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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Looking Back, Almost Five Years On.....</i>	<i>vii</i>
--	------------

Daniel C. Peterson

<i>Deuteronomy 17:14–20 as Criteria for Book of Mormon Kingship.....</i>	<i>1</i>
--	----------

Taylor Halverson

<i>Meeting Zoram.....</i>	<i>11</i>
---------------------------	-----------

Collin Charles Russell

<i>Seers and Stones: The Translation of the Book of Mormon as Divine Visions of an Old-Time Seer.....</i>	<i>27</i>
---	-----------

Stan Spencer

<i>Bare Record: The Nephite Archivist, The Record of Records, and the Book of Mormon Provenance.....</i>	<i>99</i>
--	-----------

Anita Wells

<i>“By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified”: The Symbolic, Salvific, Interrelated, Additive, Retrospective, and Anticipatory Nature of the Ordinances of Spiritual Rebirth in John 3 and Moses 6.....</i>	<i>123</i>
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Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Matthew L. Bowen

LOOKING BACK, ALMOST FIVE YEARS ON

Daniel C. Peterson

Abstract: As the axiom states, hindsight is 20/20. As Volume 24 of Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture nears the press, it seems relevant to look back to a tumultuous time nearly five years ago when the Interpreter Foundation was visualized and launched. If history has any value at all (particularly recent history), it provides a context for understanding the course on which we find ourselves. For the Interpreter Foundation, that course continues to be full of surprises and promise.

I was in Jerusalem on 14 June 2012. That night, winding down in my hotel room after a long day of guiding a large family group around to significant sites in the city, I received an email from the director of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. He informed me that my nearly quarter-century-long tenure as the founding editor of the *FARMS Review* was finished.

Immediately prior to my departure for the Middle East, toward the end of May 2012, he and I had met at his request. At that meeting, which lasted at least three hours, he told me of his desire that the Maxwell Institute begin doing “Mormon studies.” I responded that if he intended by that to abandon the Institute’s long-standing commitment to commending and defending the faith, to turn away from its goal of serving a non-specialist Latter-day Saint audience as well as scholars, I would be unable to support him in that change. However, I continued, if he wanted to add a non-confessional, academic Mormon studies component to what the Institute was already doing and to focus some of our publications primarily on a scholarly audience beyond the Latter-day Saint community, I would be pleased to endorse the addition. Furthermore, I said I would be happy, in my capacity as the Institute’s

Director of Outreach, to seek funding to support it. I had long thought that Mormon voices needed to be more prominent in the wider world of academic religious studies and that the Maxwell Institute could play a useful role in encouraging such a change.

I was confident, when the meeting ended, that we had reached a consensus.

The 14 June email, however, made it starkly obvious to me that the change he sought was no mere add-on and that he was determined to fundamentally alter the purpose of the Institute. Its peremptory tone was also a dramatic departure from the collegial and collective decision-making that had always been characteristic of the organization's leadership. He spoke in his email of a "change in direction" and a "new course" for both the *Review* and the Institute as a whole. I realized then that my belief that we had reached a consensus or an agreement had been grievously mistaken.

I received his email as a flat repudiation not only of me but, much more importantly, of the kind of Latter-day Saint scholarship that FARMS and its successor, the Maxwell Institute, had been established to foster, to publish, and to distribute. Moreover, since the very substantial endowment undergirding the Institute by that time had overwhelmingly, if not entirely, been given by people who wanted to support its apologetic work, I felt the "new course" betrayed them. I did not believe I would be able to raise money to support the "new course" — not only because I did not think that donors would rally around what I saw as a rather anodyne and elitist project of little relevance to ordinary members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints but because I thought there were innumerable other causes, frankly more worthwhile than the research interests of the small community of "religious studies" academics interested in Mormonism, to which donors could contribute. And, since I myself felt little enthusiasm for it, I could not imagine myself being able to generate much enthusiasm in any potential donors. So, responding to the 14 June email, I immediately resigned not only as editor of the *FARMS Review* (which, by this time, the director had renamed the *Mormon Studies Review*) but as the Institute's Director of Outreach.¹

1. Years earlier, I had conceived and founded the Islamic Translation Series, which had eventually become the more comprehensive Middle Eastern Texts Initiative. Comfortable within FARMS and seeking some sort of institutional home for it, I eventually brought it into the Foundation. When I resigned as editor of the *FARMS Review* and as Director of Development, I indicated my intention to

My stay overseas continued, as long planned, for another month. It wasn't a very pleasant time, as my thoughts were dominated by what I regarded (and continue to regard) as effectively the destruction — certainly the hijacking — of an organization to which I and others had given a great deal of our time and effort, at considerable cost to our own personal academic interests and careers.

Soon, though, I began to receive emails from people who had been closely associated with FARMS and who believed the torch FARMS had carried since its founding in California in 1979 needed to be picked up, now that it had been dropped, by a new organization.

Accordingly, within just a few days of my return to the United States in late July 2012, several of us — David Bokovoy, Bill Hamblin, Bryce Haymond, Louis Midgley, George Mitton, Mark Wright, Stephen Ricks, and I — met over lunch at The Olive Garden restaurant in Provo, Utah, to discuss whether we should launch such an organization, and if so, what it should be called and what, exactly, it should do. We had no funding and no institutional backing from anybody; it was just us.

We decided to proceed under the name of The Interpreter Foundation. We also decided, since we had no office, no office staff, no space for warehousing an inventory, and no mailroom, that we would publish an online journal rather than a printed one. This had the strong advantage, too, of making us a fully twenty-first century operation — working primarily online and electronically — with print media as a secondary focus rather than a primary one. Someone had once insightfully observed that FARMS had been an internet organization *avant la lettre*; The Interpreter Foundation began its life attuned to the internet and social media.

