating that Jews “provide a list of property they own and pay a registration fee” or face punishment including the loss of property and citizenship and even forced expulsion; see Oren Dorell, “Leaflet Tells Jews in East Ukraine,” *USA Today*, Thursday, April 17, 2014 (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/04/17/jews-ordered-to-register-in-east-ukraine/7816951/>). The mere fact that Jews are being made a political tool amid the Russian-Ukrainian turmoil shows how deeply-seated the antisemitism is in both nations.

2 See Daniel Peterson, “Book of Mormon expressly condemns anti-Semitism,” *Deseret News*, Thursday, September 1, 2011 (<http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700175284/Book-of-Mormon-expressly-condemns-anti-Semitism.html>).

3 Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon — The Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, November 1986, 4.

4 An etiology (from Greek *aitia* “cause” + *logia*) is an explanation of the cause or origin of something.

“praise,” after which I will examine the relevant Book of Mormon passages.

### “Thy Brethren Shall *Thank* Thee”

Moshe Garsiel observes that in the Hebrew Bible the name Judah (Heb., *Yěhûdâ*) is repeatedly “explained in terms of a derivation from the root *y-d-h* (י־ד־ה), which in its causative stem means ‘to offer praise out of a feeling of gratitude.’”<sup>5</sup> The aforementioned explanation for the name “Judah” occurs first in the account of the naming of Jacob’s sons. Leah is said to have named her youngest son as follows: “And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now **will I praise the LORD** [*’ôdeh ’et-Yhwh*]: therefore she called his name **Judah** [*Yěhûdâ*, the pun, which makes no attempt at scientific etymology, suggests the idea of *Yahô* + *ôdeh*]; and left bearing” (Genesis 29:35; emphasis in all scriptural citations added).

This passage suggests that Leah named her son “Judah,” i.e., “praised out of a feeling of gratitude”<sup>6</sup> because she wished to thank the Lord (*Yahweh*) for his giving her this particular son. Later when Jacob, nearing death, pronounces his final blessing on his sons and their posterity, he blesses Judah and his descendants as follows: “**Judah** [*Yěhûdâ*], thou art he whom **thy brethren shall praise** [lit., thou — thy brethren **shall thank thee**, *yôdûkâ*]; thy hand [*yādēkâ*] shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee” (Genesis 49:8). This passage suggests that Judah’s descendants, the Jews, are those who are to be “acknowledged” or “praised out of a feeling of gratitude,”<sup>7</sup> especially by those of the house

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5 Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns* (trans. Phyllis Hackett; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 171.

6 Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 171.

7 Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 171.

of Israel (“thy brethren,” “thy father’s children”), though the reason for that praise is not here specified.

### Paul’s Hidden Pun on “Judah” and the Roots of Gentile Christian Antisemitism

The roots of Gentile Christian antisemitism extend at least as far back as the early Church’s understanding of Paul’s writings. In at least three passages (Romans 2:28–29, 1 Corinthians 7:19, and Philippians 3:2–3), Paul offers a bold and “dramatic redefinition of what it means to be circumcised.”<sup>8</sup> In Romans 2:28–29 he states: “For he is not a **Jew** [*Ioudaios*], which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a **Jew** [*Ioudaios*], which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose **praise** [*epainos*] is not of men, but of God” (Romans 2:28–29).

N.T. Wright suggests that Paul’s use of the word *epainos* in this text is a conscious pun on the name “Judah” and “Jews” which would have been particularly evident to Jewish Christians, some of whom were still zealous of the Law of Moses:

The last two verses of the chapter [i.e., Romans 2:28–29] are the key, though their dense Greek almost defies translation, and they depend for their force on another pun, this time a hidden one. The Hebrew for ‘praise’ is *jehuda*, ‘Judah,’ so that the very name “Jew,” *Ioudaios* in Greek, ought to mean ‘praise’. This highlights what Paul is saying: the very word *Ioudaios* is now to be predicated of a different group, no longer defined ethnically by the possession of Torah, not marked out by things which are *en tō phanerō*, “in the open” or “on

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<sup>8</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 118.

the surface.” Rather, *ho en tō kryptō Ioudaios*, the Jew in “secret,” that is, the “the Jew is the Jew who is so in secret,” and “circumcision” consists in the spirit rather than the letter. Such a person, Paul declares with the Hebrew in mind, gains “praise” not from humans but from God.<sup>9</sup>

Mark D. Nanos writes that “Paul’s point is not that Gentiles are the true Jews, or that the foreskinned are the true or real circumcision; quite the opposite: the terms ‘Jew’ and ‘circumcision’ are reserved for Israelites.”<sup>10</sup> He suggests that Romans 2:29 should be translated thus: “Rather, the deepest character of the Jew, even the purpose of circumcision, is about the spirit, the intentions of the heart (at work through the way one lives who is so marked), not (merely) inscribed (in flesh) (as if a mark alone fully defined who one is).”<sup>11</sup>

Paul himself anticipates the potential misunderstanding and repercussions of the thoughts that he is articulating to his Roman audience. Nevertheless, Paul’s rhetoric — intended for a blended community of Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus as Messiah (I will use the admittedly anachronistic term *Christians*)<sup>12</sup> — has been used as a basis for supersessionism (or replacement theology), i.e., the longstanding Gentile Christian belief that the Gentiles have replaced the Jews in God’s plan.<sup>13</sup>

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9 Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 118.

10 Mark D. Nanos, “The Letter of Paul to the Romans” in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 259.

11 Nanos, “The Letter of Paul to the Romans,” 259.

12 The term Christian begins as a pejorative designation (see Acts 11:26 [cf. 26:28] and 1 Peter 4:16). Its use as a designation for believers in Jesus becomes general over time.

13 2 Peter 3:15-16 also marks the contemporary early (Gentile) Christian misuse and abuse of Paul’s writings: “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in

He further admonishes them that it is God's intent (and in his plan) to eventually save all Israel:

Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? **For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.** And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; **boast not against the branches.** But **if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.** Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. **Be not highminded, but fear:** For if God spared not the natural branches, **take heed lest he also spare not thee.** Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for **God is able to graft them in again.** For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: **how much more shall these, which**

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them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

**be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?** For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so **all Israel shall be saved:** as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. (Romans 11:12–26)

Although Paul wishes to “provoke” his fellow Jews who do not believe in Jesus as the Messiah to “jealousy” (Romans 11:11) or to “emulation,” he is no supersessionist.<sup>14</sup> To be sure, Paul’s discussion in Romans 9–11 presupposes that ultimately salvation is in and through Jesus Christ, but as Isaiah 52:7–53:12 (cf. Luke 1:67–79; 2:25–30) and the Book of Mormon suggest, the paradigm of seeing the “salvation of ... God” in a person was embraced by Israelites within Israel well before the birth of Jesus.<sup>15</sup> Like the prophets of old, Paul understands the “mystery” of how “all Israel shall be saved” (Romans 11:26; Jacob 4:17–18), with the Atonement of Jesus Christ gradually having its intended effect (Jacob 5, see especially vv. 75–76; D&C 138:58) through the fulfilling of God’s covenant to Abraham and his descendants (Acts 3:26; 3 Nephi 20:26). Paul, like Mormon, comprehends that “the Lord worketh in many ways to the salvation of his people” (Alma 24:27), or in the words of the wise woman of Tekoah, “neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not

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14 Mark D. Nanos, “Paul and Judaism,” in *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 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).”

15 See 1 Nephi 10:5–6; 2 Nephi 25:20; 30:1–2; 31:21; Jacob 7:11; Mosiah 3:17–18; this is the sum and substance of Abinadi’s arguments in Mosiah 12–17, which are based on his exegesis of Isaiah 52:7–53:12.

expelled from him” (2 Samuel 14:14; cf. 1 Timothy 2:4).<sup>16</sup> Paul does not hate his fellow Jews or the Law of Moses. In fact, Paul intends by faith in Jesus to “establish the law” (Romans 3:31), just as Jesus “fulfilled” it,<sup>17</sup> the “law” itself being an addition<sup>18</sup> to (and thus a part of) the promise or covenant that the Lord made with Abraham<sup>19</sup> — ultimately the covenant that God has intended to offer all of the human family “from the beginning” (cf. D&C 22:1; 49:9),<sup>20</sup> i.e., the new<sup>21</sup> and everlasting covenant<sup>22</sup> — a covenant which has yet to be wholly fulfilled.<sup>23</sup> In the end, it all belongs to “the covenant of the Father” (3 Nephi 21:4;

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16 1 Timothy 2:4: God “will have [*thelei*, wants to have] all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” Cf. Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Mosiah 27:31; D&C 88:104.

17 Matthew 5:17–18; Luke 24:44; cf. Romans 2:27; 8:4; 13:8–10; Galatians 5:14; 6:2; James 2:8; see also 2 Nephi 25:24–30; Alma 25:15; 30:3; 34:13; 3 Nephi 1:25; 9:17; 12:17–19, 46; Ether 12:11; D&C 74; cf. 2 Nephi 9:7.

18 Galatians 3:18–19. Paul states that the “law” was “added because of transgressions,” but also note how Moroni states that “by faith was the law of Moses given” (Ether 12:11). These are not mutually exclusive ideas. Notably, elsewhere Paul calls the law “holy” (Romans 7:12) and “spiritual” (7:14) and its commandment(s) “holy, and just, and good” (7:12).

19 See, e.g., Genesis 17:1–22.

20 Cf. the Lord’s covenant with Enoch (Moses 7:51–53; 8:2; JST Genesis 9:10–15; 14:25–40); Noah (Genesis 9:8–17; JST Genesis 9:10–15); David (2 Samuel 7; 23:5) Lehi (1 Nephi 5:5; 2 Nephi 1:5); Enos (Enos 1:16–17); cf. Isaiah 56:2–8.

21 “New covenant” (Hebrew *bērit hādāšā*; Greek *diathēkē kainē*): Jeremiah 31:31–33; Hebrews 8:8, 13; 12:24; D&C 76:69; 84:57; 107:19; or, “new testament” (κτν, i.e., “new covenant,” Greek *diathēkē kainē*): Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 9:15. Jeremiah 31:31–33 is, of course, the source of the idea of a “new covenant” versus an “old covenant” and thus the canonical division of the Bible into “Old Testament” and “New Testament.”

22 “Everlasting covenant” (Hebrew *bērit ‘ōlām*): Genesis 9:16; 17:7, 13, 19; Leviticus 24:8; 2 Samuel 23:5; Psalm 105:10; Isaiah 24:5; 55:3; 61:8; Jeremiah 32:40; Ezekiel 16:60; 37:26; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Chronicles 16:17; D&C 45:9; 49:9; 66:2; 76:101; 78:11; 101:39; 133:57; “new and everlasting covenant”: D&C 22:1; 131:2; 132:4, 6, 19, 26–27, 41–42.

23 1 Nephi 14:12–20; 22:6–28; 2 Nephi 6:8–18; 2 Nephi 9 (*passim* — vv. 2 and 53 form an *inclusio* [envelope figure] on the term “covenant”); 10:7–22; 15:18; 3 Nephi 16:4–20; 20:11–46; 29:1–9; Mormon 5:12–24; 8:21–23; etc.

Moroni 10:33) or “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 10:33; see also Acts 3:26; 3 Nephi 20:25–26).

Nevertheless, the very arguments that Paul anticipates — and inveighs against in Romans 11 — are those that Christians (sadly) have used for centuries in justifying persecution and mistreatment of the Jews. The Gentiles have, in fact, “boasted against the branches” (i.e., the natural branches; Romans 11:18), and in many instances continue to do so. Gentile Christians have frequently been “highminded,” have not “fear[ed]” (11:20), and have been “wise in [their] own conceits” (11:25).<sup>24</sup> The doctrine of supersessionism and its Gentile advocates are “ignorant of [the] mystery” of how the Lord will ultimately save Israel (see also Jacob 4:14–6:4). They do not “receive with meekness the engrafted word” (James 1:21), i.e., scriptures that come almost entirely from the Jews (Romans 3:2; 2 Nephi 29:4–6; cf. Acts 7:38).

**“What Thank They the Jews for the Bible which They Receive from Them?”**

Like Paul, the Lord anticipated Gentile (including Gentile Christian) antisemitism. Speaking to Nephi sometime in the sixth century BCE, well in advance of Gentile Christianity and the doctrine of supersessionism, the Lord pointedly offered a reason for the descendants of Judah, the Jews, to be “praised out of a feeling of gratitude,” and he indignantly noted that this is precisely what would *not* be done by the Gentiles:

And because my words shall hiss forth — many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible. But thus saith the Lord God: O fools, they shall have a Bible; and it shall

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24 Cf. Romans 12:16.

proceed forth from the Jews, mine ancient covenant people. And what **thank they the Jews** [*\*yôdû 'et-hayyêhûdîm*] for the Bible which they receive from them? Yea, what do the Gentiles mean? *Do they remember the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles?* O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? *Nay; but ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them.* But behold, I will return all these things upon your own heads; for I the Lord have not forgotten my people. Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews? (2 Nephi 29:3–6)

The Lord seems to be using the traditional association between Judah and *y-d-h*, using a direct wordplay in the phrase, “what thank they [Hebrew *\*yôdû*] the Jews [*\*'et-hayyêhûdîm*] ... ?”<sup>25</sup> While we do not know if Nephi recorded this revelation in Egyptian or Hebrew (using an Egyptian script), we can infer that it was probably spoken<sup>26</sup> to Nephi in his native language (Hebrew). This wordplay stresses the point that the Jews are to be “praised out of a feeling of gratitude,” i.e., “thanked” for their painstaking efforts to preserve the scriptures. Instead of gratitude for the Jews’ “travails,” “labors,” and “pains” (a triad), the Gentiles have ungratefully “cursed,” “hated,” “and not sought to recover” the Jews (another triad). The Lord twice calls

25 Cf. the verbal noun *yêhôdeh* “thanksgiving” in Nehemiah 11:17.

26 The language of 2 Nephi 29:2 indicates that the Lord spoke this revelation directly to Nephi: “... that I may remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi and also unto thy father, that I would remember your seed ...”

the Jews “mine ancient covenant people,” even stating that they are the source of “salvation [Heb. *yěšû ‘â*] unto the Gentiles”<sup>27</sup> which may also be a deliberate wordplay on the name “Jesus” (Heb. *yěšû‘a*). This antisemitism often overlooks the fact that Jesus was a Jew: “salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22; cf. Romans 3:1–2).<sup>28</sup> As the Lord’s words intimate, the Jews in their “travails,” “labors,” “pains” (2 Nephi 29:4) and suffering are not wholly unlike Jesus the Suffering Servant, the “man of sorrows” (Isaiah 53:3) whose “travail of ... soul” (Isaiah 53:11) brought “salvation” (Isaiah 52:10, *yěšû ‘â*) to all humankind.<sup>29</sup>

### “Respect[ing] the Words of the Jews”

Nephi, in the remarks that conclude his personal record (2 Nephi 33), reflects upon a lifetime of revelations including the Lord’s revelation to him in 2 Nephi 29 on the importance of “the words of the Jews”<sup>30</sup>:

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27 2 Nephi 29:4; see also especially Isaiah 49:3–6 (1 Nephi 21:3–6): “Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. ... I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.” This text is sometimes interpreted narrowly to mean the Messiah or Isaiah, but can be interpreted more widely to refer to all Israel.

28 John Tvedtnes recommends that John 4:22 preserves a similar kind of wordplay: “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for **salvation** [Gk. *sōtēria* = Heb. *yěšû ‘â*] **is of the Jews**” (personal communication). Jesus seems to be playing on his own name. This is not to suggest (and neither is Paul suggesting) that “salvation” automatically comes to anyone. Compare Articles of Faith 1:3: “We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.” The same is true of the dead (D&C 138:58).

29 I am suggesting that the Lord’s words as reported in 2 Nephi 29:4–6 are conscious of Isaiah’s servant motif in Isaiah 49, 52–53 and elsewhere.

30 See especially 2 Nephi 29:10–14: “Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written. For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written. For behold, **I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it**; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they

And you that will not partake of the goodness of God, and **respect the words of the Jews**, and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day. (2 Nephi 33:14)

Note how Nephi invokes “the words of the Jews” as one of three judgment witnesses in the final judgment, according to Deuteronomic requirement for “two or three witnesses” governing capital cases (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15).<sup>31</sup> The Bible, which the Jews have largely written and preserved, and for which the Lord said the Gentiles would fail to “thank” the Jews (2 Nephi 29:4), will stand as one of the scriptural witnesses by which all humankind will be judged. Every accountable individual will be judged according to his or her performance or non-performance of the principles contained in “the words of the Jews” (the Bible), Nephi’s words and the words of his descendants (the Book of Mormon), and by “the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God” (2

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shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it. And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have **the words of the Jews**; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have **the words of the Nephites and the Jews**. And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. And I will show unto them that fight against my word and against my people, who are of the house of Israel, that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever.”

31 This law is apparently an eternal principle and more important than we suppose. See Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:28; 1 John 5:8; 2 Nephi 11:3; 2 Nephi 27:12; Ether 5:4; Moroni 6:7; D&C 5:15; 6:28; 128:3, 20. On the “law of witnesses” as it occurs in 2 Nephi, see Bruce A. Van Orden, “The Law of Witnesses in 2 Nephi,” in *Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 307–21.

Nephi 33:14), which, I suppose, includes all of the revelation according to which the Lord expects us to live (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4; Moroni 7:25; D&C 84:44; 98:11).

When writing the epilogue to Jesus's ministry among the Nephites, Mormon reflects on the Lord's much earlier words to his ancestor Nephi and the latter's final words: "Yea, and **ye need not any longer hiss, nor spurn, nor make game of the Jews, nor any of the remnant of the house of Israel;** for behold, the Lord remembereth his covenant unto them, and he will do unto them according to that which he hath sworn" (3 Nephi 29:8). Mormon was expressly concerned that Gentile ingratitude toward the Jews would extend beyond not remembering them (i.e., "cursing," "hating" and "not [seeking] to recover them") to other virulent forms of antisemitism, i.e., "hissing,"<sup>32</sup> "spurning,"<sup>33</sup> and "making game"<sup>34</sup> of the Jews (another triad). All of these actions are consciously antonymic to "thanking" the Jews (2 Nephi 29:4) and "respecting" their words (2 Nephi 33:14). Unfortunately, historic expressions of Gentile Christian supersessionism and antisemitism in general have been manifest in even worse forms than the kinds of ingratitude that Mormon enumerates.

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32 Or whistling — often as an insult (cf. the Hebrew verb *šāraq* and its cognate noun[s] *šērēqâ/šēriqâ*); see, e.g., 1 Kings 9:8; Jeremiah 18:16; 19:8; 25:9, 18; 29:18; 49:17; 50:13; 51:37; Ezekiel 27:36; Micah 6:16; Zephaniah 2:15; Lamentations 2:15–16; 2 Chronicles 29:8; Job 27:23; 1 Nephi 19:14 and 3 Nephi 16:9 ("a hiss and a byword"). "Hissing" or "whistling" is also a means of summoning. See, e.g., Isaiah 5:26; 7:18; Zechariah 10:8; 2 Nephi 29:2–3; Moroni 10:28.

33 I.e., to contemptuously reject; in the LDS scriptures, this word occurs only here in 3 Nephi 29:4, 8 (twice).

34 I.e., mocking; cf. the mocking described in Ezekiel 22:4–5; cf. also possibly Ishmael's "mocking" of Isaac in Genesis 21:9; the "mocking" endured by the Savior as a part of his atoning suffering (Matthew 20:19; 27:29, 31, 41; Mark 10:34; 15:20, 31; Luke 18:32; 23:11, 36; Mosiah 15:5); and the mocking from the great and spacious building (1 Nephi 8:27).

## Gratitude: Praising the Lord with Sacrifices of Praise

The prophet Jeremiah foresaw a time of restoration for Judah that would follow much tribulation, a time when they would be able to “praise” or “thank” the Lord under much more favorable conditions:

Thus saith the Lord; Again there shall be heard in this place, which ye say shall be desolate without man and without beast, even in the cities of **Judah** [Yěhûdâ], and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate, without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast, The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, **Praise** [“give thanks [to],”<sup>35</sup> *hòdû*] the Lord of hosts: for the Lord is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of **praise** [*tôdâ*, “thank offering”<sup>36</sup>] into the house of the Lord. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the Lord (Jeremiah 33:10-11; cf. 1 Nephi 15:15).

One could argue that this prophecy (which plays on the name “Judah”)<sup>37</sup> remains to be fulfilled. Everything we do in the restored gospel is done to the end that “the sons of Levi ... may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.”<sup>38</sup> If Jesus’s ministry in Third Nephi is a type and shadow of “good things to come” for the house of Israel, Judah’s brethren will yet “praise [*yôdûkâ*]” him and “shall bow down [*yištahăwwû*] before” the lion of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:8; Revelation

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35 See Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 172.

36 See Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 172.

37 See Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 172.

38 Malachi 3:3; 3 Nephi 24:3; D&C 13:1; D&C 128:24; JS-H 1:6; see also Oliver Cowdery’s account of John the Baptist’s words at the end of JS-H.

5:5) just as the Nephites and Lamanites of Bountiful did (3 Nephi 11, 17:9–10).<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

Seeing that our Bible — both “Old” and “New” Testaments — was mostly written by Jews, it is truly “the book [that] proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew” (see 1 Nephi 13:23–24, 38; 14:23). For the composition and preservation of this book which is “of great worth unto to the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 13:23), as well as to the house of Israel, we all owe a great debt of “acknowledgement” and “thanks,” both to the Jews and to the God of Israel.

For Latter-day Saints in particular, antisemitism and the doctrine of supersessionism should be out of the question. In the Lord’s words, the Jews are ever “mine ancient covenant people” (2 Nephi 29:4): “for I the Lord have not forgotten my people” (29:5); “for behold, the Lord remembereth his covenant unto them [the Jews and all the house of Israel], and he will do unto them according to that which he hath sworn” (3 Nephi 29:8). All of this suggests that we are accountable for not only our actions but our attitudes toward the Jews and the scriptures that we have through their “travails,” “labors,” “pains,” and “diligence unto [the Lord]” (2 Nephi 29:4). We thus do well to “remember” and “thank” them (29:4).

This article is dedicated with love and gratitude to Judith Simon of New York City for the blessing that she has been (and continues to be) in the lives of the author and his family. Additional thanks go to Ko’olina Mills.

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39 See Matthew L. Bowen, “‘They Came Forth and Fell Down and Partook of the Fruit of the Tree’: Proskynesis in 3 Nephi 11:12–19 and 17:9–10 and Its Significance” in *Third Nephi: New Perspectives on an Incomparable Scripture* (ed. Gaye Strathearn, Andrew Skinner; Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute and Deseret Book, 2011), 107–129.

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# JOB: AN LDS READING

Mack C. Stirling

*Editor's Note:* This article is drawn from a chapter in a volume edited by David R. Seely and William J. Hamblin entitled *Temple Insights: Proceedings of the Interpreter Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference "The Temple on Mount Zion," 22 September 2012* (Provo, UT: The Interpreter Foundation/Eborn Books, 2014). The book will be available online (e.g., Amazon, FairMormon Bookstore) and in selected bookstores in October 2014.

*In response to questions arising within God, Job, described as blameless and upright, is thrust from idyllic circumstances into a dark realm of bitter experience. Three "friends" unwittingly press Satan's case, attempting to convince Job to admit guilt. Job, however, holds on, searching for God's face and progressing toward a transformed understanding of God and man, which is brought to strongest expression in four great revelatory insights received by Job. Finally, Job commits himself to God and man with self-imprecating oaths. After withstanding a final challenge from Elihu/Satan, Job speaks with God at the veil and enters God's presence. Many points of contact with the temple support the thesis that the book of Job is a literary analogue of the endowment ritual.*

The book of Job has challenged and puzzled interpreters for centuries. All agree that the beauty and eloquence of its Hebrew poetry are unsurpassed and that Job raises important, penetrating questions not addressed elsewhere in the Bible. Yet the meaning of many phrases and words in the book is simply unknown, which is partly responsible for multiple divergent interpretations. There is no scholarly consensus on the date,

author, structure, stages of composition (if any), nature (history, narrative, story, or dramatic fiction), or meaning of the book. Not unexpectedly, no one translation of Job is adequate; meaning and translation are invariably influenced by one's life experiences and theological presuppositions.<sup>1</sup>

I propose that the book of Job is a literary analogue of the temple endowment ritual. The book's structure, content, and use of prose versus poetry will be important in presenting my case. Following the lead of Hugh Nibley in his *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, I will discuss *only* the book of Job in its literary and scriptural context, leaving the reader to make connections to the endowment.<sup>2</sup> An overview of the literary structure of the book of Job is presented in Table 1, demonstrating the scheme followed in this exposition.

**Table 1. Literary Outline of Job**

I. Prologue (Job 1-2), *prose*

After living in idyllic circumstances, Job's integrity is put to the test by a series of economic, familial, and medical disasters.

II. Dialogues (Job 3-27), *poetry*

A. First Cycle (Job 3-14)

B. Second Cycle (Job 15-21)

C. Third Cycle (Job 22-27)

Job becomes increasingly alienated from his community with failure of communication. Job resolves to meet God and receives four great revelatory insights.

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1. I have no special expertise in Hebrew and will be guilty of simply using the translation that best suits my purposes — principally the Revised Standard Version (hereafter RSV) and the New International Version (hereafter NIV).

2. Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1975), xii – xiii.

III. Job Prepares to Meet God (Job 28-37)

A. Job's Final Soliloquy (Job 28-31), *poetry*

Job, steadfast in covenant fidelity, binds himself to God and man with self-imprecating oaths.

B. Elihu Speeches (Job 32-37), *poetry except 32: 1-5 (prose)*

Job withstands a final challenge from Elihu.

IV. Job at the Veil (Job 38: 1 – 42: 6), *poetry*

Job speaks with God at the veil and enters into God's presence.

V. Epilogue (Job 42: 7-17), *prose*

Job, restored to health/wealth/family, functions in a priestly role and enjoys his posterity for several generations.

Whereas Job may well have been a historical figure (see Ezekiel 14:14, 20; James 5:11; Doctrine & Covenants 121:10), the biblical book of Job is, in my view, an extremely sophisticated literary composition designed to raise questions and invite man into a deeper relationship with God. There are many features of Job that strain credulity if the book is approached as literal history, including the quasi-partnership of God and Satan in the Prologue. Likewise, distressed humans are unlikely to converse in beautiful poetry while sitting on an ash heap, as portrayed in the Dialogues (see Job 3–27). The book of Job, like all great drama, uses dialogue (as opposed to narrative) in an attempt to penetrate the essence of things — to explicate important truths about God, man, and their possibilities for covenant relationship.

Job and his three friends start with shared assumptions and a common understanding of the nature of God, man, and the cosmos. They are in *confessional unity*. This quickly breaks down as Job, as a result of his suffering, begins to question previously shared assumptions.

Most of the disputes in the book of Job are related to the idea of *retribution*. The friends (and Job initially) conceive of a rigid order in the cosmos, created and maintained by an all-powerful and perfectly just God, where the righteous prosper and the wicked are brought to ruin, after perhaps being given a time to repent. Therefore, they reason, if a person suffers, he or she must have sinned.<sup>3</sup> Having previously thought the same, Job comes to know by his bitter suffering that rigid retribution is false. He realizes that he is suffering innocently (suffering out of proportion to any sin), along with many others, whereas the wicked frequently thrive. Job holds ferociously to this truth, destroying the previous unity with his friends. Job is forced to entertain probing questions about the nature of God, man, and the moral order, questions that lead to his transformation. He comes to understand that salvation cannot be adequately encompassed by categories of sin and retribution and that truth is more important than confessional unity based on false premises.

Irony abounds in the book of Job. By *irony*, I mean a text that is intended to mean something different from what it seems to say. Thus, the important meaning is different from, even contrary to, the superficial or obvious meaning. For example, Job asks, “Who will say to [God], ‘What doest thou?’” (Job 9:12, RSV). Here Job seems to say that no man would venture to question God’s actions. Yet, questioning God is precisely what Job does. As another example, God asks Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (Job 38:4, RSV). This appears to portray an overbearing God intimidating Job with His awesome majesty. Ironically, however, God may actually be inviting Job to a deeper understanding of and participation in creation. Superficially, this text seems to suggest that Job could not have been present at creation, whereas ironically he may

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3. This oversimplified conception of reality is dominant in Deuteronomy and Proverbs.

well have been (Abraham 3:22–25). Irony functions to invite the reader into a creative and profound engagement with the text and to subvert conventional understanding.

Central to my analysis of the book of Job is the concept of the *existential question* as described by Janzen.<sup>4</sup> Existential questions are not posed to be answered by facts or information. They are related to a process of growth and becoming, with the question posing a goal to be lived toward. The answer to the question is the transformed self, it having been given the power to move toward the goal by the question itself. The disclosure of one's own existential questions to others admits them to the sphere of one's own being and becoming. To share existential questions is to offer to share being. Janzen views covenant as a relationship in which participants share existential questions toward a shared outcome. In this light, the creation of earth by God for man is a covenantal act wherein God shares existential questions with man: (1) Is it worthwhile to worship God for His own sake apart from material gain? (2) Can man, by coming to earth and worshipping God, enter into a process of becoming that allows him to participate in God's life and being?

The book of Job can be understood as Job's spiritual journey in response to questions posed by God. Existential questions arising within God in the Prologue are shared with Job, eventually stripping him of everything dear to him. Job internalizes these questions in his darkened and bitter state during the Dialogues. He holds on, evolving toward a transformed understanding of God and man, and finally reaches God's presence and experiences redemption. We will now consider Job's journey in detail.

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4. J. Gerald Janzen, *Job* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 19–20. My indebtedness to this commentary is immense and goes well beyond specific attributions in subsequent notes. I developed the idea for this paper as a result of pondering Janzen's work. In my opinion, his commentary on Job is unmatched in insight and inspiration.

## Prologue (Job 1–2)

Job, whose name potentially means either “Where is the divine father?” or “the persecuted one,”<sup>5</sup> is a non-Israelite living in an unnaturally idyllic world. He is rich and healthy, has a large and loving family, and is esteemed as the greatest man of his people. Furthermore, he is a member of a community with strong social bonds, a shared religion, and a common language. Job experiences all of this as the presence and friendship of God (see Job 29:2–7) and responds by living blamelessly, serving his fellow man, and defending the poor (see Job 1:1, 29:11–25). Nonetheless, as subsequent events will demonstrate, Job is, as yet, lacking both in self-knowledge and knowledge of God. He has personally experienced only goodness, tasting only the sweet.

Despite having reproduced and being a member of an established community, Job’s situation in the Prologue is analogous in many ways to that of Adam in the Garden before the Fall. Indeed, I consider the Prologue of Job to be a this-worldly analogue of the Garden of Eden.<sup>6</sup> I find it significant that the Prologue is composed in prose and will later make the case that the other two prose sections of Job (32:1–5 and 42:7–17) are also this-worldly analogues of other-worldly situations, events, or people. In contrast, the poetry sections of Job relate directly to events in this mortal, fallen world.

God intrudes on Job’s idyllic life by bringing Job to Satan’s attention, clearly in response to existential questions within God Himself about Job’s character and motivation and about the significance of human worship of God.<sup>7</sup> Satan insists that Job fears God only for secondary gain and that he would not

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5. David J.A. Clines, *Job 1-20* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 11. The first meaning signifies Job’s persistent search for God’s presence; the second, the community’s ultimate treatment of Job.

6. Idea derived generally from Janzen, *Job*, 31–60, 189–191.

7. Janzen, *Job*, 20–21.

worship God “for naught,” introducing the metaphor of the “hedge” to summarize all that God has done to prosper and protect Job (see Job 1:9–10). This *hedge* around Job is best conceived as a many-layered veil, consisting of the nourishing and cradling conditions of Job’s life: health, family, wealth, societal fabric of shared language and religion, and perceived stable order and justice in the cosmos.<sup>8</sup> Satan wagers that if God will tear down the hedge, Job will curse God (see Job 1:11). God gives Satan permission to proceed with dismantling the hedge, stating: “All that he has is in your power” (Job 1:12, RSV).

Job’s response is of utmost importance to God. The question is whether Job will hold fast to his integrity — which, in my view, consists of remaining absolutely honest but continuing to seek a relationship with God despite loss of the hedge. Failure of integrity would result from yielding to the pressure of the crowd and admitting that his sins justify his suffering, effectively holding on to a lie in hopes of appeasing “God.” Likewise, cursing God and seeking completely autonomously to find his own way in the world would breach his integrity. Either response would be a victory for Satan, the father of lies.

Satan goes out from God, and Job’s hedge begins to collapse. Two different bands of marauding humans destroy some flocks and servants. “Fire from heaven” completes their destruction, while a great wind destroys Job’s children. The book of Job is ambiguous about the precise relationship of either God or Satan to these natural and human-initiated disasters.

After these experiences, Job proclaims that he is “naked” (Job 1:21), like Adam and Eve in the garden after eating the forbidden fruit (see Genesis 3:7–11). Job continues to bless God, so Satan receives permission to afflict Job’s skin with loathsome sores, removing a more interior part of the hedge (Job 1:21–2:7). All that remains of Job’s hedge are the societal bonds of

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8. Janzen, *Job*, 39–46.

caring friends, shared religion, and common language. These, too, will be stripped away in the ensuing Dialogues, leaving Job alone to struggle with the great moral question of whether he should serve God “for nothing.”

After Job is afflicted with the sores, his wife invites him to “curse God and die,” thus mediating the desire of Satan (Job 1:11, 2:5). In this action she precisely parallels Eve in the garden, who conveyed Satan’s desire to Adam that they eat the forbidden fruit. Job calls his wife foolish and then continues with an apparently rhetorical question: “Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10, RSV). This response is ambiguous — much different from Job’s blessing of God after the first series of calamities. Job’s irritation at his wife, combined with his hiding behind a seemingly rhetorical question, suggest that his wife has actually expressed an existential question now raging inside Job.<sup>9</sup>

Job removes himself in solitude to an ash dump, resigning himself to a dreary waste (compare with 1 Nephi 8:4–7), while describing his state in terms of bitterness (see Job 7:11, 9:18, 10:1, 13:26, 23:2, 27:2) and darkness (see Job 16:16, 19:8, 23:17, 30:26). Job has thus gone through a kind of fall, brought about, in some sense, by the machinations of Satan but nonetheless occurring at the initiative of God. The book of Job thereby expresses in a literary, dramatic way the idea that “it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet” (D&C 29:36). Just like Adam and Eve, Job has partaken of the bitter tree, which will make it possible for him to comprehend the sweet tree or tree of life (compare with 2 Nephi 2:15–16) and thus partake of the life and being of God. Participating in God’s life is much different than simply being taken care of by God.

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9. *Ibid.*, *Job*, 49–51.

In general, the sources of suffering (tasting the bitter) in this world are personal sin, the sins of others, natural disasters, and ignorance. We know from the Prologue that Job's suffering is innocent, not the result of personal sin, although this will subsequently be disputed ever more vociferously by the "friends." As mentioned above, the Prologue seems to imply that both God and Satan had a role in causing Job's suffering, with the text being ambiguous about the precise level of responsibility of each. Even when Satan supposedly goes out to afflict Job, the text speaks of "fire from God" (Job 1:16). Furthermore, when we look directly at Job's suffering, it is caused either by the sins of other humans or natural disasters, all exacerbated by Job's relative ignorance. Such suffering, which Job experiences to an extreme degree, is part and parcel of life in this created, risky world, which is filled with people who voluntarily abuse others and which is subject to unpredictable natural events. I argue that the book of Job gives no definitive answers to the reasons for innocent suffering. The very ambiguity of the book on these points invites the reader to ponder and question.<sup>10</sup>

My opinion that the book of Job is a dramatic literary composition and not literal history is supported by the extreme nature and the stylized reporting of the first series of disasters to befall Job. In all four instances one person "alone escapes to tell" Job. Additionally, the very ambiguity regarding the source of each disaster (God? Satan? nature? humans?) fits drama more than literal history. Furthermore, God's complaining to Satan that Satan had "moved [God] against [Job] to destroy him without cause" (Job 2:3, RSV) strains credulity beyond reason if taken as history. Finally, I doubt that the true God would literally authorize the massacre of a man's children simply to put him to the test.

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10. I personally believe that neither God nor Satan directly controls human beings nor directly precipitates natural disasters. See Mack C. Stirling, "Violence in the Scriptures," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43 (1) (2010):80-81, 89-91..

The book of Job is not primarily about suffering. It is about a journey from blissful ignorance through darkness and bitterness to a transformed relationship with God. It is about seeking an ever stronger connection to God, based on truth, no matter what the circumstances. Job's journey is initiated by God in response to existential questions within God. The existential questions are then taken up by Job as a result of his suffering as he is driven to wonder what it means to be created in the image of God, why innocent suffering occurs, and what God's relationship is to justice. In this process, Job is proved and tried at God's initiative, much like all humanity: "We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abraham 3:24–25).

The tearing down of Job's hedge can be understood as passing through a veil — passing from a protected and secure environment to a wild and unpredictable natural world. Job is blocked from returning to his previous life. He corresponds to Adam and Eve after leaving the Garden of Eden, who are barred from re-entry and direct access to the tree of life (God)<sup>11</sup> by cherubim and a flaming sword (see Genesis 3:24; Alma 42:2–3). Thus, cherubim and the flaming sword can also be conceived as a veil, an idea supported by the presence of embroidered

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11. There are many reasons for equating Jesus/God with the Tree of Life. (1) Nephi sees the infant Jesus as the culmination of a revelation answering his question about the meaning of the tree of life (1 Nephi 11:9–21). (2) The response to the tree of life by people in Lehi's dream (1 Nephi 8:30) is the same response people have on entering God's presence (Rev. 1:13–17). (3) The tree of life represents the love of God (1 Nephi 11:22), but Jesus is the love of God personified (John 3:16). (4) The tree of life is essentially equivalent to the fountain of living waters (1 Nephi 11:25), but Jesus is the fountain of living waters (Jer. 2:13). (5) The fruit of the tree is eternal life (1 Nephi 15:36, D&C 14:7), which is the fruit of Jesus' atonement. (6) To be grafted into the olive tree (tree of life, cf. D&C 88 preface) is to come to the knowledge of Christ (1 Nephi 10: 14).

cherubim in the veil of ancient Israel's temple (see Exodus 26:31, 2 Chronicles 3:14). The tearing down of the hedge will move Job into realms of experience beyond guaranteed structure, something that will open up possibilities for new levels of understanding and becoming while entailing significant risk.

We now turn to Job outside the hedge in his lonely, dark, and bitter state.

### **Dialogues (Job 3–27)**

**First Cycle (Job 3–14).** After seven days of silence on the ash heap with the three friends, Job's anguish boils over. Surprisingly for the hero of a canonical text, Job *curse*s the day of his birth, in effect saying that it would have been better never to have been born (see Job 3:1–10). Coming close to losing his integrity, Job has lost unquestioning trust in God. He raises a series of questions, asking why he did not die at birth and why God would give life and light to one who then suffers so bitterly as to desire death (see Job 3:11–26). Job refers longingly to Sheol (the realm of the dead) as a place where he would rest from suffering. It is uncertain at this point whether Job will search for death or for meaning, but Job's wrestling with questions suggest that he has absorbed existential energy that may give him power to move forward.

Eliphaz, the first of the friends to speak (see Job 4–5), remonstrates gently with Job, reminding him that Job himself had previously counseled and strengthened those in similar circumstances (see Job 4:1–6). Job should not be impatient now that trouble has come to him. It is critical to remember that Job and his friends (community) begin with a common religious language and understanding. In his journey toward a transformed understanding of and relationship with God, Job will step out of and become differentiated from his community. The friends will continue to represent conventional religion and the wisdom of tradition, relying on their own experience (see

Job 5:27) and the words of the elders (see Job 15:9–12), as Job once had.

In his first speech, Eliphaz anticipates all subsequent arguments the friends will make to Job. First he asserts that certain retribution holds: “Think now, who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off? As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same” (Job 4:7–8, RSV).

In his second point, Eliphaz claims to have received a revelation, described in troubling terms: “dread came upon me, and trembling ... a spirit glided past my face [and] the hair of my flesh stood up but I could not discern its appearance” (Job 4:14–16, RSV). The content of the revelation is even more troubling: that man cannot be righteous or pure before God and that man dies without wisdom (Job 4:17–21). This is precisely Satan’s position in the Prologue regarding Job — that Job would be unable to remain blameless and upright without the hedge. In contrast, God is seeking a man who will hold on to his integrity. By absorbing and expounding this spurious revelation, Eliphaz and the other friends unwittingly become representatives of Satan.

Eliphaz’s third and final point is that God will chasten man in hopes of bringing repentance before final destruction: “Behold, happy is the man whom God reproves; therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he binds up; he smites, but his hands heal” (Job 5:17–18, RSV). This text is a partial quote/partial paraphrase of Proverbs 3:11–12. Thus the friends — ministers of conventional religion — use the wisdom and understanding of men mixed with scripture, while unknowingly mediating Satan’s desires to Job.

Eliphaz is forced to assume that Job is a sinner because of his concept of retribution and the justice of God. He urges Job to understand the frailty and ignorance of man, admit his own sin, and lay his case before God, hoping for mercy and

restoration (see Job 5:7–27). This is sage advice for any sinner. However, the reader knows from the Prologue that it does not apply to Job, and that for Job to follow Eliphaz’s advice would breach his integrity. Job’s challenge will be to “test and reject all the answers attempted by men.”<sup>12</sup>

Job responds (see Job 6–7) by complaining bitterly about his suffering, described metaphorically as being struck by poisoned arrows from God, and he excuses the rash words because he assumes an impending death (see Job 7:5–11). Indeed, Job loathes his life (see Job 7:13–16), which he describes as slavery imposed by God (see Job 7:1–6), and actually prays that God will kill him (see Job 6:8–9). At this point, Job has no hope of resurrection: “He who goes down to Sheol does not come up” (Job 7:9, RSV). Job laments that he has no strength, resources, or reasonable hope to continue on. Yet, the existential questions inside drive him on.

