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AN EXHORTATION TO STUDY GOD’S TWO “BOOKS”

Daniel C. Peterson

From the birth of modern science at the end of the sixteenth century, Galileo famously believed that God had written two books — the scriptures and the Book of Nature. The scriptures, he contended, should be interpreted by scholars and theologians, whereas the Book of Nature was the province of scientists:

Philosophy [by which he intended nature, or natural philosophy, or what we today would call science] is written in that great book which ever lies before our eyes — I mean the universe — but we cannot understand it if we do not first learn the language and grasp the symbols, in which it is written. This book is written in the mathematical language, and the symbols are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures, without whose help it is impossible to comprehend a single word of it; without which one wanders in vain through a dark labyrinth.¹

At the cutting edge, of course, he’s right. There is certainly a unique role in the study of scripture for the special expertise of those who have mastered the relevant history and archaeology and acquired the relevant languages, just as there is an irreplaceable role, in the study of the natural world, for those who have devoted years to learning advanced mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology.

1 Galileo Galilei, *Opere Complete di G. Gl*, 15 vols., Firenze, 1842, ff, as quoted in E.A. Burt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003), 75.

But the scriptures suggest that ordinary people, non-specialists, can also profitably devote their attention to both written revelation and the “book” or revelation potentially provided by the natural world that surrounds us all — and that they should, in fact, do so.

I’ve recently been reading, with intense interest, a stimulating book by the Protestant theologian Robert K. Johnston, entitled *God’s Wider Presence: Reconsidering General Revelation*.² (I expect that I’ll mention this thought-provoking volume in a number of things that I intend to write over the next year or so.)

Professor Johnston points to Psalm 19 as one of the biblical texts that suggest the possibility of learning about God from sources beyond the written canon of scripture. Here is how that psalm reads in the King James Version of the Bible:

- 1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.
- 2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
- 3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.
- 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,
- 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.
- 6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.
- 7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
- 8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the

2 Robert K. Johnston, *God’s Wider Presence: Reconsidering General Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014). My debt in this brief essay to Professor Johnston’s discussion is fundamental.

heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure,
enlightening the eyes.

9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever:
the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous
altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than
much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the
honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in
keeping of them there is great reward.

12 Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me
from secret faults.

13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous
sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall
I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great
transgression.

14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation
of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my
strength, and my redeemer.

“Most commentators consider vv. 1–6 and 7–14 of Psalm 19 originally to have been two independent psalms,” writes Willem Prinsloo, but “at present the psalm is viewed as forming a cohesive and meaningful unit.”³ “The justification for joining the two poems,” writes John W. Baigent,

would seem to be that both deal with the revelation of
the divine nature: the character of God is to be seen
not only in the pages of Scripture but also in the book

3 Willem S. Prinsloo, “The Psalms,” in James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, eds., *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2003), 379. Compare F. F. Bruce, ed., *The International Bible Commentary* (Basingstoke and Grand Rapids: Marshall Pickering/Zondervan, 1986): 569; Reginald C. Fuller, Leonard Johnston, and Conleth Kearns, eds., *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (Nashville and New York: Thomas Nelson, 1975), 448; Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, eds. *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 1:579; James L. Mays, ed., *Harper's Bible Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 443.

of Nature. As B[ernard]. Ramm says, ‘If the Author of Nature and Scripture are the same God, then the two books of God must eventually recite the same story.’⁴

“The entire psalm,” comments Carroll Stuhlmueller, “holds together primarily through the image of splendid light across the universe and within the law.”⁵ In other words, both nature and scripture — or, perhaps better, both nature and direct divine communication — are or can be sources of revelation from and about God.

I want to examine Psalm 19 briefly here. To do so, I choose the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible for the sake of improved clarity, and, breaking the psalm into the two parts that, as I’ve noted above, were almost certainly composed separately, I treat those parts in reverse order.

The author of the second portion of the psalm praises the revealed scripture given to Israel:

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. (19:7–11)

Throughout the original Hebrew of these five verses, he uses the specifically Israelite name *Yahweh* (or *Jehovah*, typically translated as *Lord*) to refer to God.⁶ This is fitting, since he is

4 John W. Baigent and Leslie C. Allen, “The Psalms,” in Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary*, 569. Baigent is citing Bernard Ramm’s 1964 book *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*.

5 Carroll Stuhlmueller, “Psalms,” in Mays, *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, 442–443.

6 In the ancient Greek Septuagint translation of the psalm, these occurrences of *Yahweh* are rendered by *kurios*, or “Lord.”

writing about the scriptural revelation given specifically and uniquely to Israel.

Now, though, we turn to the first six verses of the psalm as it exists today:

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. (19:1-2)

This passage contains the only occurrence of a divine title in the six verses of the other component part of today's Psalm 19. And it isn't *Yahweh*. Instead, it's *El* — a more general title for God, with related synonyms commonly appearing across the languages of the ancient Semitic world (and continuing, today, in the Arabic *Allah*).⁷ This, too, is appropriate, since, in alluding to a kind of revelation conveyed by nature, which is equally available and accessible to all of humankind around the world ("that great book which ever is before our eyes," as Galileo put it), the writer of these verses is speaking about a universal divine disclosure to people beyond the confines of Israel.

There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. (19:3-4)

The revelation available in nature, in other words, is a different kind of revelation than that embodied in the scriptures — precisely because, as a matter of fact, it doesn't *use* words. Yet it conveys an important message, or complex of messages. Robert Johnston uses an image from the late poet and novelist John Updike — who was (somewhat surprisingly, given the topics he often addressed) a devout Christian who wouldn't have minded being used for such a purpose — to explain this: The revelation of nature, Johnston says, comes as "supernatural

7 The Septuagint has *theos*.

mail,” bearing “the signature: decisive but illegible” of the divine.⁸

Of course, the “signature” may be “decisive” only to those equipped with eyes to see. “To the sensitive,” the British biblical scholar Peter Craigie wrote regarding this psalm,

the heavenly praise of God’s glory may be an overwhelming experience, whereas to the insensitive, sky is simply sky and stars only stars; they point to nothing beyond. ... Indeed, there is more than a suggestion that the reflection of God’s praise in the universe is perceptible only to those already sensitive to God’s revelation and purpose.⁹

I’m not sure, personally, where Professor Craigie detected that “more than a suggestion” in the text of Psalm 19. I find nothing of the sort. But I don’t disagree with Craigie’s fundamental point. It’s entirely possible to watch a sunset without seeing in it a sign of transcendence and a hint of the divine. Many millions of people plainly do that every day. What religious believers regard as a miracle, committed unbelievers can and do reject as the result of merely natural factors.¹⁰ And, more directly to the point, unbelievers commonly dismiss the revelations recorded in scripture as merely human creations.

Clearly, though, the compiler of Psalm 19 as we have it today wanted his hearers and readers to understand that both scripture and the world as a whole can convey important divine understanding to those prepared to look and listen. In fact,

8 Johnston, *God’s Wider Presence*, 67, is citing John Updike, “Packed Dirt, Churchgoing, A Dying Cat, A Traded Car,” in *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories* (New York: Random House/Fawcett, 1963).

9 Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 181. Craigie was a superb scholar who taught for most of his career in Canada; I still remember very clearly reading the news of his tragic death — far too young, at the age of forty-seven — in a 1985 automobile accident.

10 The differing explanations given by Moroni and Zerahemnah in Alma 44:1–10 for the former’s defeat of the latter provide a clear example of this very common phenomenon.

the final three verses of this component of the psalm offer an example of what an observer of nature can come to understand:

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat. (19:4–6)

The religions of many of Israel's neighbors regarded the sun as a god and sometimes as the chief god of their respective divine hierarchies. The sun was venerated under such names as *Shamash* (in the Akkadian, Assyrian, and Babylonian pantheons; compare the modern Hebrew and Arabic equivalents of English *sun*, *shemesh* and *shams*), *Ra* or *Re*, and, during the fourteenth-century-BC monotheistic reform of the pharaoh Akhenaten, *Aten*. In these verses, however, it is El who has set up a tent in the heavens, and appointed a course, for the sun, whose obedience to the divine decree offers yet another reason, in the psalmist's view, for venerating the true God.¹¹

Psalm 19 ends with a kind of three-verse personal application. Even, or perhaps especially, in the face of the two great sources of revelation that he's now identified, the psalmist/editor acknowledges his own incapacity, and that of humans more generally, and implores divine assistance to overcome it.

But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. (19:12–14)

¹¹ Likewise, the creation of sun and moon narrated in Genesis 1 would probably have been read by ancient residents of the Near East as, among other things, an implicit statement of their subordinate and non-divine character.

Robert Johnston's reading of these final verses of Psalm 19 is perceptive. "Uniting in one paean of praise two types of revelation that otherwise might seem distinct," he observes,

and grounding each on its own solid footing, the psalmist ends with a prayer that recognizes both his own inadequacy and the mystery of God that remains. He hopes his words and his murmurings (two responses paralleling the two kinds of revelation he has experienced) will be acceptable to God (v. 14), who remains beyond him.¹²

We who are actively engaged in the work of The Interpreter Foundation understand that God remains far beyond any human efforts to do theology and to understand scripture, just as he transcends human efforts to build shrines to him by stacking bricks, boards, and stone. "Will God indeed dwell on the earth?" asked Solomon at the dedication of the temple that he had built. And, with becoming humility, he answered his own question: "Behold," he said, "the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?"¹³

But the building of temples is obedience to God. And fallible human scholarship is part of an overall attempt to "serve him with all [our] heart, might, mind and strength."¹⁴ We don't confuse it with religion; it doesn't supplant whole-souled discipleship. But it can be, and we hope that it will be, part of an acceptable offering unto God.

Daniel C. Peterson (Ph.D., University of California at Los Angeles) is a professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University and is the founder of the University's Middle Eastern Texts Initiative, for which he served as editor-in-chief until mid-August 2013. He has published and spoken extensively

¹² Johnston, *God's Wider Presence*, 67.

¹³ 1 Kings 8:27.

¹⁴ Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.

on both Islamic and Mormon subjects. Formerly chairman of the board of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) and an officer, editor, and author for its successor organization, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, his professional work as an Arabist focuses on the Qur'an and on Islamic philosophical theology. He is the author, among other things, of a biography entitled Muhammad: Prophet of God (Eerdmans, 2007).

TYNDALE VERSUS MORE IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Royal Skousen

In 1526 William Tyndale's English-language *The New Testament* started showing up in England, printed in the Low Lands and smuggled into England because it was an illegal book. It represented an unapproved translation of the scriptures into the English language. In theory, a translation would have been allowed if the Church had approved it in advance. In reality, the Church was not interested in any translation of the scriptures since that would allow lay readers to interpret the scriptures on their own and to come to different conclusions regarding Church practices and doctrine. Moreover, scripture formed a fundamental role in the rise of the Protestant Reformation and, in particular, Lutheranism, which King Henry VIII had officially opposed, in the governing of his realm and in his own writings in defense of the Catholic Church (for which the Church had honored him with the title of Defender of the Faith).

Tyndale's translation was vigorously attacked by Sir Thomas More, the King's minister and counselor (and later chancellor), in his *Dialogue*, published in 1528. (Today this work of More's is generally referred to as *Dialogue concerning Heresies*, but that was not its original title.) More not only attacked Tyndale for his supposed Lutheranism but also for how he had translated the Greek original into English in his 1526 New Testament. In part III, section 8 of *Dialogue*, More argues against Tyndale's 1526 translations of *ecclesia* as 'congregation', *presbyteros* as 'senior', and *agape* as 'love'. Near the end of this section, More also mentions his disapproval of Tyndale referring to 'penance' as 'repentance'. In his later translation of the New Testament

(1534), Tyndale adopted ‘elder’ for *presbyteros*, which More had nonetheless ridiculed in his *Dialogue*, giving the argument that “elders” in the New Testament were not necessarily old. In More’s view, these “elders” were priests, even though the Latin word in the Vulgate was either the Greek loanword *presbyter* or the Latin *senior*. In all these cases, the New Testament never used the Greek or Latin word for ‘priest’ (*hieros* or *sacerdos*). And the argument over ‘penance’ later became one of whether the Greek verb for ‘repent’, *metanoeo*, should be translated as ‘repent’ or as the more Catholic ‘do penance’, from the Vulgate (*paenitentiam ago*).

The Protestant Reformation adopted much of Tyndale’s terminology, as in, for instance, the names of churches: the Presbyterian Church in Scotland and the Congregational Church in New England. This tradition continues in the use of synonyms for *congregation* in church names, such as “the Assembly of God” and “the Community of Christ”. Throughout the 1500s and early 1600s, we can see a tug of war over which of all these debated terms would end up in the English Bible. By the time we get to the 1611 King James Bible (KJB), the translation issues that Thomas More viciously attacked William Tyndale over were settled as follows: (1) *love* is used throughout except in the latter part of the New Testament where *charity* is sometimes used in place of *love*, chiefly in the letters of Paul; (2) *church* is used for both the general organization and the individual congregation, with the reader determining which meaning is meant in any given passage; (3) *elder* is used for the church office, not *priest*; and (4) *repent* is used throughout, never the Catholic *do penance*.

In reviewing these decisions in the King James Bible, we can see that some deference is paid to More in the epistles with the use of *charity* rather than *love* in certain phrases (thus “faith hope charity” in 1 Corinthians 13:13), otherwise the New Testament word is *love*, Tyndale’s word, especially in the gospels where even the Vulgate has *amo* ‘love’ (thus “lovest thou me” in John 21). For sure, More wins with the word *church*; the Protestant *congregation* is avoided, although one can tell from

context which meaning for *church* is intended. But Tyndale wins with *elder* and *repent*. (The word *priest* occurs in referring to the Jewish priests, but not as an office in the Christian church.)

In the following summary, I set out the history of these four words for certain key New Testament passages. We see for selected translations how the original Greek and the secondary Latin (the Vulgate) ended up in the English Bible in the 1500s and early 1600s. I also provide a modern translation from the 1989 Revised English Bible (REB), which has been approved by both the Catholic Church and Protestant churches for use in the British Isles. Even the Catholics have now accepted the King James translation of all these terms.

The Debate Over the Four Words in the 1500s and 1600s

(1) *agape* 'love' versus 'charity' (from the Latin *caritas*)

in the epistles, the Rheims New Testament
and the King James Bible use *charity* as well as *love*

1 Corinthians 13:13

Tyndale NT 1526	now abideth faith hope and love
Tyndale NT 1534	now abideth faith hope and love
Geneva Bible 1560	and now abideth faith hope <i>and</i> love
Rheims NT 1582	and now there remain faith hope <i>and</i> charity
KJB 1611	and now abideth faith hope charity
REB 1989	there are three things that last for ever : faith hope and love

in the gospels, all use *love*, never *charity*

Matthew 22:39

Tyndale NT 1526	thou shalt love thine neighbor as thyself
Tyndale NT 1534	love thine neighbor as thyself
Geneva Bible 1560	thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself
Rheims NT 1582	thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself
KJB 1611	thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself
REB 1989	love your neighbor as yourself

(2) *ecclesia* ‘congregation’ versus ‘church’

(3) *presbyteros* ‘elder, senior’ versus ‘priest’

Acts 15:4

Tyndale NT 1526	they were received of the congregation and of the apostles and seniors
Tyndale NT 1534	they were received of the congregation and of the apostles and elders
Geneva Bible 1560	they were received of the church and of the apostles and elders
Rheims NT 1582	they were received by the church and by the apostles and ancients
KJB 1611	they were received of the church and of the apostles and elders

REB 1989	they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders
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Note that *church* is decided early on (for instance, in the 1560 Geneva Bible, a Protestant Bible).

(4) *metanoeo* ‘repent’ versus ‘do penance’ (from the Latin *paenitentiam ago*)

Mark 6:12

Tyndale NT 1526	and they went out and preached that they should repent
Tyndale NT 1534	and they went out and preached that they should repent
Geneva Bible 1560	and they went out and preached that <i>men</i> should amend their lives
Rheims NT 1582	and going forth they preached that <i>men</i> should do penance
KJB 1611	and they went out and preached that men should repent
REB 1989	so they set out and proclaimed the need for repentance

The Ecumenical Book of Mormon!

Interestingly, the Book of Mormon is in full agreement with the vocabulary decisions made in the King James Bible, yet it makes adjustments for the original debate by making sure that you, the reader, correctly understand how to interpret these words. Thus we find that the Book of Mormon often tells the reader that the word *charity* is ‘love’ – that is, in various places

it adds the word *love* so that you won't think that the text is referring to alms giving (Tyndale's complaint about the Latinate word *charity*). When the word *church* is used in the Book of Mormon, the text will let you know that *church* can be used to mean both the organization and the individual congregation. And interestingly, the church in the Book of Mormon has both elders and priests, not just one or the other. In each case the Book of Mormon builds upon the original debate, yet resolves it according to the King James translation. Even then, the resolution follows Tyndale's interpretation.

love and charity

2 Nephi 26:30	that all men should have charity which charity is love
Ether 12:34	this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity
Moroni 7:47	but charity is the pure love of Christ
Moroni 8:17	and I am filled with charity which is everlasting love

church and churches

Mosiah 25:21	they did assemble themselves together in different bodies being called churches
Mosiah 25:22	and thus notwithstanding there being many churches they were all one church yea even the church of God

elders and priests

Alma 4:7	yea and to many of the people which Alma had consecrated to be teachers and priests and elders over the church
----------	---

Alma 6:1	he ordained priests and elders by laying on his hands
Moroni 3:1	the manner which the disciples – which were called the elders of the church – ordained priests and teachers
Moroni 4:1	the manner of their elders and priests administering the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church
Moroni 6:1	behold elders priests and teachers were baptized

Note that Moroni 3:1 sets the elders hierarchically over the priests and teachers.

repent, but no “do penance” at all in the Book of Mormon

Alexander Campbell claimed in his early review of the Book of Mormon (in 1831) that Joseph Smith’s golden bible was simply commenting on the religious issues of the early 1800s in America. To the contrary, there is considerable evidence that the issues and the cultural milieu of the text date more from the late 1600s than the early 1800s, during a time when the conflicts between the low-church Protestants, high-church Anglicans, and Catholics had been basically resolved (or at least reached a kind of peaceful truce in England). References to “secret combinations” and to “standing at the bar of God to be judged” can be more reasonably traced to this period, not to the early 1800s (or to biblical usage). The translation issues that Thomas More attacked William Tyndale over were basically settled in the King James Bible (1611), yet the Book of Mormon takes those translation issues to their final conclusion by explicitly resolving the conflict by (1) frequently declaring *charity* to be love, as in the “pure love of Christ”, (2) allowing for both elders and priests as offices in the church, and (3) explicitly stating that the word *church* refers to both congregation and God’s

organization. The Book of Mormon resolves the controversy in favor of the King James solution but from the point of view of William Tyndale.

Royal Skousen, professor of linguistics and English language at Brigham Young University, has been the editor of the Book of Mormon critical text project since 1988. Volumes 1, 2, and 4 of the critical text are published by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies. In 2009, Skousen published with Yale University Press the culmination of his critical text work, The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text. He is also known for his work on exemplar-based theories of language and quantum computing of analogical modeling.

PROFOUND DEPTH IN A SLENDER BOOK

Kevin Christensen

A review of Blake T. Ostler, *Fire on the Horizon: A Meditation on the Endowment and Love of Atonement*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013, 119 pages + subject and scripture indices.

Occasionally, an LDS author puts out a slender little book that displays a profound depth and insight that belies its size. Truman Madsen's *Eternal Man* is one such book, one that forever changed the way I viewed the faith in which I was raised. In that case, Madsen asked a set of basic philosophical questions and compared the LDS answers with those provided by a range of non-LDS and generally famous philosophers. Madsen commented in his preface that

Letters of praise for their “objectivity” (which usually means that I have named and highlighted some live alternatives) miss my feeling that such merit as they have is in their subjectivity. Their primary gesture is toward inner echoes, toward, as it were, the nerve endings of the spirit.¹

Blake Ostler's *Fire on the Horizon* is another book of relatively small size with a remarkable ideological depth, also directed toward those same “nerve endings of the spirit.” Ostler is a well-known figure in LDS intelligentsia, most famous, perhaps, for his 1987 *Dialogue* essay on “The Book of Mormon as an Expansion of an Ancient Source” and his more recent volumes from Kofford books in the Exploring Mormon Thought series. This little volume ought to contribute significantly to his reputation as an important voice in the LDS community.

He explains the potent metaphor of his title:

1 Truman Madsen, *Eternal Man* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), viii.

A fire on the horizon is a tremendous challenge. The horizon defines the boundary — the scope of what is accessible to us ... the horizon is the edge of the world. Yet a fire on the horizon is something more. A fire on the horizon may be a dangerous messenger that we must heed. The fire on the horizon illuminates merely where the horizon is located, but also portends an immense power to which we must pay attention.”²

The fires which he wants us to explore and better understand — by changing our current vantage points to more telling and revealing perspectives — are the temple and the Atonement. “For twenty years,” he explains, “I attended the temple, bored out of my gourd. I kept going, but did not get much out of it. The endowment was just the same endless repetition that held no meaning for me.”³ Indeed, Ostler mentions that Søren Kierkegaard’s had written a book titled *Endless Repetition*, which he compares to a “mirror for a life that is stuck in just going through the motions without meaning,” which is defined as the “unrepentant life.” The response to endless repetition and meaninglessness is to move, to change perspectives, and “moving to see the fire on the horizon.”⁴ He explains that “All the boredom I created in my encounter with the endowment changed with a change of my heart.”⁵ The classic film, *Groundhog Day*, illustrates the principle. How can you change the quality of your life if you cannot change the circumstances?

Ostler begins asking “Why?” about every event, action, word, symbol, and personal encounter, and brings his whole heart and mind into the experience. The book is an invitation to the reader to accompany a master teacher through his own change of perspective. He draws upon Kant and Kierkegaard at times, but this is not a book of analytical philosophy.

2 Blake Ostler, *Fire on the Horizon: A Meditation on the Endowment and Love of Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), vii.

3 Ostler, *Fire on the Horizon*, p. x.

4 Ostler, *Fire on the Horizon*, p. x.

5 Ostler, *Fire on the Horizon*, p. xi.

Thus, there is a reason that Joseph Smith could not have been a theologian — and it is not merely because he lacked the training and talent to be one. Theology is immoral from the Christian viewpoint to the extent that it objectifies God. The Christian cannot be objective about the matter at all, for a Christian is a person seeking a passionate *I-Thou* relationship.⁶

According to Ostler, Joseph Smith saw that “rituals and ordinances are the language of the sacred,”⁷ and he then leads into a discussion of “The Language of Ritual Viewed from Within.” This is not an objective analysis, a dispassionate dissection, but becomes, as promised on the cover, “a meditation on the Endowment and love of aAtonement.” He draws on his philosophical training at times, but his mode is personal and passionate — his voice direct and intimate. He takes us with him as he adjusts his perspective on the endowment and on the Atonement so that if we go with him, we can share his view. While discussing Kant and Kierkegaard, he stays at the level of basic principles rather than extensive analysis. He is likely to quote Martin Buber’s *I and Thou* as well as Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.

Because the endowment is a ritual drama, Ostler does not pretend to provide a definitive, final word but rather an illuminating exploration with an implicit invitation to continue the journey on our own. The endowment is not an allegory in which each element has a one-to-one correspondence with something outside but is rather a symbolic drama in which the comparisons we can make are open-ended.

I’ve read several books and essays over the years that have provided mind-expanding contexts and interesting comparisons that shed light on the temple experience. I’ve also read attempts to dissect the endowment by purported sources

6 Ostler, *Fire on the Horizon*, p. 9.

7 Ostler, *Fire on the Horizon*, p. 9.

which strike me as unhelpful attempts that offer generalized superlatives of praise — void of useful, directed insight.

I learned to appreciate Ostler's abilities a few decades ago. While driving to the Oakland Temple, my wife and I read his *BYU Studies* article, "Clothed Upon"⁸ and indeed found that knowledge enhanced our appreciation of the temple experience. I've also learned much from writings by Hugh Nibley, John W. Welch, and other LDS scholars. I've gained useful insights from Margaret Barker, including her essay called "Belonging in the Temple."⁹ I've often found helpful knowledge directly relevant to the LDS endowment from Mircea Eliade's *The Myth of Eternal Return: or Cosmos and History*. I've been helped by Joseph Campbell and Northrop Frye in several ways. As much as I have learned from such writers and as much as I recommend them, I still received much that is fresh, helpful, and new by following Ostler's exploration of the Fire on the Horizon. Highly recommended.

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8 Blake Ostler, "Clothed Upon: A Unique Aspect of Christian Antiquity," in *BYU Studies* 22/1 (1982).

9 Margaret Barker, "Belonging in the Temple" (Canterbury: Department of Politics at University of Kent, 2007), <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/BelongingintheTemple.pdf>.

LOOKING AT THE ENDOWMENT AND ATONEMENT THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS

Gaye Strathearn

A review of Blake T. Ostler, *Fire on the Horizon: A Meditation on the Endowment and Love of Atonement*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013, 119 pages + subject and scripture indices.

The author, Blake T. Ostler, describes his book as “a meditation on the endowment presented in the temple” (p. ix). In doing so, he is careful to focus his discussion on the scriptural texts in Genesis and Moses and on published material of early church leaders, particularly that of the Prophet Joseph. But readers should know that this book is not an exegetical discussion, understanding the endowment in its original context (i.e., understanding the scriptural passages in their Genesis, Moses, or temple contexts). Rather, it is an attempt to make sense of aspects of the creation accounts from the author’s particular philosophical and experiential perspective. In doing so, it is an invitation for all to think deeply about the Atonement and our relations with Christ and with one another. This approach is valuable. It is a call to ask questions about things that, if we’re not careful, can become so repetitious that they become commonplace. The book is organized around an introduction and two major parts: Part One, Atonement and the Sacred *Thou* at the Center of Joseph Smith’s Revelations; and Part Two, The Heart of Atonement.

In his introduction, Ostler sets up the metaphors that undergird his philosophical approach to spiritual knowledge. It is an invitation to see spiritual knowledge about the endowment and the Atonement from a perspective that the author likens, on the one hand, to a fire *on the horizon*. Even though the horizon is a constant — it is always there — it is also “a matter

of perspective from where one stands. It changes depending upon one's movement" (p. vii). So also, according to the author, is spiritual knowledge. He argues that spiritual knowledge can change according to where we stand on our spiritual journey and, from the perspective of Immanuel Kant, according to our experiences. But the question that immediately surfaces in my mind is whether it is actually spiritual knowledge that changes or *our understanding* of spiritual knowledge that changes. This is an important distinction the author alludes to but doesn't address directly. At stake is the larger question of whether knowledge is absolute or relative.

In addition, spiritual knowledge can also be described as a *fire*. "The horizon is the edge of the world. Yet a fire on the horizon is something more. The fire on the horizon may be a dangerous messenger that we must heed. The fire on the horizon illuminates not merely where the horizon is located, but also portends an immense power to which we must pay attention. If we fail to do so, we may get burned" (p. vii). Drawing further on the work of Kant and Kierkegaard, Ostler argues that knowledge comes from the collective experience of the community and also from our own personal experience. However,

knowledge conveyed by the spirit is an existential communication — a knowledge that communicates with and to our very being. What we know is imbedded within our very existence as an individual. We can only escape such knowledge through an act of hiding what we know from ourselves in an act of self-deception (p. ix).

The author also likens spiritual knowledge to our *eye lenses* that enable us to see: although we have them and we know that we have them,

they remain hidden from what we see. It is given to us; yet we cannot see it or experience it directly. We can write and speak about it; but we cannot simply convey such knowledge to another. One's own

spiritual knowledge is always beyond the horizon of any other person (p. ix).

[Thus,] spiritual knowledge is a burning fire within. With spiritual experience, the horizon is our own hearts — the center of our being. It may be beyond the horizon of human discursive expression, but it is a power that must be heeded (p. ix).

All of this explanation is preamble for the basic issues that Ostler wants us to consider. The Atonement is real and eternal, but our understanding of it is forged by a perspective that is often unique and can change according to where a person stands. This book is a call to deepen our understanding of the Atonement and the endowment by studying it from a different perspective. It is a call to ask questions: “Why is it done that way, why is it said in that strange way, why do we do it that way, and what does it mean about how I am doing it right now?” These types of questions can help us avoid falling into a trap of complacency and, in the process, see things that we might not have seen before. As Ostler himself asked these questions, “What was revealed was almost nothing about the endowment per se, but about the status of my own heart and my ways of being in the world.” Thus he argues that

the Atonement is the fire on the horizon that reveals the limits of what we can access, illuminates what is otherwise beyond us, warns us of what we must be aware of, and calls us to heed its gift and warns of the dangers of not doing so (p. xi).

The chapters in Part 1 are based on Immanuel Kant’s and Martin Buber’s use of the “Holy Thou.”¹ Basically, the *Holy Thou* understands that in a relationship individuals are not “mere

1 Immanuel Kant, *The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals in Kant’s Theory of Ethics*, trans. T.K. Abbott (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1879); Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1937).

means (objects), but always as ends in and of themselves.” The opposite of a *Holy Thou* is an *It*, a thing, or an object to be used. “In an *I-It* relationship, there is no genuine reciprocity. The relationship is similar to that of a manipulator to an instrument, of mechanic to an engine, or computer scientist to computer” (p. 7). In contrast, in an *I-Thou* relationship, a person engages

one’s intrinsic being in direct and sympathetic contact with another intrinsic being. The *Thou* is cherished and valued as an individual — not as a means but as an end, nor for what *It* can do for me, but valued intrinsically as a person. The *I-Thou* relation is thus necessarily reciprocal. To approach a *Thou* is to be constituted as a *Thou* in the relationship. In such a relationship, *I* not only give but receive; *I* not only speak but also listen; *I* not only respond but also invite response; *I* not only value but also am valued. Only in such a relationship where soul truly mingles with the soul of another *Thou* are persons constituted as persons. The relationship creates us in its image (p. 8).

Ostler argues that only through the lens of the *I-Thou* relationship can we understand the divine-human relationship and the associated rituals. Thus sacred rituals cannot be understood by outsiders because they neither understand nor participate in the *I-Thou* relationship.

Ostler includes four short chapters to discuss how understanding the *I-Thou* relationship can be helpful in comprehending specific theological scenarios: “The Divine Risk of Love,” “The Peer Relationship as Christology,” “Zion as the Sacred Society Reflecting Divine Love,” and “Human Sacrifice, Plural Marriage, and the *I-Thou* Relation.” For me, most intriguing of these chapters was the last one, which employs two topics that are often difficult for modern readers to understand. The author compares God’s command for Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac with God’s command to Joseph Smith to institute plural marriage. Both commandments seem to put God at odds

with modern senses of morality. Ostler poses the rhetorical question, “Why would willingness to sacrifice one’s own son, or to be unfaithful one’s own spouse, lead to eternal life with God? Murder and adultery lead to damnation — surely not eternal life” (p. 37). The author uses intentionally provocative rhetoric to draw readers into the timeless philosophical debate on the nature of God. Specifically, to what extent is our understanding of God influenced by our own experience.

In antiquity, for example, the fifth century BC Greek philosopher and theologian Xenophanes once argued that the divine world was simply an extension of the human world:

14. But mortals think that gods are born and that they have their own clothing, voice and body 15. but if the oxen <and horses> or lions had hands or could draw with hands and finish works as men do, on the one hand both horses would draw pictures of gods like horses and, on the other hand, oxen would draw pictures of gods like oxen and make their bodies just like those bodies <each one> has. 16. Ethiopians say that their own gods have flat noses and black hair and the Thracians that they have grey eyes and red hair.²

The modern counterpart focuses not on the question of what God physically looks like but on what is God’s sense of morality, justice, and love. Ostler argues that the commandments given to both Abraham and Joseph Smith initiated an environment in which they could come to know God divested of any and all preconceptions of him.

Only in this way could they encounter God without prior judgments, without expectations, and without imposing their beliefs and demands on God. They were forced to let go of every presupposition, forget everything that they thought they knew, and

2 Xenophanes, frag. 14–16 in Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente Der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1960), 132–33.

suspend every notion about how and what God must be to be God — and simply to encounter God as He is, as He reveals Himself (p. 37).

The purpose is to invite people to enter into an *I-Thou* relationship with God that is not based on past experience but is based on trust in God.

Only when we are willing to let go of all of our moral schemata, only when we do not judge before we encounter [God] can we truly encounter God as He is — as He reveals Himself. God can be encountered as a *Thou* only when we give up our will to think we know before we know God. Knowing about God and what He must be is different than ‘knowing’ God God is not an object among other objects to be categorized and manipulated — He is a holy *Thou* to be encountered (p. 40).

In Part 2, Ostler explores the question of how we become the children of God. To be sure, we come into this life having the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26–27), “yet the likeness is not a fully mature image of God: they lack a fullness of mastery over themselves and the world that God possesses. They are like children who will grow into the stature of their parents but lack the experiences essential to be like God” (p. 56). The author returns again to the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to develop his meditations. Additional sub-questions that he asks are: how can we become as God when we have broken our relationship with him by hiding from him and being cast out of his presence? How does the interplay between freedom, agency, and accountability provide an environment to develop what he calls “authentic relations” with God? Ostler defines authentic relations as ones that are chosen (p. 72). It is the *I-Thou* relationship developed in Part 1. In contrast, “an unauthentic existence” is one that is created from a “chain of causes” (p. 77): I am this way because a series of events led me to this point. This is the *I-It* relationship. How does the

Atonement heal the broken relationship between us and God and return us to the *I-Thou* relation?

In setting up this philosophical paradox between authentic and inauthentic relationships, the author invites his readers to *own* the story of Adam and Eve — not just to see it as a biblical story belonging to a distant past but rather to recognize that we are all heirs of Adam and Eve and that their story is our story. We, like Adam and Eve, all experience times when we have to choose whether or not to partake of “forbidden fruit” — decisions with difficult consequences that nevertheless provide important opportunities for growth. We all experience the cherubim’s sword that requires that we move forward instead of returning to the past. Likewise, we “are all tempted to hide from ourselves and from our accountability for our freedom to act” (p. 72). As Adam and Eve’s heirs, we also choose to leave God’s presence. The question thus becomes, “once having left Eden, how do I get past the cherubim with the sword to enter back into God’s presence?” (p. 72). Just as it is a choice to leave, so also it must be a choice to return. However, that choice to return cannot be motivated by fear or obligation; it can be truly motivated only by love. “It is by experiencing all of life that we can turn to taste the Tree [of Life’s] tender mercies that have given us the opportunity to learn to love unconditionally”(p. 64).

The author returns to the work of Kant and Buber to flush out his meditations. Once removed from Eden, Adam and Eve and their heirs choose either to “‘encounter’ the world in its wholeness (holiness)” or choose to experience it (p. 74). Readers should beware that this discussion is philosophically dense and difficult to process for the philosophical novice. The point of the discussion is to give a justification for Paul’s teaching that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). When Adam and Eve chose to hide from God’s presence, they chose a path that led to mortality, which the author characterizes as “the world of things” — a world where ideas,

people, and spiritual experiences are judged by past and present experience, and outcomes are viewed as the “effect in a chain of causes” (p. 77). This event of leaving Eden is something that recurs throughout mortality. The reality is that “we all leave the Eden of the *I-Thou* relation and enter the world of *I-It* relations over and over again” (p. 80).

The final five chapters are the culmination of Ostler’s meditations. In these chapters he unpacks the way the Atonement heals the severed relationship with God. For me, these chapters are where the reader hits the paydirt of the book as Ostler discusses the Atonement and the Sacrament. Getting to them is worth wading through the dense philosophical discussions. Ostler argues that the *I-Thou* relation is one in which we trust God enough to open our hearts to him and begin to see ourselves as God sees us rather than as the world has conditioned us (pp. 86–87). It is a trust that enables us to become spiritually vulnerable and thus open our hearts “so that the word of God can penetrate” (p. 88). Thus, “life is set up so that God’s presence and existence are only detectable by those who have eyes to see and ears to hear the subtle signs of His loving overtures” (p. 82). It is a trust that, through the Atonement, allows us to recognize that we can be justified in God’s sight. It is a trust that enables the barriers to be removed, which allows God’s indwelling in us: “we give ourselves to be in him [Christ] and he gives himself to be in us” (p. 107). It is this reciprocity that is at the core of an *I-Thou* relationship.

Ostler continues with a short chapter on the Sacrament, which he discusses as the ritual re-creation of Christ’s indwelling. By partaking of the emblems of the Sacrament, we partake of Christ’s divinity. Eating and drinking of that divinity provide divine nourishment to empower and sustain spiritual life. Although Ostler relies mainly on Luke’s account of the Sacrament (Luke 22:19), his argument would be strengthened by John’s Bread of Life sermon, which acts as the Johannine sacramental chapter:

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for

ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever. (John 6:51–58)

Ostler returns to the major focus of Part 2: being the children of God. “We began life made in the image of God already as sons and daughters of God, and yet our challenge is to *become* sons and daughters of God. How can we become what we already are?” (emphasis in original; p. 118). “Jesus’s challenge is twofold: We are challenged to be what we already are. If we are sons and daughters of God, then we are already gods in the process of growth,” and we must act like it by seeing the divine in those around us, by manifesting God’s love.

We are also challenged to become what we are not yet fully. Children become what their parents are. We already have the divine life breathed into us at birth, yet the challenge is to breathe that divine spirit into a new birth . . . we are now asked to stand in a new kind of relationship with God where he adopts us as sons and daughters (p. 118).

Overall, I think that this book is a valuable work. I see real value in asking readers to reevaluate what they think they know and invite them to see through different lenses, especially on subjects that are very familiar. Ostler has powerfully

accomplished this invitation. But there are some areas where, in my opinion, the author struggles to nail down his delivery. For example, by identifying his work as a “meditation,” the author acknowledges that his hermeneutical approach is not an *exegetical* analysis, but rather an *eisegetical* reflection on the application of scriptural texts and ideas. But even so, the author clearly wants to approach his meditation from an academic perspective and combine scholarly analysis with application. At times this works, but at times there are inconsistencies. Let me give just three examples of the difficulties.

First, the author creates the feel of a rigorous academic approach by footnoting the philosophical works of Kant, Buber, Kierkegaard, and others. These citations are helpful; they provide important opportunities for readers to check the author’s summaries and interpretations. But at other times, especially in reference to the teachings of Joseph Smith, Ostler sometimes uses broad sweeping statements like “According to Joseph Smith we have all made the same choice as Adam and Eve” (p. 56) without any supporting citation to give precision and legitimacy to his point (see also pp. 48, 50, 84).

Second, on a number of occasions, Ostler quotes from the *Lectures on Faith* to support his discussion. On three of those occasions, he directly claims Joseph Smith’s authorship for the statements (pp. 1–2, 4–6),³ while on other occasions he makes no such claim (pp. 2, 20–21). The difficulty is that when he quotes the *Lectures*, he does not acknowledge, even in a footnote, that there is a significant debate about the authorship of the *Lectures on Faith* and Joseph Smith’s role in the producing of these lectures.⁴

3 The example on pages 1–2 is not explicit, but it concludes a paragraph here the author was discussing Joseph Smith’s teachings of the indwelling union between the Father and the Son.

4 See for example, Alan J. Phipps, “The Lectures on Faith: An Authorship study,” Masters thesis, Brigham Young University, 1977. Larry E. Dahl, “Authorship and History of the Lectures on Faith,” in *The Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective*, ed. Larry E. Dahl and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990), 1–21. Noel B.

Third, and perhaps most telling, are the places where Ostler turns to Hebrew and Greek words to inform his discussion. In the Hebrew texts, most pointing for the vowels is incorrect. While the example on page 48 for Eve is accurate, the Hebrew word for life is missing a *qāmeṣ* under the yod (י), and on page 49, the Hebrew word for spirit (*ruakh*)⁵ should be רוּחַ rather than רִיחַ. The problem is compounded in the Hebrew text on page 83 where pointing for the Hebrew word “which means to ‘plan or devise’” should be תַּשֵּׁב rather than תַּשֶּׁב. In addition, there are a number of problems with the Hebrew quotation of Genesis 6:5 (p. 83). The vowel pointing for every word has problems; the Hebrew word for “every” (כָּל) has been omitted; the letters have been transposed in the first word and should read יִצַּר instead of יִרְצִי; in the second word (מַחֲשַׁבֶּת), the letter *sin* (שׁ) has incorrectly been used instead of a *shin* (שׁ); and in the third word, the short *hiriq* (.) should be under the *lamed* (ל) and not under the *bet* (ב). To be fair, printing a Hebrew text (which goes from right to left) in a Western press can be very difficult, but when any changes are made to a text, it is the responsibility of both the printer and the author to be diligent in checking if those changes have had any impact on the Hebrew text. Even more problematical is the author’s use of שָׁהָם as the Hebrew word for repentance (p. 69). Even if the letters have mistakenly been transposed, it is still problematic. The Hebrew word “to return, turn back or repent” is שׁוּב (*shuv*; see for example, 1 Kings 8:33, 48).

The difficulties using ancient languages continue in the author’s use of Greek texts. He is inconsistent in his use of accents. Some of this is because the quotations that he uses omit them, but even in the author’s general discussion,

Reynolds, “Case for Sidney Rigdon as Author of the Lectures on Faith,” *Journal of Mormon History* 31/2 (Fall 2005): 1–41.