We decided that, in order to establish a presence rapidly, to make a splash, to make ourselves known, we should take advantage of the fact that I was slated to be the concluding speaker at the annual FAIR

remain editor-in-chief of METI. But, in the aftermath of the 14 June 2012 email, I was frozen out of the project to the point that, in the latter half of 2013, seeing no practical alternative, I resigned as its editor-in-chief and have been unaffiliated with it ever since. I posted a blog entry about my resignation on 7 September 2013, under the title “The Middle Eastern Texts Initiative: Farewell and a Retrospective.” For reasons unknown to me, that entry seems to have disappeared. Fortunately, I copied it into a subsequent entry on 3 August 2016, and it can be read there: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/danpeterson/2016/08/a-gracious-note-from-the-new-director-of-the-maxwell-institute.html>.

Conference.² If we could get our act together, I would announce Interpreter's launch there, on the late afternoon of Friday, 3 August 2012. (That was only nine days away.) We also decided that, if possible, we would publish an article that day and follow it up with an article every week, ideally for several weeks in a row.

David Bokovoy kindly offered us a paper that he had written to be our first publication.³ Mark Wright offered a paper written by himself and Brant Gardner, "The Cultural Context of Nephite Apostasy," for our second week.⁴ For our third week, George Mitton provided a review of Jeffrey M. Bradshaw's *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, and, for our fourth, Bill Hamblin came through with "'I Have Revealed Your Name': The Hidden Temple in John 17."⁵ Bryce Haymond undertook the urgent task of creating a website and preparing the articles for publication.

We were on our way. As I indicated in my editor's introduction to the first volume of *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, our initial burst of productivity was facilitated by the fact that several of the articles in that initial issue came from the ill-fated, never-published last volume of my tenure at the *FARMS Review*. That volume was jettisoned under the Maxwell Institute's "new course," but the articles planned for it had already been edited and prepared for publication and, knowing

2. Since that time in 2012, FAIR (the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research) has changed its official organizational name to FairMormon. Thus, the organization's conferences are currently known as "FairMormon Conferences," though at the time they were known as "FAIR Conferences."

3. 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, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/thou-knowest-that-i-believe/>.

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

5. See, respectively, George L. Mitton, "Book Review: *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses* by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 1 (2012): 55–59, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/book-review-temple-themes-in-the-book-of-moses-by-jeffrey-m-bradshaw/> and William J. Hamblin, "'I Have Revealed Your Name': The Hidden Temple in John 17," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 1 (2012): 61–89, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/i-have-revealed-your-name-the-hidden-temple-in-john-17/>. Dr. Jeffrey Bradshaw — a computer scientist and polymath who, as I write, is serving a mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with his wife — is now one of the vice presidents of The Interpreter Foundation. He has been absolutely indispensable to the consistency and productivity of the Foundation.

the Maxwell Institute's new regime had cast them off, their authors gave *Interpreter* permission to publish them.⁶

On 3 August 2012, less than a week and a half after we had decided to launch *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* and to establish The Interpreter Foundation, we had a new website up; David Bokovoy's article had been edited, typeset, and published; and I announced the new organization at the conclusion of the fourteenth annual FAIR Conference.⁷ We hadn't requested donations — we hadn't even applied for tax-exempt status yet or established a bank account — but donations began to come in immediately after I had finished speaking. People handed me checks while I was still standing at the speaker's rostrum.⁸

We were and continue to be deeply grateful for such expressions of support, even moved. And we have tried our best to be worthy of the confidence placed in us and to use the funds contributed to us efficiently and wisely. When this introduction of mine appears, we will

6. See Daniel C. Peterson, "Charity in Defending the Kingdom," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 1 (2012): i–ix, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/charity-in-defending-the-kingdom/>. There was some bitter irony in the Maxwell Institute director's 14 June email to me, in which he referred to "how far behind it is" and "our breach of expectations with its subscribers." It was ready to go to final editing and onward to publication and had been for many weeks, but he himself had directed members of the editorial staff to devote their attention to other projects. He had also ordered us to drop a lengthy article that formed part of the next issue, although he had not read it. (That article was Gregory L. Smith's review of John Dehlin's "Mormon Stories," which was eventually posted on the Interpreter Foundation's website at <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/gregory-l-smiths-review-of-mormon-stories/>.) We had complied immediately and had very quickly substituted another very long piece for it. (That substitute piece ultimately appeared in *Interpreter* 6 [2013] as Gregory L. Smith, "Endless Forms Most Beautiful: The Uses and Abuses of Evolutionary Biology in Six Works," <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/endless-forms-most-beautiful-the-uses-and-abuses-of-evolutionary-biology-in-six-works/>.) But we were still denied editorial services. Although, so far as I am aware, the director had read none of the articles in the volume, he indicated in his 14 June email that "I'm unwilling to publish 23:2 as it stands" — an unwillingness that had become quite obvious to us by that point.

7. A transcript of my remarks (and of my announcement of the Interpreter Foundation) is online as "Of Mormon Studies and Apologetics" at <http://www.fairmormon.org/fair-conferences/2012-fair-conference/2012-of-mormon-studies-and-apologetics>.

8. This was both gratifying and surprising. Fortunately, the leadership of FairMormon very kindly allowed us to use their bank account and their tax-exempt status for the receipt of donations until we were ready to receive them directly, ourselves.

have published at least one article every Friday — sometimes, we’ve published two or even three — not merely for an opening splash but, now, for roughly 250 consecutive weeks. The Interpreter Foundation has published multiple books, posted over 200 recorded scripture roundtables, hosted a blog, sponsored several conferences, put up a number of podcasts, and is now dipping its toe into film production.