Job angrily inverts Psalm 8, which portrays man as God’s vice-regent on earth, asking: “What is man that thou dost make so much of him, and that thou dost set thy mind upon him?” (Job 7:17, RSV).<sup>13</sup> This idea, which expresses gratitude to God in the psalm, now expresses horror at God’s treatment of man (Job). Job next ponders the question of why the sin of a mere mortal should make a difference to God (see Job 7:20–21). This question is critical and will recur several times in the book of Job.

Job then reproves his friends for being treacherous, presumably for failing to support his innocence in the face of his calamities (see Job 6:14–21). He pleads with them to show him his error and promises not to lie to them, clearly hoping that the friends will take his side and vindicate him (see Job 6:24–30). From this point on, Job’s suffering will stem more

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12. Francis I. Andersen, *Job* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 135.

13. Janzen, *Job*, 82–83.

from rejection by friends/community than from the initial calamities detailed in the Prologue.

Bildad answers by calling Job's words "wind" and then announcing a strict doctrine of retribution, even stating that Job's children were killed because they sinned (see Job 8:4, NIV), which the reader knows to be false.<sup>14</sup> Bildad bases his assumption on the traditions of men handed down over generations (see Job 8:8–10). He even seems to mock Job, stating: "If you are pure and upright, surely [God] will rouse himself for you" (Job 8:6). Ironically, this does eventually happen, but not by Bildad's prescription (see Job 42:7).

Chapters 9 and 10 put Job's dilemma in sharp perspective. Like the friends, Job had always believed that the world was an orderly place, created and controlled by a perfectly just God who rewarded the righteous with good and the wicked with calamity. Now, as a result of his own experience, Job knows that this assumption is flawed. Disoriented, but firmly holding to the truth of his own innocence (see Job 9:15, 20, 21; 10:1), Job considers the possibility that God is simply an all-powerful bully who capriciously does whatever He pleases and calls it "right." Having been marked by such a God for calamity, Job can never be clean or innocent in God's grand scheme: "If I wash myself with snow ... yet thou wilt plunge me into a pit" (Job 9:30–31, RSV); "though I am innocent, my own mouth would condemn me; though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse" (Job 9:20, RSV). Job laments the utter impossibility of contending against or even communicating meaningfully with such a being, who cannot be answered like a man (see Job 9:3, 11–12, 32–33).

From Job's current perspective, God seems to "mock at the

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14. This is virtually the only reference in the Dialogues to the calamities of the Prologue. My preference for the NIV over the RSV is supported by Marvin Pope, Marvin H. Pope, *Job in the Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 64.

calamity of the innocent” and give the earth “into the hand of the wicked” (Job 9:23–24, RSV). Job wonders why God allowed him to be born or bothered to create him in the first place, simply then to torture him and cut his life short (see Job 10:5–9, 18–22). Ironically protesting that no one can ask God what He is doing, Job does precisely this, propelled forward by the need to understand why God is contending against him (see Job 9:12, 10; 2).

Another important theme appears in Chapter 10. After speaking of his public disgrace (see Job 10:15), Job charges God: “Thou dost renew thy witnesses against me ... thou dost bring fresh hosts against me” (Job 10:17). Thus, the friends — witnesses against Job — seem to be exponents of a larger crowd phenomenon, which Job sees as coming from God. Job is still holding to his initial, untransformed understanding of God, which is shared with the community. The reader, though, already has reason to suspect that neither the friends nor their cosmic paradigm properly represent God.

Zophar now interjects to accuse Job of babbling untruth and mocking God, desiring that God would speak and properly rebuke Job (see Job 11:16). He even states that Job’s suffering is less than he deserves (see Job 11:6)! Zophar taunts Job with being unable to find out the deep things of God (see Job 11:7); Job is ironically already on a journey to do just that. Because he holds rigidly to a false paradigm of God, Zophar will be unable to join Job on the journey. Assuming that Job’s problem is sin, Zophar recommends repentance, promising restoration and temporal security: “You will lie down and, none will make you afraid” (Job 11:13–19, RSV). Zophar thus persists in doing the work of Satan by urging Job to admit guilt (breach his integrity by holding to a lie) in exchange for a (false?) promise of security.

Chapters 12–14 conclude the first cycle of the Dialogues. In my view, these critically important chapters constitute a turning point for the entire book. Here, Job reaches the greatest depths

but then turns and begins his ascent toward a transformed relationship with God and a new level of understanding.

Job first sarcastically dismisses the friends' wisdom, insisting that he also has understanding while ever mindful that, though innocent, he has become a laughingstock (see Job 12:1–4). Everywhere Job looks he sees injustice. He suffers while “the tents of robbers are at peace, and those who provoke God are secure” (Job 12:6, RSV). Job notes that God has all power (see Job 12:10, 12, 13), manifested both by control over nature (see Job 12:15) and human history (see Job 12:17–25). Accordingly, he places the blame for the injustice squarely on God, asking rhetorically: “Who ... does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?” (Job 12:9, RSV). Job even accuses God of bringing deep darkness to light (see Job 12:22, RSV). At this point Job is on the verge of breaking covenant, of rejecting God and going his own way in the world. Job has reached his darkest moment and deepest point of descent.

Astonishingly, Job now does an about-face, dismissing the friends as worthless physicians who speak falsely for God (see Job 13:4,5) and conceiving a compelling desire to speak to God face to face (see Job 13:3, 10, 22–24). Job's desire to see God, present his case, and repair his relationship is brought to powerful expression: “He may slay me, I'll not quaver. I will defend my conduct to his face. This might even be my salvation, for no impious man would face him” (Job 13:15–16, translation by Pope).<sup>15</sup>

Job's persistent, though not perfectly straight course to this goal will occupy the rest of the book. Job's transformation has begun. He returns to some confidence in God's justice, stating that God “will surely rebuke” the friends for their lies (Job 13:10) and inviting God to make him understand his current sins, if any, while admitting to iniquities in his youth (see Job

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15. Pope, *Job*, 97.

13:23-26).<sup>16</sup>

We now find Job oscillating between hope and despair. After noting that a tree, though cut down, may bud and put forth branches at the scent of water, Job laments that a man dies and rises not again (see Job 14:7-12). But then Job, in a flash of inspiration, suddenly receives his *first great revelatory insight*:

If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal  
me till your anger has passed!  
If only you would set me a time and then remember  
me!  
If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my  
hard service I will wait for my renewal to come.  
You will call and I will answer you. You will long for  
the creature your hands have made.  
Surely then you will count my steps but not keep  
track of my sin.  
My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover  
over my sin. (Job 14:13–17, NIV)

Job thus conceives of a loving God calling him back to a meaningful relationship, with redemption from sin as necessary, and of the possibility of renewal of life in a resurrection. Although this vision is not immediately sustained, it represents a dramatic shift in Job's understanding.

As Janzen notes, this "brief but incandescent vision of a positive outcome to his sufferings arises in the very context of his darkest suspicions."<sup>17</sup> However, it occurs only after Job has firmly committed to seeking God's face. Janzen further suggests that this vision occurs "in response to a hidden call and hidden divine presence."<sup>18</sup> God, who has been reaching out to Job since

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16. Job never claims to be innocent of all sin, just of sin that would, according to his understanding, justify the calamities that have befallen him.

17. Janzen, *Job*, 110.

18. *Ibid.*, 112.

the Prologue, now has a real, though tenuous, grip on Job. This ever-strengthening grip will aid Job in his journey out of bitterness and darkness and into the presence of God.

**Second Cycle (Job 15–21).** This cycle features prolonged pronouncements of the fate of the wicked, combined for the first time with direct assertions of sin against Job. Job also receives two additional revelatory insights.

Eliphaz charges Job with being filled with the east wind (a figure of destruction in the prophets — see Hosea 12:1, 13–15), dangerously doing away with fear of God, and having iniquity as the source of his words/inspiration (see Job 15:1–6). He tauntingly reminds Job that he has not participated in divine councils and reprimands him for rejecting the wisdom of the aged in favor of his own prideful assertions (see Job 15:7–10). Clearly sensing that Job is dangerous to the confessional unity of the community, Eliphaz returns to his supposed “revelation” of Job 4:12–21, reminding Job that man cannot be clean before God (see Job 15:11–16) and thereby reiterating Satan’s original contention (see Job 1:9–11). Eliphaz then launches into a prolonged (windy) affirmation of certain retribution against the wicked (see Job 15:17–35), stating: “The wicked man writhes in pain all his days” (Job 15:20). Eliphaz now clearly sees Job as one of the wicked.

Job responds (see Job 16–17) by dismissing his accusing friends as miserable comforters (see Job 16:1–5), realizing that the breach between them is irrevocable: “Come on again, all of you, and I shall not find a wise man among you” (Job 17:10, RSV). Job had previously hoped that his friends would serve as his advocates, attempting to vindicate him. Now, surrounded by hostile mockers and fearing a violent death (see Job 16:10–15, 17:2), Job realizes that there is no advocate for him anywhere on earth, and he appeals to the earth itself to serve as a witness by not covering his blood nor blotting out his cry (see Job 16:18).

In this awful state, Job receives his *second great revelatory insight*:

Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend. (Job 16:19–21, NIV)

In the midst of unrelenting persecution on earth, Job, in a moment of inspiration, reaches out to a perceived advocate in heaven and prays that God Himself will provide the necessary pledge or witness on his behalf (see Job 17:2–3). This second revealed insight has a powerful effect on Job. Whereas he had previously yearned for death (see Job 3:1, 11; 6:8–9; 7:16), Job now refuses to yield to the grave or worm by letting go of his hope (see Job 17:11–16). Job has a new kind of hope, born of travail, that transcends anything he could have possessed before his “fall” (compare with Moses 5:11; D&C 29:39).

With the complete loss of community solidarity, Job's hedge is now finally gone. He is speaking and acting freely with no hope of secondary gain in this world, with even speech itself giving no benefit (see Job 16:6). Job has not yielded to the lie nor cursed God. Satan appears to be losing. Will Job continue on his path to freely worshipping God?

Despite his revelatory insights and evolving understanding of God, Job often continues to use the language and paradigms he formerly shared with the friends, speaking of God as the source of his problems (see Job 16:7–14, 17:6). Yet, in the very same context he attributes his suffering to the mocking crowd of men: “Men have gaped at me with their mouth, they have struck me insolently upon the cheek, they mass themselves together against me” (Job 16:10, rsv). I suggest that Job's inconsistency in first referring to God as his adversary (see Job 16:9, rsv) and then appealing to God to lay down a pledge for him (serve as his advocate) results from Job's position between

the old understanding once shared with the friends and a new understanding (paradigm) that will not culminate until Job speaks with God at the veil.

Bildad (see Job 18), resentfully perceiving that Job considers the friends as stupid cattle,<sup>19</sup> insists that what Job is suggesting is tantamount to moving the entire earth for one man (see Job 18:1–4). Instead, the fixed moral order in the universe expels the wicked and remains stable (see Job 18:5–21). The wicked are caught in traps, are afflicted with consumption of the skin (Job!), are brought to the king of terrors, and leave no memory or descendants behind. Andersen notes that these are “the things most dreaded by an Israelite in life and in death as the tokens of rejection by God.”<sup>20</sup> Bildad’s contention that the wicked leave no trace in the world rebuts Job’s hope that the earth will not cover his blood (see Job 18:17, cf. 16:18). In Bildad’s view, Job will have no witness in heaven nor on earth.

The argument continues with Job insisting that the friends are trying to “break [him] in pieces with words” (Job 19:2, RSV), consistent with Job’s practice in the Dialogues of complaining more about the friends’ verbal attacks than the calamities of the Prologue. Indeed, Job now sees the friends and the entire community, including his own wife and family, as “God’s troops” persecuting him on every side (see Job 19:5–22). Job is fast becoming a scapegoat for the crowd in a war of all against one. Job’s cry against the violence threatening him goes unanswered, prompting Job to pray that his words might indelibly be written in stone as a permanent witness. Paradoxically, as is clear from Job 19:5–22, Job still accepts the will and voice of the crowd in some sense as the voice of God, despite the contradiction between this idea and his ongoing revelatory insights.

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19. Ironically, in a sense, both Job and the friends in the Prologue before the calamities were like ignorant cattle in a well-watered meadow.

20. Andersen, Job, 205. These calamities are curiously similar to the fate decreed for the enemies of Joseph Smith (D&C 121:10–21).

In this turmoil, Job receives his *third great revelatory insight*:

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me! (Job 19:25-27, RSV)

This third insight is more emphatic than the first two, consistent with Job's ever firmer grip on an understanding of God. The idea of physical resurrection and seeing God are clear in the RSV translation above. Less clear is the idea, also contained in the Hebrew, that the Redeemer/Advocate will be God Himself. This concept is expressed in the New English Bible: "I shall discern my witness standing at my side and see my defending counsel, even God himself" (19:26-27).<sup>21</sup>

Zophar, like Bildad, insulted by Job's words and attitude, now makes a lengthy statement about certain retribution against the wicked (see Job 20). He also attacks Job's confidence in an advocate in heaven, saying that "the heavens will reveal [the wicked one's] iniquity and the earth will rise up against him" (see Job 20:27, RSV). Implicit in this thought is the assumed correspondence between the voice of the crowd or community on earth and God's voice in heaven. While Zophar's words (see Job 20:12-22) have value in understanding the nature of sin and its consequences, they do not apply to Job. The friends

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21. Debates about the meaning/translation of Job 19:25-27 have raged for centuries. See Clines, *Job* 1-20, 427-470 and Janzen, *Job*, 138-150 for helpful overviews of these issues. I have simply chosen those translations/interpretations which most closely fit my own, which is informed by the entire LDS canon. My interpretation of these verses is supported by Janzen, *Job*, 138-150; Andersen, *Job*, 208-210; John E. Hartley *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 292-297; Gerald H. Wilson *Job in New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2007), 207-210.

never consider the suffering of the righteous because they are blinded by a rigid theology in which it never occurs. Zophar's concluding point — "This is the wicked man's portion from God, the heritage decreed for him by God" (Job 20:29 RSV) — will later be quoted by Job as he apparently composes a speech for Zophar (see Job 27:13).

Job concludes the second cycle by imploring his friends to see, as he has, that retribution does not hold in this world (see Job 21). He refutes Zophar's last argument almost point by point, finally appealing to the testimony of travelers, who have observed much of the world, that the wicked rarely experience calamity (see Job 21:29–30). Job takes particular exception to the friends' idea that "God stores up [the iniquity of the wicked] for their sons" (Job 21:19, RSV; see also Job 20:10, 18:15–19), suggesting, instead, that God should properly recompense each person for his or her own deeds. However, the friends' concept of God punishing the children for the sins of their fathers does find support in scripture (see Exodus 20:5); thus, we have another instance of the friends mixing scripture with accumulated human tradition (see also Job 15:9–10).

Job observes, concerning the wicked, that they say to God: "Depart from us" (Job 21:14), leaving the obvious point unstated that they should be demanding that Satan depart instead of God. Job is familiar with this temptation, having once wished that God would "let him alone" (Job 10:20). Now, Job maintains that the "counsel of the wicked is far from [him]" (Job 21:16, RSV), while accusing the friends of concocting schemes to wrong him. Job condemns the comfort of the friends as empty and their answers as falsehood (see Job 21:34).

**Third Cycle (Job 22–27).** Given the increasing level of acrimony and disagreement, it is no surprise the dialogue aborts in the third cycle in a failure of communication, a failure of language itself.

Eliphaz makes a last valiant effort to make Job see things his way (see Job 22). He argues that man and his knowledge are nothing before God; therefore, man has no right to question or judge God (see Job 22:2, 11–14). Eliphaz is correct to some extent; however, the problem is that Job is actually challenging the *friends' false premise* about God that all suffering is merited because God is just. Unable to see this, Eliphaz both misjudges Job's righteousness and fails to perceive Job's journey to a deepened understanding of God. Eliphaz holds tenaciously to the idea that he understands God correctly — and thus speaks for God — despite the contradictory evidence around him, most obviously in the life of Job.

Eliphaz's distorted conception of God is clear in the rhetorical question he presents Job: "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty if you are righteous, or is it gain to him if you make your ways blameless?" (Job 22:3, rsv). Eliphaz clearly assumes the answer is "no." Here, Eliphaz speaks falsely, saying God is indifferent to (without passion for) human virtue. In fact, the entire drama of Job was precipitated precisely because God does prize human uprightness and blamelessness (see Job 1:8).

Because of Job's suffering, Eliphaz can see Job only as guilty, as keeping to the "old way which wicked men have trod" (Job 22:15, rsv) and languishing in darkness, insensitive to the truth (see Job 22:11). Now, for the first time, he accuses Job of great wickedness and *endless iniquity* (see Job 22:5). He specifically charges Job with oppressing the poor and powerless, even stripping their limited possessions for gain. Job will vigorously deny these charges under oath in chapter 31. The very unreasonableness of these accusations supports the idea that Job is being made a scapegoat for the sins of the community at large.

Eliphaz admonishes Job to "agree with God and be at peace" (Job 22:21). However, for Eliphaz this means to agree with him and the community he represents. Clearly in rivalry

with Job, Eliphaz also claims that “the counsel of the wicked is far from [him]” (Job 22:18, RSV; see also Job 21:16). Eliphaz asks Job to return to God, laying his own gold (insistence on his own righteousness and understanding — his integrity) in the dust in order to make God his “gold” (see Job 23:23–25). Continuing to speak for God, Eliphaz promises Job restoration, even to the point (in NIV and Pope translations<sup>22</sup>) of his making intercession for the guilty and facilitating their deliverance (see Job 22:27–30). Eliphaz now, however, clearly sees himself in this role with respect to Job. Ironically, it will be Job in the Epilogue, after coming to confessional agreement/unity with God at the veil, who will make intercession for the friends (see Job 42:7–9).

Ignoring Eliphaz, Job expresses a fervent wish to find God and present his case in person, reaffirming his previous resolution to seek God no matter the consequences (see Job 23:3–5, cf. 13:13–24). Job’s overwhelming desire is a face-to-face meeting with God, not by contrived repentance as recommended by Eliphaz (see Job 22:21–30), but in honesty and fairness.<sup>23</sup>

Pondering meeting God, Job receives his *fourth great revelatory insight*:

Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; he would give heed to me. There an upright man could reason with him, and I should be acquitted forever by my judge. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand I seek him, but I cannot behold him; I turn to the right hand, but I cannot see him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. (Job 23:6–10, RSV)

Significant changes have occurred in Job. He now realizes

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22. Pope, Job, 164.

23. Andersen, Job, 224–225.

that he can speak to God with reason and honesty (contrast with Job 9:32). He understands that God will not simply overwhelm him with His greater power and that acquittal can be expected (contrast with Job 9:20, 30–31). Not yet having seen God and despite having awareness of much injustice in the world, Job is now able to trust God's purposes and concern for him. Finally, Job comprehends that his trials have a transforming purpose, which will bring him forth as "gold," as something of great value to God. Job's "golden" soul will be the answer to God's (and Job's) existential questions.

Job affirms that he has treasured the word of God, kept His commandments, and stayed in God's way or path, reminiscent of the faithful in Lehi's dream (see Job 23:11–12; see also 1 Nephi 8:30; 2 Nephi 31:17–0). Nonetheless, despite confidence in God's purposes, Job is afraid of the prospect of further suffering (see Job 23:13–16). Job laments: "I am hemmed in by darkness, and thick darkness covers my face" (Job 23:17). Having received his fourth great revelatory insight and nearing the end of his journey, Job is more than ever cognizant of the veil of darkness separating him from God.

Job now considers not just his own suffering but that of others, particularly the poor and powerless (see Job 24:1–12), his suffering having deepened his empathy for others. While Job had always cared for the poor and oppressed (see Job 31:13–23), he now feels their suffering in a new and profound way. Like Habakkuk (see Habakkuk 1:12–13), Job is impatient for God to bring justice to all and put things right. Job reiterates once again the truth that the wicked often thrive at the expense of others, despite the assertions of the friends to the contrary (see Job 24:13–25).

Bildad interjects with praise of God's greatness and man's inability to be just or righteous before God, agreeing with Eliphaz (see Job 25:1–3; see also Job 4:17–19, 15:14–16). Bildad answers the question of Psalm 8 (*What is man?*) by saying that

man is a maggot or worm (see Job 25:6)! Thus, Bildad distorts Psalm 8 to strip humans of any royal potential before God.<sup>24</sup> Having none of this, Job sarcastically criticizes both Bildad's ability to counsel and the source of his inspiration (see Job 26:1–4). Job then seems to “finish” Bildad's speech for him by creating a parody of his position on the greatness of God (see Job 26:5–14).<sup>25</sup> Meaningful dialogue has aborted.

That Job has maintained his integrity is made clear in his next response (see Job 27:1–6). Job takes an oath in the name of God that he will not lie and that he will continue to hold fast to his integrity and righteousness, in effect binding himself to God in covenant fidelity. He will not falsely admit (major) sin in order to avail himself of grace, as the friends have proposed, nor will he respond with evil despite his unjust suffering. Although nothing seems to justify it, Job remains loyal to God, freely worshipping him. God now seems to have the man He has been reaching out for since the Prologue. Job closes chapter 27 (see Job 27:13–23) with an apparent caricature of the friends' (especially Zophar's) description of the fate of the wicked, even quoting Zophar (Job speaking in Job 27:13, Zophar speaking in Job 20:29).

As mentioned, speech and language are critical in the Joban drama, where truth is presented by means of dialogue. Job and the friends had shared a common language and confessional unanimity and, thereby, a common life, a common being. The Dialogues have been a war of words where Job attacks the friends' words (see Job 9:2, 12:2, 16:25, 19:2–3, 21:34, 26:1–4) and vice versa (see Job 8:2, 11:2–3, 15:2–3, 20:2–3). Job asks, “How long will you torment me, and break me in pieces with words?” (Job 19:2 RSV), illustrating the importance of speech and its relationship to being. Similarly, Job's words, which threaten the established social order, “greatly disturb” and

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24. Janzen, *Job*, 174–176.

25. *Ibid.*, 177–178.

trouble Zophar (see Job 20:2, NIV). In Job, speech and language are emblematic of and partly constitutive of being. Responding to God's call, Job no longer meaningfully participates in the language and being of the friends. Dialogue between them is no longer possible. Job is grasping forward toward a new level of being and understanding suggested by the four great revelatory insights, which betoken a transformed understanding of God and man.

### **Job Prepares to Meet God (Job 28–37)**

At this point in Job, we reach a new level or stage in the drama. Having tasted the wisdom of man (mixed with scripture) and found it wanting, Job has moved beyond dialogue with the friends and waits, instead, on God. In chapter 28, Job will meditate on the nature of wisdom, concluding that it ultimately must come from God. Job will review his past and present life in chapters 29 and 30. In chapter 31, Job will affirm his innocence and recommit himself in covenant fidelity, using self-imprecatory oaths and crying out that God will hear his words. In chapters 32–37, Job will face his last and possibly greatest test by Elihu. Elihu will try, without success, to engage Job in dialogue in order to bring him back to unity with the friends and derail his quest for God's face.

**Job 28–31 (Job Steadfast in Covenant Fidelity).** Although the text does not make it explicit, I consider chapter 28 to be Job's hymn to wisdom. Job praises human ingenuity, demonstrated by mining technology (see Job 28:1–14), but states of true wisdom that "man does not know the way to it" (Job 28:13, RSV). Yet, on another level, human mining is analogous to Job's recent experience, occurring in loneliness away from people, taking place in darkness on hidden paths, bringing hidden things to light, and producing gold and sapphires that have been transformed by fire. These descriptions of mining apply

equally well to Job's spiritual journey. Job then moves on to consider human commerce in precious stones and metals, noting that none of these can purchase wisdom (see Job 28:15–22). Yet, the Dialogues can be understood as an analogue to human commerce. The question is whether Job's experiences have produced true wisdom. Job's previous statement about coming forth as gold, after being tried by God (see Job 23:10–11), suggests that he has indeed gained wisdom.

Job concludes his hymn to wisdom by noting that God knows the way to it and that God established wisdom at creation, saying: "The fear of the Lord — that is wisdom" (see Job 28:23–28, RSV). On the surface, Job seems to say that God alone knows where wisdom is and the best that man can do, since he cannot find wisdom, is to fear God. However, this seems a bit banal and echoes the words of Zophar (see Job 11:7–9), who will be judged as speaking falsely of God (see Job 42:7–9). I propose an alternative reading. God alone understands the way to wisdom — for man. The way is to create earth for man, whereupon God can then share His existential questions and, thereby, potentially His wisdom and being. Man, by responding well to these existential questions *participates with God in the creative process* and learns wisdom.

True wisdom is found by free entry into risky acts of creation while maintaining fidelity to God. To come forth as gold, men must participate with God in the creative process of bringing forth that gold. Seen this way, the key existential question is whether man will participate with God in creation or go his own way. Job has sought God with fidelity, and his response has been creative, departing entirely from the conventional religious thinking of the crowd. Job is coming forth as gold; he and God will have a new common ground on which to meet, a shared higher level of being.

Job, now cut off from dialogue with the community, reflects on his life. Chapter 29 gives the fullest description of Job's life

before his “fall.” He then perceived God’s companionship and friendship (see Job 29:2–5), even stating that “the rock poured out for me streams of oil” (see Job 29:6, rsv), reminiscent of Adam’s easy access to food in the Garden of Eden. Beyond this, Job served as champion for the poor, sick, and powerless, with men waiting for Job’s counsel “as for the rain” (Job 29:23). Job’s voice was almost like the voice of God: “I chose their way, and sat as chief, and I dwelt like a king among his troops” (Job 29:25, rsv). Thus Job served as a royal, mimetic model, expecting a fulfilling life as a friend of God and man.

Now, all of this has been inverted (see Job 30). Even the lowest stratum of society, which Job now admits to having once disdained, mocks and spits at Job (see Job 30:1–10). Having been ostensibly marked as a sinner by his calamitous suffering, Job is now clearly a scapegoat for the crowd. The difference between royal model and despised scapegoat is all in the eyes of the multitude. As before, Job attributes his troubles at one moment to God (see Job 30:11, 19–23) and, at the next, to the crowd (see Job 30:9–10, 12–15). While Job has already rejected the friends’ explanation of his suffering and the voice of the crowd (the friends) as the voice of God, perhaps he does not yet fully discern the difference between favor in the eyes of God and favor in the eyes of men. He still sees his previous material prosperity and high societal rank as evidence of the presence of God in his life (see Job 29:1–6).

Although Job assumes an impending death at “God’s hand,” Job continues to cry out to God for help (see Job 30:20), supplementing this by cries for help in the assembly (see Job 30:28). Job perceives himself as being “reduced to dust and ashes” (see Job 30:19, NIV). This highly significant phrase will be critical in understanding Job’s response to God at the veil.<sup>26</sup> In the only use of this phrase outside Job, Abraham used “dust and

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26. Ibid., 207–208, 251–259.

ashes” to refer to mortal man in general (see Genesis 18:25–27). Man arises from dust and, in death, is reduced to ashes.

Job next takes an oath of innocence (see Job 31) before God (see Job 31:2, 6, 14, 23), affirming that he has not been guilty of fourteen sins<sup>27</sup> or seven categories of sin,<sup>28</sup> with the number seven signifying completeness.<sup>29</sup> Job has been faithful in all things. The oath has the effect of binding or consecrating Job in solidarity to God and his fellow man. This solidarity is perhaps brought to fullest expression in the following statement: “If I have rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant ... what then shall I do when God rises up? When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him? Did not he who made me in the womb make him? (Job 31:13–15, rsv). Job is thus committed to treating his neighbor as himself before God.

On five occasions, Job invokes self-imprecations — curses against himself — if he has not been or will not be true to his oath of innocence.<sup>30</sup> The most explicit of these is Job’s statement:

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27. Ibid., 212–213; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 408–409.

28. Wilson, *Job*, 334–356.

29. Many have noted the similarities between Job 31 and “Spell 125 of The Book of The Dead;” see R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (New York: The Limited Edition, 1972). Pope, *Job*, 227; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 407; Clines, *Job* 21–37, 1013–1014 contain overviews of this issue. Hugh Nibley, in turn, sees such Egyptian texts as presenting “an Egyptian endowment”, a good imitation of the Mormon endowment. See *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, xi–xiii; Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2009), 98–114; Hugh Nibley, *Eloquent Witness: Nibley On Himself, Others, And The Temple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2008), 496.

30. Such self-imprecatory oaths seem to have been quite common in ancient times. They were often connected to animal sacrifice with the person saying in effect, “May it be done to me as to these animals if I do not keep my covenant.” Accordingly, Jeremiah tells the leaders of Judea that the Lord will treat them like the calf they cut in two and walked between because they failed to keep their covenant to help the poor made at the time of the sacrifice (Jeremiah 34:17–20). Similarly, the Lord Himself passed between the pieces of cut, sacrificed animals as a token of

“If I have raised my hand against the fatherless ... then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket” (Job 31:21–22, rsv). These self-maledictions are a further expression of Job’s self-sacrifice or self-consecration in absolute fidelity to God and his fellow man.

Job’s self-consciousness of his innocence and commitment to righteousness give him confidence to approach God (see Job 31:23; see also Hebrews 10:19–23; 1 John 3:16–20, 4:16–19, 5:14; D&C 121:45–46). For a final time, Job cries out that God will hear his words, being willing to wear any indictment against himself as a crown and to approach God like a prince (see Job 31:35–37). In the last self-imprecation, Job invokes a curse of the Fall that “thorns grow instead of wheat” (Job 31:40, rsv; see also Genesis 3:17–18). Job only invokes these curses because he is confident he will not have to suffer them. This suggests that Job is ready to have the Fall reversed, much like the brother of Jared: “And when [the brother of Jared] had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back to my presence” (Ether 3:13).

A narrative voice now informs the reader: “The words of Job are ended” (Job 31:40, rsv). Job has passed through the calamities of the Prologue and the dark bitterness of the Dialogues, holding on to his integrity partly by virtue of four great revelatory insights. He is prepared to meet God — except for one final test.

**Job 34–37 (Job Tried by Elihu).** No part of the book of Job has aroused more controversy than the speeches of Elihu, with some praising their literary style and intrinsic value and others

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His faithfulness in keeping the covenant made with Abraham (Genesis 15:8–18).

denigrating them as banal.<sup>31</sup> I will look in detail at what Elihu says and does before reaching conclusions.

Elihu, found nowhere else in Job, suddenly appears, introduced in *prose* and given a human pedigree (see Job 32:1–5). The name *Elihu* means “He is my God.”<sup>32</sup> The question is whether *he* refers to the Lord or to Elihu himself, raising the possibility of an idolatrous connotation. Elihu’s anger at Job for maintaining that he is righteous and at the friends for not winning the argument is here mentioned four times. Why should Elihu be so angry?

Ironically, Elihu offers no truly new ideas. Elihu affects a sense of modesty, claiming he waited for those older and presumably wiser than him to speak first (see Job 32:6–7), but then denigrating the friends’ “wisdom” and refusing to use their speeches (see Job 32:11–17). He seems to be full of pride as well as anger. Elihu also claims to be a revelator — full of the Spirit, the breath of the Almighty, which constrains him to speak (see Job 32:8–10, 18–20; 33–34). Finally, Elihu guarantees that he will speak honestly without flattery; otherwise, he says, God would soon remove him (see Job 32:21–22, 33:3).<sup>33</sup> This last statement rings false because God permits hypocrites and flatterers significant latitude in mortality (see D&C 50:2–8; Mosiah 27:8). One cannot trust another’s honesty simply because God has not yet “removed” him.

Unlike the friends, Elihu frequently calls Job by name, both to Job himself (see Job 33:1, 31; 37:14) and to the crowd (see Job 34:5–7, 35, 36; 35:16), and repeatedly tries to draw Job into conversation (see Job 33:5, 32; 34:33; 35:2), as God will

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31. Janzen, *Job*, 217–218; Andersen, *Job*, 52–54; Clines, *Job* 21–37, 708–710.

32. Pope, *Job*, 241–242.

33. Elihu’s statement would be true if there were direct and immediate retribution on the sinner in this world, but such retribution denies the atonement of Christ and one of its gifts – the probationary period (2 Nephi 2:21–26, Alma 12:21–24, Alma 41:3–10).

subsequently do (see Job 38:3, 40:7). Job continually resists interchange with Elihu. Elihu, more confrontational than the friends, accuses Job of contending with God and categorically dismisses Job's claims of innocence and purity (see Job 33:9–13). He mentions to Job the possibility of an angel mediator (presumably Elihu himself!) who will intercede for him *if only Job will admit guilt*, even claiming that he desires to *justify* or vindicate Job (see Job 33:19–32). This “justification” is precisely the opposite of the kind Job is seeking, but it illustrates that Elihu will do or say anything to entice Job to let go of his integrity.

Elihu's perspective on divine revelation is instructive: “In a dream ... while they slumber ... he opens the ears of men and terrifies them with warnings” (see Job 33:15–18). This terrified response to “revelation” is reminiscent of Eliphaz's dread and trembling during his night vision, a vision that communicated Satan's position from the Prologue that a man (Job) could not be truly just before God (see Job 4:12–18, 1:8–11). Elihu also reiterates Eliphaz's idea that God uses suffering to chasten men and bring them to repentance (see Job 33:19–27, 5:17–18). This idea is true in a sense (as Elihu mixes truth with lies), but it does not apply to Job.

Elihu directs his second speech (see Job 34) to the crowd, publicly denouncing Job for sin at both the beginning and end of his speech (see Job 34:1–9, 31–37). He accuses Job of scoffing at God, walking with the wicked, speaking without knowledge, and adding rebellion to his original sin. He attacks Job for supposedly demanding that God “make requital” (Job 34:33, rsv) or dispense justice to suit Job. This is strange behavior for one who claims to desire Job's justification.

In the center of this speech, Elihu portrays his vision of God (see Job 34:10–30). According to Elihu, God is in complete control of the earth, sustaining life by His breath, ruling with indisputable righteousness and justice, and bringing the wicked to their deserved and timely end without bothering to bring any

man before Him in judgment (see Job 34:23–24). This “God” seems far removed from the One who sent Jesus Christ to be lifted up on the cross that men might be lifted up to God to be judged for their works (see 3 Nephi 27:14–15).<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, Elihu’s picture of God dogging every man’s steps in order to bring punishment on him as soon as he sins (see Job 34:21–25) reeks a bit of compulsion. This suspicion is strengthened by considering Elihu’s rhetorical question: “Who gave him charge over the earth?” (Job 34:13, rsv). Elihu’s assumed “no one” suggests a God who unilaterally imposes His will on mankind. This idea is subverted by D&C 121:46, which speaks of everlasting (divine) dominion as proceeding without compulsory means, in contrast to Satan’s plan of compulsion (see Moses 4:1–4).

Elihu, amplifying a previous point of Eliphaz (see Job 22:2–3), now confronts Job with God’s supposed indifference to human wickedness or righteousness: “If your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to him? If you are righteous, what do you give to him?” (Job 35:6–7). Elihu wants Job to believe that neither he nor his righteousness matter to God. The reader, of course, knows from the Prologue that this is false. God’s fervent desire is a “golden” Job. Elihu continues to berate Job, claiming that he “multiplies words without knowledge” (Job 35:16, rsv) in demanding to speak with God about his case, and assures Job that God will not respond to his empty cry nor come to him (see Job 35:9–16). These assertions will shortly be proved false.

Elihu begins his fourth speech (see Job 36–37) with an astounding claim: “I have yet something to say on God’s behalf. I will fetch my knowledge from afar ... for truly my words are not false: *one who is perfect in knowledge* is with you” (Job 36:2–4, rsv; emphasis added). Shortly after, Elihu extols God as one “who is perfect in knowledge” (Job 37:16). Thus, he puts himself

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34. Thus, judgment itself is a gift of the atonement. See also Helaman 14:15–17.

alongside and equal to God in a sense. The implication is that since Elihu shares common knowledge with God, his words are the words of God. Job must therefore decide whether to accept Elihu as a true prophet or continue to wait on the Lord. Hoping that Job will indeed give up his quest for God and accept him instead, Elihu reminds Job once more of his sin and urges him to repent (see Job 36:17–21).

Most of Elihu's fourth speech consists of now-tiresome perorations about God's majesty, the certainty of retribution against the wicked, the use of suffering as temporary divine discipline, God's inscrutable and indisputable ways, and the presence of God's voice and power in nature. However, in three places, Elihu's mask slips completely:

1. "Behold, God is great, and *we know him not*" (Job 36:26, RSV; emphasis added).
2. "Teach us what we shall say to him; we cannot draw up our case because of darkness. *Shall it be told him that I would speak?* Did a man ever wish that he would be swallowed up?" (Job 37:19–20, RSV; emphasis added).
3. "God is clothed with terrible majesty. *The Almighty — we cannot find him;* he is great in power and justice" (Job 37:22–23, RSV; emphasis added).

In other words, Elihu says that man cannot find, speak to, or know God. Unlike a true prophet who facilitates his listeners' journeys toward God, Elihu is a false prophet, doing anything he can to stop Job from meeting God.

As the reader has likely surmised, I see Elihu as a figure for Satan, much like the serpent in the Garden of Eden. This idea was first proposed by David Noel Freedman:

I believe that Elihu — who comes from nowhere and

disappears from the scene as soon as he is done with his speeches — is not a real person at all. Like the other participants, he has a name and a profession, but it is a disguise ... He is the person assumed or adopted by Satan to press his case for the last time.<sup>35</sup>

In my view, Elihu's otherworldly nature is also indicated by the *prose* introduction at his arrival. Seeing Elihu as Satan explains Elihu's extreme anger (at losing the battle for Job's soul to God), his pride, his absence from the Epilogue (on the other side of the veil where Job has overcome all evil), his pervasive lies, the potential idolatrous connotations of his name, his aggressive and repeated accusations of Job (Satan = adversary), and his prolonged attempts to turn Job from his course to God.

Understood in this light, Elihu's speeches take on new significance, constituting Job's final and greatest test. Rather than viewing Elihu as derivative and secondary to the friends, he should be viewed as the source of their well-intended but distorted advice. Elihu is the final barrier Job must pass before speaking with God at the veil. He thus occupies the place of Satan before Joseph Smith's first vision (see JS-H 1:16–17) and before Moses's greatest visions (see Moses 1:9–27). In the latter, Satan demands that Moses worship him and responds angrily when Moses refuses, frightening Moses and shaking the earth. Elihu's angry purpose with Job is similarly to frighten him back to the disoriented state of chapters 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 12 before Job firmly resolved to seek an audience with God.

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35. David Noel Freedman, "Is it possible to understand the Book of Job?" in *Bible Review* (April 1988), 29. Freedman's view is supported by Elihu's virtual equivalence with Satan in the *Testament of Job*, a probable Greek-Jewish work written in the first century B.C. or A.D. See James H. Charlesworth ed., "Testament of Job" in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 860–863.

### Job at the Veil (Job 38:1–42:6)

Like the Elihu speeches, this part of the book of Job has resulted in a great deal of controversy. A superficial reading sees God as a verbose, omnipotent bully (as Job had feared; see chapter 9) who paraphrases words of Elihu (compare Job 38:2 with Job 35:16) and frightens Job back into humble, unquestioning subservience. Job is seen as accepting the advice of the friends to repent and agree with God (see Job 11:13–18, 22:21–30) and as thus receiving restoration of health, wealth, and family. This reading is seemingly supported by translations of Job 42:6, which have Job repenting *in* “dust and ashes” and self-abasingly confessing ignorance and sin. I argue, following Janzen<sup>36</sup> and Andersen,<sup>37</sup> that such interpretations make nonsense of the entire book. The Lord’s words in the Epilogue — that the friends “have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has” (Job 42:7–8) — require that we interpret the book differently.

God’s coming to Job at Job 38:1 brings to culmination what both God and Job have been seeking since God first reached out to know Job in the Prologue. The Lord speaks with Job, conferring dignity on him, and challenges him to stand up and answer. God does not demand that Job give up his claim of innocence nor explain the reason for Job’s suffering but gently defends Himself against Job’s accusations of malign intent (see Job 38:2, 40:8, see also Job 12:22). There is no hint given that it is not for man to question God. Indeed, God answers Job’s questions with counter-questions, inviting him to deeper understanding.

Janzen insightfully summarizes these issues as follows:

God finally answers Job. But the answer, unlike those of the friends, gives no reason for Job’s sufferings. It is as though those sufferings are simply left enshrouded

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36. Janzen, *Job*, 225–259.

37. Andersen, *Job*, 288–315.

in the mystery of their givenness, their having happened. All God does is to deny Job's charges of dark purpose and indifference to justice and to ask Job three sorts of questions: Who are you, Where were you? Are you able? On the face of it these questions are rhetorical and have the specific force of impossible questions to which the proper answers are, I am nothing, I was not there, and I am not able. Yet again and again throughout the divine speeches, images and motifs and themes from earlier in the book are taken up and re-presented in such a way as to engender the suspicion that these apparently rhetorical questions are to be taken ironically, as veiling genuine existential questions posed to Job. The questions, as from another burning bush, have to do with the issue of Job's willingness to enter upon human vocation to royal rule in the image of God, when the implications of that image are intimated in terms of innocent suffering.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, the "questions of creation" addressed to Job in chapters 38–41 should be seen as a creative divine call asking for a response from Job, much like the existential questions of the Prologue. Will Job participate in and take responsibility for creation, despite unavoidable innocent suffering and the presence of evil?