5 In this instance, my transliteration differs from that used by Ostler. I am using the standard scholarly style found in *The SBL Handbook of Style For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, ed. Patrick H. Alexander, John F. Kutsko, James D. Ernest, Shirley A. Decker-Lucke, and David L. Peterson (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 25–29. See also p. 83 where the standard transliteration of the *tsere* in לֵב would be *leb*, rather than *lib*.

sometimes he includes the accent in ἄφεςις (*aphesis*) on page 41 but omits it in πνεῦμα (*pneuma*) on page 49. Sometimes the inconsistency is even in the same paragraph: γνῶσις (*gnōsis*) and γινώσχω (*ginōschō*) on page 15. Sometimes the Greek spelling is also incorrect: ἐπιστημαί (*epistēmai*) instead of ἐπίσταμαι (*epistamai*; p. 15). The inconsistency also extends to whether the Greek should be included in the discussion. For example, while it is included in the discussion on *knowledge* (p. 15), the Greek words are omitted in the discussion of *seeing* on page 112. Here he notes, “There are actually five verbs in Greek that mean ‘to see.’ In the writings of John, ‘to see’ almost always means to see both with mortal eyes and with insight or eyes of understanding.” He then quotes John 6:40; 1:39, 45–46. What the author does not indicate here is that the references in John 1 use *horaō* (ὁράω) as the Greek word for *seeing*, whereas John 6:40 uses *theōpeō* (θεωπέω).

To be sure, unless one is trained in Hebrew and Greek, these difficulties will be oblivious to most readers. But for the trained eye, they stand out immediately. With the difficulties of using ancient texts, one wonders why the author felt the need to include them. For the most part, with perhaps the exception of the use of the Hebrew word for *word/repentance*, they are not needed in texts where a transcription could have sufficed.

Conclusion

It is clear that the author has thought deeply about the Atonement and the temple. He has a perceptive mind, and there is much food for thought in the book. However, for the philosophical layperson, Ostler’s work is, at times, heavy going, and thus the casual reader may struggle with it. But, for the most part, the chapters are small (the longest being 16 pages), so even the more difficult philosophical discussions can be manageable for the committed reader. This is a book that needs to be read over and over. My experience is that each time I did so, new insights came to the fore, and as a result, I will now look at the Garden of Eden stories and the Atonement through a different lens.

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“MOST DESIRABLE ABOVE ALL THINGS”: ONOMASTIC PLAY ON MARY AND MORMON IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Matthew L. Bowen

Abstract: The names Mary and Mormon most plausibly derive from the Egyptian word mr(i), “love, desire, [or] wish.” Mary denotes “beloved [i.e., of deity]” and is thus conceptually connected with divine love, while Mormon evidently denotes “desire/love is enduring.” The text of the Book of Mormon manifests authorial awareness of the meanings of both names, playing on them in multiple instances. Upon seeing Mary (“the mother of God,” 1 Nephi 11:18, critical text) bearing the infant Messiah in her arms in vision, Nephi, who already knew that God “loveth his children,” came to understand that the meaning of the fruit-bearing tree of life “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” (1 Nephi 11:17-25). Later, Alma the Elder and his people entered into a covenant and formed a church based on “love” and “good desires” (Mosiah 18:21, 28), a covenant directly tied to the waters of Mormon: Behold here are the waters of Mormon ... and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God ... if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized ...?; “they clapped their hands for joy and exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts” (Mosiah 18:8-11). Alma the Younger later recalled the “song of redeeming love” that his father and others had sung at the waters of Mormon (Alma 5:3-9, 26; see Mosiah 18:30). Our editor, Mormon, who was himself named after the land of Mormon

and its waters (3 Nephi 5:12), repeatedly spoke of charity as “everlasting love” or the “pure love of Christ [that] endureth forever” (Moroni 7:47-48; 8:16-17; 26). All of this has implications for Latter-day Saints or “Mormons” who, as children of the covenant, must endure to the end in Christlike “love” as Mormon and Moroni did, particularly in days of diminishing faith, faithfulness, and love (see, e.g., Mormon 3:12; contrast Moroni 9:5).

When Nephi was granted his “desire” and “saw the things which [his] father saw,”¹ he immediately “beheld a tree ... like unto the tree which [his] father had seen” (1 Nephi 11:8). Nephi’s second “desire” (11:10) was expressly “to know the interpretation thereof” (11:11), whereupon he saw Mary bearing the Christ child in her arms (11:20). Nephi’s angelic guide then asked him: “Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?” (11:21), to which Nephi responded, “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” (11:22; emphasis in all scriptural citations hereafter is mine). As Daniel C. Peterson has noted, “it was only when she [Mary] appeared with a baby and was identified as ‘the mother ... of God’ that Nephi grasped the tree’s meaning.”² At that point, Nephi understood that the “love of God” that was “most desirable above all things” had its fullest expression in Christ’s incarnation through Mary whose name evidently derives from the Egyptian root *mr(i)* “love,” “desire,” “wish.”

1 See 1 Nephi 11:1-7 and 14:29, which form a literary *inclusio* or envelope figure around Nephi’s account of his own vision of his father’s tree of life dream.

2 Daniel C. Peterson, “Nephi and his Asherah,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/2 (2000): 18. It should be worth noting here that Peterson saw the tree equating to Mary (Asherah = Love of God) and the “fruit of Mary’s womb, Jesus,” equating to the fruit of the Tree (Daniel C. Peterson, “Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8-23” in *Mormons, Scripture and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson* ed. David Bitton [Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Provo, UT: 1998], 194).

Hundreds of years later, in texts preserved for us by Moroni, Mormon repeatedly describes “charity” or divine “love” as being “everlasting” or “endur[ing]” (Moroni 7:47-48; 8:16-17, 26)³ In this paper I will suggest that the relationship of these passages is more than just thematic (i.e., they speak of divine “love”), but also onomastic and philological. I will further propose that both passages use wordplay or play on meaning involving the names’ shared Egyptian term *mr(i)* or *mry*, which as a noun (*mry*[.t]) means “love” or “desire” and as a verb means to “love,” “desire,” or “wish.” Nephi’s words, recorded decades after his initial vision, play on the name “Mary” (“beloved [of deity], ‘the love of the deity’”) and Mormon’s words play on his own name (“love [that] endures,” see below).

Additionally, I will explore the naming of “the waters of Mormon” (Mosiah 18), whence Mormon tells us his name derives (3 Nephi 5:12). I will further explore the meaning of the name “Mormon” and suggest that “Mormon,” originally bestowed by King Noah upon the land, forest, and waters of Mormon, was later “re-motivated”⁴ — that is, given new meaning by Alma and his followers in light of the covenant made there. Wordplay on the name “Mormon” in terms of “desire” and “love” — the range of meaning for Egyptian *mr(i)* — is evident in Alma the Elder’s baptismal speech (Mosiah 18:8-11) and Mormon’s description of that community’s covenant “love” (18:21) and “good desires toward God” (18:28).

3 Paul Hoskisson (“What’s in a Name? Mormon — Part 2,” *Insights* 32/3 [2012]: 2) notes a possible connection between “Mormon” and Moroni 7:47. I will here offer additional textual evidence that strengthens the plausibility of this suggestion (e.g., in Moroni 7:48; 8:16-17, 26 and elsewhere).

4 On the idea of onomastic “remotivation,” see Stéphane Gendron, “L’étymologie populaire: Quels enjeux pour l’onomastique?” in *Proceedings of the XIXth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, Aberdeen, August 4-11, 1996* (2 vols.; ed. W.F.H. Nicolaisen; Aberdeen: Dept. of English, University of Aberdeen, 1998), 1:130-33. See also John M. Anderson, *The Grammar of Names* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 85.

A Methodological Note

The two languages that Nephi indicates he knew were Hebrew and Egyptian (1 Nephi 1:2).⁵ For the nearly 1,000 years these remained the spoken⁶ and literary⁷ languages of the Nephites (see especially Mormon 9:32-33).⁸ While Moroni's explanation

5 Nephi would have grown up as a native Hebrew-speaker in and near Jerusalem. He acquired his knowledge of Egyptian language/writing from his father. 1 Nephi 1:2: "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." Nephi's own name is evidently Egyptian. See John Gee, "A Note on the Name Nephi," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 189-91; and idem "Four Suggestions on the Origin of the Name Nephi," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 1-5.

6 Compare Omni 1:17: "And at the time that Mosiah discovered them, they had become exceedingly numerous. Nevertheless, they had had many wars and serious contentions, and had fallen by the sword from time to time; and **their language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records with them**; and they denied the being of their Creator; and Mosiah, nor the people of Mosiah, could understand them." This passage suggests that the Nephites' spoken language was essentially Hebrew, just as the Mulekites' spoken language had originally been. Change to the Nephites' spoken language came more conservatively because they had brought records with them and continued to keep written records. The language of the Mulekites became "corrupted" more quickly precisely because "they had brought no records with them."

7 Compare Mosiah 1:2-4: "And it came to pass that he had three sons; and he called their names Mosiah, and Helorum, and Helaman. And he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding; and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which were delivered them by the hand of the Lord. And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God. For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time."

8 Mormon 9:32-33: "And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the

that the Nephites had “altered” their writing systems “according to [their] manner of speech” (9:32) certainly suggests the presence of expected diachronic phenomena (e.g., changes in pronunciation, creolization with other languages) that occur in language.

While we cannot know the precise contents of plates from which the Book of Mormon has been translated, we can use our knowledge of the languages that the Nephites said they used to posit reasonable suppositions about what they contain. Biblical scholars engage in this type of activity (i.e., textual criticism) when they analyze the ancient non-Hebrew witnesses to the text (e.g., the Greek Septuagint [LXX], the Syriac Peshitta, the Old Latin, etc.). Using a knowledge of these other biblical languages can help us arrive at what the Hebrew *Vorlagen*⁹ of these texts may have looked like (vis-à-vis the Hebrew Masoretic Text) pending further evidence.

Whether the language on Nephi’s small plates was Egyptian, Hebrew written in Egyptian script, or a stylized form of Egyptian scribal shorthand, I begin here from the presupposition that Nephi (whose own name was Egyptian¹⁰ and who had been taught Egyptian, 1 Nephi 1:2) knew enough Egyptian for lexical associations to be made on Egyptian names and words as I have argued elsewhere.¹¹ In any case, onomastic wordplay can be detected through multiple layers of language. For example, a reader reading in English can detect the wordplay evident in the angel’s words to Joseph recorded in

reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.”

9 The German term *Vorlage* literally denotes “a forward position.” In text critical terms, a *Vorlage* is the earlier copy of a text from which another copy or a translation is made.

10 Gee, “A Note on the Name Nephi,” 189-91.

11 Matthew L. Bowen, “Internal Textual Evidence for the Egyptian Origin of Nephi’s Name,” *Insights* 22/11 (2002): 2; idem, “An Additional Note on the Meaning of the Name Nephi,” *Insights*, 23/6 (2003): 2-3; idem, “What Meaneth the Rod of Iron?,” *Insights* 25/5 (2005): 2-3.

Matthew 1:21: “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name **JESUS** [Gk. *Iesoun* < *Iesous* < Heb. *Yēšûaʿ*]: for he shall **save** [Gk. *sōsei* < Heb. *yôšîaʿ*]¹² his people from their sins.” Although the translated text is in English and the underlying text is Greek, Hebrew wordplay on *Yēšûaʿ* and the verb *yāšaʿ* (to “save”) can be detected even beneath or behind the Greek.

Another relevant example can be detected in the onomastic wordplay found in Genesis 9–10 (see especially 9:20-27) on the names Ham, Canaan, and the Hebrew word *ʿebed* (“slave”) and Egyptian *ḥm* (slave, majesty). Gary A. Rendsburg observes the following:

The word *ḥām* corresponds to the Egyptian word *ḥm*, “majesty,” used commonly in the expression *ḥm-f* “His Majesty,” used to refer to the Pharaoh. But the same biconsonantal noun *ḥm* also means “slave” in Egyptian, and this supplies one of the clues for understanding Gen 9:20-27. Ham saw his father Noah in a naked state, the punishment for which is that his son Canaan will be a slave — note the fourfold use of the word Egyptian word *ʿebed* ... in vv. 25-27 — to his brothers Shem and Japhet. The next no doubt [implicitly] puns on the root *k-n-* “be low, be humbled, be humbled” in the word *Kěnaʿan*.¹³

Rendsburg further suggests that “the author of the story had the Egyptian meaning of *ḥm* ‘slave’ in mind, and that he in turn assumed that his intellectual readership would understand the bilingual word play.”¹⁴ In other words, one need not be reading from an Egyptian text to detect an Egyptian pun embedded in a Hebrew (or vice versa) or even to detect the plausible presence

12 The wordplay on “Jesus” (Gk. *Iesoun* < *Iesous*) and “shall save” (Gk. *sōsei*) actually works in Greek as a paronomasia on *Iesous* and *sōsei*, in addition to its originally Hebrew/Semitic character (*Yēšûaʿ*/**yôšîaʿ*).

13 G.A. Rendsburg, “Word Play in Biblical Hebrew: An Eclectic Collection,” in *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Scott B. Noegel; Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2000), 143-46.

14 Ibid.

of such wordplay beneath an English translation. Thus, we can detect plausible Egyptianistic and Hebraistic wordplay in the translated English of the Book of Mormon (e.g., Hebraisms can exist in an Egyptian text and vice versa), even though we do not have the original plate text in front of us. Ultimately, it should be noted, the reader will be the final arbiter as to the plausibility of any such potential wordplay pending further confirming or negating evidence.

“The Love of God”: “Mary” as an Egyptian Name

The name “Mary” (from “Miriam”; New Testament “Mariam” or “Maria”)¹⁵ still makes best sense as an Egyptian theophoric¹⁶ hypocoristicon,¹⁷ deriving from the Egyptian root *mr(i)* or *mry* which as a verb means to “love, ... want, wish, desire”¹⁸ and as a noun (*mr[.wt]*) means “love, ... will, desire,”¹⁹ rather than as a derivation from Mara, “bitter”²⁰ from Ruth 1:20.²¹ “Mary” or “Miriam” in Egyptian, like David in Hebrew, means “Beloved,”

15 The New Testament Greek forms of “Mary,” “Mariam” and “Maria,” are aramaized forms of the biblical name Miriam. The biblical figure grew up in Egypt. Miriam [*mr̥ym*] or Mariam (Hebrew/Aramaic) > Maria(m) (Greek, Latin) > Marie (French) > Mary.

16 Theophoric names are names which “bear,” i.e., include the name of deity in some way. This definition should probably be understood to include names in which the deity is grammatically present (e.g., in verb forms or in cognomena).

17 A hypocoristicon is an originally longer name that has been shortened. ... Some examples of theophoric hypocoristica in Hebrew are “Joseph” (“May he [God] add”) and “Nathan” (“He [God] has given”). The divine name elements are formally missing but implied.

18 See, e.g., Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute/Ashmolean Museum, 1999), 111. Hereafter cited as CDME.

19 CDME, 111.

20 One may be tempted to see a conceptual play on “Mary” and “bitter” in the apocryphal story of Mary’s being subject to the Mosaic “bitter water ordeal” or Sotah (Numbers 5:11-31) in chapter 16 of the Protoevangelium of James. However there is nothing in the text *per se* that suggests that the author is making an onomastic connection between “Mary” and “bitter.”

21 Naomi’s words in Ruth 1:20 present the name “Mara” (“bitter”) as a diametric antonym to “Naomi” (“sweet,” “pleasant”): “And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with

i.e., “beloved of the god.” James K. Hoffmeier writes: “Although there are many linguistic explanations for the final *mem* [m in Miriam/Mariam], there is agreement that *mary* is the proposed writing of the root *mry*, meaning ‘love’ or ‘beloved.’”²²

Egyptian names and epithets employing forms of the verbal root *mr(i)* or *mry* are widely attested.²³ For example, the name *mry-k3-rʿ* (Merikare), which belonged to a king of the 10th dynasty, denotes “the Beloved of the Sun’s essence”; the name of the 19th dynasty Pharaoh was *mr-n-ptḥ* (Merneptah), “Beloved of Ptah”; *mry.t ʿitn* (Meritaten) denotes “Beloved of Aten (i.e., the divinized sundisk)”; *mry-rʿ* (Meryre or Merire), “Beloved of Re” was a name borne by at least two Egyptian nobles. Moreover, *mr(y)/mry(.t)* was an important element in epithets and royal epithets. *Mry-nṯr* referred to the “Beloved of the god”; *mry(.t)-rʿ* was an epithet of Isis; *mr(y) ʿimn* as a royal epithet denoted “Beloved of Amun”; and *mry 3st* denoted “Beloved of Isis.” Many other such examples could be cited.

That some form of the name “Mary” was definitively known to the Nephites as the name of the mother of the Redeemer is clear from at least two passages. King Benjamin declared that an angel had revealed to him the following details about the birth of the Redeemer: “And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called **Mary**” (Mosiah 3:8). Similarly, Alma declares to the church members in the city of Gideon: “And behold, **he shall be born of Mary**, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she

me.” It is not clear from a linguistic standpoint how Mara would have become Miriam/Mariam/Mary.

22 James K. Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 225.

23 *Mry* (“beloved”) was used in wide array of names and titles. A common title was *mry-nṯr* (“beloved of god”), i.e., the “love of God.” For a list of *mr(i)*-epithets see, e.g., Denise M. Doxey, *Egyptian Non-royal Epithets in the Middle Kingdom: A Social and Historical Analysis* (Probleme der Aegyptologie 12; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 304-312. Cf. also the title *hm.t mry.t-nṯr* (“the spouse, beloved of god”).

being a virgin, a **precious and chosen vessel**, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God” (Alma 7:10). Junge describes the noun *mrw.t* (> Coptic *merit*) in a Late Egyptian context as denoting not only “love, wish, desire,” but also “**choice**, selection (in the sense of loving hierarchically from ‘above’).”²⁴

The Hebrew adjective *yāqār/yēqārā* (“precious, valuable”; “noble”)²⁵ is associated with Wisdom, happiness/asherah and the Tree of Life: “**Happy** [‘āšrê] is the man that findeth wisdom ... she is more **precious** [yēqārā] than rubies ... she is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and **happy**[mē’uššār] is every one that retaineth her” (Proverbs 3:13-18; cf. 1 Nephi 8:10; 11:21-23).²⁶ Alma’s description of Mary as “precious” is particularly interesting in this light. Nephi himself introduces the tree as “the tree which is **most**²⁷ **precious** above all” (1 Nephi 11:9).

Alma’s use of language that alludes to Isaiah 7:14 (“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin [‘ālmā]²⁸ shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call

24 Friedrich Junge, *Late Egyptian Grammar: An Introduction*. 2nd English ed. (tr. David Warburton; Oxford: Griffith Institute, 2005), 335. One is reminded here of the language of Gabriel in Luke 1:28, 30: “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women”; “Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.”

25 Cf. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 432. Hereafter cited as HALOT.

26 Cf. Peterson, “Nephi and His Asherah,” 24.

27 Reading with Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) 747. The original text reads “most precious.” The printer’s manuscript and the 1830 edition read “precious.”

28 Alma’s own name derives from a masculine form (*‘*lem* < *ġlm*). See further Hugh W. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 76; Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Alma as a Hebrew Name,” *JBMS* 7/1 (1998): 72-73; Terrence L. Szink, “New Light: Further Evidence of a Semitic Alma,” *JBMS* 8/1 (1999): 70. See further Terrence L. Szink, “The Personal Name ‘Alma’ at Ebla,” *Religious Educator* 1/1 (2000): 53-56. John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee, and Matthew Roper, in “Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions,” *JBMS*

his name Immanuel.”) and 1 Nephi 11 (see further below) is unmistakable. His use of the adjective “precious” additionally recalls Nephi’s description of the tree of life and its fruit to his brothers in 1 Nephi 15:36: “Wherefore, the wicked are **rejected** separated²⁹ from the righteous, and also from that tree of life, **whose fruit is most precious and most desirable above**³⁰ **all other fruits**; yea, and it is the greatest of all the gifts of God.” Alma himself elsewhere alludes to Lehi and Nephi’s visions of the tree of life when he describes the “fruit” of faith and faithfulness as “desirable” (Alma 32:39) and “**most precious**, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is **white above all that is white**, yea, and pure above all that is pure” (Alma 32:42), language not only recalling Nephi’s description of the tree of life and its fruit, but the virgin that he saw in 1 Nephi 11.

Nephi reports Lehi as describing the tree of life and its fruit from the very first in terms of “desire” and “happiness” or “joy”: “And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was **desirable** to make one happy” (1 Nephi 8:10; cf. 11:22-23). Lehi’s phraseology deliberately plays on the language of the Garden Story and its description of “a tree to be desired to make one wise” (Genesis 3:6) and, as Daniel C. Peterson has noted, the expression “make one happy” likely constitutes a wordplay on Hebrew *’ašrê* “happy” (lit. “happineses”) and the term *asherah* (*’āshērâ*),³¹ a term which ultimately derives from the name Athirat (*’īrt*), the consort of El in the Canaanite pantheon, but was later used to describe a carved pole, which like the menorah, represented a kind of stylized tree of life.³²

Moreover, Nephi records other instances in which his father Lehi connects the tree of life and its fruit with “desire” and “desirability” of the fruit of the tree:

9/1 (2000): 41-51; Matthew L. Bowen, “‘And He Was a Young Man’: The Literary Preservation of Alma’s Autobiographical Wordplay” *Insights* 30/4 (2010): 2-4.

29 Reading with Skousen, *Earliest Text*, 750.

30 Reading with Skousen (Ibid.). The original text has “of.” The printer’s manuscript and the 1830 edition read “above.”

31 Peterson, “Nephi and His Asherah,” 24.

32 Ibid., 22.

And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be **desirous** that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that **it was desirable above all other fruit.** (1 Nephi 8:12)

And it came to pass that I beckoned unto them; and I also did say unto them with a loud voice that they should come unto me, and partake of the fruit, which was **desirable above all other fruit.** (1 Nephi 8:15)

While the Hebrew term for “desire” is represented by the root **hmd* (see especially Genesis 3:6) the commonest Egyptian term was *mr(i)*, whence the name “Mary” derives. Although Lehi’s description of the tree with its fruit lays tremendous emphasis on the “desirability” of the fruit of the tree, the meaning of the tree and its fruit was not immediately evident to any of his sons. Evidently, even Nephi did not understand the meaning of this image until he “desired” to know. The apparent opaqueness of the symbolism was clearly a point of contention among his brothers who argued over what their father’s vision signified. After his own vision, Nephi understood the connection between the tree, the fruit of the tree, the “mother of God”³³ according to the flesh, and her divine Son.

“The Most Desirable Above All Things”: Wordplay Involving the Meaning of the Name “Mary” in 1 Nephi 11

Nephi’s description of the “tree of life, whose fruit is **most precious** and most **desirable of all** other fruits” as “the greatest of all the gifts of God” (1 Nephi 15:36, Original Text) was addressed particularly to his brethren (“And thus I spake unto my brethren,” 15:36), who had repeated difficulty “believing” the words of Lehi their father and Nephi’s words.³⁴ Having

33 Following Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part One: Title Page, Witness Statements, 1 Nephi 1 — 2 Nephi 10* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 230-33; idem, *Earliest Text*, 748.

34 See, e.g., 1 Nephi 2:12-13; 17:18; cf. 1 Nephi 12:22. See further Matthew L. Bowen, “Not Partaking of the Fruit: Its Generational Consequences and Its

already considered Alma's later collocation describing Mary as a "**precious** and chosen vessel" (Alma 7:10), Nephi's above description of the "tree" whose fruit is "most desirable above all" can be seen as a wordplay on the name — or on the meaning of the name — "Mary" (< *mr(i)*, "love," "desire," "wish"). This becomes even clearer when we consider the dialogue between Nephi and his angelic guide, where a clear connection is made between the "tree" (cf. Asherah and the asherah), Mary, "the love of God," and "desirab[ility]":

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. 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? And I said unto him: A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins. And he said unto me: Knowest thou the condescension of God? And I said unto him: I know that **he loveth his children**; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things. And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of God,³⁵ after the manner of the flesh. 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! And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw? And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is **the love of God**,

Remedy" in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision: The Fortieth Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, Stanley A. Johnson; Provo, UT: RSC and Deseret Book, 2011), 240-263.

35 Following Skousen, *Earliest Text*, 748.

which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is **the most desirable above all things**. And he spake unto me, saying: Yea, and the most joyous to the soul. (1 Nephi 11:13-23)

Just as Nephi's recognition and identification of the "rod of iron" as the "word of God" turns on (or hinges upon) the polysemy of Egyptian *mdw* ("rod," "staff"; "word," "speak"),³⁶ Nephi's recognition and identification of the "love of God" as the "most desirable above all things" turns on the polysemy of *mry* ("love," "desire," "wish"). It is worth noting here that though Benjamin and Alma mention Mary by name, Nephi offers the most dramatic, detailed, and developed description of Mary in the Book of Mormon text. Does it not seem strange then that Nephi would leave her name unmentioned, assuming he knew it? Where is her name? I propose that it is present, literally or implicitly, in Nephi's report in the polysemic play on "love" and "desire."

In other words, if the terms "love" and "desire" appear in Egyptian language on the plates, both words would almost certainly be written as forms of *mr(i)*, thus literally placing her name in the text (like the placing of "Saul" ["asked"/"demanded"] in the verb *š' / "ask," "request," "demand" in 1 Samuel 8:10; 12:13, 17 and elsewhere). Even the use of the Hebrew equivalents of the terms "love" and "desire" would cognitively revolve around the appearance of "the mother of God" in Nephi's text. Thus in either scenario, Nephi's consciousness of Mary's name and its meaning plausibly explains and motivates the dramatic emphasis on the "love of God" in 1 Nephi 11 and his understanding of the overall meaning of the tree-of-life vision. In 1 Nephi 11, the wordplay obviates the need for Nephi to mention her name in the way that Benjamin and Alma later mention it.

36 1 Nephi 11:25; 15:22-23; Bowen, "What Meaneth the Rod?," 2-3.

As if for emphasis, Nephi iterates in 1 Nephi 11:25 that the “living waters [Heb. *mayyîm hayyîm*³⁷] ... are a representation of the **love of God**; and ... that the tree of life was a representation of the **love of God**.” Again the emphasis here is not only the “rod” (the word of God), but the “love of God”: the “mother of God,” Mary, was a representation the “love of God” (cf. Egyptian *mry[.t]-nîr*, “[be]loved of god”).³⁸ Water, of course, is a powerful symbol both of birth³⁹ and rebirth,⁴⁰ and thus baptism. It is at least noteworthy that Jesus describes the greatness or manifestation of the “love” of God in his own incarnation (“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son,” John 3:16) in the context of the necessity of baptism — being “born again” or “born from above” (*gennēthēnai anōthen*, see John 3:3-8) in his likeness. When Alma the Younger speaks of the “song of redeeming love”⁴¹ he not only commemorates Israel’s ancestors being “redeemed” (Exodus 15:1-22)⁴² or “pulled ... from the waters” like Moses — a name which incidentally connotes “begotten [of deity]” or “[the deity is] born” (< Egyptian *ms[i]* “beget”) and “drawer” or “puller” (Heb. *Mōšeh*, is pointed as a pseudo-active participle of **mšh/mšy*,⁴³ Exodus 2:10), but also baptism and being “born

37 The phrase “living waters” (*mayyîm hayyîm*) is attested in Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13; Zechariah 14:8; Song of Solomon 4:15. The variation “waters of life” is attested in Alma 5:34; 42:27; and D&C 10:66. The variation “water of life” is attested thrice in Revelation 22:1 (cf. 1-2), 17; 21:6.

38 See Michel Gitton, *Les Divines Épouses de la 18e Dynasty*, (Annales Littéraires de la Université Besançon, 306; Paris, Besançon, 1984), p. 6 note 6. See also Edouard Naville and Howard Carter, *The Tomb of Hâtshopsîtû* (London: A. Constable & Co., 1906), 109. The name “Amy” or “Aimee” in French means essentially the same thing as “Mary” in Egyptian (“beloved”).

39 Exodus 2:10; Isaiah 48:1; Moses 6:59.

40 John 3:5; Moses 6:59; D&C 5:16.

41 Alma 5:9, 26; 26:13.

42 Exodus 15 contains two “songs” of redeeming love, the Song of the Sea (vv. 1-19) and the Song of Miriam (vv. 21-22). There are further connections between Exodus 15 and Mosiah 18 that cannot be explored here.

43 See James K. Hoffmeier, “Moses,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 417; Michael P. O’Connor, “The Human Characters’ Names in the Ugaritic Poems: Onomastic Eccentricity in Bronze-Age West Semitic and the

again.”⁴⁴ Alma the Younger will describe his being “born again” as being “snatched”⁴⁵ (cf. *yaměšēnî*, “he drew me [pulled me] out of many waters,” 2 Samuel 22/Psalm 18:17 [16]; cf. Moses 1:25).⁴⁶ His father Alma the Elder, like Moses anciently, “pulled” his people from the waters of baptism or rebirth (1 Corinthians 10:2) — the waters of Mormon (Mosiah 18), the pure waters (versus bitter or filthy waters) which Mormon’s text tells us symbolized “desire” or “love.”

“If This Be the Desire of Your Hearts”: The Origin and Etymology of “Mormon” and Alma’s Remotivation of Its Meaning

According to Mormon, King Noah was responsible for naming the land of Mormon and its environs: “And it came to pass that as many as did believe him did go forth to **a place which was called Mormon, having received its name from the king, being in the borders of the land** having been infested, by times or at seasons, by wild beasts” (Mosiah 18:4). Although the text here does not specifically name Noah as the king, it seems clear from the language of Mosiah 18:31 that Noah is the king alluded to in both passages (“And these things were done **in the borders of the land**, that they might not come to the knowledge of **the king**”).⁴⁷ The naming of Mormon would

Name Daniel in Particular,” in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting Typological and Historical Perspectives* (ed. Steven E. Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 270–271, especially notes 7–8.

44 See Mosiah 27:25; Alma 5:49; 7:14; cf. John 3:3, 7; 1 Peter 1:3; Moses 6:59.

45 Mosiah 27:28–29; cf. Alma 26:17; and the whole of Alma 36.

46 Moses 1:25: “And calling upon the name of God, he beheld his glory again, for it was upon him; and he heard a voice, saying: Blessed art thou, Moses, for I, the Almighty, have chosen thee, and **thou shalt be made stronger than many waters**; for they shall obey thy command as if thou wert God.” Moses (“drawer”) will “draw” or “pull” Israel out of many waters (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:2: “And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea”).

47 One could conjecture that Noah’s father Zeniff is the intended referent of “the king,” but there is no specific evidence of this and in the context of the narrative it could hardly be anybody other than Noah. Moreover, there is no

thus constitute one of the few positive aspects of Noah's reign and legacy.

But what does the name Mormon mean? In a two part study, Paul Hoskisson explored possible origins and etymologies for the name Mormon.⁴⁸ I concur with Hoskisson (and President Gordon B. Hinckley)⁴⁹ that the "more good" etymology (from the 1843 *Times and Seasons* letter) with which many Latter-day Saints are familiar, and which is often taken as authoritative, is instead figurative (i.e., the Bible is the "good" book, the Book of Mormon is a book of "more good").⁵⁰ This pseudo-etymology was formulated as satirical response to ridicule antimormon polemical treatment of the name "Mormon" such as Eber D. Howe's (1834)⁵¹ and an anonymous editorialist's (1841)⁵²

evidence that "Mormon" was the name of an earlier king who had reigned in the land of Nephi before Mosiah's departure therefrom.

48 Paul Y. Hoskisson, "What's in a Name? Mormon — Part 1" *Insights* 32/2 (2012) 2-3; idem, "What's in a Name? Mormon — Part 2" *Insights* 32/3 (2012): 2.

49 Gordon B. Hinckley, "Mormon Should Mean 'More Good,'" *Ensign*, November 1990, 51-54; Cited in Hoskisson, "What's in a Name? Mormon — Part 2," 2-3. Hoskisson credits his use of this talk to Dustin Schwanger.

50 Ibid.

51 "The English word *Mormon*, the name given to [Joseph Smith's] book, is the English termination of the Greek word, "*Mormoo*," which we find defined in an old obsolete Dictionary "*bug-bear, hob-goblin, raw head, and bloody bones*." It seems, therefore, that the writer gave his book not only a very appropriate, but classical name. His experiment upon the human mind, he thought, would be more perfect, by giving it a name, in addition to its context, which would carry upon its very face, the nature of its true character — *a fiction of hob-goblins and bug-bears*. (emphasis as in the original). Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, OH: Howe, 1834), 21. As Hoskisson ("What's in a Name? Mormon — Part 1," 2) notes, "Almost any knowledgeable reader, even in 1834, would have recognized that this definition is not only fabricated but downright silly."

52 "Any person that understands the reformed Egyptian tongue, or even has but a superficial knowledge of it, must know that the very term or word Mormon, must forever blast its pretensions to any thing like having a divine origin. I will here give you the signification of the word Mormon, and also, book of Mormon, which every person that has read a dictionary of the reformed Egyptian tongue knows to be correct.

Mormon — A writer of wicked, absurd, fictitious nonsense, for evil purposes, to make sorcerers.

Book of Mormon — A book of gross fictitious nonsense, wrote by

laughable etymologies. It makes sense, as Hoskisson notes, that the “more good” etymology offered in the 1843 *Times and Seasons* letter and which was likely penned by primarily by William W. Phelps⁵³ and “printed over the name of the prophet” was perhaps “meant to ape the flippant anti-Mormon literature of the previous ten years” since “satire is a tempting resort to satire.”⁵⁴ In other words, “more good” was almost certainly W.W. Phelps’s tongue-in cheek etymology for “Mormon” penned in the Prophet’s name. The origins of — and thus clues and evidence as to the meaning of the name “Mormon,” are instead to be sought elsewhere, including within the book itself.

As noted above, the name “Mormon” had been bestowed upon the place and waters of Mormon, by King Noah (see Mosiah 18:4, 31). One of the first comments ever made about King Noah in the cycle that deals with him, his priests, and the consequences that their policies brought upon their subjects, specifically addresses his “desires.” Mormon informs us that upon succeeding his father Zeniff, King Noah “did not keep the commandments of God, but he **did walk after the desires of his own heart**. And he had many wives and concubines. And he did cause his people to commit sin, and do that which was abominable in the sight of the Lord. Yea, and they did commit whoredoms and all manner of wickedness.” (Mosiah 11:2)

In Mosiah 16:12, Abinadi speaks tacitly of Noah and his priests in describing the wicked as having “gone according to

Mormon, for Gazelom’s diabolical purposes.

Mormons — Anciently in Egypt — a set of black-legs, thieves, robbers, and murderers.

Now, how can it be possible any person can call it divine! It is astonishing!” (emphasis and spelling as in original) “Communications,” *Warsaw Signal*, Vol. 2, No. 14 (August 11, 1841). The anonymous writer of the letter to the editor styles himself the “translator.”

53 From Joseph Smith’s journal (published in Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* [Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1989], 378) one entry states: “Saturday, May 20[th] 10 A.M. ... In the office heart Bro[ther] Phelps read a definition [sic] of the Word Mormon – More-Good – corrected and sent to press.” Cited by Hoskisson, “What’s in a Name? Mormon — Part 1,” 2.

54 Ibid.

their own carnal **wills and desires**.” In this description we hear perhaps an echo of Jacob’s unhappiness with the Nephites who under their second king “began to grow hard in their hearts, and indulge themselves somewhat in wicked practices, such as like unto David of old **desiring** many wives and concubines, and also Solomon, his son” (Jacob 1:15). Noah’s reign is, significantly, described in terms similar to Solomon’s.⁵⁵

Nephi’s account of his vision of the tree of life contrasts the “**desires** of [the] great and abominable church” (1 Nephi 13:8),⁵⁶ i.e., the “great and spacious building” (cf. Noah’s “spacious palace,” Mosiah 11:9)⁵⁷ opposite the tree of life in his vision, with the fruit of the tree of which is “**the most desirable** above all things” and the “most joyous to the soul.” Nephi knows that the transitory and ephemeral “desires” granted by the “mother of abominations”⁵⁸ are nothing compared to the “desirable[ness]” of the “love of God” made manifest in the child held in the arms of “the mother of God after the manner of the flesh”⁵⁹: the Savior Jesus Christ who made it possible for us to keep anything that is ultimately worth having, especially our families (“And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be **desirous** that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that **it was desirable desirous**⁶⁰ **above all other fruit**,” 1 Nephi 8:12).

55 E.g., Solomon’s building projects (1 Kings 9:15-23) ostensibly described as lighter on the Israelites (vs. the Canaanites, vv. 22-23), but are later revealed as oppressive to the Israelites (1 Kings 12:3-15).

56 1 Nephi 13:8: “And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold the gold, and the silver, and the silks, and the scarlets, and the fine-twined linen, and the precious clothing, and the harlots, are the desires of this great and abominable church.”

57 Also compare the list of apparel in 1 Nephi 13:8 with Lehi’s description in 1 Nephi 8:27: “And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.”

58 1 Nephi 14:9-10, 13, 16; cf. D&C 88:94.

59 1 Nephi 11:18, reading with Skousen, *Earliest Text*, 748.

60 Reading with Skousen, *Earliest Text*, 747.

The Egyptian element *mr(i)*, from which the name “Mary” is derived, is also most plausibly the first element in the name “Mormon” as Hugh Nibley proposed long ago.⁶¹ The best candidate — or the least problematic candidate — for the second element is Egyptian *mn* (“be firm, established, enduring,” “steadfast,” “remain”).⁶² Benjamin Urrutia proposes that the “Mormon” derives from a combination of *mr(i)* (“love”) + *mn* with the meaning “love established forever,”⁶³ or as Robert F. Smith phrases it, “strong/firm love” or “love remains steadfast/firm.”⁶⁴ Even if the scientific etymology differs slightly (or even greatly) from the foregoing suggestions — which I suspect are near the mark — the plausible presence of lexical elements corresponding to *mr(i)* and *mn* are sufficient to posit onomastic wordplay or play on meaning. The lexemes *mr(i)* and *mn* can, at the very least, be heard in the name “Mormon” (i.e., they are *phonologically* evident).

Bearing in mind, however, that the range of meaning (polysemy) of Egyptian *mr(i)* as a noun and verb includes both “love” and “desire,” let us observe how the name “Mormon” is first used in connection with “desire.” Mosiah 18:4 indicates that King Noah, who, as Mormon earlier informed us, “did walk after the desires of his own heart”⁶⁵ and had “gone according to [his] own carnal [will] and desires,”⁶⁶ bestowed

61 Hugh Nibley proposed “Meryamon” or “Moriamon” (“beloved of Amon”). The primary problem here is theological — the use of the Egyptian theophoric Amon. See Nibley, *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 287. Cf. also p. 500, where he also suggests a connection with Egyptian *mr*- “intention, wish, desire.” He also proposes a connection with Arabic *marām* (from the verb *rāma*), “wish, desire, craving, longing; aspiration” (see Hans Wehr, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, 4th ed., ed. J.M. Cowan [Urbana, IL: Spoken Language Services, 1994], 428). An Egyptian etymology, in any case, is to be preferred.

62 CDME, 106.

63 Benjamin Urrutia, “The Name Connection,” *New Era*, June 1983, 40; see also Hoskisson, “What’s in a Name? Mormon — Part 2,” 3.

64 Hoskisson (Ibid.) cites this as a suggestion made by Robert F. Smith, who has made numerous suggestions regarding Book of Mormon names which have been included in the Book of Mormon Onomasticon Project.

65 Mosiah 11:2.

66 Mosiah 16:12; cf. D&C 3:4.

the name “Mormon” upon “the place of Mormon” with its forests and “fountains” of “pure water” (18:5) presumably on account of the fact that their physical beauty (cf. Mosiah 18:30) educed or awakened “strong/firm desire,” “everlasting desire,” “everlasting love” or “enduring love.” If this is the case, we can be sure that Alma’s people took a higher view of what that “desire” or “love” should have been (see especially Mormon 18:8-11, 28 and discussion further below). For them, this “desire” was primarily spiritual rather than physical (cf. Abinadi’s teaching in Mosiah 15:5).