As history reminds us, life is definitely full of surprises, some painful and others refreshingly pleasant. Personally, I feel continually thankful for the authors, editors, technical experts, speakers, and donors who have made the Interpreter Foundation possible. And I hope it’s not too tacky to say, candidly, that we’ve just begun. There are very, very good things on the horizon, and people who want to join in the cause will be warmly welcomed.

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).

DEUTERONOMY 17:14–20 AS CRITERIA FOR BOOK OF MORMON KINGSHIP

Taylor Halverson

Abstract: Deuteronomy 17:14–20 represents the most succinct summation in the Bible of criteria for kingship. Remarkably, the Book of Mormon narrative depicts examples of kingship that demonstrate close fidelity to the pattern set forth in Deuteronomy 17 (e.g., Nephi, Benjamin, or Mosiah II) or the inversion of the expected pattern of kingship (e.g., king Noah). Future research on Book of Mormon kingship through the lens of Deuteronomy 17:14–20 should prove fruitful.

Likely the most succinct set of verses in the Bible that express God's expectation for a king¹ are found in Deuteronomy 17:14–20.² These verses, I argue, are crucial criteria for understanding Book of Mormon kingship.³

1. Much has been written about kingship in the Bible. An exhaustive bibliography here is unwarranted, though several recent or relevant reads include Shawn Flynn, *YHWH is King: The Development of Divine Kingship in Israel* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2014); David T. Lamb, *Righteous Jehu and his Evil Heirs: The Deuteronomists Negative Perspective on Dynastic Succession* (Oxford, 2005) and Jamie A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms* (SBL, 2004).

2. Daniel I. Block, "The Burden of Leadership: The Mosaic Paradigm of Kingship (Deuteronomy 17:14–20)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162 (2005): 259–278; Karl W. Weyde, "The Narrative of King Solomon and the Law of the King: On the Relationship between 1 Kings 3–11 and Deuteronomy 17:14–20," *Enigmas and Images: Studies in Honor of Tryggve N. D. Mettinger*, ed. Göran Eidevall and Blazenka Scheuer (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 75–91.

3. And much has been written on Book of Mormon kingship. Here are a few pieces to begin with: Todd R. Kerr, "Ancient Aspects of Nephite Kingship

¹⁴ When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; ¹⁵ Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. ¹⁶ But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. ¹⁷ Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. ¹⁸ And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: ¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: ²⁰ That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

I interpret these passages as a set of God-decreed kingly dos and don'ts. I'll begin with the don'ts:

1. Don't acquire many horses (don't raise a military) (v. 16).
2. Don't return the people to Egypt (don't return people to the house of bondage/apostasy) (v. 16).
3. Don't acquire many wives (v. 17).⁴

in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 85–118; Gordon C. Thomasson, "Mosiah: The Complex Symbolism and Symbolic Complex of Kingship in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/1 (1993): 21–38; Val Larsen, "Killing Laban: The Birth of Sovereignty in the Nephite Constitutional Order," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16/1 (2007): 26–41, 84–85; Stephen D. Ricks, "Kingship, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1–6," in *King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom,"* edited by John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 233–275.

4. Robert Boylan noted for Deuteronomy 17:16–17 that "the Hebrew verb *RBH has the nuance of growing exponentially, not just lineally, with respect to something (cf. the same form of the verb used in Deuteronomy 17:16–17 in Exodus 1:10, 12; Deuteronomy 8:13[x2]; Psalms 49:17; Proverbs 29:16; Isaiah 40:29; 55:7; Dan 11:39; Hosea 12:2). As one lexicon puts it, the hi. רָבָה most often means *make*

4. Don't seek after silver and gold (v. 17).

What should the king be doing with all his time and influence?

1. Have a copy of the scriptures (v. 18).
2. Read the scriptures every day (v. 18).
3. Teach the scriptures (vs. 19–20).
4. Do not lift yourself up above your brethren (v. 20).

Remarkably, God doesn't want a human king to do *any* of the things we typically associate with leaders. Rather, God simply wants a leader who is a lover of scripture. Why? Because God himself is the king. As Jacob so beautifully records, "For he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish, *for I, the Lord, the king of heaven, will be their king*, and I will be a light unto them forever, that hear my words" (2 Nephi 10:14, emphasis added).

numerous or *multiply*. These forms especially portray the abundance of God's giving and the fullness of his mercy: in the promise to multiply the patriarchs into a great nation (Genesis 17:2, 20; 22:17; 26:4; 48:4; Exodus 32:13; Leviticus 26:9; Deuteronomy 1:10; 7:13), in the multiplication of signs and wonders to his glory and the destruction of Egypt (Exodus 7:3), and in his gracious redemption (Psalms 78:38; Isaiah 55:7). Conversely, Israel and all humanity stand before God continually multiplying sin, wickedness, and rebellion (Genesis 3:16; Ezra 10:13; Ezekiel 16:25, 26, 29). The remedy for the human malady is not found in multiplying possessions (as the Hebrew kings attempted, cf. Deuteronomy 17:16–17). Rather, God must wash and cleanse the sinner thoroughly (רָבָה, NIV wash away all; Psalms 51:2 [4]). Then the sinner may understand, along with the poet David, how God stoops down to make the righteous great (רָבָה, 2 Samuel 22:36 || Psalms 18:35 [36]). The hi. רָבָה can also mean *many* or *increase*, like the many gardens of Israel divinely destroyed by blight and mildew (Amos 4:9; NIV reads the proposed emendation הַרְבֵּיתִי, "many times I struck"), or the increase that comes from saving money little by little (Proverbs 13:11). Here רָבָה is to be understood as a gradual or steady increase, or larger sums compared to multitudes. See further הַרְבֵּיתִי. The hi. רָבָה + יל + inf can mean *do something frequently, copiously, continually*. For example, Hannah prayed continually to the Lord for a son (1 Samuel 1:12; NIV kept on), the woman of Tekoa begged David to prevent continued killing of her family (2 Samuel 14:11; NIV adding to the destruction), King Manasseh provoked God's wrath with the continual practice of evil (2 Kgs 21:6 || 2 Chronicles 33:6), as did Amon his son (2 Chronicles 33:23) and all the people of Judah (36:14). Even as the Leviathan (#4293) does not "keep begging" for mercy (Job 41:3 [40:27]), so the Lord has stopped listening to the continual prayers of his people (Isaiah 1:15). Yet if the wicked repent, stop doing wrong, and learn to do right, God will copiously pardon (Isaiah 55:7; NIV freely pardon) — just as he has done continually throughout Israelite history (Psalms 78:38; NIV time after time he restrained his anger).⁷ VanGemeren, W. (Ed.). (1997). *New international dictionary of Old Testament theology & exegesis* (Vol. 3, pp. 1038–1039). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House."