**God's First Speech (Job 38–39).** God steps into the tumult of opinion, which is mirrored by a literal whirlwind, finally stating His fundamental question about Job to Job himself: "Who is this?" (Job 38:2). I suggest that Job is now essentially "gold," still blameless and upright despite loss of his hedge. God chides Job for darkening His "counsel by words without knowledge" (Job 38:2; see also Job 12:13–22). Ironically, Job has been in the dark (see Job 23:17) but was gaining knowledge

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38. Janzen, *Job*, 225.

(see Job's four great revelatory insights) as a result of absorbing God's existential questions, and now God has come to endow him with more knowledge (see Job 42:3). God challenges Job to respond to His questions "like a man," making God to know (see Job 38:3), thus fulfilling Job's hope (see Job 23:7) against his earlier despair (see Job 9:32). Two chapters of uninterrupted questions related to the created order then follow.

God asks who shut in the sea and set bounds for it (see Job 38:8–11). "Sea" functions as a metaphor for primal chaos or evil — which, like Satan in the Prologue, are permitted in creation but are bounded in some way. God then alludes to a coming day when the wicked will be shaken out of the earth, cut off from light, and rendered powerless (see Job 38:12–15; see also Heb. 12:26). Like the sea and Satan, evil men are also permitted in the created world but are ultimately bounded (see D&C 76:98–108).

God queries Job if he has walked in the recesses of the deep, if he has seen the gates of death, and if he knows the way to the dwelling of light (see Job 38:16–21). Job has indeed walked through the deepest darkness, by the gates of death, and to the place where light dwells (in God Himself)! God asks Job to consider His creative use of water (see Job 38:22–30). God makes rain fall in the desert, even in the absence of man, to bring forth grass and satisfy the desolate land (see Job 38:26–27). Analogously, Job has been in the desert, cut off from meaningful contact with his fellow man but receiving revelatory insights from God in a creative process. God questions Job about having knowledge of the "ordinances of the heavens" and the ability to establish their rule on earth and whether he grasps the wisdom in the clouds (see Job 38:31–38). Ironically, God is, and has been, endowing Job with wisdom by His existential questions.

God implicitly affirms His responsibility for creation and its consequences (see Job 38:39–41), and asks Job to consider

wild animals in the wilderness — whose natures are analogues of fallen natural man — which God permits in the world (see Job 38:39–39:30). Rule over wild, mysterious animals is analogous to divine rule over the world of fallen men, free to follow their own desires. Just as the ostrich stupidly permits her own eggs to be trampled, so does innocent suffering occur in the world (see Job 39:13–18). The poetic images of the wild ass/wild ox are particularly instructive with respect to Job (see Job 39:5–12; see also Job 6:5, 11:12). These animals roam the wasteland (like Job), having been set free (like Job without the hedge). The question is whether they will willingly return to a human master or, in Job's case, whether Job will freely worship God without the benefit of the hedge.

**Job's First (Non) Response (Job 40:1–5).** Characterizing Job as one who contends with deity, God asks him if he still wishes to correct His justice (see Job 40:1–2). God thus challenges Job to deeper understanding and loyalty, and God clearly desires an answer. Job, however, is not yet ready to respond to the Lord (see Job 40:3–5). He mentions a sense of unworthiness (NIV) or insignificance (RSV) as justification for his reticence and retreats into silence. Job's feelings of inadequacy before the Lord correspond to those of the brother of Jared in his question-and-answer session at the veil before entering into the Lord's presence (see Ether 3:2–14). M. Catherine Thomas's commentary on this text applies also to Job: "As the unredeemed soul, even a guiltless one, closes the gap between himself and his Maker, he perceives the contrast as so overwhelmingly great that he is sorely tempted to shrink back, to give up the quest."<sup>39</sup>

The image of Job "contending" with the Lord at the veil resonates with several others. The patriarch Jacob wrestled all night with a man (God) before seeing him face-to-face and

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39. M. Catherine Thomas, "The Brother of Jared at the Veil" in *Temples of the Ancient World* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1994), 392.

receiving a blessing instead of the requested name of God (see Genesis 32:22–30). Enos wrestled all day before God, hoping to experience a remission of sins, before hearing the Lord’s voice and probably seeing His face (see Enos 1:2–8, 19). Habakkuk, like Job, struggled with the presence of violence and injustice in the world (see Habakkuk 1:2–4) before hearing God’s voice (see Habakkuk 2:1–4) and seeing God’s glory (see Habakkuk 3:3–6). Job’s experience at the veil is profitably compared with these.

**God’s Second Speech (Job 40:6–41:34).** God again challenges Job to answer Him (see Job 40:), asking if Job would condemn God in order to justify himself (see Job 40:8). In the rigid theology of retribution that Job once shared with the friends, they concluded he was sinful because he suffered. Job, initially locked into the same theology but knowing he was innocent, was forced to question God’s justice (see Job 9:15–33, 12:13–25). By the standards of this theology, either God or Job was unjust/unrighteous. As we have seen, that understanding of God and man collapsed for Job in the Dialogues, being replaced by fragments of new religious understanding (the four great revelatory insights) that will lead to transformation in Job, including the understanding that he does not have to condemn God to justify himself.

In order to elicit or amplify a transformed understanding of true justice (ruling in love without compulsion — see D&C 121:34–45), God ironically invites Job to use raw power and coercively solve all of the inequities in the world, punishing the proud and wicked while clothing himself in glory (see Job 40:9–14)! Job apparently demurs, probably realizing that compulsive force cannot bring good out of evil and that use of such power is corrupting. As a final tutorial, God gives Job the examples of Behemoth (see Job 40:19–24) and Leviathan (see Job 41:1–34). *Behemoth* is the Hebrew plural for “beast” and is probably a poetic description of a hippopotamus. *Leviathan*, the seven-

headed sea dragon of Canaanite myth, is here likely a poetic description of a crocodile. Though part of God's creation, these beasts are wild, ferocious, and unable to be tamed. As such, they typify the proud (see Job 41:34) and hard-hearted (see Job 41:24) who are unable to be led or made party to a covenant with God (see Job 40:24–41:4). Assuming responsibility for creation implies, in some sense, taking responsibility for such, yet creatively providing for redemption without using compulsory means.

### **Job's Second Speech (Job 42:1–6) — Job Penetrates the Veil.**

Initially not prepared to speak to the Lord (see Job 40:3–5), Job now responds, bringing the book to its climax. The meaning of this text is somewhat unclear, particularly in verse 6, and I here provide two different translations:

#### **1. Janzen translation<sup>40</sup>**

- 2 a. You know that you can do all things,  
b. and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
- 3 a. "Who is this that obscures design  
b. by words without knowledge?"  
c. Therefore, I have uttered what I have not  
understood,  
d. things too wonderful for me which I did not  
know.
- 4 a. "Hear, and I will speak;  
b. I will question you, and you will make me to  
know."
- 5 a. I have heard you with my own ears,  
b. and now my eye sees you!
- 6 a. Therefore, I recant and change my mind  
b. concerning dust and ashes.

#### **2. RSV translation**

- 2 I know that thou canst do all things, and that no

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40. Janzen, *Job*, 251.

- purpose of thine can be thwarted.
- 3 “Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?”  
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
  - 4 Hear and I will speak:  
“I will question you, and you declare to me.”
  - 5 I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee:
  - 6 Therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Janzen follows the Hebrew consonantal text to get “you” instead of “I” (from the Masoretic vowels) at the beginning of verse 2, seeing this as a stronger affirmation of Job’s confidence in God’s power: “To say ‘you know’ is to confess one’s agreement with that which is grounded outside the self .... [It] is to bring one’s own views ... and structures of understanding under the judgment of another knowing which far transcends one’s own.”<sup>41</sup> Job is now able to confess ultimate confidence and trust in the Lord.

The quotation marks in verses 3 and 4 are critically important because they indicate where Job is quoting or closely paraphrasing actual words of God from God’s first and second speeches (42:3a = 38:2; 42:4b = 38:3b & 40:7b). Job thus repeats or takes up words of the Lord, making them his own and coming to confessional unity with the Lord.<sup>42</sup> After forty-one chapters of nothing but disagreement, ending in complete failure of communication between Job and the friends, Job now makes God’s language his own. This is emblematic of entering into a higher-level covenant relationship with the Lord and

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41. Janzen, 252.

42. Janzen, 247-252, was essential in developing my thoughts in this section of the paper.

participating more fully in His life and being. Job's participation in the divine nature brings to fulfillment God's covenant desire to share His life/being with man (see Moses 1:39; 2 Peter 1:3–4).

In verse 3, Job admits to having gained a transformed understanding of *wonderful* things not previously understood. What these things might be is not specified, and one would probably have to join Job, Jacob, Enos, Habakkuk, and the brother of Jared at the veil to achieve the same understanding. I suggest that Job's transformation includes a spiritually deepened comprehension of several things: first, God's power to rule in love without force; second, God's infinite concern and love for "dust and ashes" (man); and third, man's calling and capacity to share common ground with God — language and being.

Having spoken to the Lord through the veil, Job now acknowledges that he has come into God's presence (see Job 42:5), bringing to fruition the quest for God's face initiated soon after his calamities began (see Job 3:3, 13–22). Job stands in marked contrast to the friends. They never cry out to God nor seek His presence, trapped by complacent acceptance of a limited, conventional understanding of God. The friends confuse uncritical reception of traditional wisdom with reverence and the dispensing of platitudes about God with a true search for God's face. Their fear of uncertainty and risk makes them incapable of joining Job and approaching God. Job's much-praised "patience" consists of his incessant, though far from quiet or uncomplaining, push through darkness toward the face of God.

Most translations of verse 6 have Job repenting, self-abasingly, *in* dust and ashes, illustrated by the RSV translation above. By doing this, these translators align themselves with the friends in suspecting Job of some sin (pride?). However, in my view, such translations distort the meaning of the book of Job. Far preferable is Janzen's translation, which has Job changing

his mind *concerning* dust and ashes (concerning mankind).<sup>43</sup> As Janzen says about Job: “Now all his questions and charges are dissolved. His structures of understanding are melted down in the presence of Yahweh.”<sup>44</sup> As Job’s transformation to gold is completed, he understands that man’s vocation is to “take up the divine image through engagement with the partly determinate, partly indeterminate character of the world” and the potential for innocent suffering that this implies.<sup>45</sup> Thus, God spoke (in the Prologue), extending His arm toward Job, and has now taken a man (Job) out of the crowd for His name (compare to Deut. 4:34; Exodus 6:6–12). God’s covenant grip on Job is eternal.

### Epilogue (Job 42:7–17)

On the other side of the veil we encounter the prose (suggesting an other-worldly state) Epilogue. Job is surrounded by a new hedge (veil) consisting of transformed language (God’s language) and a transformed covenant relationship with God. As we will presently see, Job’s new hedge is also “thickened” by free, loving relationships with friends and family, all in harmony with each other. God is present, communicating freely with humans, and Satan/Elihu is absent (compare to Rev. 20:7–10, 21:22–22:5). With mild exceptions, much seems the same as in the Prologue — except that everything is different: Job is transformed, having tasted the bitter and learned to prize the good, as are his relationships with man and God.<sup>46</sup>

As Janzen notes of the Epilogue, it is a “vision in which . . . the most extraordinary disclosures and insights into the nature of things are embodied in life’s ordinaries, thereby transforming

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43. Janzen, 254–258. Janzen compellingly supports his translation of 42:6.

44. Janzen, 255.

45. Janzen, 257–258.

46. The Epilogue of Job has the same relationship to the Prologue as the vision of the Celestial Jerusalem (Rev. 20–22) has to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3).

them.”<sup>47</sup> Andersen is even more explicit, saying of the Epilogue: “It was already a kind of resurrection in flesh, as much as the Old Testament could know.”<sup>48</sup> I suggest, despite the report of Job’s death (see Job 42:17), that the Epilogue is best viewed as a this-worldly analogue of eternal life.

With words that are determinative for interpreting the book, God condemns the friends for not speaking “of me what is right, as my servant Job has” (Job 42:7–8, rsv). God thus rejects the friends’ interpretations of events in the world and cosmos in terms of strict retribution. God’s approval of Job’s words cannot be applied to Job’s initial dispersions of God’s justice; the approval seems to apply most specifically to Job’s four great revelatory insights, wherein his ongoing transformed understanding of God and man is brought to fullest expression. God’s ratification of Job’s words may also extend to Job’s determination to seek God’s face at all costs and to Job’s binding oaths in covenant fidelity to God and man.

God speaks to the friends in the language they understand — that of retribution — warning them that because of their folly, folly will be done to them unless they publicly admit wrong by offering burnt offerings and asking Job to intercede (see Job 42:7–10). God’s effort is best understood as an attempt to lead the friends from retribution to grace.<sup>49</sup> Job functions in a priestly intercessory role<sup>50</sup> to help rectify the friends’ relationship with God, ironically inverting Eliphaz’s probable previous expectation of serving as Job’s intercessor (see Job 22:27–30). Job graciously retains no bitterness toward the friends, having bound Satan in his own life, accounting for the absence of Satan/

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47. Janzen, *Job*, 261.

48. Andersen, *Job*, 318.

49. In a similar way, the sacrificial law of Moses was felt to lead the Nephites to Christ and strengthen their faith in Him (Alma 25:15–16).

50. Abraham (Genesis 18:16–33) and Moses (Exodus 32:9–14) played similar roles.

Elihu in the Epilogue (see also 1 Nephi 22:26). Whereas Job may have once invoked God's justice on his enemies — the friends, see Job 27:7–10) — Job now desires that the friends partake of the new life inside the new hedge.

Job also shares his new life with previously unmentioned brothers and sisters with whom he breaks bread and who graciously participate in the restoration of Job's fortune (see Job 42:11). God doubly restores all of Job's material losses, following the demands on a thief in the law (see Exodus 22:4) and apparently accepting overall responsibility for Job's suffering (see Job 42:10–12). Job receives the same number of children as before; surprisingly, only the daughters are named and inherit alongside the sons in a gentle subversion of the law (see Numbers 27:8). Job's new life would be much less meaningful without his family. Job experiences restored health, living among his posterity for several generations (140 years).

Reading the Epilogue as a literary analogue of eternal life is much the same as sitting in the celestial room after an endowment, where ordinary things are used to signify eternal realities. Located on the other side of the veil,<sup>51</sup> the celestial room “symbolizes the exalted and peaceful state that all may achieve through living the gospel of Jesus Christ ... [and] represents the contentment, inner harmony, and peace available to eternal families in the presence of Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.”<sup>52</sup> For example, the opposing mirrors located in many celestial rooms allow one to view a “corridor of diminishing images” that give one the “feeling of looking into ... the eternities ... for the images in that corridor never end.”<sup>53</sup>

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51. James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1969), 159.

52. “Things Pertaining to This House” in *Ensign* (October 2010), 65.

53. Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 4

## Conclusions and Discussion

The book of Job describes Job's journey from a protected state (inside the hedge) of relative innocence and ignorance through bitter experiences to a meeting with God (see Figure 1). This meeting results in a reconstituted relationship on a higher level, indicated by Job's making God's speech his own, paradigmatic of participating in God's language, life, and being. Job's initial "fall" through the hedge resulted from God's own questions about Job and resolve to test him — in other words, from God reaching out toward Job. Initially bewildered and disoriented, Job descended further into darkness, cursing the day of his birth, wishing to die, and questioning God's motives and justice. Nonetheless, in a major change of direction, Job firmly resolved to seek the face of God, in effect reaching back toward God and assuming God's existential questions. Job experienced further bitterness in conversation with three friends, rejecting their temptations to lay aside his integrity by accepting a conventional understanding of God that ultimately resulted in failure of verbal communication with his fellow man. Derided by those who once honored him, Job received four great revelatory insights that moved him progressively toward a transformed understanding of God and man. Job eventually bound himself in covenant fidelity to God and man, affirming his own righteousness with self-imprecatory oaths. Holding to the four insights and neither overcome by bitterness nor yielding to the crowd's conceptions of God, Job passed a final test from Elihu/Satan. God then came to speak with Job, bringing to an end their mutual search for a new relationship. Job received additional knowledge and penetrated the veil, entering into a transformed life and being bound to God in a new and powerful way.

In my view, the parallels and connections between Job and the endowment are powerful and sustained. The reading I

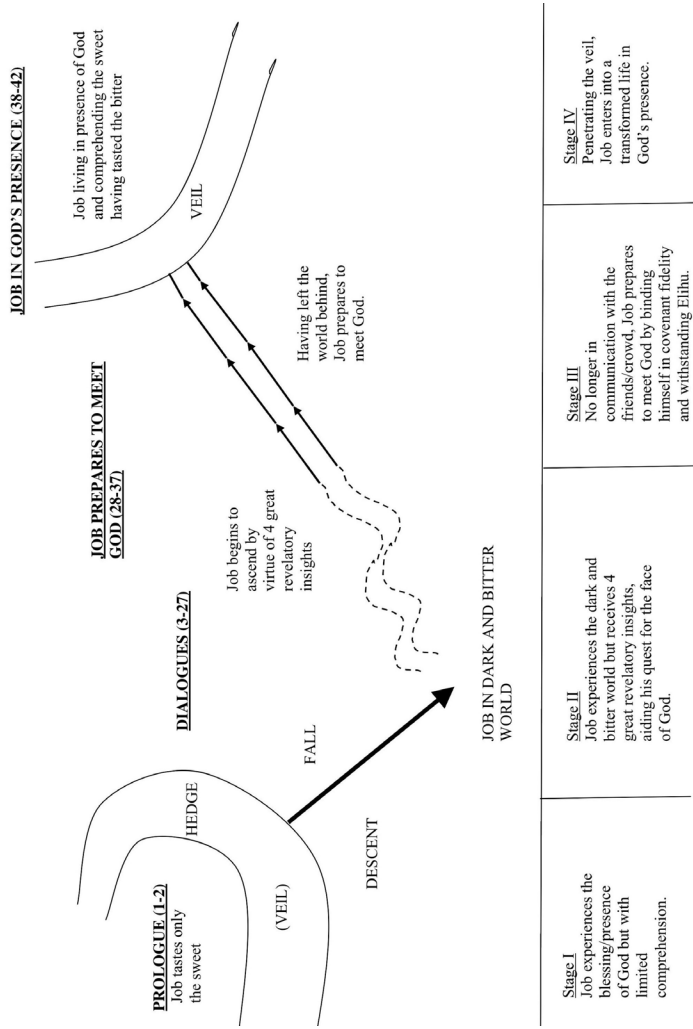


Figure 1. Job's Journey

have proposed takes into account the entire book, its structure, and its use of poetry and prose, while providing a coherent and meaningful interpretation. I am unaware of any evidence that Joseph Smith used the book of Job in developing the temple endowment.<sup>54</sup> I conclude that both result from revelation from the same divine mind. For me, finding such a close analogue of the endowment in the canon of scripture confirms the divine inspiration behind the endowment. I suggest that the book of Job can complement and amplify our understanding of the endowment — and vice versa. In some aspects, the book of Job is a mirror image of the endowment, giving a fuller description of the darkness and bitterness of the world. Furthermore, Job receives no messengers from God; instead, three friends serve as ministers for Satan's perspective. The book of Job presents Job as standing alone before God, thus placing more emphasis on the direct, unmediated relationship between an individual and God.

Although Job was not without sin, admitting to youthful iniquities (see Job 13:26), many have rightly considered Job to be a type of Christ. Job's blamelessness and uprightness are never questioned. Job's description of his life before the calamities is reminiscent of Christ in the premortal life. Job was clothed with righteousness, gave light and counsel to others, dwelt among his fellows as a king, and served as a role model (see Job 29:14–25; compare to John 17:5, Abraham 3:22–28, Moses 7:53). Job's bitter experiences correspond significantly to Christ drinking the bitter cup (see Matthew 26:36–39, D&C 19:16–18) after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Job speaks of being seized by violence, suddenly losing his prosperity, having a heart in turmoil, being abhorred and spit at by the crowd, being forsaken by God, and being brought to death (see Job 30:9–23). Job's reconstituted relationship with God in the

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54. Since I am arguing from lack of evidence my conclusion is, of course, tentative.

Epilogue corresponds to Christ being raised in glory to the right hand of the Father (see Acts 5:31, D&C 93:16–17). Finally, Job's role as mediator for the friends parallels Christ's as mediator for mankind.

Job's journey also has many points of contact with Joseph Smith's early life up to the time of the First Vision. After a relatively comfortable early childhood, the seven-year-old Joseph required an open osteotomy for a typhoid abscess. Following this, his family fell on hard financial times, moving from Vermont to Palmyra, New York. There, the teenage Joseph was exposed to religious turmoil, with many churches and ministers claiming to have the way to salvation. Resisting the entreaties of men, Joseph received a revelatory insight that he should approach God directly. Doing this, he first had to withstand an assault by Satan before the veil was opened and he saw the Father and the Son. Joseph was subsequently the means of bringing the fullness of salvation in Christ to millions.

Job's journey, however, like the endowment, has significance not only for Christ and prophets but for all. A similar conceptual framework to that of Job's journey can be obtained by juxtaposing the Garden of Eden story and Lehi's dream, both of which have universal application (see Figure 2). Adam, leaving the Garden and blocked by the cherubim (veil) from direct access to the tree of life (God), enters the dark world, which corresponds to Lehi wandering in the dark and dreary waste. Lehi, after praying for help and receiving a messenger from God, sees a straight and narrow path/iron rod that can conduct one through mists of darkness (veil) back to the tree of life (God). Thus, the Garden of Eden and Lehi's dream together recap Job's journey. The Garden of Eden, in turn, can also be understood as a typological portrayal of the premortal life (see Table 2), occurring before the mortal state portrayed in Lehi's dream.

There are several additional lessons that can be gleaned

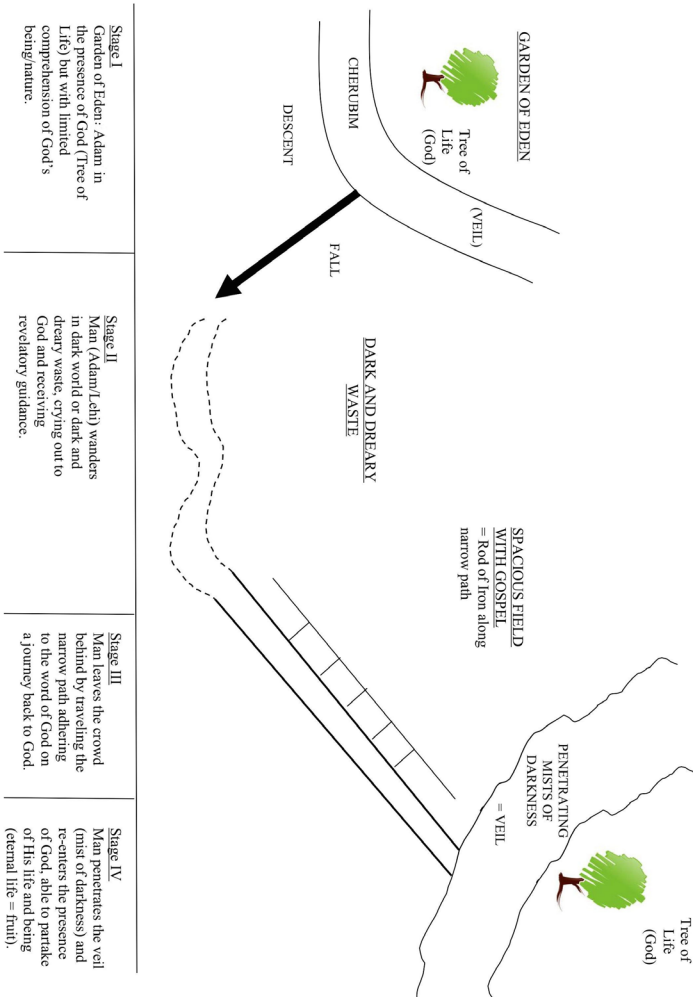


Figure 2. Garden of Eden and Lehi's Dream

**Table 2. Garden of Eden as a Type of Premortality**

<b><u>GARDEN</u></b>	<b><u>CELESTIAL HOME (KINGDOM)</u></b>
TREE OF LIFE	GOD / CHRIST
TREE OF DEATH	SATAN
TEMPTATION	WAR IN HEAVEN
DECISION TO EAT FRUIT	DECISION TO COME TO EARTH
CURSE ON SERPENT	ABSOLUTE SPIRITUAL DEATH OF SATAN
CHERUBIM AND FLAMING SWORD	VEIL
EXPULSION FROM GARDEN	BIRTH/FIRST SPIRITUAL DEATH (SPIRITUAL DEATH OF PROBATION)

from the book of Job. Salvation seems to be about more than simply being forgiven of sin, not that this is unessential. Job was already blameless in the eyes of God — yet it was only after passing through severe trials that Job gained the self-knowledge and knowledge of God that made it possible for him to participate in the life and being of God.<sup>55</sup> In Job's case, the journey toward God's face would have stalled had he simply accepted the religious certitudes of friends and community. God seems to desire, even require, creative engagement with Him and His creation as the questioning soul presses forward in search of understanding. Honest wrestling with questions about God and His work may, at times, be a more faithful response than unthinking acquiescence.

Finally, the book of Job may have something to contribute to the debate between free will and internal determinism.<sup>56</sup> In

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55. Job was initially blameless or justified, possessing a remission of sins and being held guiltless by God (cf. 3 Nephi 27:16). The book of Job may be understood as giving us a view of the completion of Job's sanctification or "transformation into gold." Sanctification consists of overcoming (with God's help, cf. D&C 20:31) the weaknesses of character which lead to sin and of becoming filled with light (D&C 50:23-24, D&C 88:66-68) and love (Moroni 8:25-26), the essential characteristics of God's nature (1 Jn. 1:5, 1 Jn. 4:8).

56. L. Rex Sears, "Determinist Mansions in the Mormon House?"

my opinion, the most straightforward reading of Job has God *not* knowing with absolute certainty how Job will respond to his trials. This makes the book a true drama rather than a simple playing out of something God already knew in advance. Job does not fully make himself known to God nor does he fully know God until after he passes through his trials. Job's actions seem to be completely un-coerced and creative, reflective of underlying free will.

Job's solitary journey away from the crowd with its conventional, distorted paradigms to true understanding in the presence of God required courage, freedom, and creativity. Job freely participated in the creation of his redeemed soul and gained wisdom thereby. The book of Job serves as a welcome antidote to suggestions that blind, unthinking obedience is God's most earnest desire of mankind.<sup>57</sup> Although obedience to God in the absence of understanding is better than no obedience, I believe that God is hoping to develop creative wisdom in us so that we can serve as understanding partners in God's work of creation and redemption. On the other hand, Job's quest should not be confused with that of the modern self for totally autonomous self-creation and self-determination.<sup>58</sup> Everything Job did was consciously done *before God* in search of a soul-constituting relationship with God. Those who wish

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Dialogue: *A Journal of Mormon Thought* 31 (4) (1998):115-141; Blake T. Ostler, "Mormonism and Determinism" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 32 (4) (1999):43-75.

57. In my experience, such blind obedience is frequently extolled by Church members as the peak of human accomplishment before God. Adam, sacrificing without knowing why (Moses 5:5-9), is often used as a prime example. Usually overlooked is the fact that Adam is given new revelation about the meaning of animal sacrifice, his obedience leading to new understanding. Another example used is Abraham's (near) sacrifice of Isaac. I argue that we are insufficiently informed about that event to claim that Abraham was acting in blind obedience.

58. Epitomized by René Descartes' statement, "I think; therefore, I am."

to follow in Job's steps must do as he did: hold to righteousness (see Job 27:6), stay in God's paths (see Job 23:11), be receptive to revelation, and continually seek God's face (see Job 13:3–22).

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# A RESPONSE TO GRANT PALMER'S "SEXUAL ALLEGATIONS AGAINST JOSEPH SMITH AND THE BEGINNINGS OF POLYGAMY IN NAUVOO"

Brian C. Hales and Gregory L. Smith

*Abstract: Grant H. Palmer, former LDS seminary instructor turned critic, has recently posted an essay, "Sexual Allegations against Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Polygamy in Nauvoo," on MormonThink.com. In it, Palmer isolates ten interactions between women and Joseph Smith that Palmer alleges were inappropriate and, "have at least some plausibility of being true." In this paper, Palmer's analysis of these ten interactions is reviewed, revealing how poorly Palmer has represented the historical data by advancing factual inaccuracies, quoting sources without establishing their credibility, ignoring contradictory evidences, and manifesting superficial research techniques that fail to account for the latest scholarship on the topics he is discussing. Other accusations put forth by Palmer are also evaluated for correctness, showing, once again, his propensity for inadequate scholarship.*

Sometime after 1999, Grant Palmer outlined his views on Joseph Smith and plural marriage up to 1835.<sup>1</sup> More recently, he has expanded that paper and retitled it: "Sexual Allegations against Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Polygamy in Nauvoo." His newer work contains the same material as the former essay, with added observations and allegations.

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1. Grant H. Palmer, "Sexual Allegations against Joseph Smith, 1829–1835," typescript, n.d. [after 1999], UU\_Accn0900, H. Michael Marquardt Collection, Marriott Library. Photocopy in possession of Brian C. Hales.

Recently Palmer posted the article on MormonThink, a website that is primarily antagonistic to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and reportedly submitted it for consideration to a scholarly journal.<sup>2</sup> This essay will examine both the accepted methodology Palmer consistently neglects to employ and the errors in his analysis, which following scholarly standards could have prevented.

### Weaknesses of Grant Palmer's Methodology

Throughout Palmer's essay, several problematic issues can be readily discerned:

1. **Factual inaccuracies.** For example, on page 8 he speaks of a man, "Benjamin F. Winchester," but there is no such person. Church history participants included "Benjamin F. Johnson" and "Benjamin Winchester" but no "Benjamin F. Winchester." This might seem a nitpicky criticism, but it is an example of how poorly Palmer's essay has been constructed and edited. It also suggests a reliance on secondary sources rather than a consultation of the original documents.<sup>3</sup>

2. **Quoting historical sources without establishing credibility of the documents.** Palmer is willing to quote just about any source so long as it conveys the message he desires. Whether his source is reliable is apparently a non-issue. In this, Palmer resembles hardened anti-Mormons or uncritical apologists, both of whom are often willing to quote any persuasive voice if it reinforces their predetermined message.

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2. Numerous non-LDS media outlets have noted the bias of the "anti-Mormon website called MormonThink." John Johnson, "UK Judge to Mormon Leader: Defend Your Religion in Court," *Newser*, 5 February 2014, <http://www.newser.com/story/181832/uk-judge-to-mormon-leader-defend-your-religion-in-court.html>. For further examples, see "How Does the News Media View MormonThink.com?" FairMormon Answers Wiki, accessed 23 September 2014, [http://en.fairmormon.org/Criticism\\_of\\_Mormonism/Websites/MormonThink/Media\\_coverage\\_of\\_MormonThink](http://en.fairmormon.org/Criticism_of_Mormonism/Websites/MormonThink/Media_coverage_of_MormonThink).

3. Van Wagoner likewise cites this source as "Benjamin F. Winchester." Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 4.

**3. Ignoring contradictory evidence.** Palmer is entitled to his opinion of Joseph Smith and plural marriage. However, good scholarship requires authors to consider and address *all* of the evidence, even those sources that contradict the writer's agenda. Palmer carefully ignores all contradictory evidence, but he does so at the peril of appearing overly biased and agenda-driven.

**4. Ignoring the most recent scholarship.** In 2013, Greg Kofford Books published Brian Hales's three volume work *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology*. With over 1500 pages, it aims to either reference or quote every known document dealing with Joseph Smith's polygamy. Palmer references these volumes only once, in footnote 34. A single mention in itself is not necessarily problematic. But in dealing with the individual topics in his essay, Palmer routinely ignores pertinent historical manuscripts that are discussed in those volumes and plainly identified in the bibliography. Thus, Palmer either did not read or understand a work that he cites, or he chooses to hide important details from his readers. Even if Hales's conclusions are in error, these new publications contain data, which Palmer must address if he is to be credible.

### Joseph Smith's Reasons for Establishing Plural Marriage

Palmer begins by asking why Joseph Smith established plural marriage. He acknowledges one reason, as part of a "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21), which restoration is mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants 132:40, 45. While Palmer is to be commended for mentioning the revelation three times in his essay, he fails to discuss the primary reason for plural marriage in Joseph Smith's theology. Verse 17 explains the need for all the righteous to be sealed to an eternal spouse, otherwise they "remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity." Verse 63 likewise says that plural marriage is intended "for their exaltation in the eternal worlds." Unsurprisingly, Palmer completely ignores this nonsexual dimension to Joseph's theology of plurality, even though it deals with eternity and eternal rewards rather than

earthly aspects of plurality. Within Joseph Smith's teachings there is more emphasis on eternal matters than on the sexual desire to which Palmer directs our attention.

Following the tradition of Mormon fundamentalists today, Palmer writes: "Joseph Smith taught, 'No one can reject this covenant [polygamy] and be permitted to enter into my glory. For all ... must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God'" (p. 1). Palmer is quoting a portion of D&C 132:19, though the addition of the bracketed word is misleading. Typically, such textual emendations are intended to add clarity to a citation. In this case, however, it is not clear upon what Palmer bases his gloss, save his own opinion, since he provides no documentation to support it. If an emendation is not patently obvious from elsewhere in the source text, the author has a duty to justify his reading or risk distorting his source.

Unfortunately for his reconstruction and his readers, Palmer's bracketed commentary "[polygamy]" contradicts the first line of the verse, which promises exaltation to a worthy monogamous couple who are sealed by proper authority. "If *a* man marry *a* wife" (D&C 132:19, italics added) clearly refers to a single worthy man being sealed to a single worthy wife by proper authority. Such sealed couples "shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory." Nineteenth century leaders certainly understood that "a Man may Embrace the Law of Celestial Marriage in his heart & not take the Second wife & be justified before the Lord."<sup>4</sup> This calls Palmer's interpretation into question.

In Part 1 of this review, we will consider Palmer's ten claims of Joseph Smith's alleged extra-marital sexual encounters. In Part 2, we will examine related claims and historical missteps that Palmer makes as he strives, but fails, to establish his thesis.

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4. Brigham Young, cited in Scott G. Kenny, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 9 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 7:31 (24 September 1871).

## Part 1 — Ten Claims of Alleged “Sexual Encounters”

Palmer alleges that Joseph may have confessed to “sexual encounters” (p. 4). He selectively quotes Joseph’s official account in an effort to reinforce this impression for his readers:<sup>5</sup>

I was left to all kinds of temptations, and mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors and displayed the weakness of youth and the corruption of human nature, which I am sorry to say led me into divers temptations, to the gratification of many appetites offensive in the sight of God.<sup>6</sup>

Palmer then asks: “Could the ‘gratification of many appetites’ refer to sexual encounters with women?” (p. 4). Curiously, Palmer quotes Joseph’s answer, but hides it in footnote 7. Apparently, after publishing the quotation above, the Prophet anticipated allegations like Palmer’s, so in December 1842 he dictated an addition that permits no misunderstanding:

In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins: a disposition to commit such was never in my nature; but I was guilty of Levity, & sometimes associated with jovial company &c, not Consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been; but this will not seem very strange to any one who recollects my youth & is acquainted with my native cheerly [sic] Temperament.<sup>7</sup>

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5. Comparable tactics are used in the similarly flawed and equally ideologically driven account found in George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*: “... *but we called it celestial marriage*” (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), 15–20.

6. “History of Joseph Smith,” *Times and Seasons* 3/11 (1 April 1842): 749.

7. “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” The Joseph Smith Papers, Addenda, Note C • 1820–1823, accessed 24 September 2014, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834?p=5#!/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834&p=139>.

Lest Palmer assume that this addition was a late attempt to cover having revealed too much, we note that Joseph made essentially the same clarification to Oliver Cowdery in 1834:

During this time, as is common to most, or all youths, I fell into many vices and follies; but as my accusers are, and have been forward to accuse me of being guilty of gross and outrageous violations of the peace and good order of the community, I take the occasion to remark, that, though, as I have said above, “as is common to most, or all youths, I fell into many vices and follies,” I have not, neither can it be sustained, in truth, been guilty of wronging or injuring any man or society of men; **and those imperfections to which I allude, and for which I have often had occasion to lament, were a light, and too often, vain mind, exhibiting a foolish and trifling conversation.**

**This being all, and the worst, that my accusers can substantiate against my moral character,** I wish to add, that it is not without a deep feeling of regret that I am thus called upon in answer to my own conscience, to fulfill a duty I owe to myself, as well as to the cause of truth, in making this public confession of my former uncircumspect walk, and unchaste conversation: and more particularly, as I often acted in violation of those holy precepts which I knew came from God. But as the “Articles and Covenants” of this church are plain upon this particular point, I do not deem it important to proceed further. I only add, that (I do not, nor never have, pretended to be any other than a man “subject to passion,” and liable, without the assisting grace of the Savior, to deviate from that perfect path in which all men are commanded to walk!)<sup>8</sup>

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8. Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery, *Messenger and Advocate* 1/3 (December 1834): 40, emphasis added.

One of the more remarkable statements in Palmer's article is on page three: "it is generally unknown that he [Joseph Smith] was accused of illicit sexual conduct with a number of women from 1827 on, until his death in 1844." One must ask if this observation remains "generally unknown" because there is scant supporting evidence or for some other reason.

Palmer discusses ten allegations that, according to his research, "have at least some plausibility of being true":

Sexual claims made against his [Joseph Smith's] character began only after he was married in January 1827. From 1827–1841, a number of sexual allegations are leveled against Smith, several of which I think contain so little information they are not worth mentioning. This section of the article [the following ten accounts] concentrates on the declarations that have at least some plausibility of being true. (p. 5)

Surprisingly, Palmer seems unaware — or unconcerned — that available contemporaneous evidence does not support his assertion. That is, there is at most *one* accusation of "illicit sexual conduct" (p. 3) (case #2 below). As explored below, this claim was made in an off-handed manner, and it was not echoed by those who could have confirmed it. After one mention, it did not resurface until decades after Joseph's death.

We will see that Palmer's other "evidences" (p. 28) are all likewise problematic and dubious on multiple other grounds, and they were all made *after* Joseph's death.

Given that novel religious groups were often charged with sexual deviancy,<sup>9</sup> regardless of their actual conduct, it is astonishing that Joseph Smith was not so accused simply as a matter of course. Had there been even a hint of such scandal, Joseph's enemies would have pounced upon it. The virtual silence is a telling clue that Joseph was not seen as lecherous by

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9. See, for example, Orson Hyde, 1832 mission journal for date, typescript, American Collection, Box 8670, M 82, Vol. 11, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University or "From the Boston Patriot," *National Intelligencer*, 13 November 1819.

his contemporaries until the doctrine of plural marriage was taught.

### #1: Broome County Trial

Palmer's first "declaration" of Joseph Smith's sexual impropriety is associated with a trial in South Bainbridge, Broome County, New York (p. 5). The Prophet was arrested on 30 June 1830 and was tried the following day. Twelve witnesses were called, including Miriam and Rhoda Stowell. No trial records are extant.

Twelve years later Joseph recalled the trial and claimed that nothing was found against him: "The young women arrived and were severally examined, touching my character, and conduct in general but particularly as to my behavior towards them both in public and private, when they both bore such testimony in my favor, as left my enemies without a pretext on their account."<sup>10</sup> His recollection was fully corroborated in 1844 when John S. Reed — his non-Mormon attorney for the case — visited Nauvoo. Reed recalled: "Let me say to you that not one blemish nor spot was found against his character; he came from that trial, notwithstanding the mighty efforts that were made to convict him of crime by his vigilant persecutors, with his character unstained by even the appearance of guilt."<sup>11</sup>

To summarize, Joseph was tried on charges unrelated to immorality and all accounts state he was not guilty of anything improper. Had sexual liberties been proven or even seemed plausible, contemporary anti-Mormon authors would have surely used such damning material against Joseph.

Nothing in these accounts appears to support "illicit sexual conduct." Palmer could speculate about the reasons for the girls' testimony and then criticize Joseph based on his speculations, but this would not be evidence.

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10. "History of Joseph Smith — continued," *Times and Seasons* 4/3 (15 December 1842): 41.

11. John S. Reed, "Some of the Remarks of John S. Reed, Esq., as Delivered Before the State Convention," *Times and Seasons* 5/11 (1 June 1844): 550–51.

## #2: Eliza Winters

Palmer's second bit of evidence is an incident that reportedly occurred between October 1825 and June 1829, involving a woman named Eliza Winters. Testimony of the described interaction was not recorded until 1834. Palmer writes:

When Joseph and his wife Emma Hale Smith were living in Harmony in 1827–1829, Emma's cousin, Levi Lewis, accused him of attempting "to seduce Eliza Winters," Emma's close friend.<sup>12</sup> Lewis further said that he was well "acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. and Martin Harris, and that he has heard them both say, [that] adultery was no crime. Harris said he did not blame Smith for his attempt to seduce Eliza Winters" (p. 6).<sup>13</sup>

Palmer's presentation of the evidence is curious, if not deceptive. He states: "Levi Lewis, accused him [Joseph Smith] of attempting 'to seduce Eliza Winters,'" and then he quotes a longer sentence containing the same quoted words as if they were separate allegation, when in fact he is just re-quoting the same sentence (see Figure 1, top of next page).

Importantly, Palmer misrepresented the quotation. According to the published version, Levi Lewis did not accuse Joseph Smith from direct personal knowledge — he does not provide us with a *first-hand* allegation. Instead, we read that Lewis was allegedly quoting Martin Harris. Palmer deftly transforms a dubious second-hand or third-hand account into a first-hand allegation.

