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## THREE DEGREES OF GOSPEL UNDERSTANDING

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Daniel C. Peterson

*Abstract: Few fireside talks outlive the week in which they are given. But Professor Stanley Kimball's remarks, offered one evening long ago in southern California, have stayed with me for nearly three and a half decades. In my view, they offer a key to surviving challenges or even what have come to be called "faith crises" — and, indeed, a key not only to surviving them but to thriving spiritually by having overcome them.*

A little learning is a dang'rous thing;  
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring;  
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,  
and drinking largely sobers us again.

—Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, Part 2.

More than three decades ago — I was still in graduate school, so it must have been in the first half of the 1980s — my wife and I attended a gathering in southern California where the late Stanley Kimball, a professor of history at Southern Illinois University and a former president of the Mormon History Association, was the speaker. His remarks have stayed in my mind ever since. Unfortunately, I've never seen (nor heard of) a written version of what he had to say, so I'll be going from memory here. (If anybody knows where a written text of the speech can be found, I would be delighted to see it.)

Professor Kimball explained what he called the "three levels" of Mormon history, which he termed Levels A, B, and C. (Given my own background in philosophy, I might have chosen G. W. F. Hegel's terminology, instead: *thesis*, *antithesis*, and *synthesis*.)

Level A is the Sunday school version of the Church and of its history. It's the kind of simple story that we tell in missionary lessons and in the Church's visitors' centers. Virtually everything connected with the

Church on Level A is obviously good, beautiful, true, and harmonious. Ordinary members may occasionally make mistakes, but leaders seldom, if ever, do.

It's difficult for somebody with a Level A understanding to imagine why everyone else doesn't immediately recognize the obvious truth of the gospel, and opposition to the Church seems flatly Satanic.

Level B — what I call the *antithesis* to Level A's *thesis* — is perhaps most clearly seen in anti-Mormon versions of Church history. In its purest and most extreme form, everything (or virtually everything) that Level A declares to be good, beautiful, true, and harmonious turns out actually to be evil, ugly, false, and chaotic. Latter-day Saint leaders at the general and sometimes even the local levels are viewed as deceitful and evil. They consider the Church's account of its own story a complete fabrication, and some exceptionally antagonistic anti-Mormons even claim the general membership often misbehaves very badly.

It's difficult for somebody solidly embedded in Level B to understand how anybody can fail to see the manifest evil and transparent falsehood of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and of the claims of the Restoration. Disagreement with them is the result either of some combination of ignorance and stupidity or, if that explanation can't be made to work, of flat-out dishonesty.

In my view, the inadequacy of both Level A and Level B for any reasonable and realistic adult ought to be immediately obvious. Nothing involving humans is purely good and without flaw, just as, so far as I can tell, nothing involving humans is entirely evil and without some trace of good. For example, I'm told that Mafiosi often care intensely about their children, and I've also seen photographic evidence that Adolf Hitler loved dogs. Each level is simplistic and a caricature of reality.

But one needn't read anti-Mormon propaganda to be exposed to elements of Level B that seem to be true and that can't quite be squared with an idealized, Level A portrait of the Restoration. In other words, it rapidly becomes obvious to people who read Mormon history or who experience it directly in the congregations of the Saints that Level A isn't entirely accurate and that Level B isn't entirely false. Some claims on Level B *are* true, at least to some extent, although many are wholly or largely false or are so taken out of context that they are *effectively* false. Most of the Witnesses to the Book of Mormon fell away at some point, though some did later return to full fellowship, and none of them ever denied their testimonies. Members of the Church did lead and carry out the Mountain Meadows Massacre, though Brigham Young certainly



didn't order it. There have even been disagreements — and at times sharp divisions — within the presiding quorums of the Church, though the areas of agreement are far, far more significant than the areas of dispute.

Whether newly converted or born in the covenant, maturing members of the Church will inevitably discover, sooner or later, that other Saints, including Church leaders, are fallible and sometimes even disappointing mortals. There are areas of ambiguity, even unresolved problems, in Church history; there have been disagreements about certain doctrines; the archaeological evidence for the Book of Mormon doesn't yield decisive proof of its authenticity; and some questions don't have immediately satisfying answers.

Eliza R. Snow, a plural wife to both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young — and, thus, someone who knew them both personally and who was directly involved in what is almost certainly the most controversial practice in Mormon history — sought to caution new converts against starry-eyed naiveté back, already, in the nineteenth century:

Think not when you gather to Zion,  
Your troubles and trials are through,  
That nothing but comfort and pleasure  
Are waiting in Zion for you:  
No, no, 'tis designed as a furnace,  
All substance, all textures to try,  
To burn all the “wood, hay, and stubble,”  
The gold from the dross purify.

Think not when you gather to Zion,  
That all will be holy and pure;  
That fraud and deception are banished,  
And confidence wholly secure:  
No, no, for the Lord our Redeemer  
Has said that the tares with the wheat  
Must grow till the great day of burning  
Shall render the harvest complete.<sup>1</sup>

Lorenzo Snow, who was Eliza's brother and the fifth president of the Church from 1898 to 1901, was the last high Church leader who knew Joseph Smith well as an adult. “I saw Joseph Smith the Prophet do things,” he recalled in 1898,

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1 Eliza R. Snow, “Think Not, When You Gather to Zion,” *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), Number 21.

which I did not approve of; and yet ... I thanked God that He would put upon a man who had these imperfections the power and authority which He placed upon him ... for I knew I myself had weaknesses and I thought there was a chance for me.<sup>2</sup>

“Now, was not Joseph Smith a mortal man?” asked George Q. Cannon, who had known the Prophet personally in Nauvoo and who, by the end of his life, had served as a counselor in the First Presidency to Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow.

Yes. A fallible man? Yes. Had he not weaknesses? Yes, he acknowledged them himself, and did not fail to put the revelations on record in this book [the Book of Doctrine and Covenants] wherein God reproved him. His weaknesses were not concealed from the people. He was willing that people should know that he was mortal, and had failings. And so with Brigham Young. Was not he a mortal man, a man who had weaknesses? He was not a God. He was not an immortal being. He was not infallible. No, he was fallible. And yet when he spoke by the power of God, it was the word of God to this people.<sup>3</sup>

Similar quotations could be multiplied indefinitely.<sup>4</sup> Although more than a few members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have mistakenly assumed a kind of inerrancy and perfection for the apostles and prophets of the Restoration — hence the well-known quip: “The Pope claims to be infallible, but no Catholic believes him; the Prophet says he’s not infallible, but no Mormon believes him” — they have never claimed those attributes for themselves.

But back to Professor Kimball’s remarks in southern California, decades ago: He observed that the Church isn’t eager to expose its members to the problems and ambiguities of its history. Why? Because souls can be lost and are lost on Level B. And anyway, the Church isn’t some sort of continuous floating seminar in historiography. Its mission isn’t primarily to teach history; it’s to preach the gospel. That humans are fallible and flawed goes without saying — or, anyway, should do so. The

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2 Lorenzo Snow, cited by George Q. Cannon, in *George Q. Cannon Diary*, 7 January 1898.

3 George Q. Cannon, *Journal of Discourses* 24:274 (August 12, 1883).

4 A representative sample of them has been gathered at [http://en.fairmormon.org/Mormonism\\_and\\_doctrine/Prophets\\_are\\_not\\_infallible/Quotations](http://en.fairmormon.org/Mormonism_and_doctrine/Prophets_are_not_infallible/Quotations).

unique and essential message of the Restoration isn't that its apostles, prophets, and witnesses are human mortals but that — wonderful news! — some human mortals have been and are genuine, divinely called witnesses, apostles, and prophets.

Regrettably, perhaps, most Latter-day Saints — many of them far better people than I — aren't deeply interested in history and, more importantly, many other very pressing priorities demand attention, including raising families, proclaiming the gospel, training our youth, redeeming the dead, and giving service. So, if the Church doesn't go out of its way to teach them the ambiguities of its history, they're not likely to learn them. And, if they do, there is at least a fairly high likelihood that they'll learn them from a hostile, unbalanced, and sometimes, frankly, dishonest source.

Thus, in failing to “inoculate” its membership against the follies and questions and problems of its history, the Church can sometimes leave them vulnerable to faith-destroying disease.

There are no easy, black and white solutions to this problem. Interestingly, although he was a professional academic historian, Dr. Kimball remarked that, were he in a high leadership position, he would himself probably make the same decision. He would not, that is, seek to expose Church members to a “disease” that would make them stronger if they survived it but that, in fact, more than a few would find fatal.

Once members of the Church *have* been exposed to Level B, though, Professor Kimball argued, their best hope is to press on to what he believed (and I believe) to be the richer but more complicated version of history (or to the more realistic view of humanity) that is to be found on Level C. Here's a crucial point, however: He contended (and, again, I agree) that Level C — what I call the “synthesis” level — turns out to be essentially, and profoundly, like Level A. Level B is substantially and essentially wrong. Level A is correct but only as far as it goes.

This is vital to understand. For one thing, it undercuts the claim that by giving little or no attention to a “warts and all” version of Restoration history in its Sunday school classrooms, the Church is *lying* to the Saints. From the standpoint of a believer such as I am (and such as Professor Kimball evidently was), Level A is a simpler version of the truth and not in any significant sense a lie.<sup>5</sup>

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5 For one view of this issue, drawing on examples from classical Greek, Latin, Islamic, and Chinese historiography, see David B. Honey and Daniel C. Peterson, “Advocacy and Inquiry in the Writing of Latter-day Saint History,” *BYU*

The gospel is, in fact, true. Church leaders at all levels have, overwhelmingly, been good and sincere people doing the best they can with the imperfect human materials entrusted to their charge (including themselves), according to their best understanding and under often very difficult circumstances.

But charity and context are all-important. Life would be much easier, of course, if we could find a church composed of perfect leaders and flawless members and one whose progress has been without bump or obstacle but smoothly and unerringly forward. Unfortunately, though, at least in my case, the glaringly obvious problem is that such a church would never admit one such as I to its membership.

My judgment and my conviction are that the claims of the Restoration do, in fact, stand up to historical examination, although (very likely by divine design) their truth is neither so blazingly obvious nor so indisputable as to compel acceptance — least of all from people disinclined to accept them. If I were not so convinced, I wouldn't waste my time on them. Being so convinced, however, I believe them to be worth everything — because they give worth and value *to* everything.

**Daniel C. Peterson** (*PhD, University of California at Los Angeles*) is a professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University and is the founder of the University's Middle Eastern Texts Initiative, for which he served as editor-in-chief until mid-August 2013. He has published and spoken extensively on both Islamic and Mormon subjects. Formerly chairman of the board of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) and an officer, editor, and author for its successor organization, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, his professional work as an Arabist focuses on the Qur'an and on Islamic philosophical theology. He is the author, among other things, of a biography entitled *Muhammad: Prophet of God* (Eerdmans, 2007).

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*Studies* 31/2 (1991), 139–179. Moreover, it must be kept in mind that there is no professionally trained clergy in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There is no fundamental dichotomy of background between the Church's leaders and the general membership of the Church from among whom they're drawn. Accordingly, knowledge of and attitudes toward Church history and doctrine in the highest echelons of the Church will approximate very closely that found among the Latter-day Saints as a whole.

# JOSEPH SMITH AND THE DOCTRINE OF SEALING

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A. Keith Thompson

*Abstract: Brian Hales has observed that we cannot understand Joseph Smith's marriage practices in Nauvoo without understanding the related theology. However, he implies that we are hampered in coming to a complete understanding of that theology because the only primary evidence we have of that theology is the revelation now recorded as Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants and a few entries in William Clayton's journal. This paper argues that we have more primary evidence about Joseph Smith's sealing theology than we realize. The accounts we have of the First Vision and of Moroni's first visits in 1823 have references to the sealing power embedded in them, ready for Joseph to unpack when he was spiritually educated enough to ask the right questions.*

In his comprehensive three-volume work on Joseph Smith's polygamy, Brian C. Hales has drawn attention to the failure of most of those who have written about LDS polygamy in Nauvoo to set the practice in its theological context.<sup>1</sup> For example, he has written that "[o]ne aspect common to most researchers who depict Joseph Smith as practicing sexual polyandry is a lack of attention to his theology."<sup>2</sup>

Hales notes Mario S. De Pillis's statement that some authors have "failed to take Smith seriously as a theologian"<sup>3</sup> and Danel Bachman's assertion that

[t]o characterize Smith as a parapath and dismiss the "stupendous theological edifice" of Mormonism as merely countermerments [sic] for the expression of sexual passion, is

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1 Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013).

2 Ibid, 1:386.

3 Ibid, 3:149, n2 and supporting text.

to underestimate the genuine religious motivation of both the Prophet and his followers.<sup>4</sup>

These recognitions of a separate, independent, and credible Mormon theology are also confirmed by Stephen Webb in his recent *Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter*.<sup>5</sup> Webb has written:

By any measurement Joseph Smith was a remarkable person. His combination of organizational acumen with spiritual originality and personal decorum and modesty is rare in the history of religion. ... He knew more about theology and philosophy than it was reasonable for anyone in his position to know. ... He read the Bible in ways so novel that he can be considered a theological innocent ... yet he brusquely overturned ancient and impregnable metaphysical assumptions with the aplomb of an assistant professor in religious studies.<sup>6</sup>

For Webb, Joseph Smith's identification of

Jesus Christ not only with God but also with both the eternal power that fuels the cosmos and the laws by which that power is regulated ... is truly the beginning of a Christological metaphysics of matter.<sup>7</sup>

Hales has also observed that Fawn Brodie led many other critics in "factor[ing] out God as a possible motivator,"<sup>8</sup> leaving plural marriage as Joseph Smith's libidinous "way to fulfill a desire for expanded sexual opportunities."<sup>9</sup> But because Brodie conceded that "[m]any Mormons have believed that Joseph Smith's marriages were entirely spiritual,"<sup>10</sup> Hales has gone to great lengths to explain Joseph Smith's theology of sealing in detail.

In this paper, I do not revisit any of Hales's work on Joseph Smith's theology of sealing and plural marriage, but rather review his observation

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4 Ibid, 3:149, n3 and supporting text.

5 Stephen Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

6 Ibid, 253.

7 Ibid, 254.

8 Hales, 1:410.

9 Ibid, 1:410.

10 Ibid, 1:422.

in chapter 10 of Volume 3, that the only primary evidence<sup>11</sup> we have of that theology is the revelation now recorded as Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants and a few entries from William Clayton's journal.

This paper suggests that Joseph Smith's account of the First Vision in 1820 and Moroni's five visits in September 1823<sup>12</sup> were full of temple ordinance and sealing theology. I also observe that Joseph Smith's and Oliver Cowdery's separate accounts of the Restoration of the Aaronic priesthood<sup>13</sup> include material that predates the revelation on marriage<sup>14</sup> that contributed to Joseph's understanding of the sealing doctrine and temple ordinances.<sup>15</sup>

In Part I of this paper, I argue that the essentiality of ordinances and the importance of the sealing power were impressed upon young Joseph's mind during the First Vision. I do so by examining the words Joseph used to record that experience in 1838, after the revelation on plural marriage was received but prior to its discussion with the Twelve in Nauvoo in the early 1840s.

In Part II, I argue that the sealing power was a significant focus of Moroni's instruction during his five visits to the boy prophet in September 1823. I do so by comparing Moroni's version of Malachi chapter 4 with the words used in the KJV Bible that was available to Joseph. I suggest that even though the young Joseph did not understand all those teachings when he first heard them, they were impressive and clear enough that they led him to questions which produced revelations as he pondered them for the rest of his life.

In Part III, I review Joseph Smith's and Oliver Cowdery's separate accounts of the restoration of the Aaronic priesthood on May 15, 1829. I note that Joseph's account as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants

11 Hales has collected considerable secondhand evidence confirming the theology in Doctrine and Covenants 132 with the post-Nauvoo recollections of people who were taught the doctrine personally by Joseph Smith or by authorized church leaders. Hales says Joseph Smith has not left anything else on the subject.

12 Joseph Smith – History 1:30–47, 49, 53. Hereafter “JS-H.”

13 Joseph's account is recorded in JS-H 1:68–72. Oliver's account is recorded as a footnote to JS-H 1:71.

14 The headnote to Doctrine and Covenants notes that the revelation was “recorded July 12, 1843” though “the doctrines and principles involved in this revelation had been known by the Prophet since 1831.”

15 Though the JS-H account has been dated to 1839 (see below n54), the events there recorded date to 1829. Oliver Cowdery's account, which is recorded as a footnote to JS-H 1:71, was published in the *Messenger and Advocate*, 1:14–16 (October 1834).

section 13 and JS-H 1:69 emphasizes that the Aaronic priesthood was temporary and would only stay on the earth as long as was necessary to enable the sons of Levi in Malachi's prophesy to complete and present their righteous offering. Oliver's account enables us to make a connection between the work of the ancient Levitical priests and their modern successors. I then trace this idea from Oliver Cowdery's account through other texts that have developed the LDS understanding of the latter-day offering to be made by the sons of Levi.

I conclude that Joseph Smith's "sealing theology" was more foundational to the restoration than many Latter-day Saints may have realized. When Christ's words from the First Vision and Moroni's four-times-repeated quotations from Malachi 4 are carefully considered, it is clear that Jesus Christ intended the revelation and restoration of temple ordinances to be the foundation and *summum bonum*<sup>16</sup> of all that Joseph Smith did during his short prophetic life.

### Part I – Seeds of the Doctrine of Sealing in the First Vision

When the Father and the Son visited Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove early in the spring of 1820, Joseph says that he asked "which of all the sects was right ... and which I should join."<sup>17</sup>

[He] was answered that [he] must join none of them, for they were all wrong; ... all their creeds were an abomination in [Christ's] sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."<sup>18</sup>

Because we are accustomed to reading these words in the context of different doctrines, it is easy to miss how they also bear upon the sealing power. The meaning is perhaps seen best if words revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith about priesthood power twelve years later are placed beside them:

And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances

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16 Doctrine and Covenants 128:11.

17 JS-H 1:18.

18 Ibid 1:19.



thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.<sup>19</sup>

When Christ answered Joseph's question about which church he should join, he answered him with words that blended the words of Isaiah with some that Paul had written to Timothy.<sup>20</sup> The Isaiah 29 passage has since been identified by Latter-day Saints as forming part of that prophet's vision of the latter-day restoration. The restoration in Isaiah's vision was introduced by the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and using words "the Lord"<sup>21</sup> would quote when he answered the boy prophet in the First Vision. But it is the Pauline words that Joseph later connected with the higher ordinances of the gospel. Paul had written to Timothy to warn him against apostates in the first century. That prophecy was being fulfilled again in the burned-over district that was upper New York State in 1820:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves .... *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*; from such turn away (emphasis added).<sup>22</sup>

Paul's counsel to Timothy was apt and so Christ quoted it to Joseph. But what was it about the Christian religious practices of the first century at Lystra (part of modern Turkey) and nineteenth-century upstate New York that earned the Lord's characteristically blunt denunciation? How was it that these religious teachers in both the first and nineteenth centuries denied the power of godliness? The answer is found in the words Christ used. According to Joseph, Christ said that the professors of the

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19 Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–22.

20 Note too that this also evokes a little of John Wesley in the concepts if not the phraseology. Steven C. Harper has noted Wesley's concern that Methodism "would multiply exponentially in number 'only to become a dead sect, having the form of religion but without the power'" ("Evaluating Three Arguments Against Joseph Smith's First Vision", *Interpreter, A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 2 (2012) 17–33, 20 quoting John Wesley, "Thoughts upon Methodism," in *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*, ed. Rupert E. Davies, vol. 9 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater [Nashville: Abingdon, 1984–], 527).

21 Isaiah 29:13.

22 2 Timothy 3:1, 2, and 5.

churches which Joseph knew,<sup>23</sup> taught “for doctrine the commandments of men,” which teaching had a form of godliness, but denied the power of godliness.

Joseph later taught that the power of godliness was revealed in the ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood and the ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood made men and women kings and priests, queens and priestesses in the kingdom of his Father so that they could learn to become gods themselves.<sup>24</sup> Christ’s charge was that the Christian teaching that had come down to Joseph’s day had changed the ordinances<sup>25</sup> that Christ had originally revealed, so they denied that human beings were of the same species as God and were intended not only to be saved, but also to be exalted with Him.

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23 Francis M. Gibbons states that there were “thirteen different religious congregations” “[w]ithin a radius of eight miles of the Smith farm” in Palmyra, “including Quakers, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists” (*Joseph Smith, Martyr, Prophet of God* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977], 28). Note that Terryl and Fiona Givens have observed that Joseph Smith had not come into contact with the Catholic creeds at the time he had his First Vision. It was therefore “the Protestant creeds that were the root of Christianity’s most lamentable errors ... [for Joseph Smith and the early Mormons and in particular] the wording of the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles (1563) largely incorporated into the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646).” The affirmation that “[t]here is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts or passions ... that was the theological basis for subsequent formulations of Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists and Methodists ... [wa]s the creedal ‘abomination’ alluded to in Smith’s First Vision.” It was an abomination because it suggested “that God was an impersonal being, without a form, inaccessible and incomprehensible [and] unmoved by human suffering” (*The Crucible of Doubt* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014], 86–87). This observation is controversial in Mormonism since it implies that this part of the statement Joseph Smith recorded from the Sacred Grove was his interpretation of the words he heard rather than the words of Jesus Christ himself. The Givens are correct to have observed, however, that this part of Joseph’s summary is not marked with quotation marks in JS-H 1:19 and it is unclear whether the quotation marks that follow are there because Jesus Christ said these exact words or because they are a quotation from the New Testament scriptures which the writer has noted in the text.

24 See for example, the discourse delivered by the Prophet Joseph Smith at the funeral of King Follett. Accounts of the discourse given at a general conference of the church were made by Willard Richards, Wilford Woodruff, Thomas Bullock, and William Clayton but have not yet been published in the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*. I therefore refer the reader to the record currently provided in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977), 342–362.

25 Compare Isaiah 24:5, 6.

Thus from the very beginning of the prophetic ministry of Joseph Smith, the Father and Son placed the power of godliness — which is revealed only in Melchizedek priesthood ordinances — at the center of his mission of restoration. But that oblique reference to a power of godliness denied by orthodox Christianity was only the beginning of Joseph's instruction. When Moroni began visiting Joseph three years later, he repeated many scriptures to him four times so that Joseph would be aware of their importance and would be most unlikely to forget them.

## Part II — Moroni's Instruction: Malachi 4

### Moroni's First Visits – September 1823

During the night of 21 September 1823, Moroni confirmed to Joseph the importance of the keys of priesthood that Elijah would reveal “before the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” Joseph recorded that after Moroni introduced himself, he prophesied of Joseph's own future mission and the publicity that his name would attract and told him of the book and interpreters deposited in a nearby hill. The angel then “commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament,” beginning with parts of Malachi 3 and 4, and then moving on to parts of Isaiah 11, Acts 3, Joel 2 and many others (JS-H 1:33–41).

While his quotation of Acts 3:22–23 was “precisely as [those verses] stand in our New Testament,” the quotations from Malachi in the Old Testament, read “differently,” or “with a little variation from the way [they read] in our Bibles” (JS-H 1:36, 39–40). Joseph Smith's critics are apt to suggest that these “differences” are the convenient adjustments of a later Joseph, that Joseph Smith reconstructed his memories, wittingly or unwittingly, to suit his developing theology,<sup>26</sup> and that the wording we now have in the Pearl of Great Price dates to Joseph's needs and thoughts in 1838, not 1820. Believers, on the other hand, will likely be willing to accept the Pearl of Great Price account as it stands and consider the possibility that Joseph's detailed memory of the “differences” is an

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26 For example, Fawn Brodie says that differences in Joseph's accounts of the First Vision should be attributed to his need to create “a magnificent tradition” after the fact (Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, second edition [New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1945], 25). Steven C. Harper has argued that Brodie was influenced by her “hermeneutic of suspicion,” since she failed to objectively revise her original findings following the discovery and publication of 1832 and 1835 accounts of the First Vision before her second edition was published in 1971 (Harper, 22n3).

intentional and significant result of an angelic visit and the repetition reported.<sup>27</sup>

For the purposes of this paper, it is useful to set out Moroni’s version of the relevant passages from Malachi in full beside the King James versions of the same passages. Some of the differences in Moroni’s version are italicized.<sup>28</sup>

<b>Malachi 4:1 (Moroni’s version)</b> For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall <i>burn as stubble; for they that come</i> shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.	<b>Malachi 4:1 (KJV)</b> For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.
<b>Malachi 4:5 (Moroni’s version)</b> Behold, I will <i>reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of</i> Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.	<b>Malachi 4:5 (KJV)</b> Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:
<b>Malachi 4:6 (Moroni’s version)</b> And he shall <i>plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and</i> the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. <i>If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.</i>	<b>Malachi 4:6 (KJV)</b> And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Joseph Smith said that Moroni “offered many explanations which cannot be mentioned here.”<sup>29</sup> We do not know the reasons why those explanations could not be provided in the now-canonized 1838 account. It may be that Joseph Smith simply did not have the time to record them. It may be that he intended to provide them later and never got around

27 Believers are also reassured by Moroni’s record of the Lord’s reassurance to him when he worried that his own foibles and his weakness in writing would be a stumbling block that would reduce the effectiveness of the future Book of Mormon as a missionary tool. That reassurance was expressed, “Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness” (Ether 12:23–26). It is evident that responding to the gospel message as communicated by the Holy Ghost to the individual soul has more to do with meekness than it does with erudition.

28 JS-H 1:37–39. See also Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3.

29 JS-H 1:41.

to doing so. Or it may be that he was instructed not to provide them, and there are any number of reasons why he might have received that instruction. For example, these explanations from Moroni may have been intended for Joseph and no one else, or perhaps others were as entitled to them as he was, but seekers would grow and learn more if they were left to receive them personally.

Whatever the reason, we may ask: Why did Moroni quote these verses from Malachi differently than Joseph had them in his King James Bible? The most persuasive reason may be that Moroni's adjustments were necessary so that Joseph Smith would better understand the work that lay ahead for him to do. And if Moroni's version assisted Joseph Smith, then it may assist us as well.

### **What was Moroni's Understanding of Malachi 4:1, 5–6?**

In choosing "Moroni's understanding" as the title for this section, I realize that I take a number of risks. Moroni is a resurrected being<sup>30</sup> and presumably walks and talks with Christ and God and others of the ancient prophets, including potentially Malachi himself. Unless Moroni tutored us individually as he did Joseph, and detailed his views exhaustively, we are not going to understand all he understands about Malachi 4:1, 5–6. It will also be difficult for us to stray far from our twenty-first century LDS theological paradigm, which colors our understanding of these often-quoted scriptures. But since even the mortal Christ learned line upon line,<sup>31</sup> and thus grew from grace to grace,<sup>32</sup> we too may hope to deepen our understanding.

### **They That Come**

In verse 1, the difference between the two versions is an emphasis in Moroni's account that it will be "they that come" who will do the burning in the great and dreadful day of the Lord. In Malachi's original account, the emphasis on what will happen in that coming day, and how it will be done, is left out. This thought does not appear in any of the other places in scripture in which Malachi's prophecy (or its earlier source) in chapter 4 verse 1 is quoted or alluded to.<sup>33</sup> Malachi's KJV of the prophecy

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30 Ibid. 1:30–33.

31 Isaiah 28:10; 2 Nephi 28:30; Doctrine and Covenants 98:12; 128:12.

32 Doctrine and Covenants 93:12–17.

33 For example Psalms 21:8–10; Isaiah 24:6; 66: 16; Malachi 3:2; 1 Nephi 22:15; 3 Nephi 24:2; 25:1; Doctrine and Covenants 29:9; 64: 23, 24.

is the clear match,<sup>34</sup> and it is Malachi's version that Christ restored to the Nephites.<sup>35</sup> The only other place in scripture where there is any trace of Moroni's thought that there will be "angels" involved in the destruction attending the Second Coming, is in the Revelation of John. There, during the seventh seal and before the Lord comes,<sup>36</sup> John sees that locusts, with power as scorpions to afflict all men (excepting those who had "the seal of God in their foreheads"<sup>37</sup>) were loosed from the bottomless pit and followed by four angels to slay "the third part of men."<sup>38</sup>

### **Neither Root nor Branch; Utterly Wasted**

In both versions of the prophecy, we understand that there will be a day when the wicked will be burned so thoroughly that they will be left neither root nor branch. So familiar are Latter-day Saints with the old Hebrew use and meaning of these two words ("root" and "branch"<sup>39</sup>), that the depth and detail of the meaning is often glossed over. When it is pondered, the temple or genealogical meaning is strengthened. All of us recognize the damage done by bush and forest fires that have devastated many regions of the world in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Vast walls of flame that dwarf fire trucks and water bombing aircraft have often been captured on film. Yet when one later visits the scenes of even the most devastating of these fires, there are always burnt stalks left. Some trees have even been shown to require fire to open their cone seeds and germinate. If one visits a few months after a devastating blaze, the profusion of returning growth is stunning.

Malachi's image is of an altogether more destructive burning. Here, he says that among the proud and wicked there will be absolutely nothing left. Indeed, the burning will not only consume the tree trunks and branches; it will burn the roots out of the ground so that they are gone too. In Malachi's image there is no chance of a stem or a rod coming

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34 Malachi prophesied after the Psalms were written and after Isaiah prophesied, and the Nephites did not have Malachi's prophecy until the Savior restored it around AD 34.

35 3 Nephi 25:1.

36 Revelations 9 – LDS edition head note.

37 Ibid. 9:2–4(4).

38 Ibid. 9:15.

39 For example, in one of the most famous of Isaiah's messianic prophecies (which Moroni quoted to Joseph Smith in full or in part immediately after he had finished quoting Malachi), Christ is referred to as a "rod out of the stem of Jesse" and then in parallel Jewish fashion, the message is restated with the words "and a Branch shall grow out of his roots."

forth out of the root of any wicked person so marked for destruction. The inference is that the wicked will be totally disconnected and cut off from their ancestors and that they will have no posterity. Moroni's later phrase "utterly wasted"<sup>40</sup> (i.e., "laid waste") seems completely justified and more graphic than the mere concept of a "curse"<sup>41</sup> in the King James translation.

### **I will Reveal the Priesthood**

In Moroni's version of Malachi 4:5, he introduces the idea that Elijah's return before the great and dreadful day of the Lord has a priesthood purpose. While careful Christian students could surmise some greater purpose in this visit, since Elijah appeared with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration, all that was known of Elijah's second return before 1836 was that it was a sign that must precede the Messiah's appearance in glory. Moroni says, "I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."<sup>42</sup> He does not say, "I will restore the Priesthood by the hand of Elijah." He says he will "reveal" it. This choice of word strongly suggests that either Elijah or what follows his visit, will explain the purpose of God's priesthood in a way that was then unknown on the earth. It would not be unreasonable to connect this statement with the words of Christ that Joseph had heard three years earlier in the First Vision — "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrine the commandments to men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."<sup>43</sup> The phrasing may even have intended to call the Lord's previous words to the prophet's mind. If this is the proper reading, then in the first two events of the unfolding restoration we have prescient references to latter-day priesthood practice in the temple. Even the best Christian scholars of the nineteenth century had no inkling of any of these perspectives.

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40 JS-H 1:39. See also Doctrine and Covenants 2:3.

41 Malachi 4:6.

42 JS-H 1:38. See also Doctrine and Covenants 2:2.

43 JS-H 1:19.

## Planting the Promises in the Hearts of the Children

In Moroni's version of Malachi 4:6, he talks only about the hearts of the children being turned to the fathers. The reference to the hearts of the *fathers* being turned to their *children* is gone but not forgotten, for as previously mentioned, Malachi's own words are those which were given to the Nephites around AD 34. Why does Moroni omit the reference to the fathers' hearts being turned? It seems that Moroni knew the purpose for which he came to the prophet. For example, Moroni told Joseph that "the time that [the plates] should be obtained had not yet been fulfilled" but that Joseph was to come and meet him at Cumorah in "precisely one year" and that such meetings between them would continue "until the time should come for obtaining the plates."<sup>44</sup> What Moroni knew and Joseph did not was that Joseph would be intimately involved in the revelation of priesthood through Elijah, which would seal the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. But the fullness of Joseph's work lay in the future and was initially to involve work on the children's side of the veil. Moroni was to be Joseph's personal tutor as he prepared to fulfill that role. It is noteworthy that in 1842, when Joseph quoted this same verse of scripture as part of his letter about baptism for the dead (which later became Doctrine and Covenants 128), he preferred Malachi's version, though he said he "might have rendered a plainer translation" of the verse (Doctrine and Covenants 128:17–18).

It is likely that Joseph was not immediately familiar with Malachi 4:1, 5–6, and that he only noticed the differences in Moroni's version of those verses later on when he read and pondered them. That night, however, Moroni had come to teach Joseph by scripture, by commentary, and by repetition. So effective was Moroni's teaching that Joseph appears to have been able to remember many of the words verbatim years later. But there was more than just this emphasis on the children that was different in Moroni's version of Malachi 4:6. He also:

1. spoke of the promises made to the fathers;
2. used the word "plant" to describe the effect of the pre-millennial visit of Elijah; and, as already noted,
3. used markedly more graphic language to describe the fate of the earth at the great and dreadful day of the Lord, if the promises made to the fathers were not planted in the hearts of the children such that their hearts turned to their fathers.

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44 Ibid.1:42, 53.



He said that the earth would not just be cursed, but that it would be “utterly wasted.”

Bearing in mind that the spirit teaches by comparing spiritual things with spiritual<sup>45</sup> and by bringing all things to our remembrance,<sup>46</sup> Moroni knew that Joseph did not need to understand all he taught during that first night of instruction. Though there are those who might ask why Moroni gave Joseph so much information in one lecture, Moroni knew what he was doing. These verses from Malachi were given first for good reason. Moroni focused on the essential core of Joseph’s foreordained responsibility. The work that Joseph was called to do would prepare the earth for the great and dreadful day of the Lord that would usher in the millennium, which was to be his next subject, as evidenced by his choice of Isaiah 11 as his second text.

Moroni’s reference to Acts 3 and Joel 2 deal with the same proximate period in this world’s mortal existence, but the Malachi quotations focused on the work of preparation as the foundation.

For the purposes of this paper, the point is not so much the novelty of the concepts, but that Moroni placed Elijah at the forefront for Joseph from the very beginning. Moroni may not have used the word “keys” to describe how Elijah would minister or what he would restore, but Joseph knew that Elijah’s mission concerned priesthood and that it was very important. We do not know if there were additional connections between these things Moroni said (and perhaps others that Joseph did not record<sup>47</sup>) and the other things Christ had communicated to Joseph during the First Vision.<sup>48</sup> But when we look back on those events with the benefit of hindsight, we can see the Lord’s design in it and we can recognize that Joseph was taught what he needed to know in the Lord’s time-honored way: line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little,<sup>49</sup> with milk before meat.<sup>50</sup>

I will now discuss what Joseph learned about the latter-day mission of Elijah when the Aaronic priesthood was restored.

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45 I Corinthians 2:13.

46 John 14:26.

47 JS-H 1:41.

48 Ibid. 1:20.

49 Isaiah 28:10; Doctrine and Covenants 98:12; 128: 21.

50 I Corinthians 3:2; Hebrews 5:12–14; Doctrine and Covenants 19:22.

### Part III — Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood

There are many places in the Book of Mormon where questions about priesthood keys and the prophecies of Malachi might have come to mind,<sup>51</sup> but the questions that led to the restoration of the Aaronic priesthood, came as Joseph and Oliver were translating the 3 Nephi account of the Savior's visit.<sup>52</sup> Though the Melchizedek priesthood keys are considered the more important, we have virtually no record of what took place or

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51 For example, there are allusions to Malachi's prophecy in 1 Nephi 22:15 where the words "wickedly" and "stubble" appear together in the same verse. But the apparent anachronism is readily explained by the fact that these concepts were not original with Malachi. Isaiah uses them in Isaiah 5:23, 24. A similar reference appears in 2 Nephi 15:24 and, of course, chapters 3 and 4 of Malachi were restored to the Nephites in 3 Nephi 24 and 25 where Joseph Smith translates them exactly as they appear in the King James Bible.

52 Oliver Cowdery, quoted in JS-H 1:71, footnote; from a letter from Oliver Cowdery to William W. Phelps, Sept. 7, 1834, Norton, Ohio, published in *Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1834, p. 15. Joseph and Oliver's questions about baptism apparently came when they translated 3 Nephi 11 where the risen Lord gave the Nephite Twelve authority to baptize. Perhaps this account and the mass baptisms which followed (3 Nephi 19:10–13) seemed strange to Joseph and Oliver since the Nephites had an authorized church and the ordinance of baptism since at least the time of Alma the Elder (Mosiah 18). But Christ was explicit in his explanation of the ordinance of baptism and the authority that was required to perform it in the 3 Nephi account. Those who performed the ordinance would be empowered to do so and it would be done by immersion and with a set prayer so that there would be no more disputation on the subject (3 Nephi 11:21–30). Though our present version of the Book of Mormon discusses the ordinance of baptism in 2 Nephi 31 before both the establishment of a church among the Nephites and Christ's detailed instructions concerning the ordinance during His resurrected ministry, it is likely that the small plates of Nephi including 2 Nephi 31 were not translated until after the translation of Mormon's abridgment of the Large Plates of Nephi (Mosiah to Moroni) was complete. This theory holds that after the 116 pages were lost, the translation continued from Mosiah to Moroni and only later circled back to the Small Plates of Nephi from 1 Nephi to Omni, and then the Words of Mormon. See: Stan Larson, "A Most Sacred Possession?: The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon" (*Ensign*, September 1977), 87–91. There are many other proponents of the "Mosiah First" theory including Matthew Roper, "A More Perfect Priority?," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6 (1): 362–78, <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/review/6/1/S00011-51b10a54017b211Roper.pdf>.

Note that many of the early Latter-day Saints were rebaptized to rededicate themselves and not as a consequence of church discipline (see H. Dean Garrett, "Rebaptism," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 3:1194, <http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Rebaptism>).

of what was said on its restoration.<sup>53</sup> That informational void stands in significant contrast to the visit of John the Baptist. The official version of the restoration of the Aaronic priesthood,<sup>54</sup> on 15 May 1829, says that while laying his hands upon their heads, John said,

Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.<sup>55</sup>

The words of the ordination have significance beyond our standard LDS understanding. While we like to recite examples of modern apostles who enjoyed the ministering of angels while they held only Aaronic priesthood office,<sup>56</sup> we seldom consider why John the Baptist chose to quote Malachi 3:3 in the blessing. It is perhaps even more significant that the only words from Malachi chapter 3 that John the Baptist chose to quote match material that Moroni had quoted over and over again, six years earlier.<sup>57</sup>

The promise that the Aaronic priesthood will remain is both a prophecy that there will be no further general apostasy before the earth's temporal existence is wound up, and a prophecy that ordinances

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53 Referenced only in passing in Doctrine and Covenants 27:12 and Doctrine and Covenants 128:20.

54 The earliest known record of these specific words was made some ten years after the event in the Manuscript History of the Church Book A-1, page 17 and was written some time between 11 June and 3 November 1839 by James Mulholland acting under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith (Robert J. Woodward, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants," PhD thesis, Brigham Young University, Department of Ancient Scripture, 1974, p 236). Oliver Cowdery's account with slightly different wording, was first published some five years earlier in the *Messenger and Advocate*, 1:14-16 (October 1834) and is discussed below.

55 Doctrine and Covenants 13. See also JS-H 1:69. The two references are identical and both come from the Manuscript History of the Church referred to above at n54.

56 References to the ministry of angels to Wilford Woodruff during his first mission as a recently ordained priest in the Aaronic priesthood, are a favourite among Latter-day Saints. For example, *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946), pp. 297-98, as quoted in Aaronic Priesthood Manual 3, Lesson 22: Duties of Priests, <https://www.lds.org/manual/aaronic-priesthood-manual-3/lesson-22-duties-of-priests?lang=eng>.

57 JS-H 1:36.

administered under the authority of the Aaronic priesthood will play a part in preparation for the great and dreadful day of the Lord. There are many commentators who have stated that the reference to a latter-day righteous offering by the sons of Levi is a reference to their offering blood sacrifices in righteousness as part of the restoration of all things.<sup>58</sup> Though Joseph Smith discussed this issue,<sup>59</sup> it appears that he also understood that Levitical priests would minister in temples in the last days as part of the work that Moroni had taught him about from Malachi. Of what then was John the Baptist prophesying when he said that the Aaronic priesthood would remain on the earth until the sons of Levi did offer again, an offering in righteousness? Oliver Cowdery's

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58 See for example, *Doctrines of Salvation, Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, compiled by Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1956), 3: 94.

59 The words below are taken from the Manuscript History of the Church Book C—1, addenda page 18 (referencing page 1104) and were written sometime between 24 February and 3 May 1845 (drawing from Joseph Smith's letters, discourses, diary entries; meeting minutes; church and other periodicals and journals; reminiscences, recollections and letters of church members and other contacts between 2 November 1838 and 31 July 1842) in the handwriting of Thomas Bullock. As the same material also appears in a document entitled "Instruction on Priesthood page 10," attributed to Joseph Smith and written by Robert B. Thompson on 5 October 1840, it would appear that is the date when it was created and from which the Thomas Bullock material compiled between 24 February and 3 May 1845 was drawn. The same material appears in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, edited by Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), 171–173. Note that Joseph Smith does not here say that blood sacrifices will be restored as performed under the Mosaic law at Solomon's Temple. He clarified:

It is not to be understood that the law of Moses will be established again with all its rites and variety of ceremonies; this has never been spoken of by the prophets; but those things which existed prior to Moses' day, namely, sacrifice, will be continued.

It may be asked by some, what necessity for sacrifice, since the Great Sacrifice was offered? In answer to which, if repentance, baptism and faith existed prior to the days of Christ, what necessity for them since that time? (173)

This teaching prefigures modern temple ordinances where the law of sacrifice is administered in symbolic terms under the authority of the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood. For further discussion and sources on the restoration of sacrifice by the sons of Levi mentioned in the restoration of the Aaronic priesthood, see Bradshaw, Jeffrey M. *Creation, In God's Image and Likeness 1: Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve*, updated ed. (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), pp. 609–610.

1834 account of the words recited by John the Baptist on 15 May 1829 is a little different than the later account repeated in both *Doctrine and Covenants* 13 and JS-H 1:69. That difference may be explained by the context of Oliver's account where he was explaining the joy that filled his soul on the occasion of the Baptist's visit, and his further effort to explain what he understood by the words uttered. Or it may be that Oliver's recollection of what John the Baptist said is more accurate because he wrote his account closer in time to the event. Whatever the reason, he recorded the Baptist's words thus:

Upon you my fellow-servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer this Priesthood and this authority, which shall remain upon earth, that the Sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.<sup>60</sup>

Oliver Cowdery's words shed additional light in two ways. First, because he confirms that John did indeed quote the same words from Malachi's prophecy which Moroni had quoted to Joseph in 1823. And second, because there are later references in modern revelation to the forthcoming "offering in righteousness" that would be made by the "Sons of Levi" and which are quoted below. Joseph Smith's accounts of the Baptist's words seem to emphasize the word "until" in the final sentence. Such emphasis draws attention to a time in the future when the Levitical priesthood (and temples) will again be taken from the earth. That is not the only possible reading, though it is surely a part of the reason why there has been an expectation of a restoration of blood sacrifices instead of a recognition that the law of sacrifice restored in temple ordinances is the same law of sacrifice that exalted the ancients, including Abraham. When Oliver Cowdery's use of the word "that" to explain what he heard and felt during the joint ordination by John the Baptist as well as Joseph's "until" are read beside the references to the "sons of Levi" in later revelations about that offering, a more complete understanding of the nature of the latter-day offering that Malachi had in mind seems likely. In simple terms, that meaning may be that the priesthood has been restored so that worthy latter-day saints may work in latter-day temples to prevent the whole world being cursed.<sup>61</sup>

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60 JS-H 1:71, footnote.

61 That work is now commenced in every case by a baptism administered under the authority and keys of the Aaronic priesthood restored by John the Baptist on 15 May 1829.

Let us now trace and understand the many times this allusion to Malachi's prophecy has been expressed in modern revelation, particularly through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The other references to Malachi's prophecy which have been included in the Doctrine and Covenants since John the Baptist's visit to restore the Aaronic priesthood are found in section 84:31 (18–34), section 124:39 and section 128:24. These references are set out below and then discussed briefly.

### **Doctrine and Covenants 84:31**

Therefore, as I said concerning the sons of Moses — for the sons of Moses and also the sons of Aaron shall offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord, which house shall be built unto the Lord in this generation, upon the consecrated spot as I have appointed.

### **Doctrine and Covenants 124:39**

Therefore, verily I say unto you, that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments, for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, honor, and endowment of all her municipalities, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name.

### **Doctrine and Covenants 128:24**

Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand; and who can abide the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purge the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present it in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance.

The connection between the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy and temple ordinances and worship is plain. What is it that is done in holy temples by modern "sons of Levi"? It is temple ordinances. That work includes baptisms, confirmations, and ordinations to the priesthood. No other ordinances can be done for the dead until this preparatory work is complete. The work is now most often commenced by the vicarious baptism of worthy Aaronic priesthood holders and young women of corresponding age.<sup>62</sup> The ordinances performed by vicarious latter-day "Levites" create a temple record for each individual, for whom they thereby make salvation and exaltation possible. It is the completed record of temple ordinances performed for the dead that will be the offering deemed worthy of all acceptance<sup>63</sup> when the work is done. This work has been prophetically foreseen and is a representation of all else that is added upon it in by further temple ordinances. For Joseph Smith, the righteous offering that Malachi saw made by worthy, purified Latter-day Saints on behalf of the entire human race was vicarious temple work, symbolized from the very outset by the symbolic purification that is unmistakable in baptism itself. As Elder Maxwell reminded us, paraphrasing Christ, worthy baptism requires the offered sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, the acceptability of which is witnessed by the baptism of fire and with the Holy Ghost.<sup>64</sup>

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62 There have been a number of changes to the practice of baptism for the dead by Latter-day Saints since it began in the 1840s. A summary of these changes is provided in H. David Burton, "Baptism for the Dead: LDS Practice," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, edited by Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:95–96, [http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Baptism\\_for\\_the\\_Dead](http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Baptism_for_the_Dead). Most of the early baptisms were performed by adults on behalf of deceased ancestors, whereas now Latter-day Saints (mostly youth) can also be baptized for other persons unrelated to them, but identified through the name extraction program.

63 Doctrine and Covenants 128:24.

64 3 Nephi 9:20. See also Doctrine and Covenants 20:37. Elder Maxwell's observation was that "real, personal sacrifice never was placing an animal on the altar. Instead, it is a willingness to put the animal in us upon the altar and letting it be consumed! Such is the "sacrifice unto the Lord ... of a broken heart and a contrite spirit," (Doctrine and Covenants 59:8), a prerequisite to taking up the cross, while giving "away all [our] sins" in order to "know God" (Alma 22:18) for the denial of self precedes the full acceptance of Him ("Deny Yourselves of All Ungodliness", general Conference, April 1995, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1995/04/deny-yourselves-of-all-ungodliness?lang=eng>).

## Conclusion

In this paper I have suggested that Joseph Smith was introduced to the sealing doctrine and the essentiality of temple ordinances from the very moment this dispensation opened. Following the Father's introduction of the Son, Joseph asked which church he should join,<sup>65</sup> and Jesus Christ's answer included His statement that the Christianity of the nineteenth century had become corrupted, denying what Christ called "the power of godliness."<sup>66</sup> As the dispensation unfolded, Joseph learned that the power of godliness to which Christ referred is enabled by his atonement and is the power to exalt human beings after they have been saved by his grace.<sup>67</sup>

The angel Moroni became Joseph Smith's personal tutor three years later.<sup>68</sup> During the first twelve hours of their association, Moroni carefully repeated his instructions to Joseph four times to help him remember and emphasize his teachings' importance.<sup>69</sup> Prominent among the scriptural passages that Moroni presented to Joseph was Malachi's prophecy of the soon-to-be fulfilled latter-day mission of Elijah. But Moroni did not simply quote Malachi's words as Joseph could have found them in the family's King James Bible. Moroni altered the words to emphasize the priesthood and sealing purpose of Elijah's mission. Angels would come and burn the earth at the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and those who were not saved by the priesthood power that Elijah would reveal would be left without root or branch — cursed so that they would remain totally disconnected from their ancestors and posterity in eternity.

While it is unlikely that Joseph understood very much of the burden of those instructions when he was seventeen years old, the repetition ensured that he remembered them and the differences between Moroni's explanation and the simple verses which had come down to Gentile America through the King James Bible. Those differences are a part of the context for his questions about family relationships in the world to come. Joseph was given enough information to provoke his curious mind to ask more questions, and when he asked questions with all the faith that he could muster, the heavens were opened and he was given revelation upon revelation.<sup>70</sup>

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65 JS-H 1:18.

66 Ibid. 1:19.

67 Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–22.

68 JS-H 1:27.

69 Ibid. 1:30–47, 49.

70 Doctrine and Covenants 42:61.



That process continued as he translated and brought forth the Book of Mormon. Why did the Nephites all need to be baptized again when Christ ministered personally among them after his resurrection?<sup>71</sup> Had not Alma<sub>1</sub> established a church with priesthood authority from God? While Joseph did not record the exact questions he and Oliver offered on 15 May 1829, they have both separately recorded accounts of the vision that answered their prayer.<sup>72</sup> John the Baptist appeared, conferred upon them the Priesthood of Aaron, and told them that it would remain on the earth until the sons of Levi had offered their offering in righteousness — the same offering that Joseph could have recognized from Moroni's scriptural quotations from six years earlier.

While it is true that Joseph Smith did not record his understanding of the theology of sealing and family relationships in the world to come in a scholarly treatise, we do have more from his own words than Doctrine and Covenants Section 132. For, as he wrote himself in Doctrine and Covenants 128, obtaining the powers of the priesthood so that family relationships could be bound in heaven, was the “*summum bonum* of the whole subject matter.”<sup>73</sup> Restoring the sealing power was the burden of his entire prophetic ministry.

[**Editor's note:** The author wishes to acknowledge and appreciate the considerable editorial and other assistance provided by Gregory L. Smith and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, which have improved this paper. The author notes, however, that any errors that remain are his own.]

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71 See above n52.

72 For Joseph's account see JS-H 1:68–72. For Oliver's account see JS-H 1: 71, footnote.

73 Doctrine and Covenants 128:10, 11.



# **“THERE’S THE BOY I CAN TRUST”: DENNISON LOTT HARRIS’ FIRST-PERSON ACCOUNT OF THE CONSPIRACY OF NAUVOO AND EVENTS SURROUNDING JOSEPH SMITH’S “LAST CHARGE” TO THE TWELVE APOSTLES**

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**Jeffrey M. Bradshaw**

*Abstract: A well-known account from early Church history describes how, in the spring of 1844, two young men, Dennison Lott Harris and Robert Scott, helped protect Joseph Smith from dissidents plotting against his life. Almost completely unknown, however, is Dennison’s account of his subsequent role as a firsthand witness to events that appear to have taken place on the morning of 26 March 1844, just prior to the meeting in which Joseph Smith gave his “Last Charge” to the Quorum of the Twelve and “roll[ed] the kingdom off [his] shoulders” onto theirs in the presence of the Council of Fifty. This article provides the background necessary to understand all these events and publishes for the first time a complete, annotated transcript of Dennison’s 1881 verbal statement to First Presidency counselor Joseph F. Smith. In addition, the article includes a discussion of the significance of apostolic succession then and now, drawing in part on the encounters of Catholic scholars John M. Reiner and Stephen H. Webb with Mormonism. In the Appendix, I reproduce an 1884 article from The Contributor that gives a secondhand version of Dennison’s account of the conspiracy of Nauvoo.*

For those who embrace the claims of the Restoration, there is no more significant event in the months immediately preceding the martyrdom of Joseph Smith than what occurred on 26 March 1844, when the Prophet announced to a gathering of trusted brethren that he had conferred all the keys and powers that he held on selected members of the Twelve, assuring continuity in the leadership of the Church after his impending death. We possess several firsthand accounts of the meeting where this took place.<sup>1</sup> However, because none of them were written until several months afterward,<sup>2</sup> and since all of them were recorded by

parties with potential self-interest due to their roles as participants, some have expressed frustration and doubt as to whether or not the incidents really happened as they have been reported. For example, a member of an online discussion group wrote the following:<sup>3</sup>

I hope I don't come across as argumentative, but I am hoping we have something other than the later recollections of those who had an incentive to remember a secret meeting where Joseph gave them, rather than their competitors to church leadership, special authority. It seems rather convenient to me that these recollections occur as their authority to lead the church is challenged. Nobody can remember a date? Nobody can provide meeting minutes, despite the fact that meetings minutes were religiously kept in other circumstances? I mean, we have loads of minutes from the Nauvoo High Council, the Council of Fifty, Relief Society, sealings, second anointings, endowments, etc., but nothing at all from the time when Joseph provided the element necessary for the work to continue after he died? If there is nothing we know of, then I suppose I have to live with that fact. I wanted to see if anyone else knew of something I had missed. Apparently not.

Actually, there is an account of these events that addresses some of these concerns. A young man named Dennison Lott Harris appears to have been a firsthand witness of the preliminaries to the Council of Fifty meeting where Joseph Smith gave his "Last Charge" to the Quorum of the Twelve, stating that he had "roll[ed] the kingdom off [his] shoulders"<sup>4</sup> onto theirs. Although other contemporaries testified of having heard the Prophet repeat similar words on other occasions,<sup>5</sup> Dennison Lott Harris is currently the only outside observer who claims to have heard Joseph Smith speak of the event on the very morning it occurred, seemingly just prior to the "Last Charge" meeting itself. Although Dennison's account was not recorded until decades after the events he reports took place, I find his description both a good fit to known circumstances and not implausible with respect to aspects of the situation for which we have no other informants. Speaking of the portion of Dennison's account that tells of the conspiracy of Nauvoo, Brian C. Hales concludes:<sup>6</sup>

As a historical document, it has been largely dismissed because it came late ... and because it contained information that was not verified by corroborative sources. Notwithstanding this general reaction, my research indicates that its reliability may be greater than previously assumed.

Following a brief overview of the statement and its significance, I will discuss its historical background and provenance. I will describe some of the difficulties with the statement. Then I will provide a conjectural timeline of events, followed by an annotated transcript of the original 1881 statement. The article continues with reflections on the significance of apostolic succession in the restored Church, with a focus on the encounters of Catholic scholars John M. Reiner and Stephen H. Webb with Mormonism. In Appendices 1 and 2, I reproduce an 1884 article that gives a secondhand account of Dennison's story about the conspiracy of Nauvoo and a statement by its author.<sup>7</sup> Appendix 3 provides a perspective on the 1884 apostasy of William Law.

### **Overview and Significance of the Statement**

Dennison Lott Harris, 1825–1885, son of Emer and Deborah (Lott) Harris and nephew of Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris, gathered with his parents to Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. He was nineteen years old in March 1844, when the events in Nauvoo recounted in his statement seem to have taken place. Harris came west with the Saints to Utah in 1852, served a mission to the Navajo in 1854, participated in the Echo Canyon campaign of the 1857–58 Utah War, and brought provisions to the handcart companies on three different occasions. After a time living in Virgin City and Paragonah, he moved to Monroe. At the age of fifty-two, he was set apart as the bishop in Monroe and served until his death in 1885.<sup>8</sup>

Dennison's statement begins by telling of how he, along with his friend Robert Scott, was asked by the Prophet to attend and report the proceedings of a series of meetings in which disaffected members of the Church proclaimed Joseph Smith as a fallen prophet and were plotting to take his life. Afterward, the Prophet made them promise to say nothing about their role in these events for many years, knowing that any disclosure might endanger their lives. However, in 1881, Dennison arranged for President Joseph F. Smith to hear his story as secretary to the First Presidency. George F. Gibbs took it down in shorthand. Although the original statement he made about the "conspiracy of Nauvoo" has never before been published in its entirety, various versions of the story of his heroic role in defending the life of Joseph Smith have circulated publicly since 1884.<sup>9</sup>

What seems to have been forgotten, so far as I have been able to determine, is Dennison's account of a second incident that appears to have taken place later in the same month.<sup>10</sup> Dennison tells of how one morning, as he passed Joseph Smith's Red Brick Store in a wagon, he was asked by

Elder Willard Richards to assist him in filling “barrels and buckets” of water and hauling them to the second floor of the store for use in giving the apostles “their endowments.”<sup>11</sup> After they had finished, Dennison remembered the Prophet declaring, in words reminiscent of later written testimonies of some of the Twelve: “This day I am going to roll this kingdom off my shoulders on to the shoulders of these my brethren [i.e., selected members of the Quorum of the Twelve who were present at the time], for them to preach the Gospel and gather Israel and build up the Kingdom upon the foundation which I have laid.”<sup>12</sup>

If taken at face value, the incidents that Dennison describes seem to have occurred as part of a prologue to the meeting where Joseph Smith delivered his “Last Charge”<sup>13</sup> to nine members of the Twelve in the presence of other brethren who had gathered at his invitation. More specifically, most scholars now accept that the “Last Charge” was given on 26 March 1844 at the morning session<sup>14</sup> of a meeting of the Council of Fifty, an organization that Joseph Smith had recently formed by divine commandment “to establish the political kingdom of God on the earth.”<sup>15</sup> Leonard Arrington summarizes the key moments of the “Last Charge” as follows:<sup>16</sup>

As if he had a foreboding of his impending death, Smith ... gave them a dramatic charge to “bear off the Kingdom.” As they later recounted the moving experience, the Prophet seemed depressed and opened his heart about his “presentiments of the future.” He explained that “some important scene is near to take place,” that perhaps he would be killed, and that as a precaution ... the Twelve [had received]<sup>17</sup> all other keys and powers that he held. Then, if God wills, “I can go with all pleasure and satisfaction, knowing that my work is done, and the foundation laid on which the kingdom of God is to be reared. ...” He counseled them about what lay ahead, then continued,<sup>18</sup>

saying, while he walked the floor and threw back the collar of his coat upon his shoulders, “I roll the burthen and responsibility of leading this Church off from my shoulders on to yours. Now, round up your shoulders and stand under it like men; for the Lord is going to let me rest a while.”... After he had thus spoken, he continued to walk the floor, saying: “Since I have rolled the burthen off from my shoulders I feel as light as a cork. I feel that I am free. I thank my God for this deliverance.

## Historical Background and Provenance of the Statement



**Figure 1.** Those known to have been present at the recording of Harris' verbal statement: Dennison Lott Harris (1825–1885)<sup>19</sup>; Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918)<sup>20</sup>; Carl Christian Nikolai Dorius (1830–1894)<sup>21</sup>; Franklin Spencer (1836–1915)<sup>22</sup>; George F. Gibbs (1846–1924)<sup>23</sup>

**Circumstances in which the statement was made.** Immediately prior to the morning session of the Ephraim Utah Stake Conference on Sunday, 15 May 1881, Dennison Lott Harris, Bishop of the Monroe, Utah Ward, approached First Presidency counselor Joseph F. Smith with a request. For nearly four decades Bishop Harris had held in confidence information about his role as a nineteen-year-old boy in two important incidents that had taken place in the spring of 1844 in Nauvoo. At last, he felt it was time to relate these stories to President Smith so they could be preserved permanently as part of the history of the Church.

Accordingly, after the morning meeting, Bishop Harris accompanied President Smith, Elder Franklin Spencer, and secretary to the First Presidency George F. Gibbs to the home of Ephraim South Ward Bishop Carl C. N. Dorius. Over a meal between conference sessions, Bishop Harris related his stories while Brother Gibbs took notes in Pittman shorthand. Expressing subdued frustration at the constrained circumstances under which he was obliged to do his work, Gibbs commented: "As the afternoon meeting had been announced to commence half an hour earlier than usual (so as to give Prest. Taylor and party an opportunity to make Moroni and Fountain Green that evening on their [way] home) the time at our disposal to hear Bro. H. also to eat dinner was not sufficient to enable him to do justice to it. He told it in his own way and had to hurry at that."<sup>24</sup> No doubt the typescript was made after Gibbs returned to his office in Salt Lake City.

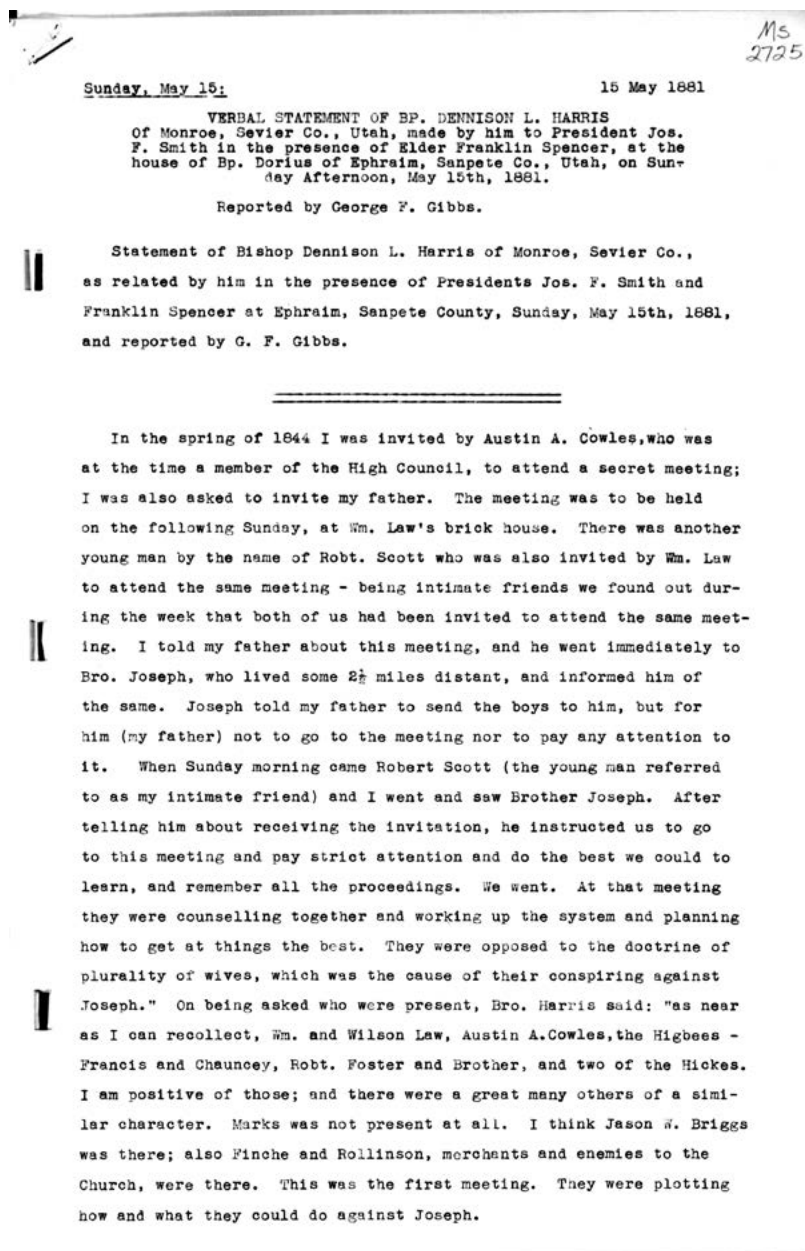


Figure 2. First Page of the Harris Verbal Statement

**Description of the document.** The only extant version of the verbal statement exists as an eight-page typescript original preserved at the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.<sup>25</sup> The document was



formally reviewed and cleared for release in January 2015, and on 29 March 2016, I received written confirmation that the document was out of copyright and could be used without restriction.<sup>26</sup>

On 23 March 2010, I was kindly assisted by Jay Burrup of the Church History Library, who had previously catalogued the Joseph F. Smith papers, in an effort to locate a manuscript behind the typescript.<sup>27</sup> After a preliminary search, I found an affidavit from a church member regarding early incidents in church history that, like the Dennison Harris statement, had been recorded by George F. Gibbs in 1881.<sup>28</sup> The affidavit was in the form of a longhand manuscript in the handwriting of Gibbs, giving us hope that a similar manuscript might exist for the Harris statement. However, after completing a more complete search for an original manuscript, Burrup wrote me to say that he "had no luck in finding the document in the Joseph F. Smith papers."<sup>29</sup> In light of our lack of success, Burrup mentioned the likelihood that Gibbs typed the Harris statement directly from his shorthand notes and then disposed of them immediately afterward.

**Related accounts.** In a statement made on 8 August 1932, Horace Cummings, the author of the better-known 1884 *Contributor* version of Harris' story, said that the genesis of his article was when he personally heard Dennison Lott Harris relate the story of the conspiracy of Nauvoo to his parents "during the spring conference of 1883." He also stated:<sup>30</sup>

Before submitting the article to the press, ... at the request of President John Taylor, I read it to him line by line as he was in Nauvoo at the time the narration deals with and the incident happened and of course was with the Prophet at the time he was killed. He was familiar with many of the things to which the article refers and added certain elements to the story. When completed, President Taylor gave it his hearty approval for publication as a valuable document concerning Church history which had never been previously published.

Within the annotations for the transcript of the Harris statement given later in the present article, I include a few minor details that appear in the *Contributor* article that are not part of the 1881 narration.<sup>31</sup> Significantly, however, although the 1884 article by Cummings was said to have been derived from an independent telling of the story, it matches the 1881 account closely in structure, and in some places the wording is nearly identical. Tellingly, the misspellings of two of the names of the conspirators given in the 1884 article match the 1881 account precisely.

If Horace Cummings had no access to the 1881 account when he wrote his 1884 article, we must suppose that Harris remembered and repeated significant portions of the account nearly verbatim in each instance, and that the substance was captured exactly in the separate notes of Gibbs and Cummings. However, it seems unlikely that Cummings would have been able to capture Harris' words in longhand with the same precision and detail that Gibbs captured them in shorthand. In addition, while I see no reason to question Cummings' statement that he read the article to President John Taylor, I am doubtful about his claim that "certain elements" were added to the account as a result. In comparing the 1881 and 1884 accounts, I saw no instance where details about the events not mentioned in the 1881 statement might have been known independently by President Taylor and contributed to the 1884 article.

Cummings asserts that sometime prior to 1877 another version of Dennison's account was told to Brigham Young and recorded by George F. Gibbs, at that time acting secretary to the First Presidency.<sup>32</sup>

The first time that it [i.e., Harris' story of the conspiracy] was revealed was at the dedication of the St. George Temple, when Brother Harris revealed it to President Brigham Young, whereupon President Young called in Brother Gibbs who took the narration in shorthand for church record purposes.

Cummings' assertion that Dennison related the story to Brigham Young "at the dedication of the St. George Temple" resembles an undocumented Harris tradition that was published in 1983 by a family biographer:<sup>33</sup>

The year before Brigham Young died, Den invited him to stay at the Harris family home in Monroe while enroute to St. George. Den then related the foregoing story. President Young said it cleared up many otherwise unanswered questions concerning the plots against the Prophet.

The fact that no other record made by George F. Gibbs of Dennison's account has been found other than the one recorded in Ephraim in 1881 raises a question as to whether or not Cummings may have conflated two different events or perhaps was mistaken altogether about a meeting having taken place between Harris and Brigham Young. In the records relating to the 1881 and 1884 accounts, there is no evidence to suggest that either President John Taylor, President Joseph F. Smith, or George F. Gibbs were aware of an earlier version of the story when they heard it in 1881 or 1883.

### Difficulties with the Statement

**Dating of the events described by Harris.** Harris states that the events relating to the conspiracy meetings occurred "in the spring of 1844."<sup>34</sup> If we accept his recollection that the meetings of the conspirators took place on three successive Sundays at face value, and if we assume that the last of the three meetings took place one week prior to Joseph Smith's public disclosure of the conspiracy on the temple stand on 24 March, we arrive at the conjectural timeline that follows in the next section. This timeline also accords with Harris' remembrance of an encounter with Joseph Smith and the Twelve at the Red Brick Store happened "two or three weeks" or "a few months" after the conspiracy meetings.