There is no need to replace God on the divine throne of kingship with some fallible human king. Unfortunately, humans have masterly usurped God's role and power as king. The Book of Mormon narrative is driven, in part, by this very pressing question, "Who is to be the king?" How that question was asked and answered contributed to significant portions of Book of Mormon narrative production.⁵

What is so striking about the seven verses quoted earlier is that expressions of Book of Mormon kingship align so well with this rubric for kingship. For those who seek to argue that Joseph Smith was the imaginative and enterprising author of the Book of Mormon, I find it difficult to believe that Joseph Smith was so versed in the Bible that he could correctly identify *the only seven consecutive verses in the entire Bible where God lays out his dos and don'ts for kingship* and then build a book of hundreds of thousands of words that contains kingship narratives that seem to be strong examples and counter examples of what happens when kings do or do not fulfill God's expectations.

Here are some compelling examples of how well the Book of Mormon represents God's expectations for kingship as set forth in Deuteronomy 17.⁶

5. The same question of "Who is to be king?" dominates and influences significant portions of the Hebrew Bible and not just the narrative sections. The question and potential answers to "Who is to be king?" shows up in the Pentateuch (Torah), Prophets (Nevi'im), and the Writings (Ketuvim).

6. Due to the way I formatted the tables, seeking to provide a representative scripture for each element of the Deuteronomy 17:14–20 pattern for each Nephite leader discussed, a challenge arose. In some instances, the lack of a scripture is taken as evidence for the pattern. For example, there are no scriptures that show Nephi seeking silver and gold for personal gain. Therefore, I do not have a scripture to demonstrate the pattern element "Don't seek after silver and gold."

Nephi Evaluated Against Deuteronomy 17

Don't	How did Nephi do? Exemplary king
Deuteronomy 17:16 <i>Don't acquire many horses (don't raise a military).</i>	2 Nephi 5:14; 2 Nephi 4:34 <i>There is no mention of Nephi seeking after horses, though he did arm his people to defend themselves from enemies. But his trust was not in the arm of flesh but in the Lord.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:16 <i>Don't return the people to Egypt (don't return people to the house of bondage/apostasy).</i>	1 Nephi 18:22 <i>Nephi led the people into a new Promised Land, just as Moses had done.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:17 <i>Don't acquire many wives.</i>	1 Nephi 16:7 <i>Nephi did not seek after additional wives.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:17 <i>Don't seek after silver and gold.</i>	1 Nephi 18:25 <i>Nephi did seek after silver and gold but only with the intent to support his society, not to empower or ingratiate himself.</i>
Do	How did Nephi do? Exemplary king
Deuteronomy 17:18 <i>Have a copy of the scriptures.</i>	1 Nephi 3:24 <i>Nephi obtained the scriptures from Laban.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:19 <i>Read the scriptures every day.</i>	2 Nephi 25:26 <i>Nephi was quite motivated about the scriptures, so likely he was a regular reader.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:19 <i>Live and teach the scriptures.</i>	1 Nephi 19:23–24 <i>Nephi lived and taught the scriptures.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:20 <i>Do not lift yourself up above your brethren.</i>	1 Nephi 17:55; 2 Nephi 5:19–20 <i>Nephi did not lift himself up above his people. In fact, he rejected the title of kingship.</i>

In summary, Nephi fulfills God's expectations of kingship in an exemplary fashion.

Benjamin Evaluated Against Deuteronomy 17

Don't	How did Benjamin do? Exemplary king
Deuteronomy 17:16 <i>Don't acquire many horses (don't raise a military).</i>	Words of Mormon 13–14 <i>King Benjamin protected his people from enemies and apparently had a military, but his trust was not in the arm of flesh but in the Lord.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:16 <i>Don't return the people to Egypt (don't return people to the house of bondage/apostasy).</i>	Words of Mormon 15–18 <i>King Benjamin did not lead people to apostasy.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:17 <i>Don't acquire many wives.</i>	<i>King Benjamin did not seek after additional wives.</i> [There are no scriptures indicating that King Benjamin sought additional wives.]
Deuteronomy 17:17 <i>Don't seek after silver and gold.</i>	Mosiah 2:12, 14 <i>King Benjamin did not seek after the wealth of the world.</i>
Do	How did Benjamin do? Exemplary king
Deuteronomy 17:18 <i>Have a copy of the scriptures.</i>	Mosiah 1:2–3 <i>King Benjamin had the scriptures.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:19 <i>Read the scriptures every day.</i>	<i>Likely.</i> [There is no specific scripture indicating that King Benjamin read the scriptures daily. However, the thrust of this prescription in Deuteronomy is that the king should be a scribe. King Benjamin, according to the Book of Mormon record, appears to have thoroughly immersed his life in the scriptures.]
Deuteronomy 17:19 <i>Live and teach the scriptures.</i>	Mosiah 1:2–3; 2:9–11 <i>King Benjamin lived and taught the scriptures to his sons and to his people.</i>

Do	How did Benjamin do? Exemplary king
Deuteronomy 17:20 <i>Do not lift yourself up above your brethren.</i>	Mosiah 2:10–11 <i>King Benjamin did not lift himself up above his people.</i>

Like Nephi, Benjamin fulfills God's expectations of kingship in an exemplary fashion.