There is much in this account that should make us doubt its accuracy.

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12. Affidavit of Levi Lewis, 20 March 1834; reproduced in *Susquehanna Register and Northern Pennsylvanian* (1 May 1834): 1. The original affidavit is not extant.

13. "Mormonism," *Susquehanna Register and Northern Pennsylvanian* (1 May 1834): 1.

(LEVI LEWIS states, that he has “been acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. and Martin Harris, and that he has heard them both say, adultery was no crime. Harris said he did not blame Smith for his (Smith’s) attempt to seduce Eliza Winters &c.”—Mr. Lewis says that he “knows Smith to be a liar ;—that he saw him (Smith) intoxicated at three different times while he was composing the Book of Mormon, and also that he has heard Smith when driving oxen, use language of the greatest profanity. Mr. Lewis also testifies that he heard Smith say he (Smith) was as good as Jesus Christ ;—that it was as bad to injure him as it was to

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injure Jesus Christ.” “With regard to the plates, Smith said God had deceived him—which was the reason he (Smith) did not show them.”)

Figure 1: Levi Lewis affidavit citation in  
E.D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled* (1834)<sup>14</sup>

First, it seems unlikely that Martin Harris would have remained devoted to Joseph Smith as a missionary in the 1830s if he were aware of such hypocritical and immoral behavior. Joseph taught that sexual immorality was a sin next to murder in severity (Alma 39:5).<sup>15</sup>

14. Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, Ohio: Telegraph Press, 1834), 268–69.

15. Alma taught his son that breaking the law of chastity was “an abomination in the sight of the Lord; yea, most abominable above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost” (Alma 39:5). This interpretation was specifically taught by Apostles Orson Pratt and Heber C. Kimball. Orson Pratt, “Celestial Marriage” *The Seer* 1/1 (January 1853): 27; Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:175. For an alternative view that Alma 39:5 was not primarily referring to sexual immorality, see Michael R. Ash, “The Sin ‘Next to Murder’: An Alternative Interpretation,” *Sunstone* (November 2006): 34–43; Bruce W. Jorgensen, “Scriptural Chastity Lessons: Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife; Corianton and the Harlot Isabel,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*

*Second*, Eliza Winters never referred to a seduction attempt by Joseph Smith. Despite having at least two perfect opportunities to corroborate Lewis's allegations, she failed to do so.

The first opportunity occurred in 1833 when Martin Harris accused her of having given birth to a "bastard child." (That Martin regarded this as a damning accusation makes it even less likely that he would tolerate a dalliance by Joseph as Levi Lewis claimed.) Eliza retaliated by suing Martin in court.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the proceedings, no one, including Eliza herself, mentioned a seduction attempt by Joseph, and the case was ultimately dismissed due to jurisdictional problems.

The second opportunity for Eliza to confirm Lewis's charge occurred nearly fifty years later. Newspaperman Frederick G. Mather interviewed the seventy-year-old Eliza in Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, specifically to gather derogatory statements about the Prophet from his former acquaintances. In the interview, Mather recorded Eliza saying, "Joe Smith never made a convert at Susquehanna, and also that his father-in-law became so incensed by his conduct that he threatened to shoot him if he ever returned."<sup>17</sup> Notwithstanding her critical attitude toward Joseph and the church he founded, Eliza did not make any accusation regarding Joseph's personal conduct toward her or other women. Her failure to incriminate the Prophet is puzzling if the Lewis allegations were true.<sup>18</sup>

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32/1 (Spring 1999): 7–34, esp. 19–28; and Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical & Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume Four: Alma* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011): 527–28.

16. Mark B. Nelson and Steven C. Harper, "The Imprisonment of Martin Harris in 1833," *Brigham Young University Studies* 45 (Fall 2006): 114–15.

17. Quoted in Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996–2004), 4:358; see also 4:314, 4:297n3.

18. Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:346. Dan Vogel characterizes her apparent silence on the topic as "an accusation she neither confirmed nor denied." It seems likely that if Winters had denied the accusation, Mather would not have included Joseph's exoneration in his article, as it did not suit his purpose of disparaging the Mormon prophet. Regardless, while Vogel's assessment may be technically true, there is no way of knowing whether the subject was even mentioned. Vogel treats Lewis's report as somewhat credible. See Dan Vogel,

A *third* reason to doubt Levi Lewis's account is silence from other sources. Lewis was Emma Hale Smith's cousin, and he provided his affidavit as part of the collection amassed by Doctor Philastus Hurlbut<sup>19</sup> and published by Eber D. Howe in the first anti-Mormon book.<sup>20</sup> The following members of Lewis's family also provided affidavits to Hurlbut and Howe:

- Isaac Hale (Emma's father),
- Alva Hale (Emma's brother),
- Nathaniel Lewis (Emma's uncle, a Methodist preacher), and
- Sophia Lewis (wife of Levi).<sup>21</sup>

These testators were quick to condemn Joseph for eloping with Emma Smith, yet they remain utterly silent on the matter of Joseph's supposed adulterous conduct. They would have been witnesses in the same sense as Levi was — he could only repeat information supposedly gained from a third party. Despite their interest in condemning Joseph, these other family members made no mention of Joseph's alleged conduct, even as a matter of rumor.

A *fourth* reason to doubt Lewis arises from falsehoods or implausibilities in the rest of his testimony. If he perjures himself on these points, then he is a less convincing witness in other matters. We do not have the original affidavit, but the published version includes the following claims:

- he heard Joseph admit that “God had deceived him” about the plates, so did not show them to anyone,

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*Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 178, 619; Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:296–97.

19. “Doctor” was not a title; it was Hurlbut's first given name. The Smiths had early legal trouble with a Hurlbut family, but it is not known if Doctor Hurlbut was related to them. See Jeffrey N. Walker, “Joseph Smith's Introduction to the Law: The 1819 Hurlbut Case,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 11/1 (Spring 2010): 129–30.

20. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*.

21. Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:281–98.

- he heard Joseph say “he ... was as good as Jesus Christ; ... it was as bad to injure him as it was to injure Jesus Christ,” and
- he saw Joseph drunk three times while writing the Book of Mormon.<sup>22</sup>

These claims simply do not hold water. Far from denying that he had shown anyone else the plates, Joseph insisted that he had and published the testimonies of eleven witnesses in every copy of the Book of Mormon. Levi’s honesty is questionable if he can blithely ignore what any Book of Mormon reader can easily discover.

A study of Joseph’s letters and life from this period makes it difficult to believe that Joseph would insist he was “as good as Jesus Christ.”<sup>23</sup> Joseph’s private letters reveal him to be devout, sincere, and almost painfully aware of his dependence on God.<sup>24</sup>

The claim to have seen Joseph drunk during the translation is entertaining. If Joseph were drunk, it would make the production of the Book of Mormon more impressive. The charge sounds like little more than idle gossip designed to bias readers against Joseph as a “drunkard.”<sup>25</sup>

In sum, when all the evidence is examined, this report of an “attempted” seduction appears unconvincing and implausible. Palmer’s audience, however, will learn none of these facts.

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22. We have only excerpts published in “Mormonism,” *Susquehanna Register, and Northern Pennsylvanian* 9 (1 May 1834): 1; republished in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 268–69; cited in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:296–97.

23. Compare Joseph’s remarks cited in note 8 above.

24. See remarks in this vein in Paul H. Peterson, “Understanding Joseph: A Review of Published Documentary Sources,” in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, the Man*, eds. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1988), 110.

25. As Vogel notes, Methodists regarded any use of liquor by a minister as grounds for dismissal; these accusations from a Methodist family are clearly intended to portray Joseph as someone unsuited for the ministry. Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:297.

### #3: Marinda Nancy Johnson

Palmer's third "declaration" involves Marinda Nancy Johnson in conjunction with the 1832 tar and feathering of the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon (p. 7). Luke Johnson, who was not present but knew some of the participants, published this account in 1864:

In the fall of [1832], while Joseph was yet at my father's [John Johnson's home], a mob of forty or fifty came to his house, a few entered his room in the middle of the night, and Carnot Mason dragged Joseph out of bed by the hair of his head; he was then seized by as many as could get hold of him, and taken about forty rods from the house, stretched on a board, and tantalized in the most insulting and brutal manner; they tore off the few night clothes that he had on, for the purpose of emasculating him, and had Dr. Dennison there to perform the operation; but when the Dr. saw the Prophet stripped and stretched on the plank, his heart failed him, and he refused to operate.<sup>26</sup>

If these events were triggered in part by sexual crimes against Marinda, it is strange that Luke — her brother — was neither incensed by them, nor even mentioned them.

Concerning Luke Johnson's account, Palmer claims in his paper:

Eli Johnson was more specific. He was troubled because Smith and Rigdon were urging his brother John Johnson to "let them have his property,"<sup>27</sup> and was "furious because he suspected Joseph of being intimate with his sister [actually she was his sixteen

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26. "History of Luke Johnson," *Millennial Star* 26 (1864): 834.

27. S. F. Whitney (Newel's brother), in Arthur B. Deming, ed., *Naked Truths About Mormonism* (Oakland, Calif: by author, 1888), 1. Eliphaz Johnson was John Johnson's brother, not his son.



**Figure 2:** Drawing by unknown artist, published in Charles Mackay, ed., *The Mormons, or Latter-day Saints; with Memoirs of the Life and Death of Joseph Smith, the American Mahomet*, 4th ed. (London: Office of the National Illustrated Library, 1851), 55; 1851 edition in Hales's possession.

year old niece], Nancy Marinda Johnson, and he was screaming for Joseph's castration."<sup>28</sup> (p. 8)

Palmer's willingness to detail Eli Johnson's feelings is remarkable because there is no known report from Eli. At best Palmer is extrapolating, at worst he is mindreading.<sup>29</sup>

It is probable that Palmer's commentary is ultimately based upon a late, second-hand reference from Clark Braden, a

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28. Edmund L. Kelley and Clark Braden, *Public Discussion of the Issues between the RLDS Church and the Church of Christ (Disciples) Held in Kirtland, Ohio, Beginning February 12, and Closing March 8, 1884 between E. L. Kelley, of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Clark Braden, of the Church of Christ* (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Publishing House, 1913), 202, square bracket addition by Palmer.

29. It is possible that Palmer is relying instead on another secondary source, Fawn Brodie who popularized this interpretation of the 1832 mobbing. See Fawn Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 119. Richard S. Van Wagoner echoed this interpretation in *Mormon Polygamy: A History*, 4–5.

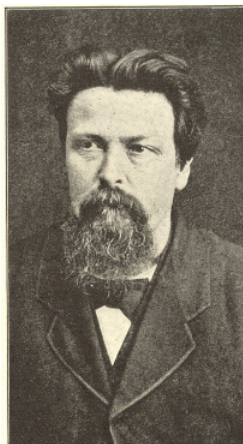


Figure 3: Clark Braden<sup>30</sup>

Church of Christ (Disciples) minister whose religious debates were reputedly free and economical with the facts.<sup>31</sup> Braden (b. 1831) was not present in Kirtland in the 1830s, but in a debate with RLDS missionary E. L. Kelly fifty-two years later he stated: “In March 1832, Smith was stopping at Mr. Johnson’s, in Hiram, Ohio, and was mobbed. The mob was led by Eli Johnson, who blamed Smith for being too intimate with his sister Marinda.”<sup>32</sup>

Importantly, prior to this 1884 claim by a non-participant, all accounts strongly suggest that the mob members were primarily concerned with attempts to live the law of consecration in 1832. For example, “Symonds Rider ... clarified” in 1868 that

Rigdon and Smith were not assaulted because of their beliefs. “The people of Hiram were liberal about religion and had not been averse to Mormon teaching,” he said afterwards. What infuriated the evildoers were

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30. George Washington Smith, *A History of Southern Illinois: A Narrative Account of Its Historical Progress, Its People, And Its Principal Interests* (Chicago and New York: Lewis Publishing, 1912), 389.

31. Nathaniel S. Haynes, “Biography of Clark Braden,” accessed 13 February 2008, <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/nhaynes/hdcib/BRADEN01.htm>.

32. Kelley and Braden, *Public Discussion of the Issues*, 202. See Wayne A. Ham, “Truth Affirmed, Error Denied: The Great Debates of the Early Reorganization,” *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 7 (1987): 8.

some official documents they found, possibly a copy of the revelation outlining the “Law of Consecration and Stewardship,” which instructed new converts about “the horrid fact that a plot was laid to take their property from them and place it under the control of Smith.”<sup>33</sup>

Rigdon’s biographer theorized that Sidney was, in fact, the primary target, since he was attacked first and treated more harshly than Joseph.<sup>34</sup> In addition, Marinda recalled in 1877: “I feel like bearing my testimony that during the whole year that Joseph was an inmate of my father’s house I never saw aught in his daily life or conversation to make me doubt his divine mission.”<sup>35</sup> If sexual impropriety was an issue in 1832, it is strange that even hostile sources made no mention of it until 1884. It does not appear in the historical record prior to that time.

#### #4: Vienna Jacques

Palmer continues his list of “declarations” by presenting the case of Vienna Jacques:

While Vienna Jacques was living in Kirtland in 1833, a Mrs. Alexander quoted Polly Beswick as saying:

It was commonly reported, Jo Smith said he had a revelation to lie /with/ Vienna Jacques, who lived in his family. Polly told me, that Emma, Joseph’s wife, told her that Joseph would get up in the middle of the night and go to Vienna’s bed. Polly said Emma would get out of humor, fret and scold and flounce in the harness. Jo would shut himself up in a room and pray for a revelation. When he came

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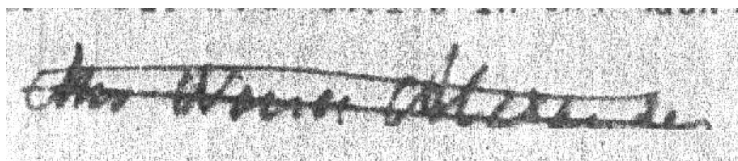
33. Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess* (Salt Lake City, Signature Books, 2005), 114–15; citing Symonds Ryder, “Letter to A. S. Hayden,” 1 February 1868.

34. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*, 108–18.

35. Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: n.p., 1877), 404.

out he would claim he had received one and state it to her, and bring her around all right.”<sup>36</sup> (p. 9)

Research supports that “Mrs. Warner Alexander” was actually Nancy Maria Smith, daughter of William Smith (no relation to Joseph Smith) and Lydia Calkins Smith, born 1 December 1822.<sup>37</sup> She married Justin Alexander on 4 September 1850, at Kirtland, Ohio, making her “Mrs. Justin Alexander” or “Mrs. Nancy Alexander.”<sup>38</sup> It is not clear how or when her name was mis-transcribed, but other internal references also corroborate Nancy as the author.<sup>39</sup>



**Figure 4: Signature at the bottom of the typed sheet ostensibly quoting Polly Beswick. Hales’s research supports the case for it reading “Mrs Nancy Alexander,” but whether it is her actual signature is unknown.**

The historical record shows the Joseph Smith family living around Kirtland, Ohio, from 1831 to 1838. In 1831, Vienna traveled from her home in Boston, Massachusetts, to Kirtland. There she met the Prophet and was baptized. She stayed in Ohio for about six weeks and then rejoined her family in Boston

36. Palmer cites: “Mrs. Warner [sic] Alexander, Statement [1886], original in Stanley A. Kimball Papers, Southern Illinois University; typescript in Linda King Newell Collection, MS 447, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. The editorial marks /.../ indicate [sic] words added.”

37. Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: History and Theology* 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 1:48–50.

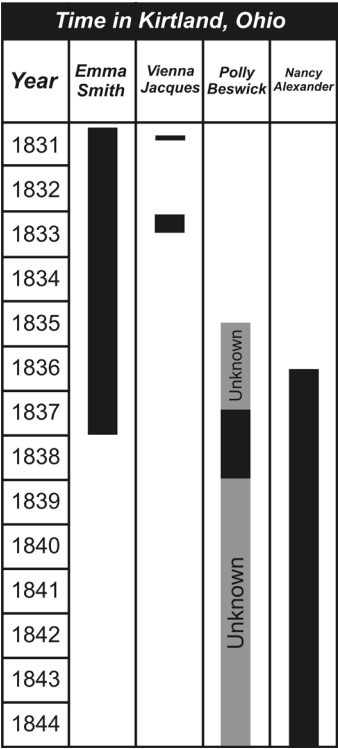
38. Ancestral File, accessed 16 May 2009, <http://www.familysearch.org>.

39. The account was apparently published as an article entitled: “Mrs. Alexander’s Statement,” but the available copy is cropped, hiding any information about its source or date of publication. At the bottom is a handwritten name: “Mrs Nancy Alexander.” A. B. Deming Papers, Utah State Historical Society, PAM 9687; reportedly copies of pamphlets from the Chicago Historical Society.

and was instrumental in converting many of them.<sup>40</sup> Vienna returned to Kirtland in early 1833 and may have stayed with the Smiths, although we are unaware of any documentation to that effect. On March 8, the Prophet received a revelation telling her to gather to Missouri (D&C 90:28–31). She apparently left in June because he addressed a July 2 letter to her in that state. These two brief periods are the only times during which Vienna and the Smiths lived in the same town.

Accordingly, if Nancy Alexander’s statement is true, in early 1833 Joseph Smith would have needed to accomplish one of two difficult tasks within three or four months. He would have needed to confirm Vienna Jacques’s conversion when she arrived in Kirtland, baptize her, convince her of the doctrine of polygamy and immediately marry her (although the form such a union would take is not known), while also convincing Emma to let him have a plural wife share their home. The second alternative is that Joseph succeeded in seducing the new convert and persuading Emma to allow him to conduct a physical relationship with Vienna (without a plural marriage ceremony) under their roof. Neither proposal seems likely.

As a woman possessing conservative moral values, there



**Figure 5: Time periods when Vienna Jacques was in Kirtland, Ohio**

40. Jerri W. Hurd, “Vienna Jacques: The Other Woman in the Doctrine and Covenants,” 2, unpublished manuscript, Linda King Newell Collection, MS 447, Box 4, fd 1, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

is little indication that Emma would have ever approved of her husband having sexual relations outside of marriage. Emma struggled mightily in 1843–1844 to accept plural marriage; it seems a frank affair would have been even more difficult for her in 1833. All records from the Kirtland period demonstrate that she did not then believe that God-approved plural marriage had been restored. Accordingly, she would have considered any polygamous intimacy as adultery and would not have permitted contact between the two as described by Nancy.

Palmer's brief and uncritical reference to Vienna Jacques is another evidence of his willingness to include any potentially negative account regardless of the narrative's credibility. One gets the impression that he is simply borrowing any critical material from secondary sources without rigorously evaluating it for his readers.

#### #5: A "Miss Hill"

Palmer also alleges that Joseph Smith had an inappropriate relationship in Kirtland with a woman called "Miss Hill" in a letter from William McLellin to Joseph Smith III (pp. 9–10). In this 1872 letter, McLellin claimed to reveal facts that he had been told by Emma Smith in 1847:

You will probably remember that I visited your Mother and family in 1847, and held a lengthy conversation with her, retired in the Mansion House in Nauvoo. I did not ask her to tell, but I told her some stories I had heard. And she told me whether I was properly informed. Dr. F. G. Williams practiced with me in Clay Co. Mo. during the latter part of 1838. And he told me that at your birth your father committed an act with a Miss Hill — a hired girl. Emma saw him, and spoke to him. He desisted, but Mrs. Smith refused to be satisfied. He called in Dr. Williams, O. Cowdery, and S. Rigdon to reconcile Emma. But she told them just as the circumstances took place. He found he was caught. He confessed humbly, and begged forgiveness. Emma and all forgave him. She told me this story was

true!! Again I told her I heard that one night she missed Joseph and Fanny Alger. she went to the barn and saw him and Fanny in the barn together alone. She looked through a crack and saw the transaction!!! She told me this story too was verily true.<sup>41</sup>

Predictably, Palmer interprets this letter as recounting two separate stories, one about Joseph Smith's involvement with "a Miss Hill" and a second regarding a relationship with Fanny Alger (see case #6, below). (One again suspects he may be merely following the lead of one of his secondary sources.<sup>42</sup>)

Four observations indicate that McLellin was telling only one story and simply became confused.

*First*, there is no additional evidence that Joseph Smith had a relationship with a woman named "Hill" at Kirtland or at any time in his life. Richard L. Anderson concurs: "I cannot find a possible 'Miss Hill' in Kirtland, nor is there any verification of the story."<sup>43</sup>

*Second*, the first part of the paragraph specifies that Emma saw an interaction between Joseph and "a hired girl" identified as "Miss Hill." In the second half of the same paragraph, McLellin states that Emma "saw him [Joseph] and Fanny in the barn together." If there were two separate encounters, Emma apparently witnessed them both. McLellin claimed that when Emma learned of the relationship she "refused to be satisfied," requiring immense efforts from Joseph to assuage her distress.

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41. William E. McLellin in a July 1872 letter to the Smith's eldest son, Joseph III, Community of Christ Archives; copy Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter Church History Library). A typescript of the entire letter is found in Stan Larson and Samuel J. Passey, eds., *The William E. McLellin Papers, 1854-1880* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2007), 488-89. See also Robert D. Hutchins, "Joseph Smith III: Moderate Mormon" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1977), 79-81.

42. *Mormon Polygamy*, 4-5, esp. 5n7. Van Wagoner treats the "Miss Hill" and Fanny Alger accounts as two different events, just as Palmer does.

43. Richard L. Anderson to Dawn Comfort, 9-15 May 1998, copy of letter in Scott H. Faulring Papers, Box 93, fds 1-3, (ACCN\_2316), Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah.

That Joseph would thereafter engage in the same behavior with a second lady, only to be caught yet again by Emma, seems less likely.

*Third*, an interview three years later between McLellin and anti-Mormon newspaperman J. H. Beadle<sup>44</sup> reports only one relationship. Beadle visited Independence, Missouri, in 1875 and reported:

My first call was on Dr. William E. McLellin, whose name you will find in every number of the old *Millennial Star*, and in many of Smith's revelations. I found the old gentleman in pleasant quarters. ...

He also informed me of the spot [in Kirtland, Ohio] where the first well authenticated case of polygamy took place,<sup>45</sup> in which Joseph Smith was "sealed" to *the hired girl*. The "sealing" took place *in a barn* on the hay mow, and was witnessed by Mrs. Smith through a crack in the door!<sup>46</sup>

McLellin's 1875 story spoke only of one young lady and one relationship. Specifically, he called her "a hired girl" (like "Miss Hill" in the 1872 letter) who was involved with the Prophet "in a barn" (like Fanny Alger in the 1872 letter),<sup>47</sup> and the single interaction was witnessed by Emma. Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery hypothesize: "Perhaps, in his old age, William McLellin confused the hired girl, Fanny Alger, with Fanny Hill of John Cleland's 1749 lewd novel and came up with the hired girl, Miss Hill."<sup>48</sup>

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44. Beadle had previously authored an anti-Mormon work entitled John Hanson Beadle, *Life in Utah: Or, the Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism* (Philadelphia: National Publishing, 1870).

45. McLellin and Beadle were then in Missouri. McLellin would have been describing the location hundreds of miles away in Kirtland, Ohio, not guiding Beadle to the actual geographic "spot" where Joseph and Fanny were spied upon.

46. J. H. Beadle, "Jackson County," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 6 October 1875, 4; emphasis added.

47. Beadle, "Jackson County," 4.

48. Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1984), 66.

*Fourth*, if McLellin had information on more than one alleged sexual impropriety, it is probable that he would have shared it in other venues than one confusing reference in his 1872 letter. J. H. Beadle would have been elated to include two allegations of Kirtland “sealings” in his published interview with McLellin, especially if both were caught in the act by Emma.

In evaluating all the available evidence, it appears that the accounts consistently refer to one affiliation between Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger in Kirtland in the mid-1830s. The minor variations in the documents are not unexpected in light of the inherent limitations of the historical record. Palmer’s audience will, on the other hand, not learn any of this.

#### #6: Fanny Alger

Consistent with his overall prejudices, Palmer discusses Joseph Smith’s first plural marriage as if it was an adulterous relationship (pp. 10–11). However, in a 1904 letter Mary Elizabeth Rollins reported: “Joseph the Seer ... said God gave him a commandment in 1834, to take other wives besides Emma.”<sup>49</sup> Joseph soon complied.

There is strong evidence that this was the Prophet’s first plural marriage. According to the only known account of the circumstances, which comes to us secondhand, Joseph did not approach Fanny directly to discuss a polygamous union. Instead, he enlisted the assistance of his friend Levi Hancock — who was distantly related to Fanny’s family — to serve as an intermediary and officiator. Levi’s son Mosiah wrote in 1896:

Father goes to the Father Samuel Alger — his Father’s Brother in Law and [said] “Samuel the Prophet Joseph loves your Daughter Fanny and wishes her for a wife

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49. Mary E. Lightner to A. M. Chase, letter dated 20 April 1904, quoted in J. D. Stead, *Doctrines and Dogmas of Brighamism Exposed* ([Lamoni, Iowa]: RLDS Church, 1911), 218–19. See also “Record Book of Mary R. L. Rollins, MS 748, Church History Library; *The Life and Testimony of Mary Lightner* (n.p., n.d. [Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press]), 10.

what say you” — Uncle Sam Says — ”Go and talk to the old woman about it twi’ll be as She says” Father goes to his Sister and said “Clarissy, Brother Joseph the Prophet of the most high God loves Fanny and wishes her for a wife what say you” Said She “go and talk to Fanny it will be all right with me” — Father goes to Fanny and said “Fanny Brother Joseph the Prophet loves you and wishes you for a wife will you be his wife”? “I will Levi” Said She. Father takes Fanny to Joseph and said “Brother Joseph I have been successful in my mission” — Father gave her to Joseph repeating the Ceremony as Joseph repeated to him.<sup>50</sup>

Eliza R. Snow, who was “well acquainted” with Fanny, also confirmed that a plural marriage occurred when she personally added Fanny’s name to an 1886 list of Joseph Smith’s plural wives.<sup>51</sup>

As discussed above, Emma discovered the relationship and confronted Joseph. In an effort to placate her, Joseph called on Oliver Cowdery. However, Oliver apparently sided with Emma, likely concluding that the relationship did not constitute a valid union despite the performance of a priesthood ceremony. On 21 January 1838, he wrote to his brother Warren of Joseph’s “dirty, nasty, filthy, scrape.” The word “scrape” is overwritten by “affair.”<sup>52</sup> Whether Oliver authorized the change of wording is unknown.

Regarding this first plural marriage, Palmer identifies several “problems” (p. 12):

*Palmer:* “(1) There is no marriage/sealing ceremony or record of the ordinance.”

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50. Levi Ward Hancock, autobiography with additions in 1896 by Mosiah Hancock, 63, Church History Library; cited portion written by Mosiah, MS 570, microfilm.

51. First List of Plural Wives, Document 1, in Andrew Jenson Papers, MS 17956, Box 49, fd 16, Church History Library.

52. Oliver Cowdery, letter to Warren A. Cowdery (Oliver’s brother), 21 January 1838, letterbook, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

*Response:* Here Palmer demonstrates ignorance of the secrecy surrounding plural ceremonies during Joseph Smith's lifetime. A few of his sealings can be documented in records written at that time, usually in coded language. For example, Brigham Young's journal for 6 January 1842 records: "I was taken in to the lodge J Smith was Agness."<sup>53</sup> The second word "was" probably stands for "wed and sealed."<sup>54</sup> However, the vast majority of the Prophet's sealings were not documented contemporaneously in any way.

As discussed above, Mosiah Hancock provides a second-hand account of a marriage ceremony. Perhaps even more persuasive is the witness of two critics. After she left Joseph and Emma's home, Fanny would stay with the Chauncey Webb family. Webb would later apostatize from the Church in Utah, and his daughter Ann Eliza Webb would marry Brigham Young, divorce him, and then embark upon a career as an anti-Mormon author and lecturer.

Yet, even though hostile to the Church, both Webb and his daughter referred to Fanny's plural marriage as a "sealing."<sup>55</sup> The anachronistic use of the term "sealing" by the Webbs during the Utah period to describe a Kirtland-era plural marriage should not be used to imply that Joseph saw his marriage to Fanny as a sealed, "eternal marriage."<sup>56</sup> It does, however, dispel Palmer's notion that the relationship was a mere dalliance. Eliza Jane also noted that the Alger family "considered it the highest honor to have their daughter adopted into the prophet's family, and her mother has always claimed that she [Fanny] was sealed to Joseph at that time."<sup>57</sup> This would be a strange attitude to take if their relationship was nothing but a disgraceful affair.

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53. Brigham Young's journal, 6 January 1842, Church History Library.

54. See discussion in Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 153.

55. Ann Eliza would have observed none of the Fanny incident first hand, since she was not born until 1844. The Webb accounts are perhaps best seen as two versions of the same perspective.

56. See discussion in Palmer's point #4 in main text below.

57. Ann Eliza Webb Young, *Wife No. 19, or the Story of a Life in Bondage, Being a Complete Exposé of Mormonism, and Revealing the Sorrows, Sacrifices*

Furthermore, the hostile Webbs had no reason to invent a “sealing” if they knew Fanny was really a case of adultery. The astonishing thing is that they did not think to change the story into an affair or seduction, but they probably thought that a polygamous marriage would be scandalous enough for their audience, as it doubtless was. Their critical account, however, is a valuable clue to how Fanny, her family, and Joseph understood the relationship: as a legitimate, solemnized marriage.

*Palmer:* “(2) A witness was not present.”

*Response:* While the Mosiah Hancock account does not list a witness besides his father Levi, it also does not declare there were no witnesses. Less than half of the recollections discussing plural marriages prior to the martyrdom list the names of witnesses. Palmer is making an assumption and then criticizing his assumption, not the historical evidence. Hancock is said to have performed the ceremony, so he serves as a witness of the arrangement — it was formally solemnized, and not simply an adulterous coupling that Joseph later strove to justify as a “marriage” after the fact.

*Palmer:* “(3) There is no text of a revelation permitting polygamous marriage. Joseph Smith may have talked about polygamy in Kirtland, but there is no evidence that he practiced it until 5 April 1841 at Nauvoo.”

*Response:* While section 132 was not written until 12 July 1843, multiple evidences document that Joseph learned of the correctness of the principle in 1831<sup>58</sup> and was commanded to

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and *Sufferings of Women in Polygamy* (Hartford, Conn.: Custin, Gilman & Company, 1876), 66–67; discussed in Danel W. Bachman, “A Study of the Mormon Practice of Polygamy before the Death of Joseph Smith,” (master’s thesis, Purdue University, 1975), 83n102; see also Eliza J. Webb [Eliza Jane Churchill Webb], Lockport, New York, to Mary Bond, letters dated 24 April 1876 and 4 May 1876, Myron H. Bond Collection, P21, f11, RLDS Archives; cited by Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 34 and commentary in Todd Compton, “A Trajectory of Plurality: An Overview of Joseph Smith’s Thirty-Three Plural Wives,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29/2 (Summer 1996): 30.

58. See Orson Pratt, “Report of Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith,” *Millennial Star* 40 (16 December 1878): 788; “W. W. Phelps to Brigham Young, letter dated 12 August 1861, Young Collection, Church History Library; copy of holograph in possession of Brian C. Hales.

establish the practice in 1834.<sup>59</sup> The idea that a revelation had to be written before it could be followed is novel, but inaccurate. The first baptisms for the dead were performed without a written revelation authorizing such ordinances.<sup>60</sup>

*Palmer:* “(4) The LDS Church believes Joseph Smith received the keys to “seal” couples for eternity on 3 April 1836 not before.”

*Response:* We do not claim the Fanny Alger plural marriage was a sealing. Joseph possessed priesthood authority that could solemnize marriages. The first such recorded marriage occurred 24 November 1835, when the Prophet performed the monogamous wedding ceremony of Lydia Goldthwaite Bailey and Newell Knight.<sup>61</sup> It is common nowadays to think of plural marriage as always tied to the doctrines of sealing and eternal marriage, but the two concepts are separate. The historical evidence has Joseph discussing plural marriage years prior to expressing ideas about eternal sealings.<sup>62</sup>

*Palmer:* “(5) Alger left the state and quickly rejected counsel by marrying a non-Mormon, something one would not expect from a plural wife.”

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59. Mary Elizabeth Rollins, 8 February 1902 statement, MS 1132, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University; Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, “Remarks” at Brigham Young University, 14 April 1905, Vault MSS 363, fd 6, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Special Collections.

60. See Alexander L. Baugh, “For This Ordinance Belongeth to My House”: The Practice of Baptism for the Dead Outside the Nauvoo Temple,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 3/1 (2002): 47–58.

61. See William G. Hartley, “Newel and Lydia Bailey Knight’s Kirtland Love Story and Historic Wedding,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 39/4 (2000): 6–22; M. Scott Bradshaw, “Joseph Smith’s Performance of Marriages in Ohio,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 39/4 (2000): 23–68; Gregory Prince, *Power from on High* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 182.

62. Regarding the 1831 knowledge of the correctness of plural marriage, see note 58. The first mention of marriage lasting beyond the grave comes from W.W. Phelps in 1835. W.W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, letter dated 26 May 1835, Journal History, Church History Library. Joseph did not teach eternal marriage publicly until 1841. See <http://josephsmithspolygamy.org/history-2/kirtland-polygamy/>. At that time, nothing was mentioned regarding the need for a “sealing” or special marriage ceremony.

*Response:* Fanny Alger told Eliza Jane Webb “her reasons for leaving ‘Sister Emma.’”<sup>63</sup> And Andrew Jenson’s notes record that Emma “made such a fuss” about Fanny.<sup>64</sup> Palmer is entitled to his opinion, but his supposition of what should be “expected” of a plural wife who had been thrust out of the home by Emma may or may not be valid. Palmer also knows nothing of what “counsel” she received from Joseph, if any. Palmer piles one speculation upon another here to support his theories.

### #7: Lucinda Harris

Palmer’s discussion of Lucinda Harris includes a brief statement from Wilhem Wyl’s anti-Mormon work (pp. 12–13).<sup>65</sup> Wyl claims that prior to 1886 Sarah Pratt said:

Mrs. [Lucinda Pendleton Morgan] Harris was a married lady, a very good friend of mine. When Joseph had made his dastardly attempt on me, I went to Mrs. Harris to unbosom my grief to her. To my utter astonishment she said, laughing heartily: “How foolish you are! I don’t see anything so horrible in it. Why I am his mistress since four years!”<sup>66</sup>

Without troubling to evaluate the credibility of either Wyl or Sarah Pratt, Palmer’s shallow scholarship apparently permitted him to cite a brief statement and then move on. However, as witnesses, Sarah Pratt and Wyl are known to have made allegations that can be shown to be blatantly false.<sup>67</sup> Both,

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63. Eliza J. Webb [Eliza Jane Churchill Webb], Lockport, New York, to Mary Bond, 4 May 1876, Biographical Folder Collection, P21, f11, item 9, Community of Christ Archives.

64. Andrew Jenson Papers, MS 17956, Box 49, fd 16, Doc. 10, Church History Library.

65. W[ilhem] Wyl [pseud. for Wilhelm Ritter von Wymetal], *Mormon Portraits, or the Truth about Mormon Leaders from 1830 to 1886, Joseph Smith the Prophet, His Family and His Friends: A Study Based on Fact and Documents* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing, 1886).

66. Wyl, *Mormon Portraits*, 60, emphasis deleted.

67. Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy*, 1:64–65.

like Palmer, seemed willing to repeat any rumor so long as it undermined Joseph Smith. Concerning Wyl's accuracy, non-Mormon writer Thomas Gregg wrote: "The statements of the interviews [in his book] must be taken for what they are worth. While many of them are corroborated elsewhere and [corroborated] in many ways, there are others that need verification, and some that probably exist only in the mind of the narrator."<sup>68</sup> Biographer Richard L. Bushman provided this assessment: "He [Wyl] introduced a lot of hearsay into his account of Joseph. Personally I found all the assertions about the Prophet's promiscuity pretty feeble. Nothing there [was] worth contending with."<sup>69</sup> Hales has discussed multiple additional problems with the timeline and allegations elsewhere.<sup>70</sup>

## #8: Sarah Pratt

While it may seem unlikely that Grant Palmer's historical documentation methodology could get any worse, it does. He next quotes from John C. Bennett quoting Sarah Pratt allegedly quoting Joseph Smith (p. 13):

Sister Pratt, the Lord has given you to me as one of my spiritual wives [somewhat like a concubine, or a wife for the night]. I have the blessings of Jacob granted me, as God granted holy men of old, and as I have long looked upon you with favor, and an earnest desire of connubial bliss, I hope you will not repulse or deny me. (p. 13; material in square brackets added by Palmer)

The dramatics in this alleged conversation appear to be Bennett's elaborations. He refers to "spiritual wifery," a term

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68. Thomas Gregg, *The Prophet of Palmyra: Mormonism Reviewed and Examined in the Life, Character, and Career of Its Founder* (New York: John B. Alden, 1890), 504.

69. Email correspondence between Richard L. Bushman and Brian Hales, 23 August 2007.

70. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 1:58–67.

Joseph Smith never used except in derision.<sup>71</sup> The revelation on celestial and plural marriage, dictated by the Prophet (now section 132), contains no mention of the words “spiritual” or “wifery.” Interestingly, Bennett did not adopt other terms like “everlasting wifery,” “celestial wifery,” “eternal wifery,” or “spiritual marriage,” which is evidence that Joseph’s teachings and Bennett’s claims were completely unrelated to each other and casts significant doubt that Joseph Smith would have ever used the term as Bennett alleged.

An additional problem with Sarah’s alleged account, as filtered through John C. Bennett, is that the evidence strongly supports that they were sexually involved with each other. In August of 1842, non-Mormon<sup>72</sup> J. B. Backenstos, signed an affidavit charging, “Doctor John C. Bennett, with having an illicit intercourse with Mrs. Orson Pratt, and some others, when said Bennett replied that she made a first rate go, and from personal observations I should have taken said Doctor Bennett and Mrs. Pratt as man and wife, had I not known to the contrary.”<sup>73</sup> Ebenezer Robinson similarly reported in 1890: “In the spring of 1841 Dr. Bennett had a small neat house built for Elder Orson Pratt’s family [Sarah and one male child] and commenced boarding with them. Elder Pratt was absent on a mission to England.”<sup>74</sup> John D. Lee recalled: “He [John C. Bennett] became intimate with Orson Pratt’s wife, while Pratt was on a mission. That he built her a fine frame house, and lodged with her, and used her as his wife.”<sup>75</sup> Another Nauvooan

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71. See Andrew F. Ehat, and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1980), 257, 357.

72. On Backenstos’s status as a non-Mormon, see Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 477.

73. “Affidavit of J. B. Backenstos,” *Affidavits and Certificates, Disproving the Statements and Affidavits Contained in John C. Bennett’s Letters*, Nauvoo, Illinois, Aug. 31, 1842. These affidavits have been listed as an “Extra” and were printed as a single, two-sided sheet on the Church’s printing press. Catherine Fuller testified J. B. Backenstos had approached her along with Bennett.

74. Ebenezer Robinson, *The Return* (St. Louis) 1/11 (November 1890): 362.

75. John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled* (St. Louis: Byron, Brand, 1877), 148.

recalled that Joseph Smith tried to intervene. Mary Ettie V. Coray Smith<sup>76</sup> related:

Orson Pratt, then, as now [1858], one of the “Twelve,” was sent by Joseph Smith on a mission to England. During his absence, his first (i.e. his lawful) wife, Sarah, occupied a house owned by John C. Bennett, a man of some note, and at that time, quartermaster-general of the Nauvoo Legion. Sarah was an educated woman, of fine accomplishments, and attracted the attention of the Prophet Joseph, who called upon her one day, and alleged he found John C. Bennett in bed with her. As we lived but across the street from her house we heard the whole uproar. Sarah ordered the Prophet out of the house, and the Prophet used obscene language to her.<sup>77</sup>

Precisely what Joseph and Sarah discussed is not known; however, she later complained that Joseph made an offensive

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76. Mary is a notoriously unreliable source, so her witness alone would be worth little. It is included here as a potentially confirming voice, though it is difficult to rely upon her for matters about which she provides the only evidence. One nineteenth century member who left the Church and wrote an anti-Mormon work said of Mary: “Much has already been written on this subject much that is in accordance with facts, and much that is exaggerated and false. Hitherto, with but one exception [Mrs. Ettie V. Smith is footnoted as the author referred to] that of a lady who wrote very many years ago, and who in her writings, so mixed up fiction with what was true, that it was difficult to determine where the one ended and the other began no woman who really was a Mormon and lived in Polygamy ever wrote the history of her own personal experience. Books have been published, and narratives have appeared in the magazines and journals, purporting to be written by Mormon wives; it is, however, perhaps, unnecessary for me to state that, notwithstanding such narratives may be imposed upon the Gentile world as genuine, that they were written by persons outside the Mormon faith would in a moment be detected by any intelligent Saint who took the trouble to peruse them.” Mrs. T.B.H. [Fanny] Stenhouse, *“Tell It All”: The Story of a Life’s Experience in Mormonism* (Hartford, Conn.: A.D. Worthington & Company, 1875 [1874]), 618.

77. Nelson Winch Green, *Fifteen Years among the Mormons: Being the Narrative of Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith* (New York: D.W. Evans, 1860, Kessinger Publishing rpt.), 31.