Unfortunately, William Law, who seems to be the only diarist among the conspirators, has a gap in his 1844 journal for the presumed dates of the conspiracy meetings. The last entry prior to the lacuna is 13 January, five days after Law heard from Joseph Smith that he had been released as counselor in the First Presidency. Entries in the journal resume on 29 March, five days after Law had been publicly named by Joseph Smith as one of the group who had conspired against his life.<sup>35</sup>

Another possibility for dating the meeting assumes that Dennison was mistaken about the order of events, and that the first conspiracy meeting he attended took place in April, following his encounter with Joseph Smith and the Twelve at the Red Brick Store on 26 March. William Law was excommunicated on 18 April and records in his 21 June 1844 diary entry that: "Since our Conference April 21<sup>st</sup> we have held public meetings every sabbath day."<sup>36</sup> The *Warsaw Signal* reported that on 12 May 1844 "there were about three hundred assembled at Mr. Law's house in Nauvoo,"<sup>37</sup> roughly matching Dennison's statement that for the third meeting they attended in the home of William Law, the crowd numbered "in the neighborhood of 200 persons."<sup>38</sup>

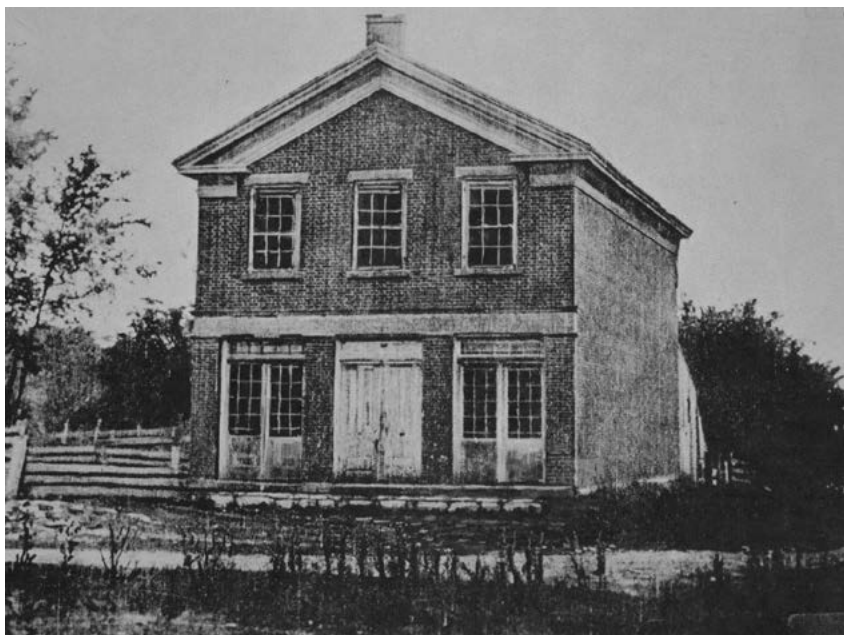
Mitigating against the likelihood that the meetings Harris described occurred in April, however, is not only that such a timeline contradicts the sequence of events in the Harris statement, but also that the meetings from 21 April onward were described as being "public" (per William Law). This stands in contrast both to Harris' descriptions of the closely guarded meetings he attended, and also to a separate description of a "secret" meeting to be held in March (per Joseph Jackson).<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the primary concerns of the April meetings seem to have been plans for the publication of the *Nauvoo Expositor* and reform — the organization of a new church, with William Law at its head.<sup>40</sup> In his report, Harris describes no such agenda. Instead, his statement focuses on efforts to stir up additional support to help

carry out with immediacy the murderous intentions that were fomented by individuals enraged at Joseph Smith and his teachings. A conspiracy of this sort, forged in secret meetings, is not only reported by Harris, but also in two separate affidavits, made in late March by men loyal to the Prophet and exposed to the public by Joseph Smith on the 24<sup>th</sup> of the same month. That the series of sabbath meetings at the Law home that began on 21 April paralleled those described by Harris with regard to timing, location, and estimated number of attendees might simply imply that the *public* meetings that began on 21 April resumed the same pattern that had been established previously for a series of *secret* meetings held in March.

With respect to the timing of the events reported as having taken place at the Red Brick Store, Dennison seems confident that they occurred *after* the conspiracy meetings. The imprecision in his description (“a few months after the thing I have related – perhaps it was two or three weeks, I do not now remember, I did not rivet dates on my mind”<sup>41</sup>) is not surprising, given the passage of time and the fact that exact dates are more easily forgotten than other, more salient details of personal events. If we can trust Dennison’s recollection of the Prophet’s words (“*This day* I am going to roll this kingdom off my shoulders...”<sup>42</sup>), he would seem to have been speaking on 26 March 1844, consistent with scholarly consensus on the dating of the “Last Charge” meeting.<sup>43</sup> Based on that assumption — and because it is known that the meeting started at 9:00 AM that morning<sup>44</sup> — the encounter with Dennison would have had to have taken place prior to that time. The need for some specific instruction to the Twelve prior to the morning session with the entire Council does not seem implausible. Moreover, it would have been prudent for the attendees of such a confidential meeting to stagger their arrivals so as not to attract undue attention.

Although the possibility that Joseph Smith’s statement to Harris about his delegation of responsibility to the Twelve occurred sometime after 26 March 1844 cannot be ruled out, it seems unlikely to me that Dennison would have misremembered the gist of the Prophet’s implication that his charge to the Twelve was imminent, rather than retrospective.

**Performing an endowment on the same day as the “Last Charge” meeting.** Dennison Harris understood that the barrels of water he helped gather and raise to the upper story of the Red Brick Store were needed because “Brother Joseph wanted to give them (the Twelve) their endowments.”<sup>45</sup> That the Prophet had requested James H. Rollins to help bring water to the upper floor of the Red Brick Store for endowments on at least one other occasion lends credence to the kind of situation described in the Harris account.<sup>46</sup> However, Dennison’s understanding that the endowments were to be given to the Twelve is a puzzle because



**Figure 3.** *Joseph Smith's Red Brick Store*, photograph attributed to Elder Brigham H. Roberts, ca. 1886<sup>47</sup>

all the apostles who were or could have been present for the “Last Charge” meeting had already been endowed, and all except Amasa Lyman also had been sealed to their wives and had received the fulness of the priesthood.<sup>48</sup> Although one might argue that the endowment might have been (re)done for the sake of the Twelve at an additional time for symbolic or instructional purposes, on this occasion it would seem not only “uncalled for” and “unnecessary,” but also “inappropriate.”<sup>49</sup> Moreover, since it is known that during the morning session of the Council of Fifty meeting on 26 March there was “no discussion of or exercise of priesthood keys, no ordinations, no ordinances, no discussion of temple teachings or other church doctrine,”<sup>50</sup> any such ordinances would have had to have been performed at an unseasonably early hour (inconsistent with other endowment sessions, which were performed in the afternoon) so they could be completed and the upper floor could be set up for the 9:00 AM Council meeting.

In light of these considerations, it seems possible that in his account, Harris inadvertently conflated two events — his encounter with Joseph and the Twelve at the Red Brick store on 26 March “two or three weeks”<sup>51</sup> after the conspiracy meetings and another occasion when some of the Twelve were called upon to assist in giving the endowments to other brethren later that spring (“a few months after”<sup>52</sup>). Confirming the plausibility of a

timeframe in the later spring for such an event, James H. Rollins related an experience where he was asked to bring water to the upper story of the Red Brick Store for use in giving endowments to “some of the brethren.”<sup>53</sup> He said that this took place “a few days” before another event that occurred “about the first of May” 1844.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, it is known that John P. Greene and Sidney Rigdon received their endowments on 11 May 1844<sup>55</sup>; that Almon W. Babbitt and William B. Smith received theirs on 12 May 1844<sup>56</sup>; and that Lyman Wight received his on 14 May 1844.<sup>57</sup> These endowments, all given prior to Brigham Young’s departure from Nauvoo on 21 May 1844,<sup>58</sup> would fit Harris’ recollection of an event that would have taken place “a few months after”<sup>59</sup> the meetings of the conspiracy in March. And a date of either the 12 or 14 May would be consistent with his remembrance that the Prophet was intending to give endowments to “the Twelve” (i.e., either to William B. Smith or Lyman Wight).

### **Conjectural Timeline of Events**

#### **Sometime Before 3 March<sup>60</sup>**

Sometime before 3 March 1844, Austin A. Cowles, a neighbor,<sup>61</sup> may have invited Dennison Lott Harris and his father, Emer, to a meeting of conspirators that was to be held on the following Sunday at William Law’s brick house. Dennison learned that Robert Scott, who had been reared by William Law,<sup>62</sup> had also been invited to the meeting. Emer went to the Prophet and was told that he should not attend the meeting himself but that he should send the boys to him to receive instructions.

#### **Sunday, 3 March<sup>63</sup>**

In harmony with the guidance received in the morning from Joseph Smith, Robert Scott and Dennison Harris may have attended a meeting of the conspirators on this date and learned of their murderous intentions against the Prophet.

#### **Sunday, 10 March<sup>64</sup>**

On this date, Harris and Scott may have attended their second meeting and then reported to Joseph Smith. The Prophet told them that they should attend a third time.

#### **Monday, 11 March<sup>65</sup>**

Joseph Smith presided at the first organizational meeting for the Council of Fifty. The members were strictly enjoined to keep the existence and proceedings of the meetings of the Council confidential.



**Figure 4.** *Harris and Scott Are Confronted by the Conspirators*<sup>66</sup>

### **Wednesday, 13 March**<sup>67</sup>

Joseph Smith met with the Council of Fifty.

### **Thursday, 14 March**<sup>68</sup>

Joseph Smith met with the Council of Fifty.

### **Friday or Saturday, 15 or 16 March**<sup>69</sup>

Abiathar B. Williams (1806–1875)<sup>70</sup> and Merinus G. Eaton (1812–??)<sup>71</sup> were approached by Joseph H. Jackson, Robert D. Foster, and Chauncey L. Higbee with accusations against Joseph Smith. These included the insinuation that the Prophet had tried to seduce Foster's wife.<sup>72</sup> Williams and Eaton were strongly urged to join a "secret meeting, ... probably tomorrow evening; but, as it was not decided, he could not say positively as to the time."<sup>73</sup>

### **Sunday, 17 March**<sup>74</sup>

In the morning of 17 March, Harris and Scott may have gone to see Joseph Smith as they had been instructed. The Prophet told them this, their third meeting, would be their last and that the conspirators would "come to some determination," but that they should not join or speak in

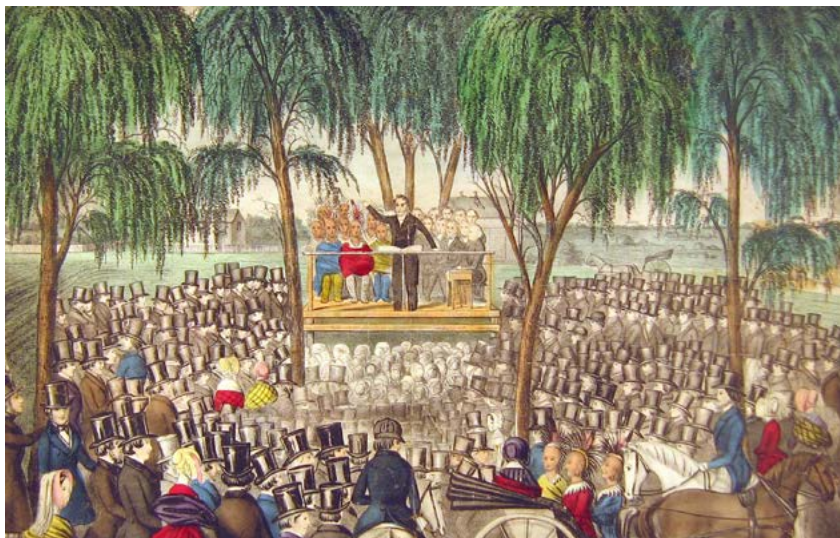
support of the conspiracy. After a dangerous escape from the meeting, Harris and Scott met with Joseph Smith and John Scott, Robert's brother and a bodyguard to the Prophet. Harris said that after "considerable conversation," "Joseph put a seal upon our mouths, and told us to tell nobody not even our fathers for 20 years."

### **Tuesday, 19 March<sup>75</sup>**

Joseph Smith met with the Council of Fifty.

### **Saturday, 23 March<sup>76</sup>**

In order to counter the accusations against the Prophet that Robert D. Foster had made in the presence of Williams and Eaton on 15 or 16 March,<sup>77</sup> Joseph Smith rode with William Clayton and Alexander Neibaur to secure a statement from Foster's wife.<sup>78</sup> Joseph Smith's journal mentions that he "spent the day in counselling,"<sup>79</sup> i.e., in a meeting with Foster's wife. Though some have proposed that the "Last Charge" occurred on this day, there could have been no meeting held that involved Willard Richards or Wilford Woodruff, who spent their day otherwise engaged, apart from the Prophet.<sup>80</sup>



**Figure 5.** George Lloyd, 1817-??: *Joseph Smith Preaches from the Stand at General Conference, April 6, 1844*<sup>81</sup>

### **Sunday, 24 March<sup>82</sup>**

Joseph Smith preached at 10 AM. His journal records: "on the stand I related what was told me yesterday by Mr [Merinus G.] Eaton. That Wm.



Law. Wilson Law. R[obert] D. Foster. Chaunc[e]y L. Higbee. & Joseph [H.] Jackson had held a caucus, design[n]ing to destroy all the Smith family in a few weeks.”<sup>83</sup> No doubt out of concern for the safety of Harris and Scott, Joseph Smith did not mention them as additional informants.



**Figure 6.** Roland L. Lee, 1949-: *Joseph Smith's Red Brick Store*, 2008<sup>84</sup>

## **Tuesday, 26 March**<sup>85</sup>

If the Harris statement can be trusted in this regard, Joseph Smith stood on the porch with the Twelve gathered around him sometime before 9:00 AM on this date<sup>86</sup> and declared to Dennison: “This day I am going to roll this kingdom off my shoulders on to the shoulders of these my brethren [i.e., selected members of the Quorum of the Twelve who were present at the time].”<sup>87</sup>

Dennison’s remembrance seems to anticipate events that took place sometime between 9:00 AM and 12:00 PM on the morning of 26 March when the Prophet gave the “Last Charge” to nine members of the Quorum of the Twelve in the presence of members of the Council of Fifty.<sup>89</sup> On 19 March 1897, President Wilford Woodruff summarized his recollection of this event as follows:<sup>90</sup>



**Figure 7.** William Warner Major, 1804-1854: *Joseph Smith and His Friends*, 1843-1844. Left to right: Hyrum Smith, Willard Richards, Joseph Smith, Orson Pratt, Parley Parker Pratt, Orson Hyde, Heber Chase Kimball, and Brigham Young<sup>87</sup>

I bear my testimony that in the early spring of 1844 in Nauvoo, the Prophet Joseph Smith called the Twelve Apostles together and he delivered unto them the ordinances of the Church and the Kingdom of God; and all the keys and powers that God had bestowed upon him he sealed upon our heads. He told us that we must round up our shoulders and bear off this kingdom or we would be damned. ... At that meeting, he began a speech of about three hours upon the subject of the Kingdom. His face was as clear as amber, and he was covered with a power that I have never seen in an instant in the flesh before.

It should be noted that Wilford Woodruff's statement telescopes events that occurred over an extended period of time as if they all happened on 26 March 1844. All the ordinances, keys, and powers mentioned had already been given to the apostles prior to that date.

### **Wednesday, 27 March<sup>91</sup>**

Merinus G. Eaton and Abiathar B. Williams made affidavits before Daniel H. Wells about the statements Joseph H. Jackson, Robert D. Foster, and Chauncey L. Higbee made to them on 15 or 16 March.

### Thursday, 18 April<sup>92</sup>

On the evening of this day, a council was held where Robert D. Foster, Wilson Law, William Law, Jane Law, and Howard Smith were excommunicated from the Church. Suspecting their own lives were threatened, Foster and Higbee swore they would "shoot the Mayor" (Joseph Smith).<sup>93</sup>

### Sundays, 21, 28 April; 5 May<sup>94</sup>

In a renewed effort to oppose the Prophet, William Law began holding public meetings in his home each Sunday, beginning 21 April. On 28 April he became president of a new, short-lived church. If the conspiracy meetings attended by Harris did not occur in March, the three successive Sunday of 21 and 28 April and 5 May might provide a second option for dating. From his careful study of the matter, Andrew Ehat concludes William Law's antagonism to the Prophet would have reached its zenith about this time.



**Figure 8.** David Hyrum Smith, 1844-1904: *Bend in the River*, 1868 (detail). The back of the Red Brick Store can be seen slightly to the left of center, above the unfinished foundation of the Nauvoo House<sup>95</sup>

### Saturday, Sunday, and Tuesday, 11, 12, and 14 May<sup>96</sup>

Dennison described how, subsequent to the conspiracy meetings, he drove his wagon, at the request of Elder Willard Richards, down to the river to fill barrels and buckets of water and haul them to the upper story of the Red Brick Store for use in giving endowments. Joseph Smith's journal records that endowments were given to five of the brethren on these dates, including two apostles.

## Verbal Statement of Dennison Lott Harris with Annotations

Sunday, May 15:

15 May 1881

VERBAL STATEMENT<sup>97</sup> OF BP. DENNISON L. HARRIS

Of Monroe, Sevier Co., Utah, made by him to President Jos.

F. Smith<sup>98</sup> in the presence of Elder Franklin Spencer,<sup>99</sup> at the house of

Bp. Dorius<sup>100</sup> of Ephraim, Sanpete Co., Utah, on Sunday Afternoon, May 15th, 1881.

Reported by George F. Gibbs.<sup>101</sup>

Statement of Bishop Dennison L. Harris of Monroe, Sevier Co., as related by him in the presence of Presidents Jos. F. Smith and Franklin Spencer at Ephraim, Sanpete County, Sunday, May 15th, 1881, and reported by G. F. Gibbs.

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In the spring of 1844 I was invited by Austin A. Cowles,<sup>102</sup> who was at the time a member of the High Council, to attend a secret meeting; I was also asked to invite my father.<sup>103</sup> The meeting was to be held on the following Sunday, at Wm. Law's<sup>104</sup> brick house. There was another young man by the name of Robt. Scott<sup>105</sup> who was also invited by Wm. Law to attend the same meeting — being intimate friends we found out during the week that both of us had been invited to attend the same meeting.<sup>106</sup> I told my father about this meeting, and he went immediately to Bro. Joseph, who lived some 2½ miles distant, and informed him of the same. Joseph told my father to send the boys to him, but for him (my father) not to go to the meeting nor to pay any attention to it. When Sunday morning came Robert Scott (the young man referred to as my intimate friend) and I went and saw Brother Joseph. After telling him about receiving the invitation, he instructed us to go to this meeting and pay strict attention and do the best we could to learn, and remember all the proceedings. We went. At that meeting they were counselling together and working up the system and planning how to get at things the best. They were opposed to the doctrine of plurality of wives,<sup>107</sup> which was the cause of their conspiring against Joseph.” On being asked who were present, Bro. Harris said:<sup>108</sup> “as near as I can recollect, Wm. and Wilson Law, Austin A. Cowles, the Higbees — Francis and Chauncey,<sup>109</sup> Robt. Foster<sup>110</sup> and Brother,<sup>111</sup> and two of the Hikes [Hicks].<sup>112</sup> I am positive of those; and there were a great many others of a similar character. Marks<sup>113</sup> was not present at all. I think Jason W. Briggs<sup>114</sup> was there; also Finche [Finch]<sup>115</sup> and Rollinson [Rollosson],<sup>116</sup> merchants and enemies to the Church, were there. This was the first meeting. They were plotting how and what they could do against Joseph.

-2-Verbal Statement of Bp. Dennison L. Harris, cont'd: 15 May 1881

The next Sunday, we attended again, having received an invitation to come back. And when they told us to come again on the next Sabbath they told us to keep quiet what had passed at the meeting, and to say nothing to our fathers, or anybody else. We reported to Joseph the proceedings as far as they went. Joseph said: 'Boys, come and see me next Sunday morning, and go on to the meeting. We did so. They went on with their arrangements, and agreed to make further arrangements during the week. They worked this up considerably that Sunday, and still gave us an invitation to attend the following week. Joseph told us to go again, this being the third Sunday, and was desirous that we should see and learn all that took place this day, for, said he, 'this will be your last meeting, this will be the last time they will admit you into their council, and they will come to some determination; but be sure, he continued, that you make no covenants nor enter into any obligation whatever with that party: be strickly reserve [strictly reserved], and make no promise either to conspire against me or any portion of the community: be silent and do not take any part in their deliberations. That day we were received and welcomed by Wm. Law and Austin Cowles. We passed up the alley; on each side there were men with guns and bayonets on them; and when we got to the door there were men on guard armed in the same way. Before we went to this meeting Brother Joseph said to us: Boys, this day will be their last meeting, and they may shed your blood, but I hardly think they will as you are so young, but they may. If they do I will be a lion in their path. Don't flinch, if you have to die, die like men, you will be martyrs to the cause, and your crown can be no greater. But, said he, again, I hardly think they will shed your blood.

We went, as I have said, to the house of meeting and passed the guards. There was a great deal of counselling going on with each other. And every little while Austin Cowles would come and sit by my side and put his arm around my neck to ascertain how I felt with regard to their proceedings; and at the same time Wm. Law would do the same thing with Robert Scott. They talked about Joseph denouncing him and accusing him. We told them that we did not know anything against Joseph or about the things they were charging him with, that we were only young men, and therefore had nothing to say. They would then try to convince us by relating things to us against him; but we told them that we knew nothing about them, and did not understand them; that

## -3-Verbal Statement of Bp. Dennison L. Harris, cont'd: 15 May 1881

we had been reared in the Church and had always esteemed Bro. Joseph highly. Robert had been reared by Wm. Law, and I had been a neighbor of Austin Cowles and consequently they esteemed us as friends, and we did them. They continued to persuade us, we being the only ones who did not sympathize with their proceedings; but they failed to convert us.

Finally they went on to administer the oath to those present. Each man was required to come to the table and hold up the Bible in his right hand, when Bro. Higbee<sup>117</sup> would say: Are you ready? When the man being sworn answered yes, he would say: You solemnly swear before God and all holy angels and these your brethren, by whom you are surrounded, that you will give your life, your liberty, your influence, your all for the destruction of Joseph Smith and his party, so help you God'. Each one was sworn in that way, numbering in the neighborhood of 200 persons;<sup>118</sup> and they were all sworn before we were called upon. There were also three women brought in<sup>119</sup> who testified that Joseph Smith and others – Hyrum among them, had tried to seduce them into this spiritual marriage and wanted them for their wives and also wanted to lie with them. They also made oath before this justice; after which they were escorted out of the room, by way of the back door. After all in the room had taken the oath but Robert and me, we were labored with by those two brethren William Law, and Austin Cowles. They sat us together side by side, with Bro. Cowles on one side and Bro. Law on the other. Their arguments were to try to convince us that Joseph was wrong; that he was in transgression, that he was a fallen prophet, and that the Church would be destroyed except action be taken at once against him — a strong one, one that would tell, ect.<sup>120</sup> We told them that we were young, that we were not members of the High Council, and that we knew nothing at all about their charges. They then told us that Joseph had read the revelation on celestial marriage to the High Council and that Joseph had instructed them in this revelation, and that he had tried to make them believe it.<sup>121</sup> After laboring with us in this way with a view of trying to get us to take the oath, we told them we could not do it. They then told us that they were combining and entering into a conspiracy for the protection and salvation of the Church, and that if we refused to take the oath they would have to kill us; they could not they said, let us go out with the information that we had gained, because it would not be safe to do so. And some one spoke up and said, 'Dead men tell no tales.' They gathered around us and after threatening they perceived that we could not be<sup>122</sup>

-4-Verbal statement of Bp. Dennison L. Harris, cont'd: 15 May 1881

that we could not be frightened into it, they again commenced to persuade and advise us in this way: Boys, do as we have done; you are young, you will not have anything to do in this affair, but we want that you should keep it a secret and act with us. We then told them that we positively could not. They then said that if we did not yield to their requirement that they would have to shed our blood; and they went so far as to start us down stairs in charge of two men armed with guns with bayonets, and Wm. and Wilson Law, Austin Cowles and one of the Fosters started down stairs into the cellar, and there they said they would cut our throats if we refused to take the oath. We told them positively that we would have to die then because we could not receive the oath, but that we desired to be turned loose. They said they could not turn us loose with the information that we had received, because it would not be safe to do it. They then walked us off with one man on each side of us armed with sword and bowie knife and two men behind us with loaded guns, cocked, with bayonets on them; we were started to the cellar, but we had not gone more than about 15 feet when some one cried out, 'hold on', let us talk this matter over. We were stopped, when they commenced to counsel among themselves; and I distinctly remember one of them saying, that our fathers knew where we were, and that if we never returned it would at once cause suspicion and lead to trouble. They became very uneasy about it, for if they shed our blood it would be dangerous for them, as it was known where we were. Finally they concluded to let us go if we would keep our mouths shut. We were escorted out and then they hated to let us go; they took us toward the river, and still cautioned us about being silent and keeping secret everything we had seen and heard, for, said they, if we opened our mouths about it, they would kill us anywhere, that they would consider it their duty to kill us when ever or wherever the opportunity afforded either by night or by day. I told them it would be to our interest and to our peace and safety never to mention it to anybody. They said they were glad we could see that, and after warning us in strong terms, and before the guard left us, I saw Brother Joseph's hand from under the bank of the river, he was beckoning us to him.<sup>123</sup> They turned back but were yet watching us and listening to us, and one of us said, Let us go toward the river. The guard made answer and said, Yes, you better go to the river.<sup>124</sup> With this we started [started] off on the run, and we ran past where Bro. Joseph was, and Bro. John Scott<sup>125</sup> was with him; he was one of his body guard. They slipped

-5-Verbal statement of Bp. Dennison L. Harris, cont'd: 15 May 1881

around the bank and came down to the same point where we were; and these men, the guard went back. We all walked down the river quite a piece, nearly a quarter [of a mile<sup>126</sup>], nearly opposite Joseph's store under the bank near Joseph's residence (it was in the afternoon); We got in a little kind of wash, and were inside Joseph's inclosure where the board fence came into the river.<sup>127</sup> Joseph said, Let us sit down here. We sat down. Joseph said, Boys, we saw the danger you were in; we were afraid you would not get out alive, but we are thankful that you got off. He then asked us to relate the results of the meeting. We told him all that had happened. We also told him the names of those who were there. After Joseph heard us he looked very solemn indeed, and he said, O Brethren, you do not know what this will terminate in. He looked very solemn, and not being able to control himself he broke right out. Bro. Scott rose and putting his arms around Bro. Joseph's neck, said, O Brother Joseph, Brother Joseph, do you think they are going to kill you; and they fell on each others neck end wept bitterly for sometime; and we all wept. After Joseph recovered himself, Brother John repeated the same question; Bro. Joseph lifted Bro. John's arms from off his neck and said, I fully comprehend it. But he would not say that he was going to be killed. But he said in the conversation, Brethren, I am going to leave you, I shall not be with you long; it will not be many months until I shall have to go. Bro. John said, Brother Joseph, are you going to be slain. He never answered; but he still felt very sorrowful. After considerable conversation Joseph said that he would go away and would not be known among the people for 20 years or upwards. Finally he said, I shall go to rest; but he did not say a word about dying.

You know Brother Joseph, (here the speaker addressed himself to Bro. Jos. F. Smith) that the Prophet started over the river, just before he gave himself up, to go away;<sup>128</sup> it might be that he intended or meant that he would leave the place, and it might be that he knew that his life would be taken. I could not say as to that.

Before leaving Joseph put a seal upon our mouths, and told us to tell nobody not even our fathers for 20 years. He cautioned us very seriously, and I did as he told me.

There was one thing that Joseph said which I have not related. He said: they accuse me of polygamy, and of being a false prophet and many other things which I do not now remember; but, said he, I am



-6-Verbal statement of Bp. Dennison L. Harris, cont'd: 15 May 1881

no false prophet, I am no impostor; I have had no dark revelations, I have had no revelations from the devil. I have made no revelations; I have not got anything up myself. The same God that has thus far dictated and directed me, and inspired me and strengthened me in this work, gave me this revelation and Commandment on Celestial and Plural marriage; and the same God Commanded me to obey it. He said to me that unless I accept it and introduce it and practise it, I together with my people should be damned and cut off from this time henceforth. And they say if I do so and so they will kill me. What shall I do! What shall I do! If I do not practise it I shall be damned with all my people; if I do teach it and practise it and urge it, they say they will kill me, and I know they will. But said he, we have got to observe it, that it was an eternal principle, and that it was given to him by way of Commandment and not by way of instruction."<sup>129</sup> That is about all.

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Bro. Harris then related the following circumstance in connection with Joseph's giving the Twelve their endowments:

"This little circumstance took place a few months after the thing I have related – perhaps it was two or three weeks, I do not now remember, I did not rivet dates on my mind. I was passing Joseph's brick building which was used for a store,<sup>130</sup> when Bro. Willard Richards came out and beckoned me. As we approached each other he said, Good morning Brother Harris! And shook hands with me. I was on my wagon, and I thought as though he wanted to chat. He walked along, and I drove on, he walking alongside of my wagon. It was an ox team I had but I asked him if he was going my way, and if he would ride. He said, Yes, if you please. He got up and rode. As soon as he was seated in the wagon he said, I have a message for you: Bro. Joseph wanted me to come and see you. As soon as he saw you coming he remarked – There, brethren, we are alright now; the time has come; —

— there is the man I want;<sup>131</sup>

/there's the boy I can depend upon and trust. Brother Richards, will you go and see him and tell him what I want." Then Bro. Richards told me that Brother Joseph had met in that building with most of the Twelve,<sup>132</sup> and they had been waiting for some one that Joseph could depend upon to assist them. He then told me that Joseph desired me to drive around to the river where he (Bro. Richards) would meet me with barrels and buckets<sup>133</sup> to assist him to get some water up to the

-7-Verbal statement of Bp. Dennison L. Harris, cont'd: 15 May 1881

house in which the brethren had gathered,<sup>134</sup> that Brother Joseph wanted to give them (the Twelve) their endowments.<sup>135</sup> I went to the river according to request, and found Bro. Richards there with barrels and buckets. We loaded up the wagon, and drove up to the house the back way. The Twelve were on the poarch<sup>136</sup> above with block and tackle with which they drew the barrels of water up. Bro. Joseph was with them and assisted. Bro. Joseph said to me: – This day I am going to roll this kingdom off my shoulders on to the shoulders of these my brethren, for them to preach the Gospel and gather Israel and build up the Kingdom upon the foundation which I have laid; for I shall not be known among the people for many years, or for 20 years; I am going to rest, and these, my Brethren the Twelve have got to preach the Gospel and gather Israel, etc.<sup>137</sup> In answer to a question, Bro. Harris, said “Joseph was then addressing himself to me, while the Twelve stood around him, on the poarch. “He then said to me, You are the only witness on the earth<sup>138</sup> to what I am about to do; I wanted you as a witness, and I have been waiting for you. Then turning to Bro. Brigham, he said, Brother Brigham when this Temple (the Nauvoo Temple) is finished will you see to the giving of this young man his endowments as I will give them to you today? Bro. Brigham answered: I will, Brother Joseph. Bro. Joseph remarked again I request you to do it. Bro. Brigham promised in his firm way that he would do it. Brother Joseph then told me that was all I could do for him, and I drove off. Bro. Young fulfilled his promise. When he was ready for me he sent Bro. Milo Andrus<sup>139</sup> to inform me that Bro. Brigham would give me my endowments if I would go to the Temple.<sup>140</sup> I went and received them.

N.B.

This statement was made under the following circumstances: Bro. Harris spoke to Bro. Jos. F. immediately before the forenoon meeting of Sunday saying that he would like to relate the foregoing to him; consequently an appointment was made, and Bro. Jos. F. asked me to be present to take what Bro. Harris might say in short hand. The time appointed was after the morning meeting. As the afternoon meeting had been announced to commence half an hour earlier than usual (so as to give Prest. Taylor and party an opportunity to make Moroni and Fountain Green that evening on their [way] home) the time at our disposal to hear Bro. H. also to eat dinner was not sufficient to enable

-8-Verbal statement of Bp. Dennison L. Harris, cont'd: 15 May 1881

him to do justice to it. He told it in his own way and had to hurry at that.  
G. F. Gibbs, Reporter.

### **Reflections on the Significance of Apostolic Succession in the Restored Church**

The question of authority was central to the acceptance of many early converts that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth."<sup>141</sup> Often, a satisfying answer to this question was found in claims of apostolic succession.<sup>142</sup> Matthew J. Grow provides the following example:<sup>143</sup>

In 1846, Oran Brownson, the older brother of the famed Catholic convert Orestes A. Brownson, penned a letter to his brother recounting a dream Orestes had shared with him much earlier. In the dream, Orestes, Oran, and a third brother, Daniel, were "traveling a road together." "You first left the road then myself and it remains to be seen whether Daniel will turn out of the road (change his opinion)," Oran wrote. At approximately the same period in which Orestes converted to Catholicism "because no other church possessed proper authority," Oran joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because he believed that "proper authority rests among the Mormons."

Despite Joseph Smith's early affection for Methodism,<sup>144</sup> one of his final sermons contended that the arguments of Catholics and Mormons for apostolic succession made their claims superior to those of any other church:<sup>145</sup>

[the] old Catholic Church is worth more than all [the other churches] — here is a princ[iple]. of logic — that men have no more sense — I will illustrate [with] an old apple tree — here jumps off a branch & says I am the true tree. & you are corrupt — if the whole tree is corrupt how can any true thing come out of it — the char[acte]r of the old ones have always been sland[ere]d. by all apos[tates] since the world began

In our time, unlike the early days of the Church, both the assertion of Mormonism's unique authority and the very idea there is only one "true and living church upon the face of the whole earth"<sup>146</sup> are seen as repugnant or simply irrelevant to many religious seekers. Indeed, one is

often led to wonder whether even the Latter-day Saints themselves fully appreciate the importance of the restoration of all priesthood keys to Joseph Smith by heavenly messengers and the continuity of apostolic succession that has prevailed in the Church since that time.

The significance of Mormonism's claims to unique authority has not been lost on some thoughtful observers from outside the Church. Perhaps the best-known example of this comes from Dr. John M. Reiner, a Catholic scholar<sup>147</sup> who spoke with Elder Orson F. Whitney during a visit to Salt Lake City in 1898. His words echo the sentiment of Joseph Smith quoted above:<sup>148</sup> "If we [i.e., the Catholic Church] have the apostolic succession from St. Peter, as we claim, there is no need of Joseph Smith and Mormonism; but if we have not that succession, then such a man as Joseph Smith was necessary, and Mormonism's attitude is the only consistent one. It is either the perpetuation of the gospel from ancient times, or the restoration of the gospel in latter days."

In a discourse given in the Salt Lake Tabernacle during his visit, Dr. Reiner elaborated more fully on his views:<sup>149</sup>

[T]o my mind, your Church and the Roman church are the only two churches in the world today that make any real claim to Christianity. ...

"Have you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" There is absolute silence, unless a voice comes from one corner of the Alps, from Rome, and says, "I have the truth," and then it comes again from another corner of the world, in this new hemisphere — from Salt Lake City — where the head of your Church says, "We have the truth." Or, as the venerable head of the Church said to me, "If you have any truth that I have not got, let me see it, and I will take it." These are the two churches. ...

I do trust and hope that if — IF! — you are really the true Church, then your light may shine before men, so that none of them shall be deprived of it. However, I am glad to say this: Whether you are or not, I must confess that I have traveled pretty nearly all over the world, but as a rule I never pay much attention whether a man says he is Presbyterian, or a Primitive Methodist, or a Wesleyan Methodist. It has no charm for me. But your humble missionaries buttonhole me everywhere, telling me they are the only true Church, ... and I stand aghast and look. Therefore my attention is arrested, and therefore I examine. What the result will be, God only knows.

Admittedly, Dr. Reiner's views on the exclusive claims of Mormonism and Catholicism to legitimate authority would be even more unusual today than they were in 1898. However, that the claim for apostolic authority in Catholicism and Mormonism retains its appeal for at least some scholars today is evidenced in the broadminded generosity of spirit and the erudite elegance of prose of the late Dr. Stephen H. Webb, a convert to Catholicism who became a serious student of Mormonism.

After receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, Stephen taught religion and philosophy for twenty-five years at Wabash College. Later, he devoted himself more fully to writing, while also teaching at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis and serving in several prison ministries.<sup>150</sup> The extent of his "deeply felt mission to 'teach the beautiful truths of Mormonism' to the wider world"<sup>151</sup> in his later life was summarized in capsule form by an academic who was also a long-time family friend. Following Stephen's funeral services in Indianapolis, he told me that it was striking to him that after a remarkable academic career in which Stephen wrote numerous articles and more than a dozen major volumes, each one taking up a topic that was very different from the one before (writing not only about theology but also about animals, vegetarianism, diet, politics, popular culture [including a book on the musical career of Bob Dylan], literature, and liberal advocacy<sup>152</sup>) he dedicated his last three books, published with Oxford University Press, to the subject of Mormonism.<sup>153</sup>

After the funeral, I also met Ruth Ellen Homer, LDS Indiana Area Interfaith Specialist, who related an experience she had with Stephen a few weeks prior to his passing. At my request she wrote the following summary, which I include with the permission of both Ruth Ellen and of Stephen's wife Diane Timmerman:<sup>154</sup>

On February 18, 2016, Steve came to my home for the Living Room Dialogue [of the Center for Interfaith Cooperation in Indianapolis].<sup>155</sup> He fit right in with the other guests, including university professors who were CIC members. In preparing for the event, I had felt prompted by the Holy Ghost to teach the need for the Restoration in a specific way. I worked on my outline and slides for days until the feeling came that everything was as the Lord wanted.

Steve listened intently as I explained why Mormons believe the Restoration was necessary: the apostles and apostolic keys had been lost in antiquity and were needed in the latter-day church. Ecumenical councils had assembled to



**Figures 9 a and b.** *a.* Stephen H. Webb, 1961–2016. *b.* Ruth Ellen Homer discusses the restoration of priesthood keys by Peter, James, and John at a meeting on 18 February 2016, with Stephen Webb seated at far left.

consider weighty theological questions, but apostles were not present to declare doctrine. There were no apostles at Nicaea.

Having built the foundation, I next showed a painting of Peter, James, and John ordaining Joseph Smith as the first apostle in modern times and conferring the apostolic keys upon him. Oliver Cowdery would be ordained next as the second modern apostle.

Then I summarized in the words given to me by the Spirit the week before: “This remarkable occasion is sacred to the Latter-day Saints. We believe the keys of the kingdom given to Peter were literally restored *by Peter*.”

During this discussion Steve had grown increasingly animated. Now, in a climactic moment, he declared firmly, “*Peter held the keys of the kingdom.*”

My friend Steve had once again voiced a beautiful truth of the gospel. As he left that evening, he turned to me and said, “That was a *good* presentation.”<sup>156</sup>

Earlier Stephen had written:<sup>157</sup>

What set [Joseph Smith] apart ... from the many mystics and prophets throughout history who have recorded their auditory and visual experiences of God was his sensitivity to the fragility of religious authority and his recognition that

the traditions of the Church needed to be re-established on the grounds of a renewal of the prophetic tradition. In other words, he instinctively understood that religion without authority is merely passing fad or speculative fantasy. ...

Joseph reinvented the theological wheel of apostolic succession (the idea that the leadership of the church should be in the hands of men who are spiritual heirs of the original ministry of the twelve apostles) and the Petrine Primacy (the idea that Jesus singled out Simon Peter to hold the first place of honor and authority among the apostles). That should not cast him in a negative light to Roman Catholics. Indeed, it should affirm Catholics in their understanding of religious authority.

The testimony of Dennison Lott Harris not only underscores the importance of the circumstances that brought the keys held by Peter back to the earth again, but also the events of 26 March 1844 that assured that the authority and power of those same keys would continue in the leading quorums of the Church after the death of Joseph Smith.

Though at first, after the martyrdom, Brigham Young had sorrowfully wondered whether Joseph Smith had taken the keys of the kingdom with him at his death, he was soon fired through with a burst of inspiration that told him all was well: "Bringing my hand down on my knee, I said the keys of the kingdom are right here with the Church."<sup>158</sup> All those keys of the priesthood,<sup>159</sup> including the "last" and "most sacred" key of the sealing power that was specifically conferred on Brigham Young,<sup>160</sup> have continued with the First Presidency and the Twelve to the present day. Andrew Ehat summarizes the enduring legacy of 26 March 1844:<sup>161</sup>

John Taylor[, the successor to Brigham Young as President of the Church,] received an admonition from the Lord for the Church to "Fear me and observe my laws and I will reveal unto you, from time to time, through the channels that I have appointed, everything that shall be necessary for the future development and perfection of my Church, for the adjustment and rolling forth of my kingdom, and for the building up and the establishment of my Zion."<sup>162</sup> ... The channels had been appointed. The process of succession was set. The flow of revelation has continued. ... This is the continuing influence of Joseph Smith's "Last Charge."

"Never, ever again," Elder Gary E. Stevenson of the Twelve has declared, "do we have to question, 'Where are the keys?'"<sup>163</sup>

## Epilogue

Dennison Lott Harris received his temple blessings in early February 1846. Brigham Young had closed the temple two days earlier, fearing that any further delay in leaving Nauvoo would increase the risk of violence from the enemies of the Church. However, after seeing a crowd of Saints that had gathered anxiously at the entrance to the temple, President Young relented and a huge swell of ordinances were performed over the next two days.<sup>164</sup> Five hundred twelve people were given their endowments on February 6<sup>165</sup> and, on the next and last day in which temple ordinances were administered in Nauvoo, over six hundred received them.<sup>166</sup> Poignantly, Dennison was endowed not only on that final day, but also as part of the ninth and last company that completed the ordinance, sometime after midnight, in the wee hours of 8 February.<sup>167</sup> Although we will never know the full story of what happened, it is not inconceivable that a day or two prior to the exodus from Nauvoo, Brigham remembered his promise to the Prophet to make sure that Dennison received his endowment in the Nauvoo Temple — as administered under the direction of the Quorum of the Twelve, Joseph Smith's authorized successors.

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Appendix 1 – Conspiracy of Nauvoo by Horace Commings<sup>168</sup>

## CONSPIRACY OF NAUVOO

THOSE who have read the life of Joseph Smith the Prophet, must be familiar with the fact that from his earliest boyhood he was ever the object of bitter persecution. Notwithstanding the numerous published accounts of mobbing, drivings, bodily injuries, aggravating accusations, mock trials, and murderous attempts upon his life which he endured, and with which the people are familiar, there are, no doubt, many events and trials yet hidden from the world in the bosoms of his most familiar friends, which may have caused him far greater agony than many of those with which the public are acquainted. Among these the following narrative may be classed, as it has never before been published, and the facts it contains may have had an important influence in hastening, if not really accomplishing, the death of the Prophet.

Early in the spring of 1844 a very strong and bitter feeling was aroused against Joseph, among many of his brethren in and around Nauvoo; and some who held high positions in the Church and were supposed to be his best friends, turned against him and sought by various means in their power to do him injury. Many murmured and complained, and some of the more wicked, even watched their opportunity to take his life, and were continually plotting to accomplish that end. At length this wicked feeling became so strong and general, among a certain class, that it was resolved to form an organization, or secret combination that would better enable them to accomplish their wicked purposes.

Accordingly a secret meeting was appointed to take place in the new brick house of William Law, Joseph's first counselor, on a certain Sabbath, and invitations to attend it were carefully extended to members of the Church whom it was thought were disaffected, or in sympathy with these wicked views and desires. Among those who received invitations to attend this meeting was

Brother Denison L. Harris, now the Bishop of Monroe, Sevier County, Utah, then but a young man of seventeen years of age. Austin A. Cowles, at that time a member of the High Council, was one of the leaders in this wicked movement, and being a near neighbor and on intimate terms with Brother Harris, he had given young Denison an invitation to the secret meeting, and told him also to invite his father, but to be sure and not breathe a word about it to anyone else, as it was to be kept a profound secret. Denison was much perplexed over the invitation he had received, and certain things that Brother Cowles had told him; and while sitting on his father's woodpile, thinking them over and wondering what he had better do, another young man, named Robert Scott, who lived but a short distance away, came over, sat down on the log, and the two began to converse upon various subjects, such as generally engage the conversation of young men of their age. It seems they had been intimate companions for several years; and they had not conversed long before each discovered that the other had something on his mind which troubled him, but which he did not like to reveal. Finally, one proposed that, as they had always been confidants, they now exchange secrets, on condition that neither should reveal what the other told him.

Both readily agreed to this, and when each had told the cause of his anxiety, it proved to be the same—both had received an invitation to the same secret meeting. Robert Scott, having been reared by William Law, seemed to be almost a member of his family, and on this account had been invited by him to attend the meeting.

"Well, Den," said Robert, after a short pause, are you going to attend the meeting?"

"I don't know," replied Denison, "are you?"

"I don't know whether to go or not," said Robert, "suppose we go in the

house and tell your father of his invitation, and see what he says about it."

They entered the house and consulted for some time with Denison's father, Emir Harris, who was a brother of Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. They informed him of his invitation to the same meeting, and told him many other things that Brother Cowles had told Denison. He decided to go at once and lay the whole matter before the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was then in Nauvoo, and ask his advice. He immediately went to Joseph's house, a distance of about two and a half miles, and informed him of the whole affair. Joseph listened with interest until he had finished, when he said: "Brother Harris, I would advise you not to attend those meetings, nor pay any attention to them. You may tell the boys, however, that I would like to have them go, but I want them to be sure to come and see me before the meeting takes place. I wish to give them some counsel."

Subsequent events showed the wisdom of Joseph in advising Brother Emir Harris not to attend the meeting and selecting young men to do the work he wished to have accomplished. Brother Harris returned and told the boys what Joseph desired them to do, and they readily agreed to comply with his request. Accordingly, on the next Sunday before the secret meeting took place, Robert and Denison called at the house of Joseph to learn what he wished them to do. He told them he desired that they should attend the meeting, pay strict attention, and report to him all their proceedings, at the first favorable opportunity. He moreover cautioned them to have as little to say as possible, and to avoid giving any offence.

They attended the meeting as desired. There were quite a number present, and the time was mostly occupied in planning how to get at things the best, and effect an organization. Strong speeches were also made against the Prophet, and many lies were told to prejudice the minds of those present against him.

This portion of the proceedings was not a difficult task, for the element of which the audience was composed was only too susceptible to such evil impressions, and those who spoke were eminently successful in producing the desired impressions, and arousing the feelings of enmity toward the Prophet, that they might wish to use in accomplishing his overthrow. It seems that the immediate cause of these wicked proceedings was the fact that Joseph had recently presented the revelation on Celestial Marriage to the High Council for their approval, and certain members were most bitterly opposed to it, and denounced Joseph as a fallen Prophet, and were determined to destroy him.

The meeting adjourned to convene again on the following Sabbath, and the two young men were invited to attend the next one also, but were cautioned not to tell a soul of what had transpired at the first one. At the first suitable opportunity they called upon Joseph, related to him what had taken place, and gave him the names of those who had taken part in the proceedings. The leading members among the conspirators, for such they really were, were William and Wilson Law, Austin A. Cowles, Francis and Chauncey Higbee, Robert Foster and his brother, two Hicks brothers, and two merchants, Finche and Rollinson, who were enemies to the Church. After hearing their report and asking several questions, which they answered to the best of their knowledge, Joseph said: "Boys, I would like you to accept their invitation and attend the second meeting. But come to me again next Sunday, before their meeting convenes, as I may have something more to say to you before you go."

At the expiration of a week they again went to see Joseph, who gave them the necessary advice, after which they went to the meeting. This time the conspirators were still more vehement in their abusive remarks about Joseph. New crimes that he had committed had been discovered, and the old ones were much magnified. Their accu-

sations were not only against him, but against his brother Hyrum and other prominent men in Nauvoo. There seemed to be no end to the wickedness of which these good men were accused, as most of the time until a late hour was occupied by different ones in denouncing and accusing Joseph and his friends of the most heinous crimes. Before the meeting adjourned, however, it was agreed that they should all endeavor to work the matter up as much as possible during the week, that something definite might be accomplished towards effecting a more complete organization without further delay. The meeting was to convene again on the following Sunday. As the boys had kept quiet and said nothing against any of their proceedings, it was supposed, of course, that they were in sympathy with the movement, and an invitation was accordingly extended for them to attend the next meeting.

As on the previous occasion, the young men watched a fitting opportunity of reporting to Joseph without arousing the suspicions of any that attended the meeting. He listened attentively to the recital of all that had taken place at the second meeting, after which he said: "Boys, come to me again next Sunday. I wish you to attend the next meeting also." The boys promised to do so, and left the room. They kept the meetings and their connection with them, however, a profound secret from the rest of their friends, and at the appointed time again went to the house of Joseph to receive their usual instructions. This time he said to them, with a very serious countenance: "This will be your last meeting; this will be the last time that they will admit you into their councils. They will come to some determination. But be sure," he continued, "that you make no covenants, nor enter into any obligations whatever with them. Be strictly reserved, and make no promise either to conspire against me or any portion of the community. Be silent, and do not take any part in their deliberations." After a pause of some moments, he added: "Boys, this will be

their last meeting, and they may shed your blood, but I hardly think they will, as you are so young. If they do, *I will be a lion in their path!* Don't flinch. If you have to die; die like men; you will be martyrs to the cause, and your crowns can be no greater. But," said he, again, "I hardly think they will shed your blood."

This interview was a long one. Joseph's sensitive feelings were touched by the faith, generosity and love manifested by these young men in their willingness to undertake such a hazardous enterprise at his bidding. He blessed them and made them precious promises for their sacrifice, and told them if their lives were taken their reward would be all the greater. After leaving Joseph's house with his sincere wishes for their safety, the boys waited anxiously for the time of meeting to arrive. They fully realized the dangers into which they were about to plunge themselves, yet they did not shrink. They knew it was their duty, and they determined to attempt it at all hazards. They were now familiar with the names of the persons conspiring against Joseph, the object they had in view, and many of their plans for accomplishing that object. Moreover, they were supposed by the would-be-murderers to be in perfect sympathy with all their hellish designs; and if, by any circumstance, they should arouse the suspicion that they were present at Joseph's request, or even with his knowledge, their lives in such a crowd would, indeed, be of little value. They determined to trust in the Lord and die rather than betray the Priesthood. Their feelings may perhaps be imagined as the time of meeting drew near, and they started off in the direction of William Law's house, where it was to be held. They certainly displayed faith that every young man in Israel should cultivate.

On arriving at the rendezvous they found to their surprise and discomfiture, that the entrance to the house was guarded by men armed with muskets and bayonets. After being scrutinized from head to foot, and carefully cross-questioned, they succeeded in passing

the guards and gaining admittance. From this it will be seen that great care was taken to prevent any person from entering, except those whom they knew to be of their party, and ready to adopt any measures that might be suggested against the Prophet Joseph. On entering they found considerable confusion and much counseling among the members of the conspiracy. All seemed determined that Joseph should die, yet objections were raised by some to each of the plans proposed.

The Prophet was accused of the most wicked acts, and all manner of evil was spoken of him. Some declared that he had sought to get their wives away from them, and had many times committed adultery. They said he was a fallen Prophet, and was leading the people to destruction. Joseph was not the only one against whom they lied. His brother Hyrum and many of the leading men in Nauvoo were accused of being in league with him and sharing his crimes. In these councilings and plannings, considerable time was spent before the meeting was called to order, and anything definite commenced. The boys, however, followed Joseph's instructions, and remained quiet and reserved. This seemed to arouse the suspicions of some that they were not earnestly in favor of their wicked purposes, and some of the conspirators began to take especial pains to explain to the young men the great crimes that Joseph had committed, and the results that would follow if his wicked career were not checked, with a view to convincing them that their severe measures against Joseph were for the best good of the Church, and persuading them to take an active part with them in accomplishing this great good. The two boys, however, sat together quietly, and would simply answer their arguments by saying that they were only young boys, and did not understand such things, and would rather not take part in their proceedings.

As before stated, Brother Scott had been reared in the family of William Law, and the latter pretended great

friendship for him on that account, and was very anxious to explain to him the object of the proposed organization, and induce him to join. He would come around and sit beside Robert, put his arm around his neck, and persuade, argue, and implore him to join in their effort to rid the Church of such a dangerous impostor. At the same time Brother Cowles would sit beside Brother Harris in the same attitude, and labor with him with equal earnestness. The boys, however, were not easily convinced. Still, in their replies and remarks, they carefully tried to avoid giving the least offence or arousing any suspicions regarding the true cause of their presence. They said they were too young to understand the "spiritual wife doctrine," of which Joseph was accused, and many of the other things that they condemned in the Prophet. Joseph had never done them any harm, and they did not like to join in a conspiracy against his life.

"But," they would urge, "Joseph is a fallen Prophet; he receives revelations from the devil, and is deceiving the people, and if something decisive is not done at once to get rid of him, the whole Church will be led by him to destruction." These and many other arguments were vainly brought forth to induce the boys to join them, but they still pretended not to understand nor take much interest in such things. At length they ceased their persuasions, and, things having developed sufficiently, they concluded to proceed with the intended organization.

An oath had been prepared which each member of the organization was now required to take. Francis Higbee, a justice of the peace, sat at a table in one end of the room and administered the oath to each individual separately, in the following manner: The candidate would step forward to the table, take up a Bible, which had been provided for the purpose, and raise it in his right hand, whereupon the justice would ask him in a solemn tone, "Are you ready?" And, receiving answer in the affirmative would continue in a tone



and manner that struck awe to the minds of the boys as they listened: "*You solemnly swear, before God and all holy angels, and these your brethren by whom you are surrounded, that you will give your life, your liberty, your influence, your all, for the destruction of Joseph Smith and his party, so help you God!*" The person being sworn would then say, "I do," after which he would lay down the Bible and sign his name to a written copy of the oath in a book that was lying on the table, and it would be legally acknowledged by the justice of the peace.

The boys sat gazing upon this scene, wondering how intelligent beings who had once enjoyed the light of truth could have fallen into such depths of wickedness as to be anxious to take such an oath against the Prophet of God and his faithful followers. They also felt no little uneasiness concerning their own fate, and almost dreaded the moment when the last one should have taken the oath. At length that portion of the business was accomplished, and about two hundred persons had taken the oath. Among that number were three women, who were ushered in, closely veiled to prevent being recognized, and required to take the same oath. Besides doing this, they also testified that Joseph and Hyrum Smith had endeavored to seduce them; had made the most indecent and wicked proposals to them, and wished them to become their wives. After making affidavit to a series of lies of this kind, they made their exit through a back door. One of the women, whom the boys suspected as being William Law's wife, was crying, and seemed to dislike taking the oath, but did so as one who feared that the greatest bodily injury would surely follow a refusal.

After the oath had been administered to all but the two boys, Law, Cowles and others again commenced their labors to get them to take it, but met the same success as before. Arguments, persuasions, and threats were in turn used to accomplish their desire, but in vain. They exhausted their ingenuity

in inventing arguments, lies, and inducements to get the boys to unite with their band. "Have you not heard," said they, the strong testimony of all present against Joseph Smith? Can a man be a true Prophet who would commit adultery? He is a fallen Prophet, and is teaching the people doctrines that his own imagination or lustful desires have invented, or else he received that revelation from the devil. He will surely lead the whole Church to destruction if his career is not stopped. We can do nothing with him by the law, and for the sake of the Church we deem it our solemn duty to accomplish his destruction and rescue the people from this peril. We are simply combining and conspiring to save the Church, and we wish you to join us in our efforts, and share the honors that will be ours. Come, take the oath and all will be well."

"Oh, we are too young," they replied, "to understand or meddle with such things, and would rather let others who are older and know more do such work. We came to your meetings because we thought you were our friends and gave us a kind invitation. We did not think there was any harm in it, but if you will allow us to go now we will not trouble any more of your meetings. Joseph Smith has never done us any harm, and we do not feel like injuring him."

"Come, boys," said another of the crowd, "do as we have done. You are young, and will not have anything to do in the affair, but we want you should keep it a secret, and act with us; that's all."

"No," replied the boys in a firm but cool tone, as they rose to leave, "we cannot take an oath like that against any man who has never done us the least injury." They would gladly have passed out and escaped the trouble they saw brewing for them; but, as they feared, they were not allowed to depart so easily. One of the band exclaimed in a very determined voice: "No, not by a d—d sight! You know all our plans and arrangements, and we don't propose that you should leave in that style. You've got to take that oath, or you'll never leave here alive."

The attention of all was now directed to the two boys, and considerable confusion prevailed. A voice in the crowd shouted, "Dead men tell no tales!" whereupon a general clamor arose for the boys to take the oath or be killed. Even their pretended friends, Cowles and Law, turned against them. "If you do not take that oath," said one of the leading members, in a blood curdling tone, "we will cut your throats." The looks and conduct of the rest showed plainly that he had spoken only what they were ready to execute. It was evident the mob were eager for blood. That moment certainly must have been a trying one, but it seemed that fear had suddenly vanished from the bosoms of the two boys, and they coolly but positively again declared that they would not take that oath nor enter into any other movement against the Prophet Joseph.

The mob was now enraged, as they thought they were betrayed, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the leaders succeeded in keeping them from falling upon the boys and cutting them to pieces. The leaders, however, were no less determined that the boys should die, but as the house in which the meeting was held stood but a short distance back from the street, they thought it better to be more quiet about it, lest some one might be passing and discover what was going on. Order was at last restored, when it was decided to take the boys down into the cellar, where the deed could be more safely accomplished. Accordingly, a guard, with drawn swords and bowie knives, was placed on either side of the boys, while two others, armed with cocked muskets and bayonets, at their backs, brought up the rear as they were marched off in the direction of the cellar. William and Wilson Law, Austin Cowles, and others, accompanied them to the cellar. Before committing the murderous deed, however, they gave the boys one more chance for their lives. One of them said: "Boys, if you will take that oath your lives shall be spared; but you know too much for us to allow you to go

free, and if you are still determined to refuse, we will have to shed your blood." But the boys, with most commendable courage, in the very jaws of death, once more rejected the only means that would save their lives.

At this juncture, when it seemed that each moment would end the earthly existence of these two noble young men, a voice from some one in the crowd, as if by Divine interposition, called out just in time to save their lives: "Hold on! Hold on there! Let's talk this matter over before their blood is shed!" and with great difficulty some of the more cautious ones succeeded in quieting those whose anger and excitement prevented them from weighing well what they were on the verge of committing, and considering the consequences that would inevitably follow. Thus the instantaneous death of the boys was prevented, while the crowd retired to the further end of the room and consulted earnestly together, in so low a tone, however, that the boys could not hear what they said. It was evident, however, that they were nearly equally divided in their views of the feasibility of putting the boys to death. Some appeared to be enraged and fully determined to shed their blood, while others were equally resolved to prevent the cruel deed. During the discussion the boys distinctly heard one of them say: "The boys' parents very likely know where they are, and if they do not return home, strong suspicions will be aroused, and they may institute a search that would be very dangerous to us. It is already late, and time that the boys were home."

This was a very important consideration, as well as a very unexpected circumstance in favor of the boys. Hope rose high in their breasts as the discussion continued, and one by one of the more excited conspirators was silenced, if not convinced, until at length the tide turned in favor of the boys, and it was decided that they should be released. Some openly, and many in their feelings, opposed this resolution, as they considered it as unsafe to liberate the boys to re-

veal all their plans, as to kill them and get them out of the way.

A strong guard was provided to escort them to a proper distance lest some of the gang might kill them before they made their escape. They placed a strict injunction upon the boys not to reveal anything they had seen or heard in these meetings, and declared if they did any member of the conspiracy would kill them at first sight. This caution and threat were repeated several times in a way that gave the boys to understand that they meant all they said, and would just as leave slay them as not if they suspected anything had been revealed by them.

Everything being ready, the boys started off in charge of the guard. Right glad were they to once more gain the open air with so good a prospect for their lives, and they breathed a sigh of relief and satisfaction when they were out of sight of the house in which they had endured such great peril. They took an unfrequented road down toward the Mississippi River which runs around one side of Nauvoo. Some of the guard were very much dissatisfied with the way the tables had turned, and, when they had got a safe distance from the house, they halted to consider if it would not be best to slay the boys on their own responsibility. They would gladly have murdered them if they could have done so with any hopes of having the deed remain undiscovered; but, after some discussion, they contented themselves by reiterating the cautions and threats that had been given to the boys before starting. They continued their march until within a few rods of the river, when they halted, and one of the guards said:

"Well, I guess we have gone about far enough, and had better turn back." Then turning to the boys, he continued, "Boys, if you ever open your mouths concerning anything you have seen or heard in any of our meetings; we will kill you by night or by day wherever we find you, and consider it our duty."

"Oh, don't fear on that account," replied the boys, anxious to allay their uneasiness, lest they still might take a

notion to slay them and cast their bodies into the river, "we can see that it is greatly to our advantage and necessary to our peace and safety to keep silent concerning these things."

"I'm glad you've got sense enough to see it in that light," was the rejoinder in a tone that indicated his mind was somewhat relieved.

During this conversation, one of the boys looking towards the river, to his great surprise, saw a hand rise into view from behind the bank and beckon for them to come that way. The guards, after admonishing them once more to be silent, and telling them their lives depended upon their keeping the secret, turned to retrace their steps just as one of the boys, anxious to put them at ease as much as possible, said to his companion: "Let's go down to the river."

"Yes," returned the guard, evidently pleased with that arrangement; "you had better go down to the river."

The reader will readily understand that the meeting had lasted until a late hour in the afternoon and the conspirators had already detained the boys so long that they were afraid their parents and friends, some of whom perhaps knew where the boys had gone, would become anxious and begin to suspect foul play, and possibly might institute a search which would prove exceedingly disadvantageous to the conspiracy. The boys therefore very adroitly proposed to go to the river, so if they were found there it would be sufficient explanation for their long absence. The guards perceived the idea instantly, and it pleased them, for it indicated to them that the boys wished to keep the secret, and avoid being questioned too closely.

The boys started off on a run toward the river, but, lest the guards should watch them, and discover the presence of Joseph, whose hand it was they had seen above the bank, they directed their course to a point about a quarter of a mile beyond where Joseph was, knowing that he would follow them. On reaching the river, they stepped down the bank and there awaited the arrival of



the Prophet, while the guards returned to the meeting.

It seems that Joseph, knowing the danger into which the boys had gone, had become so uneasy at their long absence that he could no longer remain at home, so he and one of his body guard, John Scott, who was the brother to Robert, started out to see if they could discover what had become of them. Perhaps they suspected the boys had been murdered, and that their bodies would be thrown into the stream, as William Law's house, where the meeting was held, was but a short distance from the river. At all events they were there under the bank when the boys were liberated, and now glided around close to the water's edge to the point where the boys were waiting them.

It was a joyful meeting; Joseph seemed delighted to see that the boys had escaped with their lives. The party walked on to a point nearly opposite Joseph's store, where a board fence came down to the edge of the river, forming, together with the orchard trees and shrubbery, a suitable retreat where they could converse without any danger of being seen or heard.

"Let us sit down here," said Joseph. All four of them entered the secluded retreat, and when they were seated he continued: "Boys, we saw your danger and were afraid you would not get out alive, but we are thankful that you got off safely. Now relate to me all that you have witnessed."

The boys then gave him a complete account of all they had witnessed, and passed through; repeated to him the oath they had seen and heard administered to some two hundred individuals separately; gave him the names of all they knew that had taken the oath; in short they gave him a most accurate recital of all they had seen and heard.

Joseph and his companion listened very attentively, and, as the boys proceeded, a very grave expression crept over the countenance of the former, showing that a deep anxiety was preying upon his mind. When the recital was finished a pause of some length ensued.

Joseph was very much moved, and at length burst out: "O, brethren, you do not know what this will terminate in!" But proceeded no further, for his feelings were so strong that he burst into tears.

In great agitation, Brother John Scott, who was an intimate and trusted friend of Joseph, sprang forward and throwing his arms around the Prophet's neck, exclaimed: "O, Brother Joseph! do you think they are going to kill you?" and they fell on each other's necks and wept bitterly. The scene is difficult to describe. The thought of losing their friend and Prophet by the hands of such a bloodthirsty mob was sufficient to wring their hearts; and those brave men who but a few moments before had fearlessly faced death, and scorned the proffered conditions on which their lives might be spared, now wept like children and mingled their tears with those of their leader.

Joseph was the first to master his feelings, and, raising Brother Scott's arms from off his neck, he said, in a deep and sorrowful tone: "I fully comprehend it!" He then relaxed into a solemn study, while his brethren anxiously watched the changes of his countenance as if they would read the thoughts and feelings that were preying upon his heart. The scene was painful and impressive. Each moment they expected to hear him say that his work on earth was done and that he would have to be slain to seal his testimony.

After a long silence he finally continued: "Brethren, I am going to leave you. I shall not be with you long; it will not be many months until I shall have to go."

This remark still left them in doubt as to his future fate, but had such significance that Brother Scott again anxiously inquired: "Brother Joseph, are you going to be slain?"

Joseph, for some reason, evaded a direct reply, but continued in a tone that told too plainly of the sorrow he felt: "I am going away and will not be known among this people for twenty years or more. I shall go to rest for a season."

This reply did not clear away their

doubts any more than the former one, but it was evident he intended to leave the people and keep hid more closely than he ever had done, or else, with prophetic vision, he discerned the final outcome of his enemies' efforts, and, through compassion, forebore to crush the spirits of his brethren by telling them plainly the whole truth.

Subsequent events leave us still in doubt as to the real purport of his words. The dark clouds of persecution from enemies without, fearfully augmented by traitors from within, grew so threatening toward the close of the Prophet's life, that he saw something must be done for the safety of himself and the people. He therefore conceived the idea of moving the Saints once more, and this time far beyond the cruel blasts of persecution, and seek shelter behind the barriers of the Rocky Mountains. He called for a company of volunteers to explore the great West and find the most suitable place for the Saints to settle. Quite a number volunteered and began to make preparations for the journey.

It is a well known fact that just previous to surrendering himself to be taken to Carthage, Joseph got into a boat and started across the river, evidently to evade his enemies. He intended to keep out of their hands until this company had procured a suitable outfit for such an undertaking, when he would have accompanied them. Some of his brethren, however, begged him not to desert the people in such a time of trouble and danger, and at their importunity he returned to Nauvoo, and we all know the result. He was induced to surrender himself to the officers of the law, was cast into prison, and there cruelly murdered by a bloodthirsty mob.

Perhaps in reply to Brother Scott's question, Joseph was revolving these plans in his mind and looking forward to the time when he and the Saints would be beyond the reach of persecution; it is now impossible to tell, but the events which followed rather indicate that he foresaw his death. However, he continued in great earnestness:

"They accuse me of polygamy, and of being a false Prophet, and many other things which I do not now remember; but I am no false Prophet; I am no impostor; I have had no dark revelations; I have had no revelations from the devil; I made no revelations; I have got nothing up of myself. The same God that has thus far dictated me and directed me and strengthened me in this work, gave me this revelation and commandment on celestial and plural marriage, and the same God commanded me to obey it. He said to me that unless I accepted it and introduced it, and practiced it, I, together with my people, would be damned and cut off from this time henceforth. And they say if I do so, they will kill me! Oh, what shall I do? If I do not practice it, I shall be damned with my people. If I do teach it, and practice it, and urge it, they say they will kill me, and I know they will. But," said he, "we have got to observe it. It is an eternal principle and was given by way of commandment and not by way of instruction."

It will be seen from these outbursts of his soul what a conflict was going on in his mind, and the agony that he endured can only be imagined by those who knew his sensitive and generous spirit. Persecution and imprisonment from the hand of an enemy would be passed by almost unnoticed when compared with these murderous thrusts from the daggers of alienated friends. Death, to a man who was so familiar with the unseen world and the happiness to be enjoyed there, was stripped of its terrors. His fear of simply losing his life caused him little anxiety. But his whole soul was in the work which the Lord had given him to do, and such bloodthirsty opposition to a commandment of God among his brethren caused the greatest anxiety and grief. His greatest trials are no doubt hid deepest from our view.

The consultation lasted for a long time before they separated to their homes, and impressions were made on the minds of our two young heroes that will last forever. They got an insight into the life of the Prophet and the na-

ture of the work he had to perform, that had never before entered their imaginations. Their love for him and the cause in which he was laboring was increased, and gladly would they have laid down their lives to have saved his.

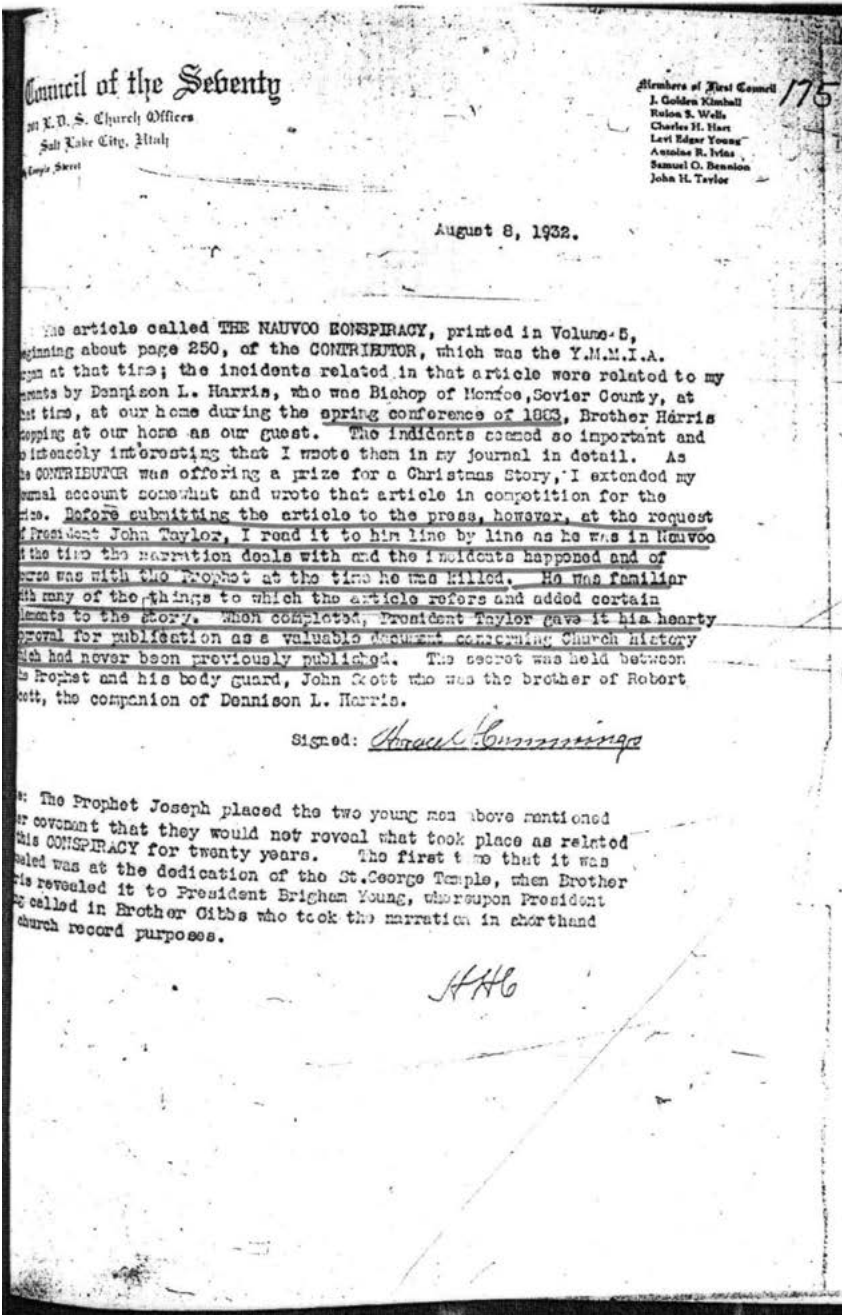
Before separating, however, Joseph placed a seal upon the boys' lips, and made them promise that they would not reveal what had transpired that day to a living soul—not even to their own fathers, for at least twenty years. The object of placing this injunction upon them no doubt was for their own safety, as their lives would probably have been taken if any of the conspirators should ever find out that any of their proceedings had been revealed. The boys kept their promise, and now, after a lapse of so many years, these important facts, which throw light upon many of the acts and sayings of Joseph Smith, which his brethren could never before fully understand, are revealed and placed with other important records in the archives of the Church.