King Noah Evaluated Against Deuteronomy 17

Don't	How did Noah do? Disastrous king
Deuteronomy 17:16 <i>Don't acquire many horses (don't raise a military).</i>	Mosiah 11:18–19 <i>Noah raised a military; he put his trust in the arm of flesh, not in God who is the divine warrior!⁷</i>
Deuteronomy 17:16 <i>Don't return the people to Egypt (don't return people to the house of bondage/apostasy).</i>	Mosiah 11:2; 19:28; 21:3–5 <i>Noah led the people into apostasy and bondage.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:17 <i>Don't acquire many wives.</i>	Mosiah 11:2 <i>Noah had many wives and concubines.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:17 <i>Don't seek after silver and gold.</i>	Mosiah 11:3–4 <i>Noah sought the gold and silver of the people for his own purposes.</i>
Do	How did Noah do? Disastrous king
Deuteronomy 17:18 <i>Have a copy of the scriptures.</i>	Mosiah 11:27, 29 <i>Noah was apparently ignorant of scriptures.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:19 <i>Read the scriptures every day.</i>	<i>Noah gave that role to the priests.</i> [No scripture indicates that Noah had any awareness of scripture. Instead the priests are the primary agitators in the trial of Abinadi, misusing scripture to attempt to trap Abinadi.]

7. Some examples of scriptures expressing the divine warrior theme include: Exodus 15: 1–7; 2 Samuel 22; Psalm 18; Habakkuk 3. A representative scholarly work on the divine warrior motif in scripture is Charlie Trimm, *YHWH Fights for Them! The Divine Warrior in the Exodus Narrative* (Gorgias Press: Piscataway, NJ, 2014).

Do	How did Noah do? Disastrous king
Deuteronomy 17:19 <i>Live and teach the scriptures.</i>	No. [Noah did not live or teach the scriptures. In fact, the priests, to whom he delegated his role as scribe, appear to be familiar with scripture but they misuse scripture in an attempt to destroy Abinadi.]
Deuteronomy 17:20 <i>Do not lift yourself up above your brethren.</i>	Mosiah 11:9–12; 19:6–11 <i>Noah lifted himself up above the people.</i>

Noah was a spectacular failure in living as God expected kings to live. In fact, it is striking how distinctly opposite all Noah's actions were from God's ideal for kingship as set forth in Deuteronomy 17:14–20.

Mosiah II Evaluated Against Deuteronomy 17

Don't	How did Mosiah II do? Exemplary king
Deuteronomy 17:16 <i>Don't acquire many horses (don't raise a military).</i>	Mosiah 29:14 <i>Mosiah II protected his people from enemies and apparently had a military, but his trust was not in the arm of flesh but in the Lord.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:16 <i>Don't return the people to Egypt (don't return people to the house of bondage/apostasy).</i>	Mosiah 29:33–37 <i>Mosiah II did not lead people to apostasy.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:17 <i>Don't acquire many wives.</i>	<i>Mosiah II did not seek after additional wives.</i> [There are no scriptures indicating that Mosiah II had or sought after additional wives.]
Deuteronomy 17:17 <i>Don't seek after silver and gold.</i>	Mosiah 27:2–5 <i>Mosiah II did not seek after the wealth of the world.</i>

Do	How did Mosiah II do? Exemplary king
Deuteronomy 17:18 <i>Have a copy of the scriptures.</i>	Mosiah 28:11, 17 <i>Mosiah II had the scriptures. It was the writings/scriptures that likely helped convince him to get rid of kingship.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:19 <i>Read the scriptures every day.</i>	Mosiah 28:10–13 <i>Likely.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:19 <i>Live and teach the scriptures.</i>	Mosiah 25:4–7, 14; 28:14, 17–18 <i>Mosiah II lived and taught the scriptures to his sons and to his people.</i>
Deuteronomy 17:20 <i>Do not lift yourself up above your brethren.</i>	Mosiah 29: 32, 40 <i>Mosiah II did not lift himself up above his people.</i>

Like Nephi and Benjamin, Mosiah II fulfills God’s expectations of kingship in an exemplary fashion.

I believe that the Book of Mosiah was constructed as a sandwich narrative: good king [Benjamin], then bad king [Noah], then good king [Mosiah II]. This narrative structure highlights why Mosiah II recognized the problem of kingship. Kingship was a major factor in Nephite conflict, suffering, and apostasy. Mosiah II therefore was motivated to disband kingship. Ironically much of the historical backdrop for the Book of Alma and the Book of Helaman revolves around people fighting for a return to kingship while others fight to avoid kingship.

Conclusion

If Joseph Smith was the putative author of the Book of Mormon, it is incredibly remarkable that he had prescience enough to construct kingship narratives that so unfailingly adhered to or perfectly disagreed with what God expected of a king as expressed in Deuteronomy 17:14–20. Future studies could take each leader from the Book of Mormon and hold them up to the standard of Deuteronomy 17:14–20. The comparisons and contrasts among Book of Mormon leaders as to how well they fulfilled God’s expectations of leaders will likely prove enlightening.⁸

8. Robert Boylan applied this approach to Jacob: “Deuteronomy 17:14–20 seems to be the scriptural basis of much of Jacob’s comments in Jacob 1–3. For instance, the screed on polygyny seems to be informed by Deuteronomy 17:17

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regarding David and Solomon having ‘many’ wives and concubines (Jacob 2:24).”