It must be significant that neither Alma nor his people make any attempt to rename “the place of Mormon,” “the waters of Mormon” or “the forest of Mormon” from what the king (Noah) had named it. In fact, the word “desire” is a *Leitwort* (leadword or key term)⁶⁷ in Alma’s baptismal speech and his articulation of the covenant that the people of his community were entering into. Alma’s speech, I propose, is not simply a covenant speech but a conscious attempt at “remotivating” the name “Mormon,” which Noah had bestowed on this locale, with connotations more in line with his community’s newfound values and more appropriate to their activities there:

And it came to pass that he said unto them: Behold, here are the waters of **Mormon** (for thus were they called) and now, as ye **are desirous to come into** the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with

67 See Martin Buber (“Leitwort Style in Pentateuch Narrative,” in *Scripture and Translation* [ed. Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig; trans. Lawrence Rosenwald and Everett Fox; ISBL; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994] 114) coined the term *Leitwort* (“lead-word,” or “guiding word”) and defines it thus: “By *Leitwort* I understand a word or word root that is meaningfully repeated within a text or a sequence of texts or complex of texts; those who attend to these repetitions will find a meaning of the text revealed or clarified, or at any rate made more emphatic. As noted, what is repeated need not be a single word but can be a word root; indeed the diversity of forms strengthens the overall dynamic effect.” See also idem, עיונים בדפוסי־סגנון בתנ”ך (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1964), 284.

those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life — Now I say unto you, **if this be the desire of your hearts**, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you? And now when the people had heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed: **This is the desire of our hearts.** (Mosiah 18:8-11)

We note that Alma's speech begins with an invocation of the name "Mormon": "Behold here are the waters of Mormon." Alma then connects the people's coming into the "waters of Mormon" with being "desirous" to "come into the fold of God" and all that these words imply in terms of bearing the burdens of other church members, mourning with and comforting them, etc. Alma then resumes, "now if I say, if this be the **desire** of your hearts," directing their attention to entering the waters of baptism that will symbolize their "enter[ing] into a covenant" in effect to "keep his commandments that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon" them (cf. 1 Nephi 11:22; 2 Nephi 31:20). In response, the people out of "joy" exclaim, "this is the desire of our hearts!" Alma's language recalls Lehi and Nephi's visions of the tree of life and the fruit which was "desirable to make one happy" (1 Nephi 8:10) and "desirous"⁶⁸ above all other fruit" (8:12) and the "love of God" which was "most desirable above all things" (11:22). It also recalls Lehi's being "desirous that [his] family should partake of [the fruit] also" (8:12).

68 Reading with Skousen, *Earliest Text*, 747.

Mormon further informs us that this baptismal covenant had the community seeing “eye to eye”⁶⁹ or with “one eye” (Mosiah 18:21) and were “at-one” in “love”: “And he commanded them that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in **love** one towards another” (Mosiah 18:21). Mormon further describes that the people were obliged to “impart of their substance of their own free will and **good desires** towards God, and to those priests that stood in need, yea, and to every needy, naked soul” (Mosiah 18:28).⁷⁰

The blessings of the covenant life experienced at Mormon were so wonderful to the 450 souls who partook of them that the place, its waters, and forest were remembered in a hymn that Mormon, who as has been noted was named after this place with its forests and waters, preserves for us:

And now it came to pass that all this was done in
Mormon, yea, by the waters of Mormon, in the forest

69 Isaiah 52:8; Mosiah 12:22; 15:29; 3 Nephi 16:18. Alma seems to have specifically had Abinadi’s use of Isaiah’s prophecy in mind when he organized his church in/at the land, forest, and waters of Mormon.

70 When the “desires” of Alma’s people go beyond those enumerated in their covenant and the covenant “love” that maintained equality and unity within their community, Alma corrects them: “And the people **were desirous** that Alma should be their king, for **he was beloved** by his people. But he said unto them: Behold, it is not expedient that we should have a king; for thus saith the Lord: **Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another**, or one man shall not think himself above another; therefore I say unto you it is not expedient that ye should have a king” (Mosiah 23:6-7). The connection between the people’s being “desirous” and Alma’s being “beloved by his people” is reminiscent of Nephi’s description of the “love of God” which is “desirable above all things” (1 Nephi 11:22), a concept which may connect to the idea of *mr(i)* as “love” and “desire.” Alma, however, knows that for the community to “esteem one flesh above another” to have one member of the community “think himself above another” would ultimately undermine the “love” of God “one towards another” (Mosiah 18:21; cf. 1 Nephi 11:22) and “good desires” that were the hallmark of their church. Alma knew that he could not be their “beloved” or their “king” (e.g., David the “beloved”). The solution was for “every man” to “love his neighbor as himself, that there should be no contention among them” (Mosiah 23:15). Their king was the “beloved Son” who was the manifestation of the “love of God.”

that was near the waters of Mormon; yea, the place of Mormon, the waters of Mormon, the forest of Mormon, how beautiful are they to the eyes of them who there came to the knowledge of their Redeemer; yea, and how blessed are they, for they shall sing to his praise forever. (Mosiah 18:30)

The hymn, in language reminiscent of Isaiah (“How beautiful upon the mountains ...” Isaiah 52:7)⁷¹ and Abinadi’s use of Isaiah, helps us understand the role of the beautiful waters, forest, and land of Mormon in fostering the enduring “desire” and abiding “love” that remained in the hearts of Alma’s people “forever.” It further helps understand just how powerful the memory of these events remained in the church that Alma himself established and that was reestablished (or reorganized) later by Jesus himself (see 3 Nephi 11–27). Mormon’s father, Mormon,⁷² was named after them — just like Mormon himself — by parents who, by then, were already living in an epoch of declining faith, hope, and charity and thus celebrated the memory and legacy of “the first church which was established among [their ancestors] after their transgression” (3 Nephi 5:12).⁷³

“Desire” also serves as a *Leitwort* in Mormon’s description of Limhi’s people who are “desirous” to become like Alma and the covenant community/church that he formed at the waters of Mormon:

And it came to pass that king Limhi and many of his people **were desirous to be baptized**; but there was none in the land that had authority from God.

71 See also 1 Nephi 13:37; Mosiah 12:21 and Abinadi’s response in Mosiah 15; 3 Nephi 20:40; D&C 128:19.

72 Mormon 1:5: “And I, Mormon, being a descendant of Nephi, (and my father’s name was Mormon) I remembered the things which Ammaron commanded me.”

73 3 Nephi 5:12: “And behold, I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon, the land in which Alma did establish the church among the people, yea, the first church which was established among them after their transgression.”

And Ammon declined doing this thing, considering himself an unworthy servant. Therefore they did not at that time form themselves into a church, waiting upon the Spirit of the Lord. Now **they were desirous to become even as Alma and his brethren**, who had fled into the wilderness. **They were desirous to be baptized as a witness and a testimony that they were willing to serve God with all their hearts**; nevertheless they did prolong the time; and an account of their baptism shall be given hereafter. (Mosiah 21:33-35)

The expression “were desirous” here recalls Alma’s covenant speech at the waters of Mormon, focusing the reader’s attention on the importance of desires. Additionally, it suggests that Mormon is not only aware of Alma’s onomastic wordplay on “Mormon” and “desire” (Mosiah 18:8-11), but that he is purposefully replicating it in his abridgment of his sources. This seems particularly appropriate given that “Mormon” was the name that our author/editor/compiler inherited specifically as a legacy of these events.

Mormon does something similar in Mosiah 25, as Limhi’s people reunite with Alma’s people and the Nephites and Mulekites of Zarahemla:

And it came to pass that after Alma had taught the people many things, and had made an end of speaking to them, that king Limhi was **desirous** that he might be **baptized**; and all his people were **desirous** that they might be **baptized** also. Therefore, Alma did go forth into the water and did **baptize** them; yea, he did **baptize** them after the manner he did his brethren **in the waters of Mormon**; yea, and as many as he did **baptize** did belong to the church of God; and this because of their belief on the words of Alma. (Mosiah 25:17-18)

Here again, Mormon stresses the connection between “desires” or “desirousness” with the name Mormon and being baptized. Here, however, they are not baptized *in* the waters of Mormon — since that opportunity was no longer available — but they are baptized “after the manner [that Alma] did baptize his brethren in the waters of Mormon. Thus they entered the same “Mormon” covenant predicated upon the same “desires” (Mosiah 18:8-11, 28).

Singing “Redeeming Love”

The impact of Alma’s people’s experiences at the waters of Mormon remains evident generations afterward. In the second generation, Alma the younger (following his own conversion experience) recalled his father Alma baptizing his people at the waters and the redemptive experiences that followed (Alma 5:3-13). Alma here and elsewhere⁷⁴ uses language reminiscent of the Exodus story to describe his father’s people’s deliverance from bondage. “And again I ask, were the bands of death broken, and the chains of hell which encircled them about, were they loosed? I say unto you, Yea, they were loosed, and their souls did expand, and they did **sing redeeming love**. And I say unto you that they are saved” (Alma 5:9); “And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to **sing the song of redeeming love**, I would ask, can ye feel so now?” (Alma 5:26). The expression “redeeming love,” while recalling God’s “love” for Israel in redeeming them from Egypt, also recalls the “desire”/“love” that Alma the Younger’s father, Alma the Elder, and the latter’s people experienced at the waters, place, and forest of Mormon (Mosiah 18:8-11, 21, 28) and the redemption from “bondage” that they experienced subsequently in the land of Helam (see Mosiah 23-24).

Ammon, once Alma’s compatriot in trying to destroy the Church, uses language similar to Alma’s description of being “born again”:

⁷⁴ Mosiah 27:16; Alma 29:11-12; Alma 36:2, 29.

Behold, how many thousands of our brethren has he loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to **sing redeeming love**, and this because of the power of his word which is in us, therefore have we not great reason to **rejoice**? Yea, we have reason to praise him forever, for he is the Most High God, and has loosed our brethren from the chains of hell. Yea, they were encircled about with everlasting darkness and destruction; but behold, he has brought them into his everlasting light, yea, into everlasting salvation; and they are **encircled about with the matchless bounty of his love**; yea, and we have been instruments in his hands of doing this great and marvelous work. (Alma 26:13-15)

God's "love" for his children (1 Nephi 11:17, 22), like the tree of life, produces "fruit" in the Lamanites in the form of "love" for their fellow human beings (2 Nephi 31:20), i.e., for their now "beloved brethren":

Now behold, we can look forth and see the fruits of our labors; and are they few? I say unto you, Nay, they are many; yea, and we can witness of their sincerity, because of their **love** towards their brethren and also towards us. For behold, they had rather sacrifice their lives than even to take the life of their enemy; and they have buried their weapons of war deep in the earth, because of their **love** towards their brethren. And now behold I say unto you, has there been so great **love** in all the land? Behold, I say unto you, Nay, there has not, even among the Nephites. For behold, they would take up arms against their brethren; they would not suffer themselves to be slain. But behold how many of these have laid down their lives; and we know that they have gone to their God, because of their **love** and of their hatred to sin. (Alma 26:31-34; see also Alma 26:9; 27:4)

The atonement of Christ also bore fruit in the form of baptism and lasting conversion. In other words, the “love” of God “remained” or “endured”: “And it came to pass when they were all baptized and had come up out of the water, the Holy Ghost did fall upon them, and they were **filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire**” (3 Nephi 19:13). The effect of baptism by water and by fire is to be “filled with **desire**” (3 Nephi 19:24), i.e., to be “filled with **love**” (see especially Moroni 7:48, and below)⁷⁵ i.e., to “be filled with **love towards God** and all men” (Mosiah 2:4; cf. 4:12), in Mormon’s words. Alma taught his son Shiblon that one needed to “bridle [one’s] passions” — one form of desire — in order to be “filled with **love**” a much higher and nobler form of “desire” or *mr(i)* (Alma 38:12; cf. 41:3). All of these expressions recall Nephi’s equation of the tree of life with “the **love** of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most **desirable** above all things” (1 Nephi 11:22; cf. 2 Nephi 4:21).

“Everlasting Love,” or, the “Love [that] Endureth Forever”

Mormon the son of Mormon’s life’s work very much consisted of “loving” broken people, most of whom were putting ever greater distance between themselves and God. If we consider, as discussed previously, that the name “Mormon” contains elements that can be rendered (or came to mean) “love is enduring” or “everlasting love” we can more fully appreciate the arc of Mormon’s life as well as all that he had to say on the subject of charity and love. Regarding the Nephite armies that he was called to lead at the age of sixteen, he said:

Behold, I had led them, notwithstanding their wickedness I had led them many times to battle, and **had loved them, according to the love of God** which was in me, with all my heart; and my soul had been poured out in prayer unto my God all the day long

⁷⁵ The expression “filled with love” is attested in 2 Nephi 4:21; Mosiah 2:4; 4:12; Alma 38:12; Moroni 7:48.

for them; nevertheless, it was without faith, because of the hardness of their hearts. (Mormon 3:12)

Mormon lived true to his name. With his society and even his church falling apart around him, Mormon chose to allow the “love of God” to abide in him, and to continue to “love.”

Mormon’s life was not only characterized by “love,” but “everlasting love” — “the pure of love of Christ” — defined it. When Mormon as leader of a failing Nephite church addressed a dwindling group of Nephite faithful on the necessity of obtaining charity as a gift of the spirit (as later recorded by Moroni), he knew whereof he spoke. To the end, both Mormon and Moroni refer to the Lamanites — the very people who slaughtered their family, kindred, and friends — as “beloved brethren.”⁷⁶ Mormon and Moroni also knew that what saved those few faithful saints individually, and what would save millions more faithful saints of a latter day collectively and individually, would be charity — the very love that God manifested toward his children — the human family (John 3:16; 1 Nephi 11:22). And so Mormon, in an apparent wordplay on his own name, authoritatively declares:

But charity is the pure **love** of Christ, and it **endureth forever**; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him. Wherefore, my **beloved** brethren, **pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love**, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ [cf. 3 Nephi 5:12-13!] ... (Moroni 7:47-48)

As reported by Moroni, Mormon here glosses “charity” for his hearers as “the pure love of Christ [which] endureth forever.” This close juxtaposition of the terms “love” and “endureth forever” fits nicely with the proposed etymology of Mormon, i.e., “love is enduring/abiding” (see above). Most readers will note the clear parallelism between Mormon’s

76 See Moroni 10:18-19.

description of charity and Paul's in 1 Corinthians 13, the "Hymn to Charity." Although Mormon clearly did not have access to Paul's writings, both men are plausibly quoting from a common source, perhaps one to which Nephi also had access on the brass plates⁷⁷ many years before Paul and Mormon. In any case, Mormon says that charity not only "endures all things" (Moroni 7:45; cf. 1 Corinthians 13:7) and "abides," but that it "endureth forever," wording that differs from Paul's version of the hymn, but still matches the semantics of the proposed wordplay involving Egyptian *mn*.⁷⁸

The description of the "pure love of Christ" recalls the covenant of "love" that Alma's people made at the "pure"⁷⁹ waters of Mormon. It also recalls the "pure" fruit of the tree of life as described by Alma the Younger: "behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and **pure above all that is pure**; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled" (Alma 32:42). Additionally, Mormon's language recalls Jacob 3:2, "O all

77 cf. 2 Nephi 26; 31–33, which redound with language and themes found in the Hymn to Charity.

78 The Hymn to Charity in 1 Corinthians 13 describes how charity "endureth [*hypomenei*] all things" (v. 7) and "abideth [*menei*]." Both verbs, derive from Greek *menō* ("remain, stay; "continue," "abide" (see Fredrick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001], 630–631). cf. Latin *maneo*, which has virtually the same range of meaning as Greek *menō* and, like the latter, may be related to Egyptian *mn*. It would thus also be related to Hebrew **mn*. English "permanent" derives from Latin *permaneo*, a form of the same verb, whose semantic range overlaps with Egyptian *mn* ("be firm, established, enduring," "steadfast," "remain"; see CMDE, 106). The former seems to either derive from or be related to the latter, and both seem to be related to the Hebrew verbal root **mn* (Cf. John Tvedtnes's discussion of **mn* in "Notes and Communications: Faith and Truth," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/2 (1994): 114–17), which has the basic meaning "to be firm, trustworthy, safe" and thus "to remain faithful ... to be permanent, endure" (HALOT, 63–65). If Nephi and Mormon had access to an earlier version of this hymn it is not implausible that such a version contained the word or phoneme *mn* (and perhaps too the word *mr(i)*, although any such scenario is admittedly very speculative at best.

79 See Mosiah 18:5.

ye that are **pure** in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and **feast upon his love**; for ye may, if your minds are **firm**, forever.” Like the latter passage, Mormon’s speech on faith, hope, and charity recalls Nephi’s vision of the tree of life and Nephi’s formulation of the gospel derived from his vision of the tree: “Wherefore, ye must press forward with **steadfastness** in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a **love of God and of all men**. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and **endure** to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20). This passage particularly influenced Mormon’s speech in Mormon 7.

In addition to his definition of charity recorded in Moroni 7:47-48 (“love ... [that] endureth forever”), Mormon similarly defines and describes charity in a letter written to his son Moroni on the subject of the baptizing of small children:

Behold, I speak with boldness, having authority from God; and I fear not what man can do; for **perfect love** casteth out all fear. And I am filled with **charity**, which is **everlasting love** (cf. “Mormon”); wherefore, all children are alike unto me; wherefore, **I love** little children with a **perfect love**; and they are all alike and partakers of salvation. (Moroni 8:16-17)

Here Mormon glosses “charity” as “everlasting love” which, again, suggests that the words being used for both — whatever they were — are not the same. Speaking with divine “authority,” Mormon speaks as if he were the Lord himself. Like Jesus’s disciples in 3 Nephi who are “filled with desire” (3 Nephi 19:24), of which he is now one (3 Nephi 5:12-13), Mormon is “filled with ... everlasting love” — the meaning of his name — the “love” which “sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men” (1 Nephi 11:22) empowers Mormon to address the issue with boldness.

We note that in the first letter from Mormon to Moroni (Moroni 8) the specific issue is who should be baptized, an issue which inevitably recalls the events at the waters of Mormon

and the covenant of “love” and unity (“one eye,” “one baptism”) that was based on the good “desires” of the heart (Mosiah 18:8-11, 21, 28). Since the smallest children are “whole from the foundation of the world” and do not have “desires” for baptism unto repentance, there is no need to baptize them:

Behold, my son, this thing ought not to be; for repentance is unto them that are under condemnation and under the curse of a broken law. And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins; And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter **fillet**h with hope and **perfect love, which love endureth** by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God. (Moroni 8:24-26)

Mormon’s description of repentance and baptism as prerequisites to the reception of the Holy Ghost or Comforter which “fillet with hope and perfect love” and his statement that “love endureth by diligence unto prayer” is a deliberate allusion to and summation of his ancestor Nephi’s teachings on the doctrine of Christ (2 Nephi 31-32, especially 31:20). It is also a reminder of the “love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men” (1 Nephi 11:22).

Importantly, Moroni also preserves a second letter from his father Mormon which captures just how depraved Nephite society had become. Where Alma’s church at the waters of Mormon had been characterized by their good “desires” toward God (Mosiah 18:8-11, 28) and “love” (18:21), Nephite society — a part from the few “peaceable followers of Christ”⁸⁰ — is now entirely absent of it: “For so exceedingly do they anger that it seemeth me that they have no fear of death; and they have **lost**

80 Moroni 7:3-4.

their love, one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually” (Moroni 9:5).

Thus a linking term shared by all three texts authored by (or spoken by) Mormon included by Moroni at the end of his record is the word “love.” In both Moroni 7 and 8, Mormon describes the “love” requisite for eternal life in terms that match the most plausible etymology and meaning of “Mormon,” i.e., “love [that] endureth” or “everlasting love” (Moroni 7:47; 8:17, 26). Moroni 9:5 on the other hand emphasizes that the Nephites have entirely “lost” this “love.” It is reasonable, then, to surmise that not only is Moroni conscious of his father’s use of this term in connection with the latter’s own name, but that Moroni uses “love” as his basis for linking all three texts.

We see supporting evidence for this in Ether chapter 12, where Moroni discusses faith, hope, and charity in the context of the self-destruction of the Jaredite nation — a Gentile nation⁸¹ which, like the Israelite Nephites, had utterly lost its “love.” Moroni knows that the only hope for the latter-day Gentiles is for them to obtain charity, “the love of God” (1 Nephi 11:22) or the “pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47):

And again, I remember that thou hast said that **thou hast loved the world**, even unto the laying down of thy life for the world, that thou mightest take it again to prepare a place for the children of men. And now **I know that this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity**; wherefore, except men shall have **charity** they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy Father. Wherefore, I know by this thing which

81 The Lord said to the Brother of Jared regarding the promised land to which he was leading them: “And there will I bless thee and thy seed, and raise up unto me of thy seed, and of the seed of thy brother, and they who shall go with thee, a great **nation**. And there shall be **none greater** than the **nation** which I will raise up unto me of thy seed, upon all the face of the earth. And thus I will do unto thee because this long time ye have cried unto me. Ether 1:43 sets the Jaredites up as a kind of type of the “mighty nation among the Gentiles” spoken of by Nephi in 1 Nephi 22:7.

thou hast said, that if the Gentiles have not **charity**, because of our weakness, that thou wilt prove them, and take away their talent, yea, even that which they have received, and give unto them who shall have more abundantly. And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have **charity**. And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: If they have not **charity** it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore, thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father. And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto **my brethren whom I love**, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood. (Ether 12:33-38)

Mormon and Moroni had witnessed with their own eyes how their own people “lost their love” (Moroni 9:5). Like the house of Israel, the Gentiles reject Christ, but for different reasons. The Gentiles have a problem: pride⁸² and a lack of charity. Both Mormon and Moroni knew that pride, a lack of charity, and the concomitant loss of love necessarily results in the entire destruction of a society if not reversed.

Moroni’s description of the “love which thou hast had for the children of men” echoes Nephi’s description of the “love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things” (1 Nephi 11:22). Like Nephi, Moroni knows that the solution for all of us — and especially for Zion — is charity, “which charity is love.” Except we “should have charity” we are, like the Nephites in the end, “nothing” (2 Nephi 26:30; Moroni 7:44, 46).⁸³

⁸² See especially Mormon 8:36.

⁸³ See also 1 Corinthians 13:2-3; D&C 18:19.

To the end Moroni could say “my brethren whom I love,” which made him the worthy successor of his father Mormon: he had lived up to his father’s name. As “Mormons,” as the world is wont to call us, we can and ought to do likewise.

Conclusion

Nephi’s account of his vision of the tree of life emphasizes “desires” and the “love of God” as manifest in the incarnation of Jesus Christ through Mary as being the “most desirable above all things” (1 Nephi 11:22). The connection between “love” and “desire” in this instance may in fact turn on the polysemy (range of meaning) of the Egyptian lexeme *mr(i)* (“love,” “desire”) from which the name Mary is derived. Similarly, Alma’s covenant speech at waters of “Mormon” (“love/desire is enduring”) (“everlasting love”) also emphasizes the “desires” of the heart requisite for entry into a covenant community unified by “love” (Mosiah 18:8-11, 21, 28), which is diametrically opposite the “desires” of King Noah’s heart, who originally named the land, waters, and forest of Mormon. This suggests that Alma and his people consciously re-motivated the name “Mormon” in terms of the covenant they made and the experiences they had in the environs of the waters, forest, and land of Mormon. Centuries later, Mormon’s descriptions of charity as “the love of Christ” which “endureth forever” and “everlasting love” become more meaningful when the proposed etymology of and onomastic play on “Mormon” are considered.

All of this has practical implications for us as Latter-day Saints or “Mormons.” Being a “Mormon” is not simply a matter of living up to the standard of being “more good” though that is important, but also a matter of aligning our “desires” with God’s will and to have those “desires” reflected in our covenant obedience, as Alma the Elder and his people learned (Mosiah 18; 23-24). Alma the Younger learned that “desires” needed to be disciplined (Alma 29:4-7; cf. Alma 38:12). Like Mormon and Moroni, we need to be filled with “everlasting love” (Moroni 8:17) or “charity,” particularly in a world of declining faith, when sometimes it seems things are falling down around

us and others are losing their “love.” This “love” motivated God the Father to send us his Son (1 Nephi 11:17, 22) and it motivated the Savior to lay down his life for us (2 Nephi 26:24). It will similarly motivate us to place on the altar whatever is necessary. To be a “Mormon” in the 21st century should mean, inasmuch as it is possible, to always be filled with “everlasting love,” “love [that] endureth” (Moroni 7:47; 8:26) or the “pure love of Christ” (7:47) and to “endure” in that love to the end. At that time, we will not only “be judged according to [our] works ... [but] the desires of our hearts” (Alma 41:3). Though iniquity abounds, our “love” as Latter-day Saints must not “wax cold” (Matthew 24:12; D&C 45:27; JS-M 1:10, 30).

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CRACKING THE BOOK OF MORMON'S “SECRET COMBINATIONS”?

Gregory L. Smith

Abstract: The Book of Mormon has been explained by some as a product of Joseph Smith's 19th century environment. Advocates of this thesis have argued that the phrase secret combinations is a reference to Freemasonry, and reflects Joseph's preoccupation with this fraternity during the Book of Mormon's composition in 1828–29. It is claimed that this phrase is rarely, if ever, used in a non-Masonic context during 1828–29, and that a type of “semantic narrowing” occurred which restricted the term to Freemasonry. Past studies have found a few counter-examples, which are reviewed, but none from during the precise years of interest. This study describes many newly-identified counterexamples, including: anti-Masonic authors who use the term to refer to non-Masonic groups, books translated in the United States, legislature bills, grand jury instructions, and works which so characterize slave rebellions, various historical groups and movements, Biblical figures, and religious groups. These examples are found before, during, and after the critical 1828–29 period. Examples from 1832 onward likewise demonstrate that no semantic shift occurred which restricted secret combination to Masonry. This element of the environmental hypothesis has now been robustly disproven.

Introduction¹

I developed my taste for debates in Mormon historiography when, as a teen, I encountered Daniel Peterson's response to Dan Vogel's theory that the Book of Mormon included

1 My thanks to Benjamin McGuire, Lou Midgley, Daniel C. Peterson, and Matthew Roper for comments and assistance on a previous draft of this paper. Any errors remain my own, and I hope to address other areas which they raised in a future paper.

"anti-Masonick" polemic.² A centerpiece of this debate was the term *secret combinations* which Vogel argued had a nearly exclusive Masonic connotation following the William Morgan hysteria of 1826. "At the time of the Book of Mormon's publication," he wrote, "the term 'secret combinations' was used almost exclusively to refer to Freemasonry."³

Vogel's account is marred by his persistence in referring to those who differ with him as "apologists."⁴ Such writers are not portrayed as having genuine, potentially well-founded differences of opinion about the historical evidence. Instead, one is said to differ with Vogel only because of theological baggage: "Resistance among Mormon scholars to the anti-Masonic interpretation, in my opinion, is theologically, not historically motivated."⁵ One wonders how far Vogel would entertain the claim that authors hostile to the Church's truth claims have theological (or a-theological) luggage of their own which might equally skew their weighting of the historical evidence.⁶ Furthermore, to characterize D. Michael Quinn's

2 Dan Vogel, "Mormonism's 'Anti-Masonick Bible,'" *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 9 (1989): 17–30. Vogel would later reply to his critics in "Echoes of Anti-Masonry: A Rejoinder to the Critics of the Anti-Masonic Thesis," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 275–320. Those interested in the history of the debate should consult Nathan Oman, "'Secret Combinations': A Legal Analysis," *FARMS Review* 16/1 (2004): 49–52, <http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1458&index=5>, and the references contained therein.

3 Vogel, "Mormonism's 'Anti-Masonick Bible,'" 18.

4 Vogel, "Echoes of Anti-Masonry," 275. See also his discussion of "[Blake] Ostler's apologetic" (276), description of Daniel C. Peterson's article as "the current apologetic against the anti-Masonic interpretation" (276), dismissal of Peterson's "apologetic aside" (284), and reference to "Apologetic Neglect" and the claim that "Apologists have focused their attention on the Gadianton bands" (307).

5 Vogel, "Mormonism's 'Anti-Masonick Bible,'" 29.

6 Vogel contrasts Peterson's and D. Michael Quinn's claims, for example, with "[t]he position taken by Michael Homer," which "is more intellectually honest and apologetically advantageous" (Vogel, "Echoes of Anti-Masonry," 299). Thus, to be an "apologist" is also — in Vogel's telling — to be less than intellectually honest, and some apologists apparently cannot even recognize a useful apologetic when they see it.

work as *apologetic* seems lexically strained, to say the least.⁷ Quinn is many things, but he is hardly a Mormon apologist, save in the sense that all authors — including Vogel — are apologists. That is, they provide a reasoned defense of their thesis regarding a given question.⁸ Vogel's loaded terminology seems yet another example of those who dispute the Church's truth claims portraying themselves as "objective," "scholarly," and "historical," while those who differ are merely theologically motivated, intellectually dishonest "apologists."⁹

7 Vogel, "Echoes of Anti-Masonry," 299. As Stephen Robinson observed of Quinn's book, "Although he is a Latter-day Saint, and despite his modest statement of faith in the introduction (xviii–xix), Quinn is clearly no LDS apologist. There is not a single page of the main text that would appear to be motivated by loyalty to the LDS church or its doctrines or to be apologetic of the Church's interests." [Stephen E. Robinson, "Review of *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, by D. Michael Quinn," *Brigham Young University Studies* 27/4 (Fall 1987): 88, page 2 of reprint: <https://byustudies.byu.edu/showTitle.aspx?title=7502>.]

8 See Daniel C. Peterson, "An Unapologetic Apology for Apologetics," *FARMS Review* 22/2 (2010): ix–xlvi, <http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1467&index=1> and "The Witchcraft Paradigm: On Claims to 'Second Sight' by People Who Say It Doesn't Exist," *FARMS Review* 18/2 (2006): ix–lxiv, <http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1460&index=1>.

9 See Martin E. Marty, "Two Integritys: An Address to the Crisis in Mormon Historiography," in *Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History*, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1992), 169–87 and David Earle Bohn, "Unfounded Claims and Impossible Expectations: A Critique of New Mormon History," in the same volume, 227–56. See also Massimo Introvigne, "The Book of Mormon Wars: A Non-Mormon Perspective," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (1996): 1–25, <http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1391&index=1>. Louis C. Midgley has also treated this theme extensively: "The Challenge of Historical Consciousness: Mormon History and the Encounter with Secular Modernity," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:502–51; Louis Midgley, "The Current Battle over the Book of Mormon: Review of *The Word of God Is Enough: The Book of Mormon as Nineteenth-Century Scripture* by Anthony A. Hutchinson," *FARMS Review of Books* 6/1 (1994): 200–254; "Atheists and Cultural Mormons Promote a Naturalistic Humanism: 'Is Modernity Itself Somehow Canonical?' (Review of *The Word of God Is Enough: The Book of Mormon as Nineteenth-Century Scripture* by Anthony A. Hutchinson)," *Review of Books* 7/1 (1995): 229–297; "Directions That Diverge: 'Jerusalem and Athens' Revisted (Review of *The Ancient State: The Rulers and the Ruled* by Hugh Nibley)," *FARMS Review of Books* 11/1 (1999): 27–87; "Comments on Critical Exchanges

Even as a callow youth, I was immediately suspicious of Vogel's theory because of the difficulty in proving a negative. No one contests the fact that the term *secret combinations* could be and was applied to the Masons — but Vogel's language parallel is compelling only if there is scant use of the term in a non-Masonic context in Joseph's era. Peterson reported that Vogel and Brent Metcalfe later claimed "that the phrase 'secret combination' was *never* used at the time of the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon, except to refer to Freemasonry."¹⁰ Vogel replied:

What I said was that after extensive reading in the primary pre-1830 sources, I had been unable to find another use for the term and doubted that one would be found. I remain skeptical, but wisdom dictates that the door be left open slightly in case someone on the margins of popular nineteenth-century culture happened to have used the term in a non-Masonic context.¹¹

This seems to me a significant potential flaw, or at least reason for caution — I am leery of theories that rely solely on negative evidence (such as the claim that something never appears in print), especially when counter-evidence is difficult to access.¹² I suspect Vogel has read far more early 19th century primary sources than I have — and so, who am I (or most readers) to gainsay him? But, on the other hand, how exhaustive can his — or anyone's — search really have been?

(Review of: 'A Hard Day for Professor Midgley: An Essay for Fawn McKay Brodie' by Glen J. Hettinger)," *FARMS Review of Books* 13/1 (2001): 91–126; and "The Acids of Modernity and the Crisis in Mormon Historiography," in *Faithful History*, 189–215.

10 Daniel C. Peterson, "'Secret Combinations' Revisited," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 184–85n5, emphasis added.

11 Vogel, "Echoes of Anti-Masonry," 318n75.

12 In other contexts, Vogel appreciates the weakness of the argument from silence, rebuking one author who "reads too much into Campbell's later neglect of the Book of Mormon since Campbell came to ignore the subject of Mormonism altogether" (Vogel, "Echoes of Anti-Masonry," 278).

Past Efforts to Disprove the Negative

Some authors have attempted to undermine Vogel's thesis in part by locating uses of *secret combinations* from prior to the anti-Masonic panic of 1826 or uses which post-date the panic which clearly refer to something besides Masonry. Early on, Daniel Peterson understood the necessity of a search of the primary sources:

What is needed, before we can confidently declare that the phrase "secret combination" was never used in non-Masonic contexts in the 1820s and 1830s, is a careful search of documents from that period of American history *that have nothing to do with the controversy surrounding the Masons*. This has not yet been done. Nevertheless, there is good reason already to predict that such a survey would not support Vogel's claim.¹³

Peterson reported on 10 instances of the phrase *secret combinations* located by John Welch via "a search of those nineteenth-century federal and state court opinions available on computer."¹⁴

Peterson's finds were, admittedly, less than ideal for resolving the issue, since his earliest example dated to 1850: "I can only sadly agree that the laborious task of combing the unindexed and noncomputerized legal and other records of the first half of the nineteenth century remains to be done."¹⁵

Despite these limitations, Peterson predicted that "the apparently widespread use of the phrase 'secret combinations' ... leads me confidently to expect that the phrase was common in the earlier period as well."¹⁶ (His optimism was rewarded

13 Daniel C. Peterson, "Notes on 'Gadanton Masonry,'" in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 191, emphasis in original, <http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1108&index=10>.

14 Peterson, "Notes on 'Gadanton Masonry,'" 191–94.

15 Peterson, "Notes on 'Gadanton Masonry,'" 194.

16 Peterson, "Notes on 'Gadanton Masonry,'" 194.

when, two years later, he found an example from 1826 that applied the term to Andrew Jackson in a non-Masonic context.¹⁷) Vogel would dismiss this evidence, agreeing with D. Michael Quinn that

Given the possible “sarcastic use of an anti-Masonic phrase by one Freemason against another,” ... Jackson’s 1826 letter “does not support Peterson’s claim that the letter ‘definitively’ disproves all claims for the exclusively anti-Masonic use of the phrase ‘secret combination.’”¹⁸

(We note, incidentally, how vulnerable Vogel’s stance is — he must explain away *any* contrary evidence, for even a few counter-examples weaken his thesis substantially.)

Peterson’s prediction was in part borne out by Nathan Oman’s discovery of legal uses of the term *combination* in cases from the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and two examples of *secret combinations* in 1819 and 1825.¹⁹ “Even if Peterson’s hoped for evidence did exist,” Vogel was quick to reply to Welch’s and Peterson’s legal finds, “Legalese was not the language of Joseph Smith, nor was it the language of his intended audience. It seems fruitless to search legal archives for exceptions to the interpretive rule that clearly dominated Smith’s cultural milieu.”²⁰ Writing later, Oman conceded that “legal writing can be turgid,” and “we should be cautious in generalizing about ordinary language on the basis of legal materials,” but argued that Vogel’s “assum[ption] that all judicial opinions can be dismissed as irrelevant ‘legalese’ is “simplistic.”²¹ Oman also provided additional examples of *secret combinations* from the

17 Peterson, “‘Secret Combinations’ Revisited,” 184–188.

18 Vogel, “Echoes of Anti-Masonry,” 301–302, citing D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 2nd rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 202, 511–12n216.

19 Oman, “Secret Combinations: A Legal Analysis,” 61–63.

20 Vogel, “Echoes of Anti-Masonry,” 301.

21 Oman, “Secret Combinations: A Legal Analysis,” 66; Oman’s analysis and argument extend from 64–70.

two decades following the Book of Mormon's publication.²² More recently, Ben McGuire provided details of an electronic database search for the term *secret combinations* that did not mention *mason* or *freemason*, though he did not examine specific quotes in context.²³

In 2003, Paul Mourtisen noted of the claims of verbal dependence that "the term secret combinations is more distinctive and deserves closer scrutiny."²⁴ He contested the strength of the newspaper evidence presented by Vogel and others:

In support of these claims, such authors point to seven occurrences of the term found in four upstate New York newspapers between 1827 and 1829.

At first this list may look impressive, but aspects of timing and location do not match up with what we know of Joseph Smith's whereabouts during the same period. Indeed, on closer examination, it is most unlikely that any occurrences of the term could have directly influenced the Book of Mormon. The first instance of the term *secret combination* occurred in March 1827 in a newspaper published in Batavia, New York, about 60 miles from Palmyra. Three more instances appeared in Palmyra newspapers in July, November, and December of 1828. At that time Joseph Smith was living not in Palmyra but in Harmony, Pennsylvania, a distance of two or three days' travel. The remaining three occurrences were published in Palmyra newspapers

22 Oman, "Secret Combinations: A Legal Analysis," 63–64.

23 Benjamin L. McGuire, "Finding Parallels: Some Cautions and Criticisms," [Part 2] 5 *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* (2013): 74n14, www.mormoninterpreter.com/finding-parallels-some-cautions-and-criticisms-part-two.

24 Paul Mourtisen, "Secret Combinations and Flaxen Cords: Anti-Masonic Rhetoric and the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/1 (2003): 67, <http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1402&index=7>, emphasis in original.

in September, October, and November of 1829, several months after the translation was completed and the copyright secured and while the printing was under way. Therefore, the argument that Joseph Smith adopted the term from anti-Masonic writings cannot be sustained by these sources. It will stand only if it can be shown that these newspaper articles are representative of a wider range of anti-Masonic writings, yet to be identified, that Joseph Smith might reasonably be expected to have read.

But even that idea is a matter of some uncertainty. In 1830 James Creighton Odiorne published a collection of popular anti-Masonic writings entitled *Opinions on Speculative Masonry*. This 280-page anthology included 29 speeches, sermons, editorials, and letters by various anti-Masonic writers from New York and Massachusetts, most of which had previously circulated in pamphlet form. Yet in this entire collection the term *secret combination* occurs only once.¹⁰ If the term were a generally understood code name for Freemasonry, it is difficult to explain why it is almost absent from a book of this kind.²⁵

Mourtisen went on to present more court documents (50 uses in the 19th century, including six prior to 1850),²⁶ and selections from the Internet and the “Making of America Collection at the University of Michigan and Cornell University.”²⁷ He provides a total of 24 examples (with some overlap from previous studies) from 1709–1850, with at most two references to the Freemasons (1830 and 1835). Unfortunately, there were no uses of the term from the key period of 1826–1830 that did not mention freemasonry (the sole example, from 1830, *did* mention the fraternity).²⁸ A few of his early examples (e.g., David

25 Mourtisen, “Secret Combinations,” 67, emphasis in original.

26 Mourtisen, “Secret Combinations,” 68.

27 Mourtisen, 68.

28 Mourtisen, Table 1, 71.

Hume) come from British works which may be less helpful in evaluating any distinctive patterns in early American usage.

I thus find myself as a dwarf straining to peer over the shoulders of giants — but, in this case, the dwarf has a secret weapon: Google Books.

Description of the Current Study

It occurred to me that Peterson's wish for more digitized records — which I remembered from my first encounter with this issue in 1990 — is now a reality, beyond even the resources available to Mourtisen or Oman. In 2004, web search giant Google began a massive project to digitize 15 million volumes within a decade (and, by April 2013, they had succeeded in scanning twice that).²⁹ Several American and international libraries cooperated in the effort, so a vast variety of publications are now available and searchable through optical character recognition. It is thus almost a trivial exercise to search any range of dates for any textual string, and I did so.

I was surprised at the number and variety of uses of *secret combination/s* between 1750 and 1832. I here report on my findings. I make no claim to have been exhaustive.³⁰ But the present results are sufficient, I believe, to convince all but the most ideologically driven that *secret combinations* referred to a far broader range of groups than Masonry, both before, during, and after the Morgan panic of 1826. It is simply no longer tenable to claim that this phrase is a clear indicator of Masonic influence or intent on the part of an author in the late 1820s. I will describe three groups of documents: (1) anti-Masonic documents that nevertheless challenge Vogel's reading; (2) general documents from 1782–1832; and (3) documents treating religious subjects.

29 Wikipedia contributors, "Google Books," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Books (accessed 25 July 2014).

30 McGuire and I independently thought to search the Google Books database; see his discussion in note 23 above.

Group 1 — Anti-Masonic Usage

To be sure, many examples of the term are available in the anti-Masonic literature. Despite the fairly broad claims sometimes made by Vogel, he elsewhere makes the more restrained claim that “in the context of the 1828 U.S. presidential campaign, the phrase [*secret combinations*] had become politically charged, not that anti-Masons had invented the phrase.”³¹ “The term ... did not take on its full anti-Masonic meaning until 1827–28.”³² Thus, the most probative evidence, in Vogel’s view, would involve the late 1820s and early 1830s. I will call this period, during which Vogel hypothesizes a semantic narrowing to refer only to Masons, the “anti-Masonic watershed.” (We recall that the gap in examples provided by Mourtisen occurs in precisely this range of dates — a good example of how the contingent nature of which documents are available for digital searching can impact the dataset.)

What is intriguing, however, is that even some of the anti-Masonic usage during the watershed makes it clear that *secret combinations* does not refer to Masonry exclusively. Not only do the authors use the phrase to refer to freemasonry, but they continue to use it to apply to other groups as well — which is the exact opposite of what we ought to see if the anti-Masonic press converted the phrase into one which referred only to the Masons.