“proposal” to her.<sup>78</sup> In a meeting of the Twelve Apostles dated 20 January 1843, Joseph Smith told Orson that Sarah “lied about me,” saying, “I never made the offer which she said I did.”<sup>79</sup> In 1845, Orson Pratt was interviewed by Sidney Rigdon. After the interview, Rigdon concluded that Orson was “literally telling the people that all Smith said about his wife was true.” Rigdon added: “He has left on the character of his wife a stain, by this degraded condescension, that he can never wash out. . . . Pratt is determined to make us believe it, by virtually declaring it was true; for if he was wrong when he called Smith a liar, then his wife was guilty of the charges preferred.”<sup>80</sup>

If he was going to opine on these matters, Grant Palmer should have been aware of this data. And, had he known, he ought then have refrained from including such feeble evidence to support allegations of impropriety between Joseph Smith and Sarah Pratt without making a cogent case, which overcomes the limitations we outline above.

#### #9: Melissa Schindle

Palmer continues to quote John C. Bennett’s publication, *History of the Saints*, by reproducing an affidavit from Melissa Schindle (p. 14):

In the fall of 1841, she was staying one night with the widow Fuller, who has recently been married to a Mr. Warren, in the city of Nauvoo, and that Joseph Smith came into the room where she was sleeping about 10 o’clock at night, and after making a few remarks came to her bedside, and asked her if he could have the

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78. Wyl, *Mormon Portraits*, 61.

79. *Minutes of the Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1835–1893* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2010), 15 (entry for 20 January 1843); see also *New Mormon Studies: A Comprehensive Resource Library*, CD-ROM (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, 1998); Richard S. Van Wagoner, “Sarah M. Pratt: The Shaping of an Apostate” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19 (Summer 1986): 80.

80. Sydney Rigdon, “Tour East,” *Messenger and Advocate of the Church of Christ*, Pittsburgh, December 1845, 1.

privilege of sleeping with her. She immediately replied no. He, on the receipt of the above answer told her it was the will of the Lord that he should have illicit intercourse with her, and that he never proceeded to do any thing of that kind with any woman without first having the will of the Lord on the subject; and further he told her that if she would consent to let him have such intercourse with her, she could make his house her home as long as she wished to do so, and that she should never want for anything it was in his power to assist her to -- but she would not consent to it. He then told her that if she would let him sleep with her that night he would give her five dollars -- but she refused all his propositions. He then told her that she must never tell of his propositions to her, for he had ALL influence in that place, and if she told he would ruin her character, and she would be under the necessity of leaving. He then went to an adjoining bed where the Widow [Fuller] was sleeping -- got into bed with her and laid there until about 1 o'clock, when he got up, bid them good night, and left them, and further this deponent saith not. MELISSA (her X mark) SCHINDLE.

Subscribed and sworn to before me, this 2d day July, 1842. A. FULKERSON, J. P. (seal).<sup>81</sup>

Palmer evidently takes this affidavit at face value, writing that on an "1841 evening ... Melissa Schindle was propositioned by Smith," and "Melissa rejected" Joseph Smith's offer (p. 14). However, the affidavit's credibility is questionable on several grounds.

Schindle's illiteracy, indicated by her signing an "X," shows that she would have required assistance from other individuals

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81. John C. Bennett, letter dated 27 June 1842, "Bennett's Second and Third Letters," *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Ill., 15 July 1842. Reproduced in Bennett's *History of the Saints: or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism* (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842), 253–54, <https://archive.org/details/historysaints00benngoog>.

— including, potentially, John C. Bennett — to compose the document. Two weeks after the affidavit was published, Melissa Schindle’s moral character was questioned in Nauvoo’s secular newspaper, *The Wasp*: “Who is Mrs. Shindle? A harlot.”<sup>82</sup> Catherine Fuller (see case #10) was tried before the Nauvoo High Council on 25 May 1842 for immoral activity with John C. Bennett. During her trial, she accused Bennett of also sleeping with Melissa Schindle.<sup>83</sup> D. Michael Quinn lists her as one of Bennett’s “free-love” companions.<sup>84</sup>

The events described in the affidavit include several details that seem implausible. In 1841 Nauvoo, no man — even Joseph Smith — was likely to be allowed to wander into a room where women were already in bed sleeping at ten o’clock at night.

Schindle’s claim that Joseph Smith “told her it was the will of the Lord that he should have illicit intercourse with her” depicts him as an adulterous hypocrite, acknowledging from the onset that the relationship would have been “illicit.” Such a depiction of the Prophet contradicts the numerous other public and private evidences that Joseph taught and practiced a different moral standard.

It is also implausible that the Prophet would offer Schindle to “make his house her home” if she would acquiesce. It seems clear that Emma, the Prophet’s legal wife, would not have tolerated such an arrangement at their Nauvoo homestead. (The Smiths did not move into the spacious Nauvoo Mansion until August of 1843.)

The offering of money, “five dollars,” is also singular. None of Joseph’s plural wives reported any promises of material benefits or financial favors to them. Plural wife Lucy Walker recalled Joseph telling her as he discussed a plural sealing with

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82. *The Wasp*, “Extra” edition, Wednesday, 27 July 1842. *The Wasp* names her “Shindle,” while Bennett’s *Sangamo Journal* and *History of the Saints* account uses “Schindle” (see note 81 above).

83. Catherine Fuller testimony before the Nauvoo High Council, 25 May 1842; copy of holograph in Valeen Tippitts Avery Collection, Utah State University, Logan, Utah. See further discussion on pp. 219–20 below.

84. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 536.

her: "I have no flattering words to offer."<sup>85</sup> There is simply too much here that does not add up.

#### #10: Catherine Warren Fuller

In her affidavit, Schindle declared that she refused Joseph Smith's advances and then witnessed sexual relations between him and Catherine Fuller. To support this allegation, Palmer also quotes an affidavit from John C. Bennett (p. 14):

...he [John C. Bennett] has seen Joseph Smith in bed with Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, and that he has seen him in the act of cohabitation with Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, all four of whom he seduced by telling him that the Lord had granted the blessing of Jacob, and that there was no sin in it -- that he told him that Bates Noble married him to \_\_\_\_\_, and that Brigham Young married him to \_\_\_\_\_, that he had free access to Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, and various others.<sup>86</sup>

Bennett asserted that Joseph Smith was sleeping with seven married women, and Bennett personally witnessed relations between the Prophet and four of them. Bennett's affidavit is remarkable for its voyeuristic features. Were Joseph behaving as described, it would be surprising if he allowed any man or woman the level of access Bennett claimed. It is also dubious to claim that the women would have permitted it. Bennett and Palmer's reconstruction makes them passive objects or props, not realistic human beings of their time and place.

Despite his many claims of being a polygamy confidant of Joseph Smith's, an examination of Bennett's writings demonstrates that he learned nothing about eternal marriage from the Prophet.

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85. Quote in Lyman Omer Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints: Giving an Account of Much Individual Suffering Endured for Religious Conscience* (Logan, Utah: Utah Journal Co., 1888), 47.

86. John C. Bennett affidavit published in *The Pittsburgh Morning Chronicle*, 29 July 1842.

State of Illinois, }  
Hancock County. } ss.

Personally appeared before me, S. Marshall, a Justice of the Peace in and for said county, John C. Bennett, who being duly sworn, according to law, deposeth and saith—that the affidavit taken before Esq. Wells on the 17th of May, and the statement before the City Council of Nauvoo on the 19th, as published in the Wasp of the 25th of June, 1842, are false, and were taken under duress, as stated in this letter—that he has seen Joseph Smith in bed with Mrs. —, Mrs. —, and that he has seen him in the act of cohabitation with Mrs. —, and Mrs. —, all four of whom he seduced by telling them that the Lord had granted the blessing of Jacob, and that there was no sin in it—that he told him that Bates Noble married him to —, and that Brigham Young married him to —, that he had free access to Mrs. —, Mrs. —, Mrs. —, and various others, whose husbands he had sent off preaching, and not now necessary to mention—and further this deponent saith not.

**JOHN C. BENNET.**

Sworn to and subscribed this 2d day of July, 1842.

**SAMUEL MARSHALL, J. P. [seal.]**

Figure 6: John C. Bennett affidavit published in *The Pittsburgh Morning Chronicle* (29 July 1842)

In a 28 October 1843 letter written to the Iowa *Hawk Eye* newspaper, Bennett reported that “This ‘*marrying for eternity*’ is not the ‘*Spiritual Wife doctrine*’ noticed in my Expose [*The History of the Saints*], but is an entirely new doctrine established

by special Revelation.” That is, eternal marriage was “an entirely new doctrine” to Bennett. Since Joseph never taught plural marriage in Nauvoo without emphasizing its eternal nature, Bennett’s admission that he had never heard of eternal marriage in Nauvoo is a tacit admission that he never learned of plural marriage there either.

As discussed above, on 25 May 1842, Catherine was called before the Nauvoo High Council on charges of “unchaste and unvirtuous” behavior — not with Joseph Smith, but with John C. Bennett and other men:

The defendant confessed to the charge and gave the names of several others who had been guilty of having unlawful intercourse with her stating that they taught the doctrine that it was right to have free intercourse with women and that the heads of the Church also taught and practiced it which things caused her to be led away thinking it to be right but becoming convinced that it was not right and learning that the heads of the church did not believe nor practice such things she was willing to confess her sins and did repent before God for what she had done and desired earnestly that the Council would forgive her and covenanted that she would hence forth do so no more.<sup>87</sup>

In this confession Catherine directly contradicts Bennett’s accusation, acknowledging that the “heads of the church,” which would have included Joseph Smith, “did not believe nor practice” what Bennett described as “free intercourse.” Given that Catherine exposed Bennett and implicated Melissa Schindle in fornication with Bennett, it is perhaps not surprising that Bennett would try to discredit her, though his zeal resulted in less-than-plausible slander.

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87. Nauvoo Stake High Council Minutes, 1839 October–1845 October, LR 3102 22: Church History Library. Printed in Fred Collier, *The Nauvoo High Council Minute Books of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Hanna, Utah: Collier’s Publishing, 2005), 57–58.

### “At Least Some Plausibility”

As quoted above, Grant Palmer explained in his introduction: “a number of sexual allegations are leveled against Smith, several of which I think contain so little information they are not worth mentioning.” Instead, he chose these ten “declarations” because he believed they “have at least some plausibility of being true.” Questions of “plausibility” can be answered in different ways by observers, usually due to the individual biases they possess. Apparently, these ten allegations are the most convincing evidences Palmer could identify in the entire historical record in order to support his belief that Joseph Smith “was accused of illicit sexual conduct with a number of women from 1827 on, until his death in 1844” (p. 3). If so, then the “allegations” that were “not worth mentioning” because they were more skimpily documented must have been very dubious indeed.

## Part 2 — Other Historical Claims and Errors

### No Accuser Equals No Sin?

On page 16, Palmer proposes an utterly unlikely interpretation of Joseph Smith’s public teaching on 7 November 1841: “If you do not accuse each other, God will not accuse you.”<sup>88</sup> There is no question that Bennett utilized this seduction line. Margaret Nyman testified that Chauncey Higbee, a follower of Bennett, approached her saying: “Any respectable female might indulge in sexual intercourse, and there was no sin in it, provided the person so indulging keep the same to herself; for there could be no sin where there was no accuser.”<sup>89</sup>

Palmer extrapolates and claims that by 7 November 1841, “this philosophy was already being practiced by Joseph Smith and John C. Bennett” (p. 16). Unfortunately for Palmer, he

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88. Joseph Smith, 7 November 1841 discourse; reproduced in *History of the Church*, 4:445.

89. “Testimony of Margaret J. Nyman v. Chauncey L. Higbee, before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in the city of Nauvoo, May 21, 1842,” *Millennial Star* 23 (12 October 1861): 657.

provides no evidence to support the tenuous claim that the Prophet did so. It seems that if John C. Bennett had known about eternal marriage and celestial sealing, he would have exploited those secret teachings rather than twisting a public statement from the Prophet. Palmer includes Joseph in his net without any documentation.

With the exception of Bennett, there are likewise no witnesses that Joseph would ever have tolerated secret sexual liaisons between unmarried individuals. On the contrary, he disciplined such behavior when it came to his attention.

### **Evidence or Unscholarly Propaganda?**

Halfway through the article, Palmer summarizes:

Improper sexual advances relating to the Stowell daughters, Eliza Winters, Marinda Nancy Johnson, Vienna Jacques, Miss Hill, Fanny Alger, Lucinda Harris, Sarah Pratt, Melissa Schindle, and Catherine Fuller Warren were made against the character of Joseph Smith from 1827–1841. (p. 16)

Palmer apparently believes his interpretations regarding these alleged interactions, but our closer look reveals that *none* of them constitute a credible report of sexual immorality.

Expanding his case with innuendo, Palmer writes:

Additionally, of the thirty-three women listed by Todd Compton as being plural wives of Joseph Smith, twelve do not have an officiator, ceremony or witness to their marriage/sealing. Fanny Alger and Mrs. Lucinda Harris, who we have already discussed, fall into this category in the 1830s; Mrs. Sylvia Sessions, Mrs. Elizabeth Durfee, Mrs. Sarah Cleveland, and widow Delcena Johnson, in 1842; and single women, Flora Ann Woodworth, Sarah and Maria Lawrence, Hannah Ells, Olive Frost and Nancy Winchester, in 1843. Is inadequate record keeping the problem, or are some of

these women — especially the married ones — sexual consent relationships? (p. 16)

It appears Palmer simply performed a superficial review of these women and then drew his extreme conclusion. If he had dug a little further he would have learned that documentation exists showing that Levi Hancock performed the marriage of Fanny Alger; Andrew Jenson documented a sealing between the Prophet and Sylvia Sessions; Emma Smith participated in the sealings of Sarah and Maria Lawrence; and valid eternal marriage ceremonies were attested for Olive Frost (by Mary Ann Frost), Elizabeth Davis [Durfee] (by Eliza R. Snow), Sarah Cleveland (by John L. Smith), Hannah Ells (by William Clayton), Nancy Winchester (by Eliza R. Snow), Delcena Johnson (by Benjamin F. Johnson), and Flora Ann Woodworth (by Helen Mar Whitney). The volume of evidence Palmer needed to ignore to arrive at his conclusion is impressive.<sup>90</sup>

### Joseph Smith's "Tremendous Power Over Church Members"?

Palmer's version of Joseph Smith's polygamy becomes more entertaining as he asserts:

Claiming heavenly sealing keys to "bind and loose" gave Smith tremendous power over church members. He used it as an inducement to persuade at least three and probably four young females to accept his proposals between mid-July 1842 and mid-May 1843. Sarah Ann Whitney, Helen Mar Kimball, Lucy Walker and perhaps Flora Woodworth — all between the ages of fourteen and seventeen[ — ]were persuaded by this approach. (pp. 17–18.)

Specifically, Palmer asserts: "Newel K. Whitney, Sarah Ann's father was promised by Smith to receive 'eternal life to all your house, both old and young,' by having Sarah Ann marry him" (p. 18). In fact, Palmer misrepresents the statement:

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90. See Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 1:323–41.

Verily thus saith the Lord unto my servant N. K. Whitney the thing that my servant Joseph Smith has made known unto you and your family and which you have agreed upon is right in mine eyes and shall be crowned upon your heads with honor and immortality and eternal life to all your house both old and young because of the lineage of my priesthood saith the Lord it shall be upon you and upon your children after you from generation to generation By virtue of the Holy promise which I now make unto you saith the Lord.<sup>91</sup>

Palmer affirms that the “thing” capable of bringing “honor and immortality and eternal life to all your house both old and young ... and upon your children after you from generation to generation” is Joseph’s plural marriage to Sarah, which is an incomplete interpretation. He ignores the other factor at play in Joseph’s communications with the Whitney’s: the eternal marriage sealing of Newel and Elizabeth Whitney on 21 August 1842. Three days prior to their sealing, Joseph wrote them urgently of “one thing I want to see you for it is to git the fulness of my blessings sealed upon our heads.” Joseph praised the Whitneys “for I know the goodness of your hearts, and that you will do the will of the Lord, when it is made known to you.”<sup>92</sup>

Plural marriage is thus a token of the Whitneys’ willingness to obey God, but their complete commitment and the eternal

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91. H. Michael Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations with Text and Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 315. See also Joseph Smith, *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, vol. 1, Significant Mormon Diaries Series, ed. Scott Faulring (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1989), 165–66, citing copies in Church History Library. Also in George D. Smith, *Revelations in Addition to Those Found in the LDS Edition of the D&C*, in *New Mormon Studies: A Comprehensive Resource Library*, CD-ROM (Salt Lake City: Smith Research Associates, 1998).

92. Joseph Smith, letter to Newel K. Whitney, Elizabeth Ann Whitney, etc., 18 August 1842, Church History Library. Reproduced in Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 539–40.

sealing that it permits seems to us the more likely source of the promised blessings.

Helen Mar Kimball's father arranged for her to be sealed to Joseph Smith. Palmer writes: "He [Joseph Smith] told Helen Mar Kimball in front of her father, Heber C. Kimball, that: 'If you will take this step, it will ensure your eternal salvation & exaltation and that of your father's household & all of your kindred'" (p. 18).<sup>93</sup> Palmer forgets to include Helen's other comment regarding the teachings she heard that day: "I confess that I was too young or too 'foolish' to comprehend and appreciate all" that Joseph Smith taught.<sup>94</sup> Contemporaneous evidence from more mature family members who were better positioned to "comprehend and appreciate" the Prophet's promises to Helen demonstrates that she did, in fact, misunderstand the blessings predicated on this sealing.<sup>95</sup>

Palmer misrepresents still another relationship: "Lucy Walker, like the other two girls was told by Smith that by marrying him, 'that it would prove an everlasting blessing to my father's house'" (p. 18). A closer look at the entire quote shows that it is the principle of sealing, not Lucy's specific marriage to Joseph that would bring blessings: "He [Joseph Smith] fully explained to me the principle of plural or celestial marriage. He said this principle was again to be restored for the benefit of the human family, that it would prove an everlasting blessing to my father's house, and form a chain that could never be broken, worlds without end."<sup>96</sup>

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93. Palmer is quoting Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney, "Autobiography, 30 March 1881," MS 744, Church History Library.

94. Helen Mar Whitney, *Plural Marriage as Taught by the Prophet Joseph: A Reply to Joseph Smith, Editor of the Lamoni Iowa "Herald"* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), 16.

95. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:28–29; 3:198–203.

96. Quoted in Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints*, 46; see also testimony in Andrew Jenson, "Plural Marriage," *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 229–30.

## Sending Men on Missions?

By quoting secondary sources such as Todd Compton, Palmer asserts:

A second method Smith used to get females to say yes to his proposals was to send family males on a mission that might or did object to his advances. ... Smith directly approached young Lucy Walker only after sending her father, John Walker, on a mission. He also sent Horace Whitney on a mission because he felt that Horace was too close to his sister Sarah Ann, and would oppose the marriage.<sup>97</sup> Smith married Marinda Nancy Johnson Hyde, a year before her husband Orson, an Apostle, returned from his mission. (p. 19)

A closer look reveals that John Walker was sent on a mission to help his health. Lucy recalled: “The Prophet came to our rescue. He said: ‘If you remain here, Brother Walker, you will soon follow your wife. You must have a change of scene, a change of climate.’ ... [M]y father sought to comfort us by saying two years would soon pass away, then with renewed health”<sup>98</sup> and upon his return he was told and approved of the marriage. Similarly, Horace Whitney approved of Sarah’s sealing upon learning of it after his mission was finished.

Two separate sealing dates for Joseph Smith’s marriage to Marinda Nancy Johnson are available. Joseph Smith’s journal contains a list of plural marriages in the handwriting of Thomas Bullock is found written after the 14 July 1843 entry: “Apri 42 marinda Johnson to Joseph Smith,” well over a year after Orson had left on his mission to Palestine.<sup>99</sup> However, the second sealing date of “May 1843” was written on an affidavit

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97. Palmer references Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness*, 349.

98. Lucy Walker Kimball, “Statement,” typescript, MS 9827, 4, Church History Library; see also Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints*, 43–44.

99. Photograph of holograph in Richard E. Turley, Jr., *Selected Collections from the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 1: DVD 20.

she personally signed. The significance of the two dates is unknown, but as evidence that the Prophet would send a woman's family members on missions in order to marry her, these cases are not impressive. If Orson had been sent away so Joseph could marry his wife, why did Joseph wait at least a year before proceeding? And, why does Palmer emphasize the amount of time *remaining* on Orson's mission, instead of the amount of time that had elapsed before the marriage? His choice shades the account to Joseph's disadvantage.

### Angel with a Sword

Palmer writes that Joseph Smith told Zina Huntington: "The angel will slay me with a sword if you don't accept my proposal" (p. 19). This entertaining fabrication is not supported by any known account of Joseph Smith's visit with the angel.<sup>100</sup> In fact, Zina testified that Joseph never spoke to her until the sealing. Zina explained: "My brother Dimick told me what Joseph had told him" regarding plural marriage, and she reported: "Joseph did not come until afterwards. ... I received it from Joseph through my brother Dimick."<sup>101</sup> Importantly, Mary Elizabeth Rollins stated that the angel did not appear with a sword until "early February" of 1842 — this was months after Joseph's sealing to Zina, so a claim about a sword to Zina appears anachronistic.<sup>102</sup>

Throughout Palmer's discussion, he seems unaware of Joseph's open condemnation of a "plurality of husbands." That

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100. Brian C. Hales, "Encouraging Joseph Smith to Practice Plural Marriage: The Accounts of the Angel with a Drawn Sword," *Mormon Historical Studies* 11/2 (Fall 2010): 55–71.

101. Zina D. H. Young, Interviewed by John W. Wight, 1 October 1898, "Evidence from Zina D. Huntington-Young," *Saints' Herald* 52/2 (11 January 1905): 28–30. Also in Stead, *Doctrines and Dogmas of Brighamism Exposed*, 212–14.

102. "Statement" signed Feb. 8, 1902, Vesta Crawford Papers, MS 125, Box 1, fd 11, Marriott Library, University of Utah. Original owned by Mrs. Nell Osborne, Salt Lake City. See also Juanita Brooks Papers, USHS, MSB103, Box 16, fd 13; Mary E. Lightner to A. M. Chase, 20 April 1904, quoted in Stead, *Doctrines and Dogmas of Brighamism Exposed*, 218–19. 2–3.

is, at no time could a woman have two husbands according to God's laws.<sup>103</sup> In the cases of Zina Huntington (legal wife of Henry Jacobs) and Mary Elizabeth Rollins (legal wife of Adam Lightner), the women chose Joseph over their civil spouses in "eternity only" sealings that begin after death.<sup>104</sup>

### Joseph H. Jackson?

Just when we thought Palmer's documentation could not get any worse, he quotes Joseph H. Jackson:

For example, he [Joseph Smith] asked Joseph Jackson for help in winning over Jane Law in January of 1844, stating that Smith: "Informed me he had been endeavoring for some two months, to get Mrs. William Law for a spiritual wife. He said that he had used every argument in his power to convince her of the correctness of his doctrine, but could not succeed."<sup>105</sup> (pp. 20–21)

Joseph H. Jackson published an extraordinary account of his alleged interactions with Joseph Smith, including those with William and Jane Law in 1844.<sup>106</sup> However, the historical record demonstrates that Jackson had few opportunities for private conversations with the Prophet. Jackson lied when he introduced himself as a "Catholic priest," on 18 May 1843.<sup>107</sup> Two days later, William Clayton recorded Joseph remarking,

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103. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 1:375–90.

104. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 1:431, 434–441.

105. Joseph H. Jackson, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Experience of Joseph H. Jackson in Nauvoo* (Warsaw [Ill.]: np, August 1844), 19.

106. Jackson's account, while intriguing, is full of egotistical assertions and gross inaccuracies, hence raising questions regarding credibility. For example, he states that at one point Joseph Smith said to him that "he thought his wife loved me more than she did him." Jackson, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Experiences of Joseph H. Jackson in Nauvoo*, 10. He also made the outlandish claim that "From my knowledge of the spiritual wife system I should think that the number of secret women in Nauvoo cannot be much less than six hundred" (25).

107. *History of the Church*, 5:394.

“Jackson appears a fine and noble fellow but is reduced in circumstances.” Apparently Jackson immediately disappointed the Prophet’s expectations. Only three days later, Joseph told Clayton, “Jackson is rotten hearted.” This gives the supposed Catholic priest no more than a five-day window without Joseph’s distrust.<sup>108</sup>

It appears that Joseph Jackson sought to marry Lovina Smith, daughter of Hyrum Smith, but was rebuffed by both Hyrum and Joseph. One month before his death the Prophet exclaimed: “Jackson has committed murder, robbery, and perjury; and I can prove it by half-a-dozen witnesses.”<sup>109</sup> Given how closely Joseph guarded the secret of plural marriage in Nauvoo, it is extraordinary to claim that he would unveil everything less than a week after first meeting Jackson.

### Slandering Women Who Refused Plural Proposals?

Palmer seems to believe John C. Bennett’s claim that if a woman refused a plural proposal, Joseph Smith would ruin her reputation (p. 22).<sup>110</sup> History records that Joseph was turned down by seven women. His preferred response was to quietly let the matter rest. No evidence of retaliatory excommunications or other vengeful reactions have been found, although twice he sought to counteract allegations he considered untrue.

Benjamin F. Johnson wrote of one rejection, relating that the Prophet “asked me for my youngest sister, Esther M. I told him she was promised in marriage to my wife’s brother.

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108. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, 6, (23 May 1843). Due to his purported involvement in the death of Joseph Smith, a broadside entitled *A Proclamation* was issued on 27 September 1844 offering a reward of two hundred dollars for the apprehension of Levi William, Thomas C. Sharp, and Joseph H. Jackson. Chad J. Flake and Larry W. Draper, *A Mormon Bibliography 1830–1930: Books, Pamphlets, Periodicals, and Broad­sides Relating to the First Century of Mormonism*, 2nd ed. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 1:539, #4198a.)

109. Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 376.

110. Bennett, *The History of the Saints*, 231 (Sarah Pratt) and 253 (Widow Fuller).

He said, ‘Well, let them marry, for it will all come right.’”<sup>111</sup> Esther and her future husband were married by Almon Babbitt in Nauvoo on 4 April 1844.<sup>112</sup>

In another case, on 15 September 1843, William Clayton recorded an incident regarding Lydia Moon: “He [Joseph Smith] finally asked if I would not give Lydia Moon to him I said I would so far as I had any thing to do in it. He requested me to talk to her.”<sup>113</sup> Two days later, Clayton wrote: “I had some talk with Lydia. She seems to receive it kindly but says she has promised her mother not to marry while her mother lives and she thinks she won’t.”<sup>114</sup> Lydia was not sealed to Joseph.

Another unsuccessful proposal occurred with Sarah Granger Kimball, who was legally married to non-Mormon Hiram Kimball:

Early in 1842, Joseph Smith taught me the principle of marriage for eternity, and the doctrine of plural marriage. He said that in teaching this he realized that he jeopardized his life; but God had revealed it to him many years before as a privilege with blessings, now God had revealed it again and instructed him to teach with commandment, as the Church could travel (progress) no further without the introduction of this principle. I asked him to teach it to some one else. He looked at me reprovingly and said, “Will you tell me who to teach it to? God required me to teach it to you, and leave you with the responsibility of believing or disbelieving.” He said, “I will not cease to pray for you, and if you will seek unto God in prayer, you will not be led into temptation.”<sup>115</sup>

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111. Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Mesa: 21st Century Printing, n.d.), 96.

112. Lyndon W. Cook, comp. *Nauvoo Deaths and Marriages, 1839–1845* (Orem, Utah: Grandin, 1994), 97.

113. Smith, ed. *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, 120.

114. Smith, ed. *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, 120.

115. Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 232.

After this snub, Sarah Kimball sent Joseph on his way. His only response was to encourage her and to pray for her.

Cordelia C. Morley recounted a similar situation: “In the spring of forty-four, plural marriage was introduced to me by my parents from Joseph Smith, asking their consent and a request to me to be his wife. Imagine if you can my feelings, to be a plural wife, something I never thought I ever could. I knew nothing of such religion and could not accept it. Neither did I.”<sup>116</sup> However, Cordelia had second thoughts and was sealed to the Prophet after his death.<sup>117</sup>

Rachel Ivins also turned Joseph down, but she was later sealed to him by proxy in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City on 29 November 1855.<sup>118</sup>

All five of these rejections came and went, unknown to most in Nauvoo. According to available records, these women suffered no consequences at Joseph Smith’s hand, directly or indirectly, for spurning him. Had the woman not personally recounted the events afterwards, knowledge of the proposals would have likely been lost to later generations.

However, Joseph’s interactions with two women, Sarah Pratt and Nancy Rigdon, demonstrate that he would defend himself against claims he considered to be false.<sup>119</sup> Joseph likely proposed plural marriage to Nancy, but she declined.<sup>120</sup> While she did not publicly accuse the Prophet, she also did not keep

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116. Cordelia Morley Cox, autobiography, holograph, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, 4.

117. Cordelia Morley Cox, autobiography, 4.

118. Thomas Milton Tinney, *The Royal Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr.* (Salt Lake City: Tinney-Greene Family Organization, 1973), 12 (handwritten entry).

119. Several authors have published reconstructions of these historical events. However, new evidence and observations indicate that traditional interpretations are incomplete. See Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy*, 1:413–42, 475–546.

120. Our research suggests that Joseph Smith approached Nancy Rigdon in early 1842 with the hope that she would respond favorably and through the process, her father, Sidney (Joseph’s counselor in the First Presidency), would also accept and support the practice. His dictated letter to Nancy, which begins, “Happiness is object and design of our existence,” may have been written to influence and teach Sidney as much as to convince Nancy.

the episode secret. One account claimed that “she like a fool had to go & blab it.”<sup>121</sup> Months later John C. Bennett broadcast his version of the episode in a letter to the *Sangamo Journal*.<sup>122</sup> Joseph publicly denied Bennett’s account, and within weeks Nancy denounced Bennett’s claims in a statement made through her father, Sidney Rigdon.<sup>123</sup>

Joseph likewise publicly refuted Sarah Pratt’s accusations (see discussion above, Part 1, Claim #8). He later confided to Orson Pratt, Sarah’s husband that Sarah “lied about me.”<sup>124</sup> Orson would eventually conclude that Joseph had told the truth.<sup>125</sup>

When we review Joseph Smith’s actions in the cases of Nancy Rigdon and Sarah Pratt and compare them to his reactions upon being rebuffed by Esther M. Johnson, Lydia Moon, Sarah Granger Kimball, Cordelia C. Morley, and Rachel Ivins, the historical data make it clear that if Nancy and Sarah had kept silent concerning Joseph Smith’s discussion of plurality, the public scandals that followed would have almost certainly been avoided.

### Helen Mar Kimball — Consummated Plural Marriage?

Without any supporting evidence, Palmer asserts:

Helen [Mar Kimball] thought she had married Smith “for eternity alone” but soon found out differently. She said Joseph protected her from the attention of young men, and that her marriage was “more than ceremony,” suggesting that she did have or would have a sexual relationship with Smith. (p. 13)

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121. John W. Rigdon, letter to “Arthur Willing, Elder,” 20 February 1904 (written from Brooklyn, New York), MS 14595, pp. 7–8, Church History Library.

122. John C. Bennett in “Bennett’s Second and Third Letters.”

123. Sidney Rigdon letter written 27 August 1842, “Editor of the Wasp,” *The Wasp*, 3 September 1842, 4.

124. Minutes of the Quorum of the Twelve, 20 January 1843. Cited on *New Mormon Studies: A Comprehensive Resource Library*.

125. Rigdon, “Tour East.”

In fact there is no evidence that the sealing between Joseph and Helen was intended or said to be “for eternity only.” However, several observations argue that Joseph’s sealing to Helen Mar Kimball was never consummated. Heber C. Kimball requested that Joseph be sealed to his daughter, to which Helen agreed.<sup>126</sup> There is no historical data suggesting that the Prophet initiated or actively sought this plural union.

In 1892, depositions seeking to discover if Joseph Smith practiced sexual polygamy were sought for litigation between the RLDS Church and the Church of Christ (Temple Lot). Helen Mar Kimball was not called to testify, even though she lived nearby and had written two books defending plural marriage. Instead, three wives who lived further away were summoned, and all affirmed sexual relations with the Prophet in their plural marriages. The most likely reason for Helen’s absence was her inability to offer the required testimony of a sealing with a sexual dimension.

While we have no firsthand accounts of the Prophet’s counsel on marriages to women in their teens, a pattern which began in Nauvoo and was carried over into Utah is instructive. This protocol taught that polygamous husbands should allow young wives to physically mature before beginning a family with them. Eugene E. Campbell described Brigham’s latter instructions:

To one man at Fort Supply, Young explained, “I don’t object to your taking sisters named in your letter to wife if they are not too young and their parents and your president and all connected are satisfied, but I do not want children to be married to men before an age which their mothers can generally best determine.” Writing to another man in Spanish Fork, he said, “Go ahead and marry them, but leave the children to grow.” ... To Louis Robinson, head of the church at Fort

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126. Helen Mar Kimball Smith Whitney, “Autobiography, 30 March 1881,” MS 744, Church History Library.

Bridger, Young advised, “Take good women, but let the children grow, then they will be able to bear children after a few years without injury.”<sup>127</sup>

### “Multiply and Replenish the Earth”

Palmer seems obsessed with the fact that some of Joseph Smith’s plural marriages included sexual relations (pp. 22–28). In fact, to “multiply and replenish the earth” was a lesser reason for the establishment of plural marriage. God explained to the Nephites that He might “command” plural marriage in order to “raise up seed” to Him (Jacob 2:30). Hales has made all known documentation of sexuality in twelve of the plural marriages available in print and online.<sup>128</sup>

At present, there is evidence of two or three children fathered by Joseph Smith via plurality. Even if that number were doubled, it would still represent a surprisingly small number of children if sexual relations occurred often. The Prophet was virile, having fathered eight children with Emma despite long periods of time apart and challenging schedules.

A review of the child-bearing chronology of Joseph Smith’s wives after his death and their remarriages demonstrates impressive fertility in several of the women. Most of them married within two years after the martyrdom and prior to the Saints leaving for the West. Three of the women became pregnant within weeks after remarrying. Sarah Ann Whitney, who was sealed to Joseph Smith for twenty-three months, married Heber C. Kimball on 17 March 1845, and, based on the birth date of their first child, became pregnant approximately June 15.<sup>129</sup> She bore Heber Kimball seven children between 1846 and 1858. Lucy Walker, who was sealed to the Prophet for fourteen months, also married Kimball. About three months

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127. Eugene E. Campbell, *Establishing Zion: The Mormon Church in the American West 1847–1869* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 198n5.

128. Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy*, 1:379–92. See sources online at <http://josephsmithspolygamy.org/faq/sexuality-2/>.

129. Sarah’s first child, David Kimball, was born 8 March 1846.

after their 8 February 1845 marriage, she became pregnant.<sup>130</sup> She gave birth to nine of Kimball's children between 1846 and 1864. Malissa Lott, who was sealed to Joseph Smith in September 1843, married Ira Jones Willes on 13 May 1849. Their first child was born 22 April 1850, with conception occurring approximately 30 July 1849 (or eleven weeks after the wedding ceremony). Seven Willes children were born between 1850 and 1863. Emily Partridge bore Brigham Young seven offspring between 1845 and 1862. Her sister Eliza married Amasa Lyman, and together they had five children between 1844 and 1860. Several other plural wives, including Louisa Beaman, Martha McBride, and Nancy Winchester, also remarried and became pregnant. In light of the obvious fertility of many of Joseph Smith's plural wives (and Joseph himself with Emma), it seems that they either bore him children who are unknown today or that sexual relations in the marriages did not occur often.

### **Conclusion: Unsubstantiated Opinion and Poor Documentation**

Grant Palmer is certainly entitled to his opinion of Joseph Smith and plural marriage. However, it is important for observers to discern whether his opinion is based upon documented history or simply his own notions. Palmer is not entitled to pass off his opinions — most poorly grounded, and some utterly fanciful — as historical fact.

Throughout his paper, Palmer consistently succumbs to a weakness found in similar antagonistic writings — he portrays Joseph Smith as a blatant hypocrite and depicts Church members as such gullible dupes that they remain blissfully unaware of what Joseph was up to. In doing so, Palmer enters the realm of historical fiction. To assume that Joseph Smith could have blithely transgressed his own theological teachings without disillusioning followers like Brigham Young, John Taylor, Eliza R. Snow, Zina Huntington, and many others is unrealistic. Joseph spent a good part of his life under intense

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130. Rachel Sylvia Kimball was born 28 January 1846; assuming a full term birth, conception occurred on approximately 7 May 1845.

scrutiny. Most of his closest followers were too perceptive to be bamboozled and too religious to become accomplices in a deliberate deception.<sup>131</sup> Even Fawn Brodie admitted, “The best evidence of the magnetism of the Mormon religion was that it could attract men with the quality of Brigham Young, whose tremendous energy and shrewd intelligence were not easily directed by any influence outside himself.”<sup>132</sup>

Our review of Palmer’s methodology reveals a reconstruction filled with implausibilities and abysmally poor evidentiary support, which undermines the accuracy of most of his conclusions. There seems to be little doubt that Grant Palmer believes his version of Joseph Smith’s polygamy, but there seems to be equally little reason that anyone else should.

*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.*

*Gregory Smith studied research physiology and English at the University of Alberta but escaped into medical school before earning his bachelor’s degree. After receiving his MD,*

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131. See discussion in *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy*, 3:263–273.

132. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 126–27. Joseph Johnson writing in 1885 disagreed: “He [Brigham Young] must have been an idiot, or thought he was addressing idiots.” Joseph Johnson, *The Great Mormon Fraud* (Manchester: Butterworth and Nodal, 1885), 17.

*he completed his residency in family medicine at St. Mary's Hospital in Montréal, Québec. There he learned the medical vocabulary and French Canadian slang that he didn't pick up in the France Paris Mission and won the Mervyn James Robson Award for Excellence in Internal Medicine. He now practices rural family medicine in Alberta, with interests in internal medicine and psychiatry. A clinical preceptor for residents and medical students, he has been repeatedly honored for excellence in clinical teaching. Since 2014 he has served as the community medical director at the local hospital.*

*He has a particular research interest in Latter-day Saint plural marriage and has been published in the FARMS Review and elsewhere on this and other topics. He was an associate editor of the Mormon Studies Review in 2011–2012. With twelve years of classical piano training, he is a lifelong audiophile and owns far too many MP3 files. He lives happily with his one indulgent wife, four extraordinary children, and two cats.*

# IS DECRYPTING THE GENETIC LEGACY OF AMERICA'S INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS KEY TO THE HISTORICITY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON?

Ugo A. Perego and Jayne E. Ekins

*Abstract: The Book of Mormon claims to be an ancient record containing a summary of a now-disappeared civilization that once lived in the American continent but originated in the Middle East. DNA studies focusing on the ancient migration of world populations support a North-East Asian origin of modern Native American populations arriving through the now-submerged land-bridge that once connected Siberia to Alaska during the last Ice Age, approximately 15,000 years ago. The apparent discrepancy between the Book of Mormon narrative and the published genetic data must be addressed in lieu of generally accepted population genetic principles that are efficient in large-scale population studies, but are somewhat weak and limitative in detecting genetic signals from the introgression of DNA by small groups of outsiders into a large, and well-established population. Therefore, while DNA can definitely provide clues about the ancient history of a people or civilization, it fails to provide conclusive proofs to support or dismiss the Book of Mormon as a true historical narrative.*

## Background

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (i.e., Mormons or LDS) consider the Book of Mormon a volume of divine origin comparable in scriptural sacredness to the Bible (Article of Faith #8). They believe it to be an historical record originally engraved on golden plates, covering a period of

approximately 1,000 years (600 BC to AD 400) and dealing with ancient people who lived in the American continent hundreds of years before the arrival of the Europeans. A small part of the Book of Mormon describes a different group of people of unknown Old World origin, called the Jaredites, disappearing (at least as a civilization) by the time the second group of migrants made their journey to the Western Hemisphere.

The main narrative of the Book of Mormon begins in Jerusalem with a family who escapes, by divine warning, the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians approximately six centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ. With a few others, they are eventually guided on a journey to a non-specified region of America's double continent.<sup>1</sup> The descendants of this small original group later divided into two opposing factions, called the Lamanites and the Nephites, and the rest of the volume focuses mainly on the spiritual and social dynamics between these two groups, including their warfare. The recurring theme of the Book of Mormon is the coming of the Savior Jesus Christ first to the Old World, as witnessed in the Bible, followed by a brief ministry after his resurrection to a group of disciples who received him in the Americas. The book itself does not claim to be a complete history of these people but rather an abridgment made by Mormon, one of the last prophets in charge of the records, after whom the whole volume was eventually named. Further, the explicit purpose of many of the contributors to the records compiled in the Book of Mormon was to focus on spiritual rather than historical matters regarding the doings of their people.

Honest seekers of truth are invited to receive a spiritual confirmation of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon within the scriptural text itself (Moroni 10:3-5). Still, at times some have wondered about the compatibility of the record put forth in the Book of Mormon with academic studies (archaeological,

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1 For a more detailed scholarly review and summary of the Book of Mormon, see Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (Oxford University Press, USA-2003).

linguistic, anthropological, etc.) of the indigenous people and area of the Americas. There are some who promote strong criticism in this arena in an attempt to discredit the divine origin of the volume.

Recent attention has been paid to DNA data reported in scholarly papers written by scientists external to the Book of Mormon debate but interpreted by some as the ultimate proof against the book's historicity. Others are even making claims about specific genetic lineages found in the Americas as a confirmation that the record is true. Overall, the complexities and limitations of the discipline of population genetics cannot be dismissed when attempting to use these tools to reconstruct the history of past civilizations. The questions treated herein examine the historical origins of the people described in the records of the Book of Mormon from a genetic point of view, making use of key principles of population genetics that cannot be neglected when undertaking such a study.