MEETING ZORAM

Collin Charles Russell

Abstract: Zoram, the servant of Laban, is a character from the Book of Mormon who is only mentioned a few times and on whom little information is given. This article analyzes what information is given in the Book of Mormon and contextualizes its historical background, all coupled with the observations of Latter-day Saint Church leaders and scholars. Insight is provided concerning Zoram's Hebraic descent in the tribe of Manasseh and his working duties under Laban's command, along with how all this affected his role in assisting Lehi's family. The meaning of his name in Hebrew and possible correlations to the meaning of his life's events are explained. The oath between Nephi and Zoram is discussed, and the debate regarding whether Zoram was a slave or servant is addressed, to show that he was likely a free servant.

Zoram, the servant of Laban, is a minor character introduced early in the Book of Mormon but mentioned only by name seven times in the text (1 Nephi 4:35; 4:37; 16:7; 2 Nephi 1:30; 5:6; Alma 54:23). Very little information is given about him, yet he is still an important figure. An entire nation rises from his seed. His assistance to Nephi was crucial in obtaining the brass plates, which taught the gospel to all Lehi's descendants. He also became an example of loyalty and trust. By examining what information we have about Zoram in the scriptures along with academic research dealing with his time, we can draw many additional conclusions about Zoram as an individual. This paper explores reasonable possibilities pertaining to Zoram's lineage, occupational duties, degree of servitude, and his relationship with Lehi's family.

Zoram as a Hebrew

Understanding whether or not Zoram belonged to the House of Israel is vital in determining more about his life. Zoram lived in Jerusalem, an Israelite city. He also appears to have observed the Law of Moses,¹ which conclusion can be assumed, based on the implications of the verses about his marriage. In 1 Nephi 16:7, “Zoram took the eldest daughter of Ishmael to wife.” This selection was most likely made according to the Law of Moses because it was commanded by the Lord (1 Nephi 7:2) and because the members of Lehi’s party “would have followed the Law of Moses.”² According to the law, intermarriage with non-Israelites was condemned (Deuteronomy 7:3; cf. Genesis 24:3; Judges 14:3; Malachi 2:11).³ Thus it may be assumed that this family would not allow the Hebrew daughter of Ishmael to marry Zoram unless he was an Israelite. The idea of Zoram as a convert to Judaism is improbable; there is currently no evidence of pre-exilic conversions to Judaism.⁴

1. The Law of Moses is “the whole collection of written laws given through Moses to the house of Israel.” See “Bible Dictionary: Law of Moses,” <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bd/law-of-moses?lang=eng>.

2. John W. Welch, “Lehi’s Last Will and Testament: A Legal Approach,” in *Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 63.

3. R. K. Bower and G. L. Knapp, “Marriage,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols., ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, fully revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986), 264: “Marriages with foreigners were strictly opposed.”

4. Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 42. This source explains that conversion, as it is defined today, did not occur in pre-exilic times. This argument is generally supported in Biblical studies. Also see Louis H. Feldman, “The Success of Proselytism by Jews in the Hellenistic and Early Roman Periods,” in *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); David Novak “Proselytism in Judaism” in *Sharing the Book: Religious Perspectives on the Rights and Wrongs of Proselytism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008), 18–22. Although conversion did not seem to have occurred, *assimilation* did occur in the northern region of Israel (Mordecai Cogan, “Into Exile” in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1998], 356–58). Perhaps assimilation practices reached Jerusalem during this period, but these people were still separated into a lower class than native Israelites, which renders problematic the possibility of an intermarriage.

Zoram as Part of the Tribe of Manasseh

Arguments pointing toward the possibility of Zoram belonging to a particular tribe of Israel also strengthens the theory that Zoram was a Hebrew. Joseph Smith explained that the Book of Mormon specifically exhibits the presence of just three tribes in the Promised Land: Manasseh, Ephraim, and Judah.⁵

There are arguments for Zoram's belonging to each of those tribes,⁶ but the most convincing evidence leads toward Zoram being from the tribe of Manasseh.⁷ Laban, a descendant of Joseph, was likely related to Lehi, given that both their lineages are written on the plates of brass (1 Nephi 5:16).⁸ Since we know Lehi was from the tribe of Manasseh (Alma 10:3), some may tentatively assume that Laban was also from the tribe of Manasseh.⁹ This information may relate to Zoram: "Elder Orson Pratt thought that, from Zoram's being worthy to hold the keys of the treasury and of the sacred brass plates, he was probably of the same tribe as Laban,"¹⁰ which makes Zoram also from the tribe of

5. Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:185, <http://jod.mrm.org/23/181>; this source will be explained later in this section. This quote does not appear in the Joseph Smith Papers.

6. Del DowDell, "More Comments from Readers – Part VI," NephiCode.com Blog, December 16, 2014, <http://nephicode.blogspot.com/2014/12/more-comments-from-readers-part-vi.html>; "The Stick of Ephraim," *Millennial Star* vol. 68, no. 12 (22 March 1906): 189–91, <https://archive.org/details/millennialstar6812eng>; Troy J. Smith, "The Identity of the King-Men" in *The War against Christianity: History and Geography of Ancient America in the Book of Mormon* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2016), 121.