In one example whose hysteria is typical of the genre, the author suggests that American citizens of 1827 ought to

amend ... our constitutions, both state and federal, so that no man should be allowed to hold any office of honour or profit, under them, who would not, in assuming the duties of it, swear to and subscribe a declaration — in addition to the oath or oaths now in use — *that he was not then a MEMBER, and would*

31 Vogel, “Echoes of Anti-Masonry,” 300.

32 Vogel, “Echoes of Anti-Masonry,” 302.

*not thereafter become ONE of any SECRET, SELF-CREATED COMBINATION whatsoever.*³³

As worried as this author is about Masonry, he clearly believes that a wide variety of “secret, self-created combinations” are present and future risks: one should not join “any ... whatsoever.” He appeals to Washington’s farewell address, claiming that the first president urged his countrymen to “BEWARE OF SECRET ASSOCIATIONS, under whatever plausible character.”³⁴ The anti-Masonic author then goes on to ask, “When we hear him [Washington] uttering a farewell warning to his countrymen, to BEWARE OF SECRET COMBINATIONS, what are we to suppose he means?... *What SECRET COMBINATION existed in our country at that time, except MASONRY?*”³⁵

Vogel cites a similar example, also from 1827, which asks “Do not these words [of Washington’s] ... point with an index that cannot be mistaken, to the society of Freemasons?”³⁶ Vogel then argues that since the “Anti-Masons had ... expanded on Washington’s own words [by adding *secret* to *combination*]³⁷ to make it appear that he agreed with them,” this implies that “[I]n such an environment, the Book of Mormon’s use of the phrase

33 Solomon Southwick, *A Solemn Warning Against Free-masonry: Addressed to the Young Men of the United States: With an Appendix Containing the Correspondence Between Eliphalet Murdock, of Le Roy, Genesee County, N.Y. and the Author, Relating to the Supposed Murder of Mr. Murdock's Father, Through Masonic Vengeance, at Rensselaerville, in the County of Albany, in October, 1803 — and Several Other Interesting Matters* (Albany, 1827), 53, emphasis in original, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=CioiAAAAMAAJ> and <https://archive.org/details/asolemnwarninga00murdgoog>.

34 Southwick, *A Solemn Warning*, 54, emphasis in original.

35 Southwick, *A Solemn Warning*, 54, emphasis, emphasis, and material in square brackets present in original.

36 Vogel, “Echoes of Anti-Masonry,” 300; citing *Ontario Phoenix*, 31 March 1830, referencing *Morgan Investigator*, published in Batavia, New York, 29 March 1827. The *Ontario Phoenix* was, Vogel notes, edited by future Mormon, W. W. Phelps.

37 Note that Washington’s address only uses the terms “combinations and associations, under whatever plausible character,” [Transcript of President George Washington’s Farewell Address (1796), <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=15&page=transcript>].

would have been understood as an unmistakable reference to Freemasonry.”³⁸

But, the example which I introduce above undercuts this view — in my example, the anti-Masonic author adds the word *secret* to both of Washington’s terms: *combinations* and *associations*. Are we to conclude, then, that *secret associations* was *another* code word for Masonry? It would appear not, because the author insists that there were not any *other* secret combinations in Washington’s era, so Washington must have meant the Masons — but his need to make such a claim is implicit evidence that the phrase *secret combination* was already broadly understood by his audience to apply to any of a number of nefarious organizations or practices.

For the anti-Masonic polemic to succeed, then, the author must make the more general warning from Washington (a Mason) apply only to Masonry. But he does not do this by putting a term that “everyone knows” means the freemasons in Washington’s mouth, instead, he uses the term, and then insists that there were no other candidates for this group *but* the freemasons.

The anti-Masonic political parties likewise provide evidence for the proposition that *secret combinations* did not apply uniquely to Masonry. The Connecticut state convention reported one resolution in 1830, well-after Vogel’s anti-Masonic usage is supposed to have been established:

Resolved That all secret “combinations of men under whatsoever plausible character,”³⁹ have a direct tendency to control and to counteract the regular deliberations and actions of the constitutional authorities. They serve to organize faction, to give it an artificial and extraordinary force, and to put in the place of the delegated will of the nation the will

38 Vogel, “Echoes of Anti-Masonry,” 300.

39 Note again the citation of Washington’s farewell address. Only a portion appears in quotation marks in the original, but the entire paragraph is virtually the same as the Washington address.

— of a small, but oftentimes, artful and enterprising minority of the community.⁴⁰

Once again we see a tacit acknowledgement that the term has a much broader meaning than Masonry, since “*all* secret combinations,” regardless of how “plausible” they may appear, are a threat to liberty. Such a declaration would be pointless if *secret combination* was not understood to have a much broader application.

And, *all* such groups will be repudiated by those who reject Masonry:

This principle, political Antimasonry, induces men to study; it brings home to the voters of our country, the question of the tendency of *secret societies*: and when that question is understandingly put, they will decide *against the mystic brotherhoods of every name*, with overwhelming majorities.⁴¹

In 1830 — well after both the watershed and the dictation of the Book of Mormon — a fourth anti-Masonic work wrote:

The Jesuits were a *secret combination* of men. It was this “which principally contributed to extend their power.” Their pernicious influence in society was extended and prolonged by the means of their secret compact. Herein is seen, the dangerous tendency of secret societies in a community. It has been the same principle of secret combination, which has extended and prolonged the power and pernicious influence of Freemasonry.⁴²

40 *Proceedings of the Antimasonic State Convention of Connecticut: Held at Hartford, Feb. 3, and 4, 1830* (Packard and Butler, 1830), 13, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=rvExAQAAMAAJ>.

41 Henry Dana Ward (editor), “Antimasonic Convention of the State of Connecticut, held at Hartford, Feb. 3, 1828,” *The Anti-Masonic Review and Magazine* 2/3 (New York: Vanderpool & Cole, 1828), 93, emphasis added, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=oARAAQAAMAAJ&pg=RA1-PA93>.

42 A Citizen of Massachusetts, *A Poem in Three Cantos. Accompanied with notes, illustrative of the History, Policy, Principles, &c. of the Masonic Institution*

Here the Jesuits — a Catholic religious order — are characterized as a secret combination, and used as an illustration to help the reader appreciate the threat of *another* secret combination: freemasonry. But this occurs at least two years after Vogel has told us that the anti-Masonic usage was established and exclusive, demonstrating that even among anti-Masonic authors, the usage wasn't exclusive at all.

Also in 1830, an anti-Masonic state convention discussed a

committee appointed...for the *sole* purpose of diffusing information extensively on the subject of freemasonry, *and other secret combinations* against the equal rights of mankind and our free institutions. ...

...the great object of this convention is, to eradicate the evils of freemasonry, *and other secret societies*. To effectuate this purpose, information of the nature, tendency, and principles of all secret societies, but especially of the masonic institution, must be laid before the world. ...

All that has been said against freemasonry, will apply, to a certain extent *to all secret societies*. They are dangerous to all governments, but especially to those that are free.⁴³

Freemasonry is, quite simply, only one of many “other secret combinations,” which functions as a synonym for “secret societies.” This convention likewise resolved that “a Committee of correspondence be appointed, whose duty it shall be to correspond...for the purpose of diffusing information on the subject of freemasonry, *and other secret combinations* against

(Leicester: Samuel A. Whittemore, 1830), 132, emphasis in original, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=AVUpAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA132>.

43 Mr. Todd, “United States Anti-Masonic Convention,” *The Proceedings of the United States Anti-Masonic Convention*, Philadelphia, 11 September 1830, 77–78, emphasis added, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=CYFJAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA77>.

the equal rights of mankind, and our free institutions. ...”⁴⁴

Another committee was

to report what measures can constitutionally and properly be used, to effectuate the extinction of freemasonry; to guard against its revival; and to secure our free institutions against the future insidious assaults *of all secret societies*. ...

diffusing information extensively on the subject of freemasonry, *and of other secret combinations*, against the equal rights of mankind and our free institutions.⁴⁵

Those who early resisted freemasonry were lauded, since “There are few men in any age, who, at a time like that, and surrounded as they were, would not have shrunk back from the impending responsibility of their situation. They stood isolated and alone. There were *no surrounding combinations* to cheer and sustain them in their course.”⁴⁶ Thus, even a hypothetical group arrayed in *opposition* to freemasonry might well be a combination — though presumably not a “secret” one.

Clearly, *secret combination* had a much broader lexical range than Vogel has been willing to grant, even among anti-Masonics, even after 1827–28. And this usage ranges smoothly from the anti-Masonic movement’s early days, through the period of the Book of Mormon’s translation, and afterward.

44 Mr. Todd, “United States Anti-Masonic Convention,” *The Proceedings of the United States Anti-Masonic Convention*, Philadelphia, 11 September 1830, 77–78, emphasis added, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=CYFJAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA77>.

45 “United States Anti-Masonic Convention,” *The Proceedings of the United States Anti-Masonic Convention*, Philadelphia, 11 September 1830, 6, emphasis added, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=CYFJAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA6>.

46 “Debates and Discussions in the United States Anti-Masonic Convention Held at Philadelphia, September 11, 1830,” *The Proceedings of the United States Anti-Masonic Convention*, Philadelphia, 11 September 1830, 11, emphasis added, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=CYFJAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA111>.

Group 2 — Use in General Publications in the United States

The anti-Masonic literature thus supports Peterson's and Oman's view that *secret combinations* was a broad term in general use before, during, and after the Book of Mormon's publication. I have located several examples of American writing unrelated to freemasonry which reinforce this conclusion.

A bill passed in New Jersey in 1782 read, in part:

AND WHEREAS, in order the more effectually to carry their insidious and pestilent Machinations into Effect, our said internal Enemies, still flattering themselves with the Hopes of ultimately reducing these United States to the absolute Sway and Dominion of *Great-Britain* by their clandestine Practices and secret Combinations against their native Country, have justly alarmed the Apprehensions of our well-affected and patriotick [sic] Citizens, and have more especially excited their Jealousy by giving Reason to suppose they are aiming to introduce some of their own Faction into the Legislature, and into Posts of Trust, Profit and Influence.⁴⁷

This description of "Internal Enemies," attempting to reduce the nation "to the absolute Sway and Dominion" of a political rival, through a "Faction" seeking "Posts of Trust, Profit, and Influence" via a *secret combination*, is paralleled precisely by the Book of Mormon's Gadianton band. Perhaps Joseph was cribbing from the New Jersey statute book?⁴⁸ Or, perhaps he had reference to a Virginia grand jury address in 1789:

47 Acts passed at General Assembly, 18 September - 5 October, 1782, sixth session, third sitting; cited in Peter Wilson (editor), *Acts of the Council and General Assembly of the State of New-Jersey* (Trenton: Isaac Collins, 1784), chapter 324, p. 303, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=P981AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA303>, some spelling standardized.

48 We see here the perils of arguing from lists of supposed parallels, as Vogel does for Masons and Gadiantons ("Mormonism's 'Anti-Masonick Bible,'" 24; "Echoes of Anti-Masonry," 283–84, 292–95, 307–12). This is particularly true when claiming that "[o]ne should not push too hard for

Our next care, gentlemen of the grand jury, will be to watch the motions of our internal enemies; to anticipate their various intrigues; and to disappoint those *secret combinations*, into which they may have entered. ... Some men feared the losing of that influence, they had assumed and established to themselves, under the weak and divided government of the several states: some again apprehended, that they would be deprived of the benefits and emoluments of certain lucrative offices.⁴⁹

In 1806, a New York newspaper discussed “The Kentucky Association, Blount’s Conspiracy and General Miranda’s Expedition,” declaring that “in the history of conspiracy and secret combinations, of those which have affected the United States, there are none of so extraordinary a nature, as the three above mentioned.”⁵⁰ These machinations aimed to, respectively: separate Kentucky and parts of the west from the United States and join them to the British crown; recruit men from the United States, and invade Spanish territory from British Canada, hoping to annex it for England; and invade Spanish Venezuela with British encouragement. (Miranda was a Freemason, but no mention of that connection occurs.⁵¹)

exact parallels” (“Echoes of Anti-Masonry,” 291, emphasis added), which lowers the evidentiary bar even further. For a detailed discussion of this issue generally, see Benjamin L. McGuire, “Finding Parallels: Some Cautions and Criticisms,” [Part 1 and Part 2] *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 5 (2013):1–104, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/finding-parallels-some-cautions-and-criticisms-part-one/> and <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/finding-parallels-some-cautions-and-criticisms-part-two/>.

49 “Charge of the hon. John Faucheraud Grimke, to the grand jury in Charleston, October, 1789,” in *The American Museum or, Universal Magazine* (Philadelphia: Carey, Stewart, & Co., 1790), Vol. 8 (August 1790), Appendix 2, p. 32, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=Zv1GAAAacAAJ&pg=PT156>, spelling standardized, emphasis added.

50 “Selected from the Western World,” *The Balance and Columbian Repository* (Hudson, New York) 5/36 (9 September 1806), 282, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=M9MRAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA282>, spelling standardized.

51 Wikipedia contributors, “Francisco de Miranda,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_de_Miranda (accessed 26 July 2014).

A work from 1804–1807 describes a crisis during President Washington’s second term:

[In 1793] the seditious and violent resistance to the execution of the law imposing duties on spirits distilled within the United States, had advanced. ...

On the part of the Executive, this open defiance of the laws, and of the authority of the government, was believed imperiously to require, that the strength and efficacy of those laws should be tried. ...

Meanwhile, the insurgents omitted nothing which might enlarge the circle of disaffection. ... a vast mass of opposition remained, determined to obstruct the re-establishment of civil authority. ...

But although no direct and open opposition was made, the spirit of insurrection was not subdued. ...

[Thus we see that] when the mind, inflamed [sic] by supposititious dangers, gives a full loose to the imagination, and fastens upon some object with which to disturb itself, the belief that the danger exists seems to become a matter of faith. ...Under a government emanating entirely from the people, and with an administration whose sole object was their happiness, the public mind was violently agitated with apprehensions of *a powerful and secret combination against liberty*, which was to discover itself by the total overthrow of the republican system. That those who were charged with these designs were as destitute of the means, as of the will to effect them, did not shake the firm belief of their existence.⁵²

52 John Marshall, *The Life of George Washington, Commander in Chief of the American Forces, During the War Which Established the Independence of His*

The citation above comes from the 1832 edition, and its use of *secret combination* shows no awareness of a lexical shift, though we cannot say whether such a detail would have been noticed or corrected prior to reprinting.

Nor are such *secret combinations* even confined to the political realm. In 1818, the governor of Connecticut urged that limited liability partnerships be publicly registered to avoid *secret combinations* unknown to the public:

On these grounds, I respectfully invite you to consider, whether it is not contrary to public policy, if not an abridgement of private right, to restrain individuals from forming partnerships with a limited responsibility. As the community are interested in being guarded against frauds arising from secret combinations, it would be proper to require contracts of this nature, to be recorded in a public office.⁵³

This is not, by any stretch of the imagination, Freemasonry.

A potential uprising among southern slaves was characterized as due to a *secret combination* in an 1822 work:

Although the utter impracticability of effecting any permanent change in their condition, by an insurrection among our Slaves, has been, we think, fully demonstrated, it is nevertheless indispensable to our safety to watch all their motions with a careful and scrutinising eye — and to pursue such a system of policy, in relation to them, as will effectually

Country, and First President of the United States, second edition, revised and corrected by the author, Vol. 2 (Philadelphia: James Crissy, 1832), 340, 341, 345, 347, 348, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=OLiLjsfyrMoC&pg=PA348>, emphasis added. [The first edition was published 1804–1807, see <http://lcn.loc.gov/10016751>.]

53 Oliver Wolcott (Governor of Connecticut), speech of 6 June 1818 to the Legislature of Connecticut, in H. Niles (editor), *Niles' Weekly Register* Vol. 14 (Baltimore: Franklin Press, March–September 1818), 251, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=3JA-AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA251>.

prevent all secret combinations among them, hostile to our peace.⁵⁴

In 1828–29, almost contemporaneously with the Book of Mormon’s production (and well after the watershed), one author cited a work which described the *Hetaria*, a Greek group dedicated to resistance against the Ottoman Turks:

One hundred dollars was paid by each member [of the Hetaria] on admission, which was... kept by... [the] invisible government. Every facility was given for admission, and, like the Carbonari, any one member could constitute another, by calling a third as witness. This did not so much endanger the secrets of the society as might be supposed. ... The society spread most rapidly: thousands became members, in the southern parts of Russia, and in the various kingdoms of Europe. ...

But the Hetaria did not rely solely upon the zeal and voluntary exertions of individual members; certain ones were selected, and sent forth by the governors of the society, not only to make proselytes, but to keep awake the hopes of the people.

Having quoted this material, the reviewer then concludes: “The nature of this association has not, we believe, been heretofore given so fully to the public, and it merits the attention of those who are not aware of the full effect of secret combinations, which sometimes promote a good cause, and not unfrequently increase the mischief of bad ones.”⁵⁵ Not only are clandestine Greek nationalists a *secret combination* but for the author such

54 “A South-Carolinian,” *A Refutation of The Calumnies Circulated Against the Southern & Western States Respecting the Institution and Existence of Slavery Among Them* (Charleston: A.R. Miller, 1822), 82, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=LH0FAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA82>.

55 “Art. VI — Greek Revolution,” *The American Quarterly Review* 5/9 (March 1829) (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Carey, 1829), 102, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=yNYRAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA102>.

groups might support good or evil causes (unlike the view of the anti-Masonic authors, for whom any secret society is cause for alarm). This stands as a rebuke to Vogel's claim that following the watershed, *secret combinations* was an exclusively anti-Masonic slur.

Further, in an 1831 biographical encyclopedia, it is reported that

Jahn first conceived the idea of making gymnasia [German] national establishments for education. ... [I]n 1814, Jahn reopened his institutions, and exerted all his powers again to make them schools of patriotism. In the meantime, the liberal spirit which spread over the continent of Europe, found its way into the gymnasia. The German government began to dread the effects of that love of freedom in the nation. ... After the murder of Kotzebue, by the student Sand, the government fearing or professing to fear the existence of secret combinations of a political character in the gymnasia, Jahn and many of his friends were arrested.⁵⁶

We see yet again that *secret combinations* may be “of a political character,” but such a qualifier implies that they need not be. Again we see no sign of the freemasons.

We see no sign of the watershed in an 1832 report to a Methodist meeting on difficulties with book publishing:

Indeed, it is proper to mention here, that your present agents have been under the necessity of encountering a competition on the part of certain other publishers, of a character unparalleled in all our former history; and attempts, in fact, by secret combinations and base artifices, to supplant, and

⁵⁶ Francis Lieber (editor), “Jahn, Frederic Louis,” *Encyclopaedia Americana*, Vol. 7 (Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1831), 157, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=5u0IAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA157>.

even crush the institution intrusted [sic] to our management.⁵⁷

A cabal of publishers is not freemasonry, even well after the purported anti-Masonic watershed.

Group 3 — Religious Works

Might a religious work such as the Book of Mormon use the term *secret combination* in a way utterly unconnected with Masonry during this period? I have found four examples of precisely this.

The first is from 1814, published in both England and the United States. It demonstrates a decidedly non-Masonic usage. In a commentary on Judges 3:19, we are told:

Ehud had ingratiated himself with Eglon by the present, and he had no suspicion of one whom he supposed unarmed; and it is likely he expected some information concerning state affairs, or the secret combination of his countrymen: yet he was strangely infatuated to trust himself alone with an Israelite!⁵⁸

Thus, pre-Davidic kingdom Israelites could be engaged in a *secret combination* against Moabite overlords.

A second example comes from a New York newspaper in 1831 — the precise state, time period, and media in which Vogel has insisted that *secret combinations* refers only to Masonry. In it, we read:

Dr. Ely says — "We question the expediency of secret sessions of the Senate of the United States and all

57 Rev. Jon Emory, "Report of the Agents of the General Book Concern, May, 1832," in *The Life of the Rev. John Emory, D.D., One of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: George Lane, 1841), 328, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=w6EDAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA328>.

58 Thomas Scott, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with Original Notes, Practical Observations, and Copious Marginal References*, Fourth American, from Second London edition, improved and enlarged, Vol. 1 (New York: Dodge & Sayre: 1814), 703, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=Q85AAQAAMAAJ&pg=PR703>.

other legislative, executive, and judicial assemblies.”
 — Will the D. please to add, *ecclesiastical*? [sic] If Dr. E. is opposed to *all* secret combinations, will he please to divulge a few more of the secrets of the orthodox church?⁵⁹

This ironic aside not only equates *secret combinations* with a religious group, but also extends the idea to secret meetings of the Senate or any other political body. Such a barb falls flat if everyone understands *secret combination* to refer only to freemasonry.

The third example narrows the time frame even further. It dates from 1828: after the watershed and almost contemporaneous with the Book of Mormon's production. In a discussion concerning the fate of deceased souls, we read:

[Judas] was admitted among the disciples; was a devil, or a spy from the beginning; if he had known any secret combination among Christ and his disciples, he no doubt would have been brought forward on the trail of Jesus as a witness, for the Jews could not find proof against him.⁶⁰

Vogel's thesis would require us to see this as an oblique reference to potential freemasonry among the first century apostles — a decidedly tortured reading. Instead, it seems simplest to admit that this is more solid evidence that *secret combination* was a term of general use with a wide spectrum of potential applications, political and otherwise.

A fourth example — an 1831 volume translated in Andover, Massachusetts, and published in both New York and Andover — says of Jesus:

59 Clement F. Le Fevre and Isaac D. Williamson (editors), *The Gospel Anchor* (Troy, New York) 1/16 (15 October 1831): 127, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=3T4rAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA127>, emphasis in original.

60 Walter Balfour, *Three Essays on the Intermediate State of the Dead* (G. Davidson: Charlestown, Ms.: 1828), 150, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=tkySCMirG0IC&pg=PA150>.

When brought before Pilate, [Jesus] was not accused of having formed a *secret conspiracy*. ... [Judas] gave them no information respecting his [Jesus'] being engaged in *secret combinations*. Had this faithless wretch known anything of the kind, or even suspected that Jesus had been able to form *secret plans*. ... had his master been connected with any *private associations*, would it have been possible for him not to have discovered it? ... Moreover the conduct of Jesus ... is altogether dissimilar to that of those who have founded *secret associations*. ... A man who forms *secret societies* ... is reserved and must be so. ...

We all know with what caution those proceed, who are in search of members for a *secret Society* ... before ... admitting [one] into *important mysteries*. ... There are many *private societies* in silent Operation ... yet none of them would bid such men as the apostles...a very hearty welcome to their *fraternities*. ... The closer, therefore, we scrutinize whatever Jesus said and did, the more we discover in his conduct entirely at variance with the conjecture, that he founded a *secret order*, and intended to use it as the means of operation. ... Jesus never intended to put the hidden springs of a *secret society* in motion. (emphasis added)⁶¹

The term *secret combination* is again used to describe a politically subversive possibility regarding Jesus's ministry — but it is also telling that the author includes a number of synonyms: secret conspiracy, secret plans, private associations, secret associations, secret society (three times), important mysteries, private society, fraternity, and secret order. And,

61 F.V. Reinhard, *Plan of the Founder of Christianity*, translated from the fifth German edition by Oliver A. Taylor (New York and Andover: G. & C. & H. Carvill and Flagg and Gould, 1831), 111–112, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=2tNGAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA111>.

significantly, this serves as an example of *secret combination* being used in English translation soon after the Book of Mormon's translation.

One is reminded of Vogel's insistence that "Joseph Smith was aware of the Masonic connotation, and his use of the phrase [*secret combinations*] was clearly intentional."⁶² It is not clear how he knows what Joseph's intentions were — this seems a conclusion driven by his thesis, and not independent evidence for it. Vogel offers eight alternative, "less problematic words," that Joseph

could have used ... had he wanted to avoid misunderstanding: secret societies, secret alliances, ... secret leagues, confederacies, plots, conspiracies, schemes, or clandestine activities. It was not necessary to use the specific phrase "secret combinations." Obviously, Smith used the term to convey the meaning and comparison he intended.⁶³

This argument is circular, since it must assume that *secret combination* had the exclusive meaning that Vogel attaches to it. We have seen that this is not the case, and so his claim begs the question of what Joseph intended. Further, for Vogel's putative alternatives to be superior, he would also have to demonstrate that these terms were commonly used in the early 19th century without referring to Masonry. If not, had Joseph chosen a different word, Vogel could protect his thesis by claiming that the alternative phrase also referred to Masons. As we have seen, many contemporaries (and even anti-Masonic authors) believed there were secret combinations that had nothing to do with Masonry. Perhaps *that* is what Joseph intended? One can always think of alternatives, but the choice of *secret combinations* seems natural in its time and place for Masonic and non-Masonic conspiracies. The final text above uses nine synonyms for *secret combination* (some in common with Vogel's supposedly less-loaded words). If Vogel's terms

62 Vogel, "Echoes of Anti-Masonry," 300.

63 Vogel, "Echoes of Anti-Masonry," 300.

could all avoid referencing Masonry in Joseph's New York book in 1829, then so can all the terms used by another New York book in 1831: including *secret combinations*.

Further, in just the anti-Masonic works cited herein, the label "secret societies" is used six times. A determined apologist for the environmentalist thesis — such as Vogel — could doubtless turn that commonality into evidence for the Masonic connection if Joseph had chosen to use it instead. Vogel's decision to leave "the door ... open [only] slightly"⁶⁴ for counter-evidence to his hypothesis would seem to evince a deficient anticipation of what the unexamined evidence might teach us.

Continued Non-Masonic Usage of the Term Beyond 1832

Ben McGuire's examination of Rick Grunder's *Mormon Parallels* also deals at some length with the question of *secret combinations*.⁶⁵ While Grunder (unlike Vogel) concedes that some non-Masonic usages of the terms can be found, he insists (like Vogel) that there was a semantic narrowing of the term following the Morgan panic. Over time, he claims, *secret combinations* came to refer only to Masonry, just as *chauvinism* refers today only to those opposed to women's equality.⁶⁶

As we have seen above, this is not consistent with the data up to 1832. Far from there being a semantic narrowing, *secret combinations* continued to refer to a large number of groups, and even some anti-Masons made it clear that Masonry was

64 Vogel, "Echoes of Anti-Masonry," 318n75.

65 McGuire, "Finding Parallels: Some Cautions and Criticisms," 70–76.

66 McGuire quotes Grunder's claim that "Prior to the 1970s women's movement, that term was heard rather infrequently, and its definition was the one which it had enjoyed since the early mid-nineteenth century — that of "Exaggerated patriotism of a bellicose sort; blind enthusiasm for national glory or military ascendancy ... " (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1971 edition). By the mid-1970s, however, most of us heard the term only in conjunction with "male," until finally, a chauvinist, in everyday speech, came to mean a man who was blind to women's issues. Then, as that specialized application of the word became entrenched and common, it evolved further, expanded in popular usage to apply to a person who was irrationally prejudiced against any cause at hand. (2008, p. 131)" (McGuire, 71–72).

only one example of such a secret combination. It is worth considering some examples from a later period simply to demonstrate that the claimed semantic narrowing did not occur. One particularly intriguing example exists from 1839, in which the author uses the word, and then clarifies that he is not referring to freemasonry, before going on to apply it to the group he addresses:

Distinction, when honorably pursued, may lead to worthy ends; but when secret combinations are made the avenues of pursuit, the end itself can hardly be generous and highminded which demands such means. It is not *masonry* to which we refer, but to its mimic embryos as existing in this institution.

We object not to secrecy itself. It is often a virtue, and the guarding of virtue and peace. But when it is made the shield of vice, the covering for those combinations that originate in selfishness, and scruple not at means, that foster the worst of passions to gain narrow or iniquitous ends — secrecy then is wrested from its legitimate purpose, and deserves the reprehension of the high minded and the virtuous. It is to counteract and expose the abuses of these combinations that we have organized this association, convinced of the extreme necessity of opposing a barrier to the fearful inroads of corruption and vice, through the channels of these secret convivial clubs. ... What must we expect when young men in our colleges esteem it an honor, and regard themselves as upon the acme of human glory, can they obtain an initiation into mysteries as profound undoubtedly as were the magic arts by which St. Patrick exterminated toads and snakes from Ireland? ... Do these secret associations invigorate talent and strengthen the mind? ...

These secret clubs are influenced by a contemptible ambition. They regard themselves as a nucleus

around which they make every possible effort to concentrate all the honors of the College; watch with suspicion and jealousy the movements of each other and of those not connected with them. Arrogating to themselves such privileges, they sunder the ties of friendship, and create distinctions regardless of merit and moral worth. ...

Conviviality, self-aggrandizement and the show of friendship, are prominent characteristics of these combinations. The hours of study, sometimes termed *tedious*, are too often wasted in idle gossip or worse dissipation.⁶⁷

He thus invokes the known application of the term to freemasonry, only to turn it against his audience and insist that what they are doing is likewise a secret combination. Such a rhetorical strategy is bootless if *secret combination* has been narrowed to mean masonry, and only masonry. The author concludes his oration by pleading that “our mutual efforts shall conspire to aid and prosper this enterprize [sic], secret combinations shall cease in ‘Old Union’ [College].”⁶⁸

If this were the only example, it might be offered in support of the idea that lexical narrowing had occurred — one could see the disclaimer as evidence that the phrase always means freemasonry. But, there are multiple other examples which precede and predate it with no caveat or qualification about Masonry at all, which lends support to my view that this usage is a rhetorical flourish (and, as the reader of the entire address will discern, this is an oration full of classical allusions and Ciceronian spunk).

I provide several additional examples of non-Masonic references to secret combinations from 1833–1850 in Appendix

67 Robert Stickney, *An Address Delivered Before the Equitable Union, Union College, July 9th, 1839* (Schenectady [New York]: Isaac Riggs, 1839). 17–20, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=QXpBAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA81>, emphasis in original.

68 Stickney, *An Address*, 24, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=QXpBAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA88>.

I. The variety and number of uses seem sufficient to disprove the semantic narrowing hypothesis.

Uses in Great Britain

My search also turned up a number of British works. These are obviously less probative regarding American usage, but they serve as additional witness that the phrase *secret combination* had a long history in English writing and thought, and shows no sign of lexical narrowing as claimed by Vogel and Grunder. Given the obvious affinities between British and early American thinkers and literary culture, this provides added evidence of how the term was used. Representative examples, by no means exhaustive, are found in Appendix II.

Conclusion

The picture is clear. We now have access to a much broader range of texts than the legal works available to previous researchers, though I have not here exhaustively examined all those that are presently available. It is obvious, however, that even anti-Masonic authors applied the term *secret combination* to any type of oath-bound, secret society, especially those with political designs. American usage also applied the term to British loyalists or sympathizers; the Jesuits; office seekers who benefited from the weak pre-Constitutional state governments; the Kentucky Association; Blount's conspiracy; Miranda's expedition; slave rebellion; 18th-century Greek nationalists; Jesus's apostles; early Hebrews chafing under their vassalage to Moab; nonpublic meetings of the U.S. Senate; any secret sessions of the legislature, judiciary, or executive branches; the threat of Washington's government to liquor interests; and the behavior of orthodox religious bodies.

Further research may extend these observations, but seems unlikely to disprove them. We also cannot know how representative these texts are — the vagaries of which documents were available for scanning will, of necessity, mean that our perspective remains fragmentary. We have enough

fragments, however, to lay Vogel's expressed view to rest. We have found too many examples, and they cannot all be dismissed as anomalies on the "margins of popular 19th-century culture [which] happened to have used the term in a non-Masonic context."⁶⁹ And, Grunder's more nuanced claim of semantic narrowing is further rebutted by the many post-1832 examples available in Appendix I, in addition to those already identified by Mourtisen.⁷⁰

At present we do not know which, if any, of the pre-1830 sources were known to Joseph Smith. The most plausible answer to me is that *secret combination* was no more or less than a common phrase used for any hidden conspiracy or arrangement to one's benefit, and so Joseph used it to describe the Gadian-ton group.

Vogel seems determined to find an "environmental" influence for every aspect of the Book of Mormon's narrative (his biography *Making of a Prophet* is an extended exercise in doing precisely this, with the resulting Joseph madly cutting and pasting influences like a plagiarizing sophomore on a tight deadline). But, given the manifest creativity of the Book of Mormon account, would it not be simpler — and more in keeping with the textual facts presented here — to declare that Joseph invented an oath-bound group, and used a common term for any such group to describe it? When Joseph speaks of a "church," he need not have had a particular building in New England as a model in mind — why presume that the young man who in a few weeks could dictate the 500+ page Book of Mormon was incapable of concocting a secret society, and just labeling it as such?

In any case, to claim that *secret combination* is a smoking gun which (nearly) always referred to freemasonry in Joseph's environment or literary culture cannot be sustained by the evidence. Vogel has claimed that the anti-Masonic view has been "long regarded as obvious."⁷¹ The evidence presented here

69 Vogel, "Echoes of Anti-Masonry," 318n75.

70 Mourtisen, Table 1, 71.

71 Vogel, "Echoes of Anti-Masonry," 275.

reproves this notion at least in part, and demonstrates why researchers ought to be cautious of matters that seem “obvious.” Obvious connections are rarely questioned or examined critically, and one does not usually seek contrary evidence for propositions that seem self-evident. Yet, they may be mistaken all the same. (Galenic physicians and their patients, after all, used bleeding as a treatment for over two millennia, confident that it “obviously” worked.)

If we claim all swans are white, we tend to present each new white swan as if it were evidence. It is, but of a decidedly weak sort. It is far better to seek the single black swan which will disprove a notion — especially if one stumbles across an entire flock. Peterson’s predictions about the use of *secret combinations* have been robustly confirmed, so perhaps it is appropriate to conclude with his conclusion, which seems even more secure than it was a quarter-century ago:

Dan Vogel’s claim that the phrase “*secret combination*” (emphasis mine) was used virtually exclusively to refer to Freemasonry at the time of the Book of Mormon’s publication would, if true, be a fact worthy of note. But there is as yet no particular reason to think it true, and considerable reason to doubt it. Vogel’s own evidence ... merely demonstrates what has been known for many years, that the phrase was indeed sometimes employed in reference to Masons. But this is a far cry from demonstrating that such was its *exclusive* use.⁷²

Now that a broader look at the literary culture of the early 1800s is more practical via digital search, Peterson’s skepticism has been vindicated. Before, during, and after Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Mormon, *secret combinations* was a general term in the United States for any clandestine group or plot, especially one in the political realm.

⁷² Peterson, “Notes on ‘Gadianton Masonry,’” 191, emphasis in original.

Appendix I — Uses of *Secret Combination* in the United States from 1833–1850

I proceed chronologically, with a minimum of commentary and analysis; a heading provides the date of the statement and a brief summary of the person or group(s) characterized as “a secret combination”.

1833, Those working against the interest of those for whom they collect funds:

As no one can coerce in a case like the present but the plaintiff in execution, if he can agree with the officer and indulge at pleasure with the use of the money, because the security is bound, then of all men the security would be the most helpless. Secret combinations or caprice might ruin him.⁷³

1834, French revolutionary patriots:

In the first twelve years of the national administration, the wars of Europe hazarded the peace of the United States. The aggressions of the belligerents, the insolent and seductive character of French enthusiasm, secret combinations, and claims for gratitude, (to revolutionary France,) called for all the firmness, wisdom, and personal influence of Washington.⁷⁴

1834, American revolutionary patriots:

Thus, on the one hand, the American patriots, by their secret combinations, and then by a daring resolution; and on the other, the British ministers ... gave origin to a crisis which eventually produced the dismemberment of a splendid and powerful empire.⁷⁵

73 “Wells vs. Grant,” (argued March 1833) in George S. Yerger, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Tennessee, During the Year 1833*, Vol. 4 (Nashville: Hall and Heiskell, 1834), 494, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=yMQEAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA494>

74 Russell, Odiorne, and Metcalf, *Familiar Letters on Public Characters, and Public Events; from the Peace of 1783 to the Peace of 1815* (Boston: Russell, Odiorne, and Metcalf, 1834), 364, small caps in original, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=fmISAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA364>.

75 William Linn, *The Life of Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of Independence, and Third President of the United States*, 3rd edition (Ithaca: Andrus, Woodruff, & Gauntlett, 1843), 57, <http://books.google.ca/>

Figures

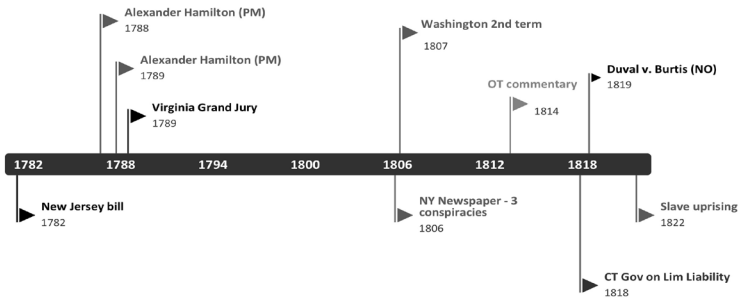


Figure 1: Uses of secret combination or secret combinations to apply to non-Masonic groups in US publications, 1782–1822. Examples identified previously by Nathan Oman (NO) and Paul Mouritsen (PM) are so labeled.

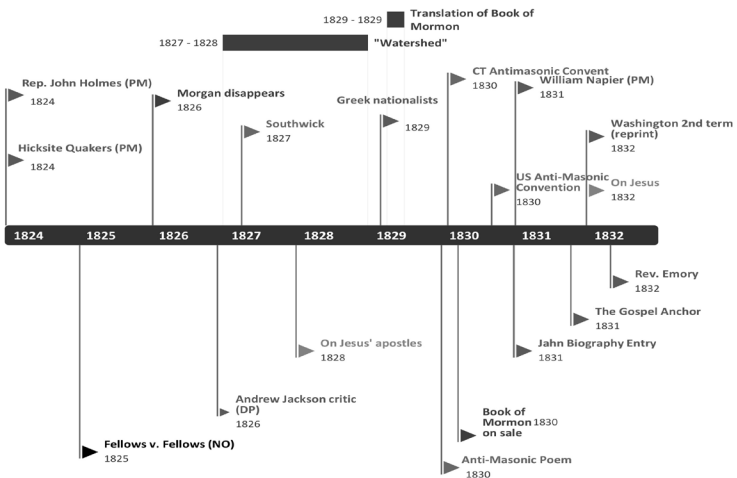


Figure 2: Uses of secret combination or secret combinations to apply to non-Masonic groups in US publications, 1823–1832. Examples identified previously by Daniel Peterson (DP), Nathan Oman (NO), and Paul Mouritsen (PM) are so labeled.

1835, A supposed “Popish plot”:

Note the use of a Masonic title (‘General Grand High King’) with a mention of *secret combination* — thus showing that this term could refer to Masonry, while at the same time being used to refer to something else that was *also* a “secret combination.”

We ... can only smile at the religious zeal of its editor, who must be acknowledged to possess some wit, and considerable secretiveness, notwithstanding his declared hostility to all *secret combinations*. He is, undoubtedly the “General Grand High King” of the anti-Catholic Fraternity.⁷⁶

1836, Manipulators of the stock market:

Stock-jobbing is the buying and selling of stocks for the purpose of deriving gain from the fluctuations in their prices. And the arts which are resorted to in this business, to “run up,” or to depress stocks, and the secret combinations which are sometimes formed, to control the market and extort money from those who have sold on time, render stock-jobbing, under such circumstances, one of the most hazardous and demoralizing species of gambling.⁷⁷

1837, Byzantine politics in era of Constantine and Nicholas:

Suspicion and distrust destroyed social confidence — rumors of secret combinations, and dark plots, and threatened violence against the Emperor, excited alarm and apprehension in every mind.⁷⁸

76 "The Press and the Convent Question," *The New-England Magazine* (June 1835): 454, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=vyXZAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA454>.

77 H. Niles (editor), "Commercial Bank Investigation," [from *Albany Evening Journal*] *Niles' Register* (Baltimore) 14/13 (28 May 1836): 231, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=jpM-AQAAMAAJ&pg=PA231>.

78 T.W. White (editor), "Constantine: Or, the Rejected Throne," in *Southern Literary Messenger* 3/12 (December 1837): 725, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=118AAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA725>.

1838, German Fem-courts:

Frederick [II] was in conflict with the popes nearly all his life, and was twice excommunicated. ... In his time, also, first appeared the most terrific tribunal ever seen on earth, and known by the name of the Fem-courts. ... These courts are supposed to have arisen from the total subversion of law and order, and were secret combinations to overawe and intimidate.⁷⁹

1839, Prisoners in jail:

It is inconsistent with the virtue and intelligence of the people of this county longer to maintain a County Prison where the innocent and the guilty are immured together... where the young offender is placed under the tuition and influence of the experienced and hardened criminal; and where secret combinations may be entered into, and plans formed, for the commission of crime.⁸⁰

1840, Railroad interests:

Irresponsible and secret combinations among railroads always have existed, and so long as the railroad system continues as it now is they unquestionably always will exist. No law can make two corporations, any more than two individuals actively undersell each other in any market if they do not wish to do so. But they can only cease to do so by agreeing in public or private on a price below which neither will sell. If they can not do this public they assuredly do it secretly.⁸¹

79 William Sullivan, *Historical Causes and Effects from the Fall of the Roman Empire, 476, to the Reformation, 1517* (Boston: James B. Dow, 1838), 272, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=D1QMAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA272>.

80 *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Prison Discipline Society, Boston, May, 1839* (Boston: Prison Discipline Society, 1839), 374, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=swo3AAAAYAAJ&pg=PA374>.