## Introduction

The arguments of some critics of the Book of Mormon suppose that the DNA characteristics of modern Native Americans should be compatible with "Israelite" rather than with Asian genetics, as reported in scientific data demonstrating a strong affinity with the latter. In response to such criticisms, others have jumped at reports of pre-Columbian genetic lineages found in the Americas that could be ascribed to a Near Eastern origin as physical evidence of the existence of Book of Mormon people.<sup>2</sup> A key point is that arguments in favor or against the Book of Mormon narrative rely on genetic data gathered by researchers uninvolved with the Book of Mormon historicity issue. These studies were designed to offer new perspectives on the prehistoric origin and migrations of Native Americans.

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2 Rod L. Meldrum, *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon Remnant through DNA* (New York: Digital Legend Press, 2009).

Contrary to the claims of critics, they fail to address historical events pertaining to the Nephites' record.

The stated time frame of The Book of Mormon covers ca. 600 BC to AD 400, and the text explicitly states itself to be a record of the religious dealings of the people rather than a purely historical document. Scholarly studies on the genetic origin of the ancestors of Native Americans have been concerned most with the first waves of migrations that took place several thousands of years ago, toward the end of the Last Ice Age, across the exposed land-bridge called Beringia that once connected Siberia to Alaska. Thus the genetic data used by critics of the Book of Mormon address a time period many thousands of years before the time of the actual record. One may compare this case of "interpretive anachronism" to searching for news about the landing of man on the moon in ancient Egyptian papyri. However, it should be noted that if there were a large genetic contribution by a group of Middle Easterners, it would stand out in these sorts of analyses because they are analyzed in comparison to modern populations sampled from diverse geographical regions. Nevertheless, these analyses have not ruled out a comparatively small contribution of ancestry from Middle Eastern groups.

Another factor worth considering in this context is that many Native American samples have some amount of post-Columbian European mixture. This mixture could confound putative evidence in support of the Book of Mormon narrative for some analyses (researchers often ignore any non-Asian DNA as definitively post-Columbian). In addition, recent publication of preliminary data from the remains of an individual dated 24,000 years ago, found in south-central Siberia and showing a possible ancient connection between Native Americans and Central/West Eurasia, is further complicating the admixture issue.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, the possibility of an arrival of a small group of migrants approximately 2,600 years ago to an already

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3 Maanasa Raghavan and others, "Upper Palaeolithic Siberian genome reveals dual ancestry of Native Americans," *Nature* 505 (2014), 87-91.

populated continent is not excluded by the reported genetic data.

Critics incorrectly insist that the LDS Church has taught for years that the American continent was uninhabited until the arrival of Book of Mormon people and that only recently, following the DNA debate, this position has changed. However, the LDS Church has not expressed an official opinion with regard to either Book of Mormon geography or population dynamics.<sup>4</sup> This, of course, does not preclude LDS leaders and scholars from sharing their personal opinions one way or the other, including several instances in which the concept of an already inhabited continent was shared prior to bringing forth the so-called DNA evidence.<sup>5</sup>

The main argument seems to stem from the introduction added in 1981 at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, which read that “after thousands of years, all [people] were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are the *principal* ancestors of the American Indians” (emphasis added). Although the term “principal” already presupposes the existence of other ancestors without specifying whether the idea of ancient or modern ancestral contribution was intended in this statement, this was recently changed. The current edition of the Book of Mormon now reads “... all [people] were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are *among* the ancestors of the American Indians” (emphasis added).

Although this change does not drastically affect the concept of heritage and ancestry of modern Native Americans in relation to ancient Lamanites, of greater importance is to understand the meaning of the term *Lamanite* as used in the latter part of

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4 Carrie A. Moore, “Debate Renewed with Change in the Book of Mormon Introduction,” *Deseret Morning News* (available at <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/1,5143,695226008,00.html> - accessed 2 December 2012).

5 LDS Conference Report (April 1929), 15-16. Also see as an example, John L. Sorenson “When Lehi’s Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1 (1992), 1-34; John L. Sorenson and Matthew Roper, ‘Before DNA’, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12 (2003); Neal Rappleye, <http://www.studioetquoquefide.com/2014/08/an-open-letter-2-to-jeremy-runnells.html> (accessed 20 August 2014).

the Nephite history. In the book 4 Nephi, the writer explains that following the visitation of the Savior to the Americas, the formerly warring people became united, without genetic or ethnic distinction among them: “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” (4 Nephi 1:17, emphasis added).

The record continues by stating that eventually there “were a small part of the people who had revolted from the church and *taken upon them the name of Lamanites*; therefore *there began to be Lamanites* again in the land” (4 Nephi 1:20, emphasis added). It is very likely that this choice of designation was social or religious rather than genealogical in nature, based on the character of the Lamanites prior to Christ’s visit. In fact, 4 Nephi 1:36-39 reports that in a similar fashion, others decided to use the term *Nephites* again to distinguish them as “true believers of Christ” and restating that those that “rejected the gospel were called Lamanites” and were “taught to hate the children of God, *even as the Lamanites were taught to hate the children of Nephi from the beginning*” (emphasis added).<sup>6</sup> Here the use of the word “even” underscores the practice of choosing a name that had a specific social meaning in the past.

History is repeating itself, but the genetic distinction most likely no longer applies to the masses. Of note in this context are instances in the text of the Book of Mormon where Mormon himself twice declares his ancestry [as a genealogical descendant of Nephi (Mormon 1:5) and a “pure descendant” of Lehi (3 Nephi 5:20)], possibly supporting by inference the existence of outside populations contributing to the social dynamics of the people of the Book of Mormon.<sup>7</sup> As the term

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6 2 Nephi 5 is also very compelling, where Nephi in v. 6 spells out who goes with him, referring to others not on the boat, and in v. 6 and 9 he goes on to say that those who are called Nephites are those who “believe in the warnings and revelations of God” — a religious designation.

7 Note that Mormon may have been distinguishing himself from the Mulekites vs. the descendants of Lehi. Of course, the presence of Mulekites and the lack of “— ite” designations for them at this time of the narrative already shows that there is an oversimplification of the genealogy/naming.

*Lamanite* loses its genetic meaning in the latter part of the Book of Mormon narrative, attempts to define an original *Lamanite* genetic signature are highly suspect, as the modern remnant of this ancient population would have to include both true descendants of Lehi's original party as well as others already inhabiting the land.

Critics who conclude the Book of Mormon to be fictitious in nature due to genetic data which fails to show "Israelite DNA" in the Americas must also consider logical and scientific reasons why such DNA could have existed in Native Americans at some point in history but may not be present or as easily detected in today's population. To rigorously examine the history of a people using genetics, all the tools of the discipline of population genetics must be embraced.

What some may refer to as the absence of genetic evidence does not preclude at all the real possibility that Lehi and his family were real people who actually left Jerusalem and established themselves on the American continent. In fact, as will be examined, it is very likely that either their DNA has disappeared over time, or it is present at such a low frequency (due to mixing with other peoples)ss that the genetic methods to date have not detected it. In the event such DNA is found, it will most likely only be possible to ascribe it to these migrant groups only speculatively. Regardless, a DNA approach does not decisively and definitively fill in our void of knowledge of the happenings on the American continent during the time frame of the Book of Mormon. Both critics and apologists utilize speculations and assumptions to support their views. However, both sides of this controversy fail either to support or reject the authenticity of the Book of Mormon on the basis of DNA.

### **Evidence or Proof?**

Stating that DNA evidence stands as the conclusive proof that the Book of Mormon is a fabricated historical account is not a convincing argument. Scholarly studies indicate that the majority of DNA observed in Native Americans has a common

origin or ancestry with Asian populations, thus suggesting an ancient split between Paleo-Indians and their Eurasian source population sometime before the Last Ice Age. These population studies do not consider, however, the possibility of other migrations that could have taken place between the first entries of the early ancestors of Native Americans and the more recent documented European colonization after 1492.

The concept of additional, small-scale contacts and migrations to the Americas throughout the millennia is not dismissed by scientists. In fact, in recent years, genetic data was successfully sequenced from hair belonging to a well-preserved, 4,000-year-old, Paleo-Eskimo individual belonging to the Saqqaq culture discovered in Greenland.<sup>8</sup> This research has contributed greatly to the current understanding of events that led to the peopling of the Americas. The authors concluded that the genetic makeup of the ancient Saqqaq individual was very different from that of Inuit or other Native American populations. Instead, he was closely related to Old World Arctic populations of the Siberian Far East, separated from them by approximately two hundred generations (roughly 5,500 years).

These data suggest a distinctive and more recent migration across Beringia by a group of people who were not related to the first ancestors of modern-day Amerindians. In an interview, one author emphasized that the lack of genetic continuity between the ancient Saqqaq individual and the modern population of the New World Arctic stands as a witness that other migrations could have taken place that left no contemporary genetic signals.<sup>9</sup> In commenting about the findings of this project, population geneticist Marcus Feldman from Stanford University said that “the models that suggest a single one-time migration are generally regarded as idealized systems, like an idealized gas in physics. *But there may have been small amounts of migrations going on for millennia*” (emphasis added).

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8 Morten Rasmussen and others, “Ancient Human Genome Sequence of an Extinct Palaeo-Eskimo,” *Nature* 463 (2010), 757-762.

9 Cassandra Brooks, “First Ancient Human Sequenced,” [www.thescientist.com/blog/display/57140](http://www.thescientist.com/blog/display/57140) (accessed 4 January, 2013).

He went on to explain that “just because researchers put a date on when ancient humans crossed the Bering Bridge, that doesn’t mean it happened only once and then stopped.”<sup>10</sup> This concept has also been included in the volume *The Origin of Native Americans* by Michael H. Crawford, molecular anthropologist at the University of Kansas. In his lengthy review of data supporting the ancient Asian origins of the Amerindians, he stated that “this *evidence* does not preclude the possibility of some small-scale cultural contacts between specific Amerindian societies and Asian or Oceanic seafarers” (emphasis added).<sup>11</sup>

Lastly, in discussing the difference between “evidence” versus “proof” Professor Daniel C. Peterson wrote that:

The claims of Mormonism are, I think, ... [n]ot so obviously true as to coerce acceptance, and not so obviously false as to make acceptance illegitimate.

I can’t agree with my fellow believers who imagine that the evidence for Mormonism is so strong that only deliberate, willful blindness can explain failure to be persuaded. But I also reject the claim of detractors of Mormonism, that its falsehood is so transparently obvious that only naked dishonesty or ignorance can account for failure to recognize it.<sup>12</sup>

Dr. Peterson’s paradigm is easily adapted to the current discussion of “genetic evidence” vs. “genetic proof.” The lack of genetic evidence or absence of strong affinity for “Israelite” genetic markers in Native American populations in no way approaches the level of ultimate proof of falsehood of the Book of Mormon. The lack of genetic evidence as examined in

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10 Brooks, “First Ancient Human.” The second quotation is Brooks’s paraphrase of Feldman.

11 Michael H. Crawford, *The Origins of Native Americans: Evidence from Anthropological Genetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4.

12 Daniel C. Peterson, “Proof and Evidence” (May 13, 2012) <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/danpeterson/2012/05/proof-and-evidence.html> (accessed 27 January 2013).

modern populations does not demonstrate proof of an absolute historical absence. This issue will be discussed in detail later in this essay.

Some critics propose a straw man construct superimposing an empty continent theory (i.e., the Americas were completely unpopulated prior to the arrival of the Book of Mormon people in 600 BC) as the basis of belief from which Mormonism stems regarding Book of Mormon populations and their origins. By such reasoning the lack of a pervasive Israelite genetic profile in pre-Columbian Native American populations must be viewed necessarily as the ultimate proof that the Book of Mormon is a product of 19th-century fiction. With this strategy, critics purposely engineer the background they want others to accept at the outset in order to have a strong case based on genetic evidence. Many fallacies arise from this approach that will be treated in detail herein. Suffice it to say, as with archaeological, linguistic, and anthropological evidence, DNA cannot be used to support or to discredit the true historical nature of Joseph Smith and his purported acquisition and translation of ancient gold plates.

Honest seekers of truth will be wary of dogmatic statements that proclaim absolute authority on a topic and call it closed. Often these statements are based on personal interpretation that can be shown to have logical lapses and are given without careful regard for the complexities of the topic at hand. At times it is helpful to understand something about the nature and motives characterizing those bringing forth such claims.

### **What Does Science Say About the DNA of Native Americans?**

The early 1990s marked the beginning of the genomic era with regard to the study of human diversity and the elucidation of the relationships and origins of different world populations. With the best technologies available in those early days, scientists for the first time were able to analyze segments of the female-inherited mitochondrial genome and to identify small but important genetic markers uniquely linked to specific populations.

Subsequent to this novel use of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), new technologies ushered in the study of genetic markers found on the male-inherited Y chromosome and the autosomes, giving sometimes distinct insights into populations origins and migrations. With regard to mtDNA, the first samples analyzed came from Native American populations. The data showed that nearly all the mtDNAs could be clustered into one of four groups, which were initially labeled A, B, C, and D, and later groupings identified in other populations proceeded through the subsequent alphabetical nomenclature.<sup>13</sup>

These earlier studies utilized a small section of the mitochondrial genome, often limited to just a few hundred DNA bases. Among others, three significant findings were published during the 1990s based on mtDNA diversity with some implications to our understanding of Native American origins:

1. The highest level of mtDNA variation was observed in sub-Saharan African groups, thus indicating that all humans shared a common female ancestor from Africa and that human colonization of the planet started from there;
2. Lineages A, B, C, and D were observed in the Americas as well as in modern Asian populations, thus supporting the theory that the ancient maternal ancestors of Native Americans were Paleo-Indians of Asian origins who survived the Last Ice Age on the continent-sized land-bridge called Beringia that once connected northeast Siberia to Alaska;<sup>14</sup>
3. A fifth lineage was observed in Native American populations from the Great Lakes area and in a few

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13 Antonio Torroni and others, "Asian Affinities and Continental Radiation of the Four Founding Native American mtDNAs," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 53 (1993), 563-590.

14 Mannis van Oven and Manfred Kayser, "Updated comprehensive phylogenetic tree of global human mitochondrial DNA variation," *Human Mutations* 30 (2009) E386-E394 (<http://www.phylotree.org> Build 15 - accessed 5 January 2013).

other North American groups. This new mtDNA was termed X, and differently from the previously known Native American mtDNA lineages, it was also observed in many modern European, African, and Middle Eastern populations<sup>15</sup> as well as in a small region of Central Asia.<sup>16</sup>

These three points have strong implications with respect to the Book of Mormon debate, but the most emphasized in early disputes was point 2 — the common presence of lineages A, B, C, and D in both the Asian and American continents. Each of these three findings deserves its own treatment in detail.

The existence of a common maternal ancestor from Africa for all mtDNA lineages has many significant implications; of relevance for the current question is the fact that this woman was not the only female alive at that time, but merely lucky in perpetuating her genetic lineage through millennia to the present time. (This was due to several factors, including her own success and the happenstance successes of her descendants.) The phenomenon of chance transmissions will be addressed in detail when we introduce the population genetic principle of genetic drift. For the current discussion, it is sufficient to realize that the genetic variation present in modern populations does not give a complete picture of the variation that existed in the past.

The second relevant principle is the presence of mitochondrial DNA lineages labeled A, B, C, and D on both sides of the Bering Strait. As explained earlier, based on data from different disciplines, including genetics, archaeology, and linguistics, it has been postulated that anatomically modern humans were trapped in the landmass that once connected

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15 Peter Forster and others, "Origin and Evolution of Native American MtDNA Variation: A Reappraisal," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 59 (1996), 935-945.

16 Maere Reidla et al., "Origin and Diffusion of mtDNA Haplogroup X," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 73 (2003), 1178-1190.

Siberia to Alaska during the Last Ice Age.<sup>17</sup> These Paleo-Indians most likely came from other source populations in Asia during the spread of hunter-gatherers thousands of years ago. By following and hunting large mammals, they reached the continent-sized land-bridge Beringia but were eventually trapped there due to the worsening of climate conditions and the build-up of glaciers on either side.

During the following millennia, they probably survived in natural enclaves, living in a manner similar to modern-day Arctic natives. Population growth was probably halted because of scarcity of resources. They were physically separated from their source population, thus gradually developing their own unique linguistic, cultural, and genetic characteristics.<sup>18</sup> Eventually, the climate began to improve again, and the large glaciers started to withdraw.

As sea-levels began to rise again, gradually submerging Beringia and most of the world's coastlines, at least one, perhaps two entryways became available to the ancestors of American natives moving eastward into a pristine and empty continent.<sup>19</sup> Lack of competition for resources allowed a quick spread southward, reaching the tip of South America's southern cone (a distance greater than that from Portugal to Japan!) probably in as few as 1,000 years. Populations began to grow, and by the time the Europeans arrived after 1492, at least 20 million people lived in the Americas.<sup>20</sup> This summary reflects the knowledge based on genetics, archaeology, and other disciplines to the proposed understanding of the first and most significant expansions into the Western Hemisphere.

Although genetic diversity in Asia is much higher than that observed among the indigenous people of America — and

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17 Jennifer A. Raff and Deborah A. Bolnick, "Palaeogenomics: Genetic roots of the first Americans," *Nature* 506 (2014), 162-163.

18 Erika Tamm et al., "Beringian Standstill and Spread of Native American Founders," *PloS One* 9(2007), e829.

19 Ugo A. Perego et al., "Distinctive Paleo-Indian Migration Routes from Beringia Marked by Two Rare MtDNA Haplogroups," *Current Biology* 19 (2009), 1-8.

20 Crawford, *Origins*.

also includes significantly different lineage frequencies — it is notable that those who survived the Beringia “imprisonment” were but a few compared to the larger Asian population of that time.

Once the two populations were separated, never to be reunited — first because of the deteriorating climate conditions and then by the Bering Strait — gene flow between the populations was interrupted, and their genetic histories diverged. Once populations become physically separated in this manner, powerful forces play a role in how the genetic dynamics of different populations develop over time. Even holding geographical and climate conditions constant, events that influence the genetic shaping of a group play out in a distinct story for every population.

Genetic drift and perhaps to some degree natural selection with regard to DNA transmission, gender (based on the inheritance of Y chromosome or mitochondrial DNA), and variation in number of offspring, etc., give shape to the resulting genetic profiles of populations as they develop over time. Often, if the group of founding migrants is small, the effects of drift that persist into future generations are accentuated, as the loss of even a single individual from the small founding group, or a female bearing no children or children of just one gender, will cause the loss of genetic variability at an early stage of the colonization process. For example, when considering mtDNA passed on only by females to their children, if an original founding group is composed of four women, each carrying a different mtDNA lineage, and one of them bears only male children, 25% of the mtDNA variation in the founding population will be immediately lost from all subsequent generations.

Although the founding group of ancient Paleo-Indians trapped in Beringia for thousands of years would have included more than four women, this process can occur in subgroups of a population and could result in lost lineages that are still found among Asians but that are not currently found among Native Americans. Additionally, the separation of Paleo-Indians

from their source population for such a long period resulted in the rise of novel mutations that were exclusively found in the ancestors of Amerindians.

From a strictly mitochondrial DNA point of view, a Native American mtDNA lineage is so distinct that it is easily distinguishable from those of any other world population. In fact, the level of discrimination allows clear discernment of Asian and Native American types that are relatively closely related but that have both amassed enough unique features since their divergence to give a strong degree of differentiation between the two. For example, if an mtDNA profile carrying the key mutations classified as Native American is found in Europe, one obvious argument is that early European colonists brought back indigenous women from the Americas to the Old World, whose descendants persist to the current day. These lineages are clearly not European, but neither are they Asian. They are Native American.

The opposite is also true. If mtDNA lineages are observed in the Americas, even in tribal groups considered deeply indigenous who belong to mtDNA groups known to be African, European, or even Asian, the argument most readily given is that they have been introduced more recently, after the rediscovery of the New World by Europeans.

Therefore, going back to the question posed above, a Native American lineage is an mtDNA profile that has accumulated a unique set of mutations that, although showing evidence of common ancestry with Asian populations, is different enough to be ascribed exclusively to the Americas and not to Asia. In other words, Native American mtDNA lineages are, for the most part, nested within the large family of Asian mtDNAs, and are distantly related to them (or showing an affinity) but not identical.

An increased understanding of the dynamics that characterized the mtDNA origin of Native American populations was achieved during the past decade through the analysis of complete mtDNA genomes — the highest level of mtDNA molecular resolution attainable. The original A, B,

C, and D mtDNA lineages observed in the Americas were eventually renamed A2, B2, C1, and D1 to distinguish them from their Asian “cousins.” Lineage X became X2a, and to this day it has been found only in North America, although there is still some uncertainty regarding its origin. These five lineages constitute the majority (approximately 95%) of all Native American lineages observed in the Americas, although in recent years, additional rare lineages also have been identified as Native American.<sup>21</sup>

At the present time, thanks to the complete sequencing of large numbers of mtDNA genomes, scientists performing research of worldwide populations are dissecting individual mtDNA lineages to discover important details missed in the past. This microgeographic approach is revealing a number of peculiar situations that, for the most part, are still not fully explained. For example, mtDNA lineage C1 has six known sublineages, called C1a-f. They all share a common maternal origin, but their geographic distribution is very specific: C1a is found exclusively in Asia, C1b, C1c, and C1d are found only in the American continent,<sup>22</sup> and C1e and C1f are two new lineages found recently in a limited number of living individuals from Iceland<sup>23</sup> and in ancient remains retrieved in Western Russia,<sup>24</sup> respectively.

The natural question is, how did the four geographically distinct clusters end up in the locations where they were observed? A possibility is that they were all in Beringia at some

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21 Ugo A. Perego et al., “The Initial Peopling of the Americas: a Growing Number of Founding Mitochondrial Genomes from Beringia,” *Genome Research* 20 (2010), 1174-1179.

22 Alessandro Achilli et al., “The Phylogeny of the Four Pan-American MtDNA Haplogroups: Implications for Evolutionary and Disease Studies,” *PLoS ONE* 3 (2008), e1764; Perego, (2010).

23 Sigríður Sunna Ebenesaersdóttir and others, “A New Subclade of MtDNA Haplogroup C1 Found in Icelanders: Evidence of Pre-Columbian Contact?” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 144 (2011), 92-99.

24 Clio Der Sarkissian and others, “Mitochondrial Genome Sequencing in Mesolithic North East Europe Unearths a New Sub-Clade within the Broadly Distributed Human Haplogroup C1,” *PLoS ONE* 9 (2014), e87612.

point, and following the Last Ice Age, carriers of the C1a and C1f mtDNA returned to Asia,<sup>25</sup> whereas C1b-C1d and possibly C1e moved eastwards in the Americas. Eventually, either through an Atlantic crossing along the north ice cap or, more recently, through Viking voyages,<sup>26</sup> a Native American female (or females) carrying the C1e lineage ended up in Iceland, where successful progeny have persisted into today's Icelandic population. However, any C1e left in the Americas either failed to perpetuate its lineage by chance due to lack of female posterity or became extinct following the massive population reduction caused by the arrival of Europeans.

Another possibility for its sole distribution in Iceland hinges on its extreme rarity as a mtDNA type, and therefore scientists have not encountered it yet on American soil.

In summary, the recent discovery of C1e in Iceland, its pre-Columbian mtDNA age, and its apparent absence among modern Amerindian groups poses some interesting questions that can be applied to the Book of Mormon debate. Would it ever have been known that an additional C1 lineage existed in America's past if it were not found in Iceland? This situation demonstrates a possible scenario in which a Beringian lineage of Asian origin could have become extinct in the Americas, and detection of the genetic type could have been accomplished only due to its having had more time to spread to outlying geographies, causing it to be external to competition with the abundant contemporary mtDNA Native American lineages.

Similarly, a more recently introduced mtDNA lineage from the Old World, as in the Book of Mormon scenario, would have been even more likely to disappear or escape detection when introduced to a large gene-pool. We will discuss this further in the section about genetic drift.

A far more puzzling story surrounds the origin of the fifth Native American lineage, called X2a. This group of mtDNAs is found exclusively in North America, with its highest

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25 Tamm, "Beringian Standstill."

26 Geraldine Barnes, *Viking America: The First Millennium* (Suffolk, England: St. Edmundsbury Press, 2001).

modern-day concentration in the Great Lakes region.<sup>27</sup> While Native American mtDNAs A2, B2, C1, and D1 are clearly nested within Asian clades, lineage X2a has a hypothesized ancient Old World origin, probably in the Middle East.<sup>28</sup>

Although a small number of X2 samples have also been observed in Central Asia,<sup>29</sup> they most likely represent a recent migratory event to that region. In an mtDNA tree, the Asian X (called X2e) contains more recent mutations than the Native American X2a, and therefore it is not ancestral to the latter. Although it cannot be completely excluded that ancestors of X2a once lived in Northeast Asia and then became extinct, at the present time the closest relatives of the Native American X2a lineage have been identified in a single sample from Iran<sup>30</sup> and in Bedouin groups from Egypt.<sup>31</sup>

The potential connection between New World and Middle Eastern mtDNA X types could be seen by some as a candidate for Book of Mormon DNA in the Americas. However, some data confounds this hypothesis, as the mtDNA molecular clock<sup>32</sup> — the estimated average number of years before a mutation is expected to appear — dates X2a at about the same time as the arrival of all the other Asian-like lineages to the Americas

27 Rosaria Scozzari et al., “MtDNA and Y Chromosome-Specific Polymorphisms in Modern Ojibwa: Implications about the Origin of Their Gene Pool,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 60 (1997), 241-244.

28 Shlush et al., “The Druze: A Population Genetic Refugium of the Near East,” *PLoS ONE* 3 (2008), e2105; Doron M. Behar et al., “Counting the Founders: The Matrilineal Genetic Ancestry of the Jewish Diaspora,” *PLoS ONE* 3 (2008), e2062.

29 Rem I. Sukernik et al., “Mitochondrial Genome Diversity in the Tubalar, Even and Ulchi: Contribution to Prehistory of Native Siberians and Their Affinities to Native Americans,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 148 (2012), 123-138.

30 Reidla, “Origin and Diffusion.”

31 Martina Kujanová and others, “Near Eastern Neolithic Genetic Input in a Small Oasis of the Egyptian Western Desert,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 140 (2009), 336-346.

32 Pedro Soares et al., “Correcting for Purifying Selection: An Improved Human Mitochondrial Molecular Clock,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 84 (2009): 740-759.

(toward the end of the Last Ice Age). Data from ancient DNA studies on pre-Columbian specimens presumably belonging to lineage X are, for the most part, also inconclusive.<sup>33</sup>

As an additional cautionary note, mtDNA dating is concerned most with the age of divergence between two lineages sharing a common ancestor and not necessarily the location of the shared ancestral sequence. In other words, the coalescence time of X2a,<sup>34</sup> or of any other mtDNA lineage for that matter, reveals only how far back in time the split from the ancestral node took place, not where the split occurred and does not account for the geographic locations of these lineages today.

As seen with the C1e example, there could have been closer relatives of X2a in other parts of the world, but either they became extinct or have not yet been found. The Egyptian and Iranian X2\* samples share one of the three coding region mutations that define X2a in the Americas. Their existence indicates that potential “relatives” of the X2a lineage could be found elsewhere, assuming they still exist in contemporary individuals.

However, in this particular example, it is important to note that the Old World X2\* haplotypes share additional mutations that would increase the genetic distance between the Amerindian and Middle Eastern branches of X2, even with the shared common conservative mutation. The story of X2a is a likely example of an mtDNA lineage found in the Americas that to this date cannot be completely ascribed to an Asian origin and is a subject worth further investigation.

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by scientists is to be able to assign clearly and unequivocally any European or African lineage found in the Americas to the pre-Columbian era. The generalized view among population geneticists is that after the initial arrival of Paleo-Indians toward the end of the

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33 Ugo A. Perego, “The Book of Mormon and the Origin of Native Americans from a Maternally Inherited DNA Standpoint,” in *No Weapon That Is Formed*, edited by Robert Millet (BYU Religious Studies Center, 2011), 171-216.

34 Perego, “Distinctive Paleo-Indian.”

Last Ice Age, no other migrations took place until the discovery of the double-continent by Europeans in 1492.

Together with a drastic indigenous population reduction (addressed in detail in the section dealing with the effect of *population bottleneck*), first the European and later the African gene-pool were introduced to the Americas, thus altering forever the original genetic landscape of the Western Hemisphere. Therefore, the common consensus, whenever any DNA is found that does not fit with the classic Native America genetic types, is an automatic assignment of such DNA to the post-Columbian migration wave of European or African migrants.

Although this assignment may be accurate in most instances, few tools are available to test the assumptions underlying this assignment; this means that even in the unlikely scenario that a few genetic lineages survived to modern times from additional migrations that occurred in the pre-Columbian era, they would not be strongly differentiated from contemporary DNA profiles found in modern Europe and Africa.

This is a critical and often overlooked limitation in using DNA to try to isolate a migration by a small group to the Americas in the recent past. If we take mtDNA, for example, it is correct to say that more than 95% of lineages identified are of Asian origin for the simple reason that they are similar to — but at the same time sufficiently different from — Asian lineages due to the fact that they have been separated for enough time to develop their own set of unique mutational motifs. If a modern Asian lineage were to be found in the Americas, it would most likely be assigned to a post-Columbian arrival, just like any other non-indigenous mtDNA profile. The root of this issue lies with the so-called “molecular clock” used to determine the age of lineages.

Scientists have been able to calibrate the estimated time of entry of the first Paleo-Indians based on the number of mutations that separate the Native American lineages from those found in Asia today (using molecular clocks).

Dating of the genetic data supporting this first arrival coincided with the geological evidence from the improvement of climate conditions toward the end of the Last Ice Age, at about 15-18,000 years ago. This molecular clock is based on the number of mutations accumulated in each mtDNA lineage, and it is calibrated on the assumed common ancestor between modern humans and chimpanzee, a split from their common unknown ancestor (the “missing link”) that would have occurred approximately 6.5 million years ago.

The mutation rate of mtDNA is roughly 3,000-9,000 years per mutation, depending on the section of mtDNA analyzed and the molecular clock applied.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, with few exceptions, it is only possible to infer migrations and other events that occurred thousands of years ago and not more recent ones.

Moreover, scientists in general are extremely cautious to make statements based on the available data that unequivocally point to a single conclusion and leave no room for an alternative hypothesis. Nearly all scientific papers published on population migration subjects offer new clues or revisit old ones, with the objective of furthering scholarly work by contribution of new perspectives and data that other researchers will utilize in their own work.

However, this is often not the case when the same information is then represented by the media or by others with a specific agenda, as they tend to sensationalize such discoveries in order to attract greater attention from the public. Unfortunately, as with any sub-specialized topic, a relatively small percentage of the population has the necessary background to fully grasp the original scientific work, and therefore they often have to rely on how this information is interpreted and propagated, and this includes all the involved biases.

In summary, it is an oversimplification to assert that all DNA in the Americas is provably Asian. The large majority shows Asian affinity simply because it is similar enough

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35 Soares, “Correcting”; Doron M. Behar et al., “A ‘Copernican’ reassessment of the human mitochondrial DNA tree from its root,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 90 (2014), 675-684.

to demonstrate a more recent shared ancestry with Asian populations than other worldwide populations but has enough accumulated differences to be distinctively identifiable as Native American DNA. Based on scientific investigation, this main genetic component was introduced in the Americas at the end of the Last Ice Age thousands of years ago.

A particular lineage called mtDNA X does not appear to be of Asian origin: it is more closely related to ancient Near Eastern lineages, but there is not enough evidence to link it definitively to Book of Mormon people. Unless retrieved from ancient specimens, any other unusual DNA types found in the Americas are generally ascribed by scientists to later colonization events. However, as the following points will clearly show, the hypothesis that makes the fewest assumptions (*lex parsimoniae*) based on the principles of populations genetics is that any unusual DNA types that arrived in a recent small migration to the Americas would most likely not be detectable in our present time.

### What Did Lehi's DNA Look Like?

A major limitation that prevents the identification of genetic signatures that could be tied to Book of Mormon people is the obvious fact that this genetic signature is not known in the first place, although based on modern and ancient DNA studies, it is possible to determine a genetic lineage that could approximate a "typical" Near Eastern type.

While this may be the case, it must still be acknowledged that virtually any individual DNA profile could be found in any population, although at different frequencies. For example, the male Y chromosome type known as lineage J and the female mitochondrial DNA family U/K are found at high frequencies in the Middle East. However, these lineages are also found in smaller numbers in other countries, and conversely non-typical Middle Eastern lineages are also found in the Holy Land and surrounding countries, albeit in low frequency.

From a genetic viewpoint, there are a larger number of distinct mtDNA lineages observed in a single population than

there are unique lineages in a particular population when comparing two or more groups. This means that anyone from any region of the Old World could have carried virtually any mtDNA lineage to the Americas.

As an example, one of the authors of this paper, Ugo Perego, is nearly 100% European based in his overall DNA makeup (autosomal),<sup>36</sup> but his paternal line belongs to the Y chromosome family C, which is typical of Asia, North America, and Oceania.

The frequency of this particular genetic lineage in the Mediterranean Basin approaches zero. It appears that the introduction of this DNA marked as Asian in Ugo's family is quite ancient and perhaps attributable to the invasion of barbaric groups to Europe between 400 and 600 AD.<sup>37</sup>

There is no genealogical record to confirm this information, only speculation based on history and the available DNA in his particular family. If he were to relocate to Asia today, and someone were to find his skeleton and extract his DNA 2,000 years from now, based on the Y chromosome data alone, they would believe that he was indigenous to Asia and not a migrant from Europe.

Additionally, this is also a helpful example that demonstrates the presence of an ancestor of Asian origins (through the Y chromosome) whose autosomal DNA failed to survive in Ugo's current genetic makeup. If a single individual or a relatively small number of people mixed with a large pool of Southern Europeans, their DNA would likely disappear over time, even though their genealogical ancestry would remain.<sup>38</sup>

The problem with not knowing the DNA of Lehi and his group is a situation that in forensics would be categorized as the absence of specific information. First, it would be impossible

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36 From a commercial ancestral DNA test based on more than 500K SNPs obtained through 23andMe.com.

37 Personal conversation with Dr. Peter Underhill from Stanford University.

38 The Coop Lab: Population and Evolutionary Genetics, UC Davis, "How Many Genetic Ancestors Do I Have?" <http://gcbias.org/2013/11/11/how-does-your-number-of-genetic-ancestors-grow-back-over-time> (accessed 20 August 2014).

to recognize their DNA even if it survived genetic drift and population bottleneck. It could be something similar to other Asian lineages, or it could be European or Middle Eastern. It could be nearly anything.

It is possible that the DNA of Lehi's group is one of the most prominent lineages in the American continent but that we do not recognize it as such due to lacking knowledge of their mtDNA profile. Second, any attempt to link DNA in the Americas that might look like a potential candidate for Book of Mormon people (e.g., mtDNA lineage X found in northern North America) would likewise result in further speculation for the same reason. The small group that left Jerusalem to embark on a journey to a new land was not selected based on their genetic uniqueness, or because they represented the typical genetic signature found in their homeland.

These people were unaware of their genetic profile, and so are we. This fact alone would seriously compromise any effort to bring forth DNA as evidence that they never existed or that the Book of Mormon is not the religious and historical record it claims to be. One could ask, "What would Lehi's DNA have looked like?" but no testable hypothesis answers this question.

Population genetic studies are based on statistical evidence, but they are weak when evaluating rare occurrences in the sampled population. If we were trying either to detect or measure the amount of genetic contribution from Book of Mormon people, the hypothesis to be tested would be not how much Middle Eastern DNA is observed in the pre-Columbian native population, but rather how much DNA from Lehi's or other groups survived to our day. In other words, what is the frequency of rare lineages that could be confidently assigned to them? We can attempt to determine a Middle Eastern DNA contribution to the Americas (a population-based approach), but we don't have the tools to determine the contribution of Lehi's family DNA in the same area (a family/pedigree-based approach). Therefore, we have to be careful to avoid confusing the absence of confidently recognizable Old World DNA in the Americas with the assertion that Lehi's party never existed.

No matter how large or small they eventually became as a people in the American continent, we are still talking about a very small initial group with extremely limited genetic variation that would not constitute a large enough sample of their native population to ensure that the genetics of the Middle East would be properly represented in the New World.

### **What is Genetic Drift?**

While several genetic principles, limitations, and possibilities have been explored at length herein, possibly the single most influential factor that would prevent detection of Lehi's DNA in both modern and ancient samples is the concept of genetic drift.

For the sake of modeling, assume that Lehi and the members of his family carried the most representative modern Middle Eastern genetic profiles, a paternal Y chromosome belonging to lineage J for the males, a mtDNA K female lineage, and nuclear DNA packed with genes and markers typical of the Old World.

The only way these Middle Eastern markers would have survived past the first few generations in the American continent would be in the unlikely event that they were successful in being an isolated population with limited mixing with the hosting population.

The abridged history contained in the Book of Mormon gives only a few sporadic details about the whereabouts of its people with regard to potential interactions with any other groups.<sup>39</sup> If the hypothesis we are trying to test is whether the party from Jerusalem really existed, we must take into the account their group size and the estimated population count in the Americas at their arrival.

Exact information on both issues is unknown, but a fair guess about proportions can be attempted. Lehi, his family and the others who came along were probably no more than 30-40 individuals, representing two, perhaps three family nuclei:

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39 See for example the encounter between Sherem and Jacob narrated in Jacob chapter 7.

1. Lehi, his wife Sariah, and their children Laman, Lemuel, Nephi, Sam, Jacob, Joseph, and some sisters;
2. Ishmael's widow and her children;
3. Zoram, the servant of Laban.

It is even more speculative to infer much about the genetics of surviving Jaredites (if any) and Mulek's group, since the Book of Mormon is silent about their population of origin.

Mulek is presented as one of the genealogical heirs to the Jerusalem throne, but nothing is recorded about the number and origins of those who eventually sailed with him to the Americas. Since many assumptions are already made about the group size and the genetics of the main characters of the Book of Mormon, the following considerations will be based exclusively on the hypothesis that these were real people and made it to the American continent.

What would have happened to their DNA after their arrival? A well-considered argument comes from Henry C. Harpending, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the University of Utah. When asked, "If a group of, say, fifty Phoenicians (men and women) arrived in the Americas some 2,600 years ago and intermarried with indigenous people, and assuming their descendants fared as well as the larger population through the vicissitudes of disease, famine, and war, would you expect to find genetic evidence of their Phoenician ancestors in the current Native American population? In addition, would their descendants be presumed to have an equal or unequal number of Middle Eastern as Native American haplotypes?"

Professor Harpending's reply was, "I doubt that we would pick up [evidence of the Phoenicians] today at all, but it does depend on how they intermixed once they were here. If they intermixed freely and widely, and if there were several millions of people here in the New World, then the only trace would be an occasional strange stray haplotype. Even if we found such a

haplotype we would probably assume it was the result of post-Columbian admixture.”<sup>40</sup>

The natural process of DNA markers disappearing in populations over time is called *genetic drift*. The concept of genetic drift is partly based on the inheritance properties of DNA. With regard to markers received from one parent only (Y chromosome and mitochondrial DNA), inheritance is contingent on whether or not you have offspring of the “right” gender. If a couple has only girls, none of them (and therefore no posterity) will receive the father’s Y chromosome. If a couple has only boys, they will all receive the mother’s mitochondrial DNA, but none of the grandchildren will inherit it.

The situation is different for autosomal DNA, the 22 pairs of chromosomes, excluding the X and Y chromosomes. This part of the nuclear genome is subject to reshuffling at each generation, with the loss of substantial components of the parents’ genetic make-up. In fact, when a man and a woman have a child, she will receive 50% of each of her parents’ autosomal DNA. Consequently, the remaining part of her parents’ DNA will be lost unless the couple has more children.

Over just a few generations, potentially all of a couple’s genetic material will be diluted and lost, as they will represent an ever-smaller percentage of the ancestors contributing to the DNA of a single descendant. Simply stated, as with the previously-mentioned example of Ugo’s autosomal DNA, there is a considerable difference between being genealogically related and having a genetic inheritance. In fact, it is estimated that at the tenth generation level, and given an equal chance to propagate their autosomal DNA, a person would carry only 12% of his or her 1,024 ancestors’ DNA.<sup>41</sup>

This phenomenon can be observed in as few as a couple of generations at a family level, but the effects of genetic drift at the population level are even more drastic. Depending on

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40 Signature Books, <http://signaturebooks.com/2010/06/dna-and-the-book-of-mormon> (accessed 5 January 2013).

41 “Autosomal DNA Statistics”, [http://www.isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal\\_DNA\\_statistics](http://www.isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal_DNA_statistics) (accessed 20 August 2014).

the population size and the variety of DNA present in that population, over a time measured in generations, some of that variation will inevitably be lost due to chance.

Even when a hypothetical population made up of only two ancestral lines, lineage A and lineage B, are found with the same frequency in a given hypothetical population (therefore having the same initial probability of perpetuating through future generations), over time one or the other may disappear completely. It is comparable to the probability of tossing a coin and knowing you have a 50% chance of obtaining heads or tails. The probability is based on the number of potential outcomes (either head or tail), but with 100 actual tosses it would be unlikely that the final result would be exactly 50 heads and 50 tails.

With DNA, you start with a specific set of genetic markers at one generation, and through mating and random segregation of variants, generation 2 will have a somewhat different representation of the DNA markers than generation 1. Generation 2 will provide the only gene-pool available, which will be responsible for the variation of generation 3 and so on. If we could compare DNA variation of a starting gene-pool to 100 marbles of two colors, 50 red representing lineage A and 50 blue representing lineage B, where marbles are drawn randomly, recorded, and placed back in their box with the purpose of determining the colors of a new box of marbles, chances are that the new box would have a different color composition than the one used to create it.