The muse of history, too often blind to true glory, has handed down to posterity many a warrior, the destroyer of thousands of his fellowmen, and left us ignorant of the valorous deeds of real heroes, whose lot chanced to be more humbly cast; but in that day, when all men's actions will be revealed upon the housetops, we shall no doubt see the names of Denison L. Harris and Robert Scott among the world's heroes as stars of no small magnitude.

"Fact is stranger than fiction," and in value they cannot be compared. I respectfully submit the above narrative, which is a true recital of events that actually transpired. The manuscript has been carefully scrutinized by proper authorities who are satisfied of its authenticity and have approved its publication, as an important and accurate item of history connected with the Church.

*Horace Cummings.*

(Taken from *The Contributor*, Vol. V, pp. 251-260.)

Appendix 2: Statement by Horace H. Cummings<sup>169</sup>

### Appendix 3: William Law's 1844 Trajectory of Apostasy

Richard L. Bushman provides the following summary of the life of William Law from 1839 to the spring of 1844:<sup>170</sup>

William Law gained Joseph's confidence after he came to Nauvoo in 1839. An immigrant from Northern Ireland who had converted to Mormonism in Canada, Law was one of the few Saints to arrive with capital. ... When Hyrum [moved] into his father's position as patriarch [(see D&C 124:91-92) and was elevated to the position of "associate president" in the First Presidency (see D&C 124:94-95)], Law was made Joseph's counselor. ... Law was one of nine trusted men given the endowment in May 1842, and he and his wife, Jane, were members of the Anointed Quorum that met regularly in prayer meetings in the fall of 1843. Law's disaffection began when Hyrum showed him the plural marriage revelation. Law had disputed John Bennett's charges of Nauvoo polygamy and temporarily allied with Hyrum and William Marks to deny the existence of the practice. After Hyrum accepted the revelation, he tried to persuade Law.

The efforts of Hyrum and Joseph Smith to persuade William must have had some effect. Lyndon W. Cook observes: "Notwithstanding his public statements opposing plural marriage and his shock upon learning that the secret priesthood order was sanctioned by revelation, William Law's own diary for this period indicates that he later seriously entertained thoughts of entering into the practice."<sup>171</sup> However, by at least January 1844, the tide had turned and the intensity of Law's opposition to plural marriage and his antagonism to Joseph Smith increased in the next few months until it reached a fever pitch.

Andrew F. Ehat summarizes the sequence of events in the last half of 1843 as follows:<sup>172</sup>

According to two separate sources, the beginning of the significant rupture [between the Prophet and William Law] began when Joseph Smith told William Law that he and Jane could not be sealed.<sup>173</sup> Joseph apparently told Law this during or shortly after ... 26 May 1843. ... Apparently Joseph never told William (and certainly not Jane) why God "forbid" him to administer these blessings to the couple. Perhaps Joseph originally did not seal the couple because he was testing them on plural marriage — a test Law ultimately failed.

However after Law was excommunicated in April 1844, Joseph explained that he refused to seal the couple because God revealed to him that “Law was adulterous.” Although left without explanation, William ... and Jane (beginning in October 1843) attended all the meetings of the Quorum until William made his final decision on plural marriage.

In Law’s journal entry for 1 January 1844, he acknowledges the “goodness of God,” without which he would have been “lost, overwhelmed, swallowed down in the vortex of iniquity,” through hearkening to the “teachings of man” — “a recollection that paralyzes [sic] the nerves, chills the currents of the heart, and drives the brain almost to madness.” William expresses his gratitude that God’s “spirit prevailed ... before the fearful step was taken”<sup>174</sup> — words that Cook takes as a sure reference “to the fact that William Law seriously considered entering plural marriage at Nauvoo.”<sup>175</sup> The last part of his entry that day provides further evidence that this subject was on his mind: “The evening of this day I have spent at my brother Wilson Law’s, a small party of friends were assembled there, and after partaking of an excellent ~~supper we conversed upon various subjects, amongst the rest the Doctrine (so called) of plurality and Community of wives; they were strongly disapprobated;~~ refreshment we returned home.”<sup>176</sup>

Subsequent journal entries for early January document Law’s increasing turmoil in the face of events that brought him into repeated conflict with the Prophet. On 2 January, he said that he had “learned from remarks made by J. Smith before the city council and police” that he was being “narrowly watched” and that “should any misconceive [his] motives [his] life would be jeopardized.”<sup>177</sup> He went with Hyrum Smith to see the Prophet, who called for a Nauvoo City Council meeting to be held the next day to investigate the matter. On 3 January, Law records the supportive words he received from Joseph and Hyrum Smith during the meeting, but his journal entries over the next few days detailing additional investigations evidence a continuing deterioration of his relationship with the Prophet. The effect of all this was to produce “an indignation in his heart, that [he] could not control.”<sup>178</sup> Then, on 8 January, he learned from Joseph Smith that he had been dropped from the First Presidency.<sup>179</sup> Law admits exchanging “unpleasant words” with the Prophet and confided in his journal as follows: “I feel relieved from a most embarrassing situation I cannot fellowship the abominations which I verily know are practiced by this man, consequently I am glad to be free from him, and so vile an association.”<sup>180</sup>

On 13 January William recorded his last journal entry for the next two-and-a-half months:<sup>181</sup>

Several days have elapsed without any important move that I know of; what my feelings have been I cannot relate, various and painful at times almost beyond endurance; a thousand recollections burst upon my burning brain, the past, the present, and the future, disappointed hopes, injured feelings, where they should have been held sacred; the holy religion of Jesus Christ perverted to meet the base designs of corrupt men, these things are as poison'd arrows in my bleeding heart — yet Heaven is my hope, and Christ is my friend —

It was during the interim of silence in Law's journal entries that the secret meetings that Dennison Lott Harris and Robert Scott attended seem most likely to have occurred (although successive Sundays beginning 21 April provide a second possibility). Despite evidence from two affidavits made in late March<sup>182</sup> that Law was involved in a conspiracy that Joseph Jackson claimed was aimed at ridding Nauvoo of every member of the Smith family within "two weeks,"<sup>183</sup> Law feigned innocence and unjust injury when he resumed his journal writing on 29 March. On that date, he angrily asserted that Joseph Smith "has employed every vile and corrupt man and woman in the city over whom he has any power to circulate evil reports as false as the author of lies, about me and my wife, but he has failed to accomplish his object, for our names yet stand fair and untarnished in the estimation of the virtuous and the good."<sup>184</sup>

Law's lack of candor in his 29 March journal regarding his participation in efforts to destroy the Prophet parallels his failure to include in his April and May journal entries anything about his prominent role in his efforts to renew public opposition to Joseph Smith during these months. Although Law organized and led a new church as president in opposition to Joseph Smith, with meetings each Sabbath beginning 21 April, he does not disclose this fact in his journal until 1 June.<sup>185</sup> Rather, his journal entries for this period continued to make himself out as a victim rather than as an active opposer of the Prophet.

Throughout the early spring, Joseph Smith made attempts through intermediaries to reclaim William Law. "William was contacted by Hyrum Smith in March 1844 and by Almon W. Babbitt in April 1844 regarding a reconciliation."<sup>186</sup> Sadly, attempts at reconciliation failed, and William Law was excommunicated on 18 April 1844, along with his brother Wilson.<sup>187</sup>

In his careful study of the question of what finally brought Law's rage against Joseph Smith to the boiling point,<sup>188</sup> Andrew Ehat observes that William Law had agonized over issues relating to Joseph Smith and his teachings since at least the summer of 1843, but that it was not until March or April 1844 that the rupture became violent. He concludes that the definitive moment for William was when he became convinced that, in the words of Law himself, Joseph Smith "had lately endeavored to seduce [his] wife, and had found her a virtuous woman."<sup>189</sup> Although this journal entry was made on 13 May — incidentally, the same day he also recorded that Sidney Rigdon visited on behalf of Joseph Smith to make another attempt at reconciliation — the event that formed the basis for Law's story must have occurred prior to 17 April because John Scott testified that Law had told him a similar story on that date.<sup>190</sup> Providing an earlier hint that could be taken as referring to Joseph Smith's attempts to refute the falsehoods in such a story, on 29 March William had referred to the Prophet as having circulated lies "about me *and my wife*."<sup>191</sup> Extensive discussions about the accusations and conflicting accounts of what may have transpired between Joseph Smith and William Law have appeared elsewhere.<sup>192</sup>

It seems likely that this same story would have been the basis for an statement that Jane Law was supposed to have made at one of the meetings of the conspirators that Harris attended. The Cummings account of those meetings states that some women were brought in to make statements, "closely veiled to prevent being recognized, and required to take [an] oath. ... One of the women, whom the boys suspected as being William Law's wife, was crying, and seemed to dislike taking the oath, but did so as one who feared that the greatest bodily injury would surely follow a refusal."<sup>193</sup> Ehat mentions the possibility that Law's newspaper, the *Nauvoo Expositor*, might have eventually planned to include an affidavit from Jane Law, since the first issue promised additional affidavits in the second issue.

On 1 June, William Law recorded in his journal: "Since our Conference April 21st we have held public meetings every Sabbath day; our enemies rage, and publish slander about us, but we cease not to vindicate the cause of truth, and oppose crime. To this end we have purchased a printing press and intend issuing in a few days a paper to be entitled the *Nauvoo Expositor*."<sup>194</sup> All the events summarized above, including the eventual destruction of the press of the *Nauvoo Expositor* by the city council, culminated in the assassination of Joseph and Hyrum Smith on 27 June 1844. Brian Hales writes: "Few researchers doubt that William



Law bore the greatest responsibility for initiating the events that eventually resulted in the death of Joseph Smith."<sup>195</sup>

Regarding William Law's reliability as a reporter of events in Nauvoo, Gordon Madsen has provided an illustrative example. He has demonstrated conclusively that damaging, accusatory statements in one of William Law's retrospective interviews about Joseph Smith regarding the estate of the Lawrence sisters are completely without foundation.<sup>196</sup> Madsen concludes his study with the following assessment: "In comparing the documentary record with the Law interview, made forty-three years after the facts to a writer who was energetically pursuing an anti-Mormon agenda, Mark Twain's statement seems applicable: 'When I was younger I could remember anything, whether it happened or not. But as I grew older, it got so that I only remembered the latter.'"<sup>197</sup>

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## Endnotes

- 1 Accounts of the “Last Charge” meeting from firsthand witnesses can be found in, e.g., A. L. Baugh et al., “I Roll the Burthen,” pp. 13-19; O. Hyde, Letter to Ebenezer Robinson (19 September 1844); E. Robinson et al., *Times and Seasons*, Orson Hyde, 8 September 1844, 5:17 (15 September 1844), pp. 650, 651, 6 October 1855, 5:19 (15 October 1844), p. 686, 6 October 1869, p. 180; B. F. Johnson, *My Life’s Review*, pp. 89-90; E. D. LeBaron, *Benjamin F. Johnson*, Benjamin F. Johnson Letter to George F. Gibbs, April-October 1903, pp. 224-225; P. P. Pratt, Proclamation, p. 151; E. Robinson et al., *Times and Seasons*, Heber C. Kimball, 8 September 1844, 5:18 (1 October 1844), p. 664; H. C. Kimball, 8 October 1852, p. 206; W. Woodruff, *Woodruff*, 25 August 1844, 2:455; W. Woodruff, *Life*, 25 August 1844, pp. 228-229; E. Robinson et al., *Times and Seasons*, Wilford Woodruff, 11 October 1844, 5:20 (2 November 1844), p. 698; W. Woodruff, To the Officers, p. 136; W. Woodruff, Statement (21 September 1883); W. Woodruff, 12 December 1869, p. 164; W. Woodruff, 16 September 1877, p. 226; W. Woodruff, General Conference, p. 722; J. R. Clark, *Messages*, Wilford Woodruff, An Epistle, 10 October 1887, 3:134; W. Woodruff, Keys of the Kingdom, p. 546 W. Woodruff, Priesthood of God, pp. 382-383; W. Woodruff, Priesthood, and the Right of Succession, p. 530; S. Y. Gates, Temple Workers’ Excursion, pp. 511-514; 12 March 1897, 19 March 1897; J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, Brigham Young, 7 August 1844, 7:230; B. Young, Letter to Orson Spencer, p. 115.

Andrew F. Ehat has assembled “more than one hundred sources” that provide evidence for the “Last Charge” meeting (A. F. Ehat, *Ordinances*, p. 473).



- 2 Lamenting the fact that better records of the momentous events of this day were not kept, Truman G. Madsen wrote (T. G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith*, p. 110):

If all of the Twelve then in Nauvoo had promptly recorded the meeting in which Joseph rolled off the responsibility from his shoulders upon them and charged them, in what he called his last charge, to go forward in building the kingdom, any claim that he intended someone else to succeed to the Presidency of the Church would be completely refuted by contemporary documents. But ... [m]ost of those present didn't say much about it until several years later. Hence, although the charge that this meeting was a convenient afterthought is a false one, as a Church we would have been invulnerable on this point if proper records had been kept. They would have refuted any possible claim that Joseph did not want the President of the Twelve to succeed him.

Though Madsen's regrets are certainly understandable, Richard Holzapfel gives at least one reason why the Twelve may not have recorded these events on the day they happened (R. N. Holzapfel et al., Wilford Woodruff's 1897 testimony, p. 329):

The "Last Charge" meeting was held on March 26, 1844. Woodruff's brief note in his diary states only, "March 26, 1844. A rainy day. I met in council with the brethren." Naturally, scholars wonder why Woodruff's diary entry was so brief for what he later considered one of the most important days of his life, especially in light of the fact that he was a prodigious diarist. Other participants were just as circumspect. For example, William Clayton noted, "In Council through the day." The Prophet's own diary states, "Tuesday, March 26 1844 From 9 to 12 in council. From 2 to 5 P.M. in council. Warm, some wet."

Because it was considered sacred and confidential, participants chose not reveal or divulge what transpired in the meeting. As with prior meetings in the spring of 1844, those participating knew that details were strictly not to be disclosed. Joseph Smith's diary notes that the participants in these special meetings beginning on March 10, 1844, took an oath of confidentiality regarding these matters: "Joseph required perfect secrecy of them." Later, one participant disclosed to a reporter, "For the

time being, this was to remain a perfect secret until God should reveal to the contrary,” and Joseph Smith “swore them all to present secrecy, under the penalty of death!”

On the issue of confidentiality, see also, e.g., A. L. Baugh et al., “I Roll the Burthen,” p. 11.

Besides the explicit requirement of confidentiality, Andrew F. Ehat and Ronald K. Esplin (A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*; R. K. Esplin, *Joseph Smith’s Mission*) document several earlier occasions where Joseph Smith indicated his feelings that his work was complete and that his life could be taken at any time. In light of these previous incidents, the witnesses to the events of 26 March 1844 may not have felt the urgency of the Prophet’s forebodings. For example, Elder Wilford Woodruff later said of Joseph Smith’s remarks that day: “The language was plain enough, but we did not understand it any more than the disciples of Jesus when he told them he was going away, and that if he went not the Comforter would come [John 16:7]” (W. Woodruff, 12 December 1869, p. 164. See also W. Woodruff, 16 September 1877, pp. 226-227).

- 3 When Did Keys.
- 4 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 7.
- 5 For example, Bathsheba W. Smith was present at a separate occasion when Joseph Smith described his last charge to the Twelve. This probably took place at a prayer circle meeting sometime shortly after 26 March 1844 (J. F. Smith, Jr., *Blood Atonement*, Bathsheba W. Smith, p. 88). Lucian Scovil also heard the Prophet say that “his work was nearly done and he should roll the burden of the kingdom upon the shoulders of the Twelve” (L. N. Scovil, *Higher Ordinances*, p. 71). President Heber C. Kimball bore “testimony of what brother Joseph said on the stand at Nauvoo,” presuming that “hundreds” of others could “bear witness of the same. Said he: ‘These men that are set here behind me on this stand, I have conferred upon them all the power, Priesthood, and authority that God ever conferred upon me.’ There are hundreds present this day who heard him utter words to that effect, more than once” (H. C. Kimball, 8 October 1852, p. 206; ). Elder George Q. Cannon testified that Joseph Smith’s “expressions” on the subject were “oft repeated in the congregations of the Saints, telling the brethren and sisters of the Church, and the world that he rolled the Kingdom on to the Twelve, and they would have to round up their shoulders

and bear it off, as he was going to rest for awhile, and many other expressions of a like nature, the full meaning of which the Saints did not realize at the time" (G. Q. Cannon, 5 December 1869, p. 49).

- 6 B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:393. Hales gives his assessment of corroborating details about the conspiracy of Nauvoo from other sources, along with a reprint of Horace Cummings' *Contributor* article (H. H. Cummings, Conspiracy) in B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:393-408.
- 7 H. H. Cummings, Conspiracy.
- 8 See M. H. Tuckett et al., *Harris*, pp. 142-171; Dennison Lott Harris.
- 9 The source for most of these versions is the 1884 *Contributor* article by Horace Cummings (H. H. Cummings, Conspiracy) rather than Dennison's own statement. Even the author of the most complete biography of Dennison Lott Harris was either not aware of or did not feel at liberty to disclose the contents of the original 1881 statement, since she quotes exclusively from the 1884 *Contributor* article instead (see M. H. Tuckett et al., *Harris*, pp. 142-161).

Other retellings of Dennison's account of the conspiracy of Nauvoo include J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 6:280-281 n; B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 2:223-224; T. G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith*, pp. 115-116; J. F. Smith, Jr., *Essentials in Church History*, pp. 362-364; W. E. Berrett, *Restored*, pp. 169-171; L. L. Baker, *Murder*, pp. 231-236; M. L. McConkie, *Remembering*, pp. 381-386. Elder Dallin H. [Harris] Oaks, a descendant of Dennison Lott Harris, has retold the story twice in General Conference (D. H. Oaks, Following, p. 72; D. H. Oaks, Priesthood Blessings, pp. 38-39). See also B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:393-408.

- 10 Dennison's biographer cites a family source, rather than the original 1881 statement, for the following brief account of Dennison's experience with Joseph Smith and the Twelve, the only published reference to this incident of which I am aware (M. H. Tuckett et al., *Harris*, p. 142):

The Prophet asked Emer if his son Den (as he was called) could haul water in barrels from the Mississippi River so that the apostles and other Saints could receive their washings and anointings "as the enemy wouldn't notice what a young boy was doing." Den willingly performed this service (Lottie

Harris Hayes, private letters and papers in possession of Belle H. Wilson).

- 11 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 7. Note that the apostles who were then present in Nauvoo all had been endowed, sealed to their wives, and had received the fulness of the priesthood previously. See Endnote 48.
- 12 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 7. For general readings on the question of succession after the death of Joseph Smith, see M. V. J. Backman, *Keys Are Right Here*; A. L. Baugh et al., “I Roll the Burthen”; Brewster, Hoyt W., Jr. *Prophets*; R. C. Durham, Jr. et al., *Succession*; A. F. Ehat, *Ordinances*; R. K. Esplin, *Succession*; J. F. Smith, Jr., *Origin*; A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*; R. N. Holzapfel et al., *Wilford Woodruff’s 1897 testimony*, pp. 343-348.
- 13 For additional context concerning the “Last Charge” meeting, see R. N. Holzapfel et al., *WW 1897*; R. N. Holzapfel et al., *Wilford Woodruff’s 1897 testimony*; R. N. Holzapfel, *Prophet’s Final Charge*; L. G. Brown, *Holy Order*; R. K. Esplin, *Succession*, pp. 14-15; L. J. Arrington, *Brigham Young*, pp. 109-110; *Our Work*, pp. 771-772; E. Snow, 9 September 1877, pp. 101-102; R. K. Esplin, *Joseph Smith’s Mission*, pp. 308-309.

For more on the date and meaning of the “Last Charge” meeting, see A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*; A. F. Ehat, *Ordinances*, pp. 160-166; L. G. Brown, *Holy Order*.

- 14 See Endnote 44. Joseph Smith’s journal also indicates that the Prophet met in council from 2:00 to 5:00 PM that afternoon (J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 26 March 1844, p. 209 and n. 912):

In this afternoon meeting, the memorial to Congress was read a second time, discussed, and accepted by the members of the council, who also voted to prepare a similar memorial for United States president John Tyler. Various members of the council spoke on the favorable prospects of spreading the kingdom of God among the nations, after which the council adjourned to 4 April 1844.

The Memorial to the United States Congress that was mentioned “petitioned Congress to pass a bill ... providing ‘for the protection of the Citizens of the United States emigrating to the adjoining territories, and for the extension of the principles of universal

Liberty.' The proposed bill gave [Joseph Smith] the authority 'to raise a company of one hundred thousand armed volunteers in the United States and Territories' to be used to protect American emigrants, settlers, and interests in the Republic of Texas, Oregon Country, and other areas of the West" (ibid., 208 n. 910).

- 15 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, pp. 480-481. For perspectives and history relating to the Council of Fifty, see A. F. Ehat, Ordinances, pp. 162-163; A. F. Ehat, Date and Meaning; A. L. Baugh et al., "I Roll the Burthen," pp. 14-15 n. 23; A. F. Ehat, Seems Like Heaven; R. N. Holzapfel et al., Wilford Woodruff's 1897 testimony, pp. 343-348; L. G. Brown, Holy Order; D. M. Quinn, Council of Fifty; R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, pp. 517-525. Selected quotations from the Nauvoo minutes of the Council of Fifty have been excerpted in J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, and publication of the entire Council of Fifty "Record" is planned as part of the Joseph Smith Papers series.
- 16 L. J. Arrington, *Brigham Young*, pp. 109-110.
- 17 Sentence altered to more clearly reflect that, within the meetings of the Council of Fifty, "no discussion of or exercise of priesthood keys, no ordinations, no ordinances, no discussion of temple teachings or other church doctrine" (R. K. Esplin, Understanding the Council). Hence, in contrast to earlier views of historians who lacked access to the relevant records, it is now clear that the reported transmission of the needed keys and powers by Joseph Smith to the Quorum of the Twelve occurred outside the Council meetings themselves.
- 18 Draft, *1844/1845 Declaration of the Quorum of the Twelve Regarding Apostolic Succession*, in A. L. Baugh et al., "I Roll the Burthen," pp. 18-19.
- 19 Family photograph in the possession of the author.
- 20 [http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/USHS\\_Class/id/3246/rec/15](http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/USHS_Class/id/3246/rec/15) (18 April 2016, Utah State Historical Society Classified Photo Collection, File Name: 39222001361117, Photo Number: 13647; Digital Image (c) 2005 Utah State Historical Society. All Rights Reserved.)
- 21 Carl C. N. Dorius.
- 22 Franklin Spencer.

- 23 George F. Gibbs.
- 24 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, pp. 7-8.
- 25 Ibid. A high-quality digital scan of the document is publicly available at [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE5377450](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE5377450) (accessed May 1, 2016).
- 26 B. C. Nash, 29 March 2016.
- 27 See J. M. Bradshaw, 24 March 2010.
- 28 J. B. Bracken, Statement.
- 29 J. Burrup, 31 March 2010.
- 30 H. H. Cummings, 8 August 1932, as transcribed in B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:393. The original of this statement can be found in Appendix 2 of the present article. The entire statement reads as follows:

The article called THE NAUVOO CONSPIRACY, printed in volume 5 beginning about page 250 of the CONTRIBUTOR, which was the Y.M.M.I.A. organ at that time; the incidents related in that article were related to my parents by Dennison L. Harris, who was Bishop of Monroe, Sevier County, at that time, at our home during the spring conference of 1883, Brother Harris stopping at our home as our guest. The incidents [sic] seems so important and so intensely interesting that I wrote them in my journal in detail. As the CONTRIBUTOR was offering a prize for a Christmas Story, I extended my journal account somewhat and wrote that article in competition for the prize. Before submitting the article to the press, however, at the request of President John Taylor, I read it to him line by line as he was in Nauvoo at the time the narration deals with and the incident happened and of course was with the Prophet at the time he was killed. He was familiar with many of the things to which the article refers and added certain elements to the story. When completed, President Taylor gave it his hearty approval for publication as a valuable document concerning Church history which had never been previously published. The secret was held between the Prophet and his body guard, John Scott who was the brother of Robert Scott, the companion of Dennison L. Harris.

Signed: Horace Cummings

Ps: The Prophet Joseph placed the two young men above mentioned under covenant that they would not reveal what took place as related in this CONSPIRACY for twenty years. The first time that it was revealed was at the dedication of the St. George Temple, when Brother Harris revealed it to President Brigham Young, whereupon President Young called in Brother Gibbs who took the narration in shorthand for church record purposes.

HHG

- 31 In addition, as I compared the accounts, I noticed two minor factual errors in the 1884 article. First, Dennison's age is listed as seventeen rather than nineteen (H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 261). Second, the account records that "Joseph had *recently* presented the revelation on Celestial Marriage to the High Council" (*ibid.*, p 262, emphasis added). In actuality, the reading of the revelation occurred several months earlier (12 August 1843) than the springtime meetings of the conspirators attended by Harris.

Moreover, the Cummings article consistently misspells Dennison's name as "Denison," and his father Emer's name is mistakenly given as "Emir" (see, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 261-262).

- 32 H. H. Cummings, 8 August 1932, as transcribed in B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:393.
- 33 M. H. Tuckett et al., *Harris* p 161.
- 34 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 1.
- 35 See L. W. Cook, *Law*, pp. 46-47. See Appendix 3 for more on William Law and his role in the events that led to the death of Joseph Smith.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 54.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 54 n. 41.
- 38 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 3.
- 39 See affidavit by Abiathar B. Williams, published in J. Smith, Jr. *Documentary History*, 27 March 1844, 6:278.
- 40 See, e.g., *ibid.*; R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, pp. 537-538; G. M. Leonard, *Nauvoo*, pp. 359-361.
- 41 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 6.

- 42 Ibid., p. 7.
- 43 Although a few scholars still debate the date of the “Last Charge” meeting (e.g., Devery S. Anderson accepts the date of 17 March [D. S. Anderson et al., *Joseph Smith’s Quorum*, pp. 71-73] and D. Michael Quinn argues that the meeting was held on 23 March [D. M. Quinn, *Origins*, pp. 193-195]), most now accept the arguments of Andrew F. Ehat in favor of 26 March as conclusive (A. F. Ehat, *Ordinances*, pp. 162-163; A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*). Among other considerations, the only entry in Wilford Woodruff’s journal for the second half of March indicating a council meeting is for 26 March (W. Woodruff, *Woodruff*, 26 March 1844, 2:371. Cf. W. Clayton, *Diaries*, 26 March 1844).
- 44 Joseph Smith’s journal indicates that he met from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM in council (J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, pp. 208-209 and n. 911):

Nine men were admitted as members of the Council of Fifty in this meeting. [Joseph Smith] summarized for the new members the business of the council to this date and “gave some instructions pertaining to the kingdom of God.” [The Prophet] then “continued his instructions on heavenly things and many other important subjects,” none of which were reported by scribe William Clayton. The minutes note that the council discussed additional business and that Willard Richards read the memorial to Congress (Council of Fifty, “Record,” 26 March 1844).

In addition to the reference about Joseph Smith giving “instructions pertaining to the kingdom of God” and additional “instructions on heavenly things and many other important subjects,” Ronald K. Esplin notes, on the basis of his access to the full Council of Fifty Record that is scheduled for publication in September 2016, a chain of other evidence for the dating of the Last Charge to the morning of March 26, “not least of which is the apparent absence of Rigdon in the a.m. and his pronounced presence in the p.m. council” (R. K. Esplin, 17 May 2016). Prior to the availability of selected notes from the Council of Fifty Record in J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, the prevailing assumption was that the Last Charge had occurred in the afternoon (see, e.g., A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*).



As to the "charge" itself, Andrew F. Ehat writes that (A. F. Ehat, 26 May 2016; 27 May 2016):

when a person was admitted to the Council, they would be given a Charge, that consisted of their receiving the following:

- The Name: The Kingdom of God and His Laws and the Keys and Power Thereof and Judgment in the Hands of His Servants
- The Key Word: Ahman Christ
- The Constitution: Ye are my Constitution, and I am your God; Ye are my spokesmen, therefore, from henceforth keep all my commandments
- The Penalty: Rather than disclosing the proceedings of the Council, you would rather have your life taken.
- Instructions on the background, history, purpose, and objectives of the Kingdom of God administered by the Standing Chairman or one he designates. On 26 March 1844, he administered the Charge.

In light of the fact that Joseph Smith was facing such rumors of his life being taken, he was primed to turn over the reins to others and "rest." ...

During the "Charge" aspect of initiation of a new member, a history of the Council is given. Thus, [it is plausible, though speculative, that] the "Last Charge" was a special case of a charge given to [those] who were admitted on 26 March 1844, and also applied to both the Council of Fifty in general and the members of the Twelve Apostles in particular. Joseph's comment, like what he made to Lucius N. Scovil [see L. N. Scovil, *Higher Ordinances*] ... that [Joseph Smith] planned to roll the burden on to the shoulders of the Twelve — works just the same for what he said to Dennison before the 26 March 1844 Council of Fifty meeting began.

45 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 7.

46 Rollins, James.

47 Public Domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph\\_Smith\\_Red\\_Brick\\_Store\\_in\\_Nauvoo.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph_Smith_Red_Brick_Store_in_Nauvoo.jpg), accessed May 18, 2016.

- 48 Apostles who are listed as present at the “Last Charge” meeting on 26 March 1844 were Orson Hyde, Heber C. Kimball, Amasa Lyman, Orson Pratt, Parley P. Pratt, Willard Richards, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Brigham Young (see Endnote 132). All these, except Amasa Lyman, had been sealed to their wives and received the fulness of the priesthood by the end of January 1844. Elder Lyman was sealed on 6 September 1844 and received the fulness of the priesthood on 18 April 1845. George A. Smith is not listed as present at the 26 March 1844 meeting, but since “there is no extant roll so it is not known if he did or not” (R. K. Esplin, 17 May 2016). He was sealed on 20 January 1844 and received the fulness of the priesthood on 31 January 1844. For a table with dates of all temple ordinances for members of the Quorum of the Anointed, see D. S. Anderson et al., *Joseph Smith’s Quorum*, pp. xxxix-xliii.
- 49 R. K. Esplin, 17 May 2016.
- 50 R. K. Esplin, Understanding the Council.
- 51 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 6.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Rollins, James.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 J. Smith, Jr. et al, *Journals, 1843-1844*, 11 May 1844, p. 248.
- 56 Ibid., 12 May 1844, p. 249.
- 57 Ibid., 14 May 1844, p. 251.
- 58 Ibid., 21 May 1844, pp. 255-256. Heber C. Kimball and Lyman Wight are also mentioned in Joseph Smith’s journal, along with one hundred others, as leaving on the same date for their electioneering missions on behalf of Joseph Smith’s presidential campaign. Orson Hyde was already in Washington, DC on other church business, and others of the Twelve (e.g., Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith [W. Woodruff, *Woodruff*, 9 May 1844, 2:394]) had already left on their missions prior to 11 May. For perspectives on Joseph Smith’s presidential campaign, see A. K. Garr, *Joseph Smith: Candidate*; M. C. Robertson, *Campaign*.
- 59 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 6.
- 60 Ibid., p. 1.

- 61 Ibid., p. 3.
- 62 Ibid., p. 3.
- 63 Ibid., p. 1. That this was the first meeting attended by the young men does not rule out the possibility that the group of conspirators had met previously.
- 64 Ibid., p. 2.
- 65 A. F. Ehat, *Seems Like Heaven*, p. 256; W. Clayton, *Diaries*, 11 March 1844; J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 11 March 1844, p. 202.
- 66 Reprinted from M. H. Tuckett et al., *Harris*, p. 152.
- 67 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 13 March 1844, pp. 202, 204; W. Clayton, *Diaries*, 13 March 1844.
- 68 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 14 March 1844, p. 204; W. Clayton, *Diaries*, 14 March 1844.
- 69 J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 27 March 1844, 6:278-280.
- 70 See brief biography in J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, pp. 462-463.
- 71 See brief biography in *ibid.*, p. 403. Eaton was one of three non-Mormons admitted to the Council of Fifty.
- 72 The encounter took place at the Keystone Store, owned by William H. Rollososon, a co-conspirator (J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 30 March 1844, 6:281).
- 73 *Ibid.*, 27 March 1844, 6:278.
- 74 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, pp. 2-6.
- 75 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 19 March 1844, p. 206; W. Clayton, *Diaries*, 19 March 1844.
- 76 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, p. 207 n. 906, citing W. Clayton, *Diaries*, 23 March 1844.
- 77 J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 27 March 1844, 6:278-280.
- 78 See the report of the interview in *ibid.*, 23 March 1844, 6:271, drawn from Clayton's journal of the same date.
- 79 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 23 March 1844, p. 207.
- 80 A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*.

- 81 Church History Library: An engraving of April 6th, 1844 conference in Nauvoo] /George Lloyd / Lloyd, George, 1817b / M273.2 L793e 1844? / Manuscript /. Image Reference: LDS 2004-51-2.tif. With permission and with thanks to Megan McShane. The original caption to the engraving reads:

This Engraving is respectfully dedicated to the quorum of the Twelve, by GEORGE LLOYD. Commemorating that great and last Conference (previous to Joseph Smith's death) held in the City of Nauvoo, Hancock County Illinois on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of April A.D. 1844 at which our beloved Prophet Joseph Smith presided and plainly set forth to the Conference the necessity of endowing the Saints and sending Elders forth to preach the GOSPEL of JESUS CHRIST. Feeling the assurance that he obeyed the commandments of God and that he should be called to a more exalted Station: he went through with all the ceremonies of his high office to the twelve he delivered the KEYS of the Kingdom, and as a legacy, bequeathed to them his Blessing.

- 82 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 24 March 1844, p. 207, pp. 207-208 n. 907; W. Woodruff, *Woodruff*, 24 March 1844, 1:368; J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 6:272; J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 24 March 1844, pp. 336-338. R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, p. 538 mistakenly lists the date of this Sunday meeting as 26 March 1844.
- 83 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 24 March 1844, p. 207.
- 84 By permission of Roland L. Lee Gallery, with thanks to Roland L. Lee and Nathan Wotkyns.
- 85 D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, pp. 6-7.
- 86 Dennison admitted that his remembrance for the lapse of time between the meetings of the conspirators and the incidents at the Red Brick Store were indefinite. In his statement, he recalls that it was "a few months after, perhaps it was two or three weeks, I do not now remember, I did not rivet dates on my mind" (*ibid.*, p. 6).
- 87 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 87 Church History Library.
- 89 Joseph Smith's journal indicates that he met with the Council of Fifty from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM and from 2:00-5:00 PM that day (J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 26 March 1844, pp. 208-209).

- 90 W. Woodruff, 12 March 1897; W. Woodruff, 19 March 1897.
- 91 J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 27 March 1844, 6:278-280.
- 92 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 18 April 1844, p. 232. For additional details, see p. 232 n. 1037.
- 93 R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, p. 531.
- 94 L. W. Cook, *Law*, 1 June 1844, p. 54; J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 28 April 1844, p. 239.
- 95 By permission of the Community of Christ, with special thanks to Ron E. Romig and Rachel Killebrew.
- 96 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, 11, 12, and 14 May 1844, pp. 248, 249, 251; D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 7.
- 97 The verbal rather than written nature of this statement comes across in the conversational style in which it is recorded. Fortunately, the stenographic skill of George F. Gibbs was sufficient to keep up with Dennison's apparently fast-paced telling of the events.
- 98 Joseph F. Smith, 1838-1918, a son of Hyrum Smith and Mary Fielding Smith, was ordained a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1867, and served as a counselor in the First Presidency to John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow. He became president of the Church in 1901. President Smith had a keen interest in Church history, and was employed by the Church Historian's office beginning in January 1865. For many years he actively pursued the collection of statements of members concerning early Church history, especially concerning the origins of plural marriage. See J. F. Smith, Jr., *Life of Joseph F. Smith*; B. M. Yorgason, *From Orphaned Boy*; R. N. Holzapfel et al., *JFS: Portrait*; R. L. Nielson et al., *Excavating*; J. L. Lund, *JFS and the Origins*.
- 99 Franklin Spencer, 1836-1915, reputed to be "one of the best speakers in the Church," had recently returned from serving in the West Tennessee Conference of the Southern States Mission, where he had served as president for the previous sixteen months. He served as the Sevier Utah Stake President from 1877-1887. In about 1864, he changed his name from "Franklin Nicholas Perkins" (or, alternatively, "Nicholas Summers Perkins, Jr.") to escape persecution stemming from his past as a Confederate soldier. For more on the life of Franklin Spencer, see B. Crow, Franklin

- Spencer; Franklin Spencer; Family and Early Life of Franklin Spencer.
- 100 Carl Christian Nikolai Dorius, 1830-1894, was born in Denmark and came to Utah in 1857. He was bishop of Ephraim South Ward from 1877 to 1894 and a missionary to Scandinavia from 1862 to 1864. See Carl C. N. Dorius.
- 101 George Francis Gibbs, 1846-1924, joined the Church as a child with his family in Wales and emigrated to the United States in 1868. In 1876, he was called by Brigham Young to serve as a shorthand, reporter for the Church. "Later he was named as secretary and stenographer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles where he served for more than forty-eight years." See George F. Gibbs.
- 102 Austin Cowles, 1792-1872, a neighbor of Dennison Harris (D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 3), was baptized in New York in 1832 and moved to Kirtland in 1827. He was called to the Nauvoo high council and as a counselor to Nauvoo stake president William Marks in 1841. "Cowles resigned his church position (23 September 1843) over the secret practice of plural marriage and provided William Law an affidavit summarizing the August 1843 High Council meeting where Hyrum Smith instructed relative to having multiple wives. He died in Decatur County, Iowa, 12 December 1872" (L. W. Cook, *Law*, p. 57 n. 50). See also J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, p. 400.
- 103 Emer Harris, 1781-1869, father of Dennison Lott Harris and a brother to Book of Mormon witness Martin Harris, was baptized in 1831 and soon moved to Ohio with the Saints. After Simeon Carter decided to join his brother Jared as a missionary companion, Emer served a mission with his brother Martin in 1832-1833 (see D&C 75:30). Later, he moved to Missouri and Illinois, and migrated west to Utah in 1850. In Utah, he served for a time as patriarch in the Provo Stake. See S. E. Black, *Who's Who*, pp. 119-122; M. H. Tuckett et al., *Harris*, pp. 115-138.
- 104 See Appendix 2 for more on the life of William Law and the unfolding of events in the first half of 1844.
- 105 Robert Scott, 1824-1873, was baptized by William Law in Trafalgar, Canada in 1837 (L. W. Cook, *Law*, p. 67). He is described as "a stubborn, rough young man, [who] followed his brother Jacob, Jun. in rebelling against parental control at Nauvoo" (Robert Thomas

Scott). Perhaps it is because he could not be governed by his parents that Law "reared" him instead, as reported by Dennison (D. L. Harris, Verbal Statement, p. 3). "Despite this exciting episode in the early life of Robert, the boy did not show any inclination to follow John on his trek to Utah or involve himself in the religious controversies of the day. Sometime in the late 1840s, Robert went to Wisconsin, perhaps in company with his older siblings. By 1850 he had married an Indian woman named Be-Mash-I-Kwe (Kate). ... There is no indication that Robert ever cared to communicate with his siblings to the south; he seems to have been content with his independence, far away from the restrictions of family or religion" (Robert Thomas Scott).

- 106 According to H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 261:

Denison [Dennison] was much perplexed over the invitation he had received, and certain things that Brother Cowles had told him; and while sitting on his father's woodpile, thinking them over and wondering what he had better do, another young man, named Robert Scott, who lived but a short distance away, came over, sat down on the log, and the two began to converse upon various subjects ... Finally, one proposed that, as they had always been confidants, they now exchange secrets, on condition that neither should reveal what the other told him.

Both readily agreed to this, and when each had told the cause of his anxiety, it proved to be the same — both had received an invitation to the same secret meeting.

- 107 For brief, accessible overviews of doctrines and historical practices in the Church relating to plural marriage, see these Gospel Topics essays posted on the official Church Web site: Plural Marriage; Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo; Plural Marriage in Early Utah; Manifesto. For many in our culture, the "emotional and priestly logic" of faithful practitioners of plural marriage is difficult to understand, particularly in light of the "romantic logic" that prevails in modern society. This topic is insightfully addressed in K. Flake, *Emotional and Priestly Logic*.
- 108 The list of names given in H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 262 is identical in order as that in Harris' verbal statement. The misspelled names ("Finche and Rollinson") are also misspelled identically.

- 109 Francis Marion Higbee (1820-after 1850) and Chauncey Lawson Higbee (1821-1884) were baptized into the Church in Ohio. Both became ardent enemies of the Prophet. Francis was excommunicated on 18 May 1844 and Chauncey on 24 May 1842. "Opposition to Joseph brought together men of diverse character. Chauncey Higbee, age twenty-three, son of Joseph's deceased legal adviser Elias Higbee, had been accused of seducing women during the time when John Bennett was operating in Nauvoo. His brother Francis Higbee felt threatened when Joseph proposed to a woman Higbee was courting" (R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, p. 529). See J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, p. 414.
- 110 Robert D. Foster, "a convert from England, had accompanied Joseph to Washington in 1839 as Sidney Rigdon's physician. In Nauvoo, Foster was appointed surgeon general in the Nauvoo Legion and justice of the peace in the municipal court. Like Law he invested in real estate near the temple, where he built the Mammoth Hotel. An early sign of trouble came when Joseph publicly taunted Foster for resisting Joseph's efforts to give first priority to land on the flat on Main Street near his house. The Church owned property there and Joseph wanted it developed first. ... Joseph and Foster still remained friendly. More a civic figure than a religious leader, he was elected school commissioner. ... Though Foster was firmly identified with the Mormons, he joined the dissidents in the winter of 1843-44. [He was excommunicated on 18 April 1844.] When a reform church was organized, Foster was selected one of its Twelve Apostles" (R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, pp. 528-529). He was identified as a member of the mob that killed Joseph and Hyrum Smith. See J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, pp. 406-407.
- 111 Charles Ambrose Foster, 1815-1904, was a physician and pharmacist, and a brother of Robert Foster. He was later identified as a member of the mob that killed Joseph and Hyrum Smith. See J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, p. 406.
- 112 This probably refers to brothers Robert Francis Hicks, 1818-after 1880, and John Alexander B. Hicks, 1801-1897 (L. W. Cook, Law, 17 January 1839, p. 73 and n. 20). They were sons of Robert Hicks, 1770-1844 (Robert Hicks, Robert Hicks; Robert Hicks, Robert Hicks) who, with his family, was converted in Upper Canada and moved to Nauvoo in 1840. Although John A. Hicks was licensed to preach as an elder (License for John Hicks) and appointed to



preside over the elders quorum in Nauvoo by revelation in 1841 (see D&C 124:137), he was soon "tried by his quorum for stating falsehoods, engaging in schismatical conversation, and breaching Nauvoo city ordinances" (S. E. Black, *Who's Who*, p. 133). He was excommunicated from the Church on 5 October 1841 and thereafter associated with apostates, joined Law's organization, and, while quartered in Carthage in June 1844, was said to have participated in plans to kill Joseph Smith. See L. W. Cook, *Law*, 25 June 1844, p. 59 and p. 59 n. 56; John Alexander Hicks; Robert F. Hicks; Robert Francis Hicks; John Alexander B. Hicks.

- 113 William Marks, 1792-1872, was baptized into the Church in New York by 1835. He soon moved to Kirtland and in 1837 was called to the Kirtland high council and an agent to Bishop Newel K. Whitney. In 1839, he was called as president of the Nauvoo stake. Although William did not come out publicly in opposition to Joseph Smith during the latter's lifetime, he sympathized with some of the apostates, and was eventually rejected as Nauvoo stake president on 7 October 1844 for supporting the claims of Sidney Rigdon to the Presidency. Although he later recanted and stated his support for the Twelve, he soon joined a succession of splinter groups and eventually became a prominent member of the RLDS Church. See S. E. Black, *Who's Who*, pp. 183-186; J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, p. 426.
- 114 "Jason W. Briggs, 1821-1899, was a leader in the early history of the Latter Day Saint movement and was instrumental in bringing about the 1860 'Reorganization' of the church, which resulted in the establishment of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. ... In 1841 at Potosi, Wisconsin he was baptized into the Church. ... Briggs became convinced that [Brigham] Young's organization had fallen into apostasy and by 1846 he and his branches [in Wisconsin] affiliated with James J. Strang who had organized a new church headquarters in nearby Voree, Wisconsin" (Jason W. Briggs).
- 115 No doubt Harris is referring to John M. Finch, 1815-1888. Finch moved to Nauvoo in about 1840 and partnered with William H. Rollososon in the grocery firm of Finch and Rollososon. Later, he participated in mob violence against the Mormons and was identified by Elder Willard Richards as a member of the mob that

killed Joseph and Hyrum Smith. See (J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1843-1844*, p. 405).

- 116 This is surely a reference to William H. Rollosson, 1820-1864, whose Nauvoo career paralleled that of his partner John M. Finch. Though Dennison paints him as sympathetic to the apostates, no evidence exists that he participated in mob actions against the Mormons. See *ibid.*, pp. 443-444.
- 117 According to H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 264, Francis Higbee was a justice of the peace.
- 118 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 268. Providing some additional, rough corroboration to the number of individuals who were attracted to William Law's movement, the *Warsaw Signal* of 15 May 1844 reported that on 12 May 1844, after he had organized his new church and begun regular Sabbath meetings, "there were about three hundred assembled at Mr. Law's house in Nauvoo" (L. W. Cook, *Law*, p. 54 n. 41).
- 119 H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 265 adds that the women were "closely veiled to prevent being recognized, and required to take the same oath. ... One of the women, whom the boys suspected as being William Law's wife, was crying, and seemed to dislike taking the oath, but did so as one who feared that the greatest bodily injury would surely follow a refusal."
- 120 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 265:

"Have you not heard, said they, the strong testimony of all present against Joseph Smith? Can a man be a true Prophet who would commit adultery? He is a fallen Prophet, and is teaching the people doctrines that his own imagination or lustful desires have invented, or else he received that revelation from the devil. He will surely lead the whole Church to destruction if his career is not stopped. We can do nothing with him by the law, and for the sake of the Church we deem it our solemn duty to accomplish his destruction and rescue the people from this peril. We are simply combining and conspiring to save the Church, and we wish you to join us in our efforts, and share the honors that will be ours. Come, take the oath and all will be well."
- 121 Hyrum Smith read a written version of the revelation on celestial and plural marriage to the Nauvoo High Council on 12 August 1843. See B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:139-

144. Separately, Hyrum had read the revelation to William Law and afterward let him take it home to share with his wife (*ibid.*, 2:218-220).
- 122 The final line on page 3 "that we could not be" was partially cut off as the document was being typed. Consequently the phrase was typed again at the top of page 4.
- 123 The compassion and concern Joseph Smith had for the two young men is obvious. While he certainly needed to hear details of the meeting they had attended, it is apparent he was already waiting nearby and watching for them out of concern for their safety despite the personal risks of doing so.
- 124 H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 267 explained:
- The reader will readily understand that the meeting had lasted until a late hour in the afternoon and the conspirators had already detained the boys so long that they were afraid their parents and friends some of whom perhaps knew where the boys had gone, would become anxious and begin to suspect foul plan, and possibly might institute a search which would prove exceedingly disadvantageous to the conspiracy. The boys therefore very adroitly proposed to go to the river, so if they were found there it would be sufficient explanation for their long absence. The guards perceived the idea instantly, and it pleased them, for it indicated to them that the boys wished to keep the secret, and avoid being questioned too closely.
- 125 John Scott, 1811-1876, was a brother to Robert Scott. Like his brother Robert:
- John was a rough character, prone to violent temper and obstinacy in the face of authority. He was fiercely loyal to his friends but intractable when crossed. Yet at the same time, John was a devoted family man, and his deep religious fervor runs through his journals and the record we have of his acts. His later life is a testament to John's belief in the message and teachings of Joseph Smith, the Mormon founder. ...
- Despite the outward growth of the church at Nauvoo, trouble within the Mormon community began to break up the Scott family during the tumultuous year of 1844. Growing militancy on the part of Joseph Smith allowed John Scott to rise in the ranks of the Mormon militia but disappointed his brothers and

sisters, who believed that Smith's political and military defiance would lead to trouble with the government. ... Father Jacob expressed his support for these doctrines, but Ann, Isaac, and Sarah began to question what they saw as Smith's autocratic rule of the church and city. The blow finally fell on April 18, 1844, when John Scott testified at a church council to excommunicate William Law, first counselor to Joseph Smith and a close personal friend to the Scotts [see summary of Scott's testimony in L. W. Cook, *Law*, p. 26 n. 84, as drawn from Minutes of meeting, 18 April 1844, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives]. Law had become disaffected with the prophet and his excommunication deeply affected the family. Ann, Isaac, and Sarah rejected the new doctrines, including plural marriage, and became open sympathizers with Law's reform movement. John, however, remained committed to his position in Nauvoo society and to his personal relationship with Joseph Smith (Robert Thomas Scott).

John Scott later went to Utah with wife and children, and served faithfully in church callings and assignments.

126 See H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 267.

127 *Ibid.*, p. 268 wrote:

The party walked on to a point nearly opposite Joseph's store, where a board fence came down to the edge of the river, forming, together with the orchard trees and shrubbery, a suitable retreat where they could converse without any danger of being seen or heard.

128 Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 269. After being summoned to Carthage to stand trial for the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* press by Governor Thomas Ford, the Prophet was defiant, telling Ford that "we shall leave the City forthwith — to lay the facts before the General government." Then, as related in R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, p. 546:

Late Saturday night [June 22, 1844], [Joseph Smith] crossed the swollen Mississippi River. He and Hyrum and Willard Richards bailed the leaky boat with their boots while Porter Rockwell rowed. About daybreak Joseph wrote Emma from Montrose that he was on his way to Washington.

Joseph remained on the Iowa side less than twelve hours. When Rockwell returned for horses he found frightened people in Nauvoo. They feared the posse would tear up the city in search of the Prophet. Vilate Kimball wrote Heber that "some were tryed almost to death to think Joseph should leve them in the hour of danger." Three Mormons crossed the river with a message from the governor saying he would hunt Joseph down if he hid, and guaranteeing him a safe trial if he submitted. Hyrum and Emma favored trusting to God and the courts. At 2 p.m. Joseph write Ford from the riverbank that he was coming in — if a protective posse could be provided. All he asked was that all be done "in due form of law." By 5 o'clock on Sunday afternoon, June 23, Joseph was back in Nauvoo. He left for Carthage on Monday morning, June 24.

- 129 According to Richard S. Law, son of William Law who led the effort against the Prophet's life, his father "with his arms around the neck of the Prophet, was pleading with him to withdraw the doctrine, of plural marriage. ... [William] pleaded for this with Joseph with tears streaming from his eyes. The prophet was also in tears, but he informed [William] that he could not withdraw the doctrine, for God had commanded him to teach it, and condemnation would come upon him if he was not obedient to the commandment" (L. W. Cook, *Law*, pp. 27-28 and B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:220, original source in "An Interesting Testimony," *The Improvement Era*, May 1903, pp. 507-510).

Later, Brigham Young declared that Joseph Smith told him and "scores" of others on many occasions that "if ever there was a truth revealed from heaven through him, it was revealed when that revelation [i.e., on celestial and plural marriage] was given, and if I have to die for any revelation God has given through me I would as readily die for this one as any other. And I sometimes think that I shall have to die for it. It may be that I shall have to forfeit my life to it and if this has to be so, Amen" (B. Young, 7 October 1866).

- 130 "Joseph Smith's two-story Red Brick Store, completed in January 1842 and situated on Water Street west of Joseph Smith's home properties (that is, Homestead and Mansion House), was the center of Joseph Smith's church, civic, and business operations and activities in Nauvoo. A small room on the second story served as the Prophet's office. A larger room was used for meetings of

the municipal council, Nauvoo Legion, Relief Society, and the leading councils and quorums of the Church. Joseph Smith also administered the temple ordinances to selected initiates there beginning on May 4, 1842” (A. L. Baugh et al., “I Roll the Burthen,” p. 13 n. 21).

- 131 This statement was typed between two normally spaced lines.
- 132 The draft *1844/1845 Declaration of the Quorum of the Twelve Regarding Apostolic Succession* lists nine members of the Twelve as being present (see A. L. Baugh et al., “I Roll the Burthen,” p. 13): Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, John Taylor, Amasa Lyman, Willard Richards, and Wilford Woodruff. George A. Smith, an additional member of the Quorum, is not listed as attending, but “there is no extant roll so it is not known if he did or not” (R. K. Esplin, 17 May 2016). All the brethren listed above (in contrast to those discussed below) were of unquestionable faithfulness. Three others who later became members of the Quorum were absent from Nauvoo at that time: William Smith (in the East), John E. Page (in the East), and Lyman Wight (in Wisconsin). There is no record of Sidney Rigdon and William Law attending the morning session, though we cannot be certain of this because we do not have a roll of attendees. Given Law’s absence from most of these meetings, it seems unlikely that he participated, however we know from the afternoon Council minutes that Rigdon attended that later session (R. K. Esplin, 17 May 2016, as a correction and clarification to A. L. Baugh et al., “I Roll the Burthen,” pp. 13-14 n. 22).
- 133 At that time, the initiatory ordinance of washing was performed in large tubs, hence a relatively large quantity of water was required. The buckets were dipped into the barrels in order to fill the tubs.
- 134 James H. Rollins recalled a similar experience of helping Joseph Smith by bringing water to the upper story to be used for the ordinance of washing: “During the spring and summer of 1844, previous to his death, the Prophet told me to assist in carrying water and other commodities to the room above the store. Afterwards I found out it was to give endowments to some of the brethren” (Rollins, James). He reported this experience as occurring “a few days” before another event that occurred “about the first of May” 1844 (ibid.).

- 135 Note that all of the Twelve who were present in Nauvoo that day had already received their endowments (see Endnote 48).
- 136 The "poarch" mentioned by Harris was a landing to the stairway that led to the upper story of the building. The landing, where the barrels of water were apparently hauled up by block-and-tackle arrangement on the occasion described by Dennison, was "opposite a door which opened into Joseph Smith's private office with its window overlooking the Mississippi River" (L. G. Brown, *Sacred Departments*, p. 263). When the upper story was to be used for the performance of temple ordinances, the Prophet's private office in the back of the building would be fitted up for washings and anointings. The endowment proper would be given in the larger Assembly Room at the front of the building (*ibid.*, p. 364).
- 137 The language of Harris describing the Prophet's remarks echoes phrases found in many of the other accounts of this meeting. As Holzapfel and Smoot observe regarding Wilford Woodruff's report of the meeting, these "accounts repeat similar ideas and in some case certain phrases word for word over a period of five decades ... This combined collection of reminiscences does not reveal layers of tradition build upon earlier tellings of the story that have to be peeled back like an onion to get to the original core; instead, the collection reveals the existence of a consistent and stable story repeated for over fifty years" (R. N. Holzapfel et al., *Wilford Woodruff's 1897 testimony*, p. 340).
- 138 I.e., apparently meaning the only external witness present on that very day, independent of the participants in the council meetings later that morning, who might have been accused by apostates of colluding to fabricate the account of this incident. This assumes, of course, that the conjectured dating of the event to 26 March 1844 is correct.
- 139 Milo Andrus, 1814-1893, was baptized in Ohio in 1833. He gathered with the Saints to Ohio and Missouri and was a member of Zion's Camp. He was bishop of the Nauvoo Fifth Ward and a Nauvoo temple ordinance worker. In his autobiography, Andrus wrote: "After we had mourned the loss of our prophet and patriarch a few weeks, during which time I was chosen one of the Nauvoo police, I helped to watch the city by night and worked on the [Nauvoo] temple by day--got it so that the work of the endowments commenced in the fall of 1845 and winter of 1846. I spent six weeks

of the time in the temple and was much blessed” (Milo Andrus, Milo Andrus). Milo’s grandson Milo Andrus Hendricks married Dennison’s niece Mary Addrienne Harris (Descendants of Nathan Harris, Descendants of Nathan Harris). After emigrating to Utah, he served faithfully in many assignments and callings, and raised a large and faithful family.

140 According to D. S. Anderson et al., *Endowment*, p. xxii, individuals who were to receive their endowments “were invited to appear at the temple at a specific time by a man appointed as a messenger. This usually occurred the night before.”

141 D&C 1:30.

142 In his well known study of the quest for religious authority as a factor in the rise of Mormonism, M. De Pillis, *Quest*, p. 77 names “apostolic succession, miracles and ‘gifts’ (as signs of divine approbation), and special revelations” as the “three modes of establishing a theological claim to being the one true teaching church.” “For the Roman Catholic Church the ‘marks’ of the one true church are traditionally four: it is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic” (*ibid.*, p. 77 n. 15). However, De Pillis downplays the importance of the role of apostolic succession in Mormonism, instead highlighting the significance of the idea of “a *prophetic* succession through a dual priesthood” (*ibid.*, p. 77 n. 16):

Mormon readers will ... be aware that Joseph Smith claimed apostolic succession through Peter or, more accurately, Peter, James, and John. But this is far less important to the definition of Mormonism than the belief that the Apostles were “prophets and revelators” in a prophetic succession from Moses on down through Solomon, John the Baptist, and Christ to Joseph Smith.

To a degree, the emphasis of De Pillis is understandable, given that the complete unfolding of the doctrines of priesthood keys and the preeminence of the Quorum of the Twelve in church administration did not occur until the culminating years of Joseph Smith’s life. For example, in an discussion of the role of authority as a potentially critical element in early Latter-day Saint understanding of the apostasy in 1830-1834, Richard E. Bennett and Amber J. Seidel, after citing Parley P. Pratt’s late recollection of the importance of “the apostleship and authority [to administer ordinances being] restored to the earth” (P. P. Pratt, *Autobiography*



2000, p. 32), conclude (R. E. Bennett et al., *World in Darkness*, p. 95):

Pratt's words are poignant and informative but nevertheless autobiographical and certainly not contemporary to our time [i.e., 1830-1834]. If the very earliest missionaries taught the loss of authority, it seems not to have been an area of particular emphasis or even the distinguishing characteristic. More often they taught the evil effects of the apostasy, the immediate need to come out of the world, and to gather to Zion. Early Mormonism was not presented as merely a denomination per se in contrast with all other churches, but as the restoration of all things, the very dispensation of the fulness of times, modern Israel preparing for the millennial day.

Although the quotation from Bennett might be strictly true, it may mislead unless it is also understood that from the beginning the elders and leaders of the Restoration claimed, spoke of, made a point of restored authority. The familiar language of priesthood restoration did not develop until later in the 1830s, but the claims of restored authority go back to the very beginning of the Church.

For related discussion on the role that questions about authority may have played in the face of religious pluralism in the time of Joseph Smith, see R. L. Bushman et al., Roundtable; M. S. Hill, *Quest for Refuge*.

- 143 M. J. Grow, *Whore of Babylon*, p. 139. For more on the respective conversions of the Brownson brothers to Catholicism and Mormonism, see M. J. Grow, "I Consider the Proper Authority."

- 144 Joseph Smith — History 1:8.

- 145 J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Thomas Bullock, Report 16 June 1844, pp. 381-382, with some additional clarifying interpretations for terms added. The argument that any branch broken off of Catholicism has even less claim to authority than the Roman church has been echoed by later LDS writers. For example, Elder James E. Talmage wrote (J. E. Talmage, *Great Apostasy*, p. 160):

The Roman Catholic Church is at least consistent in its claim that a line of succession in the priesthood has been maintained from the apostolic age to the present, though the claim is utterly untenable in the light of a rational interpretation of history. But the fact remains that the Catholic Church is the

only organization venturing to assert the present possession of the holy priesthood by unbroken descent from the apostles of our Lord. The Church of England, chief among the Protestant sections, and all other dissenting churches, are by their own admission and by the circumstances of their origin, man-made institutions, without a semblance of claim to the powers and authority of the holy priesthood.

Concerns about the loss of priesthood authority by religious reformers are also a common theme in LDS writings on the apostasy. For example, Elder Tad R. Callister writes (T. R. Callister, *Inevitable Apostasy*, p. 301; cf. p. 389):

Roger Williams (AD 1603-1683), the founder of Rhode Island and a strong proponent of religious freedom, sensed something was missing in his day and age: “The Apostasy ... hath so far corrupted all [Christian churches], that there can be no recovery out of that apostasy until Christ shall send forth new apostles to plant churches anew” [compare E. B. Bean, *Struggles and Triumphs*, p. 239]. At one point, he declined to continue as pastor of the Baptist Church because there was “no regularly constituted church on earth, *nor any person qualified to administer any church ordinance; nor can there be until new apostles are sent by the Great Head of the Church for whose coming I am seeking*” [W. C. Bryant, *Picturesque America*, p. 502. J. Green, *King Ratbod’s Dilemma*, p. 276 has since clarified that this statement is not an actual quotation from Williams, though it “does accurately represent beliefs that [he] held during his lifetime.” For more on this issue, see also pp. 273-276]. In this priesthood vacuum Charles Wesley, the brother of John Wesley (AD 1703-1791), who founded Methodism, recognized that men were taking divine authority upon themselves. They were in effect nullifying God’s mandate: “Ye have *not* chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you” (John 15:16, emphasis added). After John Wesley ordained Thomas Coke a “superintendent” to administer the sacraments to Methodists, his brother Charles wrote [J. Vickers, *Thomas Coke*, p. 101. For more background on this verse, see pp. 100-102. For current views on the wider context of the controversy between Charles and John Wesley on separation from the Church of England and Methodist ordinations, see H. D. Rack, *Charles Wesley and Early Methodism*, pp. 41, 45, 53; H. D. Rack, *Reasonable*

*Enthusiast*, pp. 506-526; J. A. Newton, *Brothers in Arms*, pp. 63-65]:

So easily are Bishops made  
By man's or woman's whim?  
W[esley], his hands on C[oke] hath laid,  
But who laid hands on him?

146 D&C 1:30.

- 147 Elder Whitney's biographer identifies the Catholic scholar as Dr. John M. Reiner (D. B. Horne, *Life of Orson F. Whitney*, p. 181). Reiner was a convert to Catholicism from Judaism (Professors Wrote Letters). He joined the faculty at the Roman Catholic Augustinian College at Villanova, Pennsylvania in 1901, and is listed in 1904-1905 with the following credentials: "Ph.D., LL.D., Professor of Civics. History and History of Philosophy" (E. F. Jenkins, History). He remained on the faculty until his retirement.

In an article in the *New York Times*, Reiner is characterized as a "famed biblical scholar" (Professors Wrote Letters). He was eloquent and vigorous in his defense of his views, and not afraid of confrontation (see, e.g., J. M. Reiner, *Books of the Wars*). A departmental history reported: "He was a very influential man: Father Delurey had a high opinion of him and sought his advice on many things" (E. F. Jenkins, History). By the end of his first year as a faculty member, Reiner was a sufficiently prominent figure, among the "most distinguished figures of the Catholic church, representatives of foreign nations, and of bench and bar" who were present at the university on 18 June 1902, to have been specifically named as the one who accompanied United States President Grover Cleveland when he came to Villanova to receive an honorary doctorate (Catholic College).

In 1898, Reiner visited Salt Lake City and delivered a discourse in the Tabernacle (J. M. Reiner, *How Beautiful*). During his visit, he was hosted by several prominent members and leaders of the Church (D. B. Horne, *Life of Orson F. Whitney*, p. 181, citing a journal entry for 18 January 1898). The subsequent correspondence of Dr. Reiner and Elder B. H. Roberts was published in the *Improvement Era* (B. H. Roberts et al., Dr. John M. Reiner. See also Elder Roberts' reference to Reiner's discourse in B. H. Roberts, *Mormonism and Christianity*, p. 384).

- 148 See, e.g., O. F. Whitney, *Thoughts*, pp. 267-268; O. F. Whitney, *Strength*, p. 6; O. F. Whitney, *Through Memory's Halls*, pp. 222-223 (reprinted in L. Richards, *Marvelous* (1950), p. 3; D. B. Horne, *Life of Orson F. Whitney*, p. 182). The full story reads:

Many years ago a learned man, a member of the Roman Catholic Church, came to Utah and spoke from the stand of the Salt Lake Tabernacle. I became well-acquainted with him, and we conversed freely and frankly. A great scholar, with perhaps a dozen languages at his tongue's end, he seemed to know all about theology, law, literature, science and philosophy. One day he said to me: "You Mormons are all ignoramuses. You don't even know the strength of your own position. It is so strong that there is only one other tenable in the whole Christian world, and that is the position of the Catholic Church. The issue is between Catholicism and Mormonism. If we are right, you are wrong; if you are right, we are wrong; and that's all there is to it. The Protestants haven't a leg to stand on. For, if we are wrong, they are wrong with us, since they were a part of us and went out from us; while if we are right, they are apostates whom we cut off long ago. If we have the apostolic succession from St. Peter, as we claim, there is no need of Joseph Smith and Mormonism; but if we have not that succession, then such a man as Joseph Smith was necessary, and Mormonism's attitude is the only consistent one. It is either the perpetuation of the gospel from ancient times, or the restoration of the gospel in latter days."

Elder Whitney replied: "I agree with you, Doctor, in nearly all that you have said, but don't deceive yourself with the notion that we 'Mormons' are not aware of the strength of our position" (O. F. Whitney, *Thoughts*, p. 268). See also Elder Whitney's report of a similar nature of an encounter with an Episcopal bishop who told him that "the Episcopalians have an unbroken succession of authority all down the centuries, and if Joseph had formed their acquaintance, he never would have gone to the trouble of organizing another church" (*ibid.*, p. 269).

- 149 J. M. Reiner, *How Beautiful*, pp. 359, 360, 362.
- 150 Stephen Howe Webb. See also the moving tribute of Samuel Rocha (S. D. Rocha, *Excess of Stephen Webb*), the loving remembrance of the Center for Interfaith Cooperation (R. E. Homer, *In Memoriam*), and the article that Alonzo Gaskill is preparing for publication

- in the *BYU Religious Education Review* (A. L. Gaskill, Stephen H. Webb).
- 151 R. E. Homer, Memories of Stephen H. Webb (19 April 2016). Unpublished manuscript in the possession of the author. Used with permission of Ruth Ellen Homer and Diane Timmerman, the wife of Stephen H. Webb.
  - 152 See Stephen H. Webb. Besides providing a book list, Wikipedia also lists many of Stephen's most popular articles. He also wrote dozens of articles that can be found at <http://www.firstthings.com>.
  - 153 S. H. Webb, *Jesus Christ*; S. H. Webb, *Mormon Christianity*; S. H. Webb et al., *Catholic and Mormon*. See also some of his other widely read essays and comments on Mormonism (e.g., S. H. Webb, *Mormonism Obsessed with Christ*; S. Salai, *Catholic and Mormon*; D. L. Paulsen et al., *How Do We Categorize Mormons*; J. Walker, *Mormonism Is Different*; M. De Groote, *Popular Theologian*; *Catholic-Mormon Fireside*) as well as his talks at FairMormon and Interpreter Foundation events (S. H. Webb, *Why Mormon Materialism*; M. Barker et al., *Evening*).
  - 154 R. E. Homer, Memories of Stephen H. Webb (19 April 2016); D. Timmerman, April 27, 2016.
  - 155 "The Mormon Living Room Dialogue was held at the residence of John L. and Ruth Ellen Homer, Fishers, Indiana on February 18, 2016. This event was organized by the Education Committee of the Center for Interfaith Cooperation, Indianapolis, Indiana. I co-chair the committee. My CIC article reporting the Dialogue is archived at the following link and Steve is shown in the photo. <http://www.centerforinterfaithcooperation.org/archives/8203>" (R. E. Homer, Memories of Stephen H. Webb (19 April 2016)).
  - 156 Russ Adamak told me that a short time later he had the chance to tell Stephen about the incident reported by Elder Boyd K. Packer of when he and others of the Twelve and Seventy visited the Vor Frue Church in Copenhagen, Denmark in the company of President Spencer W. Kimball. In sight of Thorvaldsen's statues of the Christus and of the Twelve Apostles of the primitive church, he noted the statue of Peter who held a set of heavy keys and declared: "We hold the real keys and we use them every day" (B. K. Packer, *Holy Temple*, p. 83).
  - 157 S. H. Webb et al., *Catholic and Mormon*, pp. 10, 13.

- 158 B. Young, *History 1801-1844*, 16 July 1844, p. 105. See the full recounting of this incident in M. V. J. Backman, *Keys Are Right Here*, p. 107.
- 159 “To us,” wrote Orson Hyde, “were committed the Keys of the Kingdom, and every gift, key and power, that Joseph ever had” (O. Hyde, Letter to Ebenezer Robinson (19 September 1844), in *Items of Personal History of the Editor*, No. 12). It is important to remember, however, that these gifts, keys, and powers were not given to Brigham Young and the apostles in the Council of Fifty meeting on 26 March 1844, but over a period of time in the weeks and months before that Council was organized.

Elder Parley P. Pratt (P. P. Pratt, *Proclamation*, pp. 151-152) also declared that the Twelve “hold the keys of the ministry and ordinances of salvation in this last kingdom,” having had conferred upon them by the Prophet “all the ordinances, keys, covenants, endowments, and sealing ordinances of the priesthood,” who had “set before them a pattern of all things pertaining to the sanctuary [i.e., temple] and the endowment therein,” “according to the heavenly vision.” Elder Pratt continued:

[Joseph Smith] has organized the kingdom of God. — We will extend its dominion.