81 Charles Francis Adams of Massachusetts, cited in P.P.F. Degrand, *An Address ... on the Advantages of Low Fares, and Low Rates of Freight, Practically Illustrated by the Deep researches of the British, French and Belgian Governments; Unanimously Approved and Adopted, and Ordered to be Published, by a Meeting of Gentlemen Friendly to Internal Improvements, Held in Boston, Dec.*

1841, Enemies of a bank:

A juncture of affairs, brought about by human agency, originating in folly, or in crime, might be imagined, which would compel banks, in justice to the immediate community around them, to consult the laws of self-preservation, by suspending specie payments for a time, such as secret combinations of foreign and hostile institutions against one bank.⁸²

1845, Opponents of the Medici

The Medici had succeeded up to this period in suppressing all open opposition. They afterwards aspired to supreme authority, and their empire could not be firmly consolidated, till they had put down all secret combinations against them.⁸³

1845, Execution of members of a ruffian band by a vigilante in Texas, as reported in Vermont newspaper:

Hinch and his band had been thoroughly cowed and awed; but the moment this idea occurred to him, the reaction of their base fears was savage exultation. Here was something tangible; their open and united force could easily exterminate an enemy who had acknowledged their weakness in resorting to secret combinations and assassination from ‘the bush!’⁸⁴

3, 1840 (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1840), 19, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=uriAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA101>.

82 A.P. Butler, “Appeal Brief — Circuit Decision for *State v. The Bank of South Carolina*,” in *The State of South Carolina v. The Bank of South Carolina Transcript of Pleadings, and Appeal Brief: with Notes of Argument, and Authorities, on Behalf of the State* (Charleston: W. Riley, 1843), 29, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=yUFOAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA52>. (The appeal text cited in this 1843 work was rendered on May 1841.)

83 Niccolò Machiavelli, ed. G.B. Niccolini, *Florentine Histories*, translated by C. Edwards Lester (New York: Paine and Burgess, 1845), 165, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=ZJQLAAAAYAAJ&pg=RA1-PA165>. [Translator was U.S. consul to Genoa; he produced the translation from an 1843 Italian edition, which means the translation language dates between the 1843–45 period.]

84 C. Wilkins Eimi, “The Shot in the Eye: A True Story of Texas Border Life,” [From the *Democratic Review*] in *Vermont Family Visitor*, edited by E.P. Walton and sons (Montpelier, Vermont) 1/4 (September 1845): 119, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=2Q9GAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA119>. [Despite the title, the

1846, A temperance society, the Masons, the Odd Fellows, those who sought to murder St. Paul, Judas's betrayal of Jesus, heathen groups:

"The order of the Sons of Temperance" ... makes higher pretences [sic] to charity, &c., than even Masonry and Odd Fellowship; and possesses, equally with them, the very objectionable feature of a band of *secret societies* extended throughout the country. ... Now, how obvious the danger resulting from a *secret society*, so numerous, and so systematically organized. Every one will acknowledge, that such *secret societies* are exceedingly dangerous. ...

But the principles of your Order are not merely *negative*. I shall proceed to show, that there are many, and positive evils inseparable from it! We search the Bible in vain for any thing like *secret combinations*, unless you take such precedents as the band of "more than forty men who bound themselves with an oath,"... or the *dark combination* between the chief priests and Judas, with the sign, and the password agreed on between them. ...

No, the principles of the Bible and your Order are at utter war: — but if we go back to the days of idolatry and guilt, in heathen lands, we find many precedents.⁸⁵

tale is fiction: see Sanford E. Marovitz "Poe's Reception of C. W. Webber's Gothic Western, 'Jack Long; or, The Shot in the Eye,'" *Poe Studies* 5/1 (June 1971), 4:11–13, <http://www.eapoe.org/pstudies/ps1970/p1971104.htm>. This source indicates that the original tale was in print by 1844.]

85 "A discussion, on the Order of the Sons of Temperance, Between Rev. W.R. de Witt, of Harrisburg, and Rev. William Easton, of Smyrna, PA.," *The Evangelical Repository* (November 1846) edited by Joseph T. Cooper 5/6 (Philadelphia: William S. Young, 1846): 279–280, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=Y7MnAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA279>, emphasis in original, emphasis added.

1846, Greek and other Christians in Palestine:

Unfavorable news was communicated, also, from the Levant. *Secret and extended combinations* are manifestly forming in high places, against the evangelical Christians of that region. A Greek bishop had called a special meeting of American ecclesiastics and rulers to devise means of getting rid of the missionaries.⁸⁶

1847, A temperance society; Egyptian, Greek, and Roman groups; Jacobins, Vehmic Court, Carbonari, St. Tammany, Washington Benevolent Society, Free Masons, Odd Fellows:

Secret societies governed by secret laws have always been dangerous and liable to Abuse ... the “Order of the S. of T.” bearing in all other respects such a strong family resemblance, we hope the public will be slow to believe that your “secrets” are safer or purer than theirs. These *secret moral religious societies*, as they were called, were common amongst the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. ...

When we come down to the *secret societies* of modern days, what do we find but a history of intrigue, superstition, blasphemy and wickedness; — not one *secret society* that ever proved a blessing to mankind. The Jacobin clubs of France ... The Vehmic Court, or Secret Tribunal of Westphalia. ... The Carbonari, a *secret political society* in Italy. ... The *secret order* of St. Tammany. ... The Washington Benevolent Society ... soon, however, found their efforts would be useless in seeking the honours and emoluments of office, because Free Masonry had the precedence [sic] in power and place. ... Odd-Fellowship. ... From the history of ancient as well as modern secret societies, then, we are admonished to beware of

86 “Missionary Intelligence,” *The Evangelical Repository* 5/6 (November 1846): 300, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=Y7MnAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA300>, emphasis added.

them; ... If such *secret combinations* brought ruin on ancient states, is our Republic in no danger? ...

Your country bleeding already under the infliction of a dangerous wound from Masonry, into that wound you would drive a Nail ... to render it mortal.⁸⁷

1848, Workmen uniting against employers:

I observe that it is not unusual in the United States for workmen to specify their grievances in writing, and to cause them to be published. ...

And the practice of giving publicity to these complaints is particularly worthy of commendation. ... Instead of those secret combinations, which were formerly so common, and with regard to the merit of which no impartial person could form any judgment whatever; workmen who set themselves up in opposition to the exactions of their employers, feel themselves under an obligation to sustain their conduct by a fair and intelligent exposition of their case.⁸⁸

1849, Actions of northern abolitionists:

This is one of the charges preferred against us: "*Secret combinations* are believed to exist in many of the Northern States, whose object is to entice, decoy, entrap, inveigle, and seduce slaves to escape from their owners."... That Individuals may have acted for themselves in helping the wanderers, and in assisting them ... we have no doubt; but of the existence of

87 "A Discussion on the Order of the 'Sons of Temperance,' Between Rev. W.R. de Witt of Harrisburg, and Rev. William Easton of Smyrna, Lancaster County, Penna.," *The Evangelical Repository* 5/10 (March 1847): 516–519, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=Y7MnAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA519>, emphasis added.

88 Frederick Grimké, *Considerations Upon the Nature and Tendency of Free Institutions* (Cincinnati and New York: H.W. Derby & Co. and A.S. Barnes & Co., 1848), 471–472, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=e8IRAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA472>.

such *secret combinations* there is not a shadow of proof. Such *combinations* are not only unknown to the “States within whose limits they exist,” but also the Abolitionists themselves, who are not so choicely cherished in the North.⁸⁹

1850, Secret student clubs at the University of Michigan:

If these combined rules are enforced it is morally improbable that any secret combinations can long exist without detection.⁹⁰

Appendix II — Selected Evidence from Great Britain (1743–1850)

There are many more examples than these, but they provide good sample through time and topic.

1743, English nobles and court intrigue:

Speaking of the events of 1708, one author wrote:

the earl of Wharton excell'd all others in readiness of wit, and quickness of penetration: and he was also very active and indefatigable, by which he got a knowledge of the strength and weakness of those who opposed the publick measures; and seldom fail'd of getting intelligence of their most secret combinations and intrigues.

Besides these, there were many of the nobility and gentlemen of the best account who held with the ministry, in all their publick measures; and most of those who distinguish'd themselves by their wit or learning, who naturally approv'd their conduct, as it

⁸⁹ "Recent Defenses of Slavery," *Massachusetts Quarterly Review* 8 (September 1849): 498–499, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=T2ACAAAIAAJ&pg=PA498>, emphasis added.

⁹⁰ *Documents Accompanying the Journal of The Senate of the State of Michigan at the Annual Session of 1850* (Lansing, R.W. Ingals, 1850), 21, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=OVlBAQAAMAAJ&pg=RA1-PA21>.

was the most rational, and the most adapted to the honour and safety of the nation.”⁹¹

1757, court intrigue against Frederick III

The tacit Acknowledgment of Count *Kaunitz*: The Pains taken by the *Ruffian* Ministers to find a Pretence [sic] for accusing the King of endeavouring [sic] to stir up a Rebellion in the *Ukraine*: I say, from the Combination of all these Circumstances, there results a Kind of Demonstration of a secret Combination entered into against the King: And it is submitted to the Judgment of the impartial World, whether his Majesty, who had been long informed of all these Particulars, could intirely [sic] discredit positive Advices, which came to him from good Hands, of such a Combination; and, consequently, whether he was not in the Right to demand of the Court of *Vienna* friendly Explanations and Assurances concerning the Intention of the Armaments.⁹²

1783, a family discord and trial for treason

His younger brothers and sisters were under the unhappy constraint of suing for their fortunes.

Then please inform their lordships whether, in truth, there was not a combination in the family against him? I do not mean a criminal one. — I am very certain that was not what my lord alluded to.

If you are certain of that, you can inform their lordships what it was that he alluded to? — I will give a reason why I am certain it was not that; because it appeared to be some secret combination: that was a thing publicly known.

91 Thomas Lediard, *The Life of John, Duke of Marlborough, Prince of the Roman Empire*, second edition, Vol. 2 (J. Wilcox, London: 1743), 6–7, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=r90oAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA5>, some spelling standardized. [The first edition dates from 1736. See <http://books.google.ca/books?id=fdE6AQAAAJ>.]

92 *Memoirs of Frederick III, King of Prussia. With All the Memorials, Answers, &c. Published by Order of that Monarch, in Vindication of his Conduct* (London: Hinton, 1757), 170, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=6dZbAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA170>, some spelling standardized.

How did you collect that the combination was secret? — By my lord's manner of expressing himself.

Can you recollect the phrase or the words he used? — I cannot.⁹³

1802, a faction in the pre-Revolutionary French court

As to count de Broglio, the empress must have been completely deceived by that skilful [sic] politician. He was at the head of the famous secret combination, which never ceased its exertions against the interests of Maria Theresa, in privately thwarting the Austrian alliance of 1756.

[The author goes on to underline] "The profound secrecy ever observed by agents of the secret combination."⁹⁴

1813, in a translation of Aristotle

Governments change gradually through the secret combination of obscure individuals. At Heraea, the aristocratical mode of appointment to office was changed for one more popular, because a combination of mean mechanics determined to vote for none but persons of their own level. The higher ranks of men, therefore, preferred the capricious decision by lot, to the certain partiality of election.

[Marginal note reads: "The secret combination of obscure factions."]⁹⁵

93 T.B. Howell, *State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors from the Earliest Period to the Year 1783*, Vol. 19 (London: T.C. Hansard, 1816), 935, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=IGQoAAAAMAAJ&pg=PT479>

94 John Lewis Soulavie, the Elder, *Historical and Political Memoirs of The Reign of Lewis XVI from His Marriage to his Death* (translated from the French in six volumes) Vol. 1 (London: G. and J. Robinson, 1802), 265, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=3XgvAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA265>.

95 John Gillies, *Aristotle's Ethics and Politics, Comprising His Practical Philosophy, Translated From the Greek*, third edition, Vol. 2 (London: T. Cadwell and W. Davies, 1813), 394, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=yGsMAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA394>, some spelling standardized.

1813, malcontented nobles during the reign of Elizabeth I

Elizabeth now began to be weary of keeping such a prisoner as the queen of Scots. During the former year, the tranquillity [sic] of her government had been disturbed, first by a secret combination of some of her nobles, then by the rebellion of others; and she often declared, not without reason, that Mary was the *hidden cause* of both. ... The detaining her any longer in England, she foresaw, would be made the pretext or occasion of perpetual cabals and insurrections among [her own subjects].⁹⁶

1823, Irish nationalist groups:

Fellow-countrymen we tell you nothing but the truth. — No goad, no advantage, no benefit, has ever been produced in Ireland by Whiteboyism or Ribbonism, or any other species of secret association. ...

By the law of the land, any man who joins a secret association, bound together by an oath, or any engagement or promise whatsoever, is liable to be transported. ...

We have given you this brief abstract of the legal punishments that await the disturbances produced by secret societies. ...

There is another and a more important object. These secret societies, and the outrages which they generate, are forbidden by the awful voice of religion ... We need not tell you how your religion abhors everything that approaches to robbery, murder or blood. ...

Fellow-countrymen, attend to our advice — we advise you to abstain from all such secret combinations; if you engage in them you not only meet our decided disapprobation, in conjunction with that of your reverend Clergy, but you gratify and delight the basest and bloodiest faction that ever polluted a country — the Orange faction. The Orangemen anxiously

96 George Gleig, *The Historical Works of William Robertson*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh, London, and Dublin: Doig & Stirling, Otridge & Son *et al.*, M. Kerne, 1813), 391–392, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=g64WAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA392>

desire that you should form Whiteboy, and Ribbon, and other secret societies. ...⁹⁷

Why did he select Orange societies [in Ireland] as the object of his attack? There were other societies bound together by secret oaths as well as the Orange. If the system was objectionable, why not attack those which were obnoxious in principle? But the object was too palpable to deceive the most inexperienced person in parliamentary tactics; and though he acquiesced with the hon. gentleman in his reprobation of all secret combination, yet a distinction ought to be made between the associations of the loyal and the associations of the disaffected.⁹⁸

1823, religious dissenters during reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV:

Persecution has ever been powerless against sincerity. ... [It] never overcomes true piety or conscientious resolution. ...

But abstracted from these considerations, and from the ultimate results, persecution tends to occasion immediate evils to all who use it. ... It drives the opposed from the public exhibition of themselves and of their actions into secret societies, secret combinations, secret meetings, and secret conversations. ... Persecution thus produces confederacies, and makes disloyalty creditable, till the criminality of treason becomes determined by its success. ... What government could be safe, or what country happy, in such a state of things!

97 Daniel O'Connell, "Messrs. O'Connell & Sheils' Speeches on Proposing an Address to the Lower Orders," in *A Collection of Speeches Spoken by Daniel O'Connell, Esq. and Richard Sheil, Esq. on Subjects Connected with the Catholic Question* (Dublin: John Cumming and London: Thomas Tegg, 1828), 206–208, http://books.google.ca/books?id=H19_RUCZzNcC&pg=PA208.

98 T.C. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates: Forming a Continuation of the Work Entitled "The Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803"* Vol. 8 (London: T.C. Hansard, 1823), 469–470, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=FthbAAAAQAAJ&pg=PT233>.

The reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV afford a melancholy illustration of all the ill effects of both religious and political persecutions.⁹⁹

1823, American Indians

The Indian broods over his wrongs in secresy [sic], but never forgets them till he has been amply revenged in the blood of his enemy. The first complaints are individual and feeble: when they grow clamorous, a council is convened, the subject is debated, the measure of redress determined, and instantly carried into execution: but sometimes secret combinations of young warriors, anxious to acquire celebrity and distinction, anticipate this form, and the first intelligence which the chiefs have of their scheme is their return from the expedition with scalps and prisoners.¹⁰⁰

1824, Thomas Carlyle's translation of Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister*:

Lydia had put some whims into Theresa's head concerning Jarno and the Abbé. There are certain plans and *secret combinations*, with the general scheme of which I am acquainted, and into which I never thought of penetrating farther. ...

Lothario is begirt with *secret influences and combinations*.¹⁰¹

99 Sharon Turner, *The History of England During the Middle Ages, Vol 3. Comprising the Reigns of Henry VI. Edward IV. Edward V. Richard III. and Henry VII* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1823), 230–231, http://books.google.ca/books?id=bdY_AAAAcAAJ&pg=PA230#v=onepage&q&f=false

100 "Art II. [review of *Memoirs of a Captivity among the Indians of North America*]," *The Monthly Review* (London: A. and R. Spottiswoode, 1823) Vol. 102 (November 1823), 244, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=RFxAAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA244>.

101 Thomas Carlyle (translator), *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels Translated from the German of Goethe*, Vol. 2 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1824), 94, 96, emphasis in original, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=9dVEAAAYAAJ&pg=PA94>.

1824, Indian army mutineers during the British Raj:

Mr. Adam thinks that a Free Press would have given the mutinous army certain means of extensive combination, which they could not otherwise enjoy. It is something new to hear of secret combinations (for secret they must have been, to have been of any danger) promoted by a Public Press.¹⁰²

1830, Washington Irving's account of a Carib Indian chief:

The most formidable enemy remained to be disposed of, which was Caonabo; to make war upon this fierce and subtle [Carib] chieftain in the depths of his wild woodland territory, and among the fastnesses of his mountains, would have been a work of time, peril, and uncertain issue. In the meanwhile, the [Spanish] settlements would never be safe from his secret combinations and daring enterprises, nor could the mines be worked with security, as they lay in his neighbourhood.¹⁰³

1832, one hundred 15th-century French factions, all at cross-purposes:

In Louis XIth's time ... [a] hundred secret combinations existed in the different provinces of France and Flanders; numerous private emissaries of the restless Louis, Bohemians, pilgrims, beggars, or agents disguised as such, were everywhere spreading the discontent which it was his policy to maintain in the dominions of Burgundy.¹⁰⁴

1850, Methodist faction:

¹⁰² "Examination of the Arguments Against a Free Press in India," *The Oriental Herald* 1/2 (February 1824): 220, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=PBwYAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA220>.

¹⁰³ Washington Irving, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, abridged by the author (London: John Murray, 1830), 185–186, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=LYEDAAAQAAJ&pg=PA185>.

¹⁰⁴ Walter Scott, "Introduction," *Quentin Durward with The Author's Last Notes and Additions* (Baudry's Foreign Library, Paris, 1832), viii, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=0Cj2jE1fo7MC&pg=PR8>.

There were individuals who knew what course the special district meeting would adopt, *before that meeting had assembled*; a secret party, who had prepared things before hand, and who were so confident of carrying through their illegal and unconstitutional measures, that they began to act upon them before the district meeting could assemble. Much is said in the “*accredited document*,” about “*combinations*,” “*avowed combinations*,” but it is these *secret combinations*, which are not avowed, but are so powerfully felt, that they inflict the deepest wounds on the Methodist constitution, and prove so destructive of the liberties of the church!¹⁰⁵

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, 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 from 2011–2012. With 12 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.

105 "Part II: Review of the Proceedings of the Leeds Special District Meeting," in *The People's Rights: A Defence of the Concessions and Code of Laws of 1797 and the Constitution of Wesleyan Methodism Against the Modern Assumptions of Ministerial Power* (London: John Kaye and Co, 1850), 17, <http://books.google.ca/books?id=ajNcAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA17>, emphasis in original.

HEARTLAND AS HINTERLAND: THE MESOAMERICAN CORE AND NORTH AMERICAN PERIPHERY OF BOOK OF MORMON GEOGRAPHY

Mark Alan Wright

Abstract: The best available evidence for the Book of Mormon continues to support a limited Mesoamerican model. However, Alma 63 indicates that there was a massive northward migration in the mid-first century BC. I argue that these north-bound immigrants spread out over the centuries and established settlements that were geographically distant from the core Nephite area, far beyond the scope of the text of the Book of Mormon. I introduce the Hinterland Hypothesis and argue that it can harmonize the Mesoamerican evidence for the Book of Mormon with Joseph Smith's statements concerning Nephite and Lamanite material culture in North America. Archaeological and anthropological evidence is used to demonstrate that migrations and cultural influence did in fact spread northward from Mesoamerica into North America in pre-Columbian times.

I have been trying to avoid the topic of Book of Mormon Geography for several years now, for it is a messy and oftentimes ugly endeavor. The Church, of course, has no official position on where the Book of Mormon took place. Nevertheless, there have been heated debates concerning its geography for the better part of the last century. Currently, the bitterest divide is between those who advocate for a Mesoamerican setting and those who believe that the “Heartland” of the United States is the true location. Despite what my somewhat inflammatory title may suggest, this paper is actually an attempt to synthesize

some aspects of these two models and build a bridge between the two camps insofar as possible.

My basic thesis is this: The core locations and events detailed in the text of the Book of Mormon took place in Mesoamerica, but many Nephites and Lamanites migrated and established settlements far northward of the core area and are thus simply outside the scope of the text. I am certainly not the first to make this argument or to note the significance of this northward migration; but from countless conversations I have had about Book of Mormon geography over the past few years, I have found that many people are unfamiliar with the ideas. I am admittedly doing little more than repackaging previous research and giving it a catchy name — which brings me to the Hinterland Hypothesis.¹

The term *hinterland* is used in reference to regions that are remote from urban areas. They are at the outer fringes or periphery of a core urban population. Large-scale migrations from the core out to the periphery and beyond are not uncommon due to population pressures or other causes. In pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, for example, city-states often organized migrations to establish military garrisons or trading posts at the periphery of their domains.² As Latter-day Saints, we, of all people, should understand the function of migrations, as our history and identity are largely defined by movements from Kirtland to Missouri to Nauvoo and the exodus west. As soon as the Saints were established in the Salt Lake Valley, colonies began springing up in the hinterlands: southern Utah,

1 See, for example, John L. Sorenson, “Mesoamericans in Pre-Columbian North America,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company and FARMS, 1992), 218–20; Tyler Livingston, *The Book of Mormon and Mesoamerican Travels “Northward,”* from the Book of Mormon Archaeological Forum website, http://www.bmaf.org/articles/mesoamerican_travels_northward_livingston (accessed 25 August 2014).

2 Susan Toby Evans and David L. Webster, eds., *Archaeology of Ancient Mexico and Central America: An Encyclopedia*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 368.

Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, California, as far north as Canada, and even as far south as Chihuahua, Mexico.³

In the Book of Mormon, massive migrations were due to persistent Lamanite encroachment from the south, which caused Nephite populations to be perpetually driven northward, beginning with Mosiah₁'s flight from the city of Nephi to Zarahemla (Omni 1:12–15) and culminating centuries later at the Hill Cumorah (and we will return to the Cumorah question a little later).

One of the first to highlight the significance of the northward migration in the Book of Mormon was John E. Page, who had been one of the Twelve Apostles under Joseph Smith.⁴ In 1848 he noted, "All who are familiar with the Book of Mormon are probably aware of the fact that the whole account of the history of the fore fathers of the American Indians, called the Nephites, Lamanites and Zoramites, is confined to Central America entirely until the 394th page."⁵

John Page is here referring to northward migrations discussed in Alma 63 that occurred in the 37th and 38th years of the reign of the judges, around 55 BC. Alma 63:4 informs us that "five thousand and four hundred men, with their wives and their children, departed out of the land of Zarahemla into the land which was northward." That's 5,400 men, plus their wives, plus their children. Even if each couple had only one to two children, the migration would have been composed of between 16,000 to 22,000 individuals.

That same year, Hagoth built and launched two ships from the west sea, "and they took their course northward"

3 Richard L. Jensen, "Colonization," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism: The History, Doctrine, and Procedure of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:290–94.

4 In the interest of full disclosure, it should be noted that John E. Page was excommunicated for apostasy on 26 June 1846 for supporting James Strang as the rightful successor to Joseph Smith. His excommunication was wholly unrelated to his views on Book of Mormon geography.

5 John E. Page, "Collateral Testimony of the Truth and Divinity of the Book of Mormon. — No. 3," *The Gospel Herald*, 3/90 (14 September 1848), 123.

(Alma 63:5–6). Hagoth was not on either of the first two ships, incidentally, and the following year he built more ships, at which point “the first ship did also return, and many more people did enter into it; and they also took much provisions, and set out again to the land northward” (Alma 63:7).⁶ That third ship was “never heard of more,” and yet another ship that set sail that same year suffered the same fate. We also read that in the 38th year “there were *many* people who went forth into the land northward” in addition to the previously mentioned groups (Alma 63:8–9). The point is that Alma 63 describes an era of northward movement and migration sometime in the mid–first century BC, away from the Nephite core area and thus outside the scope of Nephite history. My argument is that these Nephite migrants continued to expand northward throughout the centuries — often due to Lamanite pressure from the south. During this expansion, both Nephites and Lamanites established settlements, or colonies, or outposts, or whatever you want to call them. I believe that every statement made by Joseph Smith or his contemporaries concerning Nephites or Lamanites in North America can be accommodated by the Hinterland Hypothesis.

To be clear, I am not arguing for a return to a “hemispheric” model of Book of Mormon geography. Hemispheric models take specific, named cities in the Book of Mormon and disperse them far and wide across the whole of North and South America. I am very much a proponent of a more limited geography, and I believe that the best available evidence places the core narrative of the Book of Mormon squarely in Mesoamerica. Now, as to which specific Mesoamerican geography is correct — the Grijalva model versus the Usumacinta model — I frankly don’t care. The preponderance of evidence always has and always will favor a Mesoamerican setting, to the point where for me to even talk about it here feels like beating a dead horse (or a dead tapir, as it were). What I am suggesting is that there were likely

6 Although common in Mormon folklore dating back to George Q. Cannon’s mission to Hawaii (1851–54), there is little evidence to support the belief that Hagoth himself or the ships he sent out ended up in Polynesia.

countless Nephite and Lamanite settlements spread across the continent, including within the so-called “Heartland,” whose history is not contained in the Book of Mormon; they are simply external to the text. It does not make them any less Nephite or Lamanite; it just means that their history is not recorded in that book.

Prophets from Jacob to Moroni lamented that they could not include even a hundredth part of their proceedings, meaning that we have less than one percent of Nephite history to work with.⁷ Nephite authors, by their own admission, are able to give only abbreviated accounts of events in their core area or, at best, from their fairly limited sphere of interaction. As to those who went northward in the mid-first century BC, they were part of the 99% of the proceedings that did not make the cut — out of sight and out of mind.

I believe that we do ourselves a disservice with the “either/or” mentality when it comes to issues of geography in the Book of Mormon. And I am afraid that we often play the dangerous game of “General Authority chess”: “Elder so-and-so said this!” “Oh yeah? Well, President such-and-such said that!” And so we go, pitting the words of one early Saint against another, chasing each other around the chess board trying to check each other but never really able to end the game.

To the Saints of Joseph’s day, any and all evidence from anywhere on the continent was deemed proof of the Book of Mormon. Within a single editorial paragraph from the 15 July 1842 issue of the *Times and Seasons*, the editor rejoices in both the North American evidence gleaned from Josiah Priest’s *American Antiquities* and the Mesoamerican evidence put forth by John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood in *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*. After quoting extensively from Josiah Priest, the editorial reads:

If men, in their researches into the history of *this country*, in noticing the mounds, fortifications, statues, architecture, implements of war, of

7 See Jacob 3:13; Helaman 3:14; 3 Nephi 5:8; 3 Nephi 26:6; Ether 15:33.

husbandry, and ornaments of silver, brass, &c. — were to examine the Book of Mormon, their conjectures would be removed, and their opinions altered; uncertainty and doubt would be changed into certainty and facts; and they would find that those things that they are anxiously prying into were matters of history, unfolded in that book. They would find their conjectures were more than realized — that a great and a mighty people had inhabited *this continent* — that the arts sciences and religion, had prevailed to a very great extent, and that there was as great and mighty cities on *this continent* as on the continent of Asia. Babylon, Ninevah, nor any of the ruins of the Levant could boast of more perfect sculpture, better architectural designs, and more imperishable ruins, than what are found on *this continent*. Stephens and Catherwood's researches in Central America abundantly testify of this thing. The stupendous ruins, the elegant sculpture, and the magnificence of the ruins of Guatamala [*sic*], and other cities, corroborate this statement, and show that a great and mighty people — men of great minds, clear intellect, bright genius, and comprehensive designs inhabited *this continent*. Their ruins speak of their greatness; the Book of Mormen [*sic*] unfolds their history. — ED [emphasis added]

This editorial makes it clear that the early Saints embraced *all* evidence for the Book of Mormon, regardless of whether it came from across the continent. So how can we suggest that the core area of the Book of Mormon is in Mesoamerica and relegate North America to the periphery? Let us take a look at Joseph Smith's statements that are typically used by proponents of the Heartland Theory and see if they can be accommodated by the Hinterland Hypothesis.

Let us start with Zelph. The version of the Zelph story used by proponents of the Heartland Theory relies on the *History of*

the Church as its source, which is problematic because that work is merely a composite created by piecing together a number of different accounts.⁸ There are six primary source accounts written by men who were present, none of them Joseph himself. For those unfamiliar with the story, it goes something like this: While on the Zion's Camp march in June of 1834, some men dug into a large mound and found a skeleton a foot or two below the surface. Either Joseph was there when it happened or they brought him there later — perhaps even the next day — and he proclaimed that the skeleton was that of a righteous Lamanite warrior named Zelph who served under the command of a chief or a king named Onandagus, who was known from the eastern sea to the Rocky Mountains. Zelph had been killed in battle, as evidenced by the arrowhead found lodged in his ribcage; but who exactly battled against whom is unclear. It may have been Nephite versus Lamanite, or it may have been Lamanite versus Lamanite; the accounts are conflicting on this detail, as well as on many others. One important detail that the *History of the Church* gets wrong is the statement that Onandagus was known from the Hill Cumorah to the Rocky Mountains. None of the primary sources indicates that Joseph made that claim.⁹

Although Joseph himself never mentions Zelph in any of his journals or letters, he did write (or, more precisely, dictate) a letter to Emma the next day. It was actually penned by James Mulholland and then signed by Joseph.¹⁰ In the letter, he mentions the satisfaction he felt while “wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting occasionally the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once

8 Kenneth W. Godfrey, “What Is the Significance of Zelph in the Study of Book of Mormon Geography?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/2 (1999): 74–75.

9 Godfrey, “What Is the Significance of Zelph?” 70–79. The single account that speaks of the fame of Onandagus dates from 1893, nearly 60 years after the fact and so cannot be considered a primary source.

10 See “Source Note” for Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834, in The Joseph Smith Papers website, at <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-to-emma-smith-4-june-1834?p=#!/paperSummary/letter-to-emma-smith-4-june-1834&p=1> (accessed 25 August 2014).

beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as proof of its divine authenticity.”¹¹ To proponents of the Heartland Theory, this is an open-and-shut case. Joseph makes it plain that this was Nephite territory. Mesoamerican proponents, on the other hand, have suggested that perhaps Joseph was simply conjecturing or sharing his opinion rather than declaring that this information was received by revelation.

I believe that the Hinterland Hypothesis can reconcile a Mesoamerican setting for the Book of Mormon while accepting that Joseph’s statements were revelatory. How so? The individuals and geographic features that are named in these accounts are nowhere to be found in the text of the Book of Mormon. They are external to its history. There is no Zelph and no Onandagus named in the Book of Mormon. As the apostle John A. Widtsoe suggested, “Zelph probably dated from a later time when Nephites and Lamanites had been somewhat dispersed and had wandered over the country.”¹²

Likewise, the “plains of the Nephites” are never mentioned in the Book of Mormon. To be sure, there are “plains” mentioned between the cities Bountiful and Mulek in Alma 52:20, and we read of the “plains of Nephiah” in Alma 62:18, but the general term “plains of the Nephites” is absent from the Book of Mormon. Because there are multiple plains attested to in the text, the general phrase “plains of the Nephites” is too vague to be of any use in pinpointing it geographically. Even among the Jaredites, we read of the “plains of Heshlon” (Ether 13:28) and the “plains of Agosh” (Ether 14:15); but significantly, never just “the plains of the Jaredites.” Mentions of plains in the text of the Book of Mormon are always attached to a specific city. Those in Joseph’s letter to Emma are not.

11 Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834, in The Joseph Smith Papers website, beginning at <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-to-emma-smith-4-june-1834?p=#/paperSummary/letter-to-emma-smith-4-june-1834&p=2> (accessed 25 August 2014).

12 John A. Widtsoe, “Evidences and Reconciliations: Is Book of Mormon Geography Known?” *Improvement Era* 7/53, July 1950, 547.

The Altar at Adam-ondi-Ahman

A few years after the Zelph incident, Joseph led a number of expeditions up to Daviess County, Missouri, to survey potential settlement locations for the Saints.¹³ On 19 May 1838, George W. Robinson, who was serving as general church recorder and clerk for the First Presidency at the time, recorded in the Scriptorium Book:

The next morning we struck our tents, and marched crossed Grand river at the mouth of Honey Creek at a place called Nelsons ferry. ... We next kept up the river mostly in the timber for ten miles, untill we came to Col. Lyman Wight's who lives at the foot of Tower Hill, a name appropriated by Prest smith, in consequence of the remains of an old Nephitish Alter an Tower, where we camped for the sabath.¹⁴

The *History of the Church* account mistakenly refers to this as a “Nephite” altar. The original source material quoted here clarifies that Joseph Smith referred to it not as a “Nephite” altar but rather a “Nephitish” altar. What is the difference? Here we can only speculate. Although we find the term “Lamanitish” twice in the Book of Mormon (both times in reference to royal servants among the Lamanites),¹⁵ the term “Nephitish” never appears. In fact, as far as I know, that altar is the only thing ever to have been described as being “Nephitish.” As for Joseph’s description of the altar, some have suggested that the Prophet was merely speculating rather than claiming inspiration as to its origin, relying on Joseph’s own statement that “a prophet

13 Alexander L. Baugh, “Joseph Smith in Northern Missouri, 1838,” in Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 303–307.

14 George W. Robinson, journal entry for 18 May 1838, transcribed online in The Joseph Smith Papers website, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-march-september-1838?p=29> (accessed 5 September 2014).

15 See Alma 17:26; Alma 19:16.

was only a prophet when he was acting as such.”¹⁶ But what if he was “acting as such” in this instance? What if it was revelation? Does that require that Tower Hill in Missouri was the location of a known Book of Mormon city? No, not at all. Joseph does not link the altar to any named Nephite city;¹⁷ he merely generalized it as *Nephitish*. According to my hypothesis, this Nephitish altar would have been built by the migrant Nephites of Alma 63 — or, more likely, by their descendants many generations later. Joseph’s statement, then, can be considered revelatory without precluding a Mesoamerican setting for the Book of Mormon or requiring a North American one.

Cumorah

Let us turn our attention now to the Cumorah question. If any specific Book of Mormon site is known for sure, it must be the Hill Cumorah, right? We know that Moroni buried the plates in Cumorah anciently and that Joseph Smith dug them up there. Or do we? To be clear, Moroni never says that he buried the plates in the Hill Cumorah, and there are no firsthand accounts indicating that Joseph Smith ever referred to the hill in New York by the name Cumorah. In fact, a careful reading of Mormon 6:6 makes it clear that all of the Nephite records were buried in Cumorah *except* the abridgment that would become the Book of Mormon. Mormon explains:

And it came to pass that when we had gathered in all our people in one to the land of Cumorah, behold I, Mormon, began to be old; and knowing it to be the last struggle of my people, and *having been commanded of the Lord that I should not suffer the records which had been handed down by our fathers, which were sacred, to fall into the hands of the Lamanites*, (for the Lamanites would destroy

¹⁶ *History of the Church*, 5:265.

¹⁷ The only physical altars that are ever explicitly mentioned among the Nephites are at the city of Sidom, in association with their sanctuaries (Alma 15:17).

them) therefore I made this record out of the plates of Nephi, and hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records which had been entrusted to me by the hand of the Lord, save it were these few plates which I gave unto my son Moroni.

A few years earlier, when the Nephites were being pushed northward toward Cumorah in their never-ending battles with the Lamanites, Mormon informs us, “And now I, Mormon, seeing that the Lamanites were about to overthrow the land, therefore I did go to the hill Shim, and did take up *all* the records which Ammaron had hid up unto the Lord” (Mormon 4:23). This was actually contrary to Ammaron’s instructions. When Mormon was just a 10-year-old lad, Ammaron sat him down and said,

When ye are about twenty and four years old I would that ye should remember the things that ye have observed concerning this people; and when ye are of that age go to the land Antum, unto a hill which shall be called Shim; and there have I deposited unto the Lord all the sacred engravings concerning this people. And behold, ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are; and ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people. (Mormon 1:3–4)

Why did Mormon decide to take *all* of the records instead of just the plates of Nephi, as he was instructed? It is because the land was being overrun by Lamanites and, with the plates being deposited in the Hill Shim, he feared that they would fall into Lamanite hands and be destroyed.

In Mormon 8, Moroni laments the destruction of his people at Cumorah and speaks only vaguely of his plan to “hide up the records in the earth” (v. 4), a comment he made more than twenty years before he actually buried them. In Moroni 1, written many years later, he states, “I wander whithersoever I can for the safety of mine own life” (v. 3). In other words,

he is long gone from Cumorah. He also makes the interesting comment that the Lamanites continue to put to death any Nephite that will not deny the Christ, making it clear that not all Nephites had been destroyed at the time of the “final” battle. As Hugh Nibley explains, “to destroy is to wreck the structure, not to annihilate the parts.”¹⁸ By analogy, the Jews have been “destroyed from generation to generation” (2 Nephi 25:9), which would make little sense if *destroy* meant to utterly annihilate.

So where were these remnant Nephites that the Lamanites were putting to death? They must have been north of Cumorah, for we read in Mormon 8:2 that “after the great and tremendous battle at Cumorah, behold, the Nephites who had escaped into the country southward were hunted by the Lamanites, until they were *all* destroyed” (emphasis added). By implication, the only Nephites that were left were those in the northward colonies in the hinterlands that had been established by migrants several centuries prior.

The New Jerusalem/“This Land”

The Lord revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith that the New Jerusalem will be built in Jackson County, Missouri (D&C 84:1–4), and the Book of Mormon explicitly states that it shall be built upon “this land” (3 Nephi 20:22; Ether 13:4–6). Proponents of the Heartland Theory have taken this to mean that the core area of the Book of Mormon must have been located in North America. However, Matthew Roper has compiled literally dozens of statements from Joseph Smith and his contemporaries that make it abundantly clear that the expressions “this land,” “this country,” and “this continent” are used to refer to the entire western hemisphere.¹⁹ The

18 Hugh W. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 239.

19 Matthew Roper, “Joseph Smith and the Question of Book of Mormon Geography” (presentation, FAIR annual conference, 5 August 2010); transcribed online at <http://www.fairmormon.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/2010-Matthew-Roper.pdf> (accessed 5 September 2014).

quotation previously discussed from the 15 July 1842 issue of the *Times and Seasons* referred to both “this county” and “this continent” while touting both the North American and Mesoamerican evidence. But what about the “prophecies and promises” concerning the mighty Gentile nation? Surely that can only mean the United States of America? Statements by contemporaries of Joseph Smith make it clear that they believed that the whole of the Americas was the land of promise. For example, Brigham Young taught in August of 1852, “The land of Joseph is the land of Zion; and it takes North and South America to make the land of Joseph.”²⁰ George J. Adams, an ardent believer in the Book of Mormon, wrote in 1844,

We come now to inquire where has the seed of Joseph gone to? If they had taken up their residence in any part of what is technically called the old world would not history have informed us of the fact? There is no place except North and South America to which they could have gone, if the old world furnishes no trace of them. The Continent of America is the only place where the prophecies concerning Joseph and his seed could be fulfilled.²¹

In yet another example, we have a written debate between a pair of elders named Wharton and Appleby and a critic named Amos Wickersham in 1843. Elder Appleby declares, “[Wickersham] says ‘there were ruins known to exist in Central America,[’] (the lands he says, I said belonged to Ephraim, &c. but I contend that it is North and South America both that includes the promised land to the branches of Joseph).”²²

The early Saints understood that the whole continent of North and South America, not just the United States, was

20 Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:296 (15 August 1852).

21 G. J. Adams, *A Lecture on the Authenticity & Scriptural Character of the Book of Mormon* (Boston: J. E. Farwell, 1844), 17.

22 W. I. Appleby, *Mormonism Consistent! Truth Vindicated, and Falsehood Exposed and Refuted: Being a Reply to A. H. Wickersham* (Wilmington, DE: Porter & Nafe, 1843), 17.

the promised land. The assertion that the United States alone is the land of promise is actually a fairly modern construct. I am afraid that we often suffer from presentism, which is the uncritical adherence to present-day attitudes and especially the tendency to interpret past events in terms of modern values and concepts. The United States of our day is not the same as it was in Joseph Smith's day. When the Book of Mormon came forth in 1830, there were only 24 states. Does that mean that the 26 states added since then are outside the scope of the prophecies and promises? Notably, when the Saints headed west toward the valley of the Great Salt Lake in 1846, it and all the territory south of Oregon and west of the Continental Divide to the Pacific coast was still part of Mexico; by the time they arrived in 1847, the Mexican War had made it all part of the United States. However, the Territory of Utah did not become a state until 1896; were the Saints cut off from the prophecies and promises for nearly 50 years? And who is to say that the United States will not take over the rest of Mexico, or even Canada at some point, in our quest to eradicate the twin relics of barbarism — soccer and ice hockey — that lure our children away from the divinely inspired sports of basketball and football? All joking aside, borders change over time, but God's promises do not. The prophecies and promises given in the Book of Mormon to those who inhabit the promised land are extended to all who repent and come unto him, regardless of where they live.