7. There are arguments that Zoram belonged to other tribes or was even a non-Israelite, but I do not discuss them in detail here. For example, Hugh Nibley suggests that Zoram could even be a Phoenician or a Canaanite. See 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 parts (Provo and American Fork, UT: FARMS and Covenant Communications, 2004), 28. But these possibilities are not strongly supported or do not align with the idea that Zoram was an Israelite.

8. Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on The Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 1:36–37; K. Douglas Bassett, *Doctrinal Insights on The Book of Mormon* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2007), 24–25.

9. Robert E. Lund, "Zoram and the Zoramites: A study of Zoram and his posterity," in *Ancient Legal Systems in the Scriptures: Student papers submitted to Prof. John W. Welch*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, 1995), 4.

10. George Q. Cannon, *The Life of Nephi* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1957), 33.

Manasseh. Studies have also noted that nepotism was widely practiced in the Ancient Near East, showing that preference was given to family members in appointments to political power.¹¹ To fortify this argument, it would make sense that Laban would employ relatives, perhaps close relatives, to Zoram's position, because it was a post that would require considerable trust and loyalty.¹²

This argument is written by Erastus Snow, which he claimed to have learned from Joseph Smith. Elder Snow taught that the marriages unifying the families of Lehi and Ishmael were a completion of a prophecy by Jacob upon Ephraim and Manasseh: "and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth" (Genesis 48:16). Elder Snow reported that Joseph Smith taught,

thus these descendants of Manasseh and Ephraim grew together upon this American continent, with a sprinkling from the house of Judah, from Mulek descended, who left Jerusalem eleven years after Lehi, and founded the colony afterwards known as Zarahemla and found by Mosiah — thus making a combination, an intermixture of Ephraim and Manasseh with the remnants of Judah, and for aught we know, the remnants of some other tribes that might have accompanied Mulek.¹³

If Elder Snow is correct, his claim that the tribe of Judah came to the Americas only through Mulek would rule out theories that Zoram may have been from the tribe of Judah. It has already been established that

11. One of the proposed interpretations of Isaiah 22:23–25 refers to the implementation of nepotism, which, according to Ed. Reuss, "in the Ancient East it was the rule." See Adolf Kamphausen, "Isaiah's Prophecy Concerning the Major-Domo of King Hezekiah," in *The American Journal of Theology*, Volume 5 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1901), 57, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3153349.pdf>. Also see Charles J. Elliott, "Isaiah 22:24" in *Ellicott's Bible Commentary: Volume 2* (Harrington, DE: Delmarva Publications, Inc., 2015).

12. Lund, "Zoram and the Zoramites," 5.

13. Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:185. This statement holds weight only if Joseph Smith was considering Zoram when making this statement, which cannot be determined by the information provided by Erastus Snow. Also, we do not know if Joseph Smith was speaking prophetically under the inspiration of the Spirit, or simply from his own understanding after studying the Book of Mormon, including the missing 116 pages. Although both origins can still provide insight worth considering, this question should be put into account in considering the strength of this source.

Zoram's descendants would have the blood of Ephraim in them through their mother, but there is not sufficient evidence to infer that Zoram was from the tribe of Ephraim. We can at best conclude that Zoram was from the tribe of Manasseh.

Zoram's Occupation under Laban's Command

To understand more about Zoram's occupation, we should first develop Laban's character. Laban was a powerful man politically and religiously, with military background, and was possibly even "military governor of [the] whole region" or was closely associated with this position,¹⁴ since he was able to "command fifty" (1 Nephi 3:31), wore armor, had a sword (1 Nephi 4:19), and was custodian of the brass plates (1 Nephi 3:13; 3:25). He was also probably a prominent political and religious figure, since he spent his last evening with the "elders of the Jews" (1 Nephi 4:22), the religious leaders of Jerusalem, who also held the higher positions in the social and political hierarchy and were "leading community members."¹⁵ If Laban was meeting with these elders, he likely held an influential position in Jerusalem, especially when his treasury, which included the brass plates, is considered. This would be a great sign of his wealth and political power as well as his ancestry. The brass plates would be a sign of influence because the genealogy inscribed upon them may have "served several royal purposes."¹⁶ The brass plates were also current, since they contained the words of Jeremiah (1 Nephi 5:13), who was held in prison during the time of Lehi's departure (1 Nephi 7:14).

With this understanding of Laban in mind, let us consider how this aids our understanding of Zoram. Since Laban was a military leader, perhaps Zoram himself had a military background or was even a military leader under Laban's command.¹⁷ Zoram was most likely unmarried at the time he left Jerusalem, since "men became eligible for military

14. Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert: The World of the Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Publishing, 1952), 111.

15. Daniel H. Ludlow *et al.*, *Unlocking the Book of Mormon: A Side-By-Side Commentary* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, Inc., 2007), 9.

16. John W. Welch, "Authorship of the Book of Isaiah in Light of the Book of Mormon" in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 431.

17. Lund, "Zoram and the Zoramites," 2.

service at age 20,”¹⁸ but men typically married many years later, typically closer to 30 years old.¹⁹

If Zoram were a military leader, one might wonder how Nephi was able to overcome him (1 Nephi 4:31). We know that Nephi was large in stature but still much younger than Zoram and had no similar military training. One possible explanation is that God bestowed sufficient “strength of the Lord” on Nephi to take control of the situation (1 Nephi 4:31). Also to consider is that to “seize upon” can also simply mean to “take hold of”; it does not necessarily signify that Nephi immobilized Zoram.²⁰ Nephi’s strength simply allowed him to keep Zoram from running away by taking hold of him. Additionally, military training does not always equate with physical strength. Nephi, although not military trained, could still be physically stronger than a military leader like Zoram. This strength, combined with Nephi’s zeal and Zoram’s surprise, could have allowed Nephi to overcome Zoram.