He has restored the fulness of the Gospel. — We will spread it abroad.

He has laid the foundations of Nauvoo. — We will build it up.

He has laid the foundation of the Temple. — We will bring up the top-stone with shouting.

He has kindled a fire. — We will fan the flame.

He has kindled up the dawn of a day of glory. — We will bring it to its meridian [i.e., noonday] splendor.

He was a “little one,” and became a thousand. We are a small one, and will become a strong nation [see Isaiah 60:22].

In short, he has quarried the stone from the mountain; we will cause it to become a great mountain and fill the whole earth [see Daniel 2:34-35].

While the testator lived, the testament was not of full power [see Hebrews 9:16-17]; all that was done was preparatory. The chaos of materials prepared by him must now be placed in order

in the building [see Ephesians 2:21]. The laws revealed by him must now be administered in all their strictness and beauty. The measures commenced by him must now be carried into successful operation.

- 160 Ibid., p. 151. See D&C 132:7. In the words of Elder Pratt, Joseph Smith:

proceeded to confer upon Elder Young, the President of the Twelve, the keys of the sealing power [see Matthew 16:19, 18:18], as conferred in the last days by the spirit and power of Elijah, in order to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth should be smitten with a curse [see Malachi 4:5-6; 3 Nephi 25:5-6; D&C 2:1-2, 27:9, 110:13-16, 128:17, 138:46-47; Joseph Smith — History 1:38-39].

This last key of the priesthood is the most sacred of all, and pertains exclusively to the First Presidency of the Church, without whose sanction and approval or authority, no sealing blessing shall be administered pertaining to things of the resurrection and the life to come.

- 161 A. F. Ehat, *Date and Meaning*.  
 162 J. R. Clark, *Messages*, Revelation given through President John Taylor, 14 April 1883, 2:354.  
 163 G. E. Stevenson, *Where Are the Keys*.  
 164 The Seventies record book under the date of 6 February 1846 stated (as cited in D. S. Anderson et al., *Endowment*, 1:587):

The [news] having arrived that the Twelve and a large company with them are about starting for the West, such is the hurry and hustle of getting away, that for the last two days no endowments have been done. But this morning the doors are opened again for this purpose and the crowd is greater than ever, such is the anxiety of the people to get their blessings in this house.

- 165 Ibid., 1:603.  
 166 Ibid., 1:609, 614.  
 167 "Members of this company were probably received through the veil early on Feb. 8" (ibid., 1:617).

- 168 H. H. Cummings, Conspiracy. Note that the page numbers in this reprint do not match the page numbers in the original article. Page 1 in this reprint corresponds to page 251 in the *Contributor* publication.
- 169 H. H. Cummings, 8 August 1932.
- 170 R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, p. 528. For a more complete biographical essay on William Law, along with transcriptions of his Nauvoo diary, correspondence, and a late interview, see L. W. Cook, *Law*.
- 171 L. W. Cook, *Law*, p. 25. See Diary of William Law, 1 January 1844 in *ibid.*, p. 27.
- 172 A. F. Ehat, Ordinances, p. 74. For the full statements by William Law and his son Richard on events during the latter half of 1843, see B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:218-220.
- 173 See, e.g., W. Clayton, Diaries, 12 June 1844.
- 174 L. W. Cook, *Law*, 8 January 1844, p. 46.
- 175 *Ibid.*
- 176 *Ibid.*, 13 January 1844, p. 47.
- 177 *Ibid.*, 2 January 1844, p. 38.
- 178 *Ibid.*, 4 January 1844, p. 42.
- 179 *Ibid.*, 8 January 1844, p. 46.
- 180 *Ibid.*
- 181 *Ibid.*, 13 January 1844, p. 47.
- 182 J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 27 March 1844, 6:278-280.
- 183 *Ibid.*, 6:278.
- 184 L. W. Cook, *Law*, 29 March 1844, pp. 47-48.
- 185 *Ibid.*, 1 June 1844, p. 54.
- 186 *Ibid.*, p. 29. See *ibid.*, 29 March 1844, p. 48 and 15 April 1844, p. 50.
- 187 J. Smith, Jr. et al, *Journals, 1843-1844*, 18 April 1844, pp. 231-232.
- 188 Summarized in A. F. Ehat, 26 May 2016; A. F. Ehat, 27 May 2016.
- 189 L. W. Cook, *Law*, 13 May 1844, p. 53. Note that these words have been crossed out in Law's diary.



- 190 See transcript of John Scott's testimony in the minutes of William Law's 18 April 1844 excommunication trial, as published in B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:230.
- 191 L. W. Cook, *Law*, 29 March 1844, p. 47.
- 192 See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 25-27 n. 84; B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:218-246.
- 193 H. H. Cummings, *Conspiracy*, p. 265.
- 194 L. W. Cook, *Law*, 1 June 1844, pp. 54-55.
- 195 B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:398. On the assassination of Joseph Smith and its aftermath, see D. H. Oaks et al., *Carthage Conspiracy*; D. H. Oaks, *Legally Suppressing*; L. L. Baker, *Murder*, R. S. Wicks et al., *Junius and Joseph*; R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, pp. 537-561.
- 196 G. A. Madsen, *Serving as a Guardian*, pp. 353-354.
- 197 *Ibid.*, pp. 354-355.



**A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR MORMON  
THEOLOGY:  
ADAM S. MILLER'S *FUTURE MORMON***

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**Jeff Lindsay**

Review of Adam S. Miller, *Future Mormon: Essays in Mormon Theology*  
(Salt Lake City, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2016)

Adam S. Miller's *Future Mormon*, his collection of "Essays in Mormon Theology," is one of the most intriguing reads I've encountered in LDS studies. It is a book intended to make students of Mormonism, especially those within the Church, challenge lazy assumptions in our theological thinking and rethink our approach to help us build a stronger faith. Some of Miller's work here will be readily grasped and appreciated by LDS students, while other parts may be more radical or opaque. From my perspective, the gems should make the book a valued addition to any LDS library, in spite of my occasional disagreement and failure to grasp a few sections. I look forward to more from this author.

Miller's writing spans many disciplines and topics, ranging from philosophy, science, psychology, biblical exegesis, modern literature, several aspects of science, and even network theory. Miller delivers significant insights on the kind of topics one might expect from a book on "Mormon theology": treatments of charity and grace with analysis of Paul and modern LDS scriptures, free agency, the role of materialism in a religion that disavows an immaterial God and declares that all spirit is matter, dealing with our theological opponents, the role of the Book of Mormon in our religion, and the integration of evolution with faith. In two essays he responds to works of Terryl Givens, a highly appropriate author to include. On the other hand, readers may be challenged for the good by treatments of topics far outside the scope of what we might normally place under the label of theology. This includes a detailed

discussion on Lacanian psychoanalysis and a review of some themes from a modern novelist, Cormac McCarthy.

A strength of Miller's is his ability to reframe questions in ways that expose lazy assumptions or hidden agendas behind a question that ultimately is weak or "thin." Thus, in his shortest essay, "The Body of Christ" (Chapter 12), he reveals that the perpetually raised question, "Is the Church true?," is really the kind of question about an institution that an institution would like to be asked, for it serves the institution well. Miller is not a dissident anxious to spray-paint a loud "No!" on anybody's wall of faith. But as a faithful teacher who accepts and understands the divine origins and authority of the Church, he wisely asks us to reconsider where our inquiry should be focused, and that is on Christ:

If we want to get the right kind of answer to our questions about the church, we shouldn't ask first about the church. We should first ask about Christ.

If your life depends on the question you're asking, then ask a question that is rich enough to cover the whole span of that (messy, unfinished, broken, vulnerable) life. Rather than asking if the church is true, ask something like: Is this the body of Christ? Is Christ manifest here? Does his blood flow in these veins? Does his spirit breathe in these lungs? Does forgiveness flourish here? Can I see, here, the body of Christ?

This is an appropriately thick question, a load-bearing question.

Load-bearing questions are frequently encountered in this volume.

### Deep Reading of Scripture

For my perspective, the first few essays were among the most helpful. His third essay, "Reading Signs or Repeating Symptoms: Reading Jacob 7," powerfully illustrates both his abilities to challenge assumptions, to reframe questions, and to provide deep readings of the scriptures. There he surprised me by swiftly criticizing Jacob's rather unchristian behavior in defending the "doctrine of Christ" (Jacob 7:3) from the apostate Sherem. Miller's treatment sidesteps one of the most frequently discussed issues in this incident: who was Sherem? Was he a Jaredite, as suggested by Nibley and Milner;<sup>1</sup> a Lamanite; a Mulekite trader, as Kevin Christensen

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1 Alan C. Miner, *Step by Step Through the Book of Mormon*, vol. 2 (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 1996); [http://stepbystep.alancminer.com/jacob\\_7](http://stepbystep.alancminer.com/jacob_7).

proposes;<sup>2</sup> one of the New World's indigenous peoples amalgamated into Nephite society; or a Nephite, perhaps a descendant of Zoram, whose identity is suppressed in the text to avoid giving him added credibility, as plausibly suggested by A. Keith Thompson?<sup>3</sup> His unstated identity is not vital for a deep reading of Jacob's account, where, in light of Miller's analysis, the real meat may lie not in Sherem's story but in Jacob's.

Miller at first raised red flags with me by suggesting that "Jacob appears more interested in defending a certain kind of Christian doctrine than in enacting a certain kind of Christian behavior."<sup>4</sup> Further, Jacob is said to not provide the courtesy of listening to Sherem, who has made strident efforts to seek out the unwilling Jacob. When they do converse, Jacob only sees Sherem as a stereotype of an apostate, not as a human being with genuine concerns who should at least be heard before being condemned. The criticism of the great prophet Jacob seemed harsh and initially made me wonder about Miller's intent. Those assessments were subjective and could be debated. But then Miller led me to a relatively objective conclusion from the text that I had not previously considered: Jacob was simply and clearly *wrong* when he predicted that even if God did give Sherem a sign, it would not change him, and indeed, he would deny it because he was "of the devil" (Jacob 7:14). Jacob did use his prophetic power to call down a divine smiting upon Sherem, who then does exactly the *opposite* of what Jacob said he would do: he repents and confesses he was wrong, bearing witness of God's power, and brings many souls to Christ before he dies (Jacob 7:21–23). Sherem's deathbed conversion apparently was far more effective in converting the Nephites than Jacob's preaching.

I was astonished that I had not seen it this way before. I had overlooked the complexity of a text that, while written by a man who saw the Sherem incident as a one-dimensional story of a good guy vs. a bad guy in serious need of smiting, offered much more than meets the eye. A deeper reading shows Jacob, in spite of being the Lord's authorized leader and defender of the faith, was wrong in assessing Sherem and probably overly harsh, aloof, and judgmental. His defense of the doctrine

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2 Kevin Christensen, "The Deuteronomist De-Christianizing of the Old Testament," *FARMS Review*, 16/2 (2004), 86–88; <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1459&index=4>.

3 A. Keith Thompson, "Who Was Sherem?," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 14 (2015): 1–15; <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/who-was-sherem/>.

4 Adam S. Miller, *Future Mormon: Essays in Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2016), 27.

of Christ missed the Christlike behavior that is always more important than the theology.

Miller's deep reading of the text takes us further into Jacob's soul. I have long been intrigued by how different Jacob sounds from other writers. As others have noted,<sup>5</sup> Jacob is much more concerned with issues of feeling and uses unique expressions to describe the souls of people who are, for example, figuratively pierced with daggers (Jacob 2:9) as a consequence of the bad behavior of the men in their lives. But after reading Miller, I realized that his sensitivity to the victims of immorality and other sins was not matched by sensitivity to Sherem. Toward Sherem, as Miller points out, something sets off Jacob from the start, opening old wounds and making it impossible for Jacob to see Sherem as anything other than an imposing shadow of his abusers and enemies, Laman and Lemuel. Like Sherem, Laman and Lemuel were defenders of the ways of Jerusalem when they left it with its focus on the law and not the Messiah. Most interestingly, after Sherem's defeat and repentance, Jacob for the first time mentions making efforts to reach the Lamanites (Jacob 7:24). Miller closes swiftly, almost abruptly, as he often does in this volume, with a carefully stated point that opens the mind and leaves us wanting more and thinking more: "Then, for the first time in decades, Jacob dares to hope that his brothers aren't lost forever. This is the doctrine of Christ."

At this point, I couldn't wait to discuss this essay with my wife and realized I was going to enjoy learning more from Adam Miller.

I was also impressed with his reading of 1 Nephi 1 and the visions of Lehi mentioned there. He shows from the context that Lehi most likely was offering sacrifice upon an altar when "there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him, and he saw and heard much" (1 Nephi 1:6). Lehi had heard the Lord's call to preach repentance and was "going forth" — but going where and why? Miller plausibly fills in the gaps by suggesting that he was going forth into the desert to offer burnt offerings for the sins of the people. And there, upon the altar, the pillar of fire, like other pillars of fire in the scriptures, is associated with sacrifice, altars, and revelation.

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5 John S. Tanner, "Literary Reflections on Jacob and His Descendants," in *The Book of Mormon: Jacob through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy*, eds. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr., (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990), 251–69; <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/book-mormon-jacob-through-words-mormon-learn-joy/literary-reflections-jacob-and-his>.

In a subsequent vision shortly after the encounter with the pillar of fire, Lehi sees One descending from heaven with twelve others following Him, and that One comes to Lehi and gives him a book. Miller again casts new light on this scene by asking good questions. Why give Lehi a book to communicate when the Lord is there and can simply speak directly? “Why does the one descend from heaven in power and glory only to accomplish the mute handoff of a text?”<sup>6</sup>

There is not an easy answer to this question and a variety of related ones that Miller raises. But a meaningful response can be found in Nephi’s writings, even in his opening verse, which Miller carefully analyzes to show that Nephi is teaching the “mysteries of God,” such as the mystery of how it is possible to suffer many afflictions and yet be “highly favored” of the Lord. The detours, the complexities of God’s dealings with us, whether it is being forced to deal with a text well removed from its divine origins rather than communing face-to-face with God, or having to travel eight years through the Arabian Peninsula instead of taking a quick, direct route to the Promised Land, or even the mystery of why God couldn’t just save Jerusalem instead of allowing it to be destroyed and requiring Lehi’s family to flee it, are all part of a greater pattern in how God deals with man. Giving us what we think we want, such as leaving the gold plates around to impress modern scholars, would not give us what we really need. It would not address the real problem. Miller reminds us that the real aim of God’s dealings with man and of the Gospel itself “is to show us what we thought we wanted isn’t what God, in all his goodness and wisdom and mercy, is actually trying to give.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Advances in Understanding Grace and Charity**

The theme of charity or love comes up frequently in Miller’s discourses, and with good reason. He thoroughly understands how central charity is to the real substance of the Gospel. In exploring its role, he challenges old paradigms and adds new vitality to our understanding of God’s love and the role of grace. His lead essay, “A General Theory of Grace,” appears to have a bold objective that I feel is ably fulfilled. Miller argues that grace is already given, that it is and always has been at the core of Who God is and how He does things. The universe abounds in grace offered to us. Sin, though, is a departure from grace, a refusal to accept the gift that is offered. Miller suggests that the temptation to reject grace comes at least

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6 Miller, *Future Mormon*, 20.

7 Ibid., 24.

in part because each new aspect of grace that God tries to give us seems like a loss of something we felt we already had, so we shrink away from added grace.<sup>8</sup> One tactic we often use to resist grace is to seemingly put God in *our* debt by our obedience, imagining that He owes us for our righteousness. As a result, “religion may be, in some aspects, sin’s most successful strategy.”<sup>9</sup>

A true understanding of the relationship between grace and the law must be founded on the love of Christ. The law is a vehicle of grace. Like our lives, like this earth we live on, like the wonders of nature that surround us, the law itself is a gift from God to bless us. But we injure the truth if we think we of our own selves can fulfill the law.

Only grace can fulfill the law. We fulfill the law when we receive what is given as the grace that it is, and, then, when we respond with grace in turn. In other words, the end of the law is love and only love can fulfill the law. ... The point of the law is love. ... [O]bedience in itself cannot fulfill the law.<sup>10</sup>

I like the way Miller expresses grace as rooted in love and fulfilled in love. Understanding grace not as a backup plan but as God’s basic *modus operandi* at numerous levels deepens the eternal significance of grace and reveals its inherent linkage to charity. I disagree, though, with Miller’s treatment of the issue of compulsion associated with the law:

Normally, the point of the law is to compel obedience, not love. As a result, making love the point of the law introduces a kind of knot — a kind of torsion or structural catch-22 — into the heart of the law itself because love, if compelled, is no longer love. Love that is not freely given is not love. Love, as the end of the law, divides the law against itself. Love hamstringing the law in relation to its own assigned end because the law, working to compel obedience, cannot, in this instance, be fulfilled by way of obedience. It can, instead, only be fulfilled by a love that cannot — and must not — compel. The law must compromise its own integrity in order to achieve its assigned end. The law, compromised in this way, is broken. Not only is the law broken by our individual acts of disobedience but the

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8 Ibid., 3–4.

9 Ibid., 6.

10 Ibid.



law is, in general, broken by the grace that fulfills it. The law is too small, too weak a vessel to contain it.<sup>11</sup>

In the next section of the essay, the issue of compulsion comes up again:

We find ourselves, then, in a bind. Not only are we incapable of perfect obedience but perfect obedience, were it possible, still could not fulfill the law. The law cannot be fulfilled by way of obedience. It can only be fulfilled by a love that, unlike obedience, must be freely given and cannot be commanded or compelled. As Dieter F. Uchtdorf puts it, it is clear that “salvation cannot be bought with the currency of obedience.” What, then, is to be done? We must love. The law must be rescued from itself by way of love.<sup>12</sup>

I agree with much of Miller’s essay, but the treatment of *compulsion* confuses me. Love can be commanded and frequently is commanded. The purpose of a commandment is not to compel — that would seem to defeat the grace that is behind the law. Rather, I see the commandments God gives us as tools to teach, to guide, and to *encourage* rather than compel or force desirable behaviors in us, including charity. Is love no longer love if encouraged? If urgently taught? If rewarded? If commanded? There are different levels of love, reflecting different grades of spontaneity, commitment, and purity. If some of us need reminders and frequent pleading through God’s various instruments of grace, the commandments included, to help us move from love in theory to practice, from love in its infancy to mature fullness, I suggest that this does not destroy love. It points the way God in His grace helps us develop love.

Building on the concept of grace as the ongoing basic work of God, Miller also points out that the Atonement, “properly understood, is a mode of creation. Atonement is an aspect of God’s *ongoing* creative work.”<sup>13</sup> I think this is a vital point with interesting implications that could be further explored and applied to, say, speculative theories of the universal vs. non-universal scope of the Atonement of Christ.

Miller then brings his insight about the Atonement back to the issue of love and the law:

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11 Ibid., 6–7.

12 Ibid., 8.

13 Ibid.

Christ saves us from sin — from our active suppression of God’s grace — by displaying in an incomparable fashion the very thing we had sinfully been trying to hide by hijacking the law: the fact that God’s grace is already and overwhelmingly available. Displaying what we’d suppressed, Christ gives *again* the grace of creation (and re-creation) that God was already giving.<sup>14</sup>

Then, when we can accept his sometimes terrifying grace, we are recreated in Christ and become capable of love and of properly fulfilling the law. We are created again, born again, capable of becoming more like Christ through this ongoing creative work based on grace. This strikes me as a well-rooted expression of solid LDS and Christian theology, and I congratulate Miller for this valuable addition, in spite of my not quite following some arguments made along the way.

Grace is also the topic of his essay in Chapter 7, “Reflections on President Uchtdorf’s ‘The Gift of Grace.’” Here he further discusses the relationship between creation, redemption, and grace. Creation, he explains, “is a present-tense, ongoing event,”<sup>15</sup> and grace is at the heart of it:

Grace is this massive, ongoing act of divinely organized creation that involves an uncountable host of agents, human and nonhuman, embedded in irreducible webs of stewardship, consecration, sacrifice, and interdependence. “Glory” is one name for God’s grace as it continually brews out these massive, creative networks of divinely enabled agents.<sup>16</sup>

I like this description of creation and grace as a brew with “massive, creative networks.” Sin is also given new light, or new darkness, in this framework:

Sin is our rejection of this original and ongoing grace. Sin is our refusal of some part of creation. It is a refusal of our having to be part of creation. Or, even better, it is a refusal of our own createdness. Sin is our proud and fearful refusal of our dependence on a world that we didn’t ask for, can’t control, and can’t escape.<sup>17</sup>

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14 Ibid., 9.

15 Ibid., 67.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

Miller deftly deals with the issue of grace versus works by explaining why we are often asking the wrong question in such discussions. We normally frame the debate by asking how we get the salvation that we want — is it by works, by grace alone, or some combination? But asking about how we get what we want misses the point by emphasizing what we want:

It isn't a question of whether I'll get what I *wanted* either by way of works or by way of grace. It's a question of whether I'll assent to the grace of what I did *not* want to get and to the grace of who I did *not* want to be. Foremost among the things God is trying to give me is, well, me — this body, this mind, this weakness, this hunger, this passing away. Redemption involves my willingness, first, to just be this hungry, weak, failing thing that I already am. Redemption involves my willingness to accept that gift and treat it as a gift. This grace is free but it's certainly not cheap.<sup>18</sup>

Miller sees God's grace as abundant, ongoing, willful, intense, and even obvious, "hidden in plain sight," in our lungs and beneath our feet, already given from a God who is waiting for us to accept it and receive more.<sup>19</sup>

Overall, there is much to appreciate in his treatment of grace, a vital aspect of LDS theology that we Latter-day Saints often discuss too casually.

Incidentally, sometimes Miller's use of scriptures that refer to the law might benefit from explicit recognition that the phrase "the law" often refers to the Law of Moses and not the concept of law and commandments *per se*. From a theological perspective, fulfilling the Law of Moses may have significantly different meaning and implications than the concept of keeping God's commandments in general, and I felt that at least a brief discussion addressing those issues would have been helpful to some readers.

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18 Ibid., 68.

19 Ibid., 69–70.

## The Advanced Fruits of Grace in This Life: “Early Onset Postmortality”

I love the title of Miller’s fourth essay, “Early Onset Postmortality.” Here he notes that receiving God’s grace in this life can bring us to a condition where we enjoy many of the benefits of the next life right now. While many Latter-day Saints question fellow Christians who claim they have already been saved, Miller points out how salvation can and should be experienced now “as a present tense reality” that he calls *early onset postmortality*, a state in which we discover our day of judgment has already come before our life ends. In this state, free from worrying about whether we are reaching our goal or not, we are “no longer mortal but not yet immortal,” and in this state can “discover what it means to be human.”<sup>20</sup> While death is on its way, it has passed and been rendered toothless.<sup>21</sup>

This essay is valuable if only to help Latter-day Saints better appreciate the feelings of fellow Christians who feel they are already saved and need not be worried about their eternal state. At the same time, I am unclear on how we or our fellow born-again Christians can accept this state of salvation without recognizing the possibility of falling from grace, as Paul fervently warns (e.g., 1 Corinthians 9:27, 10:12; Romans 11:21–22; Galatians 5:4; Philippians 2:12, 3:12–14; Hebrews 3:12–14, 4:1, 11, 16, 6:4–6).

Miller delves into different kinds of time, discussing “messianic time,” “operational time,” “secular time,” and a “second ‘operational’ time.” In spite of interesting appeals to science-based analogies such as the dark light of stars so distant and moving away so fast that their light will never reach us, I found the discussion of these types of time to be opaque and beyond my grasp. Yet I did enjoy the creative use of material from Moby Dick to further illustrate the fearless life we can live in whatever time remains for us here after accepting the riches of God’s grace, and eventually realized that what Miller was writing in this essay was more poetry than analytical discourse. I do not understand it fully, but found it rich and probably worth coming back to later to digest once again.

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20 Ibid., 35.

21 Ibid., 36.

## Room for Debate

Miller offers a variety of perspectives meant to topple conventional ways of thinking. His approach asks new questions and shows that some widespread theological views based on common interpretations of LDS scriptures are open to further discussion, refinement, and debate. Naturally, as part of this debate, some of his views can be challenged, which I think he would welcome as part of the conversation his work should stir.

For example, in two essays, he reviews works by Terryl Givens (*The God Who Weeps* in Chapter 5 and *Wrestling the Angel* in Chapter 6). He shows great respect for those important works but points out some flaws and offers a few alternate views. These essays of Miller's set an excellent example of thoughtful and respectful disagreement in a conversation that can engage others and broaden thinking. But in some cases, I think the critique of Givens is flawed.

### Givens and Nietzsche

In "*The God Who Weeps: Notes, Amens, and Disagreements*,"<sup>22</sup> Miller critiques Givens' discussion of the importance of the premortal existence in Mormon theology. In typical discussions of LDS theology, Latter-day Saints point to our co-eternal nature and ancient premortal roots as vital in understanding free agency, for if our nature and soul or intelligence were entirely created and determined by God, how could we truly be responsible for what we choose and do? Understanding our ancient status as premortal beings and our eternal nature helps us appreciate who we are in this life. But Miller suspects our theology here may not be as clear and logical as we like to think. He suggests that when Givens speaks of our need to have "an identity that lies deeper than our body, moored beyond actions, reaching past memory," his approach verges on nihilism:

You must, of course, decide for yourself, but I endorse Nietzsche's sharp critique of our Christian tendency to devalue the present world by anchoring its true meaning and substance in another. The irony, in this respect, is that *Weeps* is well aware of the Nietzschean critique and it, too, wants to agree with Nietzsche. ... But a sensitivity to this Nietzschean problem never shows up in any of the book's many celebrations

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22 Ibid., Chapter 5, 45–55.

of the doctrine of a pre-world as an essential supplement to this world's poverty.<sup>23</sup>

Miller then criticizes the "ideal pre-self" he attributes to Givens, though in my reading, that ideal state is not our pre-self but being in the presence of the Father.<sup>24</sup> Speaking of the veil of forgetfulness that divides us from the full knowledge of God that we once had in his presence, Givens approvingly quotes Philip Barlow, who writes that the veil "funnels the bulk of our attention to the here and now: on the time, people, problems, and opportunities of this day, this moment."<sup>25</sup> Givens' emphasis on our eternal nature and premortal existence is not an ironic neglect of the Nietzschean problem but an explanation of a vital element in LDS theology that helps us avoid that very problem and seek to build Zion here and now.

While we look forward to the glories of eternity and recognize that our individual roots and identity trace back to the premortal existence, this knowledge drives us to make the most of this life, not to neglect it. We do not droop in fatalism. We do not resent being here. We do not overlook the needs of the present day or ignore the suffering around us knowing that heaven will solve these problems later. Our knowledge of who we are motivates us to serve others in real, practical ways now, to solve mortality's problems here, because we know we are all sons and daughters of God, and how we treat one another reflects who we are and who we wish to become. We see this time not as a meaningless episode or a quick test that depends on making just one big decision and all the rest does not matter. We see mortality as a time we have looked forward to for eons, a time to become the best we can be, to overcome challenges, to grow, and to learn how to love more fully in the present world, knowing that the gains made here have lasting and essential value.

The LDS knowledge of the premortal existence compels us to avoid the behavior Nietzsche complained of and moves us to dig in all the more vigorously in making the present world a better place. Our knowledge of the premortal existence does not represent blinders or even a blindfold in mortality but rather serves as a scope to help us better appreciate, navigate, and improve the present terrain.

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23 Ibid., 49.

24 E.g., Terryl L. Givens and Fiona Givens, *The God Who Weeps: How Mormonism Makes Sense of Life* (Salt Lake City: Ensign Peak, 2012), 38–54.

25 Philip L. Barlow, "The Veil," unpublished manuscript in Givens' possessions, as quoted by Givens, Ibid.

Nietzsche complained that “The Christian decision to find the world ugly and bad has made the world ugly and bad.”<sup>26</sup> But Latter-day Saints learn in the LDS temple and in our theology that this world is “glorious and beautiful” and that we have a duty to make it better for those around us, a drive that is shared by many other Christians and good people among many other religions. From the irrigation early Mormons are famous for to our modern emphasis on food storage, humanitarian work, getting all the education we can, and building Zion here, Mormons are keen on joyfully living in the present world and improving it, though we know we are pilgrims and strangers here on a path to a different destination that may, after all, be much like the present world but coupled with eternal glory (Doctrine and Covenants 130:2). I am sure that Miller feels the same, and my differences in his discussion of Nietzsche and Givens are a minor quibble.

The LDS view on the eternal value of the human body, which differentiates us from many fellow Christians, is also relevant here and is an important part of Givens’ discussion that might have been further considered by Miller. In Chapter 3 of *Weeps*, Givens reminds us that mortality is not retrogression but progression.<sup>27</sup> Obtaining a physical body is a vital part of our eternal progress. It is not something to regret or to abandon as soon as possible but a priceless gift that we receive with gratitude and plan on retaining, in upgraded form, for eternity. As a result, Givens explains that we look upon this mortal phase with joy and celebration, not with regret, again distancing us from the Nietzschean problem that Miller treats. LDS theology thwarts that problem, rather than falling ironically into its trap.

### Materialism and Law or Material Laws?

Givens is questioned for the proposition that Mormonism offers radical materialism. Miller argues that traditional idealism creeps into our theology because even though we argue that spirit itself is material, “this material monism is then immediately paired with a second claim about the nature of the *laws* governing this materiality.”<sup>28</sup> For Miller, “these eternal laws seem to be *ideal*. ... [T]he philosophical vacuum created by

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26 Fredrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, vol. 3, section 130, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff, ed. Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), 123; <https://archive.org/stream/TheGayScience/The%20Gay%20Science#page/n151/mode/2up>.

27 Givens, *The God Who Weeps*, 55–76.

28 Miller, *Future Mormon*, 58.

God's materiality, by his loss of immaterial ideality, is immediately filled by the ideality of these eternal laws."<sup>29</sup> Miller argues that in LDS theology, our materiality just moves some pieces around without removing us from the basic structure of idealism. "Given our thoroughgoing materialism, laws can certainly be real, but if they want to exist, they have to be material. . . ." <sup>30</sup> Here I must differ.

The existence of abstract laws to me is no different than the existence of abstract concepts such as shape and quantity. And once we admit that our material objects may be countable using the ideal concept of positive integers, we must also recognize the existence of zero and negative integers, then fractions, irrational numbers, transcendental numbers such as  $e$  and  $\pi$ , of which the latter also naturally arises from consideration of the simplest of shapes. We then must contemplate even "imaginary" numbers incorporating  $i$ , defined as the square root of negative 1. The vast and eternal realm of mathematics, abounding with ideal beauty such as the majestic relationship  $e^{i\pi} = -1$ , cannot be stripped from any imaginable universe, whether purely material, abstract, or dualistic. Numbers and the world of mathematics are always there, and do nothing to dematerialize a material universe or upend the notion of Mormonism's radical materialism.

The laws of mathematics do not need to materialize to exist in a purely material universe, no more than any other eternal laws that may exist or potentially non-eternal, divinely created governing laws that currently govern the matter of the cosmos as we know it, such as the laws relating mass and energy, the law of gravity, the laws of electromagnetism, and other laws of and relationships between the fundamental forces that govern matter. Miller's critique of Givens is flawed in this respect, in my opinion, though the gist of the argument is worthy of discussion.

## Free Agency and the Premortal Existence

Miller notes that our tendency to appeal to the premortal existence as a source of our free agency only pushes back a fundamental problem. Or, more particularly, in responding to Givens' explanation that true freedom in this world depends upon having chosen to accept the conditions here in a previous life, Miller observes that Givens' explanation of free agency pushes back the problem of free agency into the premortal existence but does not adequately explain its origins and nature. Did we then choose

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29 Ibid., 58.

30 Ibid., 60.



to accept the conditions in the premortal existence before entering that sphere of existence? Miller offers an intriguing counter-proposal:

I'm inclined to think that our doctrine of co-eternality means just the opposite of what *Weeps* proposes. Rather than safely positioning us (and God) beyond the reach of any unchosen conditions, co-eternality guarantees that there is no such unconditional place. Co-eternality guarantees that the only thing unconditional is the unconditioned imposition of always already existing and unchosen conditions. ...

Does this rule out real agency? No. Just the opposite. Unchosen conditions are the condition of possibility for any meaningful agency. The limits that constrain agency enable it. ... Mortality makes agency meaningful because it *limits* our knowledge and *constrains* our agency. "We need the continuing spiritual friction of difficulty, opposition, and hardship. ..."<sup>31</sup> Friction is the thing. I'm empowered to act by the unchosen and uncontrollable frictions that compose me and oppose me. Agency isn't simple and internal, it's complex and distributed. Agency is niche-dependent. It is a situated gift dependent on context. Agency isn't a kind of autonomy but a peculiar, reflexive, and responsible kind of heteronomy. My agency is always given and enabled by something other than myself (cf. 2 Nephi 2:26–27).

Agency isn't possessed, then, but borrowed. It isn't a freedom from the conditioned world but a freedom *for* that world. ... "Free" agency is a myth. Freedom is never free. Agency always comes at a cost. And that cost is often paid by others. This is why charity is the greatest virtue.<sup>32</sup>

Here again, Miller helps illustrate the centrality of charity in our theology. I think he offers much here that we should reflect upon and discuss in the future.

The nature of our free agency or freedom to choose is a complex issue. While I agree that common LDS explanations may just be pushing the problem back by an appeal to the premortal existence, and while I very much like Miller's recognition of the relationship between constraints and agency, I feel there is vastly more that we must learn before we can

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31 Givens, *The God Who Weeps*, 62, as cited by Miller.

32 Miller, *Future Mormon*, 54–55.

appreciate what it is to be free to choose and responsible for our choices, or to know how that gift is given.

We have some degree of agency here in mortality, but we also had agency enough in the premortal existence to choose God or rebel openly against him “because of [our] agency” (Doctrine & Covenants 29:36). Since the nature of our observable mind here in mortality is still a great mystery in many aspects, and since we have even less knowledge of the spirit mind or the concept of intelligence or whatever it is that makes us co-eternal with God, we are left largely with hopelessly inadequate speculation on these matters. Perhaps we will better understand free agency as we advance in developing artificial intelligence and neural networks that ultimately transcend their starting conditions and programmed algorithms, or perhaps not. Meanwhile, our common simple explanations, though inadequate, may be the best we can do. We have free agency here, and can sense that and the responsibility that comes with our freedom, but how and why is still a mystery, at least to me.

### **Givens vs. Darwin**

Miller also disputes Givens’ views on Darwin. Givens, while accepting the findings of science, sees wonder in the delights that nature offers as utilitarian solutions to problems of various species also add beauty, fragrance, flavor, and joy for man:

The human body and human soul alike seem to be constituted by their Maker for the amassing of experience in ever greater variety and intensity. A dog or a carrion-eating bird will ingest anything capable of sustaining its beating heart one more day. But the human palate is refined enough to register infinite grades of difference among fine wines. Our sense of smell strikes us as almost entirely superfluous, since we don’t need it to hunt prey or be alerted to danger — but it does register the difference between a rose and a lily, the aroma of Christmas pine and fresh-baked bread, and it lets us know when we have escaped the smog of the city and can relish the cleansing air of the country. If we are made in God’s image, we can see His joyful nature reflected in the arsenal of access He gave us, to a variegated world of color and sound and texture and taste and smell.

Darwin was sure that even those spectacles of nature that overwhelm us by their beauty, from the peacock's tail to the fragrance of an English rose, serve not man's purpose but their own, which is survival and reproducibility. If anything in nature could be found that had been "created for beauty in the eyes of man" rather than the good of the possessor, it would be "absolutely fatal" to his theory.<sup>33</sup>

Givens sees the hand of God in this outcome, while Miller suggests that the very issues Givens raises as evidence of the divine express the essence of naturalistic evolution without necessitating the existence of higher purpose or design.

While Miller loves the way Givens expresses the superabundance of Creation as a perfect expression of the giftedness grace, he argues that Givens actually provides "a stunning account of exactly how evolution does work, not a rebuttal that is 'absolutely fatal' to its credibility."<sup>34</sup> First, note that it is Darwin, not Givens, who in Chapter 6 of *The Origin of Species* warned that something "created for beauty in the eyes of man" would be "absolutely fatal" to his theory.<sup>35</sup> Darwin would argue that such beauty is accidental and of no consequence, arising merely from utilitarian symmetry or other functional benefits which we may perceive as beautiful but which surely were not designed with us in mind. Givens suggests there is cause for gratitude and wonder, which I find reasonable.

Miller states that "the fundamental process [of evolution] is one in which gratuitous features are purposely generated *and then these features get repurposed by extant systems for some other productive end*" [emphasis original].<sup>36</sup> The multiple benefits that arouse wonder in Givens "epitomize how natural selection works." Miller sees irony: "What does it mean if something *Weeps* sees as key to defending the *gospel* ends up being key to defending *evolution* itself?"<sup>37</sup>

From my perspective, the irony isn't there. I don't read *Weeps* as denying science or evolution. Rather, it recognizes that there is a giftedness or superabundance in nature that should inspire gratitude for the grand Creator behind it all, regardless of what tools He has put in

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33 Givens, *The God Who Weeps*, 35–36.

34 Miller, *Future Mormon*, 52.

35 Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, first edition, Chapter 6, <http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/origin/chapter6.html>.

36 Miller, *Future Mormon*, 52.

37 Ibid., 52.

nature's toolkit over the eons to bring us and nature to the amazing state we now encounter.

Further, I disagree with Miller's assessment of the mechanism of evolution. Givens is right in recognizing that in evolution, the natural selection process regarding mutations that help solve, say, a problem of pollination involving a flower and a bee are indifferent to how the flower looks and smells to a human (and, I would add, to how the honey tastes). The delight we find in the multiple purposes achieved in such solutions is not readily explained as fundamental to evolution. Random mutations in evolution are usually failures that tend to be eliminated. These mutations are not "gratuitous features" that "are purposely generated" but occur without intended purpose or design. Some tend to be selected if they provide a competitive advantage under existing (and frequently changing) circumstances. If gratuitous, there is pressure to remove them. If the feature serves a non-gratuitous purpose by chance that outweighs the cost and disadvantages of the mutation, it may be favored enough to survive and persist. There is no mechanism that should lead us to expect beauty or delight to uninvolved third parties to occur, though by chance they may be perceived as pleasant. It is, of course, left to us to weigh the results and determine if there is cause for gratitude to a Creator or not. Thus, Givens is not illustrating the fundamental mechanism or purpose of evolution, and we need not apologize for feeling gratitude to God for the superabundance of nature with remarkable blessings, beauties, and side-benefits not directly related to survival of the genes doing the work.

Evolutionary theory allows for beauty to *exist* as incidental byproducts of chance. This theory, however, seems insufficient to many to readily account not only for the existence of something beautiful, but for the existence of *consciousness* that can perceive and find joy in that beauty, especially when what seems beautiful is not needed for our survival. This is suggested by Givens in the leading sentence of the passage quoted above: "The human body and human soul alike seem to be constituted by their Maker for the amassing of experience in ever greater variety and intensity." The ability of the soul/body to experience the world in such intensity is a product of our consciousness.<sup>38</sup> Givens' gratitude for the work of the Creator is based in part on the fact that we have the ability to consciously appreciate and evaluate the creative designs and inventions of nature, and to find joy in them.

There is nothing inherent in the laws of physics and matter that should naturally lead to the rise of conscious beings who can experience

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38 Givens, *The God Who Weeps*, 36–37.

joy in watching a sunset or smelling a rose. There is nothing that should necessarily give rise to advanced brain functions that allow us to not just enjoy but to fully participate in creating music, poetry, and philosophical discourse. This is not the argument of fundamentalists or religious apologists but a serious matter faced by secular philosophers and scientists. Christopher Wills in *The Runaway Brain* attempts to deal with the perplexing gap between the refined wonders of the human brain and the blunt instrument of natural selection.<sup>39</sup> Among others grappling with such problems, a recent one of note is Thomas Nagel and his fascinating *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False*.<sup>40</sup>

Dr. Thomas Nagel, an atheist, has been described as the most famous and celebrated philosopher in the United States. He has an endowed chair at New York University as a University Professor. He sincerely does not want there to be a God and considers religion to be quite backward, yet feels compelled to speak out on the shortcomings of modern science in failing to explain the rise of consciousness from inanimate matter, and not just consciousness alone but also the existence of *value* in the lives of some of these conscious beings.

Our ability to experience joy, wonder, and reverent awe, whether inspired by nature, by music, by poetry, or by Miller's brilliant essays, ultimately points to something far more than random mutations and natural selection, and this view resonates with Nagel's work, which even touches upon the issue of freedom:

The problem, then, is this: What kind of explanation of the development of these organisms, even one that includes evolutionary theory, could account for the appearance of organisms that are not only physically adapted to the environment but also conscious subjects? In brief, I believe it cannot be a purely physical explanation. . . . The claim I want to defend is that, since the conscious character of these organisms

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39 Christopher Wills, *The Runaway Brain: The Evolution of Human Uniqueness* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

40 Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Also see Jeff Lindsay, "Thomas Nagel's Apostasy: Mind and Cosmos," *Mormanity*, April 7, 2013, <http://mormanity.blogspot.com/2013/04/thomas-nagels-apostasy-mind-and-cosmos.html> and also Jeff Lindsay, "Faith, Reason, and the Resurrection," *Mormanity*, April 4, 2013, [http://mormanity.blogspot.com/2013/04/faith-reason-and-resurrection\\_4.html](http://mormanity.blogspot.com/2013/04/faith-reason-and-resurrection_4.html).

is one of their most important features, the explanation of the coming into existence of such creatures must include an explanation of the appearance of consciousness. That cannot be a separate question. An account of their biological evolution must explain the appearance of conscious organisms as such. Since a purely materialist explanation cannot do this, the materialist version of evolutionary theory cannot be the whole truth. ... In other words, materialism is incomplete even as a theory of the physical world, since the physical world includes conscious organisms among its most striking occupants. ...<sup>41</sup>

Something has happened that has gotten our minds into immediate contact with the rational order of the world, or at least with the basic elements of that order, which can in turn be used to reach a great deal more. That enables us to possess concepts that display the compatibility or incompatibility of particular beliefs with general hypotheses. ... What this means is that if we hope to include the human mind in the natural order, we have to explain not only consciousness as it enters into perception, emotion, desire, and aversion but also the conscious control of belief and conduct in response to the awareness of reasons — the avoidance of inconsistency, the subsumption of particular cases under general principles, the confirmation or disconfirmation of general principles by particular observations, and so forth. This is what it is to allow oneself to be guided by the objective truth, rather than just by one's impressions. **It is a kind of freedom — the freedom that reflective consciousness gives us** from the rule of innate perceptual and motivational dispositions together with conditioning. Rational creatures can step back from these influences and try to make up their own minds. I set aside the question whether this kind of freedom is compatible or incompatible with causal determinism, but it does seem to be something that cannot be given a purely physical analysis and therefore, like the more passive forms of consciousness, cannot be given a purely physical explanation either. ...<sup>42</sup>

This, then, is what a theory of everything has to explain: not only the emergence from a lifeless universe of reproducing

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41 Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*, 44–45.

42 Ibid., 83–84.

organisms and their development by evolution to greater and greater functional complexity; not only the consciousness of some of those organisms and its central role in their lives; but also the development of consciousness into an instrument of transcendence that can grasp objective reality and objective value. ...<sup>43</sup>

However, our direct access to value comes from human life, the life of one highly specific type of organism in the specific culture it has created. The human world, or any individual human life, is potentially, and often actually, the scene of incredible riches — beauty, love, pleasure, knowledge, and the sheer joy of existing and living in the world. It is also potentially, and often actually, the scene of horrible misery, but on both sides the value, however specific it may be to our form of life, seems inescapably real. Our susceptibility to many of these goods and evils plays a vital role in our survival and reproductive fitness — sexual pleasure, physical pain, the pangs and satisfactions of hunger and thirst — but they are also good and bad in themselves, and we are able to recognize and weigh these values. Initially we recognize them in our own lives, but it cannot stop there. In looking for a historical explanation, a realist must suppose that the strongly motivating aspects of life and consciousness appear already freighted with value, even though they find their place in the world through their roles in the lives of the organisms that are their subjects. The pleasures of sex, food, and drink are **wonderful, in addition to being adaptive**. Value enters the world with life, and the capacity to recognize and be influenced by value in its larger extension appears with higher forms of life. Therefore the historical explanation of life must include an explanation of value, just as it must include an explanation of consciousness.<sup>44</sup> [*emphasis added*]

Nagel marvels at our consciousness and the pleasure and pain, the good and the evil that it can experience and evaluate. He finds standard Darwinian materialism to fail in accounting for the abundant consciousness of life and for the rise of reason, morals, and values. The various aspects of life that are “wonderful, in addition to being adaptive”

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43 Ibid., 85.

44 Ibid., 119–120.

to Nagel, as with Givens, are not an obvious corollary of evolution doing what it is supposed to do but a reflection of a serious gap in what science has been able to explain so far. Nagel wants better science to fix that gap and explain why nature is disposed to give rise to conscious life as we know it. Givens wants reverent respect for its Creator. Both yearnings are reasonable. Darwin, meanwhile, does not adequately explain the abundance of conscious, value-rich, human life with the inherent potential to have joy. At least there is plenty of room for intelligent debate on this matter.

### Other Essays

Though Miller's book is brief, only 134 pages long, I found more substance there than I often encounter in much longer books. Almost every page evoked abundant notes, marks, and reflection on new things. There is much in this book to be digested. Here I'll briefly comment on some of the additional essays not mentioned above.

Chapter 8, "A Manifesto for the Future of Mormon Thinking," calls for more charity and understanding in engaging our enemies. In the opening sections of this essay he lays out theory for engaging the world and facing our enemies, but the practical application of the theory was difficult for me to grasp. What does it mean to apply Mormon love and Mormon thinking to secularism?<sup>45</sup> I somehow had the sense that this advice was not being given by one with frequent front-line exposure to the attacks that are made against the LDS faith.

In his call for loving and understanding our secularist opponents, he urges us to understand secularism more fully and recognize that "religion is not, fundamentally, about supernatural stuff."<sup>46</sup>

This is not to say that supernatural things aren't real or that your neighbor down the street may not be entertaining angels. But I think it's fair to say that, even if granted, such things are pretty rare and peripheral. I think it's fair to say that they are clearly not what a Sunday service is aiming at.

Church isn't magic and prayers aren't incantations. You can sit in church for three hours each Sunday for decades and never see anything supernatural. You can read and pray everyday for a lifetime and never see anything supernatural. You can birth and bless and bury whole generations and never see anything supernatural. Does this mean religion is a sham?

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45 Miller, *Future Mormon*, 73.

46 Ibid., 77.



That it's broken? That it doesn't work? Or does it mean that something else, in plain sight, is going on instead?<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps Miller is defining the “supernatural stuff” as that which requires dramatically choreographed visitations of angels or Hollywood-style parting of the waters, but for many Latter-day Saints, and I suspect for Miller, too, the supernatural stuff is far more important and common than Miller's passage acknowledges, and without it, our religion would seem relatively broken. Mormonism's supernatural stuff involved not only the few moments of theophany that began Joseph's ministry and later gave him the gold plates from a rarely seen angel, who later showed them to other witnesses. That was accompanied by day after day of seemingly more mundane but actually full-fledged supernatural stuff in front of numerous witnesses as Joseph dictated page after page of what we now hold and cherish as 500-plus pages of supernatural stuff in print that continues to yield miracles and wonders, such as the stunning finds in the Arabian Peninsula of candidates for Nahom, Bountiful, and the River Laman, or the ongoing discovery of clever Hebraic wordplays in the Book of Mormon, many of which have been revealed for the first time here at *The Interpreter*. The supernatural stuff goes beyond the pages of scripture right into lives and the worship experience of our members, and yes, that should be a goal of those planning and organizing our meetings.

In my experience, Latter-day Saints sitting each Sunday in church tend to get frequent doses of the supernatural stuff both in the personal stories and testimonies that are shared in our sacrament meetings and classrooms, in the workings of the Spirit in our lives, and also in our service work. Some of the most profound miracles I've experienced in my life have occurred in seeking to fulfill home teaching duties or in other service events where the hand of the Lord was joyously evident. But it is possible to sit through services and be a Mormon all one's life without seriously listening to such accounts, without noticing the small miracles that are taking place, and without seeking and experiencing an answer to prayer. Possible but tragic. If that's happening, something is broken, in my opinion. If we use a reasonably broad definition of “supernatural,” we should find that such stuff abounds in our faith and has long been an important element.

After Miller's earlier essay about accepting the grace of salvation and having our calling and election made sure so that we can experience

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47 Ibid.

“early onset postmortality,” I was confused by his desire to downplay the supernatural so that we can better engage and respect our secular enemies. I hope he might later revise this essay to clarify his words or more fully recognize the significant role of the supernatural stuff in the life of many Latter-day Saints, from recent converts to life-long members.

Chapter 9, “Network Theology: Is It Possible to Be a Christian but Not a Platonist?” scored points with me for introducing concepts from network theory into religious discussion. Considering the nature of complex networks leads to concepts that are resonant with the Christian message in a way that Platonism is not,<sup>48</sup> and this recognition makes a valuable contribution to an understanding of the Restoration and its departure from some of the Hellenistic elements of mainstream Christian doctrine. Miller asks intriguing questions in this essay, such as “What if truth is an ongoing process, not a static product?”<sup>49</sup> Or even, “What if the soul is a network?”<sup>50</sup> I would say that while the soul certainly participates in networks, and that the perception of the self may be linked to network systems, as discussed by Karl Popper and John C. Eccles in *The Self and Its Brain*,<sup>51</sup> I cannot grasp how the soul itself could be a “localized network” as Miller explores with cautious speculation. Still, I applaud him for the many insights and questions he raises in this essay.

Chapter 10, “Jesus, Trauma, and Psychoanalytic Technique,” a treatment of Lacanian psychoanalysis that responds to a related book by Marcus Pound, was the most difficult and least helpful read for me, undoubtedly due to my lack of knowledge and interest in the topic.

Chapter 11, “Every Truth Is a Work, Every Object Is a Covenant,” argues that “the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon is a work to be done, not a fact in evidence.” Thus, “it is our work to make the Book of Mormon be true in as many ways and in as many worlds as we are able.”<sup>52</sup> I am grateful for the call to apply the Book of Mormon, to use it more fully in our lives, and thereby to bring out its truth as we apply it, but there are some views on truth in this section that puzzle me.

Miller sees truth in science and other fields as something of a popularity contest, where truth is what is backed up by abundant sources, measurements, charts, funding, etc. Truth is established by

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48 Ibid., 80.

49 Ibid., 84.

50 Ibid., 87.

51 Karl Popper and John C. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain: An Argument for Interactionism* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1977).

52 Miller, *Future Mormon*, 105.

getting out the vote and building broad support in multiple fields. So let's work to make the Book of Mormon true by using it, applying it, examining it, from many perspectives. I agree with the call to action but am uncomfortable with the discussion of truth, especially this: "The work of making truths — the work engaged in by scientists, lawyers, teachers, doctors, politicians, religious leaders, and entrepreneurs alike — is simply to get out the vote."<sup>53</sup> I believe his point is that profound truths and principles will withstand the challenges of peer review and gradually find growing support and application in many other fields. This does sometimes happen, but I think there is a world of difference between the popular adoption of paradigms, truthful or not, and the process of discovering truth in the first place, especially in light of the frequent unpopularity of some truths that may be vigorously suppressed or opposed. Perhaps Miller is thinking of the need for many strands of evidence to overcome the inertia of old paradigms and help bring about a revolution in thinking, as outlined by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,<sup>54</sup> who shows how major scientific truths, ones that overthrow old paradigms, are often strenuously resisted at first and require extensive evidence showing the failure of the old paradigm before the revolution in understanding finally takes place.

But again, the *discovery* of the truths that lead to such revolutions is not a matter of popular opinion. As with Ignaz Semmelweis and his discovery that something unseen but removable (what we now know as germs) was causing infection,<sup>55</sup> scientific truth often begins with one lone voice challenging the establishment and frequently being pummeled by it. That truth may be actively resisted by those with the power to control the funding, the publications, the votes, etc. Only after years, decades, or sometimes centuries (two centuries for the cure for scurvy to be recognized by the British Navy, with thousands of sailors perishing unnecessarily in the meantime)<sup>56</sup> does the truth become irresistible and recognized in the popular vote of the scientific establishment. Once

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53 Ibid, 109.

54 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962; second edition 1970).

55 Ignaz Semmelweis, *Wikipedia*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignaz\\_Semmelweis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignaz_Semmelweis).

56 Jeff Lindsay, "Lessons from the British Navy: Why the Cure for Scurvy Took 200 Years to Be Implemented," *Innovation Fatigue*, May 12, 2016, <http://www.innovationfatigue.com/2016/05/british-navy-scurvy/139-142>, and Jeff Lindsay, Mukund Karanjikar, and Cheryl Perkins, *Conquering Innovation Fatigue* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 108–111.

established, incremental advances can continue with peer review and broad consensus helping to solidify things, but there will always be a need for lone voices to stand against the tide and declare unpopular truths. The Book of Mormon is marked for unpopularity in this age. But yes, let's explore it from many angles and help bring out its power and truths in new ways.

When Miller speaks of "making the Book of Mormon true," I think he means something more than dissemination of its truths to increase popular acceptance. But in practical terms, I am not quite sure what that something more is:

Don't assume the Book of Mormon is or isn't historically true. History is not one thing. *Make* the Book of Mormon historically true in as many times and as many places and to whatever degree you're able. Shop it around the world. Do the research, visit the sites, search the texts, gather the agents. Sit the gathered agents down and hammer out as binding a multilateral agreement as the motley crowd will, in each instance, allow. There will never be perfect agreement. That's fine. Work harder. Gather more signatures. Promise more in return. ...

Don't assume that the Book of Mormon is or isn't scientifically plausible. *Make* the Book of Mormon scientifically plausible. Does its account square with evolution? With Native American DNA? With geology on a scale of billions of years? With light years of empty space? Let them pollinate each other and see what things grow.<sup>57</sup>

From my perspective, there is much value in exploring the Book of Mormon's claims in terms of their plausibility. This has led to many refinements in our understanding of its geographical scope and our understanding of the text. This has led to gems in many areas that can and should be used to "get out the vote." But there are many truths yet to be discovered that will involve work and toil in the right disciplines looking in the right areas and asking the right questions. This process is not a free-for-all where every discipline can just go out and gather support to make truth, whatever that means. But I thoroughly welcome Miller's invitation for all of us to take the Book of Mormon more seriously and increase understanding of that sacred text.

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57 Miller, *Future Mormon*, 111.

Miller's final essay, "Silence, Witness, and Absolute Rock: Reading Cormac McCarthy," is a tribute to a highly celebrated novelist of our day. Having read only one of McCarthy's books, *All the Pretty Horses*,<sup>58</sup> which I enjoyed, I am not prepared to say much about this essay. He discusses three types of characters often found in McCarthy's works, the mute, the dreamer, and the witness. Several aspects of his essay related well to the sole McCarthy novel I have read and I found Miller's explorations enlightening but somehow out of place in a volume on LDS theology. He does make an interesting connection to Mormonism at the end of the essay in quoting and applying a passage from McCarthy where an ex-priest introduces himself as Mormon-born:

"I was a Mormon. Then I converted to the church. Then I became I don't know what. Then I became me." Such is the role of the witness.<sup>59</sup>

More loyal McCarthy fans are likely to find greater value in this essay.

In general, the essays are valuable, well written, and worthy of much discussion.

As a minor point, the book has been carefully edited. Nevertheless, Romans 7:21 quoted on page 9 should be Romans 3:21. It would also have been helpful to inform readers that biblical passages are typically from the NRSV Bible, not the KJV.

*Future Mormon* is a book for the future of Mormonism, and I hope it and other writings of Miller will continue to play a growing role in our discourse and thinking. I applaud Miller for a fine collection.

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58 Cormac McCarthy, *All the Pretty Horses* (New York: Vintage International, 1993).

59 Miller, *Future Mormon*, 129.

*Paper Science and (now the Renewable Bioproducts Institute) at Georgia Tech, then went into R&D at Kimberly-Clark Corporation, eventually becoming corporate patent strategist and senior research fellow. He then spent several years at Innovationedge in Neenah, Wisconsin, helping many companies with innovation and IP strategy. Jeff has been in China for five years, where he works with various APP companies and mills in advancing their intellectual property and innovation. He is active in the chemical engineering community and was recently named a Fellow of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers. He is also listed as a leading IP strategist by Intellectual Asset Magazine in their global IAM300 listing. Jeff served a mission in the German-speaking Switzerland Zurich Mission and currently serves as counselor in the district presidency of the Shanghai International District. He and his wife Kendra are the parents of four boys and have eight grandchildren.*

## BEYOND AGENCY AS IDOLATRY

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Ralph C. Hancock

Review of Adam S. Miller, *Future Mormon: Essays in Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2016)

Adam Miller has already established himself as the most venturesome and original of LDS thinkers exploring our complex inheritance of Mormon beliefs with the tools of contemporary academic philosophy. Richard Bushman, certainly the most highly honored living scholar of Mormonism, in a foreword to an earlier collection of Miller's essays, *Rube Goldberg Theology*, praised the author as today's "most original and provocative Latter-day Saint theologian." This originality and provocation are all the more impressive given Miller's institutional prominence in the LDS academic establishment as, practically, the leading philosopher/theologian of BYU's Maxwell Institute, where he is a series co-editor as well as co-founder of the book publisher Salt Press, which was absorbed by the Institute in 2013.

Bushman also noted in that foreword that Miller was "utterly ambivalent about the theological enterprise." If this was accurate in 2012, then to judge by the claims of the present work, it is no longer true. Miller has overcome his ambivalence and now proposes a distinctive and coherent (and, yes, certainly provocative) Mormon theology — and even one not for the mere present but for the future.

Adam Miller's most important work has so far proceeded on two distinct but intersecting paths, one more religious and the other more philosophical. On the one hand he has explored scripture and drawn consequences for the religious life and for living Mormonism in particular; on the other he has produced rigorous commentaries on the work of challenging contemporary thinkers Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Marion, and Bruno Latour as well as on the fiction of Cormac McCarthy and of

David Foster Wallace. The intersections between the philosophical (and Pauline) reflections and the exploration of the meaning of Mormonism were by no means incidental or neglected in his earlier work. He developed the philosophical significance of LDS belief and scripture most notably in *Rube Goldberg Theology*. This and the present work are both collections of essays affording all the advantages (variety, liveliness) and disadvantages (incompletion, unevenness, internal tension if not contradiction) inherent in that genre. But the present collection marks a significant step towards Miller's goal: an integrated and coherent (if not exactly "systematic") presentation of a distinctive way of being Mormon, a way informed by a thorough appropriation of what he regards as the best of contemporary philosophy (Badiou, Latour).

Adam Miller is convinced that Mormons of the future, including his three children, "will have to rethink the whole tradition [of Mormonism], from top to bottom, right from the beginning, and make it their own in order to embody Christ anew in this passing world" (xi).<sup>1</sup> Rather than defending Mormonism as most Mormons, including Church authorities, now understand it against the known challenges — historical, theological and ideological — it now faces, he offers this book, "a future tense apologetics meant for future Mormons" and "a modest contribution" (xii) to strengthening a radically different Mormonism of the future. Such a contribution of course presupposes that the author can already discern at least the contours of this emergent new Mormonism sufficiently to provide the coming generation "the tools, the raw materials and the room" (xii) for them to undertake this top to bottom re-appropriation.

The philosophical and theological tools he offers to his children and ours are impressive and set forth here, with Miller's characteristically arresting formulations, in a style that is both engaging and highly evocative. The author defines the space to be inhabited by future Mormonism by a rigorously Pauline conception of grace married with a radical conception of Mormon materialism. And the terms of this marriage of materialism with grace are provided by a philosophical ontology of radical pluralism, or "network theory," derived from the author's close and appreciative studies of the thought of (especially) Alain Badiou and Bruno Latour.

Drawing persuasively on the Book of Moses, Miller argues that the revelation of grace "comes paired with the revelation of our own nothingness" (4). He then proceeds to define grace in opposition to a

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1    Parenthetical citations refer to page numbers.



“law” by which we would presume to earn and thus to control what we will and will not receive. From this point of view of the radical gratuity of the given, obedience to law is a distraction, even a dead-end compulsion that prevents our openness to the gracious gift of love. Love is the end of the law; love accomplishes the law but without confirming the erroneous assertion of “the law’s inviolable priority” (9). “Our love must be practiced with a kind of disregard for the law” (12). Miller of course does not counsel disobedience — he concedes that “obedience is generally better than disobedience” (6) — but he is much more concerned that we will attach too much importance to obedience rather than too little. He sees that “strict obedience” is too often a “strategy for suppressing the truth and avoiding God’s grace” by attempting “to put God in *your* debt” (5). By forsaking this compulsive and futile effort to win over God by obedience, to “set ourselves up ... as lords of the earth and judges of what graces we will and won’t receive” (4), we open ourselves to a world given by grace in which a love beyond law is revealed:

Dying to the law and living in Christ, we begin to carry ourselves with a characteristic grace, we begin to receive whatever is given with graciousness, and the whole of creation, regardless of its troubles, limitations, transience, acquires a kind of perfection. The world becomes perfect in the same way that God is perfect. It becomes perfect in love. (11)

Miller’s strongest and clearest insight, I think, lies in his insistence that grace is not mainly or first of all a response to sin — not “God’s backup plan” (to cite another of his titles) — but rather the defining characteristic of God’s relation to the world overall and from the outset. The grace of Creation precedes and encompasses the grace of Redemption. This seems to me to indicate a profound truth. Grace is not a fix for a particular problem (sin) but rather an effect of the love that sustains all things. Participation in this grace or sustaining love, I would suggest, is indeed the key to life’s meaning, both here and hereafter. But Miller, keen to produce a “general theory” of grace” (65) takes this further, folding redemption into the grace of Creation in such a way that grace, “a fundamental and constitutive feature of reality itself,” becomes wholly identified with reality such as we now know it, grace “as an essential and ongoing feature of everything real” (67). “The world is graced not by a flawlessness but by a halo of perfection that shines from the world’s no longer being a means to some other end, to someplace else. It has, instead, become something to be loved *as it is*, for its own sake” (43; my emphasis). In his zeal to suppress any germ of idolatry, that

is, the natural tendency of human desire to project itself on the world in the form of some supposed intelligible divine purpose, Miller is led to embrace the utter collapse of grace into nature or rather into the sheer givenness of reality as it overwhelms our nothingness.

From this point of view, “sin” is neither more nor less than our refusal to accept reality as it now presents itself; it is “our rejection of this original and ongoing grace” (67). Traditional Christianity (including conventional or “mainstream” Mormonism, even Mormonism as set forth recently by Terryl and Fiona Givens, for example), is in fact complicit in this sin because it consists essentially in Platonism or idealism, namely the refusal of what God is giving in the world as it really is in a vain attempt to shape or master the world according to some idealized assertion of human desire.

It must be said that Adam Miller is very hard on human desire, indeed on any conception of a good — even or especially a “higher” good — distinct from the “reality” of giving and taking away that defines the actual, ever-passing world in which he thinks God’s grace is fully present. His provocative radicalism stems most fundamentally, I think, from his insistence on a radical, even an absolute distinction between “what God, in all his goodness and wisdom and mercy, is actually trying to give” and “what we think we want” (24). He has nothing to say, certainly, on behalf of a plan of salvation or “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8) by which human beings would deliberately seek, through obedience and repentance, some good superior to what is given in the ordinary, everyday world. For Miller our desires have no end beyond themselves, and to look for any higher end, to hope for a better world, is to sin against grace, to resist the love that has no purpose but the graceful sharing of suffering in the world that is actually, already being given (and taken away) here and now.

There is certainly some insight in this immanent view of grace. Miller is always at his best in describing the mysterious compatibility, even a certain essential communion, between suffering and the graceful acceptance of the meaning of existence as it is somehow immediately given, beneath the grasp of any theory or any intelligible story. Thus, in *Letters to a Young Mormon*, he wisely counsels his children and our children to resist the temptation to “try to ‘solve’ the problem of your hunger by (1) satisfying it or (2) purging it. Neither will work,” he argues, “and both amount to a rejection of life.”<sup>2</sup> But he seems, to me, to go too

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2 Adam S. Miller, *Letters to a Young Mormon* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2013), 59.

far by reducing salvation to the patient “care for” or “attention” to our mortal hunger, thus reducing sin to attachment to stories (the story of salvation, for example) that disconnect us from “life’s hunger.”<sup>3</sup> For Miller the desire to understand ourselves as part of some larger story or plan is always sinful, and agency and love reside wholly in the acceptance of affliction, which he regards as “the heart of the gospel” that “makes forgiveness and redemption possible” (23).

There is surely an elusive and exquisite insight here and one that our upbeat, goal-oriented approach to the gospel often misses. But it seems clear that Miller, in his ambition to produce a pure theory of grace in the framework of the philosophies of radical materialism (his “area of professional expertise” (60n3)), is led to make this insight a template for overturning elements of Christian and especially Mormon teaching that appear to be essential. His campaign of graceful love against works righteousness in some sense goes too far and excludes too much. For Miller there can be no better world where all our tears are wiped away; to hope for such a world is to worship an idol rather than receiving the graceful world God is always already offering. Thus he candidly endorses “Nietzsche’s sharp critique of our Christian tendency to devalue the present world by anchoring its true meaning and substance in another” (47).

I have no alternative “general theory” of the gospel to offer; I would only suggest that a true and truly Mormon understanding of grace would have to be compatible with the deliberate pursuit of eternal happiness or “exaltation” (albeit a pursuit ready progressively to sacrifice imperfect conceptions along the way) or the fulfillment of the highest and best human desires (and yes, I know that I am committing “Platonism”), and with an understanding of agency as a partner of grace and not merely as the passive acceptance of the world as God gives it and allows it. Put another way, whereas, in Miller’s materialist and Pauline conception of Mormonism, hope tends to collapse in the fusion of faith and love, I would hold to hope as the Christian virtue that holds faith and love together.

This short review must pass over the subtle insights and provocative hyperbole that characterize every chapter of this rich collection of essays. There is much of value, for example, in Miller’s “thoughtful disagreement” (45) with Terryl and Fiona Givens on the character of the self and its agency and on the meaning of pre-existence, all points on which I think Miller succeeds at least in showing the need for significant qualifications

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3 Ibid.

of or corrections to the Givens' insistence on the self-subsistent eternity of the individual subject. But Miller's uncompromising rejection of the "Platonism" implicit in any hope for a better world leads him to a number of positions that I cannot examine here but that point up the significant stakes of his position. Thus, while he reasonably criticizes an understanding of agency as a "simple and internal" "freedom from outside influence" (53–54), his radical rejection of a stable distinction between beings that act and beings that are acted upon leads him to argue that agency "isn't a freedom from the conditioned world but a freedom for that world" (54–55) — that is, for that world *simply as it is* and not a freedom to act upon the world or to participate in any divine work of improving the world or building a better world. What's left of agency in this view is swallowed up in grace understood precisely as "this massive, ongoing act of divinely organized creation that involves an uncountable host of agents, human and nonhuman, embedded in irreducible webs of stewardship, consecration, sacrifice, and interdependence" (67). It is not easy to see just what shape "stewardship" or responsible agency (67) can have when embedded so deeply in a massive material creation from which intelligible higher purposes have been excluded a priori.

We cannot here trace all the implications of this dilution of agency in a fusion of grace and materialism. We can only note for now that among the consequences of Miller's reduction of agency to an effectively blind participation in the welter of material causes are his steadfast refusal "to grant the premise that religion and secularism are enemies" (74) and his celebration of "democracy," in which "power is not delivered from the top-down, but produced from the bottom up" "as inherently sacred" (84). Following a logic inherent in the democratic and materialist denial of all intelligible higher purposes, Miller links the "democratic" or "flat" character of truth to stale progressive idea that "truth" is "not a static product" but "a process" (84). The essential question is suppressed, as is always the case in this progressive rhetorical mode: how are we to distinguish a good process from a bad process and thus to contribute to or even direct the process? And the suppression of this question leads here, as always, to the implicit imperative to trust the experts who, emancipated from Platonic idolatry, offer themselves as guides to an unprecedented future existence that it would be wrong to try to judge from the perspective of our present, "static" prejudices. A future Mormon must not be bound by the categories of a present Mormonism.

To question Miller's democratic-materialist Mormon future is not to deny the high theoretical and poetic qualities of the author's project

or the value to Mormons and to other Christians of his unflinching and systematically coherent case for a radical understanding of Grace and thus for a view of the gospel that keeps in focus the teaching that “man is nothing.” At one point Miller, much to his credit, recognizes that “the costs” of his “radical and thoroughgoing materialism [may] start to seem too high,” which he acknowledges would be “an indication that Mormonism is *not* actually committed to a radically monistic materialism” (60n4). In fact I believe that Miller’s hyperbolic case for radical grace as radical materialism brings to light the impossibility of building a whole “general theory” of Mormonism on those foundations. But this is far from saying that this work is fruitless. Those of us inclined to defend or to seek a conception of redeemed agency that retains significant continuities with the Christian “Platonist” tradition and with conventional Mormon common sense now, thanks to Adam, have a clearer picture of the work that is cut out for us. We owe it to future Mormons as well as to Adam Miller and his present readers to take up this work.<sup>4</sup>

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4 Whether our argument is with Paul himself and not only with Adam Miller is a question that cannot be decided in advance, although a powerful reading of Paul’s teaching by such an eminent Christian scholar as N.T. Wright (*After you Believe*) suggests a much greater continuity with Aristotelian virtue than would be possible on Miller’s account.