Evidence for Migration? How Righteous Were the Migrants?

One perhaps unanswerable question, but one that must be considered, is in regard to the faithfulness of the migrants who left in Alma 63. The Lamanite wars had only recently ended, and “because of the exceedingly great length of the war between the Nephites and the Lamanites many had become hardened” (Alma 62:41). These people had grown tired of endless conflict with the Lamanites, and they were likely seeking to put some distance between themselves and the enemy — the farther the better. Their timing was good; the window of peace was

short-lived, a few years at best. Not long after they left, some Nephite dissenters joined with the Lamanites and another large battle ensued in Nephite territory (Alma 63:14–15).

Why does the question of their faithfulness matter? When looking for evidence of Nephite colonies, we need to ask ourselves if they had been practicing normative Nephite religion or if they had been fully acculturated into native beliefs and practices.²³ Alma 63 makes no mention of them taking records or being led by righteous individuals. I think it plausible, if not likely, that their Mesoamerican identity would have been more dominant than their Nephite affiliation. As an aside, my personal view is that the Nephites lived among the larger population but were not one and the same with it, just as Latter-day Saints across the world are completely entrenched within their cultures yet maintain their subcultural identity as members of the Church. By analogy, suppose we were to take a bunch of inactive Mormons — those who were raised in the Church but have no interest in actually practicing it — and drop them in the middle of China. Would they be perceived as an American colony or a Mormon colony? If they brought no scriptures or Church literature with them and were completely cut off from the main body of the Saints, any remnant of Mormon identity would likely be completely lost within a generation or two. So it may have been with these northward-settling Nephites. On the other hand, they may have ended up like those in the Mormon colonies of Mexico, who remained faithful despite living in the hinterlands 1,000 miles from the core of the Church.

As something of an aside, but pertinent to our discussion: When I was an undergraduate student at UCLA, I spent a summer in the Mormon Colonies doing a linguistic anthropological study of bilingualism in the Mormon Colonies for my honors research project. I am always surprised at

23 See Mark Alan Wright and Brant A. Gardner, “The Cultural Context of Nephite Apostasy,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 1 (2012): 25–55; online at <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/the-cultural-context-of-nephite-apostasy/> (accessed 5 September 2014).

how many members of the Church have never heard of the Colonies. They got a little bit of press during the 2012 election cycle, since Mitt Romney's heritage traces back to them, but they still remain relatively unknown. Perhaps we can draw an analogy, then. If the Mormon Colonies of Mexico are so little known among members of the modern Church living in the information age, it seems entirely plausible — and, I think, extremely likely — that the majority of Nephites living after the time of Christ knew little to nothing about the fate of those who went northward a century or more earlier.

Evidence for Mesoamerican/North American Interaction²⁴

With the Hinterland Hypothesis, the question naturally arises as to whether or not there is any evidence for movement from Mesoamerica to North America. There is.

The evidence suggests that Mesoamerican cultural influence spread, primarily northward, beginning long before the Nephites ever set foot in the New World and continuing through the late Postclassic period, meaning that the trails were blazed long before the Book of Mormon era began and continued to be used long after Moroni sealed the record up.

The evidence for movement northward is incremental, slowly radiating outward over the generations. What types of evidence is there? Genetic, linguistic, botanical, ideological, and archaeological evidence are all there.

Let us begin with the genetic evidence. In 2003, a study was done that compared the DNA of the Ohio Hopewell with that of 50 indigenous populations from both North and Central America, and it found Central American and even South American markers.²⁵ This, of course, demonstrates that

24 This section relies heavily on Livingston's "The Book of Mormon and Mesoamerican Travels 'Northward,'" cited in n. 1. See the article for a fuller treatment of all of the lines of evidence and supporting sources that are only briefly touched on here.

25 Lisa A. Mills, "Mitochondrial DNA Analysis of the Ohio Hopewell of the Hopewell Mound Group" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2003), 90–91.

the interaction between the two regions involved more than just the trading of goods and ideas. For the genetic markers to be so prevalent, it is likely that there was a significant amount of procreation, more than is likely from the occasional Mesoamerican merchant passing through town.

Linguistic data compiled by Brian Stubbs demonstrates that Uto-Aztecan languages spread from Mexico into North America, primarily the American Southwest.²⁶ As was mentioned previously, the northward influence was often incremental, meaning that we see clear influence from central Mexico up to northern Mexico, and then influence from northern Mexico into the American Southwest, then from the American Southwest moving further northward, and so on. There is a filtering or diluting of cultural traits, but they are nevertheless traceable. For example, non-LDS scholar Robert L. Hall recently published in *The Oxford Handbook of North American Archaeology* — a very reputable source — that the Cherokee word for corn, *selu*, is likely cognate with the Nahuatl root word for corn, *xilo*-.²⁷

As for botanical evidence, one brief but potent example will suffice. The main staple food of Mesoamericans was maize, or corn. As non-LDS scholars Bruce Smith and Richard Yarnell note in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in 2009, domesticated corn from Mesoamerica had already reached eastern North America by approximately 200 BC.²⁸

Ideologically and culturally, there are a number of fascinating commonalities pointed out by Robert L. Hall in his *Oxford Handbook* chapter entitled “Some Commonalities

26 Brian Stubbs. 2004. “A Few Hundred Hints of Egyptian and Two Dialects of Hebrew (or Northwest Semitic) in Uto-Aztecan.” Unpublished 142-page manuscript in possession of the author.

27 Robert L. Hall, “Some Commonalities Linking North America and Mesoamerica,” in *The Oxford Handbook of North American Archaeology*, ed. Timothy R. Pauketat (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 61.

28 Bruce D. Smith and Richard A. Yarnell, “Initial Formation of an Indigenous Crop Complex in Eastern North America at 3800 BP,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 106/16 (2009): 6561.

Linking North America and Mesoamerica.”²⁹ He notes the importance of the sweat bath, which is variously associated with birth, renewal, and spiritual cleansing and is found from as far south as Guatemala and across North America from Alaska to Newfoundland. Another cultural commonality is the importance of competitive sports, specifically the ball game. Although the specific game varied from culture to culture, they shared the overarching concept of team sports played with a ball. There are also many commonalities regarding their mourning rites and their rituals of sacrifice. For example, a particular rite among both Aztecs and Great Plains tribes required that warriors be tethered to a stone or pole and fight enemies using only a wooden paddle. The tethered warrior was not likely to win; it was a sacrificial rite. Another common sacrificial ritual was that of scaffold sacrifice, wherein a victim would be tied standing upright, with arms and legs spread out, and subsequently be shot with arrows.

These few examples will need to suffice. Something that nonarchaeologists may not understand is that there is frustratingly little communication between Mesoamericanists and North American archaeologists. In a 2008 article in *American Antiquity*, one of the top-tier journals in our field, the authors lamented, “Archaeologists in the southeastern United States and Mexico seldom communicate with each other. Basic comparisons of site data, settlement, subsistence, or other cultural systems from one region to the other are rarely attempted, even around the Gulf, where it should be easy.”³⁰ The point is that there is a lot we still do not know.

In conclusion, I would like to restate that my hope with this paper was that I might be able to reconcile the statements made by the Prophet Joseph Smith concerning Nephites and Lamanites with what the best archaeological evidence tells us about where the Book of Mormon likely took place. I

29 Hall, “Some Commonalities,” 52–63.

30 Nancy Marie White and Richard A. Weinstein, “The Mexican Connection and the Far West of the U.S. Southeast,” *American Antiquity* 73/2 (2008): 230.

have attempted to show that the Hinterland Hypothesis can account for Joseph's inspired statements while keeping the core narrative of the Book of Mormon in Mesoamerica. Evidence from within the Book of Mormon and from real-world archaeology demonstrates the movement of peoples and ideas from Mesoamerica to North America. But to reiterate, the Church has no official position on such matters. As members of the Church, we ought to engage in civil discourse as we discuss these matters. Let us not let questions of where the Book of Mormon took place overpower the actual message of the book: that Jesus is the Christ, and that the prophecies and promises are extended to all who come unto him.

An earlier version of this article was presented at the 2013 FairMormon Conference (<http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/fair-conferences/2013-fair-conference/2013-heartland-as-hinterland-the-mesoamerican-core-and-north-american-periphery-of-book-of-mormon-geography>). A video version of the conference presentation can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLAy1cDPLMo>. Many thanks to our friends at FairMormon for all the excellent material they have made available at their website.

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THE INTEGRATION OF TEMPLES AND FAMILIES: A LATTER-DAY SAINT STRUCTURE FOR THE JACOB CYCLE

Jamie J. Huston

Abstract: Scholars from many religious backgrounds — including Latter-day Saints--have noted both temple themes and parallel structures in the Jacob Cycle (Genesis 28–35). The present paper surveys that body of work and then offers a new structural understanding of the text, one that is uniquely LDS. This interpretation focuses on the entwining of temple and family themes in the narrative, showing how the form of the text uses each to support the other.

Latter-day Saints believe that some important doctrines have been known among covenant peoples since the earliest eras of human history. Joseph Smith taught that this final dispensation included all the doctrinal truths that had been known in those primeval eras, but which had been lost: “The dispensation of the fullness of times will bring to light the things that have been revealed in all former dispensations.”¹

It should come as no surprise, then, that two of the most cherished features of the Church in this last dispensation — temple worship and the primacy of the family unit — should be attested to in the literature of the first dispensations. In fact, the story of one early patriarch in particular, Jacob, shows just how deeply interwoven these two areas of life are.

1 *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011), 510.

Scholars from various backgrounds have studied the Jacob Cycle and discerned parallel structures, and with its instances of revelation, ritual, and altar building, many have seen a temple theme in the story of the life of Jacob. However, Latter-day Saints are in a position to see this text in a new way that is especially meaningful, as these details can be synthesized into a cohesive whole that is distinctively LDS.

In “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative,” Yehuda T. Radday states that “the story of Jacob may ... be said to end with [Genesis] chapter 35 and to start with his departure from his father’s house in chapter 28.”² Radday then explains that the structure of Jacob’s story is simple: Jacob “descends” from Canaan to Aram in the first half, ending in 31:45-32:1, and then returns to Aram to be reconciled with Esau. Radday also notes that Jacob’s encounter with a “messenger” at the central point was the defining event of the story, and he observes that Jacob erects a heap of stones at the beginning, middle, and end of his journey. But Radday’s analysis stops here, lamenting “that the Jacob Cycle is not more chiastically articulate.”³

However, the major structural scaffolding of the Jacob Cycle is achieved by chiasmus. Chiasmus is a style of writing where a series of words, phrases, or ideas is given and then repeated in reverse order. It is frequently used in ancient writings to create an aesthetic unit that can be easily memorized and to draw attention to the central turning point, the most important part of the story.

Of the Jacob Cycle in particular, Stanley D. Walters writes:

Placement and juxtaposition are among the writer’s major techniques. ... Thus the cycle is not only a narrative sequence with its own inner movement,

2 Yehuda T. Radday, “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo: Research Press, 1981), 103.

3 Yehuda T. Radday, “Chiasmus,” 103.

but an artful arrangement which invites the reader to compare each segment with its complement later (or earlier) in the sequence.⁴

Wolfgang M. W. Roth implicitly notes that multiple valid interpretations of structural arrangement — and, therefore, thematic emphasis — are possible. He reviews the central episodes of one three-fold outline of the Jacob Cycle by focusing on concerns of divine appearance to confer physical blessings:

Two divine words reinterpret the Yahwistic change of name tradition (compare 35:10, P, with 32:23-3, J) and the promise of land and descendants (compare 35:11, P, with 28:13-14, J). Jacob's renaming of Luz as Bethel (35:15, P) and the listing of his twelve sons (35:22b-26, P) demonstrates the (preliminary) fulfillment of both promises.⁵

Roth then describes a second reading of this sequence, based on a structure that focuses on Jacob's relationships and need for conflict resolution:

While P *centered* the Jacob story in the divine appearance and blessing, condensed into brief divine statements (Genesis 35:10, 11-2, J) structured the Jacob story as *two arches*, more exactly, as one arch (the Jacob-Laban series) set within another (the Jacob-Esau series). ...

Where they touch each other, Jacob's encounters with the divine intervene: this occurs first at

4 Stanley D. Walters, "Jacob Narrative," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Volume 3, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York, Doubleday, 1992), 600. Emphasis in original.

5 Wolfgang M. W. Roth, "The Text is the Medium: An Interpretation of the Jacob Stories in Genesis," in *Encounter with the Text: Form and History in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Martin J. Buss (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 105.

Bethel, after the Jacob-Esau tension had become so unbearable that Jacob had to flee and before Jacob reaches Laban (28:13-15). It occurs a second time at Peniel, on Jacob's return journey after that Jacob-Laban tension had been settled and before the crucial meeting with Esau was to take place (32:23-33).⁶

While Roth's two given arrangements of the Jacob Cycle are both compelling, each only accounts for part of the major divine encounters in that narrative: the first (that attributed to "P") favors Genesis 35, while the second (that attributed to "J") focuses on Genesis 28 and 32. Even if the present text of the Jacob Cycle represents a composite of various versions, the new schematic proposed here will show the value of reading that present text as a unified whole (for one thing, this arrangement will account for all three of those revelatory chapters).

Indeed, John G. Gammie, writing in the same volume as Roth, virtually says as much:

I reached a similar conclusion, *viz.*, that the material in Genesis 25-36 has been consciously arranged in a concentric or chiasmic pattern. The increasing awareness of such a pattern of arrangement by a number of persons laboring relatively independently strongly suggests that the pattern was consciously chosen by one of the biblical compilers-editors and therefore is of significance for interpreting the texts.⁷

Mary Anne Isaak includes the chapters of the Jacob Cycle as the first six elements of an outline of eight units, where the last two units return to the story of Jacob's life after skipping over

6 Roth, 106. Emphasis in original.

7 John G. Gammie, "Theological Interpretation by Way of Literary and Tradition Analysis: Genesis 25-36," in *Encounter with the Text: Form and History in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Martin J. Buss (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 120-21.

the story of Joseph (in Genesis 37-45) entirely.⁸ Isaak pairs Jacob's early life, up through the point where he departs his parents' home (Genesis 25:19-28:9) with Jacob's reuniting with Esau, receiving a vision at Penuel, and the episode of his children at Shechem (Genesis 32:1-34:31), each under the heading "Jacob in the Land." The two major spiritual manifestations at Bethel (Genesis 28:22 and 35:1-15) are paired together, as are the stories of Jacob's marriages, children's births, and his acquisition of land (Genesis 29:1-30:43) with Jacob's reunion with Joseph and meeting Pharaoh (Genesis 45:25-47:27), this latter pair sharing the label, "Jacob leaves the Land." Isaak's final section includes the agreement between Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31:1-55) being grouped with Jacob's blessings of his grandsons and his subsequent burial (Genesis 47:28-50:13).

Isaak gives her outline of the text as follows:

- Jacob in the Land (25:19-28:9)
 - 1. Jacob and Esau (25:19-28:9)
 - 1. Birthright (25:19-34)
 - [The Story of Isaac (26:1-34)]
 - 2. Jacob is blessed by his father (27:1-40)
 - 3. Sent from the land (27:41-28:9)
 - B. Bethel Experience (28:10-22)
 - C. Jacob leaves the land (29:1-30:43)
 - 1. Marriage (29:1-30)
 - 2. Children (29:31-30:21)
 - 3. Acquisition of Property (30:25-43)
 - D. Return to the Land (31:1-55) {70}
 - 1. Bethel recalled (31:1-21)
 - 2. Covenant between Laban and Jacob (31:22-55)
 - A. Jacob in the land (32:1-34:31) (stet)
 - 1. Jacob prepares to meet Esau (32:1-21)
 - 2. Jacob wrestles with God — name change (32:22-32)

8 Mary Anne Isaak, "Literary Structure and Theology of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Three-fold Blessing," *Direction Journal* 24, no. 2 (Fall 1995), <http://www.directionjournal.org/article/?895>.

- 3. Jacob and Esau (33:1-20)
- 4. Shechem (34:1-31)
- B'** Bethel experience — name change repeated (35:1-15)
- Ending to section of Jacob in the land (35:16-29)
 - 1. Rachel dies (35:16-20)
 - 2. Jacob's sons (35:21-26)
 - 3. Isaac dies (35:27-29)
 - [The account of Esau (36:1-43)]
 - [The story of Joseph (37:1-45:24)]
- C'** Jacob leaves the land (45:25-47:27)
 - 1. God promises Jacob will return (45:25-46:27)
 - 2. Jacob meets Joseph (46:28-34)
 - 3. Jacob meets Pharaoh (47:1-12)
 - [Joseph is administrator of Egypt (47:13-26)]
 - 4. Acquisition of property (47:27)
- D'** Return to the land (47:28-50:14)
 - 1. Bethel recalled (47:28-48:4)
 - 2. Jacob blesses his sons (48:5-49:28)
 - 3. Jacob is buried in Canaan (49:29-50:13)

Isaak explains that her arrangement is derived from the fact that “in the Jacob pattern, just as in the Abraham pattern, the name change occurs at the beginning of the second panel of the parallel structure.” She goes on to emphasize “the importance of the theme of land in Jacob’s story.”

This interpretation is novel but is not structurally holistic, as it must skip nine whole chapters without explanation and includes significant subunits with no parallel, and it focuses on one small aspect of the Jacob Cycle — land — but largely ignores other possible dimensions.

Michael W. Martin presents a more cogent arrangement of the Jacob material.⁹ Martin interprets the Jacob Cycle as an

9 Michael W. Martin, “Betrothal Journey Narratives,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70 (2008): 505-23.

example of a betrothal narrative, according to the pattern he identifies in his article: 11 elements, including commission by parents to go to a foreign country, service for a spouse, return to the original land, and reunion with the rest of the family:

The full schema of the betrothal type-scene, with minor variation in order, is as follows: (1) Jacob travels to a foreign country (29:1), and both conventional motives are described. He is in flight from a relative, Esau (27:41-45; 28:10), and he is commissioned by both his mother (27:46) and his father (28:1-5). (2) Upon arrival in the foreign country, Jacob meets a woman, Rachel, at a well (29:2-9). (3) He draws water for her (29:10b) after (4) removing the large stone from the well (29:10a, cf. v. 8). (5) In the climactic moment of the scene (accompanied by kissing and weeping), Jacob reveals to her his identity as a kinsman (29:11-12a). Immediately afterward, (6) Rachel runs home with news of his arrival (29:12). (7) As in the scene above, a relative, Laban, returns to greet the man (29:13a). (8) Subsequently, a betrothal is arranged in connection with a meal (29:15-22), the terms of betrothal ultimately (9) requiring Jacob to remain many more years than the convention's norm. That is, a month-long stay (29:14) becomes a seven-year stay (24:20) and then is extended another seven years (24:27). Since in most scenes the betrothal happens in a matter of days and the suitor is required to stay with the family for only a short time, this extended stay underscores Laban's mistreatment of Jacob. The stay also permits Jacob to beget several children, per the convention.

After the long residency, (10) Jacob returns to Canaan, commissioned by the bride's father, per conventional

expectations (30:25–31:54). The departure, however, is unconventionally acrimonious in that Jacob flees because of Laban’s growing resentment and without granting Laban the opportunity to bid farewell (31:28) — a fitting conclusion to the entire story of Jacob and Laban (normally the father-in-law graciously grants the young suitor’s request to return home and the departure is wholly amicable). (11) Finally, Jacob is received by a relative, Esau (33:1–16), and thereafter lives with his family, first in the Transjordan (33:17), and then in Canaan (33:18; etc.), where he begets even more children, further establishing his household.¹⁰

Latter-day Saints will readily relate to Martin’s recognition of the dominance of familial themes in the Jacob Cycle (not to mention a metaphor for the plan of salvation), but, like Isaak, his interpretation fails to sufficiently incorporate the crucial temple material found at intervals throughout the story, which Martin doesn’t treat at all.

The most popular arrangement of the text’s narrative parallels is summarized in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*:

The Biblical text presents the Jacob stories in a concentric pattern which has been independently observed by several scholars ... and which is signalled both by cross-references in vocabulary and by thematic similarities. The cycle breaks into 2 equal halves at Genesis 30:24–25, each having 7 matching segments, presented thematically in exact reverse order. The entire cycle is bracketed at beginning and end by genealogies of the 2 sons who stand outside the land of promise, Ishmael (25:12–18)

10 Martin, 510–511.

and Esau (chap. 36), so that Jacob's role as the bearer of the promise is unmistakable.

The Unchosen Son (Ishmael) (25:12-18)

A. Beginnings. Birth, prediction, early conflict between Jacob and Esau (25:19-34)

B. Relations with indigenous population (26:1-22)

C. Blessing obtained ... (27:1-40)

D. Jacob's flight from Esau (27:41-28:5)

E. Encounter with God's agents (28:10-22)

F. Arrival in Haran: Rachel, Laban (29:1-30)

G. Children: Jacob acquires a family (30:1-24)

Jacob's return to Canaan begins as soon as Joseph is born

G'. Flocks: Jacob acquires wealth (30:25-43)

F'. Departure from Haran: Rachel, Laban (31:1-32:1 — Eng 31:1-55)

E'. Encounter with God's agents (32:3-3 — Eng 32:1-2)

D'. Jacob's approach to Esau (32:4-33 — Eng 32:3-32)

C'. Blessing returned ... (33:1-20)

B'. Relations with indigenous population (ch. 34)

A'. Endings. Death, fulfillment, Jacob and Esau together (ch. 35)

The Unchosen Son (Esau) (chap. 36)¹¹

This formulation has both literary merit and spiritual value for all students of the text, including Latter-day Saints. However, the most well-rounded extant consideration of the Jacob Cycle — and that most closely approaching the new, uniquely LDS schema — has been that of Bernard Och. Och approaches the text from both the literary and the spiritual angles:

11 Walters, 599-600.

Structurally, the Jacob narrative (Genesis 25-35) moves along two distinct, dramatic lines: a horizontal one of human-profane activity and a vertical one of Divine-human encounter. ... God's revelations at Bethel (Genesis 28:11-22) and Penuel (Genesis 34:24-32) serve as the pillars upon which the entire narrative rests, and provide a theological gestalt which infuses the story with the concerns and fulfillments of Divine promise.¹²

Though Och shows how episodes in biblical drama are paired for thematic impact, he prefers to draw comparisons between the Jacob and Abraham narratives rather than seeing the many interdependent pairs within the Jacob text itself. For example, Och writes that, "Penuel [a site in the Jacob Cycle] is the theological counterpart to Moriah [a site in the Abraham Cycle]. Both are events of existential rebirth which are preceded by existential death."¹³ He adds his name to the roster of scholars who note that the Jacob Cycle is composed of thematic "binary opposites."¹⁴

These authors all add valuable insights to our understanding and appreciation of the Jacob Cycle. It is possible, however, to see a more specific spiritual dimension in the text because of two factors that may have influenced its composition, factors that Latter-day Saint theology emphasizes: temple work and family life. Temple worship involves more than can be readily apparent in a public text, and temple work is inherently family-oriented.

There have been previous Latter-day Saint interpretations of the Jacob Cycle, such as Andrew C. Skinner's essay, "Jacob

12 Bernard Och, "Jacob at Bethel and Penuel: The Polarity of Divine Encounter," *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought* 42, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 164.

13 Bernard Och, "Jacob," 173.

14 Bernard Och, "Jacob," 168, 169.

in the Presence of God.”¹⁵ Skinner, while he presents a detailed doctrinal exegesis of the text, including both temple and family themes, does not cover the elegant literary structure in which the author embeds this information.

Here, I propose a new outline of the structure of the Jacob Cycle, one which is based on and is intended to highlight the specific doctrinal themes of Latter-day Saints. The elements of family and temple work can be seen symbiotically entwined in the Jacob Cycle like this:

A. Jacob leaves his father to be blessed with covenant wife and great posterity. 28:1-5

B. Jacob’s brother, who had lost his birthright, rebels, dividing the family. 28:6-9

C. At Beth-el, Jacob:

a. Erects a pile of stones, 28:10-11.

b. Sees angels ascend and descend, 28:12.

c. Receives promises of temporal blessings of protection and future blessings based on endurance, 28:13-15.

d. Builds and consecrates an altar, 28:16-19.

e. Covenants to tithe. 28:20-22.

D. Jacob works to earn his first wife. 29:1-35

E. Jacob works for the welfare of his family.
30:1-43

F. Jacob’s family is abused by Laban.
31:1-35

G. Jacob is reconciled with Laban.
31:36-55

H. Jacob’s endowment, 32:1-32

15 Andrew C. Skinner, “Jacob in the Presence of God,” in *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Old Testament*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2005), 117-32.

G'. Jacob is reconciled with Esau.

33:1-17

F'. Jacob's family is abused by Shechem
and Hamor. 33:18-34:5

E'. Jacob's sons scheme for the welfare of the
family. 34:6-24

D'. Jacob's sons retaliate against their sister's
abusers. 34:25-31

C'. At Beth-el, Jacob:

e. covenants obedience to the Lord, 35:1-5

d. builds an altar, 35:6-8

c. is given a new name and is blessed with seed,
35:9-12

b. sees the Lord ascend, 35:13

a. derects a stone pillar. 35:14-15

B'. Jacob's son is lustful and rebels, losing his birthright.
35:16-26

A'. Jacob returns to his father, blessed with a large, righteous
family. 35:27-29

Once the Jacob Cycle is arranged in this chiastic format,
the messages about temples and families — including what
they have to do with each other — can be read more clearly by
examining the paired episodes of the story.

A and A' (28:1-5 / 35:27-29). The first and last things we
read are that Jacob was sent out by his father to earn the eternal
blessings of a covenant family and that he returned successfully,
despite some mistakes and adversity along the way.

And Isaac called Jacob, and *blessed him*, and *charged him*, and said unto him, *Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan*. Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and *take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother*.

And God Almighty *blest thee*, and *make thee fruitful*, and *multiply thee*, that thou mayest be *a multitude of people*;

And give thee *the blessing of Abraham*, to thee, and to *thy seed* with thee; that thou mayest *inherit the land* wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham. (Genesis 28:1-4, emphasis added)

Though the importance of family is obvious here, the temple reference is subtler: references to blessings at the outset of a journey, injunctions to fidelity to a faith community, and promises of God's covenant with Abraham — specifically, its aspects of land and descendants — being renewed with an individual, should all alert the LDS reader to temple significance in the text.

Jacob's story, as a complete biography and as a finished chiasm, constitutes a single discrete unit. By starting out with nothing and being sent away by his father in order to grow spiritually, and much later coming back to his father to announce his faithfulness and gain lasting approval in his sight, Jacob reminds us of Adam, the endowment's prototypical man, who in turn is meant to represent each of us and our journey through life.

Jacob, therefore, like Adam, Abraham (D&C 132:32), and Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:21), is presented to us as a model of how to live rightly, demonstrating the process of becoming exalted. Through these examples, we see a narrative microcosm of how our life can and should be lived; however, Jacob's model especially focuses on the importance of raising up a family in this sacred journey.

Of the typology inherent in this story from its start, Och writes:

God's initial encounter with His chosen one takes place at the start of a journey. ... Present reality has become untenable, and demands a struggle and a search for a solution, a "way out" — an exodus. The journey is made with the conscious awareness of being sought out and encountered by God, and requires an openness and obedience to the unconditional Divine claim on the totality of one's existence. ...

Man's journey with God is predicated upon an act of separation: removing oneself from the natural bonds of the past, from the kindred and parental ties which bind one to a specific place, a home. ... Jacob, like Abraham, must undertake a long and arduous journey of separation and transformation before he can return to reclaim the land of his forefathers.¹⁶

Gammie, though his structural arrangement of the text differs from this one, makes several observations about the usefulness of seeing the text through the opposing parallels of chiasmus, which also find application here:

Where the segments in the first half of the pattern record a movement of the leading character of the cycle away from the home of his parents, the corresponding segments in the second half record his movement back toward that home. ...

What transpires in the central ... segments allows a contrast to be drawn between the status of the main character who in the first half, at his departure, is alone and without wealth or progeny ..., but in

16 Och, 166-67.

the second half, at his return, is possessed with an abundance of both.¹⁷

B and B' (28:6-9 / 35:16-26). What could be learned by these sad examples? Esau, Isaac's son and Jacob's brother, perhaps jealous of his brother and angry with himself for previously discounting his covenant birthright (see Genesis 25:29-34), now moves closer to apostasy by marrying outside the covenant altogether. Later, Reuben, Jacob's son, in a position similar to Esau's, loses *his* covenant birthright by giving in to temptation and sleeping with one of Jacob's wives (see 1 Chronicles 5:1).

Agency cuts both ways, and when it comes to children, we can only prepare them and pray they'll choose the right as adults. Some have noted that the perfect Parent, our Heavenly Father, lost a third of *His* children when they poorly chose to rebel against Him (D&C 29:36). In the same fashion, even great patriarchs like Isaac and Jacob may still have an Esau or a Reuben who declines to live well.

Yet hope remains. As Brigham Young taught:

Let the father and mother, who are members of this Church and Kingdom, take a righteous course, and strive with all their might never to do a wrong, but to do good all their lives; if they have one child or one hundred children, if they conduct themselves towards them as they should, binding them to the Lord by their faith and prayers, I care not where those children go, *they are bound up to their parents by an everlasting tie*, and no power of earth or hell can separate them from their parents in eternity; they will return again to the fountain from whence they sprang.¹⁸

17 Gammie, 122-23

18 *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 173. Emphasis added.

Here's comfort for Isaac, Jacob, and every parent: obtaining and living true to the ordinances and covenants of the temple offers hope for reclamation of wayward children in eternity.

C and C' (28:10-22 / 35:1-15). Notice the five specific repeated elements in these portions of the story: the creation of a stone object, the vision of divine beings, the bestowal of blessings, the creation of an altar, and the making of covenants. The only significant difference is in the middle: in the first temple experience, relatively early in his life, Jacob is given the promise of future temporal blessings of land and seed, with the assurance from the Lord that He would "keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land" (Genesis 28:15). Clearly, the bulk of Jacob's work (and blessings) was yet to come.

The imagery of the ladder in this section illustrates this fact. President Marion G. Romney said this of the ladder's initiatory symbolism:

Jacob realized that the covenants he made with the Lord there were the rungs on the ladder that he himself would have to climb in order to obtain the promised blessings — blessings that would entitle him to enter heaven and associate with the Lord.¹⁹

But near the end of Jacob's story, when he finally does return to Beth-el, the message is slightly different: the Lord reaffirms the new name that had been given Jacob in Genesis 32:28, and He reiterates the promise of land and seed. There is no attendant blessing of companionship on a forthcoming journey as there was in Genesis 28:15 because, presumably, Jacob has completed that journey and finished faithfully. If the first encounter at Beth-el, with its preparatory blessings, can be seen as a variant of the "washing and anointing" experience,

19 Marion G. Romney, "Temples — The Gates to Heaven," *Ensign*, March 1971, 16.

then the second experience may be more akin to being “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13) or making “your calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10).

Of the doctrinal lessons in this section of the text, Skinner writes, in part:

Jacob learned that if he kept the covenant, God would be with him everywhere he went, and that God would fulfill everything He promised to do for Jacob. ... Jacob learned that sanctity and place can be, and often are, linked together. ... From Bethel, Jacob undoubtedly came away understanding the order of heaven, the possibilities for exaltation, and the promises of the Abrahamic covenant if he proved faithful.²⁰

Och writes:

The encounters at ... Bethel can be seen as rites of passage in a geographical and spiritual sense. ... This process of election and transformation involves both an outer and inner journey. The outer journey is the plot and moves through time and space; the inner journey provides the meaning, and moves towards a deeper understanding of one's true identity and being.²¹

Further, Och clearly sees a temple significance in the first Bethel passage, though he does not elucidate it in detail; his description of the power in this story is simple, reverent, and poetic: “Bethel is where heaven and earth meet. It is an axis mundi, a place of the incursion of the sacred into the profane

20 Skinner, 120-21.

21 Och, 166.

world; a bridge between heaven and earth which is initiated, not by human hubris, but by Divine love.”²²

Gammie succinctly writes, “Theophanies, for the main character, Jacob, occur at critical moments in corresponding segments of both halves.”²³ The reference to theophanies is significant for Latter-day Saints studying the Jacob Cycle as a temple-centric text. A recent Sperry Symposium focused on clarifying the relationship between Old Testament texts and the temple as a place for seeing God:

A major theme in the book of Psalms is that worshipers could enter the Lord’s temple, come into His presence and see Him face to face if they met certain requirements, said BYU professor Andrew C. Skinner during the Sperry Symposium held at Brigham Young University on Oct. 26.

“The Hebrew Bible or Christian Old Testament contains several episodes in which God appeared to mortals,” he said. “Such an appearance is called a theophany, from the Greek *theophaneia*, meaning ‘God appearance.’ They were not everyday occurrences, but neither were they so rare as to be puzzling to mortal participants.”

Passages of scripture suggest that theophanies were a result of faithful devotion to God, obedience, and covenant-keeping. The Old Testament says that the Lord would visit with the Israelites in the “tent of meeting,” and there He would dwell among the Israelites. The purpose of Solomon’s Temple — the first temple in Jerusalem — was to bring worshipers into direct contact with Deity.

22 Och, 170-71.

23 Gammie, 123.

Drawing from other scholars, Brother Skinner said that some believe that seeking the face or presence of the Lord had been at the heart of temple beliefs and rituals.²⁴

Matthew L. Bowen, in a paper based on a presentation at that same symposium, writes this of the connection between temple theophanies past and present:

On a mountain temple, Moses, who learned that fallen man was nothing, also learned that he was able to “behold” God because God’s glory had come upon him, i.e., he was transfigured (Moses 1:2, 11) and “cleansed” (cf. 3 Nephi 28:37). Isaiah, similarly overwhelmed by feelings of inadequacy as “a man of unclean lips in the midst of a people of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5), had his iniquity “purged” (tĕkuppār, atoned) so that he could be in the Lord’s presence (in the temple!) and participate in the divine council (Isaiah 6:7–8). For both prophets, not the blood of a sacrificial animal but rather of the Lord himself enabled them to remain in his presence: the Lord would “provide” himself in the mountain.

If our eyes could be “opened” like Adam’s and Eve’s (Moses 5:10–11), and if we could “see” with “purer eyes” (D&C 131:7) like Abraham, we would better appreciate that the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ is not only at the heart of the temple — both in its concept and in its ordinances — but that the temple is the Savior’s Atonement. That Atonement is gradually but surely exerting its intended effect upon the family of Adam and Eve through the temple (see Jacob 5:75). May the Lord “open [our] eyes” that we

24 Marianne Holman, “Sperry Symposium: Seeing God in His Temple,” *Church News*, Nov. 17, 2013, <http://www.ldschurchnewsarchive.com/articles/64140/Sperry-Symposium-Seeing-God-in-His-Temple.html>.

“may see” our promised redemption and “rejoice” with Adam and Eve, Enoch, Abraham, Sarah, our kindred dead, and all saints of ages past (cf. D&C 138:11–19).²⁵

To that list of exemplars could be added Jacob, whose life history shows multiple instances of theophany in temple locations.

There is also a pun made by pairing these segments of the text this way: in the *second* verse of section C, Jacob made a *stone pillow* (Genesis 28:11); in the *second to last* verse of section C’, he made a *pillar of stone* (Genesis 35:14). The pun on *pillow/pillar* appears to be peculiar to the King James Version.

J. P. Fokkelman also notices the repetition of stone and ascribes to it this spiritual significance:

Jacob immortalizes the vision in an action, the result of which, the massebe, reflects what he had seen. But what he had done earlier, put down a stone at random, in a place at random, he sets right, he completes under the influence of the vision. ...

Just as a dull drop of dew into a bright brilliant by the beams of the morning-sun, so, by the theophany, the unimportant trivial action of Jacob is transformed into a historical example in the dialogue of man and his God.²⁶

In section C, Jacob begins by making a stone object for a purely temporal, utilitarian reason: He merely needed a place to lie down. In section C’, however, Jacob has matured such that

25 Matthew L. Bowen, “‘In the Mount of the Lord It Shall Be Seen’ and ‘Provided’: Theophany and Sacrifice as the Etiological Foundation of the Temple in Israelite and Latter-day Saint Tradition,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, no. 5 (2013): 228.

26 J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 73.

even a simple action like that can now be repeated as a holy act: the creation of a consecrated altar: “And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon.” (Genesis 35:14) The difference is symbolic: just as the stone object has become fashioned from something originally crude into something sacred, so has Jacob.

D and D’ (29:1-35 / 34:25-31). Unlike the preceding three pairs, this section does not seem intended to offer a dual testimony of a principle as much as to offer a contrast. First we have Jacob humbly sacrificing seven years of his life for Rachel, the woman he has fallen in love with (but “they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her,” Genesis 29:20). Years later, after that family has flourished, we see the next generation in the horrible episode of Dinah’s rape, and the bloody revenge exacted by her brothers: the murder of all the men of the city.

The rape and revenge story in Genesis 34 seems so foreign to the text, and indeed to the very spirit of scripture, that some have wondered what purpose it serves there at all: A footnote on this chapter in the *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* points out that the name of God is entirely missing from Genesis 34, and then refers to this chapter as “sordid.”²⁷ Fokkelman does not integrate this chapter into his arrangement at all and ultimately concludes, “The interpretation of the Jacob-cycle now turns out to be incomplete.”²⁸

Jacob’s final patriarchal blessing to the sons responsible for this disaster, in Genesis 49:5-7, shows that Jacob strongly disapproved of the tactic and that the sons were punished for giving in to anger. But what else could they have done?

27 *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, ed. Kenneth L. Baker (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 2008), 59. fn.

28 Fokkelman, 238.

Perhaps the answer lies in the pious course of action displayed by Jacob himself in the juxtaposed section of the story. Laban, seeing that he had gotten seven years of excellent service from Jacob for Rachel, deceives Jacob and gives him Leah instead. Laban then demands another seven years service for Rachel. Does Jacob kill him, or illicitly kidnap Rachel and consider himself justified, or retaliate at all? No. Jacob simply continues to live and serve as he knows he should. Though they endure other conflicts, Jacob and Laban are ultimately reconciled in peace. One wonders what might have become of Shechem and Hamor had the sons of Jacob not denied them the chance to repent.

Like Esau and Reuben, Simeon and Levi did not exercise patience and forgiveness when presented with an extreme test, as their father Jacob had. The character demonstrated by Jacob, incidentally, has likewise been encouraged in our day:

Now, I speak unto you concerning your families — if men will smite you, or your families, once, and ye bear it patiently and revile not against them, neither seek revenge, ye shall be rewarded;

But if ye bear it not patiently, it shall be accounted unto you as being meted out as a just measure unto you. (D&C 98:23-24)

With both a positive and a negative example given, we are shown clearly which method of sustaining the sanctity of family is superior. Consider the verbs attributed to Jacob's reaction in the wake of being deceived by Laban in having seven years of work repaid with a promised spouse withheld:

And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he *said* to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?

And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.

Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.

And Jacob *did so*, and *fulfilled her week*: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.

And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid.

And he went in also unto Rachel, and he *loved* also Rachel more than Leah, and *served* with him yet seven other years. (Genesis 29:25-30, emphasis added)

Contrast these peaceful, submissive responses with those of his sons a generation later:

And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, *took each man his sword*, and *came upon the city boldly*, and *slew* all the males.

And they *slew* Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and *took* Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out.

The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and *spoiled* the city, because they had defiled their sister.

They *took* their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field,

And all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives ***took they captive***, and ***spoiled*** even all that was in the house.

And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. (Genesis 34:25-30, emphasis added)

The younger men “took” their swords to their enemies before they “took” their sister back, but this was inexorably followed by a note that they then “took” the children and wives of their enemies — an ironic act, considering the impetus for their revenge — part of a sequence where they “spoiled the city” and “spoiled even all that was in the house.” Whatever familial impulses may have motivated their attack, the text shows that such aggression quickly poisons the perpetrator, especially if we extend the meaning of “spoil” from its context here as “plunder” or “prey upon for profit” to its related meaning of “to weaken the character or integrity of something.”

Consider also that the D’ section ends with Jacob reacting in the same manner he did before in section D: by speaking only, with the operative verb again merely being “said.” Indeed, both times Jacob reacts to the challenge to his family by rhetorically employing three clauses:

And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban,
 What is this thou hast done unto me?
 did not I serve with thee for Rachel?
 wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?
 (Genesis 29:25)

And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi,
 Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the
 inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and
 the Perizzites:

and I being few in number, they shall gather
 themselves together against me, and slay me;
 and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.
 (Genesis 34:30)

In the latter verse, Jacob scolds his sons primarily for the impolitic nature of their actions: their short-term concern with revenge (and profit) conflicts with the family's long-term need for survival. Simeon and Levi's temporary victory in one dispute may counterproductively hurt the whole family later, Jacob explains. Jacob, always the temple-focused man, constantly keeps the big picture in mind

E, F and F', E' (30:1-31:25 / 33:18-34:24). A couple of major family-centered themes emerge in this part of the narrative. The first is a common priesthood topic in our day. According to *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*: "By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families."²⁹

Jacob embodies this responsibility to provide for his family, even under difficult circumstances of employment. Jacob has a reputation for cleverness and earns this with his strategy to increase his own holdings by manipulating the breeding of Laban's flocks. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare has the devious and greedy Shylock discuss this with the devoutly anti-materialistic Antonio:

SHYLOCK

When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep —

29 "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.