For example, during the first 100 draws, 60 blue and 40 red marbles may be obtained. To create a third box, we would repeat the exercise using the marbles of the second box. Drawing 100 times from box 2 could very easily produce an even larger number of blues for box 3 than reds. As we continue this exercise, box after box, or generation after generation, it would not be an unusual outcome to end up with a box with all blue and no red marbles.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetic\\_drift](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetic_drift) (accessed 5 January 2013).

While the example of the marbles is a purely statistical approach to what could happen to a population made of only two different lineages having equal starting frequencies, when modeling the dynamics of questions of DNA and the Book of Mormon, we face even more confounding variables. In fact, it is estimated that at the time of its rediscovery, the American double-continent may have had a larger population than Europe. It is difficult to guess the population size of the Western Hemisphere at the time of Lehi's arrival, but it probably would have been in the order of a few millions, considering that humans have been here at least since after the Last Ice Age.

From a numerical point of view, the arrival of Lehi and his group would be comparable to a drop of ink in a swimming pool. However, in the swimming pool, although nearly impossible to detect, the actual drop of ink is present. The difficulty in recognizing the drop of ink is determined by the availability of instruments sufficiently sensitive to detect its minuscule presence within the much larger body of water. This analogy does not extend perfectly to DNA and inheritance at the population level. Although the group of Old World migrants was small (a drop of ink), the DNA may have survived (or not) to the present time — due to the forces of genetic drift. If it disappeared, it would be as if someone removed the drop of ink from the swimming pool such that it seemed never to have been there in the first place. Of course, this would be heavily dependent on the level of isolation the Book of Mormon party experienced — something not clearly stated in the narrative.

In the case of almost immediate admixture with locals, returning to the model of the colored marbles, the earlier exercise would be repeated, drawing from a box with one million blue marbles and five red ones. As marbles are randomly selected to create the second generation, what is the likelihood that red marbles are selected by chance to perpetuate their color to future generations?

From a cultural or linguistic point of view, even a small group of migrants may play a significant and lasting impact on the host population, but genetic signatures are different.

Even if we know the family lines several generations in the past, the DNA of a specific ancestor, depending on the markers studied, can readily disappear. This can happen even in a single generation.

For example, in just three generations, both the Y chromosome of the paternal grandfather and the mitochondrial DNA of the maternal grandmother could not be transmitted to their descendants. On average, 25% percent of the grandparents' autosomal DNA will be inherited by their grandchildren, with a range that would go from zero to fifty percent. Some traces of the autosomal DNA may persist over generations, but this will become more diluted over time and, depending on the roll of the dice with each new generation, may be nearly extinguished at some point.

In other words, genetic lineages were and are continually lost randomly in the world among all living species, even when there is no selective factor operating or the environment would not favor any specific lineage to be the likely surviving candidate in future generations. However, when dealing with a disproportionately larger hosting population, the odds are against the chances of genetic survival in the colonizing population. Depending on the size of the migrant group and the timing of admixture, the probability approaches zero. This of course also depends heavily on the level of intermixing between hosting and colonizing groups, which will be addressed when discussing the process of *natural selection*.

It is important to remember that genetic drift is a natural a phenomenon that is central to study of the population genetics of all organisms. It is not exclusive to the Book of Mormon discussion. It affects all genetic markers: mtDNA, the Y chromosome, and autosomal DNA. A powerful example of the effect of genetic drift on a population was described in a classic study of the Icelandic people, where genealogical and historical records have been available for the past three centuries, providing opportunities for comparison to the genetic data

observed in the modern population.<sup>43</sup> This study demonstrated that the majority of individuals living in the 18th century did not have any living posterity, whereas a small percentage of the population during the same time period is responsible for nearly all living Icelanders today. The findings gleaned in the Icelandic study can be extrapolated to any population around the world, including Native Americans, keeping in mind that genealogical and historical records are often not available elsewhere. The impact of the European conquest in the shaping of the genetic dynamics and demographics of the New World would have exponentially accentuated and aggravated the effects of genetic drift in the Americas.

### The Effect of Population Bottleneck

By the time Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas in 1492, perhaps as many as one hundred million inhabitants could have populated the entire double-continent.<sup>44</sup> The clash with European settlers, followed by disease, slavery, and warfare, resulted in a population decline of tremendous proportions.

Molecular anthropologist Michael Crawford states in his volume *The Origin of Native Americans: Evidence from Anthropological Genetics* that “the conquest and its sequelae squeezed the entire Amerindian population through a genetic bottleneck. The reduction of Amerindian gene pools from 1/3 to 1/25 of their previous size implies a considerable loss of genetic variability.”

He also added that “it is highly unlikely that survivorship was genetically random.”<sup>45</sup> Eventually, starting in the 18th

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43 Agnar Helgason and others, “A Populationwide Coalescent Analysis of Icelandic Matrilineal and Patrilineal Genealogies: Evidence for a Faster Evolutionary Rate of mtDNA Lineages than Y Chromosomes,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 72 (2003), 1370-1388.

44 Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (Penguin Books, 2002), 40.

45 Crawford, *Origins*.

century, native groups began to increase in size again, even reaching some of the original numbers in certain areas. However, the variation previously seen in pre-Columbian genetic lineages would never be replicated again.

Simply stated, a population bottleneck is the decrease in number of individuals (or genetic lineages) in a population following migration, natural disasters, disease, or warfare. The small number of survivors will carry only a fraction of the genetic diversity from the original population. Their posterity, no matter how large it could become in subsequent generations, will carry the DNA of only those living through the catastrophic event, thus not representing all the genetic variation once found in the whole population.

The arrival of Europeans to the Americas in the 15th century was orders of magnitude worse than the combined effect of the Black Plague and the Spanish Influenza on Europeans. The consequences of rapidly reduced population and displacement has forever altered the demographic landscape of pre-Columbian America such that scientists from many disciplines are considerably limited in their ability to draw conclusions about the history, including the genetic history, of the New World. To model such an event, suppose that after an epidemic of smallpox, a hypothetical village of a thousand individuals experienced a 90% reduction; the 100 surviving subjects may or may not include at least one representative of all the original group genetic lineages. Although survival of many diseases also involves a genetic component,<sup>46</sup> Y chromosome and mitochondrial DNA variance have little known or no influence at all on the immunity of an individual affected by one of the several diseases Europeans brought to the New World.

With selection playing little or no recognizable role on specific ancestral lines, the drastic population reduction in the hypothetical village inevitably would have affected the number

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46 See for example Kirsten I. Bos et al., "A Draft Genome of *Yersinia pestis* from victims of the Black Death," *Nature* 478 (2012), 506-510; Michel Samson et al., "Resistance to HIV-1 Infection in Caucasian Individuals Bearing Mutant Alleles of the CCR-5 Chemokine Receptor Gene", *Nature* 382 (1996), 722-725.

of surviving genetic lineages. Of course, the initial impact with Europeans was so severe that entire tribal groups, particularly on the Atlantic side of the Americas, were completely decimated, leaving no genetic trace of their existence. Native Y chromosomes were quickly replaced by those from the Old World, and mitochondrial DNA variation was greatly reduced.<sup>47</sup>

In the unlikely scenario that the descendants of the few migrants described in the Book of Mormon were able to “survive” genetic drift and therefore transmit a modest genetic signal to future generations, the devastating conquest by Europeans in the 16th and 17th centuries has created a situation in which even the most experienced researchers admit the limited knowledge available to properly infer the complete history of the pre-Columbian era.

However, this would not be the only event affecting population bottleneck among the Nephites. In fact, the Book of Mormon itself describes at great length two additional major events that, presuming historical accuracy, would have had a tremendous impact on the survival of any genetic lineages carried to the Americas by any of its original groups.

The first event took place after the biblical account of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. Only one of the Gospels of the New Testament briefly mentions the geological events experienced in the Holy Land following the death of Christ.<sup>48</sup> Concomitantly, in the Western Hemisphere, far greater destructive natural forces were witnessed as recorded in 3 Nephi chapter 8, with entire cities being destroyed and the geographical landscape becoming greatly changed. The extent

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47 Ripan S. Malhi et al., “Distribution of Y chromosome Among Native North Americans: A Study of Athapaskan Population History,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 137 (2008), 412-424; Daniel Corach et al., “Inferring Continental Ancestry of Argentineans from Autosomal, Y-Chromosomal and Mitochondrial DNA,” *Annals of Human Genetics* 74 (2010), 65-76; Ugo A. Perego et al., “Decrypting the Mitochondrial Gene Pool of Modern Panamanians,” *PLoS ONE* 7(2012), e38337.

48 Matthew 27:51.

of destruction over the whole American continent is not known, as the writer in the Book of Mormon was likely mostly limited to his immediate radius. However, since this debate concerns the genetics of Book of Mormon people, it is not unreasonable to think that such devastation and loss of life would also have had a great effect on the survival and transmission of any Old World genetic lineages to future generations.

Finally, in conjunction with the natural destruction described in the Book of Mormon at the time of the death of Jesus Christ in the Holy Land is the targeted elimination of people referred to as Nephites through massive warfare starting in the fourth century AD.

It is a difficult task to estimate the level of admixture experienced by the descendants of those that came from Jerusalem around 600 BC, but from the population growth described occasionally in the Book of Mormon, it could be that the Lamanites were more consistently absorbed with locals than the Nephites.<sup>49</sup>

The Bible itself perhaps supports this assertion, as it is rich with examples of those who placed little importance on covenants with God and how they were more easily infiltrated and adopted practices, often mixing with the people surrounding them. This may allow suggestion that because of the religious character of the Nephite people as a whole, they may have had some success in maintaining a fraction of their ancestors' genetic integrity. The great war that resulted in their nearly complete annihilation would also have had a negative effect on the survival of their Old World DNA, if any at all persisted to the time of the end of the Book of Mormon narrative. Of course, at that time, as already discussed, the terms *Nephite* and *Lamanite* were mostly used as cultural rather than genetic terms.

## Natural Selection

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49 James E. Smith, "How Many Nephites?: The Book of Mormon at the Bar of Demography," *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence of Ancient Origins* (FARMS, 1997), and references within.

Although genetic drift and population bottlenecks are likely the two primary causes of why DNA from a purported Old World migration 2,600 years ago is not found in modern-day American natives, another perspective should be considered, albeit probably not as influential as the previous two. Consider that early humans have migrated from place to place for thousands of years in a process that resulted in the colonization of the whole planet. The initial driving force to move was simply the need for survival. If a population nucleus outgrew the resources of a particular area, they would probably starve or become a few people left searching for new means of survival.

A gradual expansion into new unoccupied regions allowed the newcomers to adapt to different environments and master new survival skills. Naturally, some individuals would have characteristics better suited to adaptation than would others. In genetics, this is known as degree of fitness, or in other words, possessing the right genes for the right surroundings so that climate, food tolerance, etc. would allow some to live longer and become stronger, thus increasing their chances for reproduction and passing their “more-fit” genes to future generations.

However, as climate conditions changed, or a move was necessary, those more fit in the previous environment may have later become genetically disadvantaged. Through this process of gene selection, the best genetic make-up for a specific environmental background would end up as the predominant gene pool for a specific population. Less fit genes would tend to disappear over time.

Natural selection is a well-established population genetic principle which has been observed among many species and organisms, including humans. This natural process has recently been recognized as influential in the Black Death that was responsible for the death of one out of four Europeans in the 14th century. Recent genetic studies on remains from that period revealed that the bacteria that caused the bubonic plague are still in existence today.<sup>50</sup> However, together with

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50 Bos, “Draft Genome.”

other factors, the subsequent generations of humans since that time are not dying in such large numbers as in the past because those who survived the first devastating pandemics had a stronger genetic resistance to it, and they passed those successful genes to their progeny.

Likewise, after the publication of the complete sequence of the Neandertal genome, scientists reported that a small percentage of hominid DNA was found also in modern humans but not the other way around. The Neandertal genome is also relevant, as some have pointed out that since we are able to sequence ancient DNA samples dating tens of thousands of years ago and to observe admixture between two related species, in turn we should also be able through the same technology to detect Middle East DNA in the genome of indigenous individuals from the Americas (and consequently, failure to find any should be a further proof that Book of Mormon migrants never existed).<sup>51</sup> However, as explained by a researcher who helped produce the Neandertal genome, this is not always the case,

We detect gene flow from Neandertals into modern humans but no reciprocal gene flow from modern humans into Neandertals. Although gene flow between different populations need not be bidirectional, *it has been shown that when a colonizing population* (such as anatomically modern humans) *encounters a resident population* (such as Neandertals), *even a small number of breeding events along the wave front of expansion into new territory can result in substantial introduction of genes into the colonizing population* as introduced alleles can “surf” to high frequency as the population expands. *As a consequence, detectable gene flow is predicted to almost always be from the resident population into the*

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<sup>51</sup> Simon Southerton, <http://simonsoutherton.blogspot.com/2013/05/could-lamanite-dna-just-disappear.html> (accessed 14 July 2014).

*colonizing population, even if gene flow also occurred in the other direction.*<sup>52</sup>

The example of Neandertal and anatomically modern human gene flow can safely be applied to the Book of Mormon and New World scenario. The indigenous inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere had lived here for thousands of years prior to the arrival of the small group of migrants from the Old World. Environmental conditions were likely dramatically different from those of their homeland as they adjusted to their new conditions. Surely food supplies and other technologies available to them allowed for their initial survival while they adapted to the features of the new land. However, although many markers used in population studies do not contribute directly to cellular processes, it is plausible that the change in climate and food resources, among other factors, may have caused a selection against their genes over time, especially in the case of potential admixture with locals. Mitochondrial DNA in the population could have experienced the same effect, since the mitochondria are organelles responsible for the cell respiratory cycle and energy production, crucial to the health and proper function of the cells making up the human body.

It is possible that Lehi and his group may have fathered a genealogically large posterity that was eventually absorbed and became part of the current, or at least the pre-Columbian, native population. Additionally, based on a simple mathematical calculation, there are scenarios in which Lehi is potentially the genealogical ancestor of all living Amerindians,<sup>53</sup> contributing culturally to their contemporary indigenous neighbors, yet leaving no genetic trace of their presence in the present day.

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52 Richard E. Green et al., "A Draft Sequence of the Neandertal Genome," *Science* 328 (2010), 710-722, emphasis added.

53 Every person with native blood in the Americas today would have had potentially billions of ancestors 2,600 years ago, and therefore all the ancestors of one person today are also all the ancestors of everyone else in the same continent during the same period of time. See Steve Olson, "The Royal We," *The Atlantic* (May 2002) <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2002/05/the-royal-we/302497> (accessed 8 February 2013).

A similar possible scenario can explain the absence of Viking DNA among modern Native Americans, although historical and archaeological evidence suggests Vikings had a significant presence which lasted a few centuries in northern North America and had regular exchanges and contacts with native groups.<sup>54</sup>

### Founder Effect

Another demonstrated principle that plays an important role in shaping the genetics of populations is the *founder effect*.<sup>55</sup> This phenomenon, which is a specific type of population bottleneck, is observed when a few members from a population source relocate to a different area, thus carrying with them a small sample of the genetic variation of the population of origin. Subsequent inbreeding and the effects of genetic drift may result in a large population displaying only the genetic lineages inherited from the founding ancestors, which may or may not resemble the frequency of the original population. An example comes from the blood types of Native Americans, which are almost exclusively group O, the least common in other world populations (where A, B, and AB are the prevalent types), including Siberia. The low blood group diversity observed in the Americas is probably attributable to a founder effect.<sup>56</sup>

An overly simplistic view of the Book of Mormon is that the American continent was empty at the time of the arrival of Lehi and his family and, assuming that they carried the most typical genetic lineages from the Middle East, all Native Americans today should have maintained a similar genetic make-up as their Israelite forefathers. However, this is an extremely skewed take on the Book of Mormon issue because it would imply, among other things, the following:

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54 Barnes, *Viking America*.

55 Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founder\\_effect](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founder_effect) (accessed 4 December 2012).

56 Léa Georges and others, "Molecular Characterization of ABO Blood Group Frequencies in pre-Columbian Peruvian Highlanders," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 149 (2012), 242-249.

1. The American continent was completely empty at the arrival of Lehi's party.
2. None of the Jaredites described in the Book of Mormon would have survived;
3. Lehi and his family would carry typical and known ancient Near Eastern genetic markers (particularly those found among Jews);
4. Mulek and his group, founders of the city Zarahemla, would meet the same genetic composition criteria;
5. Middle Eastern (and more specifically Jewish) genetic makers of today's populations would be the same ones and in the same proportions as those found in the same geographic region (Jerusalem) 2,600 years ago.

Unfortunately, none of these conditions offers true testable hypotheses. For example, as already explained, neither the Book of Mormon nor the LDS Church openly teaches that the American continent was empty in 600 BC. The summary made by Mormon on the plates does not talk explicitly about others but does not say that no one else was in the Americas. Moreover, there are different opinions on whether or not the Jaredites — whose geographic origin and genetics are unknown — became completely extinct by the time the last recorded survivor is mentioned in Omni 1:21.<sup>57</sup> Any Jaredite dissenters who escaped the final battle could have contributed to the complexity of identifying founding lineages from Eurasia on the American soil.

Regarding Mulek and his party, very little is written about their whereabouts and how/who arrived in the Western Hemisphere. There are too many unpredictable variables to use DNA effectively as a tool to test conclusively for the existence of Book of Mormon people.

## Conclusions

In commenting on a recent article published in the scientific journal *Nature* and dealing with the number of original

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57 Hugh W. Nibley, *The World of the Jaredites* (Deseret Book, 1988), 231-241.

migrations by Paleo-Indians,<sup>58</sup> Professor David Meltzer of Southern Methodist University said, “Archaeologists who study Native American history are glad to have the genetic data but also have reservations, given that several of the geneticists’ conclusions have changed over time. This is a really important step forward but not the last word.” On the same occasion, molecular anthropologist Michael H. Crawford added, “The paucity of samples from North America and from coastal regions made it hard to claim a complete picture of early migrations has been attained.”<sup>59</sup> These and other comments from experts in the field of ancient American history provide further evidence that DNA is a valid tool to study ancient and modern populations, but they also remind us to be careful about drawing absolute conclusions based on the genetic data. Can genetic testing and science honestly answer any of the following questions?

- What did the DNA of the Book of Mormon people look like?
- Was it the typical DNA found in the population of Jerusalem in 600 BC?
- Can their DNA be differentiated from that of Europeans arriving after 1492?
- Is the current molecular clock adequate to discern pre- from post-Columbian genetic contributions to the New World within the last three thousand years?
- What degree of mixture did the Nephites and/or Lamanites experienced with local natives?
- How long were the Nephites and/or the Lamanites an isolated population after their arrival to the American continent?

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58 David Reich et al., “Reconstructing Native American Population History,” *Nature* 488 (2012), 370-374.

59 Nicholas Wade, “Earliest Americans Arrived in Waves, DNA Study Finds,” *New York Times* (July 7, 2012), [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/12/science/earliest-americans-arrived-in-3-waves-not-1-dna-study-finds.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/12/science/earliest-americans-arrived-in-3-waves-not-1-dna-study-finds.html?_r=0) (accessed 3February 2013).

Obtaining answers to these questions would enable the design of research that could contribute to our understanding of the Book of Mormon as a historical record from a scientific approach. Without such information, we risk forming conclusions based on personal interpretation and biased assumptions. As outlined in this paper, the problems and limitations with attempting such an investigative approach are significant and cannot be overlooked by those honestly seeking for answers about the Book of Mormon through DNA. Trying to reconstruct and identify the DNA of these Old World migrants in the Americas is not a task comparable to that of finding a needle in a haystack. With time and diligence, the needle eventually will be found. With the Nephite record, the needle was once there, and then through population demographic pressures, such as drift and perhaps some degree of natural selection, the needle may have been removed from the haystack — with some people convinced that it is still there and therefore should be found. Consequently, these critics, rather than accepting the fact that the needle was once there and now is lost, prefer to take the position that it was never there in the first place. These are two very distinctive conclusions based on the same observations. Stating that the DNA of Book of Mormon people has disappeared or not been detected through time, following very basic and widely accepted population genetics principles such as genetic drift and selection, is much different from claiming that Book of Mormon people never existed because we failed to recover their DNA in the American indigenous gene pool.

The advances with DNA technologies have provided never-before attainable knowledge in many fields, such as medicine, criminal justice, etc., including the history of humanity. However, much more still needs to be investigated, and some information might never be fully revealed with a molecular approach.

We need to be wary about any statement against or in favor of Book of Mormon historicity based on genetic evidence and take the time to understand the difference between

scientific data and claims people make about it. As with other religious texts and topics, science is often an inadequate tool to corroborate spiritual truths, morals, and ethics.

DNA is a powerful tool in reconstructing recent and ancient historical events. The large body of published work on the topic of Native American origins using genetic markers stands as witness that researchers are still tackling some fundamental questions surrounding the history of the Western Hemisphere and of humanity in general. New publications provide helpful insights into the past but often pose new questions in need of further investigation.

As extensively explained herein, there are specific limitations that cannot be ignored when using the available genetic data to infer conclusions regarding the DNA of Book of Mormon people. Such conclusions are not founded on solid science but are the interpretation of a few, as genetic data fails to produce conclusive proof weighing credibly in favor of or against the historicity of the Book of Mormon.

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# “ZION” AND “JERUSALEM” AS LADY WISDOM IN MOSES 7 AND NEPHI’S TREE OF LIFE VISION

Samuel Zinner

*Editor’s Note:* This article is drawn from a chapter in Samuel Zinner’s forthcoming book entitled *Textual and Comparative Explorations in 1 and 2 Enoch* (Provo, UT: The Interpreter Foundation/Eborn Books, 2014). The book will be available online (e.g., Amazon, FairMormon Bookstore) and in selected bookstores in October 2014.

*The essay traces lines of continuity between ancient middle eastern traditions of Asherah in her various later Jewish, Christian, and Mormon forms. Especially relevant in Jewish texts are Lady Wisdom (Proverbs 8; Sirach 24; Baruch 3-4), Daughter of Zion (Lamentations; Isaiah); Lady Zion and Mother Jerusalem (4 Ezra), Binah in kabbalah etc. The divine feminine in the Jewish-Christian texts Odes of Solomon 19 and Shepherd of Hermas is examined, as well as in Pauline Christian texts, namely, the Letter to the Galatians and the writings of Irenaeus (Against Heresies and Apostolic Preaching). Dependence of Hermas on the Parables of Enoch is documented. The essay identifies parallels between some of the above ancient sources and traditions about Zion and other forms of the feminine divine in 19th century America, specifically in the Mormon scriptures (Moses 7 and Nephi 11). While recognizing the corporate nature of the Enochic city of Zion in Moses 7, the essay argues that this Zion also parallels the hypostatic Lady Zion of Jewish canonical and extracanonical scriptures, especially 4 Ezra. The essay also points how the indigenous trope of Mother Earth*

*parallels forms of the divine feminine stretching from the ancient middle eastern Asherah, the Jewish Lady Wisdom and Shekhinah, the Christian Holy Spirit, to the Mormon Enochic Zion.*

As a new millennium was fast approaching, in 1996 Harold Bloom referred to “the most American of religions, Mormonism.”<sup>1</sup> In the same context, Bloom writes of “Joseph Smith, greatest and most authentic of American prophets, seers, and revelators.”<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere in the same work Bloom expresses himself more expansively on the same topic when he speaks of “Our Southern Baptists and Mormons, our Adventists, Pentecostals, and other indigenous faiths ....”<sup>3</sup> As a person of a mixed background that includes indigenous ancestry (my great-grandmother was enrolled in the Six Nations Confederacy as a Mohawk) I find Bloom’s use of the taxonomy “indigenous” problematic if left unqualified. But if we understand the word “America” not as the particular place of Mother Earth where the first peoples lived (which at that time was called “America” by no one), but as the political system that was set in place after the genocide of the indigenous tribes,<sup>4</sup> then perhaps the terminology can at least be understood according to Bloom’s particular modulation.

With the above in mind, we would like to cite Bloom again: “Enoch-Metatron ... may be regarded as the authentic angel of America, which was initially the insight of the Mormon prophet, seer, and revelator Joseph Smith, who identified himself with

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1 Harold Bloom, *Omens of Millennium: The Gnosis of Angels, Dreams, and Resurrection* (NY: Riverhead Books, 1996), p. 70. He repeats the same language on pp. 224-225: “This most American of religions.”

2 Ibid., p. 224.

3 Ibid., p. 3.

4 On the genocide of the first peoples of “America,” see David Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (Oxford/NY: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Enoch, and by now may well be joined in an imaginative unity with his great precursor, if Mormon speculation proves true.”<sup>5</sup> Bloom writes in this connection more fully as follows:

One sees why Smith was fascinated by Enoch, and actually identified himself with that extraordinary being. In his own final phase, Smith evidently studied Kabbalah, and came to understand that as the resurrected Enoch his ultimate transformation would be into the angel Metatron, ... who is also the angel Michael and resurrected Adam. Though orthodox Islam refuses such an identification for Muhammad, the Sufis insisted upon it, and Joseph Smith thus brings together (whether he knew it or not) the three great esoteric traditions of Christian Gnosticism, Sufism, and Kabbalah.<sup>6</sup>

Complementing the individual known as Joseph Smith is the communal nature of the religious group that coalesced around him, as well as of the theological and eschatological notion of “Zion,” of which Bloom explains: “*Their* Zion is famously not ‘a world elsewhere’; it will be built, someday, near Independence, Missouri, according to a prophecy of Joseph Smith.”<sup>7</sup> Although we are a non-LDS scholar who claims no expertise in Mormon literature, nevertheless it is not too difficult to recognize that despite the communal nature of

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5 Harold Bloom, *Omens of Millennium: The Gnosis of Angels, Dreams, and Resurrection*, p. 46.

6 Ibid., p. 80. For a more skeptical view of kabbalistic influences on Joseph Smith, see William J. Hamblin, “‘Everything Is Everything’: Was Joseph Smith Influenced by Kabbalah?” *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): pp. 251–325. We thank Jeffrey M. Bradshaw for supplying us with a copy of Hamblin’s review. Bloom’s qualifying term “evidently” arguably suggests that the question of historical influences of kabbalah upon Joseph Smith is not an entirely settled matter in Bloom’s own opinion.

7 Ibid., p. 225. Bloom’s emphasis “*Their*” refers to those called “Reorganized Mormons” led by Joseph Smith’s direct descendants.

Joseph Smith's "Zion,"<sup>8</sup> the latter is described in ways that make it clear enough that this "Zion" is simultaneously an individual celestial hypostasis, a paradigm which is in fact grounded in the Tanakh and in traditional Jewish exegesis thereof in both kabbalah and pseudepigrapha.<sup>9</sup> As we will see, this trajectory is carried forward in texts of early Semitic Jesus groups (so-called "Jewish Christians").<sup>10</sup>

Before we address the issue of the individual-communal layers of Zion, we will comment upon its (or better, her) apocalyptic and realized eschatological dimensions. In kabbalah, as in the Tanakh, Zion is the divine mother. In the holy Zohar this mother becomes the *sefirah* Binah, Understanding, of whom Daniel Matt explains that she is identified with "the world to come" who in fact is "always coming" and is as a consequence already and always present everywhere.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps

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8 This communal nature of Zion is deftly examined by David J. Larsen, "Enoch and the City of Zion: Can an Entire Community Ascend to Heaven?" *BYU Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2014): pp. 25-37.

9 We personally advocate this term be replaced with "deuterepigrapha," coined by us in analogy to "deutero-Pauline" and "deuterocanonical."

10 We qualify the taxonomy "Jewish Christian" because not all early Semitic groups that followed Jesus considered him to be the Messiah or Christ; we see this trend in the Gospel of Thomas and in the Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew preserved by Shem-Tob; see George Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1995). Others saw Jesus as a teacher, the true prophet (this was the Ebionites' position), or as Messiah designate, that is, he would become the Messiah in the apocalyptic future. Alternatively, some Jewish Christians held that Jesus had not been the Messiah during his earthly ministry but became such upon his ascension (traces of this idea are preserved in the early chapters of Acts). Others understood the human Jesus as separate from the celestial Messiah with whom the former was united (we see this in the Odes of Solomon and among some early Ebionite positions alluded to already in 1 Corinthians and 1 John). We discuss these topics at length in Samuel Zinner, *The Gospel of Thomas in the Light of Early Jewish, Christian and Islamic Esoteric Trajectories* (London: Matheson Trust, 2011).

11 See Daniel C. Matt, *The Zohar*. Vol. 1. Pritzker Edition (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 22.

we could apply this simultaneous temporal-eternal model to the Joseph Smith prophecy lately quoted from Bloom.

In Zechariah 2:10 we find the title "daughter of Zion," a phrase also employed in Lamentations 1:6, a book wherein Zion becomes a lady who grieves over her being conquered and destroyed. We encounter the same imagery in Isaiah 22:4: "Therefore said I: 'Look away from me, I will weep bitterly; strain not to comfort me, for the destruction of the daughter of my people.'"<sup>12</sup> The prophets develop the topos of the "comfort" or "consolation" that the mourning Lady Zion will receive from the Lord in the eschatological era when the peoples of Israel and of Judah will be restored. Isaiah 40 figures prominently among such passages of promise:

1 Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.  
 2 Bid Jerusalem take heart, and proclaim unto her, that her time of service is accomplished, that her guilt is paid off; that she hath received of the lord's hand double for all her sins.  
 3 Hark! one calleth: "Clear ye in the wilderness the way of the lord, make plain in the desert a highway for our God."  
 9 O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah: "Behold your God!"

In Isaiah 66 the "*daughter of Zion*" becomes *Mother Zion* who comforts the city of Zion's inhabitants. However, while verses 10-12 of this chapter depict Zion as the comforting mother of the people, verse 13 suddenly applies this function of comfort to the Lord, indicating that Mother Zion is ultimately God's feminine dimension, or God portrayed as divine

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12 In this chapter all of our Tanakh citations are taken from the 1917 Jewish Publication Society Tanakh.

Mother. The passage significantly begins with a description of Lady Zion as a woman about to give birth, and Irenaeus, no doubt guided by Jewish-Christian apostolic tradition, sees in verse 7 a prophecy of the painless virgin birth of Jesus (*Apostolic Preaching* 54), which is the source of the painless delivery in Odes of Solomon 19 often described as “Gnostic” or “docetic” (one person’s “Gnosticism” can be another person’s “Jewish-Christianity”):

7 Before she was in labor  
she gave birth;  
before her pain came upon her  
she was delivered of a son.

8 Who has heard such a thing?  
Who has seen such things?  
Shall a land be born in one day?  
Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment?  
For as soon as Zion was in labor  
she brought forth her sons.

9 Shall I bring to the birth and not cause to bring  
forth?  
says the lord;  
shall I, who cause to bring forth, shut the womb?  
says your God.

10 Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her,  
all you who love her;  
rejoice with her in joy,  
all you who mourn over her;

11 that you may suck and be satisfied  
with her consoling breasts;  
that you may drink deeply with delight  
from the abundance of her glory.

12 For thus says the lord:  
Behold, I will extend prosperity to her like a river,

and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing  
stream;  
and you shall suck, you shall be carried upon her hip,  
and dandled upon her knees.

13 As one whom his mother comforts,  
so I will comfort you;  
you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.  
14 You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice;  
your bones shall flourish like the grass ....

Lady Zion is ultimately but a specialization of Asherah (who is herself ultimately a civilizational vestige of the earlier indigenous Mother Earth), another instantiation of whom appears under the guise of Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8, who by allusion is equated with the *ruah elohim* who hovered like a mother bird over the primordial waters of chaos, the "deep."

22 The lord made me as the beginning of His way, the  
first of His works of old.  
23 I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning,  
or ever the earth was.  
27 When He established the heavens, I was there;  
when He set a circle upon the face of the deep,  
28 When He made firm the skies above, when the  
fountains of the deep showed their might,  
29 When He gave to the sea His decree, that the  
waters should not transgress His commandment,  
when He appointed the foundations of the earth;  
30 Then I was by Him, as a nursling; and I was daily  
all delight, playing always before Him.

Famously Sirach 24:23 transforms Proverbs 8's Lady Wisdom into the celestial hypostatic archetype of the earthly scroll of the Torah of Moses: "All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law which Moses commanded us

as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob.” Sirach 24:10 has Lady Wisdom explain of herself that she “was established in Zion”<sup>13</sup> (RSV), and so she also coincides with Lady Zion. Similarly, in an allusion to Deuteronomy 30’s Torah, Baruch 3 asks concerning “wisdom”:

29 Who has gone up into heaven, and taken her,  
and brought her down from the clouds?  
30 Who has gone over the sea, and found her,  
and will buy her for pure gold?<sup>14</sup>

Baruch 3:37-4:1 then establishes an identity between this celestial Lady Wisdom and the personified earthly Torah scroll:

3:37 Afterward she appeared upon earth  
and lived among men.

4:1 She is the book of the commandments of God,  
and the law that endures for ever.  
All who hold her fast will live,  
and those who forsake her will die.<sup>15</sup>

The next major development in this trajectory occurs in 4 Ezra 9:38:

When I said these things in my heart, I lifted up my  
eyes and saw a woman on my right, and behold, she  
was mourning and weeping with a loud voice, and  
was deeply grieved at heart, and her clothes were rent,

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13 All of our citations from the so-called Apocrypha are taken from the RSV.

14 The Gospel of Thomas logion 3 transforms this personified Torah and Lady Wisdom into the divine “kingdom,” which agrees with the later kabbalistic portrayal of the *sefirah* Malkhut, Kingdom, as a specialization of the feminine divine personified presence known as Shekhinah, who is also the Holy Spirit.

15 “All who hold her fast will live, and those who forsake her will die.” Cf. Thomas logion 1, “Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not taste of death,” and Thomas logion 3, “But if you fail to know yourselves then you will persist in poverty and you will become that poverty.”

and there were ashes on her head.

The prophet Ezra speaks with this sorrowing woman and learns that she grieves because after being barren for thirty years, she was blessed with a son who on the day of his wedding fell and died as he "entered his wedding chamber" (9:43-47-10:1). The woman is grieving and refuses to eat. Ezra upbraids the woman in chapter 10:

6 "You most foolish of women, do you not see our mourning, and what has happened to us?

7 For Zion, the mother of us all, is in deep grief and great affliction.

8 It is most appropriate to mourn now, because we are all mourning, and to be sorrowful, because we are all sorrowing; you are sorrowing for one son, but we, the whole world, for our mother.

9 Now ask the earth, and she will tell you that it is she who ought to mourn ...."

We then read in verse 27:

And I looked, and behold, the woman was no longer visible to me, but there was an established city, and a place of huge foundations showed itself.

Next in chapter 10 Ezra is perplexed about his vision of the grieving woman and has the following exchange with the angel Uriel, wherein the vision is explicated as follows:

30 and behold, I lay there like a corpse and I was deprived of my understanding. Then he grasped my right hand and strengthened me and set me on my feet, and said to me,

31 “What is the matter with you? And why are you troubled? And why are your understanding and the thoughts of your mind troubled?”

32 I said, “Because you have forsaken me! I did as you directed, and went out into the field, and behold, I saw, and still see, what I am unable to explain.”

33 He said to me, “Stand up like a man, and I will instruct you.”

38 He answered me and said, “Listen to me and I will inform you, and tell you about the things which you fear, for the Most High has revealed many secrets to you.

39 For he has seen your righteous conduct, that you have sorrowed continually for your people, and mourned greatly over Zion.

40 This therefore is the meaning of the vision.

41 The woman who appeared to you a little while ago, whom you saw mourning and began to console —

42 but you do not now see the form of a woman, but an established city has appeared to you —

43 and as for her telling you about the misfortune of her son, this is the interpretation:

44 This woman whom you saw, whom you now behold as an established city, is Zion.

45 And as for her telling you that she was barren for thirty years, it is because there were three thousand years in the world before any offering was offered in it.

46 And after three thousand years Solomon built the city, and offered offerings; then it was that the barren woman bore a son.

47 And as for her telling you that she brought him up with much care, that was the period of residence in Jerusalem.

48 And as for her saying to you, 'When my son entered his wedding chamber he died,' and that misfortune had overtaken her, that was the destruction which befell Jerusalem.

49 And behold, you saw her likeness, how she mourned for her son, and you began to console her for what had happened.

50 For now the Most High, seeing that you are sincerely grieved and profoundly distressed for her, has shown you the brilliance of her glory, and the loveliness of her beauty.

51 Therefore I told you to remain in the field where no house had been built,

52 for I knew that the Most High would reveal these things to you.

53 Therefore I told you to go into the field where there was no foundation of any building,

54 for no work of man's building could endure in a place where the city of the Most High was to be revealed.

55 Therefore do not be afraid, and do not let your heart be terrified; but go in and see the splendor and vastness of the building, as far as it is possible for your eyes to see it,

56 and afterward you will hear as much as your ears can hear.

Obviously this woman, who is Lady Zion, is also the Lady Wisdom of Proverbs 8 who dwelt with God before creation.

About the same time 4 Ezra was written, ca. 100 CE or earlier (we would argue by a Semitic follower of Jesus, that is, a Jewish Christian or Ebionite; we suspect the same scenario would be applicable to texts such as 2 Baruch, the Apocalypse of Abraham, and especially the Testament of Abraham),<sup>16</sup> some of the Shepherd of Hermas' earliest layers were being composed in Rome. In our judgment the prophet Hermas, like the author of 4 Ezra, was a Semitic follower of the persons of James and Jesus. In the *Visions* of Hermas, the prophet sees an ancient celestial Lady who gives him a mysterious book as well as a vision of the construction of a tower. Later the Lady appears youthful and rejuvenated:

Vision 2: 4(8):1 Now, brethren, a revelation was made unto me in my sleep by a youth of exceeding fair form, who said to me, "Whom thinkest thou the aged woman, from whom thou receivest the book, to be?" I say, "The Sibyl" "Thou art wrong," saith he, "she is not." "Who then is she?" I say. "The Church," saith he. I said unto him, "Wherefore then is she aged?" "Because," saith he, "she was created before all things; therefore is she aged; and for her sake the world was framed."

Vision 3: 3(11):4 I say unto her, "Lady, since thou didst hold me worthy once for all, that thou shouldest reveal all things to me, reveal them." Then she saith to me, "Whatsoever is possible to be revealed to thee, shall be revealed. Only let thy heart be with God, and doubt not in thy mind about that which thou seest."

10(18):3 Now she was seen of me, brethren, in my first vision of last year, as a very aged woman and seated on a chair.

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16 On such questions in general, see James R. Davila, *The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha: Jewish, Christian or Other?* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

10(18):4 In the second vision her face was youthful, but her flesh and her hair were aged, and she spake to me standing; and she was more gladsome than before.

10(18):5 But in the third vision she was altogether youthful and of exceeding great beauty, and her hair alone was aged; and she was gladsome exceedingly and seated on a couch.<sup>17</sup>

There is a similar transformation of the mourning Mother Jerusalem in 4 Ezra 10:25: "While I was talking to her, behold, her face suddenly shone exceedingly, and her countenance flashed like lightning ...." This transformation is described in verse 50 as "the brilliance of her glory, and the loveliness of her beauty."

In Hermas Parable 9 we learn that the Lady is simultaneously the Church, the Holy Spirit, and the Son of God:

1(78):1 After I had written down the commandments and parables of the shepherd, the angel of repentance, he came to me and saith to me; "I wish to show thee all things that the Holy Spirit, which spake with thee in the form of the Church, showed unto thee. For that Spirit is the Son of God."

The Lady who is the Church (*Ecclesia*) and the theme of the building of the tower are clearly similar to 4 Ezra's pre-existent Lady who is hypostatic Zion. What is more, just as Ezra is commanded to fast and to go out to an undeveloped field, and is troubled by his vision and told to stand up "like a man," so Hermas is instructed to fast, is taken by the Spirit to a distant location in nature, is troubled by his visions, and is told at the

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17 J. B. Lightfoot translation.

conclusion of Vision 1, “Play the man, Hermas.” Both texts speak of secrets and their revelation.<sup>18</sup>

We should not overlook the isomorphism that links Hermas’ Lady Ecclesia who is the “Son of God” and 4 Ezra 10:45-49 where it becomes clear, at least upon a careful reading, that the celestial Jerusalem’s “son” is none other than the hypostatic earthly city of Jerusalem. This may shed a new light on 4 Ezra 2:42-48, where “the Son of God” is likely thought of as the single or individualized hypostatic earthly city of Jerusalem. The same passage’s “great multitude” would then constitute a sort of refraction of the individual hypostasis manifested in the mode somewhat comparable semantically to a collective singular. Verse 43 describes the Son of God: “In their midst was a young man of great stature, taller than any of the others ... he was more exalted than they.” This is quite similar to Hermas Parable 9:

12(89):7 “Didst thou see,” saith he, “the six men, and the glorious and mighty man in the midst of them, him that walked about the tower and rejected the stones from the building?” “I saw him, Sir,” say I.

12(89):8 “The glorious man,” saith he, “is the Son of God, and those six are the glorious angels who guard Him on the right hand and on the left ....”

In light of these 4 Ezra-Hermas links, it may be that the latter’s “tower” is intended to be thought of in part not only as the Jerusalem temple being rebuilt, but as the earthly city of Jerusalem’s restoration as well.

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18 The constellation of being “troubled” followed by revelation of secrets is paralleled in the Thomas gospel’s incipit and logia 1-2, which immediately precede the already-mentioned logion 3, which confirms Thomas’ underlying Judaic wisdom matrix. Note that the meaning of the name Hermas would have been understood to mean “the Interpreter,” which would have relevance for Thomas logion 1, “Whoever finds the interpretation ....”