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**“HOW THANKFUL WE SHOULD BE  
TO KNOW THE TRUTH”:  
ZEBEDEE COLTRIN’S WITNESS OF THE  
HEAVENLY ORIGINS OF TEMPLE ORDINANCES**

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**Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and K-Lynn Paul**

*Abstract: In this article, we examine circumstantial evidence for the claim of Zebedee Coltrin, contained in a secondhand report within a heretofore unpublished letter, that Jesus Christ came personally to the Kirtland Temple over an extended period to give instruction about temple work. After summarizing what Joseph Smith seems to have known about temple ordinances by 1836, we attempt to show when and how the experience reported in the letter might have occurred. We give short biographies of the participants in the story of the letter: Luna Ardell “Dell” Hinckley Paul, Zebedee Coltrin, and “Brother Potter.” We cite Matthew. B. Brown’s observations on the question of why it might have been expedient that the Saints wait several years before receiving the full complement of temple ordinances that were eventually administered in Nauvoo. Both a typescript and a reproduction of the manuscript of the letter are provided, as is an additional letter to family members from co-author K-Lynn Paul describing the circumstances under which his grandmother’s letter was found and donated to the Church. The Dell Paul letter is consistent with arguments that the Prophet learned much about temple ordinances through personal experiences with heavenly beings, translations, and revelations as much as a decade before he got to Nauvoo. If the letter’s claim that Jesus Christ “stood and talked to them just as I am talking to you” is accurately reported, it provides an additional witness of the Savior’s frequent presence in Kirtland in 1836.*

Some people dismiss Joseph Smith's story about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon *a priori*, having already concluded that "you don't get books from angels and translate them by miracles."<sup>1</sup> Others find the Prophet's claim of divine origins for LDS temple ordinances equally incredible — arguing instead, for example, that "the rituals of Masonry" provided the "starting point"<sup>2</sup> for the sacred ceremonies that were administered in Nauvoo.<sup>3</sup> Individuals who accept premises of this sort sometimes have come to "see the evolution of the temple as very organic, growing out of the mind of Joseph, not God."<sup>4</sup>

To anyone who rejects outright the possibility of actual visits from heavenly messengers, the present article will have little interest. But others who are foolish enough to accept "the absurdity of seeing visions in the age of railways"<sup>5</sup> may be interested to know something about a recently discovered letter written by Luna Ardel "Dell" Hinckley Paul that attests to extended divine appearances that occurred in the Kirtland Temple in 1836.

In this article, we examine circumstantial evidence for the letter's specific claim, based on a secondhand report, that Jesus Christ came personally to the Kirtland Temple over a two-week period to give instruction about temple work. We begin by summarizing what Joseph Smith seems to have known about the temple by 1836. Then we provide a historical overview and a discussion of the significance of the claim. Afterward, we discuss alternatives for the dating of the event described in the letter, the provenance of the letter, and give brief biographies of the three individuals important to its story: Luna Ardel Hinckley Paul, Zebedee Coltrin, and "Brother Potter." Following a conjectural timeline of events, we reproduce a typescript of the letter itself. The article continues with a discussion of some possible reasons argued by Matthew B. Brown for why it might have been expedient to wait until the Saints gathered to Nauvoo to receive the full complement of temple ordinances. A first appendix reproduces a digital scan of the letter made by the Church History Library in 2016, and a second contains excerpts from a letter K-Lynn Paul wrote to family members on 9 June 2015.

### **What Did Joseph Smith Know About the Temple by 1836?**

Latter-day Saints have long known that the most significant features of modern LDS temple-related doctrines and practices were already evident in the translations, revelations, experiences, and teachings of Joseph Smith in the 1830s and earlier.<sup>6</sup> In addition, striking resemblances



between modern temple work and ancient ritual practices that pre-date Masonry have been well documented.<sup>7</sup>

Specific knowledge about temple matters that seems to have been known by the Prophet by 1836 includes: 1) the narrative backbone, covenants, and clothing of the modern temple endowment; 2) the sequence of blessings of the oath and covenant of the priesthood, including additional ordinances; and 3) priesthood keys symbolized in words, signs, and tokens. In this section we provide only a brief summary of what Joseph Smith seems to have learned about the temple early in his ministry. More extensive information and documentation has been published elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

**Narrative backbone, covenants, and clothing, of the modern temple endowment.** Many accounts in scripture relate experiences of heavenly ascent, in which individuals may be transfigured temporarily in order to see God in actuality face to face. The LDS temple endowment depicts a figurative journey that brings the worshipper step-by-step into the presence of God.<sup>9</sup> Significantly, the sequence of events described in accounts of heavenly ascent often resembles the same general pattern symbolized in temple ritual, so that reading scriptural accounts of heavenly ascent can help Latter-day Saints make sense of temple ritual, and experiencing temple ritual can help them prepare for an eventual entrance into the presence of God.<sup>10</sup> In that sense, heavenly ascent can be understood as the “completion or fulfillment” of the “types and images” of temple ritual.<sup>11</sup>

By 1830, Joseph Smith would have been familiar with many accounts of those who had actually encountered God face to face. Indeed, while still a boy he had experienced a visit of the Father and the Son as part of his First Vision.<sup>12</sup> In translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith learned the stories of other prophets who had seen the Lord, including the detailed account of how the heavenly veil was removed for the brother of Jared so that he could personally come to know the premortal Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup>

From the point of view of temple ritual, in contrast to heavenly ascent, the Book of Mormon seems to have provided an important formative influence for Joseph Smith on temple-related doctrines and practices.<sup>14</sup> However, the most significant early tutoring that Joseph Smith received



**Figures 1 and 2.** Arnold Friberg (1913–2010): *The Brother of Jared Sees the Finger of God*, 1951; Walter Rane (1949–): *The Desires of My Heart*, 2004.

likely came in 1830 and 1831 with his translation of the early chapters of Genesis, canonized in LDS scripture as the book of Moses. The book of Moses makes significant additions to the Bible account that throw additional light on temple doctrines and ordinances. Significantly, these additions, mainly dealing with events that occurred after the Fall, also illustrate the same covenants introduced to the Saints more than a decade later in the Nauvoo temple endowment.<sup>15</sup> Following a prologue in chapter 1 of Moses that relates his heavenly ascent, the remainder of the book of Moses provided the central narrative backbone and covenants for the Nauvoo temple endowment — an outline of the way in which the Saints could come into the presence of God ritually.

As he translated the Bible in 1830–1833, Joseph Smith would have come across descriptions of temple clothing.<sup>16</sup> For instance, he would have been familiar with the story of the fig leaf apron and the coats of skins in the account of Adam and Eve<sup>17</sup> and the robes of the temple priests in the book of Exodus,<sup>18</sup> which were patterned after the clothing of heavenly beings. The temple clothing of Israelite priests symbolized the heavenly clothing that would someday supersede it.<sup>19</sup>

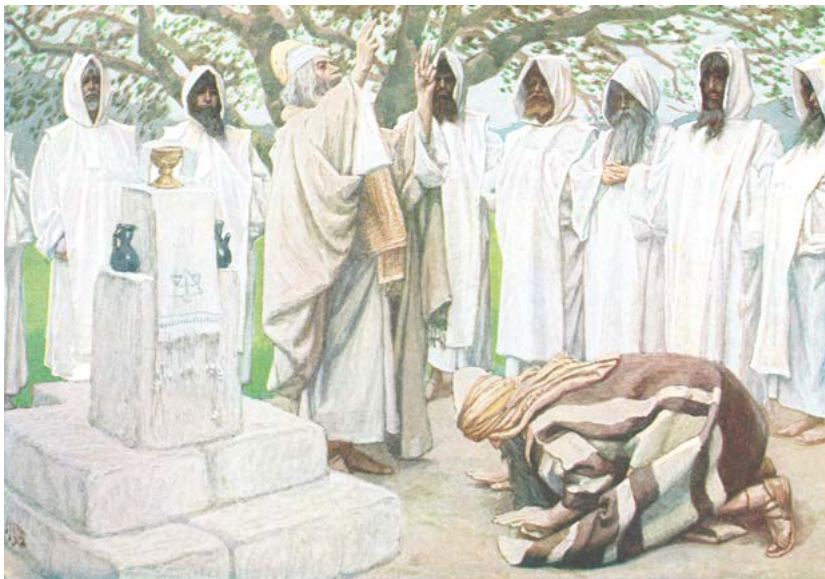
It was reported in late retrospection of an 1833 incident that the Prophet had seen Michael the Archangel “several times,” “clothed in white from head to foot,” with a “peculiar cap, ... a white robe, underclothing, and moccasins.”<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 3.** *God Dressing Adam and Eve.* Detail of the Creation Cupola, San Marco, Venice, thirteenth century.

According to Hugh Nibley, the white undergarment used anciently represents “the proper preexistent glory of the wearer,”<sup>21</sup> while the [outer garment of the high priest] is the priesthood later added to it.”<sup>22</sup> In Israelite temples, the high priest changed his clothing as he moved to areas of the temple that reflected differing degrees of sacredness.<sup>23</sup> These changes in clothing mirror details both of the nakedness of Adam and Eve and the garments they wore in different parts of their garden sanctuary.<sup>24</sup>

**Sequence of blessings of the oath and covenant of the priesthood, including additional ordinances.** The temple endowment was only one part of the extended sequence of ordinances of exaltation that were revealed over time to the Prophet. As Joseph Smith continued his translation of the Old Testament beyond the chapters contained in the book of Moses, he learned of righteous individuals whose experiences provided a further tutorial about temple ordinances and the priesthood as they existed anciently. For example, between December 1830 and June 1831, Joseph Smith translated Old Testament chapters that described the plural marriages of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the New Testament account of the Sadducees’ question about marriage in the resurrection.<sup>25</sup> By at least 1835, Joseph Smith had begun teaching the principle of eternal marriage to others such as William W. Phelps, who was told that he and his wife were “certain to be one in the Lord throughout eternity” if they continued “faithful to the end.”<sup>26</sup> In 1835, William W. Phelps mentioned



**Figure 4.** J. James Tissot (1836–1902): *The Offerings of Melchizedek*, ca. 1896–1902.

new light he had received from the Prophet on the subject of exaltation and eternal marriage, wherein those who would become “the sons of God” would dwell in “a kingdom of glory ... where the man is neither without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord.”<sup>27</sup>

Additional revelations and teachings of Joseph Smith, in conjunction with the ongoing work of Bible translation, elaborated on the accounts of righteous individuals such as Melchizedek and Elijah, explaining how the priesthood authority they held related to additional ordinances and blessings that could be given in the temple after one had already received the endowment and been sealed in eternal marriage covenants.<sup>28</sup> For example, he learned that the blessings of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood belong to one who is made a “king and a priest unto God, bearing rule, authority, and dominion under the Father.”<sup>29</sup> Correspondingly, he learned that worthy women may receive the blessings of becoming queens and priestesses.<sup>30</sup> Fittingly, these blessings were associated with the name of Melchizedek because he was both the great “king of Salem” and “the priest of the most high God,”<sup>31</sup> and the one who ordained Abraham to this same priesthood.<sup>32</sup> Later kings of Israel as well as Jesus Christ Himself, were declared to be part of the “order of Melchizedek,”<sup>33</sup> which was originally called “the Order of the Son of God.”<sup>34</sup> Additional revelatory insights of the Prophet relating to these crowning ordinances are especially evident in the changes he made in his translation of the Gospel of John and the Epistle to the Hebrews.<sup>35</sup>

The orderly sequence of blessings that culminates in the fulness of the priesthood was summarized in D&C 124:39 on January 19, 1841,<sup>36</sup> and again in a firsthand description of the events of May 4, 1842,<sup>37</sup> the day the Prophet Joseph Smith began to administer temple ordinances in the upper story of the Red Brick Store. Significantly, however, the most complete list of these ordinances and blessings is found in D&C 84:32–44, given in 1832.<sup>38</sup>

**Priesthood keys symbolized in words, signs, and tokens.** Though some regard the keys of the priesthood taught in the temple as having “only the most peripheral doctrinal significance,”<sup>39</sup> the teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young make it clear that they are as essential in the next life as they are in this one.<sup>40</sup> For example, D&C 132 teaches that as a requirement for entering into “exaltation and glory” within the heavenly temple, the candidate for eternal life must be able to “pass by the angels, and the gods.”<sup>41</sup> Elaborating details of this requirement, Brigham Young taught that in order to do so, the Saints must be “able to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood.”<sup>42</sup>

“Keywords” have been associated with temples since very early times. In a temple context, the meaning of the term can be taken quite literally: the use of the appropriate key word or words by a qualified worshipper, “unlocks” the gate for access to specific, secured areas of the sacred space.<sup>43</sup> Because the ultimate efficacy of temple ordinances depends as much on what worshippers have *become* as what they *know*, keywords are always closely associated with names. Indeed, Joseph Smith taught that “The new name *is* the key word.”<sup>44</sup> According to René Guénon, “all ancient traditions agree that the true name of a living thing reflects precisely its nature or its very essence.”<sup>45</sup> This idea is consistent with Old Testament examples of figures such as Abraham, Sarah, and Jacob who received new names only after God had tested their integrity.<sup>46</sup>

The theme of God’s disclosure of His own name to those who approach the final gate to enter His presence is pervasive in the ancient Near East. It is also reminiscent of the explanations of Facsimile 2 from the book of Abraham that date to sometime between 1835 and 1841.<sup>47</sup> In Figure 7 of that facsimile, God is pictured as “sitting upon his throne, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood.” Similarly, to take upon oneself the name of Jesus Christ in actuality is to identify with Him to such a degree that we become one with Him in every aspect of saving knowledge and personal character.<sup>48</sup> As Hugh Nibley explained: “The importance of knowing the names of things and giving those names when challenged is more than the mere idea of the



password; it is ... nothing less than ... ‘the law which makes of the name a veritable attribute of the thing named.’”<sup>49</sup>

In 1829, Joseph Smith would have encountered this principle as he translated the words of King Benjamin,<sup>50</sup> who described how, at the last day, God would call by the name of Christ all those who had taken upon themselves the nature of Christ,<sup>51</sup> while calling all those who did not thus qualify by a different name that would reflect their different nature.

The use of “signs” and “tokens” as symbols connected with covenants made in temples and used as aids in sacred teaching is an ancient practice.<sup>52</sup> For example, the raised hand is a long-recognized sign of oath-taking,<sup>53</sup> and the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle contained various tangible “tokens of the covenant”<sup>54</sup> relating to the priesthood, including the golden pot that had manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the law.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 5. Impression Seal of Gudea, Tello, Iraq, ca. 2150 BCE.

By way of analogy to a possible function of the items within the Ark of the Covenant — items that symbolized priesthood<sup>56</sup> — consider the Greek Eleusinian Mysteries,<sup>57</sup> which endured over a period of nearly two thousand years. These rites were said to consist of *legomena* (= things recited), *deiknymena* (= things shown), and *dromena* (= things performed). A sacred casket contained the tokens of the god, which were used to teach initiates about the meaning of the rites. At the culmination of the process, the initiate was examined about his knowledge of these tokens. “Having passed the tests of the tokens and their passwords, ... the initiate would have been admitted to the presence of the god.”<sup>58</sup>

In addition to a physical representation within sacred containers such as the Ark of the Covenant, tokens could be expressed anciently in the form of a handclasp,<sup>59</sup> “a precise image for absolutely unique individuality

and perfectly joined unity”<sup>60</sup> that could be used both in tests of knowledge and identity as well as in acts of recognition and reunion. In this respect, the two-armed embrace found in some ancient temple rituals can be seen as an intensification and a fulfillment of the handclasp gesture because it signifies not only an unbreakable bond between two individuals but also provides powerful symbol that signifies absolute unity and oneness between them. Matthew L. Bowen argues persuasively that the embrace described in Moses 7:63 is one of several temple motifs that Joseph Smith would have encountered in his translation of the account of Enoch in December 1830.

Both the handclasp and the sacred embrace may represent not only mutual love and trust but also a transfer of life and power from one individual to another. In what Willard Richards called “the sweetest sermon from Joseph he ever heard in his life,”<sup>61</sup> the Prophet described a vision of the resurrection that, like analogous Mandaean rituals symbolizing steps in one’s return to God after death,<sup>62</sup> included a handclasp and an embrace:<sup>63</sup>

So plain was the vision. I actually saw men, before they had ascended from the tomb, as though they were getting up slowly. They *took each other by the hand*, and it was, “My father and my son, my mother and my daughter, my brother and my sister.” And when the voice calls for the dead to arise, suppose I am laid by the side of my father, what would be the first joy of my heart? Where is my father, my mother, my sister? They are by my side. I *embrace* them, and they me.

Of course, the keywords, names, signs, and tokens would be of no importance as symbols of authentication unless deception were a real possibility. Documenting such deception, the Apostle Paul, drawing on early Jewish tradition,<sup>64</sup> spoke of Satan transforming himself “into an angel of light.”<sup>65</sup> With similar language, Joseph Smith also spoke of the devil having appeared deceptively to him “as an angel of light.”<sup>66</sup>

When did Joseph Smith first learn about the keys by which he could detect true messengers from false ones? Arguably, on May 15, 1829, when John the Baptist restored the “keys of the ministering of angels”<sup>67</sup> to him and Oliver Cowdery.<sup>68</sup> If this experience was the same as the one reported in D&C 128:20 as having taken place “on the banks of the Susquehanna,”<sup>69</sup> it seems that Satan appeared in order to deceive the Prophet and thwart the restoration of priesthood authority. As the Prophet later recorded, Michael (or Adam) then came to his aid, “detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light!”<sup>70</sup> “Thus,” according to Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig Ostler, “the right to receive the ministrations of angels and the ability to discern true messengers of God from counterfeits came before the Church was organized.”<sup>71</sup> Significantly, an account of how

Moses recognized and successfully commanded Satan to depart by virtue of his authority while invoking the name of “the Only Begotten” was received by Joseph Smith in 1830, about one year after this experience.<sup>72</sup>

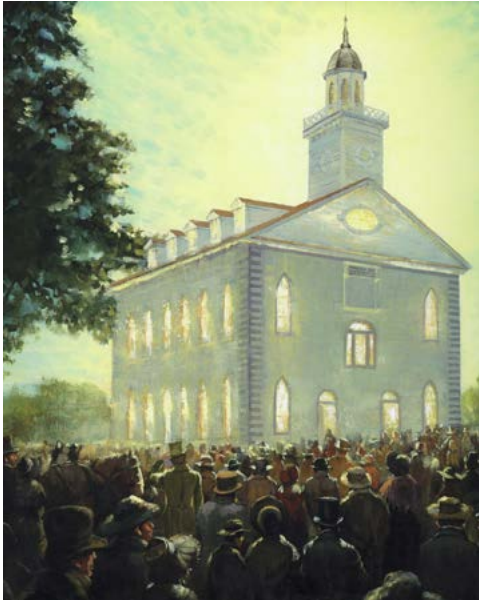
### **Historical Context and Significance of the Claim in the Dell Paul Letter**

Although it is clear that Joseph Smith knew much about the specifics of temple-related matters early in his ministry, his understandable reluctance to share details of sacred events publicly<sup>73</sup> has resulted in our possessing only very general descriptions of how these things were revealed to him. And, of particular relevance as we try to picture the kind of instruction about temple work that is described in the Dell Paul letter, we know even less about how the Prophet gained the knowledge necessary for teaching these things to others. While Joseph Smith’s exposure to Masonic ritual no doubt led him to seek further revelation as he prepared to introduce the ordinances of temple worship in Nauvoo,<sup>74</sup> there is evidence that he received crucial knowledge about the pedagogical aspects of temple work by divine means well prior to that time. For instance, Matthew B. Brown has summarized some of the accounts that speak in broad terms about heavenly visions and visits from one or more heavenly messengers:<sup>75</sup>

Elder Parley P. Pratt stated in early 1845 that Joseph Smith had given the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles “a pattern in all things pertaining to the sanctuary and the endowment therein” and explained to them that this pattern had been shown to him in a “heavenly vision.”<sup>76</sup> On another occasion Elder Pratt asked: “Who instructed [Joseph Smith] in the mysteries of the Kingdom, and in all things pertaining to Priesthood, law, philosophy, sacred architecture, ordinances, sealings, anointings, baptisms for the dead, and in the mysteries of the first, second, and third heavens, many of which are unlawful to utter? Angels and spirits from the eternal worlds.”<sup>77</sup> Elizabeth A. Whitney likewise stated her understanding, in a Church periodical, that an angel of God committed the temple rituals to Joseph Smith.<sup>78</sup>

One plausible occasion for further revelation concerning temple ordinances was the set of events surrounding the dedication of the Kirtland Temple during the five-day period of 27–31 March 1836. The dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple, given by revelation, highlighted its preparatory function, including ordinances such as washing and anointing that were associated anciently with the Aaronic Priesthood.<sup>79</sup>





**Figure 6.** Glen S. Hopkinson (1946-):  
*Like a Fire is Burning*, 2005.

Within the Kirtland Temple were given initiatory ordinances and an endowment focused on time — principally having to do with the immediate needs and duties of missionaries and others of the Saints<sup>80</sup> — while ordinances for both time and eternity — promising supernal blessings in both earth and heaven through continued faithfulness to the end, including the commencement of selected ordinances for both the living and the dead — would be performed later in Nauvoo.<sup>81</sup> In the words of the dedicatory prayer, the Kirtland Temple was built “that the Son of Man might

have a place to manifest himself to his people,”<sup>82</sup> and so that the Saints “may grow up in thee [i.e., Jesus Christ], and receive a fulness of the Holy Ghost, and be organized according to thy laws, and be prepared to obtain every needful thing.”<sup>83</sup>

The dedication of the Kirtland Temple would have provided a long-awaited place fit for additional, extensive personal instruction by the Lord Himself on details of the temple ordinances. At long last, the Savior had a place where He could “lay his head.”<sup>84</sup> Hence, the circumstances seem favorable for the report in the Dell Paul letter that “Jesus the Christ came ... and drilled them in the temple work. ... He was there day after day and far in the night ... for two weeks.<sup>85</sup> [He] took them through the ceremonies time and again.”<sup>86</sup> The lengthy instruction on temple work as reported in the letter could not have been centered primarily on the preparatory Kirtland Temple rituals, which, after all, were relatively simple and few.<sup>87</sup> Rather, it seems more reasonable, if the gist of the report is accurate, that any such instruction would have almost certainly focused on the additional ordinances that would be shared later, in their mature form, with the Saints in Nauvoo. A second possibility is that the account has its basis in the many visionary experiences reported by Joseph Smith, Zebedee Coltrin, and others prior to the temple dedication. We outline the arguments for both possibilities in the following section.

### Dating the Experience Reported by Zebedee Coltrin

One plausible time frame for the experience reported by Zebedee Coltrin is the period of 17 January to 6 February 1836, about two months prior to the temple dedication.<sup>88</sup> Mark L. Staker summarizes the spiritual manifestations that took place in the Kirtland Temple during this period:<sup>89</sup>

When the temple neared completion, the upstairs garret was finished and Joseph Smith moved immediately to prepare the priesthood quorums in their use of the temple space. He organized a series of meetings in the last weeks of January 1836. Each of the quorums met in the upper rooms of the temple with Zebedee Coltrin as a member of one of these. He met with his quorum in the third-floor garret in one of the western rooms. They washed, anointed each other with oil, and experienced marvelous things. Joseph Smith described receiving an “endowment of power.” Oliver Cowdery wrote that “the glorious scene is too great to be described. . . . I only say, that the heavens were opened to many, and great and marvelous things were shown.” Bishop Edward Partridge affirmed that some of the brethren “saw visions & others were blessed with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost.” Joseph Smith’s vision of the Celestial Kingdom that laid the foundation for his later understanding of baptism for the dead (D&C 137) was part of these experiences.

The length of this period fits the two-week interval reported in the Dell Paul letter. Moreover, among the experiences reported were visions of the Savior, some of which were experienced by Joseph Smith and others by Zebedee Coltrin himself. These visions were part of the “endowment” spoken of in D&C 110:9. The Prophet was attended by sacred dreams on two occasions during that period,<sup>90</sup> which lasted, in the words of Dell Paul letter, “far into the night.” The reference to “them” in the letter could be seen as including others of the brethren, not simply Coltrin and Joseph Smith. If the experience of Zebedee Coltrin occurred prior to the temple dedication, it must have taken place during this period.

However, while keeping in mind that the Dell Paul letter is a late, third-hand account of the event it describes, it seems to provide reasons to consider a second possible time frame, one that falls sometime after the vision of the Savior received by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on 3 April 1836.

Section 110 of the Doctrine and Covenants, a summary of that vision, is one of the most significant accounts we possess about the meaning and significance of temple-related knowledge and keys that were restored to

the Prophet Joseph Smith. Shortly after the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery “retired to the pulpit, the veils being dropped,” and knelt “in solemn and silent prayer.”<sup>91</sup> “After rising from prayer,” a vision was opened to them, in which Jesus Christ, Moses, Elias, and Elijah successively appeared. Although we are told that Moses, Elias, and Elijah came in order to commit specific keys at that time, section 110 tells us relatively little about the specific purpose of the visit of Jesus Christ. The heart of His relatively brief message to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, as reported in section 110, is His personal testimony of Himself and His Atonement, and His formal declaration of acceptance of the temple built to His name.<sup>92</sup>

Did the Savior Himself restore any keys during this visit? Matthew B. Brown concluded that he did, although it should be clarified that these were probably keys of knowledge rather than what we typically think of as keys of the priesthood.<sup>93</sup> Brown writes:<sup>94</sup>

Even though one does not get the impression from reading the contents of D&C 110 that the Savior delivered any particular keys during this visitation, as did the angelic messengers who appeared after Him, Elder Orson Pratt testified that the Lord did indeed bestow “keys of instruction and counsel and authority” on this occasion.<sup>95</sup> Elder Franklin D. Richards adds that the Lord “conversed with the Prophet Joseph and Oliver, and revealed to them their duties, and informed them that the gospel should go [forth] from there and be preached throughout the nations of the earth.”<sup>96</sup> It is apparent from these comments that D&C 110 does not record everything that occurred during this manifestation.<sup>97</sup>

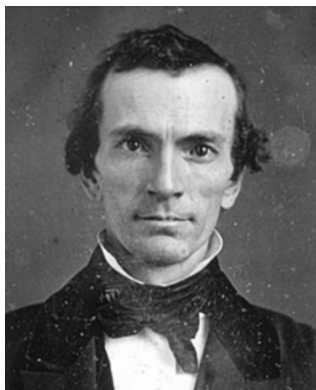
In addition to questions raised by the fact of the surprising brevity of the report of this singular vision, its position as the last journal entry made by the Prophet for a period of years is striking. Expressing subdued perplexity, the editors of Joseph Smith’s diary for this period note that the vision of 3 April 1836 “closes the journal. After more than six months of almost daily recording of developments in Kirtland ceased. For nearly two years, there were no more entries written in this or in any other [Joseph Smith] journal.”<sup>98</sup> It is, of course, understandable that during the later Kirtland period in 1837–38 — when discord among the Saints prevailed, when persecution of the Prophet himself reached its apogee, and when Joseph Smith’s scribe, Warren Cowdery (along with his brother, Oliver) had begun to take firm steps down the road of apostasy — the keeping of a regular journal became a challenge. But why were additional journal entries not made during the spring and early summer of 1836?

It is apparent from other historical evidence that this period was an unsurpassed moment of spiritual glory for the Church in Kirtland. Members such as Heber C. Kimball, John Corrill, and William W. Phelps recorded at the time that divine manifestations continued or perhaps even increased following the temple dedication.<sup>99</sup> “Others later remembered an intensity of spirit associated with the temple for weeks, even months. Eliza R. Snow wrote of ‘an abiding holy heavenly influence’ following the dedication and declared that ‘many extraordinary manifestations’ of God’s power were experienced after the events recorded in [Joseph Smith’s] journal.”<sup>100</sup> Despite the fact that we do not possess a personal record of the Prophet’s activities, it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that he also may have enjoyed supernal spiritual manifestations sometime following the 3 April 1836 vision, during the brief halcyon days of the Church in Kirtland.

What reasons might lead one to consider the alternate possibility of a date following rather than preceding the vision of 3 April 1836? For one thing, the restoration of the keys Joseph and Oliver received from Moses, Elias, and Elijah seem integral to the additional, extensive instruction on the temple ordinances that Coltrin is said to have experienced. Besides, the accounts of the visions reported during January and February do not describe a lengthy period of pedagogy wherein selected brethren were “drilled” in the specifics of temple ceremonies so much as they relate personal experiences designed to fortify faith and strengthen testimony. Indeed, apart from Joseph Smith’s revelation on the celestial kingdom on 21 January, there are no accounts of the Lord’s voice being heard.

Moreover, it is significant that the 3 April 1836 vision contained a promise, given by the Savior Himself, of further personal instruction that was to be given in the Kirtland Temple: “I will appear unto my servants, and speak unto them with mine own voice.”<sup>101</sup> We have located no other account of the fulfillment of this promise besides the report in the Dell Paul letter, where it is written that “Jesus Christ stood and talked to them just as I am talking to you.”<sup>102</sup>

In considering the plausibility of the later alternative for dating Coltrin’s experience, an additional question comes to mind: Why might Zebedee Coltrin have been selected to accompany Joseph Smith during this divine instruction rather than the seemingly more logical choice of Oliver Cowdery? Although Joseph Smith’s journal is silent on the matter, the historical record indicates that Oliver Cowdery became aware of the Prophet’s plural marriage to Fanny Alger not long after D&C 110 was received. This ultimately led to sharp disagreements on the matter with the Prophet and was a factor in Cowdery’s eventual excommunication on 12 April 1838.<sup>103</sup>



**Figure 7.** *Oliver Cowdery.*  
Daguerreotype taken in the  
1840s by James Presley Ball.

More precisely, Brian C. Hales concludes that “the most plausible timing for the Alger-Smith relationship to have become known with its explosive repercussions appears to be ... early in the summer — shortly after the Kirtland Temple dedication in late March 1836.”<sup>104</sup> He also argues that “Oliver Cowdery may have been a primary source of the rumors of Joseph Smith’s alleged adultery.”<sup>105</sup>

In contrast to the periodic vacillations of Oliver Cowdery (which concluded, happily, with repentance, rebaptism, and a complete reconciliation with Church leaders before his death in 1850<sup>106</sup>), Zebedee Coltrin remained solidly anchored to the Church and its leaders throughout his life. From the time of his baptism, he had received many heavenly visions.<sup>107</sup> For example, he is reported to have seen personal visions of the Savior on two occasions, in 1833 and 1836.<sup>108</sup> In the spring of 1836, he was serving faithfully as one of the presidents of the Seventy.<sup>109</sup> Given Oliver Cowdery’s spiritual struggles in the period that followed the 3 April 1836 vision and the possible need for essential, extensive temple-related instruction during the relatively short time the Kirtland Temple remained fit for personal visitations by Jesus Christ, Zebedee Coltrin may have been a more suitable candidate than Oliver to serve as a companion to Joseph Smith for these events at the time.

Although Zebedee Coltrin’s suitability for such an experience could be argued on the basis of his faithful service as one of the presidents of the Seventy in Kirtland, his personal gifts rather than his office may be a more relevant factor. Calvin R. Stephens, Coltrin’s biographer and a long-time student of church history during the Kirtland years, observes: “Zebedee Coltrin’s experience with the Prophet concerning the revelation on the endowment and the temple ordinances is plausible because of his sensitivity to the things of the Spirit. This was a gift ... that he was blessed with.”<sup>110</sup> Because there is a lack of precedent, since the organization of the Church, for anyone other than the apostles and prophets who lead it to be the recipient of an initial heavenly restoration of truth (see, e.g., D&C 28), one reviewer suggests that, assuming the gist of the experience happened as reported, it might be best to regard Coltrin as witness to the events described in the letter rather than as a co-recipient with Joseph Smith of the revelation and an equivalent of Cowdery.

## Background of the Dell Paul Letter

### Provenance and Physical Description

The letter from Dell Paul was found by K-Lynn Paul (b. 14 June 1937, Fergus Falls, Otter Tail County, Minnesota) in the spring of 2015, among the effects of his deceased parents, Lynn Paul (b. 29 June 1898, Victor, Teton County, Idaho; d. 28 November 1984, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma) and Lettie Annie Ririe Paul (b. 1 February 1901, Eden, Weber County, Utah; d. 23 April 1985, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma). Lynn Paul was the eighth child of Luna Ardell “Dell” Hinckley Paul (b. 18 March 1868, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah; d. February 19, 1945, Ogden, Weber County, Utah) and John Robert “Jack” Paul (2 December 1863, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah; d. 15 January 1940, Ogden, Weber, Utah).

The letter consists of a manuscript of four pages in the handwriting of Dell Paul. The original is preserved at the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.<sup>111</sup> A black-and-white version of the letter, based on a digital scan made by the Library that has been enhanced for readability, is reproduced in Appendix 1. A typescript of the letter appears in a later section of the present article.

### Biographies of Selected Individuals

In this section, we give short biographies of Luna Ardell “Dell” Hinckley Paul (the author of the letter), Zebedee Coltrin (who was reported in the letter as having participated in a heavenly manifestation in the Kirtland Temple), and Ezra Potter (presumed to be the “Brother Potter” referred to in the letter who had heard Coltrin relate the story and had later passed it on to Dell Paul).

**Luna Ardell Hinckley Paul.**<sup>112</sup> Luna Ardell “Dell” Hinckley Paul was the fourth child of Utah pioneer Arza Erastus Hinckley (b. 15 August 1826, Bastard, Leeds, Upper Canada [now Ontario, Canada]; d. 18 February 1901, Rexburg, Madison County, Idaho) and Mary Christine (originally Maria Christina) Heiner (b. 20 July 1839, Wasungen, Sachsen-Meiningen, Thüringen, Germany; d. 11 October 1879, St. George, Washington County, Utah).

As a small child, she moved with her family from Salt Lake City to Cove Creek (Cove Fort) in southern Utah. Her father’s brother, Ira Hinckley, had been called by Brigham Young to build a fort there for the protection of Mormon emigrants who passed through the area on



**Figure 8.** *Dell Hinckley at the age of 16, about the time she attended the Logan Temple dedication in 1884.*

their way to other settlements further south and west. Having had no opportunity for formal schooling, Dell received the equivalent of a “third-grade education.”<sup>113</sup>

When Dell’s mother, Mary, became critically ill in 1879, they took her on an arduous wagon ride of 150 miles to St. George, Utah, for treatment. Tragically, Mary died there on 11 October 1879. After the death of their mother, Dell and her sister Martha, received their endowments at the St. George Temple on 7 January 1880. At the time, Dell was not yet twelve years old. The family stayed in St. George six weeks longer to perform temple work for deceased family members

before the young girls went to live with their mother’s parents, Johann Martin and Adelgunda Dietzel Heiner, in Morgan, Utah. While living in Morgan with her grandparents, Dell attended the dedication of the Logan Temple on 17 May 1884.<sup>114</sup>



**Figure 9.** *Dell Paul and John Robert Paul about the time of their marriage in 1886.*

In 1885, Dell went once more to live with her immediate family, who had since moved to Rexburg, Idaho. The family consisted of her father; a new stepmother, Temperance Ricks; four boys; and two girls. In Rexburg, she met John Robert Paul and was sealed to him in marriage in the Logan Temple on 20 May 1886.



**Figure 10.** *The John Robert and Luna Ardeell Paul family at their homestead at Cedron, Idaho, ca. 1899. Two additional girls were born after this picture was taken. Lynn Paul is the small child wearing dark clothes in the right arm of his father.*

After financially challenging years in St. Anthony, Cedron, and Rexburg, Idaho, and a sojourn in Nevada, Dell and Jack moved with nine surviving children to Ogden in 1914. (One son died at age six of diphtheria in Idaho.) Though continually busy with caring for a large family, Dell served extensively in the Church, community projects, and in the Daughters of Utah Pioneers. After three happy decades in Ogden, Dell passed away on 19 February 1945.

Although it is always possible that Dell could have met Ezra Potter by chance and heard the story of Zebedee Coltrin's experience in her earlier life, it seems more likely that he told

her of the experience while they both lived in Ogden, sometime between 1917 (when Ezra Potter moved there from West Weber) and 15 May 1922 (when Dell Paul wrote the letter). According to family sources, Dell Paul was living at 1223 26th Street in Ogden in October 1918.<sup>115</sup> Both at the time of the 1920 census<sup>116</sup> and also at his passing in 1926,<sup>117</sup> Ezra Potter was living at 2215 Lincoln Avenue in Ogden. These addresses are approximately two miles apart.

**Zebedee Coltrin.** Zebedee Coltrin was one of sixty residents of Strongsville, Ohio, who joined the Church in 1830–1831. From the time of his conversion, he had many visionary experiences. On 8 January 1831, the night before his baptism, he reported that “the room became lighted up with a brilliant light, and I saw a number of men dressed in white robes, like unto what we call temple clothes.”<sup>118</sup> He was called on a mission on 7 June 1831.<sup>119</sup> In the spring of 1833, he experienced spiritual manifestations in connection with meetings of the School of the Prophets, including the gift of tongues<sup>120</sup> and a vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ.<sup>121</sup> On 19 April 1834, he, along with Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, saw Adam and Eve in vision.<sup>122</sup> On 28 January





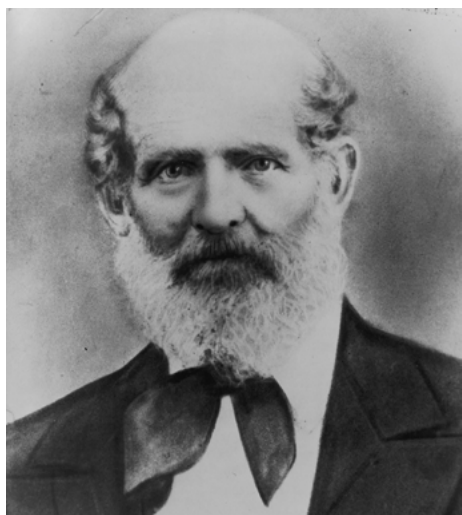
**Figure 11.** *Jack and Dell Paul, probably in 1926 at the time of their Golden Wedding Anniversary*

1836, Zebedee saw a vision of Jesus Christ on the cross in the Kirtland Temple. He also saw a vision of “the Lord’s host” on 7 February, and testified of seeing “the power of God as it was in the day of Pentecost and cloven tongues of fire [resting] on the brethren” and other spiritual manifestations during the March temple dedication.<sup>123</sup>

On 28 February 1835, Joseph Smith organized the First Quorum of Seventy, with members selected from those who had gone to Missouri in Zion’s Camp. Zebedee was selected as one of the seven presidents of this quorum and was ordained on 1 March 1835, receiving the promise: “You shall have heavenly visions and the ministry of Angels shall be your lot.”<sup>124</sup> For the next two years, Zebedee “fulfilled his duties and obligations honorably.”<sup>125</sup> However, on 6 April 1837, it was discovered that, along with four others who were serving as presidents of the First Quorum of the Seventy, he had been ordained previously as a high priest. As a result, all five of them were invited by Joseph Smith to unite themselves with the high priests quorum.<sup>126</sup> Unfortunately, we have no details from Zebedee’s biographer of his activities during 1836–1838 that would help date the manifestation reported in the Dell Paul letter.

Coltrin came to Nauvoo in 1839 but soon returned to Kirtland. A stake was reorganized for a short time in Kirtland, and he served as a counselor in the stake presidency.<sup>127</sup> When the stake was dissolved

in 1841, he returned to Nauvoo with his family. In Nauvoo, he became a merchant, but according to Stephens, “how successful he was in this



**Figure 12.** *Zebedee Coltrin, ca. 1865.*

enterprise is not known. He was involved in missionary work and he probably had little time to devote to being a successful merchant during this period.”<sup>128</sup> Zebedee was called as a full-time missionary to Virginia in 1843<sup>129</sup> and in 1844 campaigned for Joseph Smith as a candidate for the presidency of the United States until the death of the Prophet.<sup>130</sup> He was endowed on 22 December 1845 and sealed in marriage in the Nauvoo temple on 20 January 1846.<sup>131</sup>

Zebedee came to Utah with the first pioneer group in 1847.<sup>132</sup>

Soon afterward, he was called by Brigham Young to help settle the Spanish Fork area.<sup>133</sup> He served faithfully within his high priests quorum in Spanish Fork<sup>134</sup> and was reputed to be a “staunch supporter” of the United Order that was organized there.<sup>135</sup> On 31 May 1873, he was ordained a patriarch by President Brigham Young.<sup>136</sup> He served in this calling until his death in 1887, giving more than one thousand patriarchal blessings.<sup>137</sup>

Later in life, Zebedee Coltrin began sharing some of his visionary experiences in Kirtland publicly. For example, in at least one occasion in 1878, he related some of these events to his high priests quorum.<sup>138</sup> Then, in 1883, President John Taylor reorganized the School of the Prophets, an institution that had met previously at different periods during the administrations of Presidents Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. In order “that the School might be properly organized,” John Taylor asked Elders George Q. Cannon and George Reynolds to “get together all papers and information that they could obtain relating to the former Schools of the Prophets.”<sup>139</sup> Zebedee Coltrin, as “the only surviving member of the School of the Prophets organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith at Kirtland,”<sup>140</sup> was invited to answer questions about the School on 3 and 11 October 1883.<sup>141</sup> Elder Wilford Woodruff recorded the following in his journal entry for 12 October 1883:<sup>142</sup>

This was a day of fasting and Prayer with the leaders of the Church. I took a Bath and wash in the Morning and went to

the Endowment House at 9 o'clock to receive the washing of feet as it was done in Kirtland 47 years ago By the Prophet Joseph Smith as an Initiatory ordinance into the school of the Prophets. Remarks were made By the Presidency & others. President John Taylor washed the feet of Zebedee Coltrin as He was the ownly man living that was in the first school of the Prophets organized by Joseph Smith in Kirtland /in 1833/. Then Zebedee Coultrin washed the feet of Presidet Taylor. Then Presidet Taylor washed the feet of his two Councillors & all the Twelve Apostles except C. C. Rich who was sick & John Henry Smith in England. He washed the feet of 38 in all. At the Close of this Ceremony we partook of Bread & wine as a sacrament as they did in the Temple in Kirtland which Closed the labor of the day.

Because of his participation in many of the sacred events that took place in Kirtland, including the temple dedication, Coltrin was a natural choice to assist with preparation for the Logan Temple dedication. L. John Nuttall, secretary to President John Taylor, recorded that Zebedee Coltrin boarded a train in Ogden as a member of the group accompanying President Taylor to the Logan Temple twice: once on 2 February<sup>143</sup> and another time on 14 May 1884.<sup>144</sup> He also noted that Coltrin was accompanied by his son when he boarded the train on the second trip.<sup>145</sup> According to Nuttall, the overall purpose of the February trip was to inspect the temple “to determine firsthand how near [it] was to completion.”<sup>146</sup> The trip in May was on the occasion of the temple dedication itself, held on 17 May 1884. Zebedee had been asked to give a prayer on that occasion.<sup>147</sup>

Dell Paul’s letter describes the reason for Zebedee Coltrin’s passage through Ogden on his way to Logan in general terms, saying that he “was called by President Taylor to go and help start the work in the Logan Temple.”<sup>148</sup> Similarly, Margaret McNeil Ballard, in whose home Zebedee was a house guest during the Logan Temple dedication, understood that he had come at that time “to assist in the ordinance work of the temple.”<sup>149</sup> Dell Paul’s description could fit either the February 1884 or May 1884 time frame. Because Coltrin would have traveled from his home in Spanish Fork prior to boarding the train, it seems likely that he would have stayed in the Ogden area for one or more previous nights on each occasion.<sup>150</sup> Such a stay would have afforded the circumstances in which Coltrin’s conversations “in Ogden” with “Brother Potter and two other men” could have taken place while he was “on his way” to “help start the work in the Logan Temple.”<sup>151</sup>

According to Coltrin's biographer, "the last two years of Zebedee's life were spent in doing ordinance work in the Logan Temple."<sup>152</sup> He died on 21 July 1887.

**Ezra Potter.**<sup>153</sup> Although it is unlikely that we will ever be able to establish definitively the identity of the "Brother Potter" referred to in Dell Paul's letter, the figure of Ezra Potter has emerged as a prominent candidate in our search through newspapers, census records, burial records, and genealogical databases. Potter was a faithful member of the LDS Church throughout his life, was living in the Ogden area (West Weber) when Zebedee Coltrin passed through there on his way to the Logan Temple (1883), and his residence was about two miles away from Dell Paul for five of the eight years that Dell Paul lived in Ogden prior to writing the letter (1917–1922).



**Figure 13.** *Ezra and Mary Jane Potter Family, ca. 1903*

Ezra Potter was born in Leicester, England, on 16 May 1851, the only son of Richard (1820–1902) and Mary Newman Grain Potter (1814–1891). He joined the Church with his family and immigrated to Utah as an 11-year-old in 1862. His early life was spent in Logan, Utah, and Malad, Idaho. His only known journal dates from 22 July 1877 to 15 March 1879, shortly after his marriage and sealing to Mary Jane Douglass (1863–1909) on 26 February 1879.<sup>154</sup> Just prior to his marriage he bought land on the Douglass homestead in West Weber, Utah. There they made their home and became the parents of eight children. From 1904–1906,

Ezra served as a missionary in the Western States Mission. In 1917, eight years after Mary Jane passed away, he married Louisa Festersen Rohwer (1868–1940) and moved to Ogden, Utah. He passed away on 23 May 1926 in Ogden, Utah.

## **Conjectural Timeline of Events**

### **1 March 1835<sup>155</sup>**

Zebedee Coltrin was ordained as one of the seven presidents of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

### **17 January–6 February 1836<sup>156</sup>**

A pentecostal season opens in Kirtland. Experiences reported by many individuals included the gift of tongues; the sound of a mighty wind; visions and appearances of the Father, the Son, and other heavenly beings; and prophesying. D&C 137, a vision of the celestial kingdom, was received on 21 January. If the experience of Zebedee Coltrin reported in the Dell Paul letter occurred prior to the temple dedication, it must have taken place during this period.

### **27–31 March 1836<sup>157</sup>**

The Kirtland Temple was dedicated over a five-day period, accompanied by glorious heavenly manifestations.

### **3 April 1836**

Following morning meetings in the temple, Joseph Smith administered the sacrament to those assembled in the afternoon. After the veils were dropped, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the vision of Jesus Christ, Moses, Elias, and Elijah published in D&C 110. A promise was given in D&C 110:8 that Jesus Christ would later “appear unto [His] servants, and speak unto them with [His] own voice, if my people will keep my commandments, and do not pollute this holy house.” Following the record of this vision, no further entries were made in Joseph Smith’s journal for nearly two years.

### **April–May 1836**

Spiritual outpourings among the Saints continued in Kirtland.

### **After 3 April 1836 and Before 12 January 1838**

If the experience of Zebedee Coltrin reported in the Dell Paul letter took place after the temple dedication, it must have occurred sometime following the vision of 3 April 1836 (D&C 110), after Oliver Cowdery had fallen out of harmony with Joseph Smith. Brian C. Hales dates the disclosure of Joseph Smith's marriage to Fanny Alger, which was a significant factor in Cowdery's disaffection during that period, to "early in the summer — shortly after the Kirtland Temple dedication in late March 1836."<sup>158</sup> Eventually, after several attempts at reconciliation and much vacillation, Cowdery was excommunicated on 12 April 1838.<sup>159</sup>

Because Joseph Smith's journal entries ended after 3 April 1836, we have relatively few records of his activities in the late spring and early summer of 1836. Apart from a short trip to escort his grandmother Mary Duty Smith to Kirtland on 17 May 1836, there is no report of Joseph Smith being away from Kirtland until his departure for New York City and Salem, Massachusetts on 25 June 1836 (see D&C 111). Frederick Granger Williams Smith was born to Emma on 20 June 1836. On 29 June 1836, Clay County Missouri citizens demanded an end to Mormon immigration and the eventual departure of all the Saints. During the last half of 1836, the Prophet's attention turned largely to practical matters: raising money for Missouri land, his journey to the east (which lasted into September), and preparing for the opening of Kirtland Safety Society on 9 January 1837.

From all this we conclude that if the experience reported in the Dell Paul letter did not happen in January-February 1836, the most likely alternative time frame would have been in April-June 1836. It could have occurred no later than 12 January 1838, when the Prophet left Kirtland definitively.<sup>160</sup>

### **6 April 1837**

Zebedee Coltrin was released as a president of the First Quorum of the Seventy, along with four others, after it was discovered that they had been previously ordained high priests.

### **31 May 1873**

Zebedee Coltrin was ordained a patriarch by President Brigham Young.<sup>161</sup>

## **5 February 1878**

Zebedee Coltrin is recorded as having related some of his visionary experiences in Kirtland to his high priests quorum in Spanish Fork, Utah.<sup>162</sup>

## **1879**

Ezra Potter moved to West Weber, a few miles west of Ogden, Utah.<sup>163</sup>

## **3 and 11 October 1883**

Zebedee Coltrin as “the only surviving member of the School of the Prophets organized by the Prophet Joseph Smith at Kirtland,”<sup>164</sup> was invited by President John Taylor to answer questions about how the school was organized and to share some of his visionary experiences.<sup>165</sup>

## **2 February<sup>166</sup> or 14 May 1884:<sup>167</sup>**

On one of these dates, Zebedee Coltrin may have related the experience in the Kirtland Temple reported in the Dell Paul letter to “Brother Potter” and two others in the Ogden area before joining a group led by President John Taylor bound for the Logan Temple.

## **21 July 1887**

Zebedee Coltrin passed away.

## **1914**

Dell Paul moved to Ogden.

## **1917**

Ezra Potter moved to Ogden from West Weber.

## **1917–1922**

Assuming that Ezra Potter is the “Brother Potter” referred to in Dell Paul’s letter, this is the most plausible time period for him to have related what he had heard from Zebedee Coltrin to Dell Paul.

## **15 May 1922**

Dell Paul wrote her remembrance of what she was told by “Brother Potter” in a letter to her son, Lynn Paul.

## **28 November 1984**

Lynn Paul passed away.

## **Spring 2015**

K-Lynn Paul, son of Lynn Paul, came across the 15 May 1922 letter of Dell Hinckley Paul among the effects of his parents. He donated the letter to the Church History Library for safekeeping, scanning, and access by researchers.



**Letter of Luna Ardell Hinckley Paul to Lynn Paul, 15 May 1922**

Ogden May 15 1922

Mr Lynn Paul

Dear boy your Mother letter came today thanks  
many times for your love. I have been going to  
whrite you for some time but have not been in the  
umer [humor, i.e., mood]. a number of things about the church, now I  
have  
a lot more to tell you so hold your breath for  
you will have the task of reading a lot.  
In the first place they are going to divide the stake.  
and it is rumered a number of wards. They have  
called a specal [special] Priesthood meeting. next saturday.  
and a special conference sunday to devide the Weber  
stake. there is some talk of the devision being [illegible, perhaps  
Washington?] Ave. but [I] do not know. I went to mother day program.  
it was grand the best I ever atended. also last week  
a program in the Junior Hy [High]. abot [about] 5 hundred girls  
all dressed in cotsem [costume] took part. you can amagen [imagine]  
the buty [beauty] and grace they sure done well.  
to day there is a big parade [parade] with all the boys in  
the city. this is boy week in the state. you speak of  
hot weathr well we have not had it warm an  
uf [enough] not to make fires to be cumfertabel [comfortable] hear  
this spring the trees are covered with blom [bloom].  
it may be good that the weath [weather] has stayed  
cool as the weather counts so much with  
the hay water

[page 2]

Lynn you speak of cycole [cyclones] and the feer of them<sup>168</sup>  
you can expect them, as this is the time the Profits  
of old fortold about the desasters of this time  
in Weaber Colege, they had a testamoniyaal meeting  
and one of the visiting Ladies spoke in tong [tongues]  
and another interperted it and this is the intent  
taken as it was reported to me. that this is the  
day the profits told abot in the last days and

that we could look for the changes in the earth, but the promes if the Laterday sants would live their religion that they would ascape and if not they would sufer with the disobedent. your Fathe[r's] helth is better, but he has not his teath as his goms [gums] do not heal as fast as they should. you speak of art. they seem to have a specal awaking down their. the quire [choir] down have been invited to sing in a number of large halls. England or her people are having a time percuting [persecuting] the sants. the worst they ever have had. I wanted to tell you about Zdbide Colter [Zebedee Coltrin]. this man was called by Present Talor [President Taylor] to go and help start the work in the Logon Temple. And on his way he vised [visited] a brother hear in Ogden while hear he talked to Brother Potter and two other men and he told them he wanted them

[page 3]

[to] remember what he said. this is as near as I can remember as Broth[er] Potter told me. he said that he was with the Profit Joeph [Prophet Joseph] in the curtland [Kirtland] temple. and he said that Joeph had called him to help with this work and he said that Gesios the Crist [Jesus the Christ]. came their and drilled them in the temple work and he was their day after day and for [far] in the night every day for two weeks.<sup>169</sup> and took them thru the sarmones [ceremonies] time and again. he said he stood and talked to them just as I am talking to you. and then Zebide Colter described him his hight wate culer of eys [height weight color of eyes] and hair but I canot remember only he was tall. And I think blue eys. but am not shure. I was going to whrite this at the time but put it off. he said that what he told them was true and then he explained a lot of things that Joeph and oth[ers] of the L.D.S. had

done and said that he was the only one  
 living that was thair at that time and  
 he has since died. How thankful we

[page 4]

should be to know the truth with love I must  
 write some other letters mother.

### **Why Might It Have Been Expedient That the Saints Wait Before Receiving the Full Complement of Temple Ordinances?**

In considering what Joseph Smith seems to have known about the temple by 1836, an additional question merits attention: Why might it have been expedient that the Saints wait several years before they received the full complement of temple ordinances that were eventually administered in Nauvoo? In response to this question, we can do no better than to cite Matthew B. Brown:<sup>170</sup>

First of all, it must be remembered that Kirtland, Ohio, was only a temporary gathering place for the Saints. In May of 1831 the Lord indicated that the Saints would only remain in Ohio “for a little season” until he should “provide for them otherwise, and command them to go hence.”<sup>171</sup> On 11 September 1831 the Lord was even more specific when He announced that the Saints would only remain in Kirtland, Ohio, for the space of five years,<sup>172</sup> during which time they would lay the foundation for a great work which was yet to come.<sup>173</sup> It was not until near the very end of this time frame that the Kirtland Temple was dedicated and the angels of D&C 110 came to commit their keys. According to Joseph Fielding Smith, the house of the Lord in Kirtland “was only a preparatory temple” that “was built primarily for the restoration of keys of authority.”<sup>174</sup>

Elder George A. Smith indicated that there were other reasons why the Lord only bestowed a portion of his full temple rites upon the Saints during the Kirtland period. He said that during those years the Saints had among them “a great many traditions which they borrowed from their fathers,” and some of them were so unstable in the gospel that they apostatized over very trivial matters. Even when the Lord restored the basic temple rituals of the Kirtland period, some of the Saints

“apostatized because there was not more of it, and others because there was too much.” Elder Smith continues:<sup>175</sup>

If the Lord had on that occasion revealed one single sentiment more, or went one step further to reveal more fully the law of redemption, I believe he would have upset the whole of us. The fact was, he dare not, on that very account, reveal to us a single principle further than he had done, for he had tried, over and over again, to do it. He tried at Jerusalem; He tried away back before the flood; He tried in the days of Moses; and he had tried, from time to time, to find a people to whom he could reveal the law of salvation, and he never could fully accomplish it; and he was determined this time to be so careful, and advance the idea so slowly, to communicate them to the children of men with such great caution that, at all hazards, a few of them might be able to understand and obey.

All of this raises an interesting question. Since Joseph Smith had the necessary keys, could he have restored and administered the Nauvoo-style temple rites during the Kirtland period? Brigham Young seems to have thought so. After giving a basic outline of the Nauvoo-era temple rites, President Young said that<sup>176</sup> “before these endowments could be given at Kirtland, the Saints had to flee before mobocracy.” The Saints then settled in Far West, Missouri, and laid the cornerstones of a temple there but eventually “had to retreat to [Nauvoo,] Illinois to save the lives of those who could get away alive from Missouri.” President Young lamented that the Kirtland Temple then fell “into the hands of wicked men, and by them [it was] polluted, like the temple at Jerusalem, and consequently it was disowned by the Father and the Son.”

And what about the Far West Temple? Did the Lord plan to restore the full temple ordinances to the Saints in His house at Far West, Missouri? This seems to be a definite possibility. The “pattern” that the Lord revealed for the Kirtland Temple would not have lent itself very well to the administration of the type of ordinances that were practiced during the Nauvoo period. But notice that the Lord was going to “show” the First Presidency the “pattern” for the Far West Temple just as He

had for the Kirtland Temple.<sup>177</sup> Why would this have been necessary unless the “pattern” for the Far West Temple was going to be different than the “pattern” for the Kirtland Temple? As noted above in Brigham Young’s statement, persecution and mobocracy prevented the building of the Far West Temple and the Saints did not get another chance to build a House of God until they had settled in Nauvoo, Illinois. Before the Prophet even set foot in Nauvoo, he wrote a member of the Church saying: “I never have had [an] opportunity to give [the Saints] the plan that God has revealed to me.”<sup>178</sup>

### Conclusions

The Dell Paul letter is consistent with arguments that the Prophet learned much about temple ordinances through personal experiences with heavenly beings, translations, and revelations as much as a decade before he administered them in Nauvoo.<sup>179</sup> A careful study of this question will reveal that many unmistakable references to significant components of priesthood and temple doctrines, authority, and ordinances date to the 1830s or earlier. These components include: 1) the narrative backbone, clothing, and covenants of the modern temple endowment; 2) the sequence of blessings of the oath and covenant of the priesthood, including additional ordinances; and 3) priesthood keys symbolized in words, signs, and tokens.<sup>180</sup>

Because the Dell Paul letter is a late, third-hand account of the event it describes, the accuracy of the report in all its details cannot be known with any certainty. We have described what circumstantial evidence is available for the heavenly manifestation and have outlined two major possibilities for its setting: 1. As a part of the many visionary experiences reported by Joseph Smith, Zebedee Coltrin, and others prior to the temple dedication in January-February 1836; and 2. As a separate heavenly manifestation that took place after the temple dedication in April-June 1836 that would have provided a fitting capstone to all that Joseph Smith had learned about temple matters up to that time. In either case, if the letter’s claim that Jesus Christ “stood and talked to them just as I am talking to you” is accurately reported, it provides an additional witness of the Savior’s frequent presence in Kirtland in 1836.

Every Latter-day Saint who cherishes the temple blessings restored through the Prophet and his successors will resonate with the grateful exclamation of Luna Ardel Hinckley Paul: “How thankful we should be to know the truth!”

## Acknowledgments

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**K-Lynn Paul** was born in Fergus Falls, Otter Tail County, Minnesota. He was called to the Northwestern States Mission, and served in Washington, Oregon, and northern Idaho. He graduated from Brigham Young University in 1963, and from the University of Minnesota Medical School in 1967. In 1971, he completed specialty training in psychiatry at Kansas University Medical Center. After two years as a Major in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, he worked at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences

*Center and the VA Hospital in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He then became Director of Psychiatric Residency Training at the University of South Dakota School of Medicine in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. There, he directed the training of physicians to become psychiatrists until he retired in 2005. K-Lynn and his wife, Karen, served a two-year mission in Hong Kong as Area Mental Health Advisors for missionaries in the Philippines and in Asia from 2009–2011. K-Lynn has served in member missionary leadership callings for many years and currently serves as a ward mission leader. He has also served as a high councilor in two stakes, as a bishop in Sioux Falls, and as a high priests group leader.*

# Appendix 1: Digital Scan of a Letter from Luna Ardell Hinckley Paul to Lynn Paul, 15 May 1922<sup>181</sup>

Ogden May 15 1922

Mr Lynn Paul.

Dear boy your Mother's letter came to day thanks  
many times for you love. I have been going to  
write you for some time but have not been in the  
mood. a number of things about the church, now I have  
a lot more to tell you so hold your breath for  
you will have the task of reading a lot.  
On the first place they are going to divide the stake.  
and it is rumors a number of words. They have  
called a special District meeting. meet Saturday.  
and a special conference Sunday to divide the Weber  
stake. this is some talk of the division leaving Brigham Co.  
but do not know. I went to yesterday's program.  
it was grand the best I ever attended. also last week  
a program in the Gamma Halls. about 5 hundred girls  
all dressed in costume took part. you can imagine  
the beauty and grace they have done well.  
to day there is a big parade with all the boys in  
the city. this is boy week. in the state. you speak of  
hot weather well we have not had it woman  
up not to make girls to be uncomfortable here.  
this spring the trees are covered with bloom.  
it may be good that the weather has stayed  
cool as the weather counts so much with  
the big water.



Lynn you speak of cyclo and the fear of them  
 you can expect them, as this is the time the Profits  
 of old fortold about the deathtes of this time  
 in Wesber College, they had a testimonial meeting  
 and one of the visiting ladies spoke in tong,  
 and another interpreted it and this is the intet  
 taken as it was reported to me, that this is the  
 day the profits told abot in the lost days and  
 that we could look for the changes in the earth, but  
 the profits is the Saturday saints would live their  
 religion that they would awake and if not they  
 would rise with the disabedent. your father  
 helth is better, but he has not his teeth as his  
 goons do not hear as fast as they should.  
 you speak of art, they seem to have a spital  
 awaking down their. the quire down have been  
 invited to sing in a number of large  
 halls, England or her peple are having a time  
 persecuting the saints. the worst they ever have  
 had. I wanted to tell you about Gdbride Colter.  
 this man was called by Barent Jals to go and  
 help start the work in the Loagon Temple, and  
 on his way he vied a brother here in Ajden  
 while hear he talked to Brother Potter and two  
 other men and he told them he wanted them

remember what he said, this is as near as I  
 can remember as Braith Patton told me. he said  
 that he was with the Prophet Joseph in the Cuthbert  
 temple, and he said that Joseph had called him  
 to help with this work and he said that  
 Gesius the Priest, came there and drilled them  
 in the temple work and he was there day  
 after day and for in the night every day  
 for two weeks, and took them there the  
 same time and again, he said he stood  
 and talked to them just as I am talking  
 to you, and then Zebide Colter described  
 him his light water color of eyes and hair,  
 but I cannot not remember only he was tall, and  
 I think blue eyes, but am not sure. I  
 was going to write this at the time but put  
 it off, he said that what he told them was  
 true and then he explained a lot of things  
 that Joseph and all of the L.D.S. had  
 done and said that he was the only one  
 living that was there at that time, and  
 he has since died. How thankful we

should be to know the truth with love I must  
write some other letters rather.

## Appendix 2: Letter of K-Lynn Paul to Family Members

June 9, 2015

Dear Family,

I discovered a letter in my parent's things that Luna Ardell Hinckley Paul wrote to my father, Lynn Paul, in 1922 which contained some very interesting information if accurate. Here is what I wrote to the Church Historian:

I recently came across a letter that my grandmother, Luna Ardell Hinckley Paul, wrote to my father Lynn Paul dated May 15, 1922. In that letter she reports that a Brother Zebedee Colter (did she mean Coltrin) was passing through Ogden on his way to Logan, having been called by President Taylor to help start the work in the Logan Temple. According to the letter he talked to a Brother Potter and two other men and told them that he wanted them to remember what he said. He said that he was with the Prophet Joseph in the Kirtland Temple and that Joseph had called him to help with the work. Then he said that Jesus the Christ came there and "drilled" them in the temple work and he was there day after day and far in the night for two weeks and took them through the ceremonies time and again. He then described the Savior. He also told them that he was the only one living (when he spoke with Brother Potter) that was there at that time. Brother Potter told the story to my grandmother Luna Ardell Hinckley Paul. She said that she was going to write this at the time (she was told it) but put it off (until she wrote it to my father.)

I had never heard any of this information before, but not living in Utah, I don't always hear things that are common knowledge among Church members in Utah. However, in case this information is useful I could provide a copy of my grandmother's letter. ...<sup>182</sup>

[The Church Historian] indicated that they would love to have a copy (since that is what I said I could provide.) I decided that the Church History Department should have the original for safe keeping, but I am sending a copy to you for your interest. Below is the information I sent to Elder Steven E. Snow, the Church Historian.

Enclosed is the letter my grandmother, Luna Ardell Hinckley Paul, wrote to my father May 15, 1922. She had just a third

grade education so her spelling is not good. Therefore I have typed out the letter with corrected spelling which is enclosed with the original.

When she wrote 'Colter' she well could have meant Coltrin as he is the only person that would fit the story. Zebedee Coltrin died in 1887, so if the story is accurate he must have spoken to Brother Potter in Ogden prior to that time. When Brother Potter spoke to my grandmother is unknown, but she says she did not write it down at the time but later on May 15, 1922. So 35-plus years had to have elapsed since the story was told to Brother Potter, and the story is dependent upon the memories of three people — Brother Coltrin, Brother Potter and my grandmother. Nevertheless, my grandmother had a knack for ferreting out historical information as she did in finding out the role of her father, Arza Erastus Hinckley, in the rescue of the handcart pioneers.

Brother Coltrin, who is mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants apparently often told accounts of miraculous events, according to what I was able to learn about him from the Internet.

In her letter my grandmother refers to a fear of cyclone(s) that my father had mentioned to her (presumably in a prior letter.) My father had moved to Fergus Falls, Minnesota, where a tornado (called a cyclone back then) had destroyed much of the town in 1919, so the people there would still have had a considerable fear in 1922.

I hope you find this account interesting — I certainly did. Please feel free to pass the information on to your descendants or other family members as you see fit.

Your relative,  
K-Lynn Paul

## Figure Credits

1. Arnold Friberg (1913-2010): *The brother of Jared Sees the Finger of God*, 1951. <http://www.deseretnews.com/top/704/1/The-Brother-of-Jared-Sees-the-Finger-of-the-Lord-Arnold-Fribergs-religious-paintings.html> (accessed 21 June 2016).
2. Walter Rane (1949-): *The Desires of My Heart*, 2004. <http://www.walterraneprints.com/prints/the-desires-of-my-heart>. By permission of the artist, with special thanks to Linda Rane.
3. Unknown. *God Dressing Adam and Eve*. Detail of the Creation Cupola, Cathedral of San Marco, Venice, thirteenth century. With permission of PM Russian Icon. [http://www.ruicon.ru/arts-new/mosaics/1x1-dtl/italiya\\_venetciya\\_san-marko/11bog\\_odevaet\\_adama\\_i\\_evu\\_v\\_kozhanye\\_rizy\\_byt\\_3\\_23-24/?page\\_19=411&1=&p\\_f\\_15\\_66=1&ref-cat=](http://www.ruicon.ru/arts-new/mosaics/1x1-dtl/italiya_venetciya_san-marko/11bog_odevaet_adama_i_evu_v_kozhanye_rizy_byt_3_23-24/?page_19=411&1=&p_f_15_66=1&ref-cat=) (accessed 30 December 2015).
4. J. James Tissot (1836-1902): *The Offerings of Melchizedek*, ca. 1896-1902. Scanned from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw's personal copy of J. J. Tissot, *Old Testament*, 1:47. The Jewish Museum, No. 52-94. In the public domain. See Genesis 14:18-20
5. Unknown. *Impression Seal of Gudea*, Tello, Iraq, ca. 2150 BCE. Published in J. V. Canby, *Ur-Nammu*, Plate 14a.
6. Glen S. Hopkinson (1946-): *Like a Fire is Burning*, 2005. With permission and thanks to Glen S. Hopkinson. Original published in G. S. Hopkinson, *Faithful Life*, p. 45.
7. Oliver Cowdery. Daguerreotype taken in the 1840s by James Presley Ball. Public Domain. <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c6/Olivercowdery-sm.jpg> (accessed May 12, 2016).
8. Dell Hinckley at the age of 16, about the time she attended the Logan Temple dedication in 1884. <https://familysearch.org/photos/images/125627?p=527749> (accessed March 27, 2016).
9. Dell Paul and John Robert Paul at about the time of their marriage in 1886. <https://familysearch.org/photos/images/125590> (accessed March 27, 2016).
10. *The John Robert and Luna Ardell Paul family at their homestead at Cedron, Idaho, about 1899*. Two additional girls were born after this picture was taken. Lynn Paul is the small child wearing dark clothes in the right arm of his father. <https://familysearch.org/photos/images/759364> (accessed March 27, 2016).
11. *Jack and Dell Paul, probably in 1926 at the time of their Golden Wedding Anniversary*. <https://familysearch.org/photos/images/509645> (accessed March 27, 2016).

12. Zebedee Coltrin, ca. 1865. <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/zebedee-coltrin> (accessed May 12, 2016). [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zebedee\\_Coltrin.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zebedee_Coltrin.jpg) (May 12, 2016). <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/RelEd/id/277> (May 12, 2016).
13. *Ezra and Mary Jane Potter Family*, ca 1903. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=27916790> (accessed March 27, 2016). Photo contributed by Barbara Anne (Brownell) Potter. With permission of Glenn Kartchner.

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## Endnotes

- 1 “I came to the conclusion at a very early age, earlier than I can remember, that you don’t get books from angels and translate them by miracles; it is just that simple. So I simply don’t believe the Book of Mormon to be authentic. I think that all of the hassling over the authenticity of the Book of Mormon is just a waste of time” (S. M. McMurrin et al., *An interview with Sterling McMurrin*, p. 25).
- 2 M. W. Homer, ‘Similarity of priesthood in Masonry’: The relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism, p. 40. Within the article, Homer repeats this point using the same wording four times (see also *ibid.*, pp. 100, 106, 112. See also M. W. Homer, *Masonry and Mormonism*). Though Homer’s tone in his more recent book-length treatment of the subject is somewhat gentler overall and he does summarize (with little discussion) some of the older literature that posits ancient origins for temple ordinances, the primary thrust of his argument has not changed: the burden

of the volume is to make the case that “the first Mormon prophet did use and adapt a Masonic formula [in the development of the Nauvoo temple ordinances] and extrapolated some of Masonry’s teachings that were developed during the previous one hundred years in England, France, and America” (M. W. Homer, *Joseph’s Temples*, p. 404).

For my own treatment of the relationship between Mormonism and Masonry, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Freemasonry*.