This Jacob from our holy Abram was,
 As his wise mother wrought in his behalf,
 The third possessor; ay, he was the third —

ANTONIO

And what of him? did he take interest?

SHYLOCK

No, not take interest, not, as you would say,
 Directly interest: mark what Jacob did.
 When Laban and himself were compromised
 That all the eanlings which were streak'd and pied
 Should fall as Jacob's hire, the ewes, being rank,
 In the end of autumn turned to the rams,
 And, when the work of generation was
 Between these woolly breeders in the act,
 The skilful shepherd peel'd me certain wands,
 And, in the doing of the deed of kind,
 He stuck them up before the fulsome ewes,
 Who then conceiving did in eaning time
 Fall parti-colour'd lambs, and those were Jacob's.
 This was a way to thrive, and he was blest:
 And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not.

ANTONIO

This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for;
 A thing not in his power to bring to pass,
 But sway'd and fashion'd by the hand of heaven.³⁰

Antonio sees the success of Jacob's plan to gain wealth as a blessing from outside his own control, while Shylock sees it as mere natural consequence of physical law. Where Shakespeare draws this distinction to make foils of these characters, Brigham Young may not have seen a conflict at all;

30 William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, I.3.71-93

his philosophy often recognized that as people are in the course of their duty in serving their families, divine favor follows. Young once paraphrased a popular maxim: “We have none to depend upon for protection but God and his people; and God helps those who try to help themselves.”³¹

Though section E shows us Jacob creatively working in peace to provide for his family in a positive context, section E’ shows his sons resorting to obvious negative force in an attempt to serve their family.

Where sections D and D’ taught the importance of self-control in resolving conflict, this part of the story, which includes stories of the conflicts themselves, shows us exactly what should and should not be done.

Their sister having been raped, Jacob’s sons deal with the problem in a violently reactive way: They plot to trick the guilty parties and then murder them. Jacob handled the abuse of his family with greater wisdom. As Laban took advantage of Jacob’s situation as an indentured servant, Jacob relied on his faith and ingenuity to survive, not the impulsive guile his sons would later embrace. Genesis 30:25-43 explains how Jacob worked within Laban’s rules for dividing cattle to ensure an adequate sustenance for his family and recognized the Lord’s hand in rewarding him (later saying to his wives, “Ye know that with all my power I have served your father. . . . Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me” Genesis 31:6, 9).

It’s worth noting that Jacob let his family endure Laban’s extortion for fully 20 years before the Lord allowed Jacob to make a stand (Genesis 31:41), while his sons immediately prepared to exact revenge, waiting only three days before resorting to murder (Genesis 34:25).

31 William S. Harwell, ed. *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1847-1850* (Salt Lake City: Collier’s Publishing Co., 1997), 331.

Gammie appropriately notes that chiasmus draws our attention to “ironic reversals” in the text; this might be best related to the dichotomies presented in sections D, E, and F, and their opposing parallels. “The concentric arrangement of traditions enables the interpreter to conclude with some certitude that the arranger of these texts viewed the slaughter of the Shechemites by the sons of Jacob/Israel (Genesis 34) as a culpable act,” he writes, though he compares the episode with an incident involving Isaac in Genesis 26. “The arranger of these texts thus urges Israel to reflect at once on the virtues of her antagonists and on her own offenses,” he adds.³² Contrast that assessment with Fokkelman, who surveys the complete story of Jacob handling his suffering under Laban and marvels: “The more he is oppressed the more he expands!”³³

G and G' (31:36-55 / 33:1-17). When Laban overtakes Jacob's family, Jacob simply explains his case, and when Laban is willing to end hostilities, Jacob readily agrees to the covenant of peace. Gammie observes: “Where the *dramatis personae* include the same two main characters in corresponding segments of both halves, the action in the corresponding segment of the second half usually brings to a clear resolution a strife or tension which connected in the first.”³⁴

Having given closure to the major antagonism of his life to this point by conquering the natural man's instincts and conducting himself humbly (as the Lord would directly command the world during His mortal ministry in Matthew 5:23-25), Jacob was now ready for the passage into spiritual maturity. Before it even happened, he was preparing to live as righteously as possible by sending messengers to his long-estranged brother, collecting gifts for him, and praying for success in an eventual reunion (Genesis 32:1-23). When Jacob

32 Gammie, 124.

33 Fokkelman, 194.

34 Fokkelman, 122.

had obtained the spiritual gifts of power to endure that he had so well earned, he is able to face his brother.

One could imagine Esau as bitter towards the younger brother from their early history. Jacob had obtained the covenant birthright from Esau and then Esau, in light of Jacob's commission to marry righteously, married against his parents' wishes and moved away. Whatever Esau's state of mind was after all those years, Jacob had done all that he could to prepare for a reunion with his brother — a life of service and sacrifice had molded his spirit into one that would be eager for and receptive to his brother's good will — and Esau, like Laban, had his heart softened and was ready to forgive and forget.

Laban was Jacob's father-in-law; reconciliation was needed for the benefit of the family. Also in the best interests of the family was a restored relationship with Esau — Jacob had probably missed out on much of his brother's life (as their parents would have as well), and Jacob's wives and children had never known their brother-in-law and uncle.

But Jacob was deeply nervous about the meeting (Genesis 32:11). He worried that he wasn't ready or worthy (Genesis 32:10). How then did he finally prepare, after already proving his great spiritual strength through several trials, for this greatest test he would face? The Lord came and gave him the endowment — the dramatic centerpiece of Jacob's life.

The effect of the endowment on Jacob is immediate. Fokkelman describes the post-endowment reconciliation with Esau beautifully:

“To see your face is like seeing the face of god — with such favour have you received me.” [33:10] Jacob asks Esau to confirm the forgiveness implied in v. 4 by accepting his present. V. 10b states the reason Jacob dares to ask him: now Esau is to him like God. Esau is lord of the servant Jacob, as God is.

Esau is the ... authority which alone, by his mercy, can absolve Jacob's guilt and which can lend a new integrity to Jacob. ... A purified relationship to God necessarily goes with a purified relationship to his fellow-man. ...

Jacob, who once stole the blessing from Esau with complete self-assurance, now tries to make up for this, as far as possible, by returning a blessing.³⁵

An analysis of the temple material in the cycle's central episode may help us address a question raised here, one that echoes through the ages: How is the endowment able to aid people in making such positive progress in righteous relationships with their families?

H (32:1-32). Jacob had already made and kept covenants (including tithing), had proven himself a hard and honest worker, and was being a righteous husband and father. Now, on the eve of his great test — the bridging of the chasm between himself and his brother — he was blessed with a power that he had not before known, a power that would be able to sustain him for the rest of his days and fulfill all the promises that had ever been made to him.

Hugh Nibley describes the endowment summary in Genesis 32 in *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*: The “wrestling” in Genesis 32:24 “can just as well mean ‘embrace,’ and that it was in this ritual embrace that Jacob received a new name and the bestowal of priestly and kingly power at sunrise.”³⁶

Also worthy of note in this context is that the messenger put a mark on Jacob's thigh that didn't affect the physical “contest” (Genesis 32:25), but that remained with him as a permanent

35 Fokkelman, 226-27.

36 Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, ed. John Gee and Michael D. Rhodes (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2005), 434.

reminder of the experience (Genesis 32:31-32). Joseph Fielding Smith wrote of this event: "Who wrestled with Jacob on Mount Peniel? ... More than likely it was a messenger sent to Jacob to give him the blessing."³⁷

The messenger would not reveal his name (Genesis 32:29), but this gift of power allowed him to be in the Lord's presence (Genesis 32:30). Indeed, the new name "Israel" itself refers to perseverance with God, one purpose of the endowment's gift of power. The word *preserved* in Genesis 32:30 may be symbolic of the Atonement: Jacob has literally been saved from a tragic future (the possible vengeance at the hands of Esau that Jacob feared) by the Lord's intervention.

Och likewise sees the spiritual importance of this passage, that it is elevated by a poetic structure:

At Penuel, the Jacob narrative reaches its theological climax in a Divine-human encounter which parallels the earlier theophany at Bethel. Both encounters are arranged symmetrically, at Jacob's departure from Canaan and upon his return, and can be seen as rites of passage in a physical and spiritual sense: Jacob is crossing over the threshold of the ancestral land and, at the same time, acquiring a new identity. At Bethel, Jacob is recognized as the bearer of promise and secures a special relationship with God, his Divine benefactor. At Penuel, Jacob receives his new name and new identity as "Israel." Both theophanies project an atmosphere of mystery and inscrutability. They occur unexpectedly, in the darkness of night when Jacob is alone, a frightened and vulnerable individual.³⁸

37 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56), 1:17.

38 Och, 172.

By the end of this narrative, Jacob had received all that one can receive on Earth: The final fulfillment of his promises could be received only in the next world. After Jacob establishes harmony with his brother, the Jacob Cycle turns primarily to the lives of Jacob's children; there we mostly see him as a wise father who teaches, praises, and reproves as needed.

Michael Fishbane says of this point: "Jacob awakens with the deep conviction that he had faced his struggle with courage and had been blessed by divinity. He greets the morning light with the glow of his own self-transformation and illumination."³⁹ Fishbane also offers an understanding of the spiritual themes in the Jacob Cycle that Latter-day Saints might recognize and appreciate:

Three issues are of primary importance in [the Jacob Cycle]: *birth*, *blessing*, and *land*. These correspond, as will be recalled, to the threefold patriarchal blessing given to Abraham (12:1-3). ...

A series of polarities pervade the text and charge it with life force and dramatic tension. The first issue, birth, functions together with its opposite: barrenness. ...

The second issue, blessing, also functions together with its opposite. ... The hope for a blessing and the fear of a curse clearly charge the actions of this Cycle.

Land functions in this Cycle as subject of the binary pair *exile/homeland*. ... The shrines mark the transition of action from sacred to profane space and back. The promises of land inheritance in the divine blessings to ... Jacob (28:13, 35:12) underscore this

39 Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Text and Texture: A Literary Reading of Selected Texts* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1998), 53.

value of settlement on the land as a sign of divine grace and favor.⁴⁰

The three “issues of primary importance” Fishbane sees in the Jacob Cycle may also be read into the promises of the modern temple endowment, which also suggest blessings of eternal inheritances both physical and spiritual.

Fokkelman concurs with Fishbane: “we see that the texts appear to us in three perspectives; the themes of land and of family-history are a function of the even larger perspective that God’s plan of salvation means to a chosen people on its way to a promised land.”⁴¹

It’s instructive to consider how Jacob’s faithful experiences and temple blessings influence the lives of his posterity; not just of the next generation, but of every generation of the House of Israel. Besides the expected success with Esau, what was the practical effect of the endowment on Jacob’s life? Considering that he had already demonstrated faith in living by the covenants of the endowment, what was left?

In spite of all his spiritual successes, we cannot overlook Jacob’s imperfections. When working for Laban, part of his efforts to be productive involved employing the superstitious practice of putting rods in the animals’ water to help them conceive (Genesis 30:37-43). Even among his family, such primitive superstition was a problem — Rachel and Leah apparently thought mandrakes could help them get pregnant (Genesis 30:14-22), and Rachel even stole her father’s idols when Jacob and his family left Laban (Genesis 31:19).

Of this latter incident, Ktziah Spanier theorizes that Rachel stole these “cultic objects” as “part of her continuing struggle

40 Fishbane, 60-61, emphasis in original.

41 Fokkelman, 241.

for primacy within Jacob's household. ... Her objective was to prevail over her sister in the contest for family supremacy."⁴²

Spanier further explains:

The teraphim are known to have been used for the purpose of divination, as personal deities, in the dispensation of justice, and as emblems of authority. Rachel stole her father's teraphim in order to enhance her position in the family and to secure Joseph's position among his brothers.⁴³

This insight into the relatively silent role of the women in this text contributes more to our understanding of the nature of family strife in the first half of the pattern. Not only were there Jacob-centric conflicts — with Esau, Laban, and himself — but there may have been intra-familial conflicts as well, as manifested by paganism.

But after the majestically intimate experience of the Lord that is the endowment, no trace of paganism can be found in Jacob. In fact, when preparing his family to travel through Beth-el with him, Jacob tells them to “put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments” (Genesis 35:2). The work and blessings of the temple had fully converted Jacob, and he raised his family better accordingly.

Of Jacob's growth and success, Skinner writes, “At Bethel, Jacob had his first temple experience. ... For twenty years thereafter, Jacob proved himself at every hazard and under every circumstance.”⁴⁴ This evaluation may be slightly hagiographic when Jacob's life is considered closely, but his ultimate victory warrants the praise. Like each individual later pilgrim that Jacob represents, that final victory is in spite of his

42 Ktziah Spanier, “Rachel's Theft of the Teraphim: Her Struggle for Family Primacy,” *Vetus Testamentum* 42, Fasc. 3 (July 1992), 405.

43 Spanier, 410.

44 Skinner, 132.

flawed, stumbling path toward God, a victory made possible by his reliance on the grace of God, as seen in Jacob's prayer in Genesis 32:10: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant."

The Jacob Cycle could be arranged into another pattern, this one simply identifying the primary thematic concerns of the narrative sections. Here we see how totally entwined temple work and family life really are:

- A. Family 28:1-9
- B. Temple 28:10-22
- C. Family 29:1-32:23
- D. Temple 32:24-32
- C'. Family 33:1-34:31
- B'. Temple 35:1-15
- A'. Family 35:16-29

Family life is paramount, and the temple will periodically provide both the impetus and ability to a family to collectively lengthen their stride, as is so beautifully shown in the Jacob Cycle. Whenever Jacob has reached his limit and needs the light of God to move forward, the work of the temple is given to him. Thus refreshed, he sets out to make progress in his journey back to his father (and his Father), keeping his covenants, raising his family, and cherishing the work of the temple.

Julie B. Beck, speaking as Relief Society General President, spoke about the integrated nature of family and temple work in a 2009 Church Education System broadcast:

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have a theology of the family that is based on the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement. ... God created a man and a woman who were the two essential halves of a family. It was part of Heavenly Father's plan that Adam and Eve be sealed and form an eternal family. ...

The Atonement allows for the family to be sealed together eternally. It allows for families to have eternal growth and perfection. ... The rising generation need to understand that the main pillars of our theology are centered in the family. ...

Where are these blessings Abraham received? They come only to those who have a temple sealing and marriage. ...

This generation will be called upon to defend the doctrine of the family as never before. If they don't know it, they can't defend it. They need to understand temples.⁴⁵

President Gordon B. Hinckley said this of the inherent relationship between temple work and family life:

If we are a temple-going people, we will be a better people, we will be better fathers and husbands, we will be better wives and mothers. I know your lives are busy. I know that you have much to do. But I make you a promise that if you will go to the House of the Lord, you will be blessed; life will be better for you.⁴⁶

Jacob's history is an endowment-like story that itself revolves around the temple, ever for the practical purpose of improving his role as a husband and father. Thousands of years separate us from Jacob, but in all that time, the most important things in life have not changed.

⁴⁵ Julie B. Beck, "Teaching the Doctrine of the Family," *Ensign*, March 2011, 12, 16, 17.

⁴⁶ Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1997), 624.

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CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT A BABY

Orson Scott Card

When I was a child, I completely understood all the Santa Claus stuff. No great moment of disillusionment, because my parents were wise enough to let us help create the illusion for the younger kids as soon as we were old enough.

I loved decorating the tree. I was the icicle fanatic, laying each one on individually. Even better was setting up HO trains all around the tree (and short-circuiting the train by laying icicles on the track for the engine to run over).

Shopping for gifts was great, but when I was feeling ambitious, so was creating some of the most awful “crafts” that ever forced a parent to smile and pretend to not only “love” the gift but also understand what it was supposed to be.

The Christmas carols. The church Christmas bazaar. Pretending to like candy canes. Playing games with the family. Digging treats out of the stockings. Trying to conceal my envy when my older siblings got cool gifts that my parents thought I was too young for (but they were always wrong, in my opinion).

You know: Christmas.

As a kid, I took Santa Claus in stride, but after a while I wondered about the Christ child: What was all the hoopla about?

What did the shepherds see when the angels sent them into Bethlehem? A baby. What did the Wise Men see after traveling so far and ineptly tipping off a corrupt king about a threat to his throne? A toddler.

As a kid, I had seen plenty of babies. They were all alike — wordless, clumsy, big headed, sleepless, pukey, demanding, incontinent, and incompetent at everything.

But cute.

The only thing different about baby Jesus was they swaddled him like a mummy, and he had a bunch of people looking at him and worshiping him.

But come to think of it, almost all babies are surrounded by worshipers. Oh he's so cute. Look at those eyes. Whose nose does he have? (Answer: Nobody's. Because he barely has a nose at all.) He can already do *that*? (No, he can't, but his parents are delusional and everyone pretends to believe them.)

As I got older, I started hearing some of the medieval legends about baby Jesus's miracles — Joseph cuts an expensive board too short for the piece of furniture he's making, but little Jesus makes it long enough. That sort of thing.

I wasn't expected to believe those miracle tales. Because the doctrine *we* believe is that Jesus was born as a baby. Not a miraculous winged creature with a wand, like a cross between a Victorian fairy and a Victorian Cupid — just a baby.

The point was that he was born into *mortal* life and suffered the same kinds of problems we suffer. He learned “line upon line” like any other child in a religious family. He learned “obedience by the things which he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8).

Christ was able to have “compassion on the ignorant” because “he himself also is compassed with infirmity” (Hebrews 5:2). Both at church and at home, I learned that Jesus was not a miracle-working child — he worked and played, got frustrated and probably skinned his knees, and had childish adventures and had friends who sometimes liked him and sometimes didn't.

He was one of us. That was the whole point of his becoming a mortal man — he could sin, but when he learned the law, he chose to obey it perfectly and thus needed no atonement himself and so could suffer as a perfect sacrifice for our repentance's sake.

If he had known all along that he was Savior of the world, if he had been chatting with angels from the start, if he was working miracles, if he never had to live by *faith*, then how could he tell us, “I am the Way. Come follow me”?

Or, as my wife puts it, “Fasting doesn’t count if you are not actually hungry.” I have a friend who sometimes forgets to eat. I have no idea what that would feel like. But it doesn’t count as “fasting” simply to miss meals because you didn’t remember that it was mealtime. When Jesus was fasting in the wilderness, when Satan tempted him to turn stones into bread, what was the point if he didn’t care about food?

Likewise, it’s no great accomplishment that I keep the Word of Wisdom. Tea and coffee always looked and smelled icky. Alcoholic drinks stank and made people stupid. I hated campfires because the smoke always tried to choke me; cigarettes involved deliberately taking smoke into your lungs. Why would anyone ever do that? So I don’t earn any celestial points because I obey the Word of Wisdom — I was never *attracted* to those sins.

Why would we praise Jesus for being perfect if *no* sin ever tempted him? If he never had cause for anger or wished for something that he didn’t have but somebody else did?

We usually depict him bearded, which suggests he passed through puberty like any other boy; do we have any reason to think he wasn’t flooded with the normal hormones? If he wasn’t, then what’s the big deal about his chastity? And how could he possibly understand all of us who *do* know about such pleasurable desires?

In all those Christmas stories, Jesus himself was only a baby. Yes, his real Father wasn’t a regular guy, but he was *raised* by a regular guy. And maybe Mary never raised her voice at any of the kids, but ... Jesus certainly heard *other* mothers chewing out their kids.

He was a baby, then a toddler, then a boy, then a young man, and he experienced life at every stage. If Jesus didn’t have the normal bodily desires and needs, then it was no great accomplishment for him to shun the more popular sins.

So to me, as a boy thinking about Christmas, it seemed that while it was good to have the tree and the lights and the gifts and the parties and the carols, what really mattered about Jesus was not that he was the Son of God, but that he was One of Us.

It is not his *difference* from ordinary mortals that we should be celebrating, it's his *similarity*.

And as I held each of our children in my arms, and later each of our grandchildren, I have thought: Joseph and Mary might have had signs that their baby was going to be remarkable, but so did my wife and I, and so do our grandchildren's parents. Nobody knows the paths the children will walk through life — but we're filled with hope all the same.

Wise Men may not bring gold, frankincense, and myrrh, but clever and loving women and men show up with stuffed animals, car seats, rattles, teething rings, clothes, and all sorts of other helpful items.

Angels may not sing to shepherds, but they're not needed — all the local shepherds are checking out the baby pictures on Facebook.

Every baby who's born into this world is a son and daughter of God, even if He is not the literal genetic sire of the body. And so are the parents of every child, imperfect as we parents always are.

All children come from a heavenly realm, they had a premortal identity and experience that, just like Jesus, they voluntarily set aside in order to experience this life and show themselves and everyone else what they choose to do when they don't know that God is watching.

We are all immortal beings who are clothed in these incompetent, incontinent sacks of skin and bone that somebody else has to take care of and clean up and protect and educate for *years* before we're finally skilled enough to contribute to society.

We are all filled with divine potential, and God loves and cares about us all.

So I'm perfectly happy that in choosing the day to celebrate Christmas, the early Church Fathers picked the season of Saturnalia, so that the Church could provide a faith-promoting alternative to the absurd but popular pagan revelry of the season.

Let everyone's favorite holiday now be centered on the stories surrounding the birth of the Son of God. Even though

as a baby, Jesus didn't do *anything* that other babies don't also do, why not surround our memory of his life with gifts and sharing, fellowship and charity?

If we want to see what the Christ child was like, we have only to look at any and every baby making noise in sacrament meeting, or crying in nursery the first time the parents left him behind, or toddling into some dangerous predicament because he has no clue what to be afraid of.

Every baby partakes of divine nature and young baboonhood at the same time. And the struggle of raising those babies to adulthood is to help the divine nature triumph over the baboon.

Jesus's parents had to teach him the law as well as social rules of ordinary courtesy. He was trained to show respect for figures of authority. He learned to dress himself. To feed himself. And, eventually, to use the tools of his father's trade — as well as the books and teachers that taught him about his Father's business.

When we see the purity and innocence of babyhood, along with the messiness and inconvenience, we are seeing the spirit of Christmas past, present, and future.

Thank God for all the babies. God bless them, every one.

Orson Scott Card, publisher of NauvooTimes.com, is first counselor in the bishopric of his ward in Greensboro NC, where his house is the first one to have Christmas lights every year, and his wife, Kristine Allen Card, keeps the house filled with her seminary students. Card also writes fiction and teaches writing and literature at Southern Virginia University.

WHAT COMMAND SYNTAX TELLS US ABOUT BOOK OF MORMON AUTHORSHIP

Stanford Carmack

Abstract: The variety of command syntax found in the Book of Mormon is very different from what is seen in the King James Bible. Yet it is sophisticated and principled, evincing Early Modern English linguistic competence. Interestingly, the syntactic match between the 1829 text and a prominent text from the late 15th century is surprisingly good. All the evidence indicates that Joseph Smith would not have produced the structures found in the text using the King James Bible as a model, nor from his own language. The overall usage profile of command syntax seen in the Book of Mormon strongly supports the view that the Lord revealed specific words to Joseph Smith, not simply ideas.

This paper considers the systematic use of the verb *command* when it governs another verb, in both the 1829 Book of Mormon and the 1611 King James Bible (excluding the Apocrypha). This analysis leads to some important conclusions in relation to Book of Mormon authorship. Because there are profound differences between the two scriptural texts, and because there are more than 150 instances of command syntax in each text, it is possible to make strong claims with respect to this question.

As part of this study, some structural properties of command syntax are examined. The two main parameters to be investigated are (1) whether an infinitive or a finite verb

follows the command verb, and (2) whether the command verb itself is in the active voice or in the passive voice.

As shown in this paper, the Book of Mormon is a relatively strong match with an important 1483 English translation out of Latin by the early printer / publisher / translator William Caxton. From this match we can conclude that the Book of Mormon's systematic use of command syntax is not unheard of in the annals of English literature. Yet neither is it commonly found. Although I have discovered that another text is close to the Book of Mormon in terms of command syntax, the particular usage patterns were not prevalent in the general textual record, and they have been thoroughly obscured by language change and the passage of time.

While the forms found in the Book of Mormon constitute old syntax, they are not difficult to understand or impenetrable in meaning. Yes, the syntax can be complex and even a bit cumbersome (especially when judged according to present-day sensibilities), but the meaning is usually plain. Of course the text often sacrifices economy for clarity, and its favored form of command syntax fits within that paradigm.

Grammatical Details of Command Syntax

In the particular grammatical construction of interest to this study, some form of the verb *command* is followed by a syntactically related finite clause or infinitival complement. The finite clause may or may not have an auxiliary (*should* or *shall*):

Finite command syntax (past tense, active voice)

X commanded **that** Y (should) do something

Infinitival command syntax (past tense, active voice)

X commanded Y **to** do something

Command syntax is, generally speaking, complex. That is because two or more verbs are involved — either active or passive in construction — and often there are multiple

grammatical subjects and objects. As a result, the usage of this structure is diverse and exhibits interesting patterns of use.

Even so, the syntax can occasionally be fairly simple. The following example involves two verbs and just one subject and one object — pronominal *he* and *him*:

1483 Caxton, tr. *Golden Legend* [spelling modernized]

He commanded to put him in prison

Here is one example from the Book of Mormon that we will take a look at in order to facilitate an initial understanding of the structure (Skousen's Earliest Text of the Book of Mormon is used throughout this discussion):¹

3 Nephi 20:14 [*here the standard LDS text is the same*]
the Father hath commanded me that I should give
unto you this land for your inheritance

More than half of the occurrences of command syntax in the Book of Mormon (BofM) have this general structure. In this verse the verb *hath commanded* has both an indirect object (*me*) and a direct object **clause** headed by *that*. Along with its grammatical subject, these are the main-clause ARGUMENTS:

[the Father]_{subject} [hath commanded]_{present-perfect verb}
[me]_{indirect object}
[that I should give unto you this land]_{direct object clause}

The object clause in this kind of syntax is commonly referred to as both embedded and finite. In 3 Nephi 20:14 this clause has a ditransitive verb *give* that has three arguments of its own: subject, direct object, and indirect object:

[that]_{conjunction / complementizer} [I]_{embedded subject}
[should]_{subjunctive auxiliary} [give]_{embedded infinitive}
[unto you]_{embedded indirect object} [this land]_{embedded direct object}

1 Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2009).

The pronouns *me* and *I* are referentially identical; they are the main-clause indirect object and the embedded subject of the structure. In this paper I will refer to command syntax with such an object and subject as *LAYERED*. In this passage the auxiliary *should* functions as a subjunctive marker indicating compulsion, a notion inherent in the semantics of command syntax.

Unlike what is commonly encountered in Modern English and in the King James Bible (KJB), an infinitive is **not** employed after *hath commanded me* in this and most cases of command syntax in the BofM. If this verse had used an infinitive, it would have simply read:

the Father hath commanded me **to** give unto you this
land for your inheritance

The construction with an infinitival complement is more compact. A parenthetical phrase elsewhere in the text provides evidence that the above syntax would have been permissible:

Helaman 4:22

— or **THAT WHICH** the Lord commanded him **to** give
unto the people —

In this verse the relative pronominal *that which* precedes the main-clause verb *commanded* but it is notionally the direct object of the embedded verb *give*. This parenthetical phrase thus illustrates the connectedness of command syntax. The option of using either finite or infinitival complementation in command syntax is an example of usage variation that is a feature of all texts. The general meaning is the same but the syntactic expression is different.

I have transformed the following verse in order to exemplify some of the structures that this study discusses:

Alma 52:4 — *as it appears in the text*

he [Ammoron] did command that his people should
maintain those cities which they had taken

Transformations of Alma 52:4 (*did command* → *commanded*)

Layered syntax (the most common B of M type)

he commanded HIS PEOPLE that THEY should
maintain those cities which they had taken

Infinitival complement with a raised object

he commanded **his people** to maintain those cities

Infinitival complement without a raised object (KJB)

he commanded to maintain those cities

Finite-clause syntax, no auxiliary (TENSE-LEVELLED)

he commanded that his people MAINTAIN those cities

Main-clause passive, infinitival complement

his people **were** commanded *to* maintain those cities

Main-clause passive, finite object clause

the people **were** commanded by Ammoron *that* they
should maintain those cities

Embedded-clause passive, infinitival complement (KJB)

he commanded those cities to be maintained

Embedded-clause passive, finite object clause (B of M)

he commanded that those cities should be maintained

Multiple embedded verbs

he commanded that his people should GUARD and
MAINTAIN those cities which they had taken

Embedded negation

he commanded that his people should NOT maintain
those cities which they had taken

Intervening adverbial

he commanded that his people should WITH GREAT
ENERGY maintain those cities which they had taken

Double passive

those cities **were** commanded to **be** maintained

Layered Command Syntax

Returning to consider 3 Nephi 20:14 —

the Father hath commanded ME that I should give
unto you this land for your inheritance

— we note that the first-person pronoun *me* is the indirect object of *hath commanded*. In earlier English the preposition *to* (indicating dative case) optionally preceded the indirect object. This is seen in the following Oxford English Dictionary² (OED) quotation from around the year 1400 (spelling modernized):

c1400 MANDEVILLE (Roxb.) XXIV. 110

He commanded **to** ALL that THEY should forsake all
that they had.

The KJB uses the dative preposition *to* once (in Daniel 3:4: *To you it is commanded*); the BofM never does (except after *command* nominals). This syntactic marking became obsolete in the EModE period. In the Mandeville quotation, as in 3 Nephi 20:14, the indirect object is recapitulated by a pronoun that functions as the subject of the embedded clause. The OED indicates that this layered syntax is obsolete. However, because of biblical influence, its use persisted in a minor way into the 18th century and beyond. Google books *Ngram Viewer*³ shows usage rates of approximately 1% between 1700 and 1820 (some of this is biblical, and some is reprinted older language, including sermons using biblical phraseology).

In contexts where both verbs are in the active voice, the BofM has 84 instances of this layered syntax while the KJB has only 9, two in one Old Testament verse. This verse, Nehemiah 13:22, contains the last-dated example of layered syntax that

2 *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. on CD-ROM, v4 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009).

3 Jean-Baptiste Michel *et al.*, “Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books,” *Science* (published online ahead of print on 16 December 2010).

is listed in the OED. That suggests that the KJB's use of the structure was a vestige of older syntax. Here is the structure with ellipsis shown by brackets and indexing. Main-clause ellipsis is shown in square brackets, and embedded-clause ellipsis is shown in curly brackets; the embedded infinitives are underlined:⁴

Nehemiah 13:22

[I **commanded** THE LEVITES]_i *that* THEY ***should***
cleanse themselves, and [*i*] {*that* THEY ***should*** }_j come
 and {*j*} keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day

The other seven biblical instances of active-voice, obsolete layered syntax are shown below, along with two in passive constructions. Main-clause indirect objects and embedded subjects are in SMALL CAPS:

Active-voice examples

Genesis 3:11

Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I **commanded**
 THEE *that* THOU ***shouldest*** not eat?

Exodus 27:20

thou shalt **command** the CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, *that*
 THEY ***bring*** thee pure oil olive beaten for the light

Lamentations 1:10

WHOM thou didst **command** *that* THEY ***should*** not
 enter into thy congregation

Mark 6:8

And **commanded** THEM *that* THEY ***should*** take
 nothing for their journey

Acts 1:4

Jesus . . . **commanded** THEM *that* THEY ***should*** not depart
 from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father

4 Because there are two separate object clauses headed by *that*, I have counted Nehemiah 13:22 as containing two instances of command syntax.

Acts 5:28

Did not we straitly **command** YOU *that* YE **should** not teach in this name . . . ?

Acts 24:23

he **commanded** a CENTURION . . . *that* HE **should** forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him

Main-clause impersonal passives

Daniel 3:4–5

Then an herald cried aloud, To YOU it is **commanded**, O people, nations, and languages, *that* at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, YE **fall** down and **worship** the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up

Revelation 9:4

it was **commanded** THEM *that* THEY **should** not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree

The last two examples have passive command verbs whose grammatical subject is the expletive *it*; these are discussed later.

The next example is different from the others since it involves an embedded passive verb phrase *should be stoned*:

Embedded-clause passive (not a case of layered syntax)

John 8:5

Moses in the law **commanded** US, *that* such **should** be stoned

As a result, the embedded subject *such* is not related to the indirect object *us* in the same way that the arguments in the other verses are related to each other. This verse is the only time in the KJB that the embedded subject is different from the indirect object; this state is essentially obligatory in embedded

passive syntax.⁵ It is similar to the relation between *my people* and *these plates* in the following BofM verse:⁶

1 Nephi 19:4

this have I done and **commanded** MY PEOPLE *that*
THEY **should** do after that I was gone and that these
plates **should** be handed down

This syntax is complex since it has a fronted direct object *this* with subject–verb inversion: *have I* instead of *I have*. The fronting of *this* eliminates the need for a repeat. The pronominal object functions as the understood object of the embedded verb *do*:

[this]_i have I . . . **commanded** MY PEOPLE *that* THEY
should do [*i*]

With all these elements, it qualifies as a fairly typical EModE construction. This is also the only occurrence in the BofM with both an indirect object — *my people* — and an embedded passive verb phrase:

[I have] **commanded** MY PEOPLE . . . *that* these plates
should be handed down

Joseph Smith could hardly have authored this elaborate syntax.

Overview of Command Syntax in the BofM and the KJB

According to the counts carried out for this study,⁷ there are 163 instances of command syntax in the BofM, and 170 in the KJB. Overall, the BofM has 92 cases of layered command

5 When the embedded verb is in the active voice, its subject is commanded to do something. But when the embedded verb is in the passive voice, its subject is the recipient of the commanded action.

6 See Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU, 2004–09), 1:402.

7 I have simplified this analysis by not including any *command* **nominals** in counts. While it is not always a straightforward matter to tally instances of command syntax, these cases are few in number. That being so, unresolvable counting issues are minor in effect and do not affect the conclusions of this study. The approach taken here counts each occurrence of infinitival *to* or conjunctive *that* (or an auxiliary without *that*) governed by a form of the verb *command*.

syntax and the KJB has only 12. Consequently, had the KJB used layered syntax as often as the *BofM*, there would have been more than 300 of them in the 1611 text. Thus the *BofM* is markedly different from the KJB in terms of rate of use of this obsolete structure. Yet because layered syntax is found in the KJB, the construction does not constitute evidence on its own that the *BofM* is independent of the KJB in relation to command syntax. It is the totality of usage patterns that points to independence, as is amply evident from a comprehensive analysis of the construction. This article seeks to perform such an analysis, drawing conclusions from systematic usage patterns and the sum of the evidence.

Table 1 breaks down command syntax in the *BofM* and KJB according to whether the embedded clause is finite or strictly infinitival:

Table 1. A Comparison of Command Syntax in the 1829 *BofM* and the 1611 KJB

Embedded syntax	<i>BofM</i>	KJB
FINITE	129	32
INFINITIVAL	34	138
FINITE RATE	79.1%	18.8%

Chi-square test: $X^2 \approx 120$; $p < 10^{-27}$

The *BofM* uses finite command syntax nearly 80% of the time, while the KJB prefers compact infinitival syntax, using it slightly more than 80% of the time. (In addition, the *BofM* uses command syntax at 2.5 times the rate of the KJB.) Statistically speaking, there is a significant difference in usage between the two texts that almost certainly did not arise by accident. So either Joseph Smith consciously preferred and used the less-common biblical syntax, or he dictated specific, revealed words to his scribes. The latter is more plausible as this analysis attempts to show.

Historical Overview of Command Syntax in English

Infinitival command syntax is attested at least from the early 14th century. The OED has examples with *to*, without *to* (akin to *bid*), and with *for to* (accidentals regularized):

1382 WYCLIF *Matt.* xviii. 25

His lord **commanded** HIM *to* be sold.

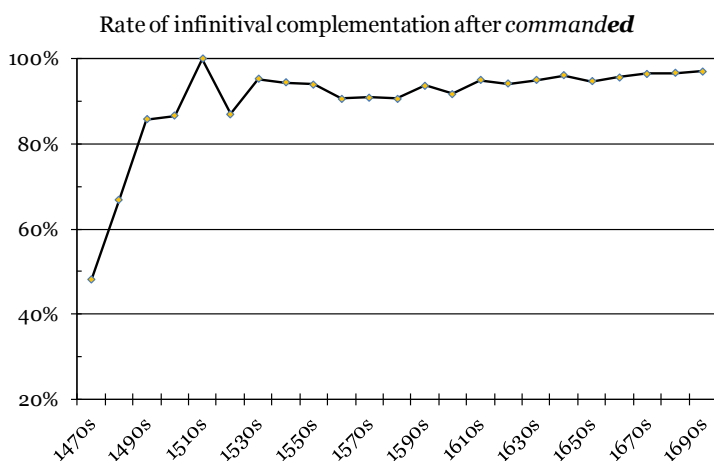
c1350 *Will. Palerne* 236

Of what kin he were come he **commanded** HIM [Ø] tell.

c1386 CHAUCER *Clerk's T.* 477

This child I am **commanded** *for to* take.

Infinitival usage with *to* persists to this day and is the nearly exclusive type. The notion is now often expressed with a different verb like *order*, as in “I was ordered to pay the fine.”



The Early English Books Online database⁸ (EEBO) indicates that only in 15th-century EModE was finite command syntax common (see above chart). This is largely due to Caxton. By the

8 Chadwyck-Healey, <eebo.chadwyck.com>. Mark Davies, *Early English Books Online, 400 million words, 1470s–1690s* (2013–). I am indebted to Mark Davies for providing me with access to his large corpus and excellent interface.

year 1500 the infinitival was the default type. Thus a match between the BofM's command syntax and that of the printed textual record of English can be found only in the 15th century.

Moving beyond EModE into the 18th-century textual record (using *Ngram Viewer*), we find that finite command syntax was still used less than 5% of the time. Layered syntax, the most common type found in the BofM, and which the OED declares to be obsolete, occurred no more than 1% of the time.

If we consider only active-voice finite constructions, we find that the BofM employs layered syntax 73% of the time; the KJB uses it only 38% of the time. To be clear, here are these structures and their rate of use in the BofM:

Active-voice layered finite syntax (73%) [obsolete]

X COMMANDS Y that Y/Z should/shall do something

Active-voice simple finite syntax (27%) [archaic]

X COMMANDS that Y should/shall do something

The first set of OED quotes below contains examples of layered finite command syntax (obsolete), with both an indirect object and an object clause. The second group of quotes contains simple finite command syntax (archaic), with only an object clause (spelling has been regularized and some lexical items have been replaced by semantically equivalent modern words):

COMMAND + INDIRECT OBJECT + THAT

c1400 MANDEVILLE (Roxb.) xi. 41

He urgently **commanded** HIS SUBJECTS *that* THEY *should* let me see all the places.

1530 in W. H. Turner *Select. Rec. Oxford* 80

The university heads **commanded** THE SERVANTS *that* THEY *should* neither buy nor sell with him.

COMMAND + THAT

c1420 *Prose Life Alex.* 41 & 76

He **commanded** *that* HE *should* go home to his fellows without any harm.

Then **commanded** Alexander *that* THEY *should* make many fires. For it began to be unsufferable cold.

The use of *that* in finite command syntax was optional through the centuries. The following OED quotations show the use of *should* **without** *that*. These have embedded passive verbs or intransitive verbs with only a grammatical subject:

1580 NORTH *Plutarch* (1676) 729

Antonius . . . **commanded** [Ø] his head and his hands *should* . . . be set up over the pulpit.

1596 SHAKES. *Tam. Shr.* IV. iii. 148

I **commanded** [Ø] the sleeues *should* be cut out, and sow'd vp againe.

c1611 CHAPMAN *Iliad* vii. 357

Priam **commanded** [Ø] NONE *should* mourne . . .

We find command syntax without *that* at least three times in the BofM, but not in the KJB. The first one we consider is the following:

Mosiah 18:23

he **commanded** THEM *that* THEY *should* observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, *and also* [Ø] *every day* THEY *should* give thanks to the Lord their God

This passage is like the following excerpt from Caxton's *Golden Legend*, a text whose command syntax is similar to the BofM's:

1483 Caxton, tr. *Golden Legend* [spelling modernized]

anon the cruel tyrant **commanded** *to* slay all the people that were with St. Edmund and destroy them, *but* [Ø] THEY *should* hold and keep only the king, whom he knew rebel unto his wicked laws

In both cases it is the second embedded clause that lacks the complementizer *that*. Other elements — conjunctions and adverbials — take its place.

The other two without *that* are these:

Alma 63:12

save it were those parts WHICH [had been **commanded**
by Alma] *should* not go forth

Helaman 6:25

it is these secret oaths and covenants WHICH [Alma
commanded his son] *should* not go forth unto the
world

These two examples are similar to the 1611 Chapman quote from the OED seen above (also with an intransitive verb), and they are also similar to the following 17th-century quotes:

1635 William Tyrwhit, tr. *A mirrour for Christian states*
a Drum . . . WHICH [he **commanded**] *should* be beaten up

1664 Peter Wyche, tr. *The life of Dom John de Castro*
the Fortress, WHICH [he **commanded**] *should* be Scal'd

In all four examples command syntax occurs in a relative clause and the complementizer *that* is not used before *should*. This particular syntactic match is striking. In the case of the BofM, which clearly favors the use of *that*-clauses, its absence here strongly suggests knowledgeable EModE authorship.