As we have remarked, we suspect that the main portion of 4 Ezra, chapters 3-14, is Ebionite in provenance. We do not see why chapters 1-2 could not have been written around the same general time as 3-14. The only difference is that chapters 1-2 stem from a Jewish-Christian source (perhaps from Rome or Corinth) that is distinct from the Jerusalem Ebionite trajectory reflected in chapters 3-14. Hermas, a prophet from Rome, reflects knowledge of the underlying traditions reflected throughout both 4 Ezra 1-2 and 3-14. Hermas' thought is deeply Jacobean and therefore "Jerusalemite." Consider his text's many parallels to the diction and theology of the Letter of James, yet without necessarily knowing that epistle, which suggests that he was in touch with a still living oral tradition that had emanated from James the Righteous' preaching and teaching. Neither is there any trace at all in Hermas of Pauline terminology or theology.

Furthermore, Hermas never once names the "Son of God" that he refers to; neither the name "Jesus" nor the title "Christ" occurs anywhere in the quite extensive text of the Shepherd of Hermas. Interestingly, although the Gospel of Thomas employs the name "Jesus," the text never calls him "Christ." This obviously overlaps with the non-Christic layer of Hermas. It may be that Hermas' "Son of God" expresses himself more expansively than in a single individual such as Jesus. Perhaps Hermas' Son of God is dual, as in the parable in Matthew 21:33ff. where a "servant" and a "son" are killed (alluding to Jesus and John the Baptizer), or as in Zechariah 4:14's "two anointed," which implies two Messiahs (cf. the hotly debated two-messiahs expectation at Qumran, and the rabbinic Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David). In fact, Hermas' "Son of God" shares a prominent feature in common with James the Righteous, for in Vision 2 we read at 4(8):1 of Lady Ecclesia (elsewhere identified as the Son of God), "and for her sake the world was framed." This accords with the Thomas

gospel logion 12, which describes “James the Righteous” as “the one for whose sake heaven and earth came into being.”

We know that James, like Peter and John, was called a “pillar,” literally, a “standing one,” of Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup> Cf. Zechariah 4:14 once more: “These are the two anointed ones, that stand (העמודים) by the Lord of the whole earth.” If we read Galatians 4:24-26 in the light of Paul’s tensions with James the Righteous documented earlier in Galatians chapters 1-2, then reading verses 24-26 between the lines, so to speak, we might see hints that James was viewed as an instantiation of the celestial Jerusalem, symbolized by Sarah — just as Sarah underlies the Lady Zion/Jerusalem of 4 Ezra and the Lady Ecclesia of Hermas, as demonstrated by J. Ford-Massingberd, as we shall soon document.

We should also mention that Hermas’ “angel of righteousness” of Commandment 6 may in some way be connected to James (“Jacob” in Greek and Hebrew) the Righteous, since the patriarch Jacob was thought of as the earthly instantiation of a celestial angel named Israel, according to the Prayer of Joseph (in our view a Jewish-Christian text): “I, Jacob, who speak to you, and Israel, I am an angel of God, a ruling spirit, and Abraham and Isaac were created before every work of God ....”<sup>20</sup> Compare the structure of “and Abraham and Isaac were created before every work of God” with that of Hermas Vision 2 4(8):1’s “she was created before all things; ... and for her sake the world was framed.”

At this point we would like to mention that, as we have documented in chapter 16 of the present monograph, the Ezra figure of 4 Ezra has absorbed several aspects of the prophet

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19 See David Wenham and A. D. A. Moses, “‘There Are Some Standing Here’ Did They Become the ‘Reputed Pillars’ of the Jerusalem Church? Some Reflections on Mark 9:1, Galatians 2:9 and the Transfiguration,” *Novum Testamentum* 36, 2 (1994): pp. 146-163.

20 Allen Menzies, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. IX (NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912), p. 341.

Enoch, and 4 Ezra's author was familiar with the Parables of Enoch. The similarities shared between 4 Ezra and Hermas open up the possibility that Hermas may have known the Parables of Enoch as well (we will demonstrate presently that he indeed did), and this might even have something to do with Hermas' section title *Parables*. 1 Enoch 40:9's angel Phanuel, "who is set over the repentance unto hope of those who inherit eternal life," which is from Enoch's first parable, is clearly reflected in Hermas Parable 9 13(90):3: "For all these things I gave thanks unto the Lord [cf. 1 Enoch 40:3, 'those four presences as they uttered praises before the Lord of glory'], because He had compassion [cf. 1 Enoch 40:9, 'Michael, the merciful and long-suffering'] on all that called upon His name [cf. 1 Enoch 40:6, 'pray and intercede ... and supplicate in the name of the Lord of Spirits'], and sent forth the angel of repentance to us that had sinned against Him, and refreshed our spirit, and, when we were already ruined and had no hope of life, restored our life."<sup>21</sup> Hermas' angel of repentance is "the shepherd" after which his book is named.

Although the Parables of Enoch do not speak of a Lady Zion or Jerusalem, Lady *Wisdom* does make a prominent appearance in 1 Enoch 42. By contrast, 2 Enoch 55:3 refers explicitly to Jerusalem: "For to-morrow I shall go up on to heaven, to the uppermost Jerusalem to my eternal inheritance."<sup>22</sup> Enoch's celestial inheritance or lot is a prominent trope scattered throughout the Parables of Enoch. We would suggest that 2 Enoch 55's "uppermost Jerusalem" is the equivalent of 4 Ezra's "Zion, the mother of us all," which brings to mind Galatians 4:26's "the Jerusalem above" who "is our mother," symbolized

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21 Surprisingly, in his commentary on the Parables of Enoch, Nickelsburg overlooks all of these Hermas-1 Enoch 40 correspondences; see George W. E. Nickelsburg; James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 37-82* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2011), pp. 130-134.

22 R. H. Charles edition.

by the once barren but now fruitful Sarah. Thus 2 Enoch 55's celestial Jerusalem is the individual personified Lady Zion, equivalent to the Lady Wisdom of 1 Enoch 42.

In this model, the transfigured Enoch, whom 3 Enoch calls Metatron, is the male partner of the feminine divine Lady Wisdom or Shekhinah, which accords with later kabbalistic paradigms.

Before continuing we should note that J. Ford-Massingberd documents in two profoundly enlightening essays how the grieving Lady Zion of 4 Ezra and the aged but subsequently rejuvenated Lady of Hermas are both built out of the figure of the matriarch Sarah, who is at first barren and elderly, yet who then becomes youthful and fecund. These same traditions contributed to various early Christian and Semitic Christian traditions, including notions concerning the Virgin Mary, traces of which are also detectable in a passage such as Revelation 12 where a celestial Lady labors to bring forth a son. Ford-Massingberd notes how *Genesis Rabbah* 38,14 gives Sarah the title or name "Zion."<sup>23</sup> We have written elsewhere, commenting on Ford-Massingberd's two essays in question: "Hebrew literature is also fond of the wordplay between 'sons' (*banim*) and 'builders' (*bonim*). The wordplay occurs in some manuscripts of Isaiah 49:17 and 54:13. The latter, starting with verse 11, contains imagery of stones and building and this passage is referred to Sarah in Jewish tradition".<sup>24</sup>

11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will set thy stones in fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.

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23 J. Ford-Massingberd, "A Possible Liturgical Background to the Shepherd of Hermas," *Revue de Qumran* vol. 6, no. 24 (March 1969): pp. 531-551, and idem, "'Thou art Abraham and upon this Rock...'" *The Heythrop Journal* (July 1965): pp. 289-301.

24 Samuel Zinner, *Self and Other in the Abrahamic Religions: Explorations in German Romanticism and Jewish Mysticism* (London: Matheson Trust, forthcoming), p. 214.

12 And I will make thy pinnacles of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of precious stones.

13 And all thy children shall be taught of the lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

This gives us the background of Hermas' visions of the tower's construction, a symbol of the earthly Church, which is built out of *stones*, that is, the *sons* or *children* of the celestial Lady Ecclesia whose imagery and person are rooted in Sarah. Hermas' choice of the term "tower" is of particular interest in light of 1 Enoch 89, which deploys the same word to describe the Temple of Jerusalem in its various instantiations. Verse 50 speaks of "a tower lofty (*nāwah*) and great (*'ābiy*)," and explains that "the tower was elevated and lofty." We believe that 1 Enoch 89's terminology has influenced Hermas' "tower" visions. Moreover, a case can be made that relevant passages in both Hermas (regarding the Lady with a book) and 1 Enoch 89 ("lofty and great"; "elevated and lofty") have left their mark on Qur'ān *sūra* 43:4 which describes the "mother of the book," *umm al-kitāb*, as "exalted/lofty, wise," *'aliyyun ḥakīm*. The Mother of the Book is "wise" because she is none other than a reverberation of the Lady Wisdom of Jewish scriptural tradition.

In chapter 1 of the present monograph we explain how Enoch the Son of Man and Lady Wisdom constitute a syzygy, a supernally wedded pair. We also explain the Parables of Enoch as a pre-Mosaic inliteration of hypostatic Lady Wisdom, a veritable hypostatic Torah (a word that literally means "instruction," "teaching") of the seventh antediluvian patriarch. Just as Baruch portrays Lady Wisdom descending to earth to walk among humans in the form of the Mosaic Torah, so in 1 Enoch Lady Wisdom descends to walk upon the same earth in the form of the three Parables of Enoch. This is a sort

of targumic reformulation of 1 Enoch 1:4, which itself is then restated and reformulated in 1:9, the latter verse being famously quoted in Jude 14:

4 The Holy Great One will come forth from His dwelling,  
And the eternal God will tread upon the earth, (even) on Mount Sinai,  
[And appear from His camp]  
And appear in the strength of His might from the heaven of heavens.  
9 And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones ....

According to the scenario in 1 Enoch 1, when God walks upon earth the wicked will be judged, but the righteous rewarded. According to chapter 5:8, which continues the same scene presented in chapter 1, “And then there shall be bestowed upon the elect wisdom, / And they shall all live ....” This “wisdom” is the hypostatic Lady Wisdom incarnated (that is, textually incarnated) in the form of the three Parables of Enoch, which/who, like the Mosaic Torah, bestows life, because she is the tree of life.

Enter now Joseph Smith’s story of Enoch’s end in Moses 7. We quote the passages most relevant for present purposes:

14 There also came up a land out of the depth of the sea, and so great was the fear of the enemies of the people of God, that they fled and stood afar off and went upon the land which came up out of the depth of the sea.

17 ... And the Lord blessed the land ....

18 And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.

19 And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION.

20 And it came to pass that Enoch talked with the Lord; and he said unto the Lord: Surely Zion shall dwell in safety forever. But the Lord said unto Enoch: Zion have I blessed, but the residue of the people have I cursed.

21 And it came to pass that the Lord showed unto Enoch all the inhabitants of the earth; and he beheld, and lo, Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Behold mine abode forever.

23 And after that Zion was taken up into heaven, Enoch beheld, and lo all the nations of the earth were before him;

24 And there came generation upon generation; and Enoch was high and lifted up, even in the bosom of the Father, and of the Son of Man;...

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

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

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

30 And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still; and yet thou art there, and thy bosom is there; and also thou art just; thou art merciful and kind forever;

31 And thou hast taken Zion to thine own bosom, from all thy creations, from all eternity to all eternity; and naught but peace, justice, and truth is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end; how is it thou canst weep?

47 And behold, Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh; and his soul rejoiced, saying: The Righteous is lifted up, and the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world; and through faith I am in the bosom of the Father, and behold, Zion is with me.

48 And it came to pass that Enoch looked upon the earth; and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof, saying: Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children ....

49 And when Enoch heard the earth mourn, he wept, and cried unto the Lord, saying: O Lord, wilt thou not have compassion upon the earth? Wilt thou not bless the children of Noah?

56 And he heard a loud voice; and the heavens were veiled; and all the creations of God mourned; and the earth groaned; and the rocks were rent; and the saints arose ....

58 And again Enoch wept and cried unto the Lord, saying: When shall the earth rest?

62 ... to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.

63 And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other;

64 And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest.

65 And it came to pass that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to dwell on the earth in righteousness for the space of a thousand years;

68 And all the days of Zion, in the days of Enoch, were three hundred and sixty-five years.

69 And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, ZION IS FLED.

We find the following congruences between these verses and the Jewish and Jewish-Christian sources discussed in the first part of this chapter: Although we would not press this particular parallel too far, nevertheless Moses 7:14's "There also came up a land out of the depth of the sea" does remind us structurally of 4 Ezra 13:3: "And I looked, and behold, this

wind made something like the figure of a man come up out of the heart of the sea. And I looked, and behold, that man flew with the clouds of heaven ....” To us there seems to be an intimate connection between verse 14’s and 17’s “land” and verse 18’s “people ZION.” Verse 18’s “they were of one heart and one mind” recalls Shepherd of Hermas Parable 9, 17(94):4, “they had one understanding and one mind, and one faith became theirs and [one] love,” and 18(95):4, “the Church of God shall be one body, one understanding, one mind, one faith, one love.”<sup>25</sup> Again, Moses 7:19’s “the people of God” strikes the reader as synonymous with the same verse’s “the City of Holiness, even ZION,” and verse 20 seems to create the same impression. In other words, by “city” the passage does not refer to streets, to stone or wood buildings, but to a group of people. This is congruent with Hermas’ tower that is constructed out of stones which symbolize human beings, in accord with, although not necessarily influenced by, 1 Peter 2:5’s “living stones ... built into a spiritual house...” a notion quite possibly influenced by Essenic thought.<sup>26</sup>

However, although the Moses 7 passage’s Zion possesses a communal character, such seems simultaneously inseparable from the above-documented individual celestial hypostasis called Lady Zion and Lady Wisdom, who is also the Holy Spirit and Shekhinah, all specializations of Asherah,<sup>27</sup> who is

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25 Although this is similar to language found in Ephesians, Hermas does not depend on Ephesians here, as is ably demonstrated by Joseph Verheyden, “The Shepherd of Hermas and the Writings that later formed the New Testament,” Andrew F. Gregory, Christopher Tuckett, eds., *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford/NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 293-329, and John Muddiman, “The Church in Ephesians, 2 Clement, and the Shepherd of Hermas,” Andrew F. Gregory, Christopher Tuckett, eds., *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford/NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 107-121, especially pp. 117-118.

26 See e.g., 1QS, the *Rule of the Community*, Col. VIII, 7-9.

27 For one particular Mormon exegete’s work who sees Asherah in the Book of Mormon, see Daniel C. Peterson, “Nephi and His Asherah,” *Journal*

but a vestige of the earlier indigenous Mother Earth, who has been transformed in a "citified" Ancient Near Eastern mode. Consequently, when we read in verse 21, "and lo, Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Behold mine abode forever," Zion's ascent may be compared to the ascent of Lady Wisdom in 1 Enoch 42:2: "Wisdom returned to her place, / And took her seat among the angels." In the Enochic Parables, just as Lady Wisdom ascends to heaven, so her masculine counterpart, the seventh antediluvian patriarch, ascends to heaven, as is so dramatically related in 1 Enoch 70-71. Such a dual ascent seems to us to be depicted in Moses 7:23-24:

23 And after that Zion was taken up into heaven,  
Enoch beheld, and lo, all the nations of the earth were  
before him;

24 And there came generation upon generation; and  
Enoch was high and lifted up, even in the bosom of the  
Father, and of the Son of Man ....

Significantly, after Enoch ascends to heaven in 1 Enoch 71, he is named "the Son of Man," the title we find in verse 24 cited above. Verse 24's "bosom of the Father" from a Syrian Jewish-Christian perspective would be the Holy Spirit (= Lady Wisdom) as celestial Mother and Spouse (cf. Odes of Solomon 19). Even in the Parables of Enoch Lady Wisdom ascends before the patriarch and scribe does, so that one might indeed think of his ascent as a delayed (temporally viewed) journey to Lady Wisdom in heaven. The Father's bosom as the maternal Holy Spirit in verse 24 would lend intelligibility to the mention of "the Holy Ghost" in verse 27. Interestingly, in verse 28 there begins an accentuation upon the divine sorrow and weeping,

which recalls the sorrowing Lady Zion of 4 Ezra, suggesting that in Moses 7 the weeping is being carried out by God in a feminine mode equivalent to Lady Zion. The femininity of this weeping would then be linked to the previous verse's "Holy Ghost," again the celestial Mother. Even though the Holy Ghost in Mormon tradition is thought of as being of the appearance of "a man," this could arguably be interpreted in a more inclusive sense of "human," and it is certainly the case that the divine Spirit appears at times in masculine mode and at other times in feminine mode in both Jewish and Jewish-Christian sources. Recall that for Hermas the Holy Spirit who is Lady Ecclesia is simultaneously the masculine "Son of God," and the latter is also the angel Michael according to Hermas, all of which lends weight to the authenticity of the tradition in the Coptic Cyril Gospel of the Hebrews citation which declares that the earthly Mary pre-existed in heaven as the angel Michael. We could thus compare the pair Enoch-Metatron with the dual Mary-Michael.

In verse 29 Enoch asks the Lord why he weeps, just as in 4 Ezra the prophet asks Lady Zion why she weeps. The Lord's weeping, as we have argued, is performed by God in feminine mode. This makes sense of verse 56's resurrection of saints, for the combination of the feminine maternal Spirit weeping and a subsequent resurrection suggests that in part the weeping occurs in the form of the groans of the resurrection-birth (recall that resurrection is called a birth in both Acts 13:33 and Revelation 12:2 and 5). This recalls Romans 8, where alluding to the general resurrection Paul speaks of the divine Spirit in the feminine mode of a mother in the pains of birth. Romans 8:22 refers to the groaning and travail of the creation (which would encompass both the heavens and the earth, with which we may compare Moses 7:56's "*the heavens* were veiled; and all the creations of God mourned; and *the earth* groaned"); in Romans 8:26, the Spirit groans in travail. Obviously Paul here

is thinking of the Holy Spirit as an expectant mother, and he presupposes the traditional notion of Mother Earth in verse 22 and holds her to be a symbol of the divine Mother, the Holy Spirit.

Moses 7:30's "thy bosom is there; and *also* thou art just; thou art merciful and kind forever" is of interest as well. The divine bosom is the source, not of God's justice (cf. "also thou art just"), but of God's mercy and kindness. Verse 30 links together God's "bosom" — which word (*kolpos*) in John 1:18 means "womb" — together with the trope "thou art merciful and kind." This gives us an intriguing parallel to the Islamic *basmala*, that is, *bi smi llāhi l-raḥmāni l-raḥīm(i)*: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate," which could just as well be rendered, "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Kind." The two divine names *al-raḥmān* and *al-raḥīm*, the Merciful and the Compassionate, are both derived from the Arabic word for "womb," *raḥm* (the same holds true for their Hebrew cognates),<sup>28</sup> which may also be rendered "bosom" if we wish to employ older English parlance. Enoch's proclamation in verse 47, "through faith I am in the bosom of the Father, and behold, Zion is with me," indicates an equivalency, even theological identification, between the Father's bosom and Zion. In verse 48, the earth weeps (cf. 4 Ezra 10:9, "Now ask the earth, and she will tell you that it is she who ought to mourn"), and she is called "the mother of men," which accords with Lady Zion's description in 4 Ezra 10:7 as "the mother of us all" who is in mourning. In verse 56 the personified Earth groans and the saints are raised, which brings us back to Romans 8. Here it

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28 We discuss these divine names and their etymology in Samuel Zinner, *The Praeparatio Islamica: An Historical Reconstruction, with Philological-Exegetical Commentary on Selected Qur'ānic Āyāt Based on Ancient Hebrew, Syro-Aramaic, Mandaic, Samaritan and Hellenistic Literatures* (London: Matheson Trust, forthcoming).

would be instructive to quote Tecumseh: “The sun is my father and the earth is my mother. On her bosom I will rest.”<sup>29</sup>

Verse 62 speaks of “a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City ... there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.” According to verse 63, God’s people referred to in verse 62 as “my people” will be met by Enoch and Enoch’s “city,” which in the context, we would argue again, is meant in the sense of people, not of crass stone or wood buildings or of city streets. Verse 64 again seems to establish a synonymy between Mother Earth and Lady Zion: “And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion and ... the earth shall rest.” The preceding verse 63 seems to describe a union between the earthly and the heavenly saints who are both merged into the divine “bosom” or womb, which, as we have argued, alludes on various levels to the Holy Spirit, Lady Zion, and Lady Wisdom. This all recalls the Parables of Enoch’s trope of the intimate union that subsists between the individual Chosen One, who is the Son of Man, and the plural chosen ones. In 1 Enoch 71:16 the Son of Man and his followers are clearly all joined together in some mystical mode:

And all shall walk in his ways since righteousness  
never forsaketh him:  
With him will be their dwelling-places, and with him  
their heritage,  
And they shall not be separated from him for ever and  
ever and ever.

This scenario of a virtual mystical union between God, the Son of Man, and the latter’s followers is anticipated already in the third Parable in 1 Enoch 62:

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29 James Mooney, *The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890. Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology. Part 2* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896), p. 721.

14 And the Lord of Spirits will abide over them,<sup>30</sup>  
 And with that Son of Man shall they eat  
 And lie down and rise up for ever and ever.

To appropriate Hermas' terminology, not only are Enoch's people "one body, one understanding, one mind, one faith, one love," but Enoch and his people constitute an inseparable mystical unity, a single spiritual organism or entity which can be described by the mytheme of the Pauline dogma of the church as body and Christ as head of that same body. There can be only a single individual in such a case, which is far more profound a unity than the one denoted by a mere grammatical collective singular. This mystical union between Enoch's people called "Zion" and the patriarch himself is powerfully intimated by verse 68: "And all the days of Zion, in the days of Enoch, were three hundred and sixty-five years." The concluding verse 69 is especially rich: "And Enoch and all his people walked with God," that is, as a single mystical organism, "and he dwelt in the midst of Zion;" — this could mean both that Enoch dwelt in the midst of his people (which would be impossible to avoid given the corporate mystical union between them) and that Enoch was united with the Lady Wisdom of 1 Enoch 42, which may be equivalent to the hypostatic Righteousness of 1 Enoch 71:14, "And righteousness abides over him," and 16, "righteousness never forsaketh him," since 1 Enoch 48:1 establishes the synonymy of wisdom and righteousness: "And in that place I saw the fountain of righteousness / Which was inexhaustible: / And around it were many fountains of wisdom ...." This should be understood as follows: "And in that place I saw the fountain that belongs to Lady Righteousness / Which was inexhaustible: / And around it were many fountains that belong to Lady Wisdom "

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30 Cf. "shall abide over them" with 1 Enoch 71:14, "And righteousness abides over him."

Moses 7:69 concludes, “and it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, ZION IS FLED.” Clearly, from the context of the entire chapter “Zion” denotes the people of Enoch, so that Zion being received into the divine bosom or womb does not refer to any city buildings, streets, etc., but to the Enochic saints who are virtual hypostases of Enoch. Enoch and his people form a single mystical person. This would seem to be both presupposed and confirmed by the statement, “ZION IS FLED,” for this implies not that one individual named Enoch vanished together with a second and separate collectivity of his followers, but that only a single entity ascended to heaven, whom we may designate ENOCH-ZION, or perhaps even as a single word, ENOCHZION. With the fleeing or disappearance of Zion, we may compare 4 Ezra 10:27, where the weeping woman, who is really Mother Jerusalem, vanishes and becomes a city: “And I looked, and behold, the woman was no longer visible to me, but there was an established city.”

We believe that the general thrust of our exegesis can be strengthened by the famous vision of the tree of life in 1 Nephi 11:

8 And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me: Look! And I looked and beheld a tree; and it was like unto the tree which my father had seen; and the beauty thereof was far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow.

9 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.

10 And he said unto me: What desirest thou?

11 And I said unto him: To know the interpretation thereof — for I spake unto him as a man speaketh; for I beheld that he was in the form of a man; yet nevertheless, I knew that it was the Spirit of the Lord; and he spake unto me as a man speaketh with another.

12 And it came to pass that he said unto me: Look! And I looked as if to look upon him, and I saw him not; for he had gone from before my presence.

13 And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, and also other cities. And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white.

14 And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me; and he said unto me: Nephi, what beholdest thou?

15 And I said unto him: A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins.

16 And he said unto me: Knowest thou the condescension of God?

17 And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things.

18 And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh.

19 And it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time the angel spake unto me, saying: Look!

20 And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms.

21 And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?

22 And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things.

25 ... and I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God.

26 And the angel said unto me again: Look and behold the condescension of God!

27 And I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world, of whom my father had spoken; and I also beheld the prophet who should prepare the way before him. And the Lamb of God went forth and was baptized of him; and after he was baptized, I beheld the heavens open, and the Holy Ghost come down out of heaven and abide upon him in the form of a dove.

Before commenting on these verses, we would like to cite verse 1 of the same text:

For it came to pass after I had desired to know the things that my father had seen, and believing that the Lord was able to make them known unto me, as I sat pondering in mine heart I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceedingly high mountain, which I never had before seen, and upon which I never had before set my foot.

This is quite close to the situation we find at the beginning of the Shepherd of Hermas:

... as I walked I fell asleep. And a Spirit took me, and bore me away through a pathless tract, through which no man could pass: for the place was precipitous, and broken into clefts by reason of the waters. When then I had crossed the river, I came into the level country.

Nephi's request for an interpretation of the tree of life goes unanswered in any direct mode via speech from an angel or the Spirit. But clearly verse 13 forcefully denotes that the tree has many specializations or hypostases that are theologically equivalent to said tree. Among them are verse 13's "great city of Jerusalem," which is easily equivalent to Moses 7's Lady Zion, "the city of Nazareth," which can be called Lady Nazareth (there is no rule that tells us only Zion or Jerusalem can be a celestial Lady), and the Virgin Mary. This implies a theological and hypostatic equivalency and continuity between the tree of life, Lady Jerusalem, Lady Nazareth, and the Virgin Mary. These are all ultimately specializations or refractions of Asherah, a dim reflection of the earlier indigenous Mother Earth. We know that the Gospel of the Hebrews apparently portrayed the Virgin Mary as the Holy Spirit or at least as the latter's celestial counterpart or spiritual double/twin, given that Jesus there speaks of "my mother, the Holy Spirit," and indeed verses 18 and 19 of the Nephi tree of life vision refer to Mary and the Spirit respectively. Verses 22 and 25 explain that the tree is the love of God, which is congruent with the feminine imagery that enframes the vision and its interpretation.

The vision concludes in verse 27 with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism in the form of a dove, which harks back to Jewish exegesis that sees in the "Spirit of God" of Genesis 1:2 a divine mother bird hovering over the waters of chaos (an image mirrored in the opening scenes of the indigenous

Finnish *Kalevala*). The diction of verse 27 here is suggestive, “I beheld the heavens open, and the Holy Ghost come down out of heaven and abide upon him in the form of a dove,” because this accords well with 1 Enoch 71:14’s statement about the glorified Enoch, the Son of Man: “And righteousness abides over him.” Again, this is likely a hypostatic Righteousness, none other than Lady Wisdom who is the Holy Spirit. Thus we come full circle.

We should mention that 4 Ezra 2 combines the images and themes of the divine mother, Mother Jerusalem, and the tree of life both as a single tree and as twelve trees:

12 The tree of life shall give them fragrant perfume,  
and they shall neither toil nor become weary.

17 Do not fear, mother of sons, for I have chosen you,  
says the Lord.

18 I will send you help, my servants Isaiah and Jeremiah.  
According to their counsel I have consecrated and  
prepared for you twelve trees loaded with various  
fruits,

19 and the same number of springs flowing with milk  
and honey, and seven mighty mountains on which  
roses and lilies grow; by these I will fill your children  
with joy.

With this we may compare the twelve mountains of Hermas Parable 9 and the six mountains of 1 Enoch 52, the latter being partly inspired by the seven mountains of 1 Enoch 17-19 and 24-26. Especially relevant is 1 Enoch 24:4:

And the seventh mountain was in the midst of these,  
and it excelled them in height, resembling the seat of  
a throne: and fragrant trees encircled the throne. And  
amongst them was a tree such as I had never yet smelt,

neither was any amongst them nor were others like it: it had a fragrance beyond all fragrance, and its leaves and blooms and wood wither not for ever.

This has shaped Hermas Parable 8's tree upon a mountain, and this tree, which is obviously the tree of life, is identified in good Jacobean (Jamesian) fashion as both the Torah ("law") and as the Son of God, that is, the tree of life is both the feminine Lady Torah or Wisdom and the masculine Son of God, in general accord with Hermas' overall androgynous theology:

1(67):1 He showed me a [great] willow, overshadowing plains and mountains, and under the shadow of the willow all have come who are called by the name of the Lord.

3(69):2 "Listen," saith he; "this great tree which overshadows plains and mountains and all the earth is the law of God which was given to the whole world; and this law is the Son of Cod preached unto the ends of the earth. But the people that are under the shadow are they that have heard the preaching, and believed on Him."

This same androgynous model surfaces in 2 Clement 14,<sup>31</sup> a passage obviously cognate with the theology of Hermas:

Wherefore, brethren, if we do the will of God our Father, we shall be of the first Church, which is spiritual, which was created before the sun and the moon And I do not suppose ye are ignorant that the living Church is *the*

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31 Going against the grain of general scholarship, Karl Paul Donfried, *The Setting of Second Clement in Early Christianity* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974) presents good evidence to conclude that 2 Clement is a first-century CE work from Corinth that dates to a time soon after 1 Clement.

*body of Christ*: for the scripture saith, *God made man, male and female*. The male is Christ and the female is the Church. And the Books and the Apostles plainly declare that the Church existeth not now for the first time, but hath been from the beginning: for she was spiritual, as our Jesus also was spiritual, but was manifested in the last days that He might save us.<sup>32</sup>

Theodore A. Bergren translates the last statement more accurately as “that *she* might save us.”<sup>33</sup> Part of the eschatological salvation effected by Lady Ecclesia comes in the form of Mother Jerusalem’s children’s alleviation from toil and weariness spoken of in the lately quoted 4 Ezra 2:12, as well as verse 18’s “help” and verse 19’s “milk and honey” and “joy.” All of these constitute elements of the eschatological “comfort” promised Lady Zion and her children throughout Isaiah, as documented in this chapter’s first section. This comfort is personified in the maternal entity known as the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, in John chapters 14-16. Although the trope of comfort is lacking in the Parables of Enoch, cognate themes are noticeable there, namely, that of “rest” and “peace,” as we see in 53:7, “And the righteous shall have rest” and 45:6, “For I have provided and satisfied with peace My righteous ones / And have caused them to dwell before Me.”

It is not impossible that Joseph Smith may have known the Parables of Enoch, since Richard Laurence’s English version of 1 Enoch was published in 1821, a version of which was published in America in 1828.<sup>34</sup> However, it is not necessary

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32 Lightfoot version.

33 See Theodore A. Bergren, “Mother Jerusalem, Mother Church: Desolation and Restoration in Early Jewish and Christian Literature,” in Esther G. Chazon, David Satran and Ruth A. Clements, eds., *Things Revealed: Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in Honor of Michael E. Stone* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 243-259, specifically p. 257; emphasis added.

34 For one Mormon’s view on this question, see the extremely interesting and intriguing comments (especially those regarding Matthew Black) in Jeffrey

to resolve such an historical question (on which we do not claim to be an expert, and which we therefore consider an open question) in order to appreciate Moses 7 and the Nephi vision of the tree of life as integral texts within themselves and in the form in which they have been transmitted. In any case, from the perspective of Christian theology, Jesus' acquaintance with the historical Tanakh does not detract from the genius of his teachings that are based upon and inspired by his reading of the Torah scroll, for example. In the end, perhaps history is not as important as the sacred kingdom of the symbol and of the imaginal, to invoke a term coined by Henry Corbin.<sup>35</sup> This of course is not to say that history doesn't matter, but it is to put the larger picture of things into a clearer perspective, and indeed the imaginal (which is by no means a pejorative term and which does not denote the valence "fictive") and the perspectival overlap significantly. In any case, it might prove fruitful to apply to Joseph Smith's modern-era Enoch writings Michael Stone's model whereby he posits that at least some ancient post-canonical literature (especially a work like 4 Ezra) may have been created under the impact of visionary experiences rather than having been authored exclusively by imitating previous literary works.<sup>36</sup>

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M. Bradshaw, "Sorting Out the Sources of Scripture," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 9 (2014): pp. 215-272, especially pp. 254-257. We thank the author for supplying us with a copy of his essay. For a contrary view, see Salvatore Cirillo, *Joseph Smith, Mormonism and Enochic Tradition* (2010). Durham theses, Durham University: <<http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/236/>>. Accessed 9 June 2014.

35 Cf. as well Paul's Middle Platonic dictum, "for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

36 See the chapter, "Apocalyptic — Vision or Hallucination?" in Michael E. Stone, *Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha* (Leiden: Brill 1991), pp. 419-428. See also the following work fundamentally influenced by Stone's thesis in this regard, Angela Kim Harkins, *Reading with an "I" to the Heavens: Looking at the Qumran Hodayot through the Lens of Visionary Traditions* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012).

Moses 7:30 refers to “millions of earths like this,” and verse 31 speaks of “all thy creations.” This reminds us of the holy Zohar I:5a which teaches that each time the Torah is interpreted in an esoteric sense, that interpretation ascends in the form of a feminine hypostatic word to God and 70,000 new worlds are created from the interpretation that (or more precisely, “who”) has ascended. The Derridean trope of text as world (cf. the notion of “there is nothing outside text”) in this manner receives a fresh and startling layer of meaning. For the Zohar, all heavens and all earths are exegetical worlds that spring into being through the interpreted word. (In modern physics terms we would say that the cosmos, “its,” consists of information, “bits”). This is eminently compatible with the rabbinic tradition which holds that God created the world by reading the Torah, a notion ultimately based on Proverbs 8’s record of Lady Wisdom, who as the hypostatic Torah can be called Lady Torah, who assisted God in creation, effected by God’s spoken word of command, “Let there be!”

To create is to build, to construct, to arrange, to put in order, or in Genesis terms, to bring order out of chaos. Enoch *builds* a city who is Lady Zion, but Lady Zion is not other than Lady Wisdom who is Lady Torah. On one level we could posit that Enoch therefore builds by means of Lady Torah, just as God creates via her (a refraction of Genesis’ account of creation being effected through the spoken word). However, on a deeper level, and one more congruent with Jewish tradition, we can say that Enoch builds Lady Torah herself, that is, he composes his trifold Parables which constitute the Enochic hypostatic (oral) Torah.<sup>37</sup> To *build* the “city of holiness,” which may be seen as a cipher for “Spirit of holiness” (the Holy Spirit), is to *write* and to *interpret* the text of Lady Torah. This agrees with tradition’s portrayal of Enoch as the “scribe” of righteousness.

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37 We may perhaps compare the *three* Parables of Enoch with the later threefold division of the Tanakh, namely, Torah, Nevi’im, and Ketuvim.

Contextually read, the Gospel of Thomas logion 32 portrays the act of interpretation (here specifically of Jesus' secret words, based on Jesus' distinctive interpretation of the Torah) as a city (no doubt Jerusalem, that is, hypostatic Lady or Mother Jerusalem) being built on a high mountain, and this exegetical city cannot be hidden, which alludes to Thomas' trope of the meaning of Jesus' secret words being manifestly or openly revealed: "Jesus said: 'A city that is being built upon a lofty mountain and being strengthened cannot fall, neither can she be hidden.'" This is immediately followed in logion 33, which insists on not hiding the light but *preaching* or *proclaiming* it. Logion 32's city on a lofty mountain immediately calls to mind 1 Enoch 87:3, "And those three that had last come forth grasped me by my hand and took me up, away from the generations of the earth, and raised me up to a lofty place, and showed me a tower raised high above the earth, and all the hills were lower," and 89:50, "a tower lofty and great was built on the house for the Lord of the sheep, and that house was low, but the tower was elevated and lofty, and the Lord of the sheep stood on that tower."

The one who finds the meaning of Jesus' secret sayings must proclaim or make known their explanation. In logion 56 finding the meaning of Jesus' secret words is likened to finding a corpse. This in part harks back to the model we find in 4 Ezra 10, where the scribe is troubled and becomes like a corpse before finding the interpretation and meaning of secrets:

30 and behold, I lay there like a corpse and I was deprived of my understanding.<sup>38</sup> Then he grasped my right hand and strengthened me and set me on my feet, and said to me,

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38 This is inspired by Daniel's being troubled (Daniel 2:1, 3; 7:15, 28) and his sick prostration (8:27). Thomas' being troubled (logion 2) as a stage of knowledge has nothing to do with Greek philosophy, but is purely Danielic and Ezran in origin.

31 “What is the matter with you? And why are you troubled? And why are your understanding and the thoughts of your mind troubled?”

38 He answered me and said, “Listen to me and I will inform you, and tell you about the things which you fear, for the Most High has revealed many secrets to you.”

In zoharic terms, Enoch can be said to build the Knesset Israel, the Assembly of Israel. In the Zohar, the Knesset Israel is simultaneously both the individual celestial Shekhinah, the divine feminine, and the earthly community of Jews. This is deeply similar to Paul’s model of the mystical union that subsists between Christ and the Church, which is no doubt based in part on ancient Jewish esoteric notions. It is as if the people of Israel are the earthly embodiment (or incarnation) of the Holy Spirit, Shekhinah, just as Enoch together with his followers, “the chosen ones,” constitute a single mystical organism according to the Parables of Enoch. As we have seen, in the Parables, Enoch is similarly inseparable from Lady Wisdom; her ascent in 1 Enoch 42 and the patriarch’s ascent in chapters 70-71 are but two sides of a single exegetical coin or mythologoumenon.

According to Genesis 4:17 Enoch the son of Cain “built a city,” which Genesis sees as a sign of human decadence. This Enoch was the father of Irad (עירד). This stands in contrast to Enoch son of Jared (ירד) who “walked with God and was not, for God took him,” according to Genesis 5:24. It seems as if the rabbis sensed some sort of hidden connection between these two Enochs, and this may help explain some of the rabbinic reticence when it came to the figure of Enoch. To build a city and to write a text are both signs of the city life that the Genesis author sees as a betrayal of the original divine ideal for humans. 1 Enoch 69:9-10 ascribes the invention of writing to the fallen

Watcher Penemue: "And he instructed mankind in writing with ink and paper, and thereby many sinned from eternity to eternity and until this day. For men were not created for such a purpose, to give confirmation to their good faith with pen and ink." (Ironically, according to Islamic tradition, it was Enoch who invented writing). Incidentally, this might indicate that the Parables of Enoch, of which 1 Enoch 69 forms a part, were originally composed and used strictly as oral texts intended for liturgical use, as Nickelsburg suggests.<sup>39</sup>

We would propose that such ambivalent feelings about the invention of writing in part explains the negative imagery of the "corpse" in both 4 Ezra 10 (and its Danielic inspirations) and the Thomas gospel involved in the act of textual interpretation. Scrolls (including those for the Torah) were made out of the hides of animal corpses. In contrast to this, the original Lady Wisdom was instantiated in the form of a *living* tree, namely, the tree of life. Glaringly, the Second Temple is of no concern to the author/s of the Parables of Enoch, and the Apocalypse of Weeks avoids direct mention of it, but 1 Enoch 91:11 seems to allude to it, but only as a "foundation of violence" and "structure of deceit."<sup>40</sup> Perhaps in part this reflects a nostalgia for the days of the original mobile tabernacle in the desert, which is more compatible with humanity's hunter and gatherer origins, which was replaced later by the sedentary temple, necessarily in a context of civilization (i.e., citification), which Genesis implies is a betrayal of the more nomadic and simple or local pastoral mode of life envisaged as the original divine ideal for humanity. In this connection it is worth recalling that Moses 7:62 specifically speaks of a tabernacle, not of a temple:

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39 See George W. E. Nickelsburg; James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch*, Chapters 37-82, pp. 37-38.

40 See George W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Temple according to 1 Enoch," <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8knRHDarss>>. Accessed 8 June 2014. However, "foundation" and "structure" may also allude to the activities of scriptural exegesis.

“a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City ... there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.”

Enoch, the masculine counterpart of the feminine Lady Wisdom, lived “at the ends of the earth” (1 Enoch 106:8), away from civilization. He is like the Lady Wisdom of 1 Enoch 42:2: “Wisdom went forth to make her dwelling among the children of men, /And found no dwelling-place.” Where do Enoch and Lady Wisdom find their dwelling-place? The answer may be found in 1 Enoch 39:7, which says of the Chosen One: “I saw his dwelling-place under the wings of the Lord of Spirits.” At the ends of the earth Enoch lives closer to the animals than to humans, which is to say he abides with the angels (cf. 1 Enoch 42:2, according to which Lady Wisdom has “her place” and “seat among the angels”), who are called “animals” both throughout Ezekiel 1 (*hayot*) and in Mark 1:13 (*thērion*).<sup>41</sup> The most prominent anatomical animal aspect of the angels is of course their bird wings (see 1 Enoch 61:1 where the angels “took to themselves wings and flew”). When the Lord of Spirits is pictured as having wings in 1 Enoch 39:7, this should be taken seriously and in an indigenous sense, and must not be vitiated by positing any purely “symbolic,” “metaphorical,” or “poetic” valence. In this context we are reminded of an Arapaho Ghost Dance song, on which note we will bring our Enochic observations to an end:

My father, my father —  
 I am looking at him,  
 I am looking at him.  
 He is beginning to turn into a bird,  
 He is beginning to turn into a bird.<sup>42</sup>

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41 On Mark 1:13's animals as angels, see Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), p. 211.

42 James Mooney, *The Ghost Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, p. 973.

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