- 3 This is not to say that circumstances in Joseph Smith’s immediate environment and culture were not an important part of the process in which temple ordinances were revealed. However it is a significant overreach to say that Masonic ritual was the starting point. For my views on Freemasonry and the origins of temple ordinances, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Freemasonry*.
- 4 Peter\_Mary, *Critical Examination*.
- 5 J. Hannay, Smith, p. 385, cited in R. J. Dunn, *Dickens*, p. 4. A non-LDS observer similarly wrote of the Mormons in 2009: “What would you do if you met people you admired greatly, who reminded you of the best examples of your fellow believers, yet whose faith rested on what you saw as patent absurdities” (W. Lobdell, *Losing*, pp. 121–122). He goes on to concede, however: “Yet what’s so strange about Mormonism compared to traditional Christianity? ... The details of Mormonism are fresher but not much more strange and mythical” (*ibid.*, pp. 126, 127).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell expressed his “special appreciation for my friends who, though resolutely irreligious themselves, were not scoffers. Instead, though doubtless puzzled by me and their other religious friends, they were nevertheless respectful. I admire the day-to-day decency of such men and women. Though detached from theology, their decency is commendable” (N. A. Maxwell, *Inexhaustible*, p. 216). Among the many religious non-Mormon friends is historian Jan Shipps. She put her finger on part of the problem that people encounter in understanding LDS beliefs when she observed that “Mormonism is a really complex theological system. ... All its parts fit together beautifully. But if you just know a little bit about one of them, or part of them, it seems weird” (M. Luo, *Test*. For an insightful essay charting the historical evolution of charges that Mormonism is not Christian, see J. Shipps, *Sojourner*, pp. 335–357. For general overviews of

changes in public perceptions of the Mormons in America, see T. L. Givens, *Viper*; J. Shipps, *Sojourner*, pp. 51–123).

Vatican astronomer Guy Consolmagno, well-respected among both religionists and scientists, found that two religions were universally dismissed by the subjectively selected sample of scientists and engineers he interviewed as “obviously wrong”: Scientology and Mormonism. However, he also notes a difference between the two: “... no scientist of my acquaintance has ever had something good to say about Scientology — rather ironic, given its name. But as it happens, I know a number of techies who are Mormons, including my thesis advisor at MIT” (G. Consolmagno, *God’s Mechanics*, p. 98). Consolmagno’s masters thesis advisor was John S. Lewis, who joined the Church in Boston while teaching at MIT and, among many other accomplishments, was an internationally-respected professor of planetary science at the University of Arizona.

As one who has experienced both the perplexity and the generosity of spirit of his non-LDS colleagues, prominent Mormon historian Richard L. Bushman shared the following (R. L. Bushman, pp. 79–80):

I have lived an academic life ever since I graduated from Harvard College in 1955 and then later received a Ph.D. in the history of American civilization from that same institution. Since then I have taught at Brigham Young University, Boston University, and the University of Delaware, been visiting professor at Brown and Harvard universities, and now am Gouverneur Morris Professor of History at Columbia University. In these many years as an academic, I have never been belittled for my religious beliefs or felt excluded. I have published books, contributed to conferences, entered into scholarly controversies, and had my share of honors without once feeling that my well-known faith raised a barrier. Only now and then have I caught a glimpse of the wonder my colleagues must feel that a rational, modern man believes the stories and doctrines of the Latter-day Saints. Soon after I was hired as professor of history and chair of the department at the University of Delaware, a member of the search committee invited me to lunch. While we

were driving along, I mentioned my work on a biography of Joseph Smith, the founder of the Latter-day Saint Church. My colleague, doubtless to reassure me, turned quickly and said, “Dick, we took all that into account and decided it didn’t matter.” Apparently he was thinking of the peculiar tic in my intellectual makeup that allowed me to hold these strange beliefs. A similar reaction greeted me on coming to Columbia in 1989. Introduced to a member of the faculty, he said jovially, “Oh, you’re the Mormon,” an entirely amiable remark meant to make me feel at home. But one can imagine the repercussions if a new faculty member at Brigham Young University was greeted with “Oh, you’re the Jew,” or “Oh, you’re the Catholic.”

The extravagant nature of the Latter-day Saint religion probably accounts for the perplexity of my colleagues. Christian and Jewish doctrines, weathered by time, no longer strike people as bizarre or unusual. One can hold to one of the moderate versions of these ancient religions without startling one’s friends. But Joseph Smith saw the angel Moroni less than two hundred years ago and then brought home gold plates and translated the Book of Mormon. These miraculous events, happening so close to home, strain one’s credulity. How can anyone in this day of science and skepticism believe that God sends angels to speak to humans and requires such unlikely acts as the translation of an ancient history with the aid of a Urim and Thummim? My sophomore tutor, the distinguished historian of science, I. B. Cohen, once coyly mentioned to me that many people thought LDS beliefs were pure garbage. He doubtless was trying gently to bring me to my senses after my sheltered upbringing as a member of the Church.

For an additional perspective on this issue, see N. Kristof, *Confession*.

- 6 See S. C. Harper, *Joseph Smith and the Kirtland Temple* for an excellent general summary of the trajectory of temple revelations that led up to the dedication of the Kirtland Temple.

- 7 Besides the many scattered articles found elsewhere, a quick sampling of titles of LDS monographs and collections of papers fully dedicated to the topic of ancient temple beliefs and practices might include, among others, J. W. Welch, *Sermon*; J. W. Welch, *Light*; L. L. Baker et al., *Who Shall Ascend*; J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes* (2014); A. L. Gaskill, *Lost*; T. G. Madsen, *Temple: Where Heaven*; D. W. Parry, *Temples*; D. W. Parry et al., *Time and Eternity*; J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*; J. M. Bradshaw et al., *God's Image 2*; H. W. Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*; H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005); H. W. Nibley et al., *One Eternal Round*; W. J. Hamblin et al., *Temple Insights*; M. B. Brown et al., *Ancient Temple Worship*; D. R. Seely et al., *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord*; S. D. Ricks et al., *Temple: Ancient and Restored*.
- 8 See, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, What Did Joseph Smith Know; J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Keys and Symbols*; M. B. Brown, *Gate*; M. B. Brown, *Exploring*; G. E. Smith, *Schooling*; S. C. Harper, Joseph Smith and the Kirtland Temple.
- 9 J. E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord*, pp. 159–161. Oliver Cowdery, editor of the *Evening and Morning Star*, wrote the following description in 1834 (The Elders of the Church in Kirtland to Their Brethren Abroad, *Evening and Morning Star*, 2:17, February 1834, p. 135. See also J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 22 January 1834, p. 51; J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 22 January 1834, 2:8. Note statement has been erroneously attributed to Joseph Smith (see A. F. Ehat, *Who Shall Ascend*, p. 62 n. 11)):

We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the more conspicuous are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, until he has overcome the evils of this life and lost every desire of sin; and like the ancients, arrives to that point of faith that he is wrapped in the glory and power of his Maker and is caught up to dwell with Him. But we consider that this is a station to which no man has ever arrived in a moment: he must have been instructed in the government and laws of that kingdom by proper degrees, till his mind was capable in some measure



of comprehending the propriety, justice, equity, and consistency of the same.

President David O. McKay is reported to have said (cited in T. G. Madsen, *House*, p. 282):

I believe there are few, even temple workers, who comprehend the full meaning and power of the temple endowment. Seen for what it is, it is the step-by-step ascent into the Eternal Presence. If our young people could but glimpse it, it would be the most powerful spiritual motivation of their lives.

About the difference between coming into the presence of God through heavenly ascent and through ritual, Andrew F. Ehat writes (*A. F. Ehat, Who Shall Ascend*, pp. 53–54):

As Moses' case demonstrates [see Moses 1], the actual endowment is not a mere representation but is the reality of coming into a heavenly presence and of being instructed in the things of eternity. In temples, we have a staged representation of the step-by-step ascent into the presence of the Eternal while we are yet alive. It is never suggested that we have died when we participate in these blessings. Rather, when we enter the celestial room, we pause to await the promptings and premonitions of the Comforter. And after a period of time, mostly of our own accord, we descend the stairs, and resume the clothing and walk of our earthly existence. But there should have been a change in us as there certainly was with Moses when he was caught up to celestial realms and saw and heard things unlawful to utter.

- 10 See, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 37ff; A. A. Orlov, *Garment of Azazel*, p. 48; J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes* (2014), pp. 26–50; J. M. Bradshaw et al., *God's Image 2*, pp. 82–85.
- 11 H. W. Nibley, *Apocryphal*, p. 312; cf. pp. 310–311. See W. W. Isenberg, *Philip*, 85:14–16, p. 159.
- 12 Joseph Smith — *History* 1:14–20.
- 13 *Ether* 3:6–28. For a detailed analysis, see M. C. Thomas, *Brother of Jared*.
- 14 G. E. Smith, *Schooling*.

- 15 See J. M. Bradshaw, LDS Book of Enoch.
- 16 For official Church descriptions and photographs of modern LDS temple clothing, see Sacred Temple Clothing. For detailed studies of ancient temple clothing, see, e.g., H. W. Nibley, *Vestments*; D. W. Parry, *Ancient Sacred Vestments*; B. T. Ostler, *Clothed*; J. A. Tvedtnes, *Clothing*; S. D. Ricks, *Garment*; M. B. Brown, *Gate*, passim.
- 17 Genesis 3:7, 21; Moses 4:13, 27.
- 18 Exodus 28.
- 19 J. A. Tvedtnes, *Clothing*, pp. 662–695.
- 20 Daniel Tyler stated (H. L. Andrus et al., *They Knew* (2004), p. 48; see also excerpts from this account in M. B. Brown, *Exploring*, p. 90):

A short time prior to his arrival at my father's house, my mother, Elizabeth Comins Tyler had a remarkable vision. Lest it might be attributed to the evil one, she related it to no person, except my father, Andrew Tyler, until the Prophet arrived, on his way to Canada, I think. She saw a man sitting upon a white cloud, clothed in white from head to foot. He had a peculiar cap, different from any she had ever seen, with a white robe, underclothing, and moccasins. It was revealed to her that this person was Michael, the Archangel.

The Prophet informed her that she had had a true vision. He had seen the same angel several times. It was Michael, the Archangel.

Other sources verify the circumstances of the reported incident, providing evidence that Daniel Tyler first met Joseph Smith when the Prophet stopped at his father's house in West Springfield, Erie County, Pennsylvania on October 6–8, 1833 — see J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 1:416–418. See also J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals: 1832–1839*, 6–12 October 1833, p. 12.

- 21 The undergarment served as an earnest of the heavenly garment that would be restored to them through their faithfulness. In the context of rituals and ordinances based on the experiences of Adam and Eve, Nibley explained (H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005), p. 489): “The garment [of light] represents the preexistent glory of the

candidate... When he leaves on his earthly mission, it is laid up for him in heaven to await his return. It thus serves as security and lends urgency and weight to the need for following righteous ways on earth. For if one fails here, one loses not only one's glorious future in the eternities to come but also the whole accumulation of past deeds and accomplishments in the long ages of preexistence." Cf. A. A. Orlov, *Garment of Azazel*, p. 49–53.

- 22 H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005), pp. 489–490.
- 23 See G. A. Anderson, *Perfection*, p. 122.
- 24 See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 234–240.
- 25 Matthew 22:23–33. See S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, pp. 57–58. The preface to the 1981 LDS edition of D&C 132 states that relevant “doctrines and principles ... had been known by the Prophet since 1831.” For detailed studies, see D. W. Bachman, *New Light*; D. W. Bachman, *Authorship*. Vestiges of the Prophet’s early encounters with these marriage passages in Genesis and Matthew 22 seem to be reflected in some portions of D&C 132:1–40, though, as with many of the other revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, the final form of the revelation clearly reflects continued development of these doctrines over succeeding years.
- 26 W. W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, May 26, 1835, cited in B. A. Van Orden, *Writing to Zion*, p. 550.
- 27 W. W. Phelps, Letter 8, p. 130. See 1 Corinthians 11:11. For more on this statement by Phelps, see D. W. Bachman, *New Light*, pp. 28–29. Thanks to Jacob Rennaker for pointing me to this reference. M. B. Brown, *Gate*, p. 308 notes that sometime between 2 February and 2 July 1833, Joseph Smith would have translated JST Exodus 34:1–2, which was modified to read as follows (modifications shown in italics): “Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read *the names written therein*; No one of these shall fail; none shall want [i.e., lack] *their* mate; for my mouth it hath commanded, and *my* spirit it hath gathered them.”
- 28 See, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 45–58. References to the fact that Elijah was going to “reveal ... the Priesthood” and the implication that this would involve “the promises made to the fathers” were made by Moroni in his visit to Joseph Smith earlier on 21 September 1823 (D&C 2:1–2).

- 29 O. Hyde, Diagram, p. 23. See also D&C 76:56–59. See J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 27 August 1843, p. 322 (cf. J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals 1843–1844*, 27 August 1843, p. 86): “Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings. In fact, that Priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam.” See also J. F. Smith, Jr., *Way* (1945), p. 208.
- 30 G. M. Leonard, *Nauvoo*, pp. 260–261; J. Smith, Jr., *Record*, 28 September 1843, p. 416. See also R. K. Esplin, Succession, pp. 314–315; J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 27 August 1843, pp. 244–247, 303–307 nn.; W. W. Phelps, cited in S. M. Brown, Paracletes, pp. 80–81.
- 31 Genesis 14:18. See also Hebrews 7:1–10, Alma 13:15–19, and JST Genesis 14:25–40.
- 32 D&C 84:14.
- 33 Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6–10, 6:20, 7:1–28, and Alma 13:1–19.
- 34 See D&C 107:2–4.
- 35 See J. M. Bradshaw, What Did Joseph Smith Know, pp. 78–85 n. 46.
- 36 D&C 124:39.
- 37 See J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 4 May 1842, p. 237; J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 4 May 1842, 5:1–2. The account given in these sources is a later expansion by Elder Willard Richards of an entry he made in the daily record he had been assigned to keep for Joseph Smith (J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1841–1843*, pp. 53–54, spelling, grammar, and punctuation standardized):

4 May 1842, Wednesday

... In council in the President’s and General Offices with Judge [James] Adams, Hyrum Smith, Newell K. Whitney, William Marks, William Law, George Miller, Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Willard Richards. [illegible] and giving certain instructions concerning the priesthood. [illegible], etc. on the Aaronic Priesthood to the first [illegible] continuing through the day.

Additional background for this entry is given by the editors in a footnote (*ibid.*, p. 54 n. 198, with my standardization of spelling, grammar, and punctuation of Richards’ statements):

[Willard] Richards, who participated in the events of 4 May 1842, made the brief summary of Joseph Smith's daylong temple instruction in this journal entry and also prepared the following description of the new endowment, which later became part of the Joseph Smith multivolume manuscript history: Joseph Smith instructed those present "in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, and all those plans and principles by which anyone is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the First Born, and come up and abide in the presence of the Eloheim in the eternal worlds. In this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days." According to Richards, Joseph Smith's instructions "were of things spiritual, and to be received only by the spiritually minded: and there was nothing made known to these men but what will be made known to all the Saints of the last days, so soon as they are prepared to receive, and a proper place is prepared to communicate them, even to the weakest of the Saints; therefore let the Saints be diligent in building the Temple, and all houses which they have been, or shall hereafter be, commanded of God to build, and wait their time with patience, in all meekness, faith, and perseverance unto the end, knowing assuredly that all these things referred to in this council are always governed by the principles of revelation."

Andrew Ehat further explains (A. F. Ehat, *Who Shall Ascend*, pp. 50–51):

As with many other diary entries that [Elder Richards] so seamlessly included in the *History of the Church*, he humbly wrote the record as if it contained the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith. When he could find a diary containing information relating to the Prophet Joseph that was found nowhere else, he benignly revised and inserted into the *History* the words of others as if they

were the Prophet's own. He knew Joseph did not have the time to record these things for himself (see D. C. Jessee, *JS History*, pp. 440, 470, 472–473). In fact, Elder Richards kept the personal diary of the Prophet for the last year-and-a-half of his life. But in the case of the endowment, Elder Richards had been an eyewitness of the events. So the words he would choose for this entry would reflect as much the impact of the events on himself as well as the enlarged understanding of the endowment he had personally gained in the ensuing three years ... [Thus,] Willard Richards' draft for the Prophet's "History" entry for 4 May 1842 is ... actually the most comprehensive statement made by an original participant, providing us Joseph Smith's explanation of the meaning of the endowment.

- 38 See J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*. Section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants also contains many significant references to temple themes. For a summary, see M. B. Brown, *Exploring*, pp. 87–88. See also D&C 88:34, 36, 121, 123–125 and JST Exodus 34:1–2.
- 39 A. L. Mauss, *Reflections*, p. 80.
- 40 The importance of obtaining these essential keys was felt keenly by the early Saints in Nauvoo. Brigham Young recorded: "[S]uch was the anxiety manifested by the Saints to receive the ordinances of [the] Endowment — and no less on our part to have them get the keys of the Priesthood — that I gave myself up entirely to the work of the Lord in the temple almost night and day" (Brigham Young Office Journal, 1844–1846, Box 71, Folder 4, Brigham Young Papers, 12 January 1846, spelling and punctuation modernized. Compare J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 12 January 1846, 7:567). To satisfy their eagerness to learn, meetings to explain the priesthood ordinances were scheduled in the temple on Sundays during the month of December 1845, but they had to be discontinued when the attic could no longer bear the weight of the growing audience. At one of these meetings, President Heber C. Kimball expressed the spirit of urgency that attended the work: "We cannot rest day nor night until we put you in possession of the [keys of the] priesthood" (*Heber C. Kimball Journal*, 93, December 21, 1845, as excerpted in H. M. Whitney, *Scenes in Nauvoo*, 12:4, p. 26). Elder

Amasa Lyman explained that the “portions of the priesthood which [they] had received are all essential matters” (ibid., 12:4, p. 26), providing the keys to unlock the heavens in this life and in eternity. “You have learned how to pray,” said he, “putting you in possession of those keys by which you can ask for things you need and obtain them. This is the key by which to obtain all the glory and felicity of eternal life. It is the key by which you approach God” (ibid., 12:5, p. 34).

- 41 D&C 132:19. See also v. 18. Cf. B. Young, 3 December 1854, p. 139:

When we talk of the celestial law which is revealed from heaven, that is, the Priesthood, we are talking about the principle of salvation, a perfect system of government, of laws and ordinances, by which we can be prepared to pass from one gate to another, and from one sentinel to another, until we go into the presence of our Father and God.

See also B. Young, 8 July 1855, p. 315; B. Young, 16 February 1868, pp. 163–164; B. Young, 24 May 1863, p. 172; H. C. Kimball, 22 November 1857, p. 63; O. Hyde, 3 January 1858, pp. 154–155.

- 42 B. Young, *Discourses*, p. 416; B. Young, 6 April 1853 - B, p. 31, emphasis added.
- 43 See, e.g., S. Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 1:180, 1:181 n. 191; J. H. Eaton, *Psalms Commentary*, 118:19–22, p. 405; J. Gee, Keeper; J. M. Bradshaw et al., Investiture Panel.
- 44 D&C 130:11, emphasis added. Stephens qualifies this reference by noting that although “many attach the new name in this revelation to the new name given in the temple, . . . there is not a reliable source of one who has the right to teach such doctrine” (C. R. Stephens, June 6, 2016).
- 45 R. Guénon, *Symboles*, p. 36.
- 46 Genesis 17:5, 15; 32:28.
- 47 The substance of many of the explanations of this Facsimile can be dated to 1835–1836 (see B. M. Hauglid, *Textual History*, pp. 225–231), although we currently have no specific mention of comments relating to the explanations of Figures 3 and 7 until May 5, 1841 (Report of William I. Appleby in ibid., p. 219). The explanations of Facsimile 2 were first published in the *Times*

- and Seasons* 3/10 (15 March 1842), p. 724 (ibid., p. 222). For translations and commentary on these Figures, see R. D. Draper et al., *Commentary*, pp. 291–292; M. D. Rhodes, *Hypocephalus Translation*; M. D. Rhodes, *Twenty Years*.
- 48 See, e.g., D. A. Bednar, *Power to Become*, pp. 9–10.
- 49 H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005), p. 451.
- 50 Mosiah 5:10, 12.
- 51 Mosiah 5, verses 11 (“take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts”) and 13 (“For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?”).
- 52 See, e.g., L. M. Hilton, *Hand*; J. M. Bradshaw, *Ezekiel Mural*.
- 53 D. R. Seely, *Raised Hand*; D. Calabro, *Stretch Forth*; D. Calabro, *When You Spread*; D. Calabro, *Body Symbolism*.
- 54 H. W. Attridge et al., *Hebrews*, p. 236. Cf. Exodus 25:16; Hebrews 9:4. For more about the symbolism of these and other ancient temple objects as they related to the higher priesthood, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 658–660, 679–681.
- 55 Hebrews 9:4.
- 56 For more about the symbolism of these and other ancient temple objects as they related to the higher priesthood, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 658–660, 679–681.
- 57 For more on the Eleusinian Mysteries, see *ibid.*, pp. 675–679.
- 58 T. M. Compton, *Token*. For a shorter version of this study, see T. M. Compton, *Handclasp*.
- 59 See D. Calabro, *When You Spread*, pp. 23–27.
- 60 Noting the “many continuities between the [Greek/Hellenistic] mystery religions and early Christianity,” Todd Compton studied parallels in “the climax of the recognition scene [of Greek recognition dramas], with its crucial tokens, and the climax of the mystery ritual, with its tokens.”  
  
For more on the Greek Mysteries and a more complete summary of Compton’s comparative study, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 675–679. For more on the ancient use of the handclasp as a religious symbol, see *ibid.*, pp. 681–686.



- 61 Rhoda Richards Diary, 16 April 1843, cited in J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, p. 199. Rhoda was a sister to Willard Richards, who recorded the most complete account of the Prophet's sermon.
- 62 See J. M. Bradshaw, *What Did Joseph Smith Know*, pp. 21–23.
- 63 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals: 1841–1843*, 16 April 1843, p. 360, spelling and punctuation modernized, emphasis added. Cf. J. Smith Jr., *Words*, 16 April 1843, pp. 195–196.
- 64 B. Witherington, III, *Conflict*, p. 449.
- 65 2 Corinthians 11:14.
- 66 D&C 128:20. See also 2 Nephi 9:9; D&C 129:4–7; J. Smith, Jr., *Spirits* (cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 1 April 1842, pp. 204–205).
- 67 Joseph Smith—History, 1:69; D&C 13:1.
- 68 Cf. J. F. McConkie et al., *Revelations*, p. 1040. Alternatively, A. L. Baugh, *Parting the Veil*, p. 273 argues that “Satan’s appearance also seems to be associated with the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood since [in D&C 128:20] Joseph refers to Peter, James, and John’s appearance on the Susquehanna in the very next sentence.”
- 69 Stephens cautions that since there is “no historical or doctrinal evidence to tie the event mentioned in D&C 128:20 to the coming of John the Baptist” and the date of 15 May 1829, this connection can only be made speculatively rather than definitively (C. R. Stephens, June 6, 2016).
- 70 D&C 128:20. Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:14; 2 Nephi 9:9; D&C 129:8; Moses 1:2, 9, 11–25.
- 71 J. F. McConkie et al., *Revelations*, p. 1040. Considering the similarity of language used in 2 Nephi 9:9 to describe Satan’s efforts to deceive Adam and Eve, these same authors conjecture that Adam “came to aid the Prophet ... on this occasion” “by virtue of his own experience in such things” (*ibid.*, p. 1035).

Ehat and Cook relate that: “George A. Smith, who ... was a witness to all the dimensions of Joseph’s teachings on this subject, later said, ‘There was no point upon which the Prophet Joseph dwelt more than the discerning of Spirits’” (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, p. 21 n. 21. The source for George A. Smith’s statement can be found in “Minutes of Meetings held in Provo City,” 28 November 1869, Church Archives). However, as with most other sacred incidents of

his early ministry, the Prophet was at first reticent to speak openly about these keys.

For more on Joseph Smith's teachings and experiences on the detecting of evil spirits, see A. F. Ehat, *Ordinances.*, pp. 33–35.

- 72 See Moses 1. For a detailed commentary on this chapter, including a comparison with the pseudepigraphal *Apocalypse of Abraham*, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes* (2014), pp. 23–50. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 32–81, especially pp. 53–58.
- 73 R. O. Barney, *Joseph Smith's Visions*; R. Nicholson, *Cowdery Conundrum*; A. F. Ehat, *Who Shall Ascend*, p. 49.
- 74 J. M. Bradshaw, *Freemasonry*.
- 75 M. B. Brown, *Gate*, p. 307.
- 76 P. P. Pratt, *Proclamation*, p. 151.
- 77 P. P. Pratt, 6 April 1853, p. 44.
- 78 “It was during the time we lived at the Brick Store that Joseph received the revelation pertaining to celestial marriage; also concerning the ordinances of the House of the Lord. He had been strictly charged by the angel who committed these precious things into his keeping that he should only reveal them to such persons as were pure, full of integrity to the truth, and worthy to be trusted with divine messages” (E. A. Whitney, *Leaf* (15 December 1878), p. 105). From the statement, it seems, however, that Whitney was referring specifically to the ordinances of sealing associated with celestial marriage.
- 79 According to Richard L. Bushman (R. L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Creation of the Sacred*, p. 104), the Kirtland Temple “ceremonies were derived from the Exodus instructions for consecrating priests, involving washings with water, anointing with oils, and sealings (Exodus 30:22–30; 40: 12–15).”
- 80 Elder Orson Pratt later explained (O. Pratt, 20 May 1877, p. 16):

When the Temple was built, the Lord did not see proper to reveal all the ordinances of the Endowments, such as we now understand. He revealed little by little. No rooms were prepared for washings; no special place prepared for the anointings, such as you understand, and such as you comprehend at the period of the history of the Church! Neither did we know the necessity of the washings, such

as we now receive. It is true, our hands were washed, our faces and our feet. The Prophet Joseph was commanded to gird himself with a towel, doing this in the Temple. What for? That the first Elder might witness to our Father and God, that we were clean from the blood of that wicked generation, that then lived. We had gone forth according to our best ability, to publish glad tidings of great joy, for thousands of miles, upon this continent. After this we were called in, and this washing of hands and feet was to testify to God that we were clean from the blood of this generation. The holy anointing was placed upon the heads of his servants but not the full development of the Endowments in the anointing. These administrations in the Kirtland Temple were revealed, little by little, corresponding with what I have already been saying, that the Lord does not give the fullness at once, but imparts to us according to his own will and pleasure. Great were the blessings received. We were commanded to seek to behold the face of the Lord; to seek after revelation; to seek after the spirit of prophecy, and the gifts of the Spirit; and many testify to what they saw. But yet they were inexperienced; they had not proven themselves in their religion long enough. They obtained blessings greater than some of them were prepared to receive. They perhaps might have been faithful if they had exercised the agency which God gave them. But how easily are mankind toppled first this way, then that way, and are led astray, even after the heavens were opened and chariots and horses of fire as well as angels were seen: still many of these brethren apostatized.

The first ordinances of the Kirtland endowment were administered on 21 January 1836. The ordinances of that endowment were apparently completed by 30 March 1836. On that date Joseph Smith said to the brethren, “that I had now completed the organization of the Church, and we had passed through all the necessary ceremonies, that I had given them all the instruction they needed, and that they now were at liberty, after obtaining their licenses, to go forth and build up the Kingdom of God” (J. Smith, Jr., et al., *Journals, 1832-1839*, 30 March 1836, 1:215. Cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 30 March 1836, 2:432). Stephen Post, a

recipient in the final ordinance of washing of feet on 30 March 1836 said that it was, “The last ordinance of the endowment.” Four days later, the Lord confirmed that the endowment had indeed been given. He declared, “The hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of ... the endowment with which my servants have *already* been endowed ... in this House” (J. Smith, Jr., et al., *Journals, 1832-1839*, 3 April 1836, 1:222, emphasis added). This wording is as it appears in the original record. ... The language makes clear that the endowment had been given before April 3, 1836, adding the word “already” to the text found in Doctrine & Covenants 110:9.

81 M. B. Brown, *Gate*, pp. 209–210, 221–232.

82 D&C 109:5. Such a manifestation had been promised three years earlier in D&C 94:8–9, and five years earlier in D&C 36:8 and 133:2. See also J. Smith, Jr., Letter to William W. Phelps, 11 January 1833, p. 367. Cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Writings* (2002), To William W. Phelps, 11 January 1833, p. 293; J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 11 January 1833, 1:316.

83 D&C 109:15.

84 In his moving discourse at the 27 March 1836 Kirtland Temple dedicatory services, Sidney Rigdon had anticipated this requirement, though perhaps not fully realizing its implications (O. Cowdery, 27 March 1836, pp. 275–276. Cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 27 March 1836, 2:414, 415):

[President Rigdon] assumed as a postulate that in the days of the Savior there were synagogues where the Jews worshiped God, and in addition to them, the splendid temple at Jerusalem, yet, when on a certain occasion, one proposed to follow Christ, whithersoever He went, He, though the heir of all things, cried out like one in the bitterness of His soul in abject poverty — “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head” [Matthew 8:20. Cf. Luke 9:58]. This, said the speaker, was evidence to his mind, that the Most High did not put His name there, and that He did not accept the worship of those who paid their vows and adorations there. ...

This brought him to the inevitable conclusion, that the various sects of the present day, from their manifesting the same spirit, rested under the same condemnation, with those who were contemporary with the Savior. He admitted there were many houses, many sufficiently large, built for the worship of God, but not one except this, on the face of the whole earth, that was built by divine revelation; and were it not for this the dear Redeemer might in this day of science, this day of intelligence, this day of religion, say to those who would follow Him: "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

Similarly, Brigham Young later taught in the Salt Lake Valley (B. Young, 6 April 1853 - B, p. 30, emphasis in original):

From the day the children of Israel were led out of Egypt to the days of Solomon, Jehovah had *no resting place* upon the earth, (and for how long a period before that day, the history is unpublished,) but walked in the tent or Tabernacle, before the Ark, as it seemed Him good, *having no place to lay His head*. ... Why, then, did Jesus exclaim to the man who volunteered to follow him wheresoever he went, that "the Son of Man hath *not where to lay his head?*" [Matthew 8:20. Cf. Luke 9:58]. Jesus knew the pretended Saint and follower to be a hypocrite, and that if he told him plainly that he would not fare as well as the birds and foxes, he would leave him at once, and that would save Him much trouble.

But how could Jesus' saying, that he had "*not where to lay his head,*" be true? Because the house which the Father had commanded to be built for his reception, although completed had become polluted, and hence the saying, "My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves" [Luke 19:46. Cf. Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17], and he made a scourge of cords, and drove the money-changers and dove-sellers, and faro-gamblers, all out of his house, and overthrew their tables; but that did not purify the house, so that he could not sleep in it, for an holy thing dwelleth not in an unholy Temple.

- 85 It seems reasonable to interpret this as meaning that the Savior appeared repeatedly during the period mentioned, not that He was present continuously (C. R. Stephens, June 6, 2016).
- 86 L. A. H. Paul, Luna A. Paul Letter, 15 May 1922, p. 3, spelling and punctuation modernized.
- 87 For descriptions of the Kirtland endowment, see, e.g., K. R. Anderson, *Joseph Smith's Kirtland*, pp. 185–188; M. B. Brown, *Gate*, pp. 209–210.
- 88 My appreciation to Mark L. Staker for highlighting the possibility of this alternate approach to dating the events in the letter.
- 89 M. L. Staker, May 17, 2016. For the descriptions of this period in Joseph Smith's journal, see J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1832–1839*, 17 January–6 February 1836, pp. 160–182. For convenient summaries including additional sources describing these events, see, e.g., K. R. Anderson, *Joseph Smith's Kirtland*, pp. 169–177; S. C. Harper, Pentecost; M. V. Backman, Jr., *Heavens*, pp. 286–294.
- 90 For example, after concluding a spirit-filled meeting on 22 January 1836 at 2:00 AM, Joseph Smith recorded in his journal that “the spirit & visions of God attended me through the night” (J. Smith, Jr., et al., *Journals, 1832–1839*, 22 January 1836, p. 172). On 28 January 1836, he likewise wrote: “I retired to my home filled with the spirit ... while my eyes were closed in sleep the visions of the Lord were sweet unto me & his glory was round about me” (J. Smith, Jr., et al., *Journals, 1832–1839*, 28 January 1836, p. 175).
- 91 Heading to section 110 in the 1981 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.
- 92 See D&C 110:4–10.
- 93 J. S. Thompson, June 6, 2016.
- 94 M. B. Brown, *Gate*, pp. 211–212.
- 95 O. Pratt, 9 April 1871, p. 273.
- 96 F. D. Richards, *Early Church Experiences*, p. 17.
- 97 According to R. J. Woodford, *Historical Development.*, 3:1458: “This section is not a revelation in the sense that the words are necessarily inspired of God. It is, however, a description by Joseph Smith of what happened at the time he and Oliver Cowdery were visited by four heavenly beings on April 3, 1836.”

- 98 Editorial note in J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1832–1839*, p. 223. The editors further note (*ibid.*, p. 217):

The journal ends with two entries penned by Warren Cowdery, a scribe who had been writing history for [Joseph Smith]. Unlike Warren Parrish and other scribes in this journal, who referred to themselves in the third person and JS in the first, Warren Cowdery referred to JS in the third person. Cowdery's work on JS's 1834–1836 history also produced third-person accounts. In that endeavor, he had before him a first-person text (the earlier entries of this journal), which he changed to third person as he copied them into the history.

The first of Cowdery's entries and the opening of the second read as if Cowdery were an observer of what he described. The account of the 3 April vision of Jesus Christ, however, reports details and a long direct quotation that only the two participants — JS and Warren's younger brother Oliver Cowdery—could have known. For this material, Warren Cowdery must have relied on another original text—no longer extant — or on oral reports from either or both of the participants. If Warren Cowdery was working from a prior text, that would directly parallel the method that produced the third-person 1834–1836 history. This account of the vision was later recast in first person as part of the history JS began in 1838, and in that form it was incorporated into the published Latter-day Saint canon (D&C 110) in 1876.

Unfortunately, because Wilford Woodruff was serving a mission until November 1836, we lack the detailed, daily accounts that he otherwise would have recorded about the events in Kirtland earlier that year.

- 99 See, e.g., M. V. Backman, Jr., *Heavens*, pp. 303–308.
- 100 Editorial note in J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1832–1839*, p. 223. The quote from Eliza R. Snow is taken from E. W. Tullidge, *Women*, p. 99.
- 101 D&C 110:8.
- 102 L. A. H. Paul, Luna A. Paul Letter, 15 May 1922, p. 3, spelling and punctuation modernized.

- 103 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1832–1839*, 12 April 1838, pp. 250–255; D. Q. Cannon et al., *Far West*, 12 April 1838, pp. 162–171.
- 104 B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy*, 1:160.
- 105 Ibid., 1:137. For an extended discussion of Cowdery’s accusations and their aftermath, see *ibid.*, 1:136–144. For an extensive discussion of Joseph Smith’s relationship with Fanny Alger and evidence that a marriage ceremony occurred, see *ibid.*, 1:85–126. For a thorough review of evidence regarding Cowdery’s authorship of the article on marriage that appeared in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, see *ibid.*, 1:153–182. See J. M. Bradshaw et al., *God’s Image 2*, Excursus 1: Revelatory Experiences of Oliver Cowdery, pp. 441–448 for a summary of controversies between the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery regarding translations, revelations, and the early history of the Church.
- 106 See S. H. Faulring, Return of Oliver Cowdery.
- 107 For a brief summary of some of these manifestations, see the short biography of Zebedee Coltrin given below.
- 108 C. R. Stephens, Life and Contributions, pp. 21–28, 34–35; *School of the Prophets*, 3 October 1883, pp. 53–55; 11 October 1883, pp. 62–63; 5 February 1878, p. 102; 28 January 1836, p. 106; J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1832–1839*, 28 January 1836, pp. 174–175. Cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 28 January 1836, 2:386–387. See also Jennifer Mackley’s transcription of the High Priests’ Record of Spanish Fork Branch, 5 February 1870.
- 109 C. R. Stephens, Life and Contributions, p. 30.
- 110 C. R. Stephens, June 6, 2016. See “Kirtland Council Minute Book” or “Kirtland High Council Minutes” for March 1, 1835, p. 178 (<http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/minute-book-1?p=182>), where Zebedee was promised in his ordination as a member of the Seventy by the First Presidency: “You shall have heavenly visions and the ministry of Angels shall be your lot.” Our thanks to Karl Ricks Anderson for pointing us to this source (K. R. Anderson, July 23, 2016).
- 111 L. A. H. Paul, Luna A. Paul Letter, 15 May 1922.
- 112 Information in this biography of Dell Paul is gleaned from personal knowledge of K-Lynn Paul and other family sources, including a



brief biography written by Dell Paul's daughter-in-law, Grace Paul (G. Paul, Luna Ardele Hinckley Paul).

- 113 K.-L. Paul, 2015.
- 114 See L. J. Nuttall et al., *In the President's Office*, 17 May 1884, pp. 138–141 for an account of the dedicatory services.
- 115 K.-L. Paul, April 29 2016.
- 116 Ezra Potter.
- 117 Ezra Potter, Aged 75, dies.
- 118 C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, p. 7, citing the minutes of a high priests meeting held at Spanish Fork, Utah, February 5, 1878. See also *School of the Prophets*, p. 100, which lists the year of the high priests meeting, mistakenly, as 1875.
- 119 D&C 52:29.
- 120 See Jennifer Mackley's transcription of the High Priests' Record of Spanish Fork Branch, from April 29, 1866 to December 1st 1898.
- 121 C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, pp. 21–28; *School of the Prophets*, 3 October 1883, pp. 53–55, 11 October 1883, pp. 62–63, 5 February 1878, p. 102; W. Woodruff, *Woodruff*, 8:200–201. See also Jennifer Mackley's transcription of the High Priests' Record of Spanish Fork Branch, from April 29, 1866 to December 1st 1898.
- 122 C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, pp. 45–47; *School of the Prophets*, 5 February 1878, pp. 102–103, 11 October 1883, p. 64; W. Woodruff, *Woodruff*, 8:201. See also Jennifer Mackley's transcription of the High Priests' Record of Spanish Fork Branch, from April 29, 1866 to December 1st 1898.
- 123 C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, pp. 34–35; *School of the Prophets*, 11 October 1883, p. 63, 28 January 1836, p. 106; J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1832–1839*, 28 January 1836, pp. 174–175. Cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 28 January 1836, 2:386–387. See also Jennifer Mackley's transcription of the High Priests' Record of Spanish Fork Branch, 5 February 1870.
- 124 C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, p. 30. For the promise that he would have heavenly visions, see “Kirtland Council Minute Book” or “Kirtland High Council Minutes” for March 1, 1835, p. 178 (<http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/minute-book-1?p=182>). Zebedee gave the following account of his

ordinations to Melchizedek Priesthood offices (Jennifer Mackley's transcription of the High Priests' Record of Spanish Fork Branch, 5 February 1870):

I was ordained an Elder under the hands of John Whitmer, and ordained a High Priest on the 22nd day of July 1832 under the hands of Hyrum Smith and Reynolds Cahoon, Hyrum Smith being mouth. I was ordained one of the Seventies under the hands of father Joseph Smith, his two sons, Joseph and Hyrum, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, F. G. Williams and Sidney Rigdon. Sidney being mouth, he ordained me to all that could be places upon man upon the earth, and last of all that it should ever be by my desire to preach the Gospel to all the eternities of God. This being sealed by all the Brethren by a Hearty Amen. I sit [Is it] anything to [be] wondered at that I always want to preach.

- 125 Ibid., p. 31. For Coltrin's prophetic blessing of Wilford Woodruff when the latter was ordained a Seventy, see W. Woodruff, 3 January 1837, 1:118. See also 1:216. Woodruff received the "ordinance of anointing under the hands of Zebedee Coltrin in the house of the Lord in Kirtland" on 4 April 1837 (ibid., 1:216).
- 126 C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, p. 31; J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 6 April 1837, 2:476.
- 127 C. R. Stephens, June 6, 2016, pp. 36–38, 57.
- 128 Ibid., pp. 57–58.
- 129 Ibid., p. 58.
- 130 Ibid., pp. 61–63.
- 131 Ibid., p. 10; D. S. Anderson et al., *Endowment*, 22 December 1846, pp. 126, 128, 132, 137, 20 January 1846, p. 438. Zebedee's first wife, Julia, died in Kirtland on 24 April 1841. He married Mary Mott on 5 February 1843 (C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, p. 10). They received the fulness of the priesthood on the same day as their sealing, 20 January 1846 (D. S. Anderson et al., *Endowment*, p. 437). Mary was a proxy for Julia when she was sealed to Zebedee on 20 January 1846 (L. W. Cook, *Nauvoo Marriages*, 20 January 1846, p. 97). On 6 February 1846, he was also sealed for time to Sarah Oyler Mackley (divorced) (ibid., p. 97 n.; 6 February 1846, p. 209) and Hannah Husted Marsh (ibid., p. 97n.). He was sealed

for time and eternity to Lavina Elizabeth Fullmer Coates on 25 February 1857 (subsequent divorce) (*ibid.*, p. 97n.).

- 132 C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, pp. 66–69.
- 133 *Ibid.*, pp. 74–78.
- 134 *Ibid.*, pp. 79–80.
- 135 *Ibid.*, pp. 85–89.
- 136 W. Woodruff, *Woodruff*, 31 May 1873, 7:140.
- 137 C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, p. 83.
- 138 *School of the Prophets*, 5 February 1878, pp. 100–104.
- 139 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 140 *Ibid.*, p. 108, citing the *Journal of Henry Eyring*, 12 October 1883, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.
- 141 *Ibid.*, 3 and 11 October 1883, pp. 53–63.
- 142 W. Woodruff, *Woodruff*, 12 October 1883, 8:201.
- 143 L. J. Nuttall et al., *In the President's Office*, 2 February 1884, p. 117.
- 144 *Ibid.*, 14 May 1884, p. 134. Nuttall records that Zebedee Coltrin's son accompanied him on the train. According to <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=11174973> Zebedee had three sons: John Graham Coltrin (1843–1905), Zebedee Coltrin, Jr. (1851–1918), and Heman Coltrin (1854–1932). All three sons were buried in the Spanish Fork City Cemetery, Spanish Fork, Utah.
- 145 *Ibid.*, 14 May 1884, p. 134.
- 146 C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, p. 83 n. 50.
- 147 *Ibid.*, pp. 83–85; L. J. Nuttall et al., *In the President's Office*, 14 May 1884, p. 134.
- 148 L. A. H. Paul, Luna A. Paul Letter, 15 May 1922, p. 2, spelling modernized. See also the High Priests Record of Spanish Fork, April 29, 1866 to December 1, 1898, February 7, 1884, cited in C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, p. 83 n. 50.
- 149 M. M. B. Shurtliff, *Brief Sketch*. This characterization of the purpose of Coltrin's visit to the temple in this account would have most likely originated with Coltrin himself, corroborating the similar description given in the Luna Paul letter.

- 150 Understandably, a wagon trip all the way from Spanish Fork to Logan would have been a hardship for a man of Zebedee Coltrin's age. Perhaps Coltrin rode his buggy to Ogden each time, and then through the kindness of President Taylor was provided with a ticket to ride the train from Ogden to Logan. According to Stephens (C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, p. 90):

At his age and unable to ride from Spanish Fork to Logan in his buggy, he wrote [a letter on 2 November 1885] and asked President John Taylor to let him have the sum of twenty dollars so that he could take the train to Logan and do temple work.

- 151 L. A. H. Paul, Luna A. Paul Letter, 15 May 1922, p. 2, spelling modernized.
- 152 C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, p. 90.
- 153 The information about Ezra Potter in this section has been gleaned from Ezra Potter, aged 75, dies; Ezra Potter; Louisa Festersen Rohwer Potter; Ezra Potter.
- 154 B. A. Kartchner, *History of John & Matilda Douglass*, pp. 30–44. Thanks to Jennifer Mackley for making me aware of this journal and to Glenn Kartchner for providing pages to me from his mother's book, which contained a typescript of Ezra Potter's journal and other information about him. Bertha A. Kartchner was a granddaughter of Ezra Potter through his daughter Katherine. Her book says that she borrowed the original journal from her aunt, Matilda Potter Hayes, a daughter of Ezra. Glenn Kartchner does not know the whereabouts of the original copy of the journal and I have been unable to find it in either the archives of the Church History Library or in the catalogue of L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.
- 155 C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, p. 30.
- 156 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1832–1839*, 17 January–6 February 1836, pp. 160–182. See convenient summaries including additional sources describing these events in K. R. Anderson, *Joseph Smith's Kirtland*, pp. 169–177; S. C. Harper, *Pentecost*; M. V. Backman, Jr., *Heavens*, pp. 286–294.
- 157 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1832–1839*, 27–31 March 1836, pp. 200–216. See convenient summaries including additional sources describing these events M. V. Backman, Jr., *Heavens*, pp. 294–302;

- S. C. Harper, Pentecost; K. R. Anderson, *Joseph Smith's Kirtland*, pp. 179–191.
- 158 B. C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 1:160.
- 159 J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1832–1839*, 12 April 1838, pp. 250–255; D. Q. Cannon et al., *Far West*, 12 April 1838, pp. 162–171.
- 160 Regarding the circumstances of Joseph Smith's departure from Kirtland, see A. L. Baugh, Joseph Smith in Northern Missouri, pp. 291–294.
- 161 C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, p. 83.
- 162 *School of the Prophets*, 5 February 1878, pp. 100–104.
- 163 Ezra Potter, aged 75, dies.
- 164 *School of the Prophets*, p. 108, citing the *Journal of Henry Eyring*, 12 October 1883, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University.
- 165 *Ibid.*, 3 and 11 October 1883, pp. 53–63.
- 166 L. J. Nuttall et al., *In the President's Office*, 2 February 1884, p. 117; C. R. Stephens, *Life and Contributions*, p. 83 n. 50, citing the High Priests Record of Spanish Fork, April 29, 1866 to December 1, 1898, February 7, 1884.
- 167 L. J. Nuttall et al., *In the President's Office*, 14 May 1884, p. 134.
- 168 K.-L. Paul, 2015 explains this reference to cyclones: “In her letter my grandmother refers to a fear of cyclone(s) that my father had mentioned to her (presumably in a prior letter.) My father had moved to Fergus Falls, Minnesota where a tornado (called a cyclone back then) had destroyed much of the town in 1919, so the people there would still have had a considerable fear in 1922.”
- 169 It seems reasonable to interpret this as meaning that the Savior came repeatedly during the two weeks mentioned, not that He was there continuously during that period.
- 170 M. B. Brown, *Gate*, pp 216–217.
- 171 D&C 51:16.
- 172 See D&C 64:21.
- 173 See D&C 64:33.
- 174 J. F. Smith, Jr., *Doctrines*, 2:242.

- 175 G. A. Smith, 18 March 1855, pp. 214–215.
- 176 B. Young, 6 April 1853 - B, pp. 31–32.
- 177 See D&C 115: 7–16.
- 178 J. Smith, Jr., To Presendia Huntington Buell. Cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Writings* (2002), To Presendia Huntington Buell, 15 March 1839, p. 427; J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 15 March 1839, 3:286.
- 179 J. M. Bradshaw, What Did Joseph Smith Know.
- 180 J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Keys and Symbols*.
- 181 L. A. H. Paul, Luna A. Paul Letter, 15 May 1922. The reproduction here of the original color scan has been converted to grayscale, and the contrast has been increased for better readability.
- 182 The omitted portion of the letter contains a private response from the Church Historian.

## PERHAPS CLOSE CAN COUNT IN MORE THAN HORSESHOES

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**Brant A. Gardner**

Review of Gerald E. Smith, *Schooling the Prophet: How the Book of Mormon Influenced Joseph Smith and the Early Restoration* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2015). pp 305. \$19.95.

*Abstract: Schooling the Prophet provides a good survey of many early Latter-day Saint doctrines. It suggests that there is a causal link between the Book of Mormon and those doctrines. Sometimes it makes the case; many times it is close but doesn't quite support the thesis of the book.*

*Schooling the Prophet* proposes that early Latter-day Saint doctrine and some practices can be traced to themes in the Book of Mormon. Gerald Smith's chapters look at specific sets of religious doctrines or practices which he describes and then ties to the Book of Mormon:

- Influences on Doctrine and Theology
- Sacred Rituals, Symbols, and Narratives of Sacrament, Baptism, and Zion
- Influences on the Temple of the Early Restoration
- Priesthood Restorations, Origins, and Influences

There is an introductory chapter, which lays out his thesis that the Book of Mormon was influential in the development of the topics developed in the above-listed chapters, and a concluding chapter on "The Meaning of the Book of Mormon in the Early Restoration."

The chapters on doctrine or practice are well documented and provide a very nice introduction to early Mormon theology and ritual. For those descriptions, the book is very useful and informative. However,

the theme of the book is not that early Saints had theology and ritual but that the development of the theology and rituals was dependent upon, or seeded by, the Book of Mormon.

In his conclusion, he suggests: “[Joseph] Smith’s relationship with the book — indeed, his vital reliance upon Book of Mormon forms and observances for religious development — recommends a more nuanced consideration of the book itself, not merely as a religious text but as a repository of ancient religious conventions such as institutions, theologies, rites, ordinances, and rituals” (207–8). That would certainly open new avenues of thought about the Book of Mormon. It flows from his defining “thesis that the Book of Mormon had a profound formative influence on Joseph Smith’s doctrinal and institutional development during the nascent days of the nineteenth-century Mormon restoration” (3).

There are times when Gerald Smith is unquestionably correct that the Book of Mormon impacted the development of theology and practice in the Restoration. Well-known is that as Joseph and Oliver worked on the translation of the Book of Mormon, they were inspired to pray about baptism. That question, rooted in the Book of Mormon, directly led to both the beginning of baptism as a rite in the early restoration and to the initiation of current baptismal theology. Smith recognizes and discusses that important tie to the Book of Mormon (107). The representation of baptism by immersion and the words of the baptismal prayer can be directly traced to the Book of Mormon (see 3 Nephi 11:22–26, cited on p. 108).

Gerald Smith also suggests another time when the Book of Mormon may have led to revelation for the early church. He suggests that a close examination of the chronology of the translation of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s revelations on Zion and the New Jerusalem indicate a probable correlation. That is, that the presence of those themes in the part of the Book of Mormon that they were translating led directly to the revelations on those topics (122–3).

Both of these examples clearly support Gerald Smith’s thesis that the Book of Mormon influenced the development of ritual and doctrine. Unfortunately, many of his other examples are not nearly as clear in connecting the Book of Mormon as instrumental and influential in the development of theology and ritual. G. Smith notes that the Book of Mormon deals with a plan of salvation, and, of course, Joseph Smith developed a theology of eternal salvation and exaltation. While the Book of Mormon certainly speaks of a plan of redemption (Jacob 6:8;



Alma 12:25–33, 17:16, 18:39, 22:13, 34:31, 39:15, 42:11–13), it is also certain that this is not unique to the Book of Mormon. It is present in the Book of Mormon but also in other Christian religions. The unique Mormon adaptations came later. What G. Smith can say is that it is present in the Book of Mormon but not necessarily that it was influential.

For those who read the Book of Mormon as a purely modern construction, Joseph's Christianity could easily have influenced the Book of Mormon rather than the Book of Mormon influencing Joseph. For those who believe that the Book of Mormon is a translated ancient text, the vocabulary of Christianity may more plausibly be traced to Joseph than the language of antiquity — again arguing that Joseph's Christianity influenced the Book of Mormon rather than having the Book of Mormon be foundational to Joseph's Christianity.

G. Smith attempts to link LDS temple theology to the Book of Mormon. He sees King Benjamin's declaration that "Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent *may seal you his, that you may be brought to Heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life*, (Mosiah 5:15)," as foundational to later LDS sealing theology. That the word *seal* is there is unquestionable. Whether there is any conceptual link between King Benjamin's intent and later LDS theology is more than questionable.

Too many of the examples of suggested influence show only that one can find concepts in the Book of Mormon if one looks for them. That is very different from the suggestion that the Book of Mormon was influential. Too many examples begin with the later theology and then find some word or kernel of an idea that is in the Book of Mormon. Finding them by searching backwards is not an indication that the presence of those words or concepts in the Book of Mormon were influential in the development of LDS theology and ritual.

G. Smith is certainly correct that there are times when the Book of Mormon was influential, and his suggestion of the timing of the Zion and New Jerusalem revelations is one I had not seen before. His discussions of the doctrines are certainly useful, but the overall thesis of the foundational importance of the Book of Mormon for ritual and theology is not as well demonstrated as it would need to be for him to support that thesis. This is not to say there isn't a lot of very good information in the text. There clearly is. The objection is that the book is designed to support a particular thesis, and while it does other things well, it does not really demonstrate that thesis.

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# MORMONISM, MATERIALISM, AND POLITICS: SIX THINGS WE MUST UNDERSTAND IN ORDER TO SURVIVE AS LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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**Rick Anderson**

*Abstract: We are called as Latter-day Saints to be a force for good in the world in every way possible, which necessarily includes active and positive engagement with political and social issues. At the same time, it is essential to our spiritual survival that we never allow ourselves to forget the radical difference between the philosophies of men — no matter how superficially harmonious some of these may seem with particular principles of the gospel or with some aspects of traditional Mormon culture — and the teachings of the prophets. In a world that constantly entices us with messages designed to lure us away from the eternal truths of the restored gospel and into the embrace of philosophies that are partially and contingently true at best and actively destructive at worst, we must exercise constant vigilance. This essay suggests and discusses six propositions that, if understood and embraced, should help us maintain that vigilance.*

## **The Fundamental Problem**

**W**hile the wider world and its myriad cultures offer many different theories concerning the ultimate meaning of life, the existence of a reality beyond the natural and physical, and what constitutes a good and noble manner of living, those of us living in the industrialized West are, for the most part, immersed in a culture that promotes, both explicitly and implicitly, a strong philosophy of materialism. This is not only “materialism” in the colloquial sense of an overweening focus on the accumulation of wealth and consumer goods but also in a philosophical sense: the belief that nothing exists that is not physical and measurable.

In this latter sense, the term “materialism” is roughly coterminous with “naturalism” and “scientism.”<sup>1</sup>

Even in the United States, where religiosity of various kinds remains widespread (to the head-shaking amusement of our European friends), the controlling assumptions that inform our politics, our systems of education, and our popular culture are overwhelmingly materialistic. Within these systems, materialist and naturalist assumptions are generally treated as reasonable or even as obviously true, while appeals to the supernatural or the transcendent are regarded with tolerance at best, more often with condescension, and at worst with hostility. There are exceptions, of course, and politicians and tastemakers regularly pay lip service to religious values of various kinds, but here in the industrialized West, the cultural water in which we swim every day is that of materialism — in both the consumerist and the philosophical senses.

This reality poses a variety of challenges to Latter-day Saints and especially to those Latter-day Saints who seek fully to be disciples of Christ, to make and keep sacred covenants with a God who is real, and to follow modern-day prophets. Since doing those things necessarily means consecrating our means to the building up of the Kingdom of God, giving the eternal a higher priority in our lives than the temporal, and affirmatively accepting the existence of a reality beyond what is perceivable and measurable by physical senses and instruments, the Latter-day Saint concept of Christian discipleship necessarily constitutes a radical rejection of much of Western culture and the assumptions that shape it. We can reasonably expect our culture to respond with irritation, and even aggression, when it senses our rejection. To be a disciple of Christ means setting oneself at odds with the world in very real and concrete ways; true discipleship is, in other words, a countercultural stance. In reality, it has always been so.

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1 The concept of “Mormon materialism” refers to a somewhat different idea: the concept, apparently taught by Joseph Smith, that there is no such thing as “immaterial matter” and that therefore the things we call “spiritual” are, in fact, constituted in matter that is too fine for us to perceive in our fallen physical state. Without rejecting that teaching in any degree, for the purposes of this essay I will use “materialism” in the more commonly understood senses, as explained in the text.

### Firm Submissiveness and Gentle Defiance

Being a Latter-day Saint, then, to the degree that it constitutes an authentic commitment to abide by Christ's teachings, keep sacred covenants, and follow the prophets, is simultaneously a position of *firm submissiveness* and of *gentle defiance*. We *submit* by subjugating our will to that of our Master; we do so *firmly* in that we submit to Him without making any apology or excuse to the world for our submission. At the same time, when we stand in *defiance* of the world and its wisdom, we do so *gently*, with meekness, and without arrogance or anger. True disciples do not persecute those who disagree with them, and they do not attack or ridicule the enemies of God's Kingdom — nor, equally importantly, do they fail to stand up to those enemies boldly in defense of the Kingdom when such is called for. Boldness does not require overbearance, and in fact, the boldness required of Christian disciples precludes it.<sup>2</sup>

Nor does true discipleship require us to withdraw from the world, to see only ugliness in it, or to find no value and even wisdom in the philosophies of men. On the contrary, those who follow the teachings of the Savior will be actively engaged in the world, and those who follow the teachings of modern prophets will seek to understand the world, its people and cultures, and the ways it works.<sup>3</sup> This suggests at the very least that both knowledge of and active engagement in social and political issues are expected of us as Latter-day Saints. True discipleship does, however, require us to recognize the transitory and contingent nature of worldly wisdom, and never to mistake the philosophies of men for eternal truth.

It is important to note that one does not have to be an authentic Christian disciple or even a committed Latter-day Saint in order to be a member in good standing of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Although Church members receive regular instruction in gospel principles and doctrine, we are rarely asked directly or officially to account for what we believe; only when applying for a temple recommend is a Latter-day Saint asked formally to say whether she believes in God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, whether she believes in the restored gospel, and whether or not she sustains the leaders of the Church as prophets, seers, and revelators — and a member does not have to hold a temple recommend in order to be a member in good standing. What this means is that rejecting the world and its philosophies is not

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<sup>2</sup> See Alma 38:12.

<sup>3</sup> See Doctrine & Covenants 88:78–80.

necessary in order to be a genuine member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, to the degree that we fail, in our minds and hearts, to displace those philosophies in favor of eternal truth and saving doctrine, our authenticity as actual Christian disciples (as distinct from simply members of the Church) is threatened.

Unfortunately, the world will not cede its place in our minds and hearts without a fight. To reject the world is tremendously difficult, and its pull on us is incessant and powerful. This is partly because the world itself offers such tempting delights; it is also because those who embrace the world and its philosophies see those who reject the world as deluded and perhaps dangerous and will work constantly and with great sophistication to entice, cajole, or threaten the followers of Christ out of their discipleship.

### Six Propositions

In light of this reality, I suggest six propositions that I believe are essential to understand and accept in order to survive as Latter-day Saints in the world in which we now live. These are not doctrines or principles of the gospel; rather, they are propositions about the nature of the world and human society that I believe we must understand in order for our testimonies to take root deeply and anchor us against the currents that seek to pull us away from true doctrine and from exalting discipleship — or, in other words, for us to survive spiritually as Latter-day Saints.

The first is that **things as they seem to be are not things as they really are**. This is perhaps the most fundamental fact about earthly reality that we have to accommodate in order to be open to the gift of a genuine testimony of the gospel — without which we may survive, and might even continue to call ourselves “Mormons,” but without which we will not be Latter-day Saints in any meaningful sense. If we cannot accept the fact that there is a reality beyond the grasp of our brains and the reach of our temporal instruments of perception and measurement, we will not be able even to start down the road that leads to saving faith in Christ and a testimony of the restoration of His gospel in the latter days.<sup>4</sup> Belief in Jesus as a real historical figure who set a good example and taught good moral principles can easily take root in a mind committed to the materialist worldview; belief in Jesus as the atoning Christ cannot.

Unfortunately, **the complex of social and cultural systems within which most of us live has a great deal invested in the proposition that,**

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4 See 1 Corinthians 13:12.

**in fact, things as they seem to be truly are things as they really are.** Materialist scientism is the prevailing religion in the developed Western world. Believing in the reality of something beyond the obviously material will attract the world's derision, and actively proclaiming such a belief will tend to invite its anger and its active opposition — although it is also worth noting that in this particular regard (among others) we do have allies among those of other religious faiths. We are called by our Heavenly Father to live and function in this world and in it to stand as witnesses of His gospel. In order to honor and respond to that call, we have to recognize and accept the fact that doing so will get us into some degree of trouble with the world.

In fact, this means that **doing the right thing will often (though not always) mean offending the world.** While the world will generally smile on us for being kind to our neighbors, caring for the poor and needy, and providing for our children (though maybe not for having so many of them), we should be prepared to accept the world's disgust and anger when we follow the prophets. The role of a prophet is to speak hard truths to the world, including the truth that there is a true and living God to whom we owe submission, and our role as Latter-day Saints is to stand for those truths, publicly and without apology. If we cannot accept and endure the world's disapproval, we will not survive as Latter-day Saints — even if we remain in the Church and/or continue to call ourselves Mormons. Consider the implications of Lehi's dream: the failure to bear the world's ridicule is what leads people in that scriptural account to abandon and walk away from blessings and joy beyond any they had previously experienced: they had held fast to the iron rod of truth; they had followed it until they realized the exceptional rewards to which it led; and then, having done all of that work *and while actually enjoying the fruit*, they dropped the fruit on the ground and walked away from it because they could not stand being made fun of by a world that, in many cases, had no idea what it was missing.<sup>5</sup>

However, we need to be very careful. As Latter-day Saints we are also human beings who regularly misunderstand revealed truth, misinterpret prophetic counsel, implement that counsel selectively or incorrectly according to our individual prejudices, and misjudge the boundary that separates our own personal opinions and desires from revealed truth. So while doing the right thing will often offend the world, and we have to be willing to accept that, we also need to be careful not to assume that every time we offend the world as Latter-day Saints, we have necessarily

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5 See 1 Nephi 8.

done so by doing the right thing. Authentic discipleship means not only standing unapologetically for Christ; it also means being ready to repent and change when we learn that we have mistakenly been standing for something else.

More importantly, however, **even when we are not wrong, but are in fact doing the right things and standing for the truth, those who oppose us are not necessarily operating in bad faith.** Some people who oppose us in our efforts to live and proclaim the gospel are doing so as conscious agents of wrong. I tend to think that these constitute a small minority of our opponents. Most of those who oppose us believe sincerely that doing so is the morally right, or at least intellectually responsible, thing to do. These people may be deceived but are probably not insincere, and that matters. Recognizing that they are not evil should not lead us to sympathize with their misguided positions, but responding to our enemies as if they are evil is probably not a wise or productive approach, nor is it obviously in keeping with the teachings of Christ. We can — and, as disciples of Christ, we are instructed to — stand our ground without returning railing for railing or assuming that we know the hearts of those who set themselves up as our enemies.<sup>6</sup>

In doing all of these things, we need to bear in mind that **the very elect may be deceived.**<sup>7</sup> Our testimonies are often fortified by the examples of spiritually powerful people around us. Being strengthened in this way is a blessing to us, and being such an example to others is part of our duty as Latter-day Saints. However, if our testimonies are founded on those examples, rather than merely fortified by them, we are relying on the arm of flesh and building our spiritual houses on foundations of sand. Our testimonies must have independent foundations of revelation that do not rely on the faithfulness of anyone else.<sup>8</sup>

### Mormonism and Politics

This brings us to the issue of Mormonism and politics, an issue that most readers may, at this point in the essay, be wondering if I was ever planning to address.

What does politics have to do with the aforementioned points relating to testimony and faithfulness? The careful reader will have noticed a conceptual thread binding all of those points together: it is the thread of intellectual and spiritual independence from the world, in

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6 See 1 Peter 3:9, 3 Nephi 6:13.

7 See Matthew 24:24.

8 See JST Mark 9:40–48, especially v. 44.



the face of both its opposition and its enticements, and regardless of its opinions of us as Latter-day Saints, whether positive or negative.

The world will always oppose the gospel for the simple reason that the gospel exists to change the world radically. It is on the earth in order to call people out of the world; to extract us from the world's behavioral patterns and from the visceral, transitory pleasures those patterns offer; to encourage us to turn our backs on the ideologies in which the world has invested so much; to turn our hearts from supporting the ideologies and systems of selfishness, egocentrism, power-seeking, materialism, coercion, and conflict on which Satan's kingdom is built; and to turn our hearts towards the building up of the Kingdom of God on the earth and the establishment of a Zion society in which such things are obviated and done away.

Among these ideologies and systems are every single social and political philosophy conceived by mankind. To be sure, not all political ideologies are equally noxious. It is also true that the great majority of political ideologies embrace at least some principles that are in harmony with eternal truth.<sup>9</sup> A political ideology that contains some truth is not, however, the gospel — any more than a pile of sawdust that contains some flour is bread.

If no political philosophy can be counted on to offer pure, complete, and consistent truth, then it should be clear that the allegiance we hold to any political philosophy should be contingent at best and that our deepest and most unswerving loyalty are reserved for the principles of the restored gospel.

In light of this reality, it should come as no surprise that **those who oppose us and want us to fail as Latter-day Saints are to be found across the political and social spectrum.** Some of them oppose virtually everything we stand for; some support some aspects of the restored gospel (doing good to all people, the sanctity of the family, etc.) but really wish we would shut up about other things (consecration, priesthood authority, the Book of Mormon as a historical record, etc.)

This last proposition has important political and spiritual implications, particularly for Latter-day Saints in countries like the United States, where there is a deep and growing divide between those on the political Left and those on the Right.

I have seen people leave the Church because it is too conservative, and I have seen people leave it because it is too liberal. I have seen people

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9 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Does the Church Endorse Political Parties?" <https://www.mormon.org/faq/political-beliefs>.

leave the Church because they disagreed with the Church's stance (or lack thereof) on one particular social issue or another. Many of us have heard members of the Church complain that the prophet should speak out more in support of some initiative or philosophy that they passionately support and that he should be quiet and leave public commentary to the experts when he expresses disagreement with their favored position.

Fortunately, none of us is under any obligation whatsoever to embrace in an unreserved and uncritical way any worldly political philosophy or platform. Speaking from an American perspective, we may find that the platform of one particular party comports better than the others with our own understanding of what is good and true. Thinking in broader terms, each of us may identify as more "conservative," more "moderate," or more "liberal," feeling that one or the other of those positions on the political spectrum is the wisest and the most often correct. Taking such a position does nothing to threaten our authentic discipleship.

What none of us should do — what would threaten our survival as Latter-day Saints, both individually and collectively — is to drift from contingent alliance ("I am a liberal or a conservative because I generally agree with that philosophy, recognizing its limitations as a source of reliable truth") to unswerving allegiance or, far worse, to the belief that to be more enthusiastically and purely an adherent of that philosophy is necessary to be a better and more faithful Latter-day Saint.

The danger in doing so lies in two dimensions: first (and more abstractly), it is to make what philosophers call a "category mistake," by confusing the philosophies of men with eternal doctrine; second (and more concretely), it is to treat as steady and constant a guide-star that is, in fact, erratic and unreliable by its very nature. The fact that liberals may often seem closer to the teachings of scripture on matters of socioeconomic equality<sup>10</sup> or that conservatives seem generally closer to the Church and its teachings on matters related to sexual behavior and family values<sup>11</sup> does not mean that either of those worldly philosophies can be relied upon to harmonize consistently with divine teaching on other matters.

In the final analysis, there is simply no way to live comprehensively according to the teachings of the Church without living highly selectively according to the teachings of the world. "My ways are not your ways,"

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10 See Doctrine & Covenants 78:6, 82:17, and 104:16; also, 2 Corinthians 8:14.

11 See The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," <https://www.lds.org/topics/family-proclamation?lang=eng>.

the Lord has sternly rebuked His disciples more than once,<sup>12</sup> and it is essential to our spiritual survival that we both believe and apply that sobering principle in our lives.

Failing to do so can lead us into a host of intellectual, spiritual, and social behaviors that are dangerous both to our own spiritual survival and to that of others. These can include:

- Wrestling the scriptures to suit our prejudices or using only those passages of scripture that flatter our social beliefs while ignoring those that complicate or even contradict them.
- Condemning or persecuting those whose social and political views differ from our own.
- Communicating to others (intentionally or not) that holding social or political views different from our own would make them unwelcome among the Saints.
- Teaching for doctrine the philosophies of men.<sup>13</sup>
- Seeking to gather disciples unto ourselves, rather than inviting all to come unto Christ, a practice condemned by prophets both ancient and modern as “priestcraft.”<sup>14</sup>

It is important to note that what leads to these behaviors is not the adherence to any *particular* worldly philosophy — it is the unswerving adherence to *any* worldly philosophy rather than to the revealed truths of the gospel.

All of these tendencies have a single antidote: genuine and submissive Christian discipleship informed by an independent testimony of the restored gospel, built on a solid foundation of fidelity to saving and exalting covenants and a willingness to heed and follow the prophets called by God to lead His church on the earth. There is no other way for us to survive spiritually as Latter-day Saints.

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12 See Isaiah 55:8–9, Ezekiel 18:29, Hebrews 3:10.

13 See Colossians 2:8, Matthew 15:9.

14 See Alma 1:16, 2 Nephi 26:29; also, Elder David A. Bednar, “Seek Learning by Faith,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2007, 66–67.