Nineteenth-Century Usage

The prolific Scottish author Walter Scott never used layered syntax in the first third of the 19th century, but he did use simple archaic syntax with an auxiliary. However, this linguistically conservative writer employed past-tense command syntax with object clauses only seven times (my count) in his extensive writings for his *Waverley* novels:

1814 – 1831, Walter Scott, *Waverley* novels [Brit. usage]
it is said the king had **commanded** *that* it SHOULD not be
further inquired into | Sir Richard **commanded** *that* he
SHOULD prepare himself for attending him on an immediate
journey | I sent you this morning to attend my nephew on the
first tidings of his illness, and **commanded** *that* he SHOULD
make no attempt to be present on this day's solemnity | he

was answered, that the King had **commanded** *that* none SHOULD be admitted to him for some time | the colonel, in base revenge, **commanded** *that* they SHOULD not spare that rogue Hudson | then **commanded** fiercely *that* I SHOULD be deprived of the sight of my eyes! | he **commanded** *that* the minstrel SHOULD be enlarged from the dungeon.

In contrast to a limited use of command syntax with *should*, Scott used *commanded* . . . *to* + INFINITIVE about 120 times in his *Waverley* novels (also my count). That means that he used past-tense finite-clause syntax only 6% of the time. These figures and Scott's conservative style tell us that archaic command syntax was infrequent in British English in the early 1800s.⁹ And the absence of layered command syntax in his writings reinforces the assertion made by the OED that it was obsolete.

The American author James Fenimore Cooper used infinitives after *commanded* approximately 50 times in his copious writings. His output was roughly contemporaneous with the Scottish author. I have found that Cooper used *that*-clauses with *shall* and *should* only twice (my count — a 2% past-tense rate), once with an embedded passive and once in the context of statutory language:

1820 – 1851, James Fenimore Cooper [Amer. usage]

After which he incontinently **commanded** *that* the runaways SHOULD be apprehended | the statute **commanding** *that* all executions SHALL take place by the light of the sun.

This tells us that archaic command syntax was uncommon in American English in the early 1800s, and perhaps less common than it was in British English.

9 There are elements in each of the above excerpts that made Scott's use of finite-clause syntax with *should* more likely. First, four of these have embedded passives: *should be* + PAST PARTICIPLE. Second, two have embedded negation, *should not* (and one has *should make no* which is similar to *should not make any*). Third, one has an embedded reflexive, *should prepare himself*. In short, each one of the above syntactic structures exhibits embedded complexity. This almost certainly prompted Scott, at a subconscious level, to employ *that*-clauses. These issues are addressed later in this paper.

By the 20th century command syntax with *shall* or *should* was defunct, effectively remaining only with bare finite verbs in the shape of present-tense subjunctive verb forms, as in “they commanded that he **go**.”

Auxiliary Usage in Finite-Clause Syntax

The last example from Cooper has the auxiliary *shall*. This auxiliary usage was uncommon, but it is found in the EModE textual record despite being absent in the KJB:

1536 Miles Coverdale, tr. *A myrrour or glasse for them that be syke [and] in payne* [EEBO]
Therefore also doth Christ commaunde *that* we **shall** so shewe the lyght of oure fayth before men

1598 Stow *Surv.* 36 [OED]
I . . . will and command, *that* they **shall** [enjoy] the same, well and quietly and honourably

The KJB never uses the auxiliary *shall* in the object clause of command syntax. Instead, the biblical text always employs bare finite verbs when the tense is non-past:

Leviticus 13:54
the priest shall command that they **wash** the thing wherein the plague is

Yet *shall* occurs seven times in the BofM in present and future contexts (and other times after *command* nominals). In this way, then, it is properly independent in its usage, following EModE but not the KJB.

Table 2 shows the breakdown of auxiliary usage and non-usage in the two texts; six BofM examples with *shall* follow.

Table 2. Comparison of Finite-Clause Auxiliary Usage

Auxiliary	BofM	KJB
NONE	9	7
SHALL	7	0
SHOULD	113	25

Alma 37:2

I also command you that ye SHALL keep a record of
this people, according as I have done

Alma 44:7

I will command my men that they SHALL fall upon
you and inflict the wounds of death in your bodies

Alma 61:13

he doth not command us that we SHALL subject
ourselves to our enemies

Helaman 10:11

I command you that ye SHALL go and declare unto
this people

3 Nephi 3:8

on the morrow month I will command that my armies
SHALL come down against you

3 Nephi 16:4

I command you that ye SHALL write these sayings after
that I am gone

The Periphrastic Past

Both the KJB and the BofM use the periphrasis DID + *command* as part of command syntax; it is also attested in EModE:

Lamentations 1:10

whom thou DIDST COMMAND that they should not
enter into thy congregation

3 Nephi 15:16

This much DID the Father COMMAND me that I should
tell unto them

1575 Rishton / Allen, tr. *A notable discourse* [EEBO]

yet our Sauour DID COMMAUND that they should pay
him tribute

Past-tense syntax with *did*, with main-verb lexical stress, is a distinct EModE phenomenon that peaked at an average rate

of 10% in the middle of the 16th century.¹⁰ It is characteristic of the BofM and is used more than 25% of the time to express the simple past, but less than 2% of the time in the KJB (my estimates).

This is another strong piece of syntactic evidence pointing to the independence of the BofM vis-à-vis the KJB. The latter uses the periphrastic past heavily and noticeably only with the verb *eat* (and never for instance with *did go*). The BofM employs the syntax at a high rate and with many different verbs (about 50 times with *did go*). It is thus a mid-16th-century EModE text in this regard, and it was something Joseph Smith would not have been aware of from the KJB.

Finite-Clause Syntax

As has been noted, when command syntax is not infinitival, the BofM prefers to use obsolete layered syntax, while the KJB does not. Table 3 shows the breakdown, limiting it to cases where the grammatical voice of both verbs is active:

Table 3. Comparison of Active-Voice, Finite-Clause Syntax

$X^2 = 11.33; p < 10^{-3}$	BofM	KJB
LAYERED	84	9
SIMPLE	31	15
LAYERED RATE	73.0%	37.5%

Therefore, the predominant finite-clause construction (active voice) for each text is as follows.

BofM: X commanded Y that Y should do something

KJB: X commanded that Y should do something

The type favored by the BofM is emphatic, versatile, and precise. When *should* and *shall* are used (more than 90% of these cases), the notion of compulsion is reinforced. When

10 Alvar Ellegård, *The Auxiliary Do: The Establishment and Regulation of its Use in English* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1953), 161–62.

the indirect object is repeated as the embedded subject, the structure is emphatic. And when the embedded subject is different from the indirect object, the command structure is versatile and precise; this usage is not directly possible with infinitival syntax. Furthermore, the complementizer *that*, unlike the infinitival preposition *to*, may be used far from the embedded subject and verb and can be used to clarify complex syntax and separate constituents. Finally, layered syntax is clear and direct. The person commanded is made explicit, as is what is commanded.

There are six instances in the BofM where the indirect object is **different** from the embedded subject:¹¹

1 Nephi 3:2

the Lord hath commanded ME *that* **thou and thy brethren** *shall* return to Jerusalem

1 Nephi 3:4

the Lord hath commanded ME *that* **thou and thy brothers** *should* go unto the house of Laban and seek the records and bring them down hither into the wilderness.

1 Nephi 7:2

the Lord commanded HIM *that* **I Nephi and my brethren** *should* again return into the land of Jerusalem and bring down Ishmael and his family into the wilderness

Mosiah 18:21

he commanded THEM *that* **there** *should* be no contention one with another

Mosiah 18:24

he also commanded THEM *that* **the priests which he**

¹¹ Here I exclude the lone case with an embedded passive, in 1 Nephi 19:4 (see above), where the arguments are necessarily different.

had ordained *should* labor with their own hands for their support

Mosiah 19:11
the king commanded THEM *that* **all the men** *should* leave their wives and their children and flee before the Lamanites

Here is an early example with a passive command verb:

1483 Caxton, tr. *Golden Legend* [spelling modernized]
CIRIACUS . . . was commanded *that* **he and his fellows** *should* delve the earth

It is worth noting that the syntactic structure of the first three examples is noticeably consistent. Yet there is free variation in 1 Nephi 3:2,4 with the auxiliaries *shall* and *should*, and with *brethren* and *brothers*.

Infinitival Syntax

Switching now to examine active, **infinitival** contexts, we find that the KJB has 26 occurrences without a raised object, while the BofM always explicitly identifies this object:

X COMMANDED [\emptyset] to do something: BofM = 0%; KJB = 23%
This makes the BofM a plain text, consonant with a stated priority. The counts in Table 4 and the examples that follow exclude cases with embedded passives.

Table 4. Comparison of Active, Infinitival Command Syntax

$X^2 = 5.50; p \approx 0.019$	BofM	KJB
RAISED OBJECT	19	86
NONE	0	26
RAISED OBJECT RATE	100%	76.8%

Esther 6:1
he commanded [\emptyset] to bring the book of records of the chronicles

Daniel 3:13

Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded [ø]
to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego

1 Nephi 5:8

the Lord hath commanded MY HUSBAND to flee into
the wilderness

Mosiah 18:22

he commanded THEM to preach

Considering now infinitival command syntax with embedded passive verb phrases, we find that the KJB often employs this construction — 24 times — but that the BofM never does:

Acts 22:24

The chief captain commanded [him **to be brought**
into the castle]

The BofM only employs embedded passives in finite object clauses (1 Nephi 19:4; Mosiah 9:2; 12:18; 3 Nephi 17:11; 23:13; Ether 4:2), as in this example:

3 Nephi 17:11

he commanded [that their little children **should be brought**]

The KJB uses this construction as well:

Nehemiah 13:19

I commanded [that the gates **should be shut**]

There is one case in the KJB in which both the main verb and the embedded verb are used in the passive; such a construction is not found in the BofM:

Nehemiah 13:5 [DOUBLE PASSIVE]

he had prepared for him a great chamber, where
aforetime they laid *the meat offerings, the frankincense,*
and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine,

and the oil, [WHICH was commanded **to be given**] to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters

The relative pronoun *which* — whose lengthy antecedent is shown in italics — functions as the subject of the command verb but refers to the things given, the past participle.

Active–Passive Effects in Command Syntax

Table 5 shows the breakdown of command syntax in the BofM according to whether the command verb was used in the active voice or in the passive voice, and whether the construction has an infinitival complement or a finite clause:

Table 5. Active–Passive Effects in the BofM		
$X^2 = 31.9; p < 10^{-7}$	<i>Voice of the COMMAND verb</i>	
Embedded syntax	ACTIVE	PASSIVE
FINITE	121	8
INFINITIVAL	19	15
FINITE RATE	86.4%	34.8%

Table 5 demonstrates that while infinitival syntax is decidedly not favored in the BofM in main-clause active contexts, it is favored in main-clause **passive** contexts. The chi-squared test indicates that it is highly unlikely that this grammatical pattern occurred by accident.

The KJB only has five main-clause passives so there is little data to analyze in this regard. Yet the biblical text uses finite-clause syntax with passive command verbs at twice the rate that it does with active command verbs. So the BofM pattern cannot derive from the KJB.

The following two BofM passages effectively illustrate the active–passive usage difference in the text since they have the same embedded verb phrase:

Alma 52:4
he **did command** *that* HIS PEOPLE ***should maintain***
those cities which they had taken

Alma 56:20

THEY **were commanded** by Ammoron to maintain
those cities which they had taken

Alma 52:4 has an active main-clause verb, while Alma 56:20 has a passive main-clause verb (with an overt agent, Ammoron).

Cases of object-clause syntax after passive command verbs are rare in the OED. Although there are probably more than I have found, I located only three examples in that voluminous dictionary. Moreover, there are 26 instances of *was/were/been commanded to* in the OED, but **no** cases of *was/were/been commanded . . . that . . . should*. The EEBO database shows that the latter syntax was always the minority usage in the EModE period, but that passive finite syntax was more common in the 16th century than in the 17th century. By the year 1700 the infinitival rate after passive command verbs was at least 98%.

From the evidence in the textual record, we conclude that there was a strong preference in EModE for infinitival complementation after passive command verbs. Therefore, in view of the fact that the BofM strongly favors finite-clause syntax generally, but favors infinitival syntax after passive command verbs, the text evinces a contrastive regard for the general EModE tendency. And it is important to note that there is no biblical evidence for this tendency. In fact, if anything, the KJB points to heavier finite-clause use with passive command verbs.

Here are the seven exceptional cases of finite syntax with passive command verbs in the BofM, all with the auxiliary *should*, regardless of the tense of the main clause:¹²

Omni 1:1

I, Omni, **being** commanded by my father, Jarom,
 that I SHOULD write somewhat upon these plates to
 preserve our genealogy

¹² This arcane usage is also consistent with the EEBO database — it shows that *shall* was hardly ever used with present-tense passives (1 of 18; my count).

Mosiah 7:8

and they stood before the king and **was**
permitted — or rather commanded — that they
SHOULD answer the questions which he should ask
them

Alma 6:6

the children of God **were** commanded that they
SHOULD gather themselves together oft and join in
fasting and mighty prayer

Alma 8:25

I have **been** commanded that I SHOULD turn again and
prophesy unto this people

Alma 9:1

I Alma having **been** commanded of God that I
SHOULD take Amulek and go forth and preach again
unto this people

Mormon 6:6

I Mormon . . . having **been** commanded of the Lord
that I SHOULD not suffer that the records which had
been handed down by our fathers, which were sacred,
to fall into the hands of the Lamanites

Ether 4:3

I **am** commanded that I SHOULD hide them up again
in the earth

In every case there is something, syntactically speaking, that might have led to the choice of finite-clause syntax. Four of these verses have embedded verb phrases with elements that favor finite embedded syntax. In Alma 6:6 the embedded verb is reflexive and in Mormon 6:6 it is negated. In Alma 8:25; 9:1 the embedded verb phrase has two or more verbs. These factors are discussed below.

Mosiah 7:8 has broken main-clause syntax: first the verb *permit* is used, then it changes to *command*. This correction interrupts straightforward syntactic usage. Also, Ether 4:3 has

an embedded phrasal verb *hide up*. Such phrasal verbs are not used with embedded **infinitival** complementation in the text. The adverbial *up* may have a syntactic effect analogous to what is seen with embedded reflexive verbs (discussed below).

Finally, Omni 1:1 has a purposive infinitival preposition *to* that is part of the embedded clause. So the choice of finite syntax meant that only one infinitival preposition was used in the embedded clause. That is also a possibility in Mormon 6:6 which has double embedding with the verb *suffer*. An analogous situation is present in Acts 24:23, discussed below.

The intervening prepositional phrase in the next example (cf. Omni 1:1 above) may have led to the use of an object clause:

1483 Caxton, tr. *Golden Legend* [spelling modernized]
 she **was** commanded *by a voice in her sleep* that she
 SHOULD go to the holy King Edward

There are only five passive command verbs in the KJB data set: two with embedded finite clauses and three with infinitival complementation:

Finite complementation

Daniel 3:4–5

To you it is commanded . . . **that** . . . ye fall down and
 worship [Nebuchadnezzar's] golden image

Revelation 9:4

it was commanded them **that** they should not hurt . . .

Infinitival complementation

Numbers 36:2

my lord **was** commanded by the Lord **to** give the
 inheritance . . . unto his daughters

Nehemiah 13:5

which **was** commanded **to** be given to the Levites

1 Corinthians 14:34

they **are** commanded **to** be under obedience

So, as stated above, the KJB actually uses *that*-clauses at a higher rate (40%) with main-clause passives than it does when the command verb is in the active voice.

Given the strong preference in both the KJB and EModE for passive infinitival syntax, it is natural to ask why object clauses were used in Revelation 9:4 and Daniel 3:4–5. The reason may ultimately reside in embedded complexity. In Revelation 9:4 there is embedded negation. Furthermore, Wycliffe in 1382, Tyndale in 1526, and the Geneva Bible in 1560 used *that*-clauses in this verse,¹³ probably because of the negation. Their syntactic choice may have prompted the King James translators to do the same since earlier biblical translations are known to have influenced KJB usage.

As far as Daniel 3:4–5 is concerned, the extended aspect of the command structure, with many intervening elements (and an embedded conjoined verb phrase as well), could have influenced KJB translators not to use an infinitive. The complex wording of this verse demonstrates the increased clarity of finite-clause syntax with intervening constituents.

What Main-Clause Passive Command Syntax Tells Us

There are some conclusions that can be drawn from the foregoing evidence. We have seen that there is no discernible preference for passive infinitival syntax in the KJB. Consequently, countervailing passive infinitival syntax in the BofM cannot be attributed to the KJB.

Stepping back to a more general argument, if we ascribe the text of the BofM to the authorship of Joseph Smith, then we must assume that he followed the nine instances of active-voice layered syntax found in the KJB and vastly expanded its

13 Wycliffe: It is comaundid to hem, THAT THEI SHULDEN not hirte hay of the erthe | Tyndale: hit was sayde vnto them THATT THEY SHULDE nott hurt the grasse off the erth | Geneva: it was commanded them, THAT THEY SHULDE not hurt the grasse of the earth.

use in the *BofM*, making it the predominant form of command syntax. That follows directly from the uncontroversial position that Joseph Smith was not an expert in EModE syntax and would have known of layered syntax only from the KJB, and not from obscure EModE texts (nor from his environment). But then, because there was no passive infinitival tendency to be found in the KJB, this view must lead us to conclude that he would have also used the same variety of syntax that he favored — with finite complementation — just as heavily with main-clause passives. It is clear that he did not.

The reliable EEBO database points to 98% infinitival rates at the end of the EModE period. The writings of Scott and Cooper show that infinitival syntax had nearly supplanted finite syntax by the 1820s. The American author used infinitival complementation 98% of the time, and the OED and *Ngram Viewer* provide cross-verification of similar rates. So it is almost certain that Joseph Smith's spoken and written language was predominantly infinitival (see JS–History 1:49,70; 1:29,48,50). And this is directly in line with what is found in the 1611 KJB.

As a result, it is highly likely that Smith would have used infinitival command syntax at a 90% rate or higher had he been responsible for the language of the text of the *BofM*. Therefore, the heavy use of obsolete and archaic finite syntax in the *BofM*, in conjunction with a contrastive preference for passive infinitival syntax, argues strongly against inexpert 1820s authorship. It is a virtual certainty that a nonscholarly author could not have produced this mix of syntactic structures. And this is especially apparent when we consider all the other intricacies of command syntax found in the text.

Mixed Syntax and Embedded Negation

Next we look at passages in the *BofM* and the KJB where both infinitival and finite syntax are used after a single command verb. The following *BofM* passage shifts from infinitival to

finite, seemingly focusing the command Mosiah makes about not having a king:

Mosiah 29:30

I commanded you **to do** these things in the fear of the Lord; and I commanded you **to do** these things and THAT YE HAVE *no* king

Note that there is tense levelling in the finite clause, just as there is in present-day English: “we insisted that they **leave**.” We see this in EModE as well:

1483 Caxton, tr. *Golden Legend* [spelling modernized]

Then Hermogenes was angry and called many devils and commanded them that they **bring** to him St. James bound

This same type of switch — from infinitival to finite — is found in the KJB as well. In the following passage there are first two infinitivals, then an object clause headed by *that*. The finite clause is complex, containing a conjoined infinitival of its own:

Acts 24:23

he commanded a centurion **to keep** Paul, and **to let** him have liberty, and THAT HE SHOULD FORBID *none* of his acquaintance **to** minister or [*i*] come unto him

The switch to a finite clause effectively prevents the use of multiple embedded infinitives: **he commanded . . . to forbid none . . . to minister or come unto him*. Also, it adds variety given the preceding infinitival prepositions.

It is also possible, in both Mosiah 29:30 and Acts 24:23, that the negative aspect of the embedded verb phrases influenced the choice of a *that*-clause. That claim is made because there is an observed preference for finite command syntax in both texts with **negated** embedded verbs:¹⁴

14 However, neither Mosiah 29:30 nor Acts 24:23 has been counted as an instance of verb negation. That is because the negative element is restricted to a noun phrase; it does not act as an adverbial modifying the verb.

Table 6. Embedded Verbal Negation in Command Syntax

Syntax	BofM		KJB	
	NEGATION	NONE	NEGATION	NONE
FINITE	20	109	6	26
INFINITIVAL	0	34	3	135

$$X^2 = 6.01; p = 0.014 \quad X^2 = 14.24; p = 0.00014$$

By and large the KJB prefers infinitival complementation, but it favors finite complementation when there is embedded negation.

Embedded Complexity: Ellipsis and Counting

The tendency in the two texts, but especially in the BofM, is not to use an infinitival construction when there is embedded complexity of one kind or another. For instance, when there are conjoined verb phrases after the command verb, the BofM always uses finite syntax except in one instance. The exception is the following verse with a main-clause passive:

Alma 5:44

I am commanded to STAND and TESTIFY unto this people

Expanded: I am commanded to stand and

I am commanded to testify unto this people

There were two syntactic forces at work in this verse: the passive command verb called for an infinitival complement, and the conjoined verb phrases called for a finite clause. The former effectively outweighed the latter.

Because there is not another instance of *to*, this verse is counted as containing only one instance of command syntax. The use of the simple intransitive verb *stand*, without any following adverbial element such as *up* or *forth* before the conjunction and the next infinitive, may have favored *to*-ellipsis. There are two similar cases of ellipsis in the KJB. These verses have more robust ellipsis, since there are adverbials that follow the first infinitive in each case:

Luke 9:54

Lord, [wilt thou that we command fire]_i {to}_j COME
down from heaven, and [*i*] {*j*} CONSUME them, even as
Elias did?

Acts 4:18

And [they]_i called them, and [commanded them]_i not
{to}_j SPEAK at all nor [*i*] {*j*} TEACH in the name of Jesus

The expansion of the ellipsis in Acts 4:18 would conceivably be something like *nor did they command them to*.

The following BofM verse does not have ellipsis of the infinitival preposition:

Mosiah 26:39

[they . . . being commanded of God]_i TO pray without
ceasing and [*i*] TO give thanks in all things

It is counted as two cases of infinitival syntax because of the second use of *to* and the possibility that there could have been a switch to a finite clause. In other words, the above verse could have been expressed in the following way:

they . . . being commanded of God **to** pray without
ceasing and **that they should** give thanks in all things

As we have seen, this switch from infinitival to finite is found elsewhere in the BofM and KJB (Mosiah 29:30 and Acts 24:23).

The KJB has 12 instances of embedded, conjoined verb phrases; the BofM has 11. The only pure infinitival case in the BofM with more than one instance of *to* is Mosiah 26:39; here are two infinitival examples from the KJB:

Genesis 42:25

Then Joseph commanded **to** fill their sacks with corn,
and **to** restore every man's money into his sack, and **to**
give them provision for the way

Acts 23:10

the chief captain . . . commanded the soldiers **to** go down, and **to** take him by force from among them, and **to** bring him into the castle

Here are examples with finite-clause syntax, one from each scriptural text:¹⁵

Jeremiah 37:21

Zedekiah the king **commanded** THAT THEY SHOULD commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and THAT THEY SHOULD give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city were spent

3 Nephi 18:8

when he had said these words, he **commanded** his disciples THAT THEY SHOULD *take* of the wine of the cup and *drink* of it, and THAT THEY SHOULD also give unto the multitude that they might drink of it

Note the conjoined verbs *take* and *drink* after the first instance of *that they should* in 3 Nephi 18:8. The text could have read *and that they should drink of it*, with a complete expansion. We consider that kind of syntax next.

Conjoined Verb Phrases in the Embedded Clause

This section examines conjoined embedded verb phrases in the BofM. Besides Alma 5:44 (with a main-clause passive: *I am commanded to stand and testify*), finite-clause syntax is always used when there is more than one embedded main verb. A comparison of usage is shown in Table 7:

¹⁵ 2 Nephi 26:32 (not shown) is remarkable in that it has nine instances after a single command verb.

Table 7. Embedded Verb Phrases in BofM Command Syntax*[embedded verb phrases limited to active contexts without negation]*

Syntax	1 VERB	2+ VERBS
FINITE	79	18
INFINITIVAL	19	0

$$X^2 = 4.17; p = 0.041$$

Because the text favors finite syntax anyway, this particular usage pattern barely enters the realm of statistical significance. We have already seen some instances of conjoined, embedded verb phrases; here are four more examples:

Mosiah 19:11

the king commanded them that all the men should
LEAVE their wives and their children and FLEE before
the Lamanites

Alma 8:16

I am sent to command thee that thou RETURN to the
city of Ammonihah and PREACH again unto the people
of the city

Alma 44:7

I will command my men that they shall FALL upon you
and INFLICT the wounds of death in your bodies

Alma 47:27

Amalickiah commanded that his armies should
MARCH forth and SEE what had happened to the king

In every case in the BofM, the ellipsis involves *that* and the embedded subject, and it usually involves an auxiliary. In short, this is an additional way in which the BofM uses command syntax in a regulated manner, favoring once again finite syntax with embedded complexity, perhaps because of its greater clarity and syntactic flexibility (the conjunction *that* and the auxiliary verb are freer, syntactically speaking, than the infinitival preposition *to*).

We have seen that the KJB has two cases of embedded ellipsis with infinitives (Luke 9:54; Acts 4:18). It also has five instances of embedded ellipsis in object clauses. One of these has a reflexive verb (Acts 27:43) and is mentioned below, another has been discussed more than once (Daniel 3:4–5), and another has been shown before as well (Nehemiah 13:22). The remaining two verses are these:

Acts 1:4

And, being assembled together with them,
commanded them that they should not **DEPART** from
Jerusalem, but **WAIT** for the promise of the Father

Joshua 8:29

Joshua commanded that they should **TAKE** his carcase
down from the tree, and **CAST** it at the entering of
the gate of the city, and **RAISE** thereon a great heap of
stones

Joshua 8:29 has three embedded main verbs, similar to 1 Nephi 3:4 and Alma 9:1. (Alma 39:12 may have four [see below].)

With these counts in mind, we see that the biblical text opts for finite syntax more than 70% of the time with this type of embedded complexity. There are few cases of this, but we can say that this high finite rate with conjoined verb phrases contrasts with a complementary 17% finite rate with simple verb phrases ($p < 0.003$; Fisher's exact test).

Finite Followed by Infinitival Syntax in the B of M

The B of M has two cases of finite followed by infinitival syntax; the KJB does not have similar examples. In both cases the finite-clause verb phrase is more complex than the infinitival one, as we expect from the evidence considered thus far:

Alma 8:25

[I have been commanded]; **THAT** I **SHOULD** **TURN**
AGAIN **AND** **PROPHECY** unto this people, yea, and [i] **to**
testify against them concerning their iniquities

3 Nephi 4:23

[Zemnarihah did give command unto his people]_i
 THAT THEY SHOULD WITHDRAW THEMSELVES from the
 siege and [*i*] **to march** into the farthermost parts of
 the land northward

In Alma 8:25 the finite-clause verb phrase is complex, consisting of two verbs: *prophecy* and an obsolete phrasal verb *turn again* = ‘return’ (see OED **turn**, v. †66b). In contrast, the infinitival verb phrase is simple. The next example, 3 Nephi 4:23, does not contain the verb *command*; so it has not been included in database counts. But I include it here because (1) it has relevant syntax and (2) the semantics of *did give command* is equivalent to ‘commanded.’ Note that the finite-clause verb is reflexive and that the infinitival verb phrase is a simple intransitive.

Although this complex syntax is not biblical, we find it in EModE; this switch was used more than once by Caxton:

1483 Caxton, tr. *Golden Legend*

He commaunded THAT SHE SHOLD BE BROUGHT
 to fore hym And **to be tormented** wyth so many
 tormentes that she shold be estemed for dede

Thenne he commaunded THAT SHE SHOLD BE PUT in
 pryson and on the morn **to be byheded**

And after this themperour commaunded THAT THEY
 SHOLD BE HANGED with cordes And theyr bodyes **to**
be gyuen to houndes and woluyes to be deuoured

Caxton is free with his use of ellipsis in the first two examples, since objective *her* does not occur in the preceding clause and that would be the grammatical expansion in front of the infinitival preposition *to*. The *BofM* is likewise free, at times, with ellipsis. Also, Caxton’s infinitivals are used in passive verb phrases. These have the same, simple argument structure (an elliptical subject, no grammatical object) that the intransitives have in the infinitivals in Alma 8:25 and 3 Nephi 4:23.

On Embedded Reflexives

The BofM uses finite-clause syntax exclusively with embedded reflexive verb phrases (five times if we count 3 Nephi 4:23):

3 Nephi 18:2

he commanded the multitude THAT THEY SHOULD SIT
THEMSELVES down upon the earth

Alma 6:6

the children of God were commanded THAT THEY
SHOULD GATHER THEMSELVES together oft and join in
fasting and mighty prayer

Alma 61:13

[he doth not command us]_i THAT WE SHALL SUBJECT
OURSELVES to our enemies, but [*i*] THAT WE SHOULD
put our trust in him and he will deliver us

Mosiah 12:17

he commanded THAT THE PRIESTS SHOULD GATHER
THEMSELVES together

This is taken to be a real pattern in the BofM because the same behavior is noted more extensively in causative syntax (13 times), which is similar in construction. Furthermore, the KJB, which disfavors finite-clause syntax, uses it both times with embedded reflexive verbs:

Acts 27:43

But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them
from their purpose; and commanded THAT THEY
which could swim SHOULD CAST THEMSELVES first
into the sea, and *get* to land

Nehemiah 13:22

I commanded the Levites THAT THEY SHOULD
CLEANSE THEMSELVES

In Alma 61:13 the tense of the auxiliary shifts from present to past under main-clause ellipsis. This is the only case of such

a tense shift in embedded command syntax. Skousen's work shows that this has never been emended in the history of the text. Hence, no editor has determined it to be unacceptable from a grammatical standpoint. We note here that *should* is found frequently after present-tense *commandeth* in EModE:

1485 Caxton, tr. *The Royal Book*

God commandeth that he **should** fast; the belly saith nay.

Auxiliary Usage Patterns in the B of M

Embedded finite verbs are used **without** an auxiliary only 7% of the time in the B of M. In one of these the bare verb overtly shows subjunctive marking, similar to what is seen elsewhere in the text, such as in the second example below containing an impersonal construction with *flee*:

Alma 8:16

I am sent to command thee THAT THOU **return** to the city of Ammonihah

1 Nephi 3:18

Wherefore, it must needs be THAT HE **flee** out of the land

Because subjunctive is clearly used in Alma 8:16, and since *shall* and *should* act as subjunctive markers, the other verses with bare embedded finite verbs likely contain covert subjunctive verb forms. These are shown immediately below (the last example, Alma 39:12, has three instances of *that ye* after a single command verb):

1 Nephi 17:48

I command you THAT YE **touch** me not

Mosiah 29:30

I commanded you . . . THAT YE **have** no king

Alma 5:61

I Alma do command you in the language of him who

hath commanded me THAT YE **observe** to do the
words which I have spoken unto you

Alma 37:1

I command you THAT YE **take** the records which have
been entrusted with me

Alma 37:27

I command you THAT YE **retain** all their oaths and
their covenants and their agreements in their secret
abominations

Alma 39:12

I command you, my son, in the fear of God, THAT
YE **refrain** from your iniquities, THAT YE **turn** to the
Lord with all your mind, might, and strength, THAT
YE **lead** away the hearts of no more to do wickedly, but
rather **return** unto them and **acknowledge** your faults
and **repair** that wrong which ye have done

What is noteworthy about these is that they all involve second-person pronouns. Alma 8:16 has second-person singular *thou*, and the rest have second-person plural *ye*, with the pronoun in Alma 37 and 39 used with singular meaning to refer to one of Alma's sons.¹⁶

Five other times *ye* is used with *should* or *shall*:

Alma 37:2

I also command you that YE SHALL keep a record of
this people

Alma 61:20

the Lord hath commanded you that YE SHOULD go
against them

Helaman 10:11

I command you that YE SHALL go and declare unto
this people

16 Singular *ye* was typical EModE usage — see OED *ye*, *pers. pron.* 2nd *pers. nom. (obj.)*, *pl. (sing.)*, definition 2.

3 Nephi 16:4

I command you that YE SHALL write these sayings
after that I am gone

3 Nephi 18:25

but rather have commanded that YE SHOULD come
unto me

And as we have already seen, *shall* and *should* are used with a pair of verses in 1 Nephi 3:2,4 with resolved second-person plural subjects. This distribution of usage means that more than 50% of the time there is no auxiliary with embedded second-person subjects, as shown in Table 8:

Table 8. Finite-Clause Auxiliary Usage in the BofM

Auxiliary	Person of the embedded subject	
	2nd	1st or 3rd
NONE	9	0
SHALL or SHOULD	7	113

Fisher's exact test (a more demanding test for this data set) points to this as being statistically significant ($p < 10^{-9}$). This means that it is unlikely that exclusive non-auxiliary usage with second-person embedded subjects occurred by accident in the BofM text.

Caxton's *Golden Legend* (1483)

This paper has shown how the BofM is systematically different from the KJB in terms of command syntax. A prominent EModE text is significantly closer to the BofM in this regard. This book — titled *Legenda aurea sanctorum* — is a hagiographical work. Caxton published a translation in 1483 that he made from the original Latin. The book went through many editions before the middle of the 16th century. We have seen a number of examples from this text in the course of this discussion.

I have tallied and considered 380 past-tense instances of command syntax in this lengthy text (more than twice as

long as the *BofM*). Both the *BofM* and this Caxton translation employ command syntax at a rate of 600 instances per million words. And both texts show a remarkable similarity along quite a few different dimensions, even though they were published 350 years apart. Table 9 shows how the three texts compare:

Table 9. Comparison of Various Command Syntax Rates

<i>19 command syntax rates</i>	Book of Mormon	Caxton, tr. [1483]	King James Bible
Overall finite-clause rate	79.1%	59.2%	18.8%
Percentage of finite clauses with auxiliaries	93.0%	99.1%	78.1%
Percentage of layered syntax in active contexts	73.0%	53.8%	37.5%
Percentage involving passive command verbs	14.1%	5.3%	2.9%
Percentage involving passive embedded verbs	3.7%	41.6%	17.6%
<i>Finite-clause rates with...</i>			
all active-voice syntax	85.8%	43.5%	17.6%
all passive-voice syntax	—	28.6%	0.0%
active–passive syntax	100.0%	83.4%	20.7%
passive–active syntax	34.8%	46.2%	50.0%
active command verbs	86.4%	60.3%	18.2%
passive command verbs	34.8%	40.0%	40.0%
passive embedded verbs	100.0%	81.0%	20.0%
active embedded verbs	78.3%	43.7%	18.6%
embedded adverbials	97.1%	86.5%	41.2%
no embedded adverbial	74.2%	54.9%	16.3%
multiple embedded verbs	95.5%	79.7%	71.4%
one embedded verb	76.6%	55.5%	16.6%
embedded negation	100.0%	100.0%	66.7%
no embedded negation	76.2%	58.7%	16.1%
<i>Correlations</i>			
Book of Mormon–Caxton, tr. [1483] = 79%	Calculated <i>t</i> -value = 5.3; $p < 10^{-4}$		
Caxton, tr. [1483]–King James Bible = 68%	Calculated <i>t</i> -value = 3.8; $p < 0.002$		
Book of Mormon–King James Bible = 30%	Calculated <i>t</i> -value = 1.3; $p = 0.22$		

The KJB has a considerable amount of Tyndale's language in it, and Tyndale made his biblical translations about 45 years after Caxton published this translated text. So the 68% correlation between the KJB and Caxton's *Golden Legend* understandably follows from that observation. Yet the *BofM* correlates even more closely with Caxton's 1483 translation, and it does so when nearly 20 esoteric usage rates are directly

compared — rates that can be known only after performing a close linguistic analysis.¹⁷

It seems significant that both texts show the same active finite and passive infinitival complementation preferences, and that both have many instances and high rates of layered syntax in active contexts. This state of affairs appears to be rare in the textual record. Further investigation will clarify this picture.

Summary of Command Syntax in the BofM and the KJB

- BofM active command verb finite rate = 86%;
KJB active command verb finite rate = 18%
BofM passive command verb finite rate = 35%;
KJB passive command verb finite rate = 40% [*no evidence that the KJB favored passive infinitival complementation*]
- Layered syntax in active contexts:
BofM = 84 times (73% of finite-clause instances)
KJB = 9 times (38% of finite-clause instances)
- Active infinitival raised object usage rates:
BofM = 100% (plain syntax); KJB = 77%
- The BofM always uses finite-clause syntax with embedded negation (20 times), passive participles (6 times), reflexive verbs (4 times); 21 of 22 times with conjoined verb phrases: remarkably systematic usage!
- The KJB also favors finite-clause syntax with embedded negation, reflexives, and conjoined verb phrases; yet **infinitival** syntax with embedded passive participles is frequent and typical (24 times; 80%)
- Finite-clause auxiliary usage:
BofM = 93%; KJB = 78% (never uses *shall*)

17 Another Caxton translation, the first book printed in English (circa 1473–1474 in Bruges), is also similar to the BofM, but it has fewer than 50 examples of command syntax, and no main-clause passives.

BofM shall usage = 7 times; *should/shall* are always used except with *thou* and *ye* (9 times); again, systematic usage

Conclusion

Command syntax in the *BofM* and the KJB is markedly different. Caxton's 1483 usage profile is significantly closer to the *BofM*'s. The principal difference between the scriptural texts lies in their rates of finite and infinitival complementation. They are opposites in this regard. Both texts display a number of statistically significant usage patterns, and the *BofM* does so to an impressive degree. It prefers layered finite syntax with the auxiliary *should*, occasionally employing *shall* as an auxiliary — a less common EModE usage notably absent in the KJB. In spite of its heavy use of finite syntax, the *BofM* is consonant with the strong EModE preference for infinitival complementation after passive command verbs. Despite the KJB's strong preference for infinitival syntax, it uses finite syntax at a significantly higher rate with embedded complexity, but not with embedded passives.

The *BofM* represents a late 15th-century form of command syntax that is less modern in construction than most of what is found in the KJB. It certainly does not systematically match the KJB in most instances, yet it incontrovertibly evinces principled usage of the grammatical construction. A linguistically unsophisticated author could not have produced the array of syntactic structures found in the *BofM*. Deep, native-speaker knowledge of EModE was required to achieve the regulated patterns of use found in the *BofM*.

Those involved in putting the text into writing in the late 1820s were not EModE scholars but were familiar with the KJB. Had they composed the *BofM* themselves, they naturally would have used the KJB as a template not only to make it sound "scriptural," as Twain put it back in 1872, but in order to fashion complex syntactic structures such as the ones this

article has examined. Moreover, since the majority infinitival usage of the KJB was largely consonant with their own native-speaker intuitions, that is exactly what they would have employed extensively, not the linguistically distant and obscure usage from more than three centuries earlier that is so prevalent in the BofM. Both the KJB and 19th-century American usage would have led them to adopt infinitival command syntax as the default case for the BofM because that was the most obvious feature of the KJB and that was also the predominant feature of their own language.

Therefore, in order to maintain a belief that Joseph Smith authored the BofM, one must assume that he chose to consciously and independently adopt an obsolete finite-clause construction as the main form of command syntax, against the KJB and his own language. One must also ascribe to him the ability to follow principled usage patterns not found in the KJB and incapable of being derived from a normal reading of that text. These include: favoring active finite and passive infinitival complementation, as well as heavy doses of layered syntax (both obscure phenomena to be found mainly at the beginning of the EModE period); nearly always using finite syntax with four types of embedded complexity; always employing finite syntax with an auxiliary (occasionally *shall*), **except** when the embedded subject was second person (optionally); and always using main-clause raised objects with embedded infinitives. Because syntactic knowledge is largely tacit, Joseph Smith would have been unaware of such linguistic fine points, just as we are today. And because much of this language was inaccessible to him, it is possible to assert with confidence that he would have been incapable of implementing this complex syntax in the remarkably consistent fashion the text presents.

In summary, a scrutiny of command syntax in the 1829 BofM, the 1611 KJB, and Caxton's 1483 translation of *Legenda aurea* (and in EModE generally) emphatically tells us that the

BofM is an advanced EModE text in terms of this syntactic structure and that linguistic competence in earlier forms of English was necessary for its elaboration. Thus we have further evidence in favor of Skousen's view that Joseph Smith received specific, revealed words from the Lord. Had Smith received distinct ideas and put them in his own language or in biblical language, he would have used infinitival complementation heavily, and any infrequent finite syntax would not have been predominantly of the layered variety.

The many obsolete EModE aspects of the text¹⁸ (including command syntax in its richness and diversity) suggest that the process of translation, as we usually understand the term, occurred without human participation. Yet translation — in the sense of conveyance from one condition to another — did indeed occur with human participation, by the gift and power of God. In our sphere, Joseph Smith (and his scribes) required faith, receptivity, and concentration in order to receive and set down in writing the BofM in a divinely sanctioned form. It was no easy task. The effect for us has been a transformation of the plate script into (Early Modern) English by the bestowal of God's miraculous power.

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18 See Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014), 216ff.