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# WERE WE FOREORDAINED TO THE PRIESTHOOD, OR WAS THE STANDARD OF WORTHINESS FOREORDAINED? ALMA 13 RECONSIDERED

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A. Keith Thompson

*Abstract: Alma 13:3–4 is often interpreted as Book of Mormon confirmation of the doctrine that all those who are ordained to the Priesthood on the earth were foreordained to receive that Priesthood in the pre-existence as a result of their exceeding faith and good works. That interpretation is inconsistent with the 1978 revelation on Priesthood. A contextual reading of the account of Alma<sub>2</sub>'s ministry to the people of Ammonihah also suggests that Alma<sub>2</sub> was not telling the men of Ammonihah that they (or anyone else) had been foreordained to receive the Priesthood. Rather, Alma<sub>2</sub> was teaching that what we now call worthiness was ordained as the standard for ordination to the Priesthood before the foundations of this earth were laid. If the people of Ammonihah demonstrated their worthiness by repenting of their sins, they could qualify to receive the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood and enter into the rest of the Lord as many of the ancients had done. The manner in which men were ordained to the Priesthood and in which its ordinances were administered was intended to show the people how they should look to Christ for redemption.*

**I**n the second edition of *Mormon Doctrine*, under his heading “Foreordination,” Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

To carry forward his own purposes among men and nations, the Lord *foreordained* chosen spirit children in pre-existence and assigned them to come to earth at particular times and places so that they might aid in furthering the divine will. These pre-existence appointments, made “according to

the foreknowledge of God the Father” (1 Peter 1:2), simply designated certain individuals to perform missions which the Lord in his wisdom knew they had the talents and capacities to do (emphasis in original).<sup>1</sup>

Elder McConkie then elaborated the doctrine, citing Alma 13:3–9, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 365, and Abraham 3:22–23 among other scriptural references as his authorities for the doctrine.<sup>2</sup> He used his references from Alma to explain the doctrine of foreordination to the Priesthood as follows:

*Alma taught the great truth that every person who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood was foreordained to receive that high and holy order in the pre-existent councils of eternity.* “This is the manner after which they were ordained,” he says. They were “called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works [while yet living in the pre-existence]; in the first place [that is, in pre-existence] being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.” Thus, he explains, Melchizedek Priesthood holders have been “prepared from the foundation of the world” for their high callings. The Lord has prepared them “*from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things*” (Alma 13:3–9) (emphasis and square brackets in original).<sup>3</sup>

In his 1992 entry in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* entitled “Foreordination,” Brent L. Top wrote similarly of the doctrine of foreordination, interpreting verses from Alma 13 in this way:

Alma<sub>2</sub> taught that priests belonging to a “holy order” were foreordained “according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works” (Alma 13:1, 3).<sup>4</sup>

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1 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 290.

2 Ibid., 290–292.

3 Ibid., 290–291.

4 *Jesus Christ and His Gospel, Selections from the Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 173.

In the same volume in an article entitled “Premortal Life,” Gayle Oblad Brown wrote:

The Book of Mormon prophet Alma<sub>2</sub> further explains the opportunities presented to the spirit children of God in the premortal existence: “In the *first place* being left to choose good or evil; therefore they have chosen good and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling ... on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren. Or, in fine, in the *first place*, they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for each as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son” (Alma 13:3–5; *emphasis added*). The “first place” here refers to one’s first estate or premortal existence.<sup>5</sup>

Again in the same volume, Jay E. Jensen also explained the foreordination doctrine using Alma 13 in a similar way:

Many were foreordained to perform certain tasks when upon the earth ... In the premortal state, spirits received their first lessons in the gospel and the work of God that they would do on the earth (D&C 138:55–56; cf Jeremiah 1:5; Ephesians 1:3–4; Titus 1:2). Many of these spirit beings were called and prepared from the foundation of the world because of their faith and good works, to bear the priesthood and teach the gospel and the commandments of God in mortality (Alma 13:1–6).<sup>6</sup>

Many more examples of this interpretation of verses from Alma 13 could be cited from respected church sources.<sup>7</sup> My purpose is not to deny the doctrine taught in those sources or even to suggest that previous

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 399.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 439.

<sup>7</sup> The Church’s website says that the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* “is a comprehensive look at Church history, doctrine, scripture, and culture written at the educational level of a high school graduate or beginning college student. The work does not ... substitute for the scriptures ... [but i]n preparing the extensive work ... [editor-in-chief Daniel H. Ludlow] worked closely with members of [Brigham Young U]niversity’s board of trustees and Elders Neal A. Maxwell and

authors have misunderstood the doctrine. Rather, it is to suggest that Alma<sub>2</sub>'s statements in Alma 13 mean something other than these previous interpretations suggest. The doctrine of foreordination to the Priesthood has ample authority in the words of the prophets beginning with the Prophet Joseph Smith himself as all of these authors note with references from his *Teachings*. The clearest of those references can be found on page 365:

Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose I was ordained to this very office in the Grand Council.<sup>8</sup>

This author suggests that in examining both the context and text of Alma 13 without the preconception that it teaches foreordination to the Priesthood, a more nuanced and complete understanding will emerge. Additionally, by examining what we know of the doctrine of foreordination as well as the 1978 revelation on Priesthood, we will see that the idea that some were foreordained to the Priesthood on account of their exceeding faith and good works in the pre-existence while others were not is conceptually inconsistent with the affirmation that “every faithful, worthy man in the Church”<sup>9</sup> could “receive the holy priesthood ... without regard to their race or color.”<sup>10</sup>

## Alma<sub>2</sub> and Amulek's Address to the Ammonihabites

### Alma 13: Context

The opening words of Alma chapter 13, “And again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children,”<sup>11</sup> is a clear indication that what we now have marked off as a separate chapter in our modern editions of

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Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve.” ([https://www.lds.org/ensign/1992/03/news-of-the-church/encyclopedia-of-mormonism-released?lang=eng&\\_r=1](https://www.lds.org/ensign/1992/03/news-of-the-church/encyclopedia-of-mormonism-released?lang=eng&_r=1)).

8 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), 365. John Tvedtnes has observed that Joseph Smith may have only intended to suggest that those holding keys for the preaching of the gospel in the entire world (apostles and presidents of the latter-day Church and earlier dispensation heads like Abraham) were intended by this statement (<http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/publications/agency-vs-predestination>) at n23.

9 Doctrine and Covenants, Official Declaration – 2, Salt Lake City, September 30, 1978.

10 Ibid.

11 Alma 13:1.



the Book of Mormon, was always a part of a larger sermon that has been segmented for better understanding.<sup>12</sup>

It will be remembered that Alma<sub>2</sub> was rejected when he first visited the city of Ammonihah to preach the gospel<sup>13</sup> after he had resigned the judgment seat.<sup>14</sup> As he was reluctantly leaving the city on that earlier occasion in an apparent state of depression,<sup>15</sup> he was comforted by the same angel who had reproved him on the roadside years before<sup>16</sup> when, in company of the sons of Mosiah, he was “going about to destroy the church of God.”<sup>17</sup> On the occasion of this later visit, the angel’s instruction was that he was to “return to the city of Ammonihah”<sup>18</sup> and declare repentance lest the Ammonihahites “destroy the liberty of thy people”<sup>19</sup> as they were planning since that was “contrary to the statutes, and judgments, and commandments”<sup>20</sup> of the Lord.

Alma<sub>2</sub> immediately returned to the city by another way<sup>21</sup> and was resuscitated spiritually and physically by Amulek, who had been prepared by the angel to take care of him.<sup>22</sup> Alma<sub>2</sub> records that he spent “many days”<sup>23</sup> under Amulek’s roof before he received a command, not only to go forth and preach repentance,<sup>24</sup> but to extend a call to Amulek to do likewise.<sup>25</sup>

The record does not show whether what Alma<sub>2</sub> later recorded was a verbatim report taken down by someone else, a collection of sermons spoken during an extended period, or, as seems more likely, Mormon’s summary of Alma<sub>2</sub>’s subsequent synopsis of what transpired

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12 In the 1830 original edition of the Book of Mormon there are still chapter divisions, but Amulek’s entire sermon and following debate with the Ammonihahites (Alma 10:1–11:46), are recorded as Alma VIII. Alma’s follow-up of Amulek’s teaching is spread between Alma IX (Alma 12:1–13:9) and Alma X (Alma 13:10–15:19) in the 1830 edition.

13 Alma 8:6–13.

14 Alma 4:15–20.

15 Alma 8:13,14.

16 Alma 8:15.

17 Mosiah 27:10.

18 Alma 8:16.

19 Alma 8:17.

20 Ibid.

21 Alma 8:18.

22 Alma 8:19–22, 26–27.

23 Alma 8:27.

24 Alma 8:29.

25 Ibid.

as the companionship preached.<sup>26</sup> However, his recounting of the words Amulek preached<sup>27</sup> and that he himself preached<sup>28</sup> as they gave their separate witnesses of the Lord's message of repentance, suggest that the preaching recorded in Alma 9–13 was presented on a single occasion. That Alma and Amulek were imprisoned following Alma<sub>2</sub>'s address in Alma 13 also suggests this was a singular event.<sup>29</sup>

Alma<sub>2</sub>'s opening remarks are not recorded, but the contention that followed as well as his response is detailed in Alma 9:2–33. The burden of his message was that the people of Ammonihah needed to repent to save themselves from physical destruction.<sup>30</sup> Their rebuttals centered on Alma<sub>2</sub>'s authority and the fact that he appeared to be a single witness to their supposed sins, possibly in breach of their religious law.<sup>31</sup> When Amulek stood as a second witness to Alma<sub>2</sub>'s message, the second objection was answered,<sup>32</sup> though Alma<sub>2</sub>'s account makes clear the Ammonihahites did not accept that he had authority since he was preaching to them following the direction of an angel of God.<sup>33</sup>

Amulek presented his own credentials as a reputable local<sup>34</sup> before bearing witness to Alma<sub>2</sub>'s authority with his own firsthand experience

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26 The bridging words between Alma chapters 8 and 9 indicate that these are “[t]he words of Alma ... according to the record of Alma,” and the use of the first person in the narrative confirms that when Mormon made his abridgement, he proceeded with that understanding. The first person style appears to have been retained to emphasize authenticity. The point being made is that Alma could not make an exact account of his own words at the same time as he was speaking. The record must therefore be a subjective summary of some kind.

27 Alma 9:34; 10:1, 12, 25; 11:21–23, 27, 36, 39, 46.

28 Alma 9:1, 7, 31, 32; 12:1–2, 7, 9, 19, 22; 13:22, 31.

29 Alma 14:2–3.

30 Alma 9:18, 19.

31 Alma 9:1–6. The Book of Mormon text says that the people of Ammonihah “were of the profession of Nehor” (Alma 15:15), and also implies that the religious teachings of Nehor were a relatively recent innovation in Nephite society. This inference flows from the narrative of Nehor’s teaching, trial for the murder of Gideon, and condemnation in the opening year of the judicial republic about nine years earlier (about BC 91, see Alma 1). But it is also possible that Nehor’s teachings were not entirely new among the Nephites and had been derived from the Law of Moses, which included the law of witnesses known to us from Deuteronomy 17:6. See for example, Thompson, A.K., “Who was Sherem?”, *Interpreter, A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 14 (2015), 1–15.

32 Alma 10:12.

33 Alma 9:25, 29–32.

34 Alma 10:2–4.

of angelic ministry<sup>35</sup> and instruction.<sup>36</sup> Though the crowd's objections to this preaching (that authority was required to preach<sup>37</sup> and that two witnesses were required to authenticate religious ministry<sup>38</sup>) were answered, the crowd did not accept the answers provided and sought other ways to discredit these missionaries they chose to perceive as religious critics. It seems that the crowd perceived the less experienced man as a target and they immediately began to question him in ways designed to cross and contradict him.<sup>39</sup> Alma<sub>2</sub> records the bribes offered<sup>40</sup> but notes Amulek's resolute and strengthened response to the attacks,<sup>41</sup> and indeed, his exposure of their dishonest purpose.<sup>42</sup> Alma<sub>2</sub> then stood to teach the assembly since Amulek's words had silenced Zeezrom, the chief antagonist.<sup>43</sup> Chapter 12 recounts Alma<sub>2</sub>'s detailed exposition of the words of Amulek, expounded from scripture. In particular, he explained: the duty of missionaries not to speak of tenets;<sup>44</sup> the resurrection from the dead;<sup>45</sup> the judgments of God;<sup>46</sup> the plan of redemption and the creation of mortality as a probationary estate;<sup>47</sup> the place of commandments<sup>48</sup> and the consequent need for repentance<sup>49</sup> in

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35 Alma 10:7.

36 Alma 10:10.

37 Alma had been challenged on the basis that he lacked authority to preach in their city on his first visit (Alma 8:11–12).

38 Alma 9:2–6. Note that there seems to have been an element of a further criticism blended into the two which the author has identified. That is, that there was no need for a “foreign missionary” to come and teach this people because they were competent to teach themselves. This view is evident in the charge that Alma<sub>2</sub> and Amulek “had reviled against their law and ... their lawyers and judges” (Alma 14:2) and recalls the spirit of similar criticism of Abinadi in the court of King Noah (Mosiah 12:9–15(13–14)) where the people who accused him asserted that it was treasonous to cast aspersions on the integrity of the king or to suggest that they could not defend themselves against their enemies.

39 Alma 10:13–16.

40 Alma 11:22.

41 Alma 11:23–46.

42 Alma 10:17–23; 11:23–25, 36; 12:1.

43 Alma 12:1.

44 Alma 12:9,10. Compare also with 1 Corinthians 3:1,2; Hebrews 5:13,14; D&C 19:21–22,31.

45 Alma 12:12–15.

46 Alma 12:12–18.

47 Alma 12:22–27.

48 Alma 12:31–32.

49 Alma 12: 30, 33–37.

the plan of redemption; and the remission of sins through the name of the Only Begotten Son of God.<sup>50</sup>

Then he spoke of Priesthood. Why speak of Priesthood in the context of a missionary call to repentance, and particularly to a people who worshipped after the order of the Nehors and did not even believe in the need for repentance?<sup>51</sup> In the context of Alma<sub>2</sub>'s statement that missionaries were "laid under a strict command ... [to] impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him,"<sup>52</sup> and in the face of an argumentative and unbelieving crowd, it seems strange that he would discuss the doctrines of the Priesthood. What was his purpose in choosing that subject matter for this people?

Perhaps he spoke of foreordination to Priesthood office as some kind of historical prompt so that these listeners would reconsider their rejection of the doctrine of repentance.<sup>53</sup> If so, the Nephite scriptural record evidently provided material that enabled him to contrast repentant and unrepentant responses to prophetic calls to repentance. For the people of ancient Salem repented in response to King Melchizedek's leadership and preaching, but the children of Israel failed to qualify for equivalent blessings, though the Priesthood was also made available to them. Whatever Alma<sub>2</sub>'s reason for raising the doctrine of Priesthood qualification, the key to understanding this apparent digression seems to lie in the reference to Melchizedek, whose people Alma<sub>2</sub> said "had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination"<sup>54</sup> to the point where "they had all gone astray ... [and] were full of all manner of wickedness."<sup>55</sup> When it is remembered that Alma<sub>2</sub> had been personally commanded by an angel to preach to this people,<sup>56</sup> he may have felt there were similar repentance prospects for the people of Ammonihah. Preaching to a depraved people

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50 Alma 12:34.

51 The story of the originator of this order, Nehor, is told anecdotally in Alma 1. This man was sentenced to death for his murder of the patriot Gideon in the first year of the reign of the judges. Alma<sub>2</sub> characterized his religious practice as "priestcraft" (Alma 1:12) in evident reference to Nehor's introduction of the idea the priests and teachers "ought to be supported by the people" (Alma 1:3,5). Their doctrines included the idea that "all mankind should be saved ... and have eternal life" (Alma 1:4) without any need for repentance (Alma 15:15).

52 Alma 12:9.

53 Alma 15:15.

54 Alma 13:17.

55 Ibid.

56 Alma 8:14–18.

must have reminded him of Melchizedek, whose ministry among the people of Salem saw similarly depraved people repent.<sup>57</sup> It seems that the closing words of his prophetic call to the people of Ammonihah had exactly that spirit about them. He said

I wish from the inmost part of my heart, yea, even with great anxiety even unto pain, that ye would hearken to my words, and cast off your sins and not procrastinate the day of your repentance; But that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be lead by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long suffering; Having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest.<sup>58</sup>

This last hope — that they might be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest<sup>59</sup> — seems to focus and connect the references Alma<sub>2</sub> made to the people of Melchizedek; he said that Melchizedek's people had repented, been called according to this holy order of Priesthood,<sup>60</sup> been sanctified,<sup>61</sup> and, having been made holy, pure, and spotless before God,<sup>62</sup> they had entered into this rest of the Lord their God.<sup>63</sup> Though “the more part” of the inhabitants of Ammonihah rejected the message,<sup>64</sup> the command to Alma to return and preach to the people<sup>65</sup> clearly bore fruit, as Zeezrom<sup>66</sup> and those who escaped with him to Sidon<sup>67</sup> as well as

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57 Alma 13:17.

58 Alma 13:27–29.

59 Alma 13:12, 29.

60 Alma 13:11.

61 Alma 13:11–12.

62 Alma 13:12.

63 Ibid. Note, in contrast, that the children of Israel who provoked the Lord in the matter of the golden calf had not been allowed to enter into their rest in their promised land. Alma<sub>2</sub> referred to them in Alma 12:35–36 with quotations from Psalms 95:8–11.

64 Alma 14:2.

65 Alma 8:16.

66 Alma 14:6,7; 15:3–12.

67 Alma 15:1.

those who remained and were martyred<sup>68</sup> can all be counted as examples of his success.

In context, the references in Alma 13:3, 4 to foreordination thus appear as part of an address designed to deepen Ammonihahite understanding of the doctrine and the blessings flowing from repentance. Though context may admit an oblique reference to the doctrine of foreordination to Priesthood office, what seems more likely, since it was the *manner* of that ordination to which Alma<sub>2</sub> repeatedly drew attention,<sup>69</sup> is that he was trying to focus their minds on the eternal principle that the receipt of all spiritual blessings is predicated upon obedience to spiritual law.<sup>70</sup>

### Alma 13: Text

The best way to advance our understanding is to examine the actual text of Alma<sub>2</sub>'s words as they have been translated in the Book of Mormon. To assist in this undertaking, the pertinent verses are organized in columns: the text in the first column, and likely meanings discussed in the second column. The meaning one takes from these verses depends upon whether one reads them as primary authority for the doctrine that individuals were foreordained to specific priesthood offices in the pre-existence or whether one thinks Alma<sub>2</sub> was using the worthiness requirement before priesthood ordination as a way to motivate the Ammonihahites to repent:

1 And again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people.	Alma <sub>2</sub> 's reference is to the time the Lord God both gave commandments to his children and ordained priests. While God gave commandments to men from the beginning, the coupling here of the giving of commandments and the ordination of priests, together with the reference two verses previously in Alma 12:36 to "the first provocation," suggest Alma was referring to the ordination of Israelite priests in the wilderness — the time the Ten Commandments were given and Israel provoked God by worshipping the golden calf.
2 And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, <i>in a manner</i> that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.	Though the Israelite priests were Aaronic or Levitical priests, all Priesthood is Priesthood "after the order of his Son" (D&C 107:5, 14). The <i>manner</i> in which these priests were ordained is Alma <sub>2</sub> 's focus. He reaffirms his focus on the manner of the ordination in verses 3, 8, and 16.

68 Alma 14:1, 8, 10–11.

69 Alma 13:2, 3, 8, 16.

70 D&C 130:20–21.

<p>3 And this is <i>the manner after which they were ordained</i> — being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.</p>	<p>The conventional interpretation of Elder McConkie, above, is that all male spirits who showed “exceeding faith and good works” before the foundation of this world, were foreordained to receive the Priesthood on earth. However, this verse may also be interpreted to mean that it is the manner of ordination to the Priesthood on the earth that was foreordained in the pre-existence. This latter interpretation holds that it is “exceeding faith and good works” on earth that would qualify men for ordination to the Priesthood. Alma<sub>2</sub>’s use of the words “called and prepared” makes this interpretation problematic since it seems odd to suggest that the manner of ordination, rather than individual male spirits, was “called and prepared” in the pre-existence. However, Alma<sub>2</sub>’s use of the words <i>calling</i> and <i>called</i>, in verses 4, 5, 6, 8, and 11 to refer to an ordination in mortality seem to confirm that Alma<sub>2</sub> anticipated an ordination following exceeding faith and good works in mortality.</p>
<p>4 And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren.</p>	<p>The conventional interpretation holds that those who did not exercise exceeding faith and good works in the pre-existence were not foreordained to receive the Priesthood on earth. This interpretation recalls LDS Church understanding and practice before 1978 which denied Priesthood ordination and temple ordinances to some on account of their race or color. The alternative interpretation here suggested is that Alma<sub>2</sub> intended to explain that those who do not exercise exceeding faith and good works in mortality will not be ordained to the Priesthood. In this verse, the “calling” was foreseen in the pre-existence but does not take place until earth life.</p>
<p>5 Or in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared—</p>	<p>This verse is a parallel restatement of the thought in verse 4. The question is what Alma intended by the words “in the first place.” The conventional interpretation requires that male spirits who hardened their hearts in the pre-existence forewent the privilege of foreordination to the Priesthood. This verse may also be interpreted to mean that all male spirits who do not harden their hearts against the gospel on the earth will receive the Priesthood here. In this verse, while the “calling” was prepared in the pre-existence, it is extended only in earth life after faith and good works have been demonstrated.</p>

<p>6 And thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest—</p>	<p>The “calling” referred to is a calling to the high priesthood on earth.</p>
<p>7 This high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things—</p>	<p>In this verse it is clear that the eternal Priesthood already existed when this earth’s existence was planned. This insight makes likely that the manner by which male spirits would be ordained to the Priesthood on earth, rather than the foreordination of specific pre-mortally qualified individuals, was what Alma<sub>2</sub> was referring to throughout this passage in his sermon at Ammonihah.</p>
<p>8 Now <i>they were ordained after this manner</i> — being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order, which calling, and ordinance, and high priesthood, is without beginning or end —</p>	<p>Joseph Smith could have used the word “foreordained” in place of “ordained” to make it clear that Alma<sub>2</sub> was referring to specific Priesthood ordinations in the pre-existence in this verse, but he did not. An interpretation of this verse which holds the ordination here referred to is an ordination on earth, is the simplest and most natural meaning of these words.</p>
<p>9 Thus they become high priests forever, after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth. And thus it is. Amen.</p>	<p>Those who “become high priests” ‘in the manner which Alma<sub>2</sub> has explained are made high priests forever. If they became high priests by foreordination in the pre-existence and were thus “high priests forever,” there would be no need for an ordination on earth. These words confirm again that the manner of ordination to which Alma<sub>2</sub> is referring is an ordination on earth.</p>



<p>10 Now, as I said concerning the holy order, or this high priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God; and it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish;</p>	<p>Those who follow the conventional interpretation will interpret the repetition of the “exceeding faith” phrase as a recall of the pre-existence context they find in verse 3. But neither Alma<sub>2</sub> nor Joseph Smith license that interpretation with the words used in verse 10. The simplest interpretation of this verse is that it is the exceeding faith of righteous men on earth that leads to their ordination to the Priesthood and the office of high priest within that Priesthood.</p>
<p>11 Therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.</p>	<p>The word “therefore” is used to justify or logically require an understanding that only righteous men who exercise exceeding faith will be ordained to the Priesthood on this earth. However, this verse is inconclusive as to where that exceeding faith must be exercised.</p>
<p>12 Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.</p>	<p>[S]anctification by the Holy Ghost is a doctrine that describes the way human beings qualify themselves to live with God during their mortal lives. Sanctification in mortality requires that the individual exercise exceeding faith and good works, and Alma<sub>2</sub> likely intended the word “sanctification” as a synonym for his phrase “exceeding faith and good works.” It stretches the context to imagine that Alma<sub>2</sub> was suggesting here that sanctification began in the pre-existence.</p>
<p>13 And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest.</p>	<p>Here Alma<sub>2</sub> is clearly admonishing the Ammonihahites to repent and exercise exceeding faith and good works so that they may also merit ordination to the Priesthood in mortality.</p>
<p>14 Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the high priesthood forever.</p>	<p>Alma<sub>2</sub> restates that repentance and the exercise of exceeding faith and good works in mortality qualified the people of Melchizedek’s day for ordination to the Priesthood.</p>

15 And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed.	The payment of tithes to Melchizedek was one example of Abraham's exceeding faith and good works in mortality.
16 Now <i>these ordinances were given after this manner</i> , that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord.	Alma <sub>2</sub> says that the manner in which men are ordained to the Priesthood demonstrates, to those who observe their example, how to prepare for and benefit by the Son of God's atonement. It is submitted that Alma <sub>2</sub> 's repeated reference to the manner of ordination to the Priesthood would have been meaningless if Alma <sub>2</sub> intended to refer the people of Ammonihah to ordinations in the pre-existence, for those could not be seen or remembered. Rather, he intended them to contemplate how they could repent and live worthy mortal lives so that they could also qualify for the privilege of ordination to the Priesthood in mortality.

Alma 13:1 and 2 are Alma<sub>2</sub>'s introduction to what he taught the Ammonihahites about Priesthood. He wrote:

I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people.<sup>71</sup>

What were "these things" of which Alma<sub>2</sub> spoke? Surely, the things that he and Amulek had been preaching about before Alma<sub>2</sub> stopped to give this Priesthood ordination example. In essence, "these things" were the message that the people of Ammonihah must repent if the Lord were to be persuaded to turn away His fierce anger and make available the blessings of redemption from the effects of sin. Alma<sub>2</sub> continued:

And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.<sup>72</sup>

The "manner" was all-important — and at this point, he had not yet made reference to the foundation of the world or the foreknowledge of God.<sup>73</sup> In other words, Alma<sub>2</sub> was talking about the way Priesthood was conferred among the Nephites. Alma<sub>2</sub> did not explain Priesthood ordination in detail which would indicate that, although the

<sup>71</sup> Alma 13:1.

<sup>72</sup> Alma 13:2.

<sup>73</sup> Alma 13:3.

Ammonihahites followed the teachings of Nehor,<sup>74</sup> they were familiar with the manner in which the Priesthood was conferred in the Christian church among the Nephites.<sup>75</sup> If not, Alma<sub>2</sub>'s reference to the manner in which Nephite men were ordained to the Priesthood would not have been understood by his audience.

It is only after referring to the manner of priesthood ordination among mortals that Alma<sub>2</sub> made any mention of the foundation of the world or the foreknowledge of God.<sup>76</sup> Why then did Alma<sub>2</sub> refer to the foundation of the world and the foreknowledge of God? If these verses are viewed objectively and seen in their context as part of Alma<sub>2</sub>'s admonition that the people of Ammonihah should repent, then his reference to the foreknowledge of God at the foundation of the world is made to emphasize that the Father had approved the manner of ordination to the Priesthood to be observed in mortality even before the earth's existence.

Why then did Alma<sub>2</sub> use the words "called and prepared from the foundation of the world"? Did he intend the Ammonihahites to understand that individual men were ordained to the Priesthood in the pre-existence on account of the exceeding faith and good works they had manifest there? How would that contribute to his admonition to the Ammonihahites that they should repent now? Surely the suggestion that some individuals pre-qualified for the priesthood according to the foreknowledge of God would have been an unlikely and counter-productive message for Alma<sub>2</sub> to preach to these people. This message would seem to indicate not only that they were unworthy and in need of repentance on earth but that their state was the perpetuation of their unworthiness in the life they were said to have lived before mortality. It is submitted that it is much more likely that Alma<sub>2</sub> was explaining that the people of the city of Ammonihah could qualify for ordination to the holy priesthood after the order of the Son of God as had the people of the city of Melchizedek before them. This privilege was available to them,

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74 Alma 15:5; 16:11. See also notes 31 and 51, above.

75 It is not clear when the term "Christian" was first used among the Nephites, though it is first used in connection with those who followed Captain Moroni's banners in 73 BC, approximately nine years after Alma's mission to the Zoramites. The term was first coined among followers of Christ in Palestine at Antioch (Acts 11:26) around 43 AD, approximately six years after the church was established there (Farrar, F.W., *Life of Paul*, [London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1901], p. 165–171).

76 Alma 13:3.

as to Melchizedek's people, if they would repent and thereafter exercise exceeding faith and good works.

It is further submitted that Alma<sub>2</sub> was using the standard of worthiness for priesthood ordination as a parable to teach the basis upon which anyone can receive blessings from God. For Alma<sub>2</sub>, the manner of ordination was a type, or pattern, of how anyone might qualify to receive blessings or privileges from God. But it does not appear that he was referring to the physical manner in which priesthood ordinations were done, as in the performance of the ordinance by the laying on of hands. Nor was Alma<sub>2</sub> referring to the requirement of a sacrificial sin offering beforehand in accordance with Mosaic law, for nowhere does Alma<sub>2</sub> mention such ordinances (though Amulek discussed sacrificial offerings in his mission with Alma<sub>2</sub> among the Zoramites<sup>77</sup>). Rather, what Alma<sub>2</sub> specifies as the "manner of ordination" is the way in which any man (including an Ammonihahite man) may qualify to receive the Priesthood. That method of qualification is what Alma<sub>2</sub> says was intended to provide a type, or teaching, as to how all people might "look forward to the Son of God for redemption." And what was that method?

It is that, "being left to choose good or evil,"<sup>78</sup> they exercise "exceedingly great faith"<sup>79</sup> and are called, "while others ... reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds"<sup>80</sup> when they might have received the same holy calling if they had also exercised exceedingly great faith.<sup>81</sup>

In this way, the reference to "the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God"<sup>82</sup> can be seen as a parenthetical observation that the worthiness qualification itself was foreordained "from the foundation of the world."<sup>83</sup> While God certainly foreknew which of His sons would qualify in mortality to receive the Priesthood, the standards He preset did not exclude any of them. All men would exercise their agency and choose for themselves. All were called, but fewer would be chosen, in exercise of their own free will and choice.

When the context of this day of preaching to the Ammonihahites is understood, we can see that Alma was identifying the foreordained

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77 Alma 34:8–14.

78 Alma 13:3.

79 Ibid.

80 Alma 13:4.

81 Ibid.

82 Alma 13:3.

83 Ibid.

worthiness standard as a second witness or proof that repentance and righteousness to a high priestly level was a completely legitimate expectation of all the children of God. The suggestion that the passage proves that there were trials of faith in the pre-existent first estate is misplaced for it is unlikely that Alma<sub>2</sub> intended to raise that idea in a missionary context.

When a man qualifies to receive the Priesthood, he may be said to have obtained a “preparatory redemption”<sup>84</sup> of sorts — a conditional seal of approval on his righteousness to that point. That seal might be made sure if he continued to be righteous and had “his ... garments washed white through the blood of the Lamb.”<sup>85</sup> Thereafter the promise was, and remains, that such may be made pure to the point where they “c[an] not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence ... and enter ... into the rest of the Lord their God.”<sup>86</sup> The Melchizedek Priesthood was “prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts ... through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son.”<sup>87</sup>

Alma<sub>2</sub>’s hope was that the inhabitants of Ammonihah might respond in the same favorable way as the previously wicked inhabitants of Salem had done after Melchizedek preached to them. If they did, it was foreordained that they might obtain the same blessings.

What then of the familiar teaching that anyone who holds a Priesthood office was foreordained to do so?

### **The Doctrine of Foreordination**

A better source for more complete understanding of this doctrine may be found in the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He said:

1. I believe in the fall of man, as recorded in the Bible; I believe that God foreknew everything, but did not foreordain everything; I deny that foreordain and foreknow is the same thing. He foreordained the fall of man; but as merciful as He is, He foreordained at the same time, a plan of redemption for all mankind (HC 4:78),
2. Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose that I

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84 Ibid.

85 Alma 13:11.

86 Alma 13:12.

87 Alma 13:15.

was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council (HC 6:364), and

3. At the general and Grand Council of heaven, all those to whom a dispensation was to be committed were set apart and ordained at that time, to that calling (WJS, p. 371; standardized).<sup>88</sup>

The generality of the statement at 2 above may be considered to be inconsistent with the specificity of the statements made in quotes 1 and 3. Perhaps they may be reconciled if the second statement is understood as referring to the men called to minister to the whole world in a dispensational sense. This author, however, has not the liberty to reinterpret the prophet's meaning. Joseph Smith certainly did not believe that God foreordained everything. That would amount to predestination and would have undone the principle of agency over which the war in heaven had been fought.<sup>89</sup>

There are a number of scriptural passages that shed further light on the doctrine. They include:

- The revelation to Abraham that he and other noble and great ones were chosen before they were born to rule in mortality<sup>90</sup>
- Moses' teaching that "the bounds of the people" were set by the Most High "according to the number of the children of Israel" when He "divided to the nations their inheritance"<sup>91</sup>
- Paul's similarly spirited teaching in Greece that God had "determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of [man's] habitation"<sup>92</sup>

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88 As quoted in *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings*, Dahl, L.E. & Cannon, D.Q. Eds., (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), p 270.

89 Moses 4:1–4; Revelations 12:7–9.

90 Abraham 3:22–23.

91 Deuteronomy 32:7–9.

92 Acts 17:26. Note that Greg Boyd's interpretation of this passage is said to deny the conventional LDS view that this reference confirms the extent of God's foreordination and planning of human habitation on the earth. Boyd has written:

In this passage Paul is preaching to Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (Acts 17:18). His goal is to show them that, in contrast to their idols, God created and cares for all people (Acts 17:24–26). Paul says that the reason God gives "times" and "places" to nations is "so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him — though indeed he is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27). The statement certainly implies that God is sovereign over the nations, but it also implies that God does not

- The revelation to Jeremiah that he was both foreknown, and foreordained “a prophet unto the nations.”<sup>93</sup>

Nor were Abraham, Jeremiah, and Joseph Smith<sup>94</sup> the only individuals who are scripturally revealed to have been individually foreordained. There are many references to Christ’s foreordination as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”<sup>95</sup> Mary<sup>96</sup> and John the Baptist<sup>97</sup> and the Twelve who ministered with Christ in Time’s meridian<sup>98</sup> were similarly chosen beforehand, including particularly John later called Beloved.<sup>99</sup> Joseph sold into Egypt saw Moses,<sup>100</sup> Joseph Smith, and his father also named Joseph.<sup>101</sup> And then there are cases where the Lord revealed His foreknowledge of all things when He revealed the identity and missions of many people for prophetic faithful purposes. These included His knowledge that Pharaoh would harden his heart against Moses,<sup>102</sup> that Esau would serve Jacob,<sup>103</sup> that Cyrus would enable an Israelite return to Palestine,<sup>104</sup> and that Columbus would “bring the American nations to the knowledge of the old world.”<sup>105</sup>

But as Joseph Smith taught, He did not foreordain everything. The Calvinistic idea that God has already chosen who will respond to the gospel, from Paul’s statement that some men were “predestinate[d] to

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meticulously control people. God wants to be found and “now commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). Yet many people from every nation refuse to do this. Indeed, most of the philosophers Paul was preaching to rejected his message (Acts 17:32–34). Although God controls the general parameters of human freedom ... he does not meticulously control humans and thus does not always get his way when it comes to the decisions they make. (Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* [IVP Academic, 2001]), 413.

93 Jeremiah 1:4–5.

94 2 Nephi 3:6–16.

95 For example, Moses 4:1–4; Abraham 3:27; 1 Peter 1:19–20; Revelations 13:8.

96 1 Nephi 11:18–20; Mosiah 3:8; Isaiah 7:14.

97 1 Nephi 10:7–10; Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:3.

98 1 Nephi 11:29, 34–36.

99 1 Nephi 14:18–27.

100 2 Nephi 3:9–10, 17.

101 2 Nephi 3:6–16 (15).

102 For example Exodus 7:3 JST

103 Romans 9:10–12.

104 Isaiah 44:28; 45.

105 1 Nephi 13.

be conformed to the image of his Son”<sup>106</sup> in a passage that also uses the words “called,” “justified,” and “glorified,”<sup>107</sup> denies the essence of the doctrine of moral agency. That doctrine holds that all may “come to God through righteousness and diligence (exceeding faith and good works in Alma<sub>2</sub>’s words) and thus become numbered with those who are ‘sons [and daughters] of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.’”<sup>108</sup> Again, in Romans 8 as in Alma 13, Paul was teaching the foreordained principles upon which all could qualify for the blessings of the celestial kingdom of God, regardless of whether they were born Jew or Gentile. That message was the burden of his entire ministry after his conversion. The Calvinistic mistake originates in the idea that Paul had taught that God had already made His choices as to who would be saved and that mortals exercising faith and good works can not change decisions God has made in advance.

Alma<sub>2</sub>’s preaching on the principle of foreordained worthiness underlies modern LDS practice where Bishops and Stake Presidents interview those who seek to demonstrate their qualification to attend the temple and to be ordained to priesthood office. It is also the principle that underlies the so-called raised bar for missionary service.

### The 1978 Revelation on Priesthood

The preface to the 1978 revelation on priesthood provides further context. It states:

*The Book of Mormon teaches that “all are alike unto God,” including “black and white, bond and free, male and female” (2 Nephi 26:33). Throughout the history of the Church, people of every race and ethnicity in many countries have been baptized and have lived as faithful members of the Church. During Joseph Smith’s lifetime, a few black male members of the Church were ordained to the priesthood. Early in its history, Church leaders stopped conferring the priesthood on black males of African descent. Church records offer no clear insights into the origins*

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106 Romans 8:29. Readers interested in more detail about this theology are referred to the work of John Tvedtnes and Richard Pratt — see <http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/publications/agency-vs-predestination> and [http://thirdmill.org/newfiles/ric\\_pratt/th.pratt.historical\\_contingencies.pdf](http://thirdmill.org/newfiles/ric_pratt/th.pratt.historical_contingencies.pdf).

107 Romans 8:30.

108 Top, Brent L., “Foreordination,” *Jesus Christ and His Gospel, Selections from the Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Ludlow, D.L., (Salt Lake City, 1994), 173–174, quoting in part D&C 84:34.



*of this practice. Church leaders believed that a revelation from God was needed to alter this practice and prayerfully sought guidance. The revelation came to Church President Spencer W. Kimball and was affirmed to other Church leaders in the Salt Lake Temple on June 1, 1978. The revelation removed all restrictions with regard to race that once applied to the priesthood (emphasis in original).<sup>109</sup>*

The June 8, 1978, letter by which the revelation was announced, had been previously sustained by the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, all other General Authorities, and it was unanimously approved by the membership of the Church in the 148<sup>th</sup> Semiannual conference on September 30, 1978 as part of the Church's scriptural canon.<sup>110</sup> The letter by which it was earlier announced reads in relevant part:

Aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us that at some time, in God's eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood, and witnessing the faithfulness of those from whom the priesthood has been withheld, we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly, all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color. Priesthood leaders are instructed to follow the policy of carefully interviewing all candidates for ordination to either the Aaronic or the Melchizedek

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109 Doctrine and Covenants OD2.

110 In the "Race and the Priesthood" essay on the Church's official website (<<https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng>>), canonization of the revelation is confirmed in the following words:

The First Presidency statement regarding the revelation was canonized in the Doctrine and Covenants as Official Declaration 2.

Priesthood to insure that they meet the established standards for worthiness.<sup>111</sup>

While the text of the letter does not identify a lack of pre-existent valiance as one reason why some men were not entitled to the privilege of priesthood ordination in mortality, the essay on “Race and the Priesthood”<sup>112</sup> confirms that earlier view with the following statement:

Around the turn of the century, another explanation gained currency: blacks were said to have been less than fully valiant in the premortal battle against Lucifer and, as a consequence, were restricted from priesthood and temple blessings.<sup>113</sup>

That statement is supported with a footnote citing the statements in a letter by then Apostle Elder Joseph Fielding Smith to Alfred M. Nelson on January 31, 1907. The footnote quotes from the letter:

the belief was “quite general” among Mormons that “the Negro race has been cursed for taking a neutral position in that great contest.” Yet this belief, he admitted, “is not the official position of the Church, [and is] merely the opinion of men.”<sup>114</sup>

That Elder Smith himself accepted the validity of this view, is manifest in his book, *The Way to Perfection*, first published in 1931, though he did foresee the day when the negro race would receive the priesthood.<sup>115</sup> There he wrote:

It is a reasonable conclusion however, that there were many who did not stand valiantly with Michael in the great battle for the protection of the free agency and the plan for the merited exaltation of mankind, although they may not have

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111 Doctrine and Covenants OD2.

112 Essay on “Race and the Priesthood,” above n 110.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid., footnote 14.

115 Quoting President Woodruff, who recorded the words of President Young, he noted:

Any man having one drop of the seed of Cain in him cannot receive the Priesthood; but the day will come when all that race will be redeemed and possess all the blessings which we now have (*The Way to Perfection*, Genealogical Society of Utah, Zion’s Printing and Publishing Co., 1943, 106).

He concluded that discussion with an expression of hope: “Surely the Lord will remember their faithfulness and reward them accordingly” (ibid., 111).

openly rebelled ... We naturally conclude that others ... did not show the loyalty to their Redeemer that they should. Their sin was not one that merited the extreme punishment which was inflicted on the devil and his angels. They were not denied the privilege of receiving the second estate but were permitted to come to the earth-life with some restrictions placed upon them. That the negro race, for instance, have been placed under restrictions because of their attitude in the world of spirits, few will doubt. It cannot be looked upon as just that they should be deprived of the power of the Priesthood without it being a punishment for some act or acts performed before they were born.<sup>116</sup>

Those statements accord with entries made by his son-in-law, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, in the first edition of his most famous work, *Mormon Doctrine: A Compendium of the Gospel* in 1958. Elder McConkie wrote:

In the pre-existent eternity various degrees of valiance and devotion to the truth were exhibited by different groups of our Father's spirit offspring. One-third of the spirit hosts of heaven came out in open rebellion and were cast out without bodies, becoming the devil and his angels. The other two-thirds stood affirmatively for Christ; there were no neutrals. To stand neutral in the midst of war is a philosophical impossibility ... Of the two-thirds who followed Christ, however, some were more valiant than others ... Those who were less valiant in pre-existence and who thereby had certain spiritual restrictions imposed upon them during mortality are known to us as the negroes ... Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty ... The present status of the negro rests purely and simply on the foundation of pre-existence. Along with all races and peoples he is receiving here what he merits as a result of the long pre-mortal probation in the presence of the Lord. The principle is the same as will apply when all men are judged according to

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116 Ibid., 43.

their mortal works and are awarded varying statuses in the life hereafter.<sup>117</sup>

However, President Joseph Fielding Smith had passed away before the revelation on priesthood was received. We expect that if he was alive at the time of that revelation, he would probably have responded as did his son-in-law Elder McConkie afterwards, when he acknowledged the error in what he had previously believed and written. Elder McConkie famously said:

There are statements in our literature by the early Brethren that we have interpreted to mean that the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same things, and people write me letters and say, ‘You said such and such, and how is it now that we do such and such?’ All I can say is that it is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and believed in a living, modern prophet. Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or George Q. Cannon or whoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world ... It doesn’t make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before the first day of June 1978. It is a new day and a new arrangement, and the Lord has now given the revelation that sheds light out into the world on this subject. As to any slivers of light or any particles of darkness of the past, we forget about them. We now do what meridian Israel did when the Lord said the gospel should go to the Gentiles. We forget all the statements that limited the gospel to the house of Israel, and we start going to the Gentiles.<sup>118</sup>

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117 Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine: A Compendium of the Gospel*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958). Note that the Committee assigned by The First Presidency to review the first edition of McConkie’s *Mormon Doctrine* identified more than 1000 corrections which were made before the second edition was issued in 1961 (Gregory Prince and William Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism*, [Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005], 50–53).

118 “All are Alike unto God,” The Second Annual Church Education Religious Educators Symposium, 18 August 1978, Brigham Young University, <[https://si.lds.org/bc/seminary/content/library/talks/ces-symposium-addresses/all-are-alike-unto-god\\_eng.pdf](https://si.lds.org/bc/seminary/content/library/talks/ces-symposium-addresses/all-are-alike-unto-god_eng.pdf)>. Note that Joseph Fielding Smith similarly acknowledged his

How then does what I have called the conventional understanding of the reference to foreordination in Alma 13:3–4, referenced in *Mormon Doctrine* and *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, square with the revelation on priesthood? To the extent that these statements reflect the view that some male spirits came to earth unable to qualify to receive the priesthood here, these views must be rejected. While it is conceded that some Book of Mormon readers still find it difficult to reconcile Nephi<sub>1</sub>'s variable views about race in 2 Nephi 5 and 26, there is no need to interpret Alma 13 in a manner that suggests Alma<sub>2</sub> believed any of God's mortal sons could not qualify themselves to receive the priesthood according to the foreordained worthiness requirement.

### Conclusion

The conventional interpretation of the opening verses of Alma 13 holds that Alma<sub>2</sub> understood and taught the people of Ammonihah that all who receive the priesthood in mortality were foreordained to receive it on account of their exceeding faith and good works in the pre-existence. That interpretation includes the idea that others were not foreordained to receive the priesthood in mortality because they were not as faithful or valiant in the pre-existence. In this article, I suggested three reasons as to why that interpretation cannot be correct.

First, it is unlikely that such an idea would have served Alma<sub>2</sub>'s missionary purpose among the Ammonihahites. Such instruction would likely have been interpreted to mean that God is a respecter of persons and that the unbelieving Ammonihahites were unworthy to receive the priesthood from before the foundation of the world.

Second, when Alma<sub>2</sub>'s emphasis on the manner of ordination is identified as the burden of his teaching, rather than the actions of some few individuals before the foundation of the world, it becomes

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own human fallibility. In *Doctrines of Salvation*, a work edited by Elder McConkie before the 1978 Revelation on Priesthood, he said:

It makes no difference what is written or what anyone has said, if what has been said is in conflict with what the Lord has revealed, we can set it aside. My words, and the teachings of any other member of the Church, high or low, if they do not square with the revelations, we need not accept them. Let us have this matter clear. We have accepted the four standard works as the measuring yardsticks, or balances, by which we measure every man's doctrine. You cannot accept the books written by the authorities of the Church as standards in doctrine, only in so far as they accord with the revealed word in the standard works (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Vol. 3, 203).

clear that Alma<sub>2</sub> intended to offer an example of how those on earth should live to qualify for redemption by the Son of God. This focus of Alma<sub>2</sub>'s instruction in its turn leads to an understanding that it was the worthiness standard itself that was foreordained in the pre-existence.

And finally, to interpret this passage any other way is to return to the ideology that underlay LDS practice before 1978 that denied the priesthood to some men on account of their race or ethnic origin.

A more careful understanding of Alma<sub>2</sub>'s insights about the qualifications for priesthood ordination can also improve our teaching. For example, his teachings show that God is no respecter of persons and that He intended to provide all His children with the opportunity to qualify for eternal life from the foundation of the world. They also suggest that the requirement that we demonstrate our worthiness, both before we are ordained to the priesthood and before we enter the temple, is intimately connected with the principle that advantage in the world to come is predicated upon our diligence and obedience to commandments in this life.<sup>119</sup> But it does so without undermining Nephi<sub>1</sub>'s insight that it is by grace we are saved after all we can do.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, the whole plan is dependent upon the work of redemption to be accomplished by the Son of God.<sup>121</sup>

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119 D&C 130:18–19.

120 2 Nephi 25:23.

121 Alma 13:2.

## REMEMBERING AND HONORING Māori LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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Louis Midgley

Review of Robert Joseph, “Intercultural Exchange, Matakite Māori and the Mormon Church,” in *Mana Māori and Christianity*, ed. by Hugh Morrison, Lachy Paterson, Brett Knowles and Murray Rae (Wellington, New Zealand: Huia Publishers, 2012), pp. 43–72;<sup>1</sup> and of Selwyn Kātene, ed, *Turning the Hearts of the Children: Early Māori Leaders in the Mormon Church* (Wellington, New Zealand: Steele Roberts Publishers, 2014). 231 pp. Glossary (pp. 220–22), Index (pp. 223–31). N.Z. \$39.99.<sup>2</sup>

*Abstract: Dr. Robert (Rob) Joseph’s essay on Māori matakite (seers) is described and assessed, along with the contents of a book, edited by Dr. Selwyn Kātene, consisting of essays on twelve nineteenth-century Māori Latter-day Saint “leaders.” All these essays are indications that Māori scholars are setting out and defending the Māori Latter-day Saint narrative. These essays also make available to future generations the stories of some of the Māori who subsequently helped set in place a Māori community of Latter-day Saints in Aotearoa (now the official Māori name for all of New Zealand rather than merely the name for the North Island). One crucial fact is that there were divine special revelations to Māori seers that opened the way for the message brought to them by Latter-day Saint missionaries. These essays will help Māori Saints (and others) remember and honor earlier encounters with the divine that yielded what was for at least a hundred years primarily a Māori community of Saints in New Zealand.*

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1 Hereafter cited as Joseph.

2 Hereafter cited as *Turning the Hearts* (when necessary preceded by the name of the “leader” whose career is described).

### A Personal Prolegomena

Why am I again opining on Māori things? I grew up hearing stories about how the Māori came to be Latter-day Saints. How so? Several in my extended family served as Latter-day Saint missionaries in New Zealand, including my older brother, Rushby C. Midgley Jr., first under my uncle, M. Charles Woods (1935–1938), and then under Matthew Cowley (1938–1945), who was my father’s close friend.<sup>3</sup> In addition, some Māori Saints visited my family, and one lived with us for a while. As a missionary in New Zealand in 1950–1952, I heard additional stories of how various *whanau* (extended families) had come to be Latter-day Saints. I wrongly assumed that others had recorded these stories,<sup>4</sup> which was most often not the case. Hence I very much applaud efforts to assemble accurate accounts of these remarkable stories.

In 1950 my initial missionary assignment was north of Auckland in the area around Whangarei and the Bay of Islands. In my first and subsequent encounters with Māori Latter-day Saints (and also with Māori who were not Latter-day Saints) I discovered a people not yet affected by enervating post-enlightenment skepticism about divine things. Though they were often candid about their own struggles with the lusts of the flesh, even some non-Latter-day Saints saw in the account of the recovery of the Book of Mormon, and also embedded in its narratives and messages, the lessons that, if acted upon, would eventually make them genuine Saints. By contrast, non-Māori were, if not hostile, very skeptical about our message, and insisted on arguing about whether or not it is true. In addition, the Māori did not see in what we taught something at odds with their own deepest beliefs but as an extension, correction, and even vindication of those beliefs.

I also discovered that faithful Māori Saints did not focus on the quirks of Latter-day Saint mission presidents nor on the foibles of immature missionaries from the United States and Canada. Instead, they had charity toward mission presidents who, in the way they presided over the Saints, were not always consistent or wise; and they also manifested a genuine love for young, immature, inexperienced Latter-day Saint missionaries. I was a benefactor of such love.

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3 In addition to President Woods (1935–1938), two other members of my extended family served as New Zealand Mission presidents: James Lambert (1916–1920) and Rufus Hardy (1907–1909 and 1933–1934).

4 For more details, see Midgley, “Māori Latter-day Saint Faith: Some Preliminary Remarks,” *Interpreter* 8 (2014): 45–65 at 52–54, 63–65.



In addition, I also discovered that special divine revelations were not for many Māori a scandal or stumbling block, though they have begun to be for those colonized by a European secular ideology that is profoundly skeptical about divine things. A version of the ideology can now be seen in the opinions of a few Kiwi critics of their former faith. Hence the need for the kinds of essays I wish to introduce.

### **Launching *Turning the Hearts*; Remembering and Honoring**

On 23 October 2014 a *hui* (conference) was held at Waikato University in Hamilton, New Zealand.<sup>5</sup> The title of this gathering was: A Symposium to Commemorate the 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Mormon Church in NZ; the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Translation of the Book of Mormon into Māori; and Early Māori Mormon Leaders (Book Launch).<sup>6</sup> The conference was chaired by Rob Joseph. Selwyn Kātene introduced *Turning the Hearts*, and versions of several of these essays were presented.

The twelve essays in *Turning the Hearts* challenge the cultural ignorance and resulting insensitivities as well as the often overt and covert secular assumptions, biases, and the resulting skepticism that one finds in accounts written by some non-Māori who have been indoctrinated in and enthralled by secular categories, assumptions, and explanations found in the dominant non-Māori intellectual culture. I urge non-Māori who are interested in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Aotearoa/New Zealand to take seriously what faithful Māori Latter-day Saints have to say about the faith of Māori Saints past and present.

In his “Introduction” (pp. 9–23) to the twelve essays in *Turning the Hearts*, Selwyn Kātene indicates that a crucial aim of this book “is to help the present cohort of Church members to *remember and honour* the

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5 For the program for this *hui*: <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Maori-Mormon-Symposium-Programme-Proposal-9-Octo-2014-Update-2.pdf>. See also <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/announcing-the-Maori-mormon-symposium/>.

6 For an account of this conference, see <https://pacific.lds.org/a-significant-step-in-lds-church-history-in-new-zealand>. One should note that Dr. Gina Colvin, a cultural Mormon critic of the faith of Latter-day Saints, presented her opinions on what she called “2050 Destination,” which was ignored in the report above. Herewini Jones, who was scheduled to give a “keynote” address on “Māori and the Book of Mormon,” does not seem to have attended. I suspect a link between the Colvin’s being invited to speak and his withdrawal from the conference.

contributions from past leaders” (p. 20, emphasis added).<sup>7</sup> The Latter-day Saints addressed in *Turning the Hearts* include the following:

- Hirini Te Rito Whaanga, 1828–1905 (pp. 25–47).
- Hoani te Whatahoro Jury, 1841–1923 (pp. 62–77).
- Raihi Miraka Kewene-Ngawaka, 1830–1933 (pp. 48–61).
- Ngahuia Pikeka Chase, 1857–1943 (pp. 78–91).
- Percy Stanley Connorton Going, 1868–1940 (pp. 92–107).
- Hohepa Heperi, 1870–1964 (pp. 108–21).
- Te Rawhiti Paerata, 1876–1931 (122–35).
- Stuart Meha, 1878–1963 (pp. 136–53).
- Wetekia Ruruku Elkington, 1879–1957 (pp. 154–69).
- Sidney Christy, 1883–1955 (pp. 170–87).
- Polly Duncan/Pare Takana, 1892–1974 (pp. 188–203).
- Tūrake Manuirangi, 1896–1969 (pp. 204–16).<sup>8</sup>

Kātene explains that those whose lives and faith are dealt with in *Turning the Hearts* were “matriarchs, high priests or politicians,” each of whom, with the exception of Percy Going,<sup>9</sup> was of Māori ethnicity (p. 20). They were also all “born in the nineteenth century.” The authors of these biographical essays, all members of the extended family of those early “leaders,” had access to the currently available oral and textual

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7 There are some fine biographical vignettes already in print. For example, Marjorie Newton’s essay entitled “‘Her Very Presence Is a Sermon’: Mere Mete Whaanga (1848–1944),” in *Women of Faith in the Latter Days*, vol. 3 (1846–1870), ed. Richard E. Turley and Brittany A. Chapman (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014), 252–62, 344–47. (Mere Whaanga was the third of Hirini Te Rito Whaanga’s wives, the other two having passed away before he and Mere were married and also before their becoming Latter-day Saints.) Newton stresses that numerous similar accounts await to be written, which is true.

8 I have favorably reviewed Marjorie Newton’s *Tike and Temple: The Mormon Mission in New Zealand, 1851–1958* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2012). It is an excellent “faith promoting” account of Latter-day Saint Māori faith (and faithful Saints are its intended audience). Her *Mormon and Māori* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014) is a much revised version of the analytical and highly critical portion of her “Mormonism in New Zealand: A Historical Appraisal,” her 1998 PhD thesis at the University of Sydney.

9 The Goings raised a large and faithful family, whose gifted children and grandchildren often married Māori and eventually Samoan Saints.

sources as well as *whanau* (extended family) approval and support (p. 20), which Māori feel is necessary and hence seek. In addition, four of these essays examine the faith of Māori women, and six of the authors of these essays are women (p. 20).

Without the availability of accurate, detailed, written accounts, the Māori past is easily lost and forgotten, and some of the important grounds and contents of faith are impoverished or may wither. This collection of biographical vignettes is an effort to *remember* and thereby bolster, deepen, renew, and restore the faith of Māori Latter-day Saints, and all who love the Lord.

Māori are, of course, the primary audience of *Turning the Hearts*. However, those who have served as Latter-day Saint missionaries in Aotearoa/New Zealand constitute an important potential secondary audience. If they have not had the privilege of actually knowing any of those whose lives and times are described in these essays, they may have known some of their descendants or have heard stories about these and other faithful Māori Saints.<sup>10</sup> But there should also be other audiences for this literature.

Both the essay by Dr. Robert Joseph<sup>11</sup> and the collection of essays edited by Dr. Selwyn Kātene<sup>12</sup> are readily available to Māori (and other) Saints in Aotearoa/New Zealand. However, their being published in New Zealand makes them less accessible elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

The contents of *Turning the Hearts* and Rob Joseph's essay are evidence that the Māori Saints are preserving the Māori Latter-day Saint

10 I was privileged to know five of these truly remarkable Saints: Polly Duncan, Sid Christy, Wetekia Elkington, Stuart Meha, and Hohepa Heperi. My mother took me with her in the early 1940s to visit Mere Whaanga, Hirini's wife, in her modest Forest Dale home, just south of Salt Lake City. In 1950–1952 I also got to know members of the Going *whanau* in Maromaku as well as members of the Whaanga *whanau*.

11 Dr. Robert (Rob) Joseph is Senior Lecturer at the Te Piranga Faculty of Law at the University of Waikato in Hamilton, New Zealand. See [http://www.waikato.ac.nz/law/about-us/staff/academic/robert\\_joseph/](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/law/about-us/staff/academic/robert_joseph/); and for his publications, see <http://www.waikato.ac.nz/php/research.php?mode=show&author=57008>. See also <http://mormonscholarstestify.org/955/robert-joseph>.

12 Dr. Selwyn Kātene is the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Māori and Pacifica) at Massey University, Palmerston North, Aotearoa/New Zealand. He is also the editor of *Fire that Kindles Hearts: Ten Māori Scholars*, "Foreword" by Tipene O'Reagan (Wellington, New Zealand: Steele Roberts, 2015).

13 I hope to see an enlarged version of Rob Joseph's essay made available in *Interpreter* so that it becomes easily accessible to English-speaking Latter-day Saints everywhere.

narrative by keeping some significant events and people in remembrance. What Rob Joseph also calls “the Mormon historical narrative” (Joseph, 51, and 58, 62, 63) ought to be retained in remembrance by Māori Saints; it should also be taken seriously by Latter-day Saint historians as well as non-Latter-day Saint scholars.<sup>14</sup>

### A Prepared People

Rob Joseph provides a detailed account of some but not all of the proclamations by Māori *matakite* (seers) that prepared Māori in some *iwi* (tribes) for both Latter-day Saint missionaries and the contents of their message. And in his editor’s “Introduction” to *Turning the Hearts*, Kātene sets out a Māori understanding of the Māori traditional “religion,” while also drawing on Rob Joseph’s essay (see Kātene, “Introduction” to *Turning the Hearts*, 10–17) in his own account of the role of Māori *matakite* and their crucial role in opening the way for Latter-day Saint missionaries and their message.

Rob Joseph demonstrates that although Latter-day Saint missionaries had no way of anticipating it, “Māori tohunga ironically predicted that the fullness of religious truth and salvation would come to Māori from the Pākeha” (Joseph, 44), and that these *Pākeha* (European) messengers turned out to be Latter-day Saint missionaries. He explains that “a number of tohunga matakite made significant prophecies concerning the coming to Aotearoa/New Zealand of a true church. In the *Mormon historical narrative*, as a result of such prophetic utterances, a number of Māori in certain tribal areas ultimately joined the Mormon Church” (Joseph, 48).

Then, after apologizing in advance “to those Mormon Māori whanau, hāpu and iwi” [extended families, subtribes, and tribes] whose stories he could not include in his essay (Joseph, 44), he sets out the

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14 The standard faithful accounts of the foundational stories of the faith of Māori Saints include, in chronological order, Ian Rewi Barker, “The Connection: The Mormon Church and the Māori People,” MA Thesis, Victoria University, 1967; Brian W. Hunt, *Zion in New Zealand: A History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand, 1854–1977* (Hamilton, New Zealand: Church College of New Zealand, 1977), which is the published version of his “History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand,” an MA thesis at Brigham Young University, August 1971; and especially R. Lanier (Lanny) Britsch, *Unto the Isles of the Sea: A History of the Latter-day Saints in the Pacific* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 253–345. (See also his essay entitled “Māori Traditions and the Mormon Church,” *New Era*, June 1981, 37–46, which is available at <https://www.lds.org/new-era/1981/06/Maori-traditions-and-the-mormon-church?lang=eng>).

proclamations made by a few of the Māori seers who opened the way for the conversions of Māori to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He examines in detail the statements made by the following Māori *Matakite*: Arama Te Toiroa (Joseph, 48–54), Paora Te Potangaroa (Joseph, 54–60), and King Tawhiao (Joseph, 61–67). Also woven into his detailed treatment of King Tawhiao's opinions is a commentary on Roma Heruru Ruruku, and his daughter, Wetekia Ruruku Elkington, who was herself a seer (Joseph, 61–67).<sup>15</sup> He also introduces his essay by describing how traditional Māori ways were transformed and severely eroded by British colonization (Joseph, 43).

### The Historical Setting

The arrival of colonists in New Zealand led to an immediate, rapid challenge to the customs, social controls, and way of life of a previously stone-age people. However, the Māori adapted rapidly to much of the new material culture the British colonists brought to them, including such things as woolen clothing, leather shoes, alcohol, and especially muskets, which they soon used to settle accounts between competing tribes.

The Māori did not, of course, choose to have their land stolen by the new settlers. In a cynical effort to gobble up their land, their new “masters” sought to destroy many of the key traditional ways of the Māori. Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic missionaries who arrived with the first settlers soon managed to make most Māori Christian, who soon soured on the version of Christian faith brought to them by those missionaries, especially when they sided with the Crown as efforts were made to steal Māori land. But the picture is more complicated.

Christian missionaries sought to suppress Māori *atua* (Gods), and hence also the traditional modes of Māori piety and also moral restraint.<sup>16</sup> They were not, however, entirely successful. Hence the work of those first Christian missionaries also facilitated our own subsequent missionary endeavors among them by introducing literacy and also by making the Bible available in Māori.<sup>17</sup>

But there is more. Beginning late in 1882, Latter-day Saint missionaries soon discovered that those Christian missionaries, who

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15 There is, in addition, in *Turning the Hearts* a fine essay by Nolanmay Campbell on Wetekia Elkington entitled “He Matakite — A Visionary” (pp. 155–69).

16 See Midgley, “Stairway to Heaven,” *Interpreter* 12 (2014): 97–110 at 97–102, 104–105.

17 See Midgley, “Māori Latter-day Saint Faith,” 50.

then, as now, discounted the importance of revelation, dreams, and visions had thereby inadvertently assisted Latter-day Saint missionary endeavors. The reason is that they seemed to the Māori to have lost contact with their own God (see Joseph, 47). Hence some crucial older Māori ways worked to the missionaries' advantage, despite or because of the efforts of Christian missionaries and at times in subtle opposition to them. Both Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries downplayed or flatly rejected Māori beliefs that easily found an important place in the faith of Māori Saints.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, an elite of male Māori were being taught cosmological mysteries in *whare wānanga* (a house of learning). And some *tohunga matakite*, as Rob Joseph demonstrates, had also prepared some Māori for the arrival and message of Latter-day Saint missionaries. Māori *tohunaga matakite* (seers) prepared the way and opened the door for the Saints' missionary endeavors. And, much like the Māori, Latter-day Saint missionaries did not teach that the heavens were closed to special divine revelations. Hence some Māori discovered that crucial elements of their traditional world were compatible with what Latter-day Saint missionaries brought to them.<sup>19</sup>

In 1950 I soon became aware that, while Māori were often remarkably open to divine special revelations, the *Pākehā* (and their preachers), much like those who first brought Christianity to Aotearoa, were more or less dominated by post-Enlightenment skepticism about divine things. Māori were able, however, to see affinities between elements of their own traditional world and their new Latter-day Saint faith, some of which is celebrated in the essays under review.

### The Māori Latter-day Saint Narrative

In the "Preface" to her fine narrative history of the first hundred years of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand, Marjorie Newton indicated that she realized "that as an Australian, I am vulnerable to errors of fact and interpretation in both New Zealand and American history and especially in Māori culture. I hope that one day a Māori historian will produce a scholarly history of Mormonism in New Zealand that will remedy any omission and defects in both my works. *I also hope to see additional work done with the hundreds of stories*

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18 See Midgley, "Māori Latter-day Saint Faith," 57–63.

19 See Midgley, "Māori Latter-day Saint Faith," 47–48, 51–57.

of New Zealand Saints, both Māori and Pākehā, that are still waiting to be told.”<sup>20</sup>

The most interesting and challenging portion of the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Aotearoa is the story of the Māori community of Saints. Faithful Māori Saints are, I believe, those most likely to know, understand, and appreciate the subtle elements of the changing patterns in Māori ways. They are also best able to select from the welter of Māori customs and traditions the most basic and noble features and also to figure out which are truly base and degrading. For this and other reasons I insist that faithful “Māori scholars are best situated to provide an explanation of the faith of Māori Saints.”<sup>21</sup>

Both the essay by Rob Joseph and the collection of essays by Selwyn Kātene demonstrate that Newton’s “hope” that Māori scholars would eventually remedy the omissions and defects in previous historical accounts of the faith of Māori Latter-day Saints is now taking place; Māori Saints are beginning to assemble what Newton has described correctly as “the hundreds of stories of New Zealand Saints, both Māori and Pākehā.”<sup>22</sup> Newton indicates that “much of this gap is being filled by the Rangi Parker, whose dedicated work over many years in collecting and preserving stories and the photographic records of the Māori Saints and Mormon missionaries is unique and is now receiving the recognition it deserves.”<sup>23</sup> Rangi Parker has assembled both historical materials, including something like 40,000 Latter-day Saint missionary photographs of primarily Māori Saints, going back to the beginning of

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20 Newton, *Tiki and Temple*, xiv (emphasis added). I reviewed this book favorably in the *Journal of Mormon History* 40/1 (2014): 253–56; and also engaged it in “Māori Latter-day Saint Faith,” 45–65, where I included some cautions about crucial lacuna in her otherwise fine book. See also Louis Midgley, “Comments on the History of Mormon Māori Faith,” Association of Mormon Letters, posted 26 July 2013 at [http://www.forums.mormonletters.org/yaf\\_postsm2657\\_Newton-Tiki-and-Temple-The-MormonMission-in-New-Zealand-18541958-reviewed-by-Louis.aspx](http://www.forums.mormonletters.org/yaf_postsm2657_Newton-Tiki-and-Temple-The-MormonMission-in-New-Zealand-18541958-reviewed-by-Louis.aspx).

21 Midgley, “Māori Latter-day Saint Faith,” 47.

22 Newton, “Preface” to her *Tiki and Temple*, xiv, which I have quoted fully above.

23 *Tiki and Temple*, xiv. For some details on the work of Rangi Parker, see Don L. Searle, “So They Will Know Their Heritage,” available at <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2011/01/so-they-will-know-their-heritage?lang=eng>; and also John L. Hart, “Māori memories,” at <http://www.ldschurchnewsarchive.com/articles/50741/Maori-memories.html>; and “Love for Past and Present Generations Motivates Mormon Historian,” <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/CU1302/S00238/love-for-past-and-present-generations-motivates-mormon-histo.htm>.

missionary work among the Māori; and she has been able to identify many of the places where the photographs were taken, and the names of most of those in those photographs. Māori scholars are also making efforts to preserve and enhance the memory of what often made their ancestors remarkable Latter-day Saints.

### Faithful Stories; Stories of Faith

Rob Joseph has carefully uncovered the details of the proclamations of Māori *matakite* that prepared Māori in some *iwi* (tribes) for both Latter-day Saint missionaries and for the contents of their messages. And Dr. Kātene often cites Rob Joseph's essay in his "Introduction" (*Turning the Hearts*, pp. 9–21), where he describes the crucial role of Māori seers in preparing the way for the message of Latter-day Saint missionaries (see especially "Māori Prophecies" in his *Turning the Hearts*, 10–17), which is integrated with a description of the reception of Latter-day Saint missionary messages that fit rather snugly with the traditional Māori "religion," which it both supplemented and corrected.

Accurate and culturally sensitive accounts of the lives and experiences of various Māori Saints as well as assessments of their contributions to the Kingdom of God in Aotearoa, are now very much needed. What grounded and sustained the faith of Māori Saints when they were still fully in the grips of an oral culture is no longer the case. The remedy is rich, accurate, written accounts. Elsewhere I have demonstrated that there is "increased interest in recovering and preserving the crucial *memory* of what made the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints essentially Māori during much of its first century in New Zealand."<sup>24</sup>

I highly recommend the fine collection of essays that Dr. Selwyn Kātene assembled and introduced. These essays were written by descendants of those he describes in the subtitle of his book as *Early Māori Leaders in the Mormon Church*. This intriguing book is, among other things, an effort to *remember* (and hence also *honor*) some of the truly noteworthy early Māori founding mothers and fathers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand. It is also a contribution to the history of the faith of Māori Saints from a genuinely Māori perspective. These essays are not, as is typical of other excellent accounts, primarily dependent on and derived from the opinions of Latter-day Saint missionaries and mission presidents. In addition, this is not an institutional history. Instead, these essays express the faith of

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24 Midgley, "Māori Latter-day Saint Faith," 47.



Māori Latter-day Saints, and hence also manifest their personal piety. These essays give voice to earlier Māori Saints; they are also not set out in secular categories, nor are they grounded in secular assumptions, which is, unfortunately, sometimes the case with accounts written by others about the faith of Māori Saints. Instead, these essays set out *the* Latter-day Saint Māori narrative.

### The “Ways of Remembrance”

*Remembering* the mighty acts of God on our behalf is a crucial element of the faith of all genuine Latter-day Saints. Why? On virtually every Sabbath, faithful Saints assemble to renew their covenants by offering to God their “broken hearts and contrite spirits” as a communal prayer is read asking God first to sanctify bread to “the souls of all those who partake of it; that they may eat in *remembrance* of the body of thy Son,” and then “that they are willing to *remember* him and *keep* his commandments” as they consume the emblem to indicate that they genuinely desire to have “his Spirit to be with them always” (Moroni 4:3; D&C 20:77).<sup>25</sup> This ritual memorial meal with which the Saints renew their covenants with God is also a manifestation of individual and collective turning or returning to God — that is, repentance.

Saints must desire to have the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and hence be sanctified.<sup>26</sup> For this to happen, they must also *remember* the ominous stories of previous carnal captivity and then the joyful liberation from sin as well as their own past encounters with God and his ambassadors. The larger web of such stories must also become an integral part of life histories.<sup>27</sup> Various “ways of remembrance” are stressed in the LDS scriptures,<sup>28</sup> which tell us that we must continually be stirred up by ways

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25 With slightly different wording, the emblem of wine (now water) is blessed and sanctified “to the souls of all that who drink of it, that they may do it in *remembrance* of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always *remember* him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them” (Moroni 5:2; D&C 20:79; emphasis added).

26 Forms of the biblical Greek word *hagios* (Holy and Holy One) are rendered in KJV English as either the verb “to sanctify” or the nouns “sanctification,” and hence also “Saint.”

27 See Midgley, “A Plea for Narrative Theology: Living In and By Stories,” *Interpreter* 8 (2014): vii–xxi.

28 See, for example, 2 Nephi 5:25; Mosiah 1:17; Mosiah 4:11; 6:3; 9:17; 13:30; Alma 4:3, 5–6, and so forth. For a detailed account of the links set forth in the Book of Mormon between remembrance and keeping the commandments as the

of *remembrance*. This is, it turns out, the laudable primary purpose of *Turning the Hearts*.

### Esoteric Lore and the Māori Story

I must again call attention to the published work of the late Dr. Cleve Barlow, who was the last Māori to be initiated in the esoteric lore of the Io cult that traditionally took place in a *whare wānanga*.<sup>29</sup> Professor Barlow's most significant publication was *Tikanga Whakaaro*.<sup>30</sup> In this standard guide to important elements of Māori culture and language, he dealt with seventy important concepts. His initiation in a *wānanga* in the Hokianga area of the Northland of New Zealand, and also his being a faithful Latter-day Saint — he was a convert to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints — as well as a distinguished scholar, fit him well to grasp important links between the traditional Māori lore and the faith of Latter-day Saints.

I first met Professor Barlow at the Pioneers in the Pacific Conference, held at BYU–Hawaii on 7–11 October 1997 to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the Saints in the Salt Lake Valley.<sup>31</sup> In 1999–2000, when as Latter-day Saint missionaries, my wife and I directed the Lorne Street LDS Institute (next to the Auckland University of Technology and Auckland University), Professor Barlow described for

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necessary and proper response to the covenants that the Saints make with God, see Midgley, “‘To Remember and Keep’: On the Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book,” in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 95–137.

29 For a cautious indication of what took place at a *whare wānanga* initiation, and its significance for an elite among the aristocratic social order of the Māori, see Midgley, “Māori Latter-day Saint Faith,” 57–62.

30 *Tikanga Whakaaro: Key Concepts in Māori Culture*, first published by Oxford University Press in 1991, and then reprinted in 1992, 1993, 1994 (with corrections), and again in 1996 and 1998.

31 Nearly three thousand attended this remarkable academic conference, which included one hundred sessions on the history of the Saints all over the South Pacific. The largess was such that my wife and I could not attend all of the sessions on New Zealand. I presented a brief version of an essay entitled “A Singular Reading: The Māori and the Book of Mormon,” *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 245–76. See also Louis Midgley, “A Māori View of the Book of Mormon,” 8/1 *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* (1999): 4–11, 77.

me some of what he had learned in his initiation in a *wānanga*,<sup>32</sup> and also his understanding of how that fit closely his own Latter-day Saint faith.

Those Māori privileged to be initiated in a *wānanga* were made aware of the premortal existence of human beings. And of the sons of Io — the Māori high God — in the highest heaven, where the peopling of the earth was debated.<sup>33</sup> They learned of a war of the Gods between Tu (the Māori God of war) and also Whiro (the God of evil or Hades) against *Tane* (with his consort, the first humans on earth) and Rongo, the God of peace and agricultural pursuits, which war continues even now here below.

The oldest recorded version of what was taught in a *whare wānanga* was dictated in 1863 and 1865 to Hoani Te Whatahoro (1841–1923)<sup>34</sup> by Moihī Te Motorohunga and Nepia Pohutu, two *tohunga* of the Ngāti Kahunganu — an *iwi* on the East Coast of the North Island. This took place long before any Latter-day Saints had encountered any Māori. Eventually a remarkable amateur ethnologist, S. Percy Smith (1840–1922), published the Māori text and an English translation of Whatahoro's Māori manuscripts.<sup>35</sup>

Whatahoro eventually became a Latter-day Saint.<sup>36</sup> For months in 1888 he helped to revise the Māori translation of the Book of Mormon. Marjorie Newton has shown that Whatahoro eventually gave his precious manuscripts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. James E. Lambert, then New Zealand Mission president, had a fireproof vault built in the little Latter-day Saint chapel at Scotia Place on Queens Street in Auckland to safeguard those manuscripts.<sup>37</sup>

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32 It was not unusual for those who had been initiated in a *whare wānanga*, since the details of that initiation were *tapu* (sacred), to agree not to reveal the details of what they had learned to those not also initiated.

33 There is a debate among different *iwi* over whether there are ten or twelve heavens, and on other details of the cosmology and cosmogony.

34 See Rwiri Smith, "Between Two Worlds: Whatahoro Jury, 1841–1923," *Turning the Hearts*, 51–77.

35 Whatahoro's manuscript was published in two volumes in the Memoirs of the Polynesian Society under the title *The Lore of the Whare-Wānanga or Teachings of the Māori College on Religion, Cosmogony, and History*. In 2011 these two volumes were recently republished by Cambridge University Press. In 1913 the first volume was published under the subtitle *Te Kauwae-Runga, or "Things Celestial."* The second volume was published in 1915, under the subtitle *Te Kauwae-Raro or "Things Terrestrial."* Whatahoro assisted Percy Smith with the translation of his Māori text into English.

36 Newton, *Tiki and Temple*, 57–59.

37 Newton, *Tiki and Temple*, 71–72.

Marjorie Newton also has shown that Whatahoro's manuscripts could not be sent to the Church Archive in Salt Lake because of the Māori Antiquities Act of 1908, and also over objections by some non-Latter-day Saint Māori.<sup>38</sup> Marjorie Newton also calls attention to a failed attempt to have an aged Whatahoro travel to Salt Lake to receive his endowment.<sup>39</sup> However, she seems unaware of the contents and hence importance of Whatahoro's manuscripts. Put bluntly, she ignores the esoteric lore of the *whare wānanga*.

It is not my intention to set out in any detail the contents of the *whare wānanga*. Māori often consider these teachings *tapu* (sacred), and those actually initiated in a *wānanga*, like Professor Barlow, felt bound by the restrictions accepted by those who underwent such instruction not to make public that into which they had been initiated. The elite initiated Māori were for a long time able to keep most *Pākehā* unaware of the existence and most of the details of what was taught in a *wānanga*. This has led some to insist that the *wānanga* initiation was fashioned by Māori after the arrival of the Europeans. Bronwyn Elsmore, in an influential book, indicates that "in the early years of the twentieth century" the entire

Io cult was open to much debate, with some scholars maintaining that it was not part of the old tradition but was post-European, being the result of Christian teachings, and others answering that the doctrine was not generally known ... because of the custom of the Māori to restrict the highest esoteric spiritual knowledge to selected initiates of the *whare wānanga*.<sup>40</sup>

The Māori, who just a few generations earlier were a stone-age people, were actually able to keep most *Pākehā* from knowing about the Io cult. The initiates learned that their ultimate home, if faithful, was with Io in the highest heaven. Those Māori initiated into the Io cult knew of the premortal existence of the souls of human beings, of a council in the deep past of those representing human beings, and also of a war that broke out over whether to people the earth, which struggle still goes on

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38 Newton, *Tiki and Temple*, 171–73.

39 Newton, *Tiki and Temple*, 172.

40 Bronwyn Elsmore, *Mana from Heaven: A Century of Māori Prophets in New Zealand* (Auckland: Reed Books, 1999), 150. Elsmore describes a host of those she calls "Māori Prophets," but other than Paora Potangaroa (pp. 246–55), essentially ignores the *matakite* who figure in Māori Latter-day Saint accounts, and also garbles Latter-day Saint Māori beliefs (see pp. 150–52; 246–55).

here below between those loyal to Io — who seek to ascend back to the highest heaven — and a demonic opposition. This does not seem to me to be a belief system fashioned by the Māori from Anglican, Methodist or Roman Catholic systematic or dogmatic theology or fashioned out of thin air after the *Pākehā* arrived in New Zealand. Those initiated into the Io cult saw in what Latter-day Saint missionaries taught a cosmology that fits with some of their own arcane traditional beliefs. And it also provides a clue to why those first endowed Māori Saints found in the Latter-day Saint temple endowment a correction and completion of their own deepest mysteries.

There is now a growing interest among Māori in the details of their traditional arcane teachings. In addition, despite the contents of these teachings being *tapu* (sacred),<sup>41</sup> accounts of what was set out in various *wānanga* were preserved by Te Whatahoro and eventually published or, more recently, recovered.<sup>42</sup> In addition, many informal *wānanga*, such as those conducted by Heriwini Jones,<sup>43</sup> then by Professor Barlow as well as others, have made traditional Māori wisdom available to interested Māori (and non-Māori) Saints.

My own experience with the Māori Saints sixty-five years ago (and also more recently) grounds my belief that those with traces of Māori ethnicity have found within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints a genuinely safe, life-affirming place to celebrate an honorable, even heroic past as well as an appreciation for what is most noble and enriching in the Māori world while also rejecting the most debasing

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41 The word *tapu* (*kapu* in Hawaiian) entered the English language as “taboo” when Captain James Cook’s crew garbled either the Tahitian word *tapu*, or the Tongan cognate *tabu*. See <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/taboo>.

42 See, for example, Pei Te Hurinui Jones, *He Tuhi Mārei-kura: Ngā Kōrero a te Māori mo te Hanganga mai o te Ao Nonga Whare Wānanga o Tainui* (Hamilton, New Zealand: Aka and Associates, 2013); and also the English translation by Pei Te Hurinui Jones of the Māori version under the title *A Treasury of Sacred Writings; A Māori Account of the Creation, based on the Priestly Lore of the Tainui People* (2013).

43 Heriwini Jones is a gifted Māori convert to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with a remarkable memory and rhetorical style. In 1999–2000, when my wife and I were in New Zealand, he conducted informal Latter-day Saint *wānanga* at Māori *marae*, and often for more than one day. These were held under the direction of Howard Hunter and Paul Mendenhall, while they were serving as Latter-day Saint mission presidents in Auckland, New Zealand. These informal *wānanga* were helpful in missionary endeavors, including both convert baptisms, reactivations, and strengthening the faith of the Saints. He has also held similar instruction sessions in many other places in Pacifica, and elsewhere.

elements. This is true for contemporary Māori. And just a glance at some of the surnames of faithful Māori Saints — for instance, such non-Māori sounding surnames as (and I am not making this up) Jones, Smith, Barlow, Lambert, Midgley, Elkington, Going, and so forth — indicates that Māori ethnicity is now something chosen, exactly as is one's faith (or unfaith) in God. The reason is that we all may become genuine Saints by both *remembering* the mighty acts of God on our behalf and then *keeping* our covenants with him, which the essay by Rob Joseph and the essays assembled by Selwyn Kātene both demonstrate and promote.

**Louis Midgley** (PhD, Brown University) is an emeritus professor of political science at Brigham Young University, where he taught the history of political philosophy, which includes efforts of Christian churchmen and theologians to identify, explain, understand and cope with the evils in this world. Dr. Midgley has therefore had an abiding interest in both dogmatic and systematic theology, and the alternatives to both. His doctoral dissertation was on the religious socialist political ideology of Paul Tillich, a German American Protestant theologian most famous for his systematic theology which is a radical elaboration of classical theism. Dr. Midgley's encounter with the writings of Leo Strauss, an influential Jewish philosopher/intellectual historian, drew his attention to the radical challenge posed by what is often called modernity to both the wisdom of Jerusalem, which is grounded on divine revelation, and also the contrasting, competing wisdom of Athens, which was fashioned by unaided human reason. Dr. Midgley has an interest in the ways in which communities of faith have responded to the challenges posed by modernity to faith in God grounded on divine special revelation.

## READING A PENTECOSTAL READS THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Stephen O. Smoot

Review of John Christopher Thomas, *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon: A Literary and Theological Introduction*, Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2016. 448 pp. + bibliography. \$24.95

In recent years the Book of Mormon has enjoyed increased attention from the scholarly world.<sup>1</sup> This is entirely welcomed by the Latter-day Saints, especially when such attention comes from a place of fairness

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1 A survey of recent publications from non-Mormon academic institutions clearly reveals this. See for instance Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Grant Hardy, ed., *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Joseph Smith, Jr., trans., *The Book of Mormon*, ed. Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp (New York: Penguin Books, 2008); Terryl L. Givens, "'Common-Sense' Meets the Book of Mormon: Source, Substance, and Prophetic Disruption," in *Revisiting Thomas O'Dea's The Mormons: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Cardell K. Jacobson, John P. Hoffman, and Tim B. Heaton (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008), 79–98; *The Book of Mormon: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Margaret Barker and Kevin Christensen, "Seeking the Face of the Lord: Joseph Smith and the First Temple Tradition," in *Joseph Smith Jr.: Reappraisals after Two Centuries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 143–72; Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Paul C. Gutjahr, *The Book of Mormon: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); John A. Tvedtnes, "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, 4 vols., ed. Geoffrey Khan (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2013), 195–96; "Names of People: Book of Mormon," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, 787–88; Noel B. Reynolds, "The Gospel According to Mormon," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68, no. 2 (2015): 218–34; Grant Hardy, "The Book of Mormon," in *The Oxford*

and open-mindedness. A praiseworthy example of how non-Mormon academics can fruitfully engage the Book of Mormon is John Cristopher Thomas's new volume *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon: A Literary and Theological Introduction*.<sup>2</sup> Thomas is well-equipped to approach the Book of Mormon on a literary and theological angle. He is, after all, an erudite biblical scholar whose work on New Testament text and theology has appeared in such prestigious venues as Sheffield Academic Press, T&T Clark, Eerdmans, Mohr Siebeck, *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, and *Novum Testamentum*.<sup>3</sup> He is also friendly toward the Latter-day Saints, both in his academic work and, I'm told, in his personal dealings with his Mormon acquaintances.<sup>4</sup>

*A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon* is a good faith attempt to open an ecumenical conversation on the religious traditions of Pentecostals and Latter-day Saints. It is free from the acrimony, spitefulness, and dishonesty that can often be seen in the shabby literature of the Christian counter-cult. For this Thomas is to be immediately commended. Unlike many of his predecessors who have provided commentary on Mormonism, Thomas performs actual scholarship, including a close and fair reading of the Book of Mormon. It is refreshing to have a non-Mormon engage the Book of Mormon in such a manner and an encouraging sign that the academic discourse surrounding the Nephite record is improving.

While there was much about *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon* that I enjoyed, there were nevertheless more than a few aspects of the book I found rather weak. In this review I shall therefore proceed as follows: First, I provide an overview of the contents of the volume.

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*Handbook of Mormonism*, ed. Terryl L. Givens and Philip L. Barlow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 134–48.

2 *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2016). Subsequent citations of this book will appear in parentheses in the body of this review.

3 Thomas's CV is available online at <http://www.itpbucuresti.ro/media/facultate/cv%20liste%20lucrari/CV%201%20John%20Christopher%20Thomas.pdf>.

4 See John Christopher Thomas, "Book of Mormon Pneumatology," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 24 (2015): 217–30. The Neal A. Maxwell Institute hosted Thomas last Fall as he lectured on his work on the Book of Mormon at Brigham Young University. See "'The Book of Mormon Meets Pentecostals' by Christopher Thomas now available on YouTube," online at <http://mi.byu.edu/the-book-of-mormon-meets-pentecostals-by-christopher-thomas-now-available-on-youtube/>.



Second, I highlight what I thought were some of the book's strengths. Third, I highlight what I thought were some of the book's weaknesses.

### Contents

The structure of *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon* is rather straightforward. Thomas begins with a preface in which he describes the origins of his interest in Mormonism (xi–xv). His first encounter with the Book of Mormon was in 1974 “as a result of a visit to Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah” (xi). This evolved into lasting relationships with members of both The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Community of Christ (formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) that continue to this day.

Thomas introduces his book by explaining why he, a non-Mormon academic, would undertake this kind of project. “There are voices emerging from within the somewhat cloistered world of Mormon Studies that acknowledge the need of and issue an invitation for more scholarly work to be done by those from outside the tradition(s) in order to make Mormon Studies a more mainstream discipline,” Thomas writes. This, he insists, will bring “new, and sometimes fresh” eyes to read “the texts and history sacred to the LDS family of churches” (2).

*A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon* can easily be situated in the Mormon Studies movement that has come to be distinguished by an avoidance of passing judgment on matters such as religious truth claims. “Despite the plethora of studies devoted to the Book of Mormon, few of them address many of the questions (at least under one cover) that I brought to this text,” Thomas indicates. Whereas many of these works “are primarily interested in whether the Book of Mormon is historically true or false, verifiable or not,” *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon* attempts merely to “acquaint its (mainly non-Mormon) readers with the [Book of Mormon] while offering engagements from a Pentecostal perspective” (2).

Since Thomas is primarily approaching the Book of Mormon from a theological and textual vantage point, he bypasses any initial narrative exposition on the origins of the Book of Mormon and jumps right into outlining the structure of the text (11–23). This includes an overview of the various books, authors, and redactors presented in the Book of Mormon as well as a timeline for Book of Mormon events (what Thomas calls “chronological indicators”). In following Grant Hardy, Thomas draws specific attention to the roles of Mormon and Moroni as the

book's principle authors-redactors.<sup>5</sup> Oddly, Thomas does not talk much at all about Nephi's role as the abridger of his father Lehi's text and the author of his own record. This is a curious oversight but doesn't really detract too much from Thomas's overall presentation.

Immediately after this quick rundown on the structure of the Book of Mormon, Thomas launches into an extended look at its contents. This includes a section of roughly 160 pages that breaks down the individual books of the Book of Mormon into individual subdivisions (29–187). This is done, Thomas informs his readers, “to acquaint readers with the book's basic story line as well as identify the literary markers around which the individual books are structured.” In short, with this section Thomas wishes “to approach the text on its own terms, allowing its own narrative structure to emerge in order to inform the readers” (27).

After providing his readers with a respectable look at the structure and content of the Book of Mormon, Thomas goes on to approach the text's theology. This takes up roughly the next 100 pages of *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon* and includes a look at such theological topics as the Godhead, soteriology, ecclesiology, angelology, eschatology, and “a few other matters” such as women in the Book of Mormon (193–291). Obviously, Thomas approaches these topics from his Pentecostal background and later specifically offers a comparison between Pentecostal theology and the Book of Mormon (351–87). Thomas's investigation uncovers what he sees are “points of surprising overlap” between Pentecostal thought and the Book of Mormon while also admitting “significant differences.” Ultimately, Thomas hopes to “underscore such similarities and dissimilarities, perhaps serving as a basis for future conversations between Pentecostalism and those for whom the Book of Mormon functions as Scripture” (387).

Part four of *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon* is a valuable look at the reception history of the Book of Mormon (297–344). “Reception history as a discipline ... does not focus so much on whether this or that individual or group has correctly interpreted a given text ... but rather is concerned to trace the impact of that text throughout history without judgment” (295). The Book of Mormon in particular “has had an incredible history of reception, ranging from intended to unintended effects.” From art and music inspired by the Book of Mormon, recasts of the book as scripture in various communities, and even to the book's role in influencing the “disastrous interpretations” of Ron and Dan Lafferty (339–42), the Book of Mormon's reception, Thomas insists, testifies “to

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5 Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*.

[its] powerful influence” (345). Although irksome to many Latter-day Saints, the popular musical *The Book of Mormon* is one cultural artifact that can be situated in this reception history (324–28).

The last two parts of the book cover more reception history (“Pentecostalism and the Book of Mormon,” 351–87) and a discussion on Book of Mormon origins, including a look at academic controversies surrounding such (“Book of Mormon Origins,” 393–443). Thomas’s analysis of how Pentecostals have historically interacted with the Book of Mormon as well as his own personal engagement from the perspective of his Pentecostal faith are especially illuminating. Although Pentecostals have historically opposed Mormon claims to new revelation and living prophets, Thomas is careful to eschew any polemics and offers a fair assessment for the sake of maintaining “future conversations between Pentecostalism and those for whom the Book of Mormon functions as Scripture” (387).

### Strengths

The most obvious strength of *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon* is its thoroughness. Thomas has clearly taken the time not just to read but to try to understand the Book of Mormon’s narrative and teachings. He spends almost 200 pages structuring the Book of Mormon and synthesizing its narrative. The level of patience and care Thomas has taken with the Book of Mormon is apparent and easily establishes his credibility as a commentator on the text. For instance, I was appreciative of Thomas’s observation (31) that 1 Nephi can be structured into three parts: the prologue involving Lehi and his sons (1 Nephi 1–9), Nephi’s endowment of spiritual power (1 Nephi 10–14), and Nephi assuming leadership over the group (1 Nephi 15–22).

Thomas’s reception history of the Book of Mormon is also insightful and engaging. Instead of focusing on just the dominant branch of Mormonism headquartered in Salt Lake City, Thomas pays attention to the Book of Mormon’s reception in other branches as well, including the Community of Christ and smaller splinter groups (297–310). This wider scope invites a stronger ecumenical emphasis that seeks to bridge the various Mormon denominations and find common ground.

Perhaps my favorite part of *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon* is, not surprisingly, where the Pentecostal Thomas deliberately reads the text through a Pentecostal lens (351–87). This unique contribution by Thomas stands out as the real focal point of his treatment. It reveals his willingness to put aside the old sectarian debates and instead in a spirit

of comradery look for ways that Latter-day Saints and Pentecostals might better appreciate what they share in common. For instance, Thomas points to the Book of Mormon's insistence that those who wish to follow Christ must be baptized both by water and by fire (2 Nephi 31:13–14, 17). He compares this to the concept of spirit baptism in the Pentecostal tradition (377–79), and concludes that the two find overlap.

So there was plenty in *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon* that I thought was quite good. That being said, I think it's important to highlight a few areas where I felt Thomas was at his weakest.

### Weaknesses

Thomas is not explicitly hostile towards Joseph Smith's account of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Polemicists eager to get their hands on anti-Mormon fodder will have to look elsewhere, as Thomas does not indulge in any of the often offensively petulant antics of many sectarian critics of the faith of the Latter-day Saints. In the spirit of objectivity and fairness he does, however, devote much attention to what he calls "complications to the standard story" (401). Here Thomas is at his weakest, as he does a decent job summarizing the objections to the "standard story" without giving the responses to these complications a fair shake. I do not detect any overt malice on Thomas's part, however. I suspect it is perhaps a matter of Thomas's not being completely aware of the scholarship that has been produced in defense of the Book of Mormon, with perhaps an understandable non-Mormon bias influencing how much time and attention he allots to the two sides of this issue.

This is most easily discerned with a quick glance at Thomas's bibliography. Whereas the work of Fawn Brodie,<sup>6</sup> Dan Vogel,<sup>7</sup> Grant Palmer,<sup>8</sup> Michael Coe,<sup>9</sup> Thomas Murphy,<sup>10</sup> and Jerald and Sandra Tanner<sup>11</sup>

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6 Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage, 1995).

7 Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004).

8 Grant Palmer, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002).

9 Michael Coe, "Mormons and Archaeology: An Outside View," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1973): 40–48.

10 Thomas W. Murphy, "Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 47–77.

11 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm, 1969).

are all featured in the bibliography and footnotes, hardly anything appears from scholars who have responded to these and other writers who have passed negative judgment on the Book of Mormon's historicity. John Welch and John Sorenson find themselves in Thomas's book but not their strongest or most relevant works.<sup>12</sup> Sorenson's work blasting amateurish attempts to find archaeological evidence for the Book of Mormon is quoted by Thomas, for instance,<sup>13</sup> but not his seminal *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, nor his magnum opus *Mormon's Codex: An Ancient American Book*.<sup>14</sup> Amazingly, the work of major Book of Mormon scholars such as Hugh Nibley and Royal Skousen is missing altogether from Thomas's treatment.<sup>15</sup>

Take Thomas's treatment of the DNA issue as a case study. He skips through the issue in little over a page and a half (418–20). "Just as with the archaeological attempts to vindicate the Book of Mormon," Thomas writes, "the DNA explorations were terribly disappointing to those" who sought to find a genetic link between modern Native Americans and Middle Eastern populations (419). Thomas then immediately proceeds to quote the damning judgments of Thomas W. Murphy and Simon Southerton on this matter. As a gesture towards the apologetic response to this, Thomas does briefly summarize Terryl Givens (one of the few believing scholars he bothers to quote at all in this section<sup>16</sup>) thus:

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12 Thomas cites a single item by Welch (John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds [Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, Religious Studies Center, 1982], 33–52) and two early works by Sorenson (John L. Sorenson, "Ancient America and the Book of Mormon Revisited," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 4, no. 2 [Summer 1969]: 80–94; "Some Voices from the Dust," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* [Spring 1966]: 144–48).

13 Sorenson, "Ancient America and the Book of Mormon Revisited," 81 n. 2.

14 John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985); *Mormon's Codex: An Ancient American Book* (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2013).

15 The voluminous work of Nibley and Skousen is accessible on the Neal A. Maxwell Institute website (for Nibley, online at <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/people/hugh-nibley/>; for Skousen, online at <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/people/royal-skousen/>) and the Interpreter Foundation website, online at <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/author/royals/>.

16 Thomas relies primarily on Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); *The Book of Mormon: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

“The disappointing nature of the results of such DNA testing has resulted in a tendency among some LDS readers to devalue the importance of such testing and even to dismiss the possibility, suggesting that such testing is virtually impossible to carry out” (419).<sup>17</sup> Thomas does not give even a brief mention to the work of Latter-day Saint geneticists such as Ugo Perego, John Butler, Michael F. Whiting, and David A. McClellan responding to the criticisms leveled by Southerton and Murphy.<sup>18</sup>

Besides summarizing a number of issues surrounding Book of Mormon historicity and translation, Thomas also devotes attention to other Joseph Smith translation projects that he thinks likewise complicate the “standard story.” Once again, though, all Thomas really accomplishes is to give a megaphone to critics of Mormonism while essentially ignoring those who have spoken in Joseph Smith’s defense. Thomas thus wades into the issues surrounding the Book of Abraham and the Joseph Smith Papyri (403–5). After summarizing the controversy, Thomas simply concludes with a quotation from Richard Bushman to the effect that some Mormons have suffered a faith crisis because of this issue,<sup>19</sup> topped off with a citation to Robert Ritner, a vocal antagonist of Joseph Smith.<sup>20</sup> *Not once* in this section does Thomas even mention

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17 Givens, *The Book of Mormon*, 118.

18 See Ugo A. Perego, “The Book of Mormon and the Origin of Native Americans from a Maternally Inherited DNA Standpoint,” in *No Weapon Shall Prosper: New Light on Sensitive Issues*, ed. Robert L. Millet (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2011), 171–217; Ugo Perego and Jayne E. Ekins, “Is Decrypting the Genetic Legacy of America’s Indigenous Populations Key to the Historicity of the Book of Mormon?” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 12 (2014): 237–79; John M. Butler, “A Few Thoughts from a Believing DNA Scientist,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 1 (2003): 36–37; “Addressing Questions surrounding the Book of Mormon and DNA Research,” *FARMS Review* 18, no. 1 (2006): 101–8; Michael F. Whiting, “DNA and the Book of Mormon: A Phylogenetic Perspective,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 1 (2003): 24–35, 115–16; David A. McClellan, “Detecting Lehi’s Genetic Signature: Possible, Probable, or Not?” *FARMS Review* 15, no. 2 (2003): 35–90.

19 Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage, 2007), 291.

20 Robert K. Ritner, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2013).

in passing the work of Hugh Nibley,<sup>21</sup> John Gee,<sup>22</sup> Kerry Muhlestein,<sup>23</sup> Brian Hauglid,<sup>24</sup> and others who have written on the Book of Abraham from a faithful perspective. Reading Thomas's treatment, it's as if an apologetic response to the Book of Abraham controversy from believing Latter-day Saint scholars doesn't even exist!

There are many more problematic aspects of this part of the book that I could talk about, but these few examples should suffice. This section of *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon* was completely disappointing. So disappointing, in fact, that I'm tempted to advise readers to skip it altogether. To be fair, Thomas does acknowledge up front that it is not his intention once and for all to settle the matter of Book of Mormon historicity. Nor, as I mentioned, is he coming from a place of malice. "As any one familiar with the literature knows, this chapter merely scratches the surface of this issue," Thomas admits. "It should also be observed that not all of these complications are of equal weight nor are they equally problematic for the standard story of origins" (429–30). I thus was not at all expecting Thomas to act as some sort of final arbiter on the issue of Book of Mormon historicity, as he specifically disclaimed such a position himself (430).

Also to be fair to Thomas, he does give a cursory plug for the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies after describing issues facing the Book of Mormon's historicity (431–34). I suppose, then, that his section detailing the "complications to the standard story" is meant to be something of a legal brief and not so much a discussion of both sides of the issue. Nevertheless, I still would like to have seen Thomas give more attention to the Mormon responses to these complications, if

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21 As with his work on the Book of Mormon, Nibley's massive collection of work on the Book of Abraham can found on the Neal A. Maxwell Institute's website, online at <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/people/hugh-nibley/>.

22 Much of Gee's research can be found online at the Neal A. Maxwell Institute's website, online at <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/people/john-gee/>.

23 Kerry Muhlestein, "The Book of Breathings in Its Place," *FARMS Review* 17, no. 2 (2005): 471–86; "Egyptian Papyri and the Book of Abraham: A Faithful, Egyptological Point of View," in *No Weapon Shall Prosper: New Light on Sensitive Issues*, ed. Robert L. Millet (Provo and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University and Deseret Book, 2011), 217–43; "The Religious and Cultural Background of Joseph Smith Papyrus I," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22, no. 1 (2013): 20–33.

24 Brian M. Hauglid, "Thoughts on the Book of Abraham," in *No Weapon Shall Prosper: New Light on Sensitive Issues*, ed. Robert L. Millet (Provo and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University and Deseret Book, 2011), 245–58.

only to maintain the spirit of fairness he had cultivated throughout the rest of his book. After all, Thomas had handled the Book of Mormon in such a relatively intelligent and respectful manner for a non-Mormon that I was hoping his discussion of historicity would be as engaging and evenhanded as it had heretofore been for the rest of the Book of Mormon. I was, however, greatly disappointed in this regard.

### Conclusion

My issues with the book notwithstanding, I would still recommend *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon*. The book is an encouraging sign of wider Book of Mormon readership and broader participation in the scholarly discussion. Whatever one ultimately thinks of the quality of Thomas's contribution, *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon* deserves credit at least in these two regards. Thomas has also set an excellent example of how non-Mormon Christians should seriously interact with the Book of Mormon from the perspective of their own faith tradition. Hopefully we will soon see more titles such as *A Catholic Reads the Book of Mormon* or *An Episcopalian Reads the Book of Mormon* and fewer titles such as *Behind the Mask of Mormonism: From Its Early Schemes to Its Modern Deceptions* or *Unveiling Grace: The Story of How We Found Our Way out of the Mormon Church* from Christian authors.<sup>25</sup>

Thomas set out to “acquaint readers for whom [the Book of Mormon] does not function as Scripture with the book, readers who desire to know more about the book but prefer an approach that is not overly apologetic for or against the book and its claims.” He also had the goal to help readers “for whom the book functions as Scripture ... gain some insight into the book they treasure, insights that result from a reading that comes outside their tradition” (448). Even with some weaknesses in mind, I think Thomas largely succeeded in this laudable endeavor.

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25 John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Behind the Mask of Mormonism: From Its Early Schemes to Its Modern Deceptions* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1992); Lynn K. Wilder, *Unveiling Grace: The Story of How We Found Our Way out of the Mormon Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013).



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# “WITH THE TONGUE OF ANGELS”: ANGELIC SPEECH AS A FORM OF DEIFICATION<sup>1</sup>

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Neal Rappleye

*Abstract: The “tongue of angels” has long been a point of interest to Latter-day Saints, who wonder whether it really is as simple as speaking under the influence of the Spirit or if it might mean something more. Drawing on the structure of Nephi’s record and the interactions with angels that Nephi recorded, we learn that this notion of speaking with the tongue of angels has connections with ancient Israelite temple worship and the divine council. Nephi places the act of speaking with the tongue of angels at the culmination of a literary ascent, where one must pass through a gate (baptism) and by a gatekeeper (the Holy Ghost). This progression makes rich allusions to imagery in the visions of Lehi, Nephi, and Isaiah, where these prophets were brought into the presence of the Lord, stood in the divine council, and were commissioned to declare the words of the Lord. Nephi’s carefully crafted narrative teaches that all are both invited and commanded to follow the path that leads to entrance into the Lord’s presence, and ultimately grants membership into the heavenly assembly.*

Toward the end of his record, Nephi introduces the notion of “speak[ing] with the tongue of angels” (2 Nephi 31:13–14; 32:2–3).

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1 The core idea behind this paper first appeared in a KnoWhy by Book of Mormon Central on March 23, 2016. See Book of Mormon Central, “What is It to Speak with the Tongue of Angels? (2 Nephi 32:2),” *KnoWhy* 60 (March 23, 2016), online at <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/what-is-it-to-speak-with-the-tongue-of-angels> (accessed July 24, 2016). When I wrote the initial draft for the KnoWhy, I knew there was much more that could be said on the topic, and started drafting what became this paper. I would like to thank David J. Larsen for discussing several of the ideas in this paper with me as I was doing research on the topic. Jasmin Gimenez and Stephen Smoot also gave feedback on an earlier draft, which substantively helped improve the quality of this paper.

As Nephi explains it, after receiving the ordinances and principles of the gospel (see Articles of Faith 1:4), “then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.” Indeed, you “can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels” (2 Nephi 31:13–14). What it means to *speak with the tongue of angels* is not entirely clear. It seems that Nephi’s own people were perplexed by this because when he takes up the matter again, he writes:

And now, behold, my beloved brethren, I suppose that ye ponder somewhat in your hearts concerning that which ye should do after ye have entered in by the way. But, behold, why do ye ponder these things in your hearts? Do ye not remember that I said unto you that after ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? And now, how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost? Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ. (2 Nephi 32:1–3)

From this, most Latter-day Saint commentators have gathered that speaking with the *tongue of angels* is to have the Holy Ghost with you, giving you the words to say, and hence, “speak[ing] the words of Christ.” In short, angels declare the words of Christ, and thus speaking “with the tongue of angels” is likewise to proclaim the words of Christ.<sup>2</sup> While this interpretation resonates well with modern readers, the phrase may have a more nuanced meaning in ancient Israelite theology. If one takes 1 and 2 Nephi as progressing through the Nephite temple narrative, the phrase *speaking with the tongue of angels* may represent breaching the veil to

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2 See Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987–1992), 1:369–70; Robert L. Millet, “Tongue of Angels,” in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 757–58; Ed J. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen, *Commentaries and Insights on the Book of Mormon*, 2 vols. (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2007), 1:243–44; Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007–2008), 2:451–52; D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, *Verse by Verse: The Book of Mormon*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 1:251–52; Thomas R. Valletta, *The Book of Mormon Study Guide: Start to Finish* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015), 207; Kathryn Jenkins Gordon, *Scripture Study Made Simple: The Book of Mormon — Complete Text and Commentary in a Single Volume* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2015), 127.

enter into the Lord's presence, becoming divine, and thereby joining the divine council.

### Nephi and the Temple

Events leading up to the time when Nephi makes his small plates, provide important background and context for the record Nephi creates.<sup>3</sup> Just before Nephi began his record, he and his people built a temple (see 2 Nephi 5:16). The temporal proximity of the building of the temple and the beginning of Nephi's record suggests that Nephi's record of "the more sacred things" (1 Nephi 19:5) may have been made in connection with the newly built temple (see 2 Nephi 5:28–32).<sup>4</sup>

This connection appears to be evident in the first few verses of 1 Nephi 1. Hugh Nibley noticed that Nephi begins with a colophon, introducing himself and his reasons for making his record.<sup>5</sup> Nephi's colophon mentions "the *mysteries* of God" (1 Nephi 1:1). The term *mystery* comes from the Greek μύστηριον (*mystērion*), and commonly referred to initiation rites connected to temples or sacred space in antiquity.<sup>6</sup> Though generally associated with Greco-Roman religion, similar concepts and practices are found in the Judeo-Christian tradition.<sup>7</sup> The Israelite roots are very ancient indeed. Late Catholic biblical scholar Raymond E. Brown noted, "The connection of the prophets with mysteries dates back to the role

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3 See John W. Welch, "When Did Nephi Write the Small Plates?" in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 75–77.

4 See Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2016), 47.

5 Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert/The World of the Jaredites/There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City/Provo, UT: Deseret Book/FARMS, 1988), 17–18.

6 See Herodotus, *The Histories*, 2.51; Euripides, *The Suppliants*, 173; Plato, *Meno*, 76e; Andocides, *On the Mysteries*, 1.11; Lysias, *Against Alcibiades*, 14.42; Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 6.28. I appreciate Jasmin Gimenez for providing these references to the primary sources.

7 See Raymond E. Brown, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (I)," *Biblica* 39/4 (1958): 426–448; Raymond E. Brown, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (II)," *Biblica* 40/1 (1959): 70–87; Andrew I. Miller, "'Able to Know Heavenly Things': The Ante-Nicene Mysteries and their New Testament Sources," *FairMormon Papers and Reviews* 2 (2015); David J. Larsen, "Angels among Us: The Use of Old Testament Passages as Inspiration for Temple Themes in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 5 (2013): 91–110.

of the prophet as witness in the heavenly *sôd* where he heard the secret counsels of God and conveyed them to men.”<sup>8</sup>

Nephi says he “had a great knowledge ... of the mysteries of God.” The very next statement from Nephi is “*therefore*, I make a record of my proceedings in my days” (1 Nephi 1:1, emphasis added), meaning that his knowledge of the *mysteries* is Nephi’s justification for making a record. This is reinforced by the chiasmic structure of 1 Nephi 1:1–3, as identified by Donald W. Parry.<sup>9</sup>

I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days;

A    yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God,

B    therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.

C    Yea, I make a record in the language of my father,

D    which consists of the learning of the Jews

C’   and the language of the Egyptians.

B’   And I know that the record which I make is true: and I make it with mine own hand:

A’   and I make it according to my knowledge. (1 Nephi 1:1–3)

In the chiasmic structure, Nephi’s *knowledge* of the mysteries is paired with the *knowledge* by which he makes his record. This suggests that his knowledge of the mysteries *is* the knowledge by which he makes his record.

8 Brown, “The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (I),” 448.

9 See Donald W. Parry, *Poetic Parallelism in the Book of Mormon: The Complete Text Reformatted* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2007), 1.

In that light, Hugh Nibley has commented that in some ancient cults, after going through the initiation (i.e., “the mysteries”) the initiate was required to record their experiences.<sup>10</sup> The final line of 1 Nephi 1:1 even bears a striking resemblance to the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead — understood by some to be a temple text.<sup>11</sup>

The temple, then, seems to be at the heart of Nephi’s small plates project — a record that is supposed to consist of “the more sacred things” (1 Nephi 19:5). According to theologian Joseph M. Spencer, this manifests itself in how Nephi structured his account.

These structural divisions order Nephi’s record as a four-part progression, from (1) the journey to the New World (1 Nephi 1–18) through (2) a series of theological sermons (1 Nephi 19–2 Nephi 5) to (3) the culminating, commanded heart of Nephi’s record (2 Nephi 6–30) and (4) a brief conclusion (2 Nephi 31–33).<sup>12</sup>

Having identified the four-part progression, Spencer then identifies the theological pattern embedded within this structure.

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10 Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon: Transcripts of Lectures Presented to an Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University*, 1988–1990, 4 vols. (American Fork and Provo, UT: Covenant Communications and FARMS, 1993), 1:2: “At the end of the mysteries, you were required to record this before you could leave the cave, or the temple or whatever it was. You would leave a record of your experiences in the mysteries — whatever visions it was you had.”

11 Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 64n11: “In a vein still more speculative than the one followed above, one might moreover suggest that Nephi — given his Egyptian connections — makes an allusion with the last line of 1 Nephi 1:1 to the temple text of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the title of which — *rhw nw prt m hrw* — can be translated as ‘the book (or record) of going forth (proceeding) by day.’” For the Book of the Dead as a temple text, see John Gee, “The Use of the Daily Temple Liturgy in the Book of the Dead,” in *Totenbuch — Forschungen: Gesammelte Beiträge des 2. Internationalen Totenbuch — Symposiums 2005*, ed. Burkhard Backes, Irmtraut Munro, and Simone Stöhr (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 73–86; Alexandra Von Lieven, “Book of the Dead, Book of the Living: BD Spells as Temple Texts,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 98 (2012): 249–67. I appreciate Stephen Smoot bringing these to my attention. Also see Stephen O. Smoot and Quinten Barney, “The Book of the Dead as a Temple Text and the Implications for the Book of Abraham,” in *The Temple: Ancient and Restored, Proceedings of the Interpreter Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference, 25 October 2014*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry (Orem, UT and Salt Lake City: Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2016), 183–209.

12 Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 36.

The basic theological pattern at work is relatively straightforward: (1) 1 Nephi 1–18 recounts the founding of the Lehite colony in the New World; (2) 1 Nephi 19–2 Nephi 5 relates the breaking up of this colony into two rival factions, one of which is cut off from the presence of the Lord; (3) 2 Nephi 6–30 consists of prophecies and sermons focused on the eventual return of that cut-off faction to the Lord's favor; and (4) 2 Nephi 31–33 offers summary reflections on baptism as a crossing of a limit.<sup>13</sup>

From here, Spencer categorizes the four sections as Foundation (1 Nephi 1–18); Division (1 Nephi 19–2 Nephi 5); Redemption (2 Nephi 6–30); and Conclusion (2 Nephi 31–33).<sup>14</sup> Using only a little imagination, Spencer quickly recasts these categories as follows:

- Creation (1 Nephi 1–18)
- Fall (1 Nephi 19–2 Nephi 5)
- Atonement (2 Nephi 6–30)
- Veil (2 Nephi 31–33)<sup>15</sup>

This pattern bears a striking resemblance to ancient Israelite temple theology, as outlined by Margaret Barker.<sup>16</sup>

The temple background is important for understanding what it means to *speak with the tongue of angels*. Specifically, it is important that all instances of *speak with the tongue of angels* appear in the section Spencer classifies as “veil.”

The last three chapters of Second Nephi are saturated with the theme of the veil. After a few introductory words, Nephi speaks of baptism as “the gate by which ye should enter” (2 Nephi 31:17), associating passage through the gate with

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13 Ibid., 41–42.

14 Ibid., 42.

15 Ibid., 42.

16 See Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London, UK: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004). Spencer notes, “I had been working with the creation/fall/atonement/veil interpretation of Nephi’s record for several years before I came across Margaret Barker’s work for the first time.” (Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 65, n.19.). While I acknowledge that some scholars disagree with Spencer’s structural analysis, and others have proposed different organizational structures for the text, Spencer’s will be used for the purposes of this paper.



passage through the veil of the Old Testament temple — something indicated when he describes those who pass through the gate as able to “speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises to the Holy One of Israel” (31:13). The holy of holies in the Old Testament temple was, according to ancient Israelite belief, the dwelling place, precisely, of the angels.<sup>17</sup>

The procession toward the temple was an ascent (see Psalm 24:3),<sup>18</sup> and the tripartite division of the tabernacle, and later temple, was seen as analogous to ascending Mount Sinai — with the holy of holies being the summit.<sup>19</sup> In the end, you passed through the veil, where you ascended to heaven to join God and the angels (i.e., the divine council).

### The Temple and the Divine Council

In recent decades, biblical scholars have come to understand that ancient Israelite religion was not strictly monotheistic. God — or the “most high God” — was not the only divine being but rather the supreme divine being, ruling over a council of other divinities.<sup>20</sup> The members of the divine council are called (in English), variously, *the hosts of heaven, gods, sons of the Most High, sons of God, the heavens, morning stars, and angels*.<sup>21</sup>

In Hebrew, the council is commonly referred to as *סֹד* (*sôd*), which is also used to refer to its *counsel* or secrets (as in Amos 3:7 in the KJV). The

17 Spencer, *An Other Testament*, .

18 David J. Larsen, “Ascending into the Hill of the Lord: What the Psalms Can Tell Us about the Rituals of the First Temple,” in *Ancient Temple Worship: Proceedings of the Expound Symposium 14 May 2011*, ed. Matthew B. Brown, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen D. Ricks, and John S. Thompson (Orem, UT and Salt Lake City: Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014), 174–75.

19 See L. Michael Morales, “The Tabernacle: Mountain of God in the Israelite Cultus,” in *Ancient Temple Worship*, 27–70.

20 For useful discussions by Latter-day Saints of the divine council, see Daniel C. Peterson, “‘Ye Are Gods’: Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witness to the Divine Nature of Humankind,” in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Daniel C. Peterson (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 471–594; David E. Bokovoy, “‘Ye Really Are Gods’: A Response to Michael Heiser concerning the LDS Use of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John,” *FARMS Review* 19/1 (2007): 267–313; Daniel O. McClellan, “Psalm 82 in Contemporary Latter-day Saint Tradition,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 15 (2015): 79–96.

21 See Stephen O. Smoot, “The Divine Council in the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon,” *Studia Antiqua* 12/2 (Fall 2013): 5–6. Smoot provides the Hebrew and scripture citations.

Hebrew *sôd* was connected to the Greek *mystērion* by both Christians and Jews,<sup>22</sup> hinting at its connection with the ancient temple. The meeting place of the heavenly council was the heavenly temple, of which the temple on earth was a replica, and temple rituals were considered a dramatic reenactment of the divine council.<sup>23</sup> “In short,” explains Joseph Spencer, “the temple is where human beings are inducted into the divine council.”<sup>24</sup> Such an induction came from passing through the veil.

### Nephi and the Divine Council

This divine council manifests itself throughout both the Bible and the Book of Mormon.<sup>25</sup> “Following a lucid biblical pattern,” writes Stephen O. Smoot, “the Book of Mormon provides a depiction of the divine council and several examples of those who were introduced into the heavenly assembly and made partakers in divine secrets.”<sup>26</sup> Within Nephi’s record alone is no less than three visions of the divine council: Lehi’s, Nephi’s, and Isaiah’s.

### Lehi’s Prophetic Call

John W. Welch has noted that Nephi appropriately makes the significant connection between the *mysteries* (*sôd*) and his father’s vision of the heavenly assembly (*sôd*) (see 1 Nephi 2:16; cf. 1:8).<sup>27</sup> As Smoot explained,

Nephi begins his account by describing the prophetic commission of his father Lehi. Embedded within his account

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22 See David J. Larsen, “Mysteries,” Book of Mormon Central — Notes, online at <http://www.notes.bookofmormoncentral.org/Mysteries> (accessed February 27, 2016); John W. Welch, “Lehi’s Council Vision and the Mysteries of God,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: A Decade of New Research*, John W. Welch, ed. (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), 24–25. Also see Brown, “The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (I),” 426–448; Brown, “The Semitic Background of the New Testament Mysterion (II),” 70–87.

23 See William J. Hamblin, “The Sôd of YHWH and the Endowment,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 147–154.

24 Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 51.

25 Smoot, “The Divine Council,” 1–18.

26 *Ibid.*, 2.

27 Welch, “Lehi’s Council Vision and the Mysteries of God,” 24–25: “it is remarkable yet understandable that when Nephi described his desire to receive a personal confirmation of the truth of his father’s words, he said that he wanted to ‘know of the mysteries of God.’ Those ‘mysteries’ (*sod*) were apparently synonymous, in Nephi’s inquiring mind, with the decrees and knowledge that Lehi had received in the council (also *sod*).”

is specific language indicating that Lehi followed the example of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible who also received Yahweh's *šôd* [šôd].<sup>28</sup>

The specific language Smoot is referring to is found in 1 Nephi 1:8:

And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, *surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.* (Emphasis added)

Joseph Spencer notes, "Lehi at first sees this whole scene from a distance, but one of the angelic figures brings him a book, and then, it seems, inducts him into the chorus of angels around the throne."<sup>29</sup> Spencer's inference stems from Lehi's reaction to his vision:

Great and marvelous are thy works,  
O Lord God Almighty!  
Thy throne is high in the heavens.  
  
And thy power, and goodness, and mercy  
Are over all the inhabitation of the earth;  
  
And, because thou art merciful,  
Thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee  
That they shall perish! (1 Nephi 1:14)<sup>30</sup>

John W. Welch pointed out that these "words seem to reflect poetic composition similar to exaltations of God's controlling power and wisdom found in ancient Near Eastern literature," and thus, "it may have been that Lehi, too, sang his words of praise, like other hymns or psalms of praise in his day were sung."<sup>31</sup> This leads Welch to conclude, "He spontaneously and eloquently joined the heavenly host in praising God. By so doing he functionally, if not constitutionally, joined the council as one of its members."<sup>32</sup>

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28 Smoot, "The Divine Council," 11.

29 Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 51.

30 Structure and punctuation taken from John W. Welch, "The Calling of Lehi as a Prophet in the World of Jerusalem," in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 433.

31 Welch, "The Calling of Lehi," 432–33.

32 Ibid., 432.

Latter-day Saint biblical scholar David E. Bokovoy likewise made this connection:

Following his interaction with the council mediator, Jesus Christ, Lehi could perform the very same act identified with the “numberless concourses of angels” (1 Nephi 1:8). Given the way biblical prophets like Isaiah were seen as official members of the council, Nephi’s account may suggest that Lehi had become one of these angels, or messengers, praising God. ... Lehi fulfills the assignment specifically given the *ṣabaʾ*, or “host,” in Psalm 103:20–21 to “praise/bless” the Lord. ... Lehi appears to have become a fully inducted member of the *malʾakim* to bear witness of the Book of Mormon’s great dual focus.<sup>33</sup>

In becoming a member of the divine council, Lehi is now an authorized messenger, commissioned “to prophesy and to declare” all “the things which he had both seen and heard” (1 Nephi 1:18). He can now speak the decrees of the council.

### Nephi’s Vision

Without question, Nephi’s understanding of *speaking with the tongue of angels* must have been informed by his personal experience conversing and interacting with an angel in 1 Nephi 11–14. Nephi is “caught away in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an exceedingly high mountain” (1 Nephi 11:1) where he is first interviewed by the Spirit before conversing with an angel (1 Nephi 11:1–7).

Bokovoy has argued that Nephi’s encounter with the Spirit of the Lord has a number of motifs associated with the divine council visions.<sup>34</sup> Specifically, “the prophet’s reference to an ‘exceedingly high mountain’ suggests that the Spirit of the Lord brought Nephi to the heavenly temple, the traditional meeting place of God’s divine assembly.”<sup>35</sup> Bokovoy goes on to explain:

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33 David E. Bokovoy, “On Christ and Covenants: An LDS Reading of Isaiah’s Prophetic Call,” *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 3 (2011): 38–39.

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

35 Bokovoy, “‘Thou Knowest That I Believe,’” 3.

Though the Book of Mormon does not specify the reason that Nephi was brought to the location of the divine council or heavenly temple, a careful reading of the account suggests that as a representative of the assembly, the Spirit of the Lord assumed the customary role of council witness, meaning one who could offer testimony in a legal setting.<sup>36</sup>

There, in the meeting place of the divine council, the Spirit questions Nephi. Bokovoy explains: “This exchange may have served a profound purpose reflecting the common Near Eastern motif of invoking members of the heavenly host as council witnesses who could testify of human righteousness.”<sup>37</sup> After Nephi declares this testimony, and thus proves his worthiness, the Spirit of the Lord sings a hymn of praise:

Hosanna to the Lord,  
the most high God;  
for he is God over all the earth,  
yea, even above all. (1 Nephi 11:6)

As Bokovoy points out, this is one of only seven times in which the Book of Mormon uses the title “most high God.”<sup>38</sup> This is significant because this is “one of the traditional biblical terms for the head God of the divine assembly.”<sup>39</sup> As has already been pointed out, the act of singing praises unto God is a common function of the heavenly hosts. Since such praises are usually given in the presence of the most high God, whilst he sits on his throne, this — like the location upon a high mountain — implies that they are in the presence of the Lord, before the heavenly court.

The implication is also made when Nephi prefaces the vision with the phrase, “I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might *see*, and *hear*” (1 Nephi 10:17), and he uses the similar phrase “the things which I *saw* and *heard*” toward the end of his vision (1 Nephi 14:28). Bokovoy explains:

Ancient Israel witnessed its fair share of false prophets who feigned divine authority with their predictions. Hence Lehi’s

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36 Ibid., 7.

37 Ibid., 11.

38 The others are 1 Nephi 11:6 (a second time); 2 Nephi 24:14 (quoting Isaiah); Alma 26:14; 3 Nephi 4:32 (2x); 11:17. Bokovoy mistakenly includes Jacob 2:13 in his list of references. See Bokovoy, “‘Thou Knowest That I Believe,’” 6.

39 Bokovoy, “‘Thou Knowest That I Believe,’” 6.

biblical contemporary, the prophet Jeremiah, specifically identified a true messenger as one who had “perceived and heard [God’s] word” (Jeremiah 23:18). In Jeremiah 23:18, “perceived” is the King James translation for the Hebrew verb *ra’ah*, which means, in its most basic sense, “to see.” Therefore, according to the stipulations provided by Jeremiah, a true prophet had both *seen* and *heard* God’s word.<sup>40</sup>

Jeremiah specifically asks, “For who hath stood in the counsel [*sôd*] of the Lord, and hath perceived [*ra’ah*] and heard his word?” So *seeing* and *hearing* is connected to the divine council. Kevin L. Tolley, a Hebrew Bible PhD candidate at Claremont, explains:

This veiled reference, “saw and heard,” becomes a credential for being a spokesman or messenger of the council of Jehovah. The implication of the phrase is that one has seen the divine council and heard the decrees thereof. A person who claims to have “seen and heard” can be identified as a legitimate representative of Jehovah without going into detail concerning the sacred nature of his experience. The concept of a prophet justifying his claim to divine authority is reduced to what he has “seen and heard.”<sup>41</sup>

Bokovoy goes on to point out that Nephi appropriately places emphasis on the fact that Lehi had both *seen* and *heard* the divine council (1 Nephi 1:6, 18–19).<sup>42</sup> Nephi’s use of the phrase at both the beginning and the end of his vision effectively serves as a shorthand to indicate that in the course of the vision, he had stood in the divine council. As Tolley explains, Nephi “solidifies his own prophetic status as one who ‘saw and heard,’ standing shoulder to shoulder with his father and Jeremiah.”<sup>43</sup>

The presence of the divine assembly is also implied by the fact that the Spirit bears witness of Nephi’s righteousness (1 Nephi 11:6). If the Spirit is acting as a council witness, it only makes sense that he stands before the council when he bears testimony of Nephi’s worthiness.

Returning to the sequence of the vision, what happens next is crucial to understanding Nephi’s teaching about the tongue of angels. “By

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40 David E. Bokovoy, “The Bible vs. the Book of Mormon: Still Losing the Battle,” *FARMS Review* 18/1 (2006): 8.

41 Kevin L. Tolley, “To ‘See and Hear,’” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 142–43.

42 Bokovoy, “The Bible vs. the Book of Mormon,” 8.

43 Tolley, “To ‘See and Hear,’” 147.

presenting Nephi with an opportunity to officially declare his testimony,” wrote Bokovoy, “the Spirit of the Lord could, from a Near Eastern perspective, function as a divine witness *concerning Nephi’s worthiness to be introduced to further revelatory knowledge*.”<sup>44</sup> As the witness to the council of Nephi’s righteousness, the Spirit of the Lord is the one who has power to grant Nephi access to the heavenly assembly and the greater knowledge it can impart. And he does exactly that, declaring, “Wherefore, thou shalt behold the things which thou hast desired” (1 Nephi 11:6). Nephi is, in effect, passing through the veil. He now begins to see visions and converses with one of the heavenly host.

Nephi’s experience speaking with an angel, then, comes only after he is questioned by the Spirit of the Lord, and found worthy of revelatory knowledge from the divine assembly, being granted access by the Holy Spirit.

### Isaiah’s Prophetic Call

Nephi took care to not only record his and his father’s visions, he also copied Isaiah’s vision of the divine council into his record (see 2 Nephi 16). While in the temple, Isaiah saw “the Lord sitting upon a throne, high, and lifted up” (2 Nephi 16:1; Isaiah 6:1), surrounded by heavenly hosts (seraphim, in this instance), singing praises to the Lord (2 Nephi 16:2–3; Isaiah 6:2–3).

Of specific interest to the topic at hand is that Isaiah’s induction into the council involves the purification of his *lips*. The Hebrew here is שפה (*šāpāh*), which is sometimes used, as here, as a metaphor for language/speech. Isaiah is concerned because he has “unclean lips,” then a seraph comes and places a hot coal against his lips, which purifies him. After that, Isaiah is able to participate in the council, and thus volunteers to be sent by the council (see 2 Nephi 16:5–8; Isaiah 6:5–8). Isaiah’s commission is, “Go and *tell* this people — Hear ye indeed, but they understood not; and see ye indeed, but they perceived not” (2 Nephi 16:9; Isaiah 6:9). Bokovoy observes, “through a mouth-cleansing ritual at the altar, Isaiah received a divine status as one fully capable of participating in God’s council and eventually of speaking his message.”<sup>45</sup>

### Nephi’s Contemporaries: Jeremiah and Ezekiel

44 Bokovoy, “‘Thou Knowest That I Believe,’” 11, emphasis added.

45 Bokovoy, “On Christ and Covenants,” 35.

Bokovoy has pointed out that Isaiah is *not* the only one to make an association between the mouth and becoming a member of the divine council. “Each book of the Major Prophets contains examples of the symbolic use of the mouth as an allusion to prophetic participation in the divine council.”<sup>46</sup> As part of Jeremiah’s prophetic call, “Then the Lord put forth his hand, and *touched my mouth*. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, *I have put my words in thy mouth*” (Jeremiah 1:9). Here it is made explicit that because of the ritual involving the prophet’s mouth, the prophet can speak the words of the Lord.

Ezekiel’s experience is a little different but still interesting in light of Nephi’s teaching on *speaking with the tongue of angels*. Ezekiel 1–3 describes an elaborate vision of the Lord on his throne, accompanied by other divine beings. The Lord converses with Ezekiel, and tells him, “open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee” (Ezekiel 2:8). Ezekiel is then given a book, and again commanded, “eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go *speak* unto the house of Israel” (Ezekiel 3:1). So, he eats the book (or roll), and the Lord tells him that now he can “speak with my words unto them” (Ezekiel 3:4). So Ezekiel is empowered to speak the words of the Lord by actually *eating them* first.

### Passing through the Veil: Angelic Speech and Deification

When Nephi first introduces the notion of *speaking with the tongue of angels*, he does so with a literary form called *progression parallelism* or sometimes *staircase parallelism*. This form gives the reader a sense of progressing forward or ascending upward until reaching a pinnacle or culmination of thought.<sup>47</sup> *Speaking with the tongue of angels* is at the pinnacle of the progression that Nephi sets out twice, paired together as an extended alternate, in 2 Nephi 31:13–14.<sup>48</sup>

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46 Ibid., 34.

47 See Parry, *Poetic Parallelism*, xxviii–xxix for explanation of progression parallelism.

48 Ibid., 127.



Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent,

A repenting of your sins,

B witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ,

C by baptism — yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost,

D yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost;

E and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.

But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying:

A After ye have repented of your sins,

B and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments,

C by the baptism of water,

D and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost,

E and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me.

Nephi unexpectedly positions *speaking with the tongue of angels* at the pinnacle of a literary ascension, which involves passing through a “gate” and being purged of sin by a fiery being (see 2 Nephi 31:17). Although this overall progression is a familiar one, we expect enduring to the end and receiving salvation to come at the top of the ascent. When

using 2 Nephi 31 to illustrate the Nephite Gospel,<sup>49</sup> Noel B. Reynolds completely removes *speaking with the tongue of angels* from Nephi's formulation. Instead, he jumps to 2 Nephi 31:15, which reads: "And I heard a voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

A careful reading here reveals at least two things. First, that the Father is *not* speaking to *add* anything to the Son's words (in 2 Nephi 31:14) but rather to *reaffirm* what the Son has already said. Second, that the Son never actually mentions enduring to the end or being saved. The progressive structure of 2 Nephi 31:14 (the words of the Son) would suggest that *enduring to the end* is continuing the ascent until you reach the pinnacle, and being *saved* is arriving at that culminating point. Hence, *speaking with the tongue of angels* is in some sense represents being saved.

Joseph Spencer illuminates this connection by lining up 2 Nephi 31:13 with 1 Nephi 1:8,<sup>50</sup> from Lehi's vision of the divine council. Spencer writes, "Nephi's record opens by displaying what *can* happen to the righteous and Lehi's induction into the heavenly council serves as a model."<sup>51</sup>

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49 Noel B. Reynolds, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ as Taught by the Nephite Prophets," *BYU Studies* 31/3 (Summer 1991): 31–50.

50 Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 52.

51 *Ibid.*, 51.

2 Nephi 31:13	1 Nephi 1:8
Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism — yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye <i>speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.</i>	And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with <i>numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.</i>

Remember that singing and praising the Lord is a function of the divine council. Lehi joins the angels in singing praises to God on his throne (1 Nephi 1:14). The Spirit sings praises to the “Most High” when he inducts Nephi into the council (1 Nephi 11:6), and in Isaiah, fiery beings sing praises to the Lord (2 Nephi 16:2–3; Isaiah 6:2–3). Speaking with the tongue of angels means *doing as the angels do* — “shout[ing] praises unto the Holy One of Israel.” Hence, Spencer explains, “Nephi offers in 2 Nephi 31 a promise that the obedient can, as Lehi had done, *join the angelic council* to sing and shout praises.”<sup>52</sup>

This same concept can be found in ritual practice of Jews and early Christians. David J. Larsen found that in the liturgical texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls, members of the community were “enabled to participate in the heavenly vision and praise God together with the angels, often singing or shouting for joy; some texts suggest that they may have been subsequently clothed with heavenly robes in imitation of the heavenly beings.”<sup>53</sup> This can be seen in 4Q403 1, i (“Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice”), where it says, “Sing (or chant) with joy, you who rejoice with rejoicing among the wondrous godlike beings. And chant (or recount) His glory with the tongue of all who chant with knowledge; and [recount] his wonderful songs of joy.”<sup>54</sup> Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150–215), an important early Christian writer, also tied singing with the angels with

52 Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 52.

53 Larsen, “Angels Among Us,” 92.

54 As cited in Larsen, “Angels Among Us,” 107.

initiation into the mysteries. “If it is thy wish, be thou also initiated; and thou shall join the choir along with angels around the unbegotten and indestructible and the only true God, the Word of God, raising the hymn with us.”<sup>55</sup>

Spencer calls this *angelicization*, i.e., becoming an angel. The term is synonymous with *deification*, or becoming a god. In Latter-day Saint nomenclature, it is called *exaltation*, or being saved in the truest sense of the word.

This connection between *speaking with the tongue of angels* and actually becoming angelic/divine is strengthened by role that the Holy Ghost plays in 2 Nephi 31–32. Baptism by water is the gate (2 Nephi 31:17), while the Holy Ghost is the *gatekeeper*. Nephi’s direct experience teaches that “the Spirit of the Lord” proves ones’ worthiness to enter into the presence of the Lord and converse with angels (1 Nephi 11:1–6). Thus, Nephi asks, “how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost?” (2 Nephi 32:2).

Significantly, Nephi repeatedly associates the Holy Ghost with *fire* (2 Nephi 31:13, 14, 17), and for Nephi it is the baptism of *fire*, rather than water, that cleanses sin (2 Nephi 31:17). This calls to mind the vision of Isaiah, which Nephi recorded, where a seraph — in Hebrew, שָׂרָפ (sārāp), literally meaning “fiery one” — purges Isaiah of his sins by placing a hot coal to his mouth (2 Nephi 16:6–7; Isaiah 6:6–7).<sup>56</sup> It may also be important that Lehi’s vision of the council was preceded by a “pillar of fire” (1 Nephi 1:6).

The symbolism of the mouth or lips potently representing the power to *speak* the words of the Lord also tie into Nephi’s understanding of the *tongue* of angels. When Isaiah’s lips are purged, he is then able to speak in the council and deliver its message (2 Nephi 16:8–9; Isaiah 6:8–9). When the Lord touches Jeremiah’s mouth, the Lord’s words are put in Jeremiah’s mouth for him to speak (see Jeremiah 1:9). Likewise, Nephi teaches that after being purged of sin by fire, we receive a “new tongue,” and can speak “with the tongue of angels” (2 Nephi 31:14). Angels, Nephi explains, “speak the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3). Lehi has no

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55 Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortations to the Heathen*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library (ccel.org), <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.vi.ii.xii.html> (accessed April 11, 2016).

56 Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 56 aligns the Holy Ghost/baptism of fire with the seraph/live coal both as “mediating elements” in a table comparing 2 Nephi 31, 1 Nephi 1, and Isaiah 6 but offers no commentary on the connection between the Holy Ghost as the baptism of fire and seraph as a “fiery” being.

interaction with the mouth, but he is given a book — also a common motif — by a figure commonly identified as Christ, reads the message in the book, and then is able to “declare” its message (1 Nephi 1:9–13, 18).<sup>57</sup>

Ezekiel brings together the mouth/speech symbolism with the heavenly book motif found in Lehi’s vision. Like Lehi, Ezekiel is given a book, but it is only by opening his mouth and eating the book that he is able to speak the words of the Lord (Ezekiel 2:8–3:4). In this light, it is interesting that Nephi says that in order to “press forward” toward “eternal life” (salvation and exaltation) we must do so while “feasting upon the word of Christ” (2 Nephi 31:20). This is then brought together with speaking with the tongue of angels when Nephi says, “Angels speak ... the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3). In order to speak with the tongue of angels, we must feast upon the words of Christ, just as Ezekiel did.

What is striking about all of this is the way these themes are worked into 2 Nephi 31–33 to illustrate that Nephi himself had been angelicized, to use Spencer’s term. As Nephi bids the reader farewell, he bears witness that he, himself, is a member of the divine council who speaks the words of Christ. First, Nephi subtly uses an extended alternate, setting his own words up as parallels to the words of Christ in 2 Nephi 31:13–14. Nephi bears his own witness, saying, “I know that if ye shall follow the Son” (2 Nephi 31:13). After going through points A–E, culminating with the tongue of angels, Nephi then says, “thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying” followed by a repeat of the same points (A–E) culminating in the tongue of angels. The effect of the parallelism is to signal that Nephi’s words *are* the words of Christ — and hence Nephi speaks (or writes) with the tongue of angels.

After again explaining that it is “by the power of the Holy Ghost” that angels speak (2 Nephi 32:3), Nephi tells us that his own speech is constrained by “the Spirit,” who “stoppeth mine utterance” (2 Nephi 32:7). Nephi then gets more explicit in 2 Nephi 33. Nephi says that he is “mighty” in speaking, because he “speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 33:1). Nephi then explicitly states that his words *are* the words of Christ.

And now, my beloved brethren, and also Jew, and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in

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57 On the heavenly book motif, see Brent E. McNeely, “The Book of Mormon and the Heavenly Book Motif,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 26–28.

Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should do good. And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye — for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, at the last day; and *you and I shall stand face to face before his bar; and ye shall know that I have been commanded of him to write these things*, notwithstanding my weakness. (2 Nephi 33:10–11)

By promising to stand “face to face” with the reader at the judgment bar, Nephi is placing himself directly in the council. The divine council functioned as a heavenly court, where divine judgment was rendered. Bokovoy specifically notes that “the God of ancient Israel ... could invoke his סֹד [sôd] to assist in the important process of rendering a divine judgment.”<sup>58</sup> As one biblical scholar put it, “[The sôd] is a vital decision-making agency responsible for juridical judgments directed both to divine beings and human beings.”<sup>59</sup> When we see Nephi at the judgment bar, we shall then know that his words were commanded by Christ because we will know he has been inducted into the heavenly council and hence a commissioned messenger of the Lord.

### Conclusion

The “tongue of angels” has long been a point of interest to Latter-day Saints, who wonder whether it really is as simple as speaking under the influence of the Spirit or if it might mean something more. Drawing on the structure of Nephi’s record, and the interactions with angels that Nephi recorded, we learn that this notion of *speaking with the tongue of angels* has connections with ancient Israelite temple worship and the divine council.

Nephi’s record taken as a temple text carries the reader through the progression of creation, fall, atonement, and entering the presence of the Lord through the veil. Nephi only discusses *speaking with the tongue of angels* in the final portion of the text, which represents passing through the veil (or “gate”) and coming into the Lord’s presence. There, Nephi places the act of *speaking with the tongue of angels* at the culmination of a literary ascent, where one must pass through a gate (baptism) and by

58 David E. Bokovoy, “שמעו והעידו בבית יעקב: Invoking the Council as Witnesses in Amos 3:13,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127/1 (2008): 51.

59 Min Suc Kee, “The Heavenly Council and its Type-scene,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31/3 (2007): 259.

a gatekeeper (the Holy Ghost). This progression makes rich allusions to imagery in the visions of Lehi, Nephi, and Isaiah, where these prophets were brought into the presence of the Lord, stood in the divine council, and were commissioned to declare the words of the Lord.

Here in these final chapters, Nephi makes it clear that he himself has stood in this council, has become one of the heavenly hosts, and now speaks with the tongue of angels. Nephi also makes it clear, however, that this is not merely the prerogative of the prophets. Nephi's carefully crafted narrative teaches that all are both *invited* and *commanded* to follow the path that leads to entrance into the Lord's presence, and ultimately grants membership into the heavenly assembly.

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