As Laban’s servant, Zoram may have held other potential responsibilities during his time. Having access to the brass plates in Laban’s treasury, he himself may have been the scribe that kept the brass plates current.²¹ This also coincides with how “the term [treasury] often denoted what we would today call a library.”²² Because the brass plates

18. Richard A. Gabriel, *The Military History of Ancient Israel*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003), 88.

19. Martha T. Roth, “Age at Marriage and the Household: A Study of Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Forms,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (October 1987), 737.

20. “Webster’s Dictionary 1828,” <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/Seize>.

21. A. Keith Thompson, “Who Was Sherem?,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 14 (2015): 11, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/who-was-sherem/>. Karel Van Der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 59 suggested: “Most students who had completed only the first phase of the scribal study program would find a place in the administration; there was a steady demand for clerks and scribes. Others might enter the service of private estates and merchant houses.” Zoram may have been either a scribe assigned to Laban from the administration (given Laban’s presumed role in the Jerusalem government), or a perhaps a scribe of Laban’s private estate.

22. John A. Tvedtnes. “Books in the Treasury” in *The Book of Mormon and Other Hidden Books*. (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies, 2000), 155. <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1083&index=12>

were kept current,²³ and Zoram “was responsible for the treasury and its contents”,²⁴ perhaps Laban would bring Zoram to hear Jeremiah’s teachings.²⁵ Zoram could then keep record of what that prophet taught. Laban surely kept other valuables inside his treasury; possibly all his gold and money were located in a personal financial center. If this is the case, Zoram may have held other duties along with being a scribe, such as librarian, financial clerk, or accountant.²⁶

Zoram: Slave or Servant?

Throughout the Book of Mormon, Zoram is given the title of “servant.” However, there appears to be an even divide among scholars concerning Zoram’s position: half calling him a “servant,”²⁷ the other half a “slave.”²⁸ Such a division of opinion may spark many questions pertaining to forms of servitude and whether Zoram was indeed a servant or a slave. For example, the term *ebed* in Hebrew, the language used by the Jews, can be translated as both “servant” and “slave.” Also, many people interpret 1 Nephi 4:33 to mean that Nephi was *liberating* Zoram, “that he should be a free man like unto us,” as if he were not a free man to begin with. In this section, I review these arguments.

If Zoram were a Hebrew, we can all but eliminate the idea that he was a slave. Hebrews were prohibited from holding other Hebrews as slaves. The only possible exception is that Hebrews could work as debt servants if they could not repay a debt. This servitude was only for a space of seven years unless the slave desired to stay with the master in order to remain with his own family — if the slave had formed a family during

23. The brass plates contained prophecies “even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah” (1 Nephi 5:13), which is the same time Lehi’s family left Jerusalem (1 Nephi 1:4).

24. Alonzo L. Gaskill, *Miracles of the Book of Mormon*, (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2015), 13.

25. Laban could have been one of the princes mentioned in Jeremiah 38:27. The term “princes” also refers to military captains and officials, like Laban. (See “Lexicon: Strong’s H8269 – sar,” *Blue Letter Bible*, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=h8269>).

26. Lund, “Zoram and the Zoramites,” 1, 3.

27. Thompson, “Who Was Sherem?” 11; Hugh W. Nibley, “Lecture 59 Alma 46,” 34.

28. Matthew L. Bowen, “‘See That Ye Are Not Lifted Up’: The Name Zoram and Its Paronomastic Pejoration,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 16 (2016): 114, 118; Robert L. Millet, *Magnifying Priesthood Power* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2008), 15.

those seven years (Exodus 21:2-6). This is unlikely if we assume that Zoram was single during his time as Laban's servant. Another option for Israelites who had "waxen poor" was to become a "hired servant ... unto the year of jubilee," but this term is specifically contrasted in these verses with the title "bondservant" (Leviticus 25:39-43).²⁹

In light of Zoram's responsibilities under Laban's command, Hugh Nibley was convinced that Zoram was "no mere slave."³⁰ No Hebrew bond-slave could attain to such a position in fewer than seven years of employment. The term *ebed*, aside from meaning "slave," has several other interpretations. "*Ebed* means 'slave' in the Bible, except where it is used to signify a servant of the king, i.e., a royal officer."³¹ *Ebed* might also mean "adjutant," a military officer who acts as an administrative assistant to a senior officer.³² These translations appear to coincide better with the positions Zoram held in Laban's employment, especially the latter, given that Laban had a military background, and Zoram likely did also.

Also, if we examine Nephi's oath, it becomes apparent that he may not have implied a previous state of bondage. Nephi promises "that he need not fear; that he should be a free man like unto [Nephi and his family]" (1 Nephi 4:33). Zoram's vision would have been weakened by the nighttime darkness (1 Nephi 4:5), so he may have thought Nephi and his brothers were Babylonians or members of another foreign group. We know the Babylonians took Jerusalem captive shortly after Nephi's departure, so Zoram easily could have been concerned that he would

29. One substantial argument against this reasoning is the difference between written and practiced law at this time in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was wicked at the time of Lehi's departure (1 Nephi 1:13; 3:17), and Laban was a wicked man (1 Nephi 4:13). This wickedness included disobedience to many laws, including laws pertaining to the enslavement of Hebrews.

30. Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1957), 109.

31. W. F. Albright, "The Seal of Eliakim and the Latest Preëxilic History of Judah, with Some Observations on Ezekiel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51, no. 2 (June 1932): 79-80, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3259097?seq=3#page_scan_tab_contentsrk. Also see Peter R. Ackoyd, *The Chronicler in His Age* (Sheffield, UK: JOST Press, 1991), 20; Nachman Avigad, "New Light on the Na'arSeals," in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 294.

32. Alfred Bertholet, *A History of Hebrew Civilization* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004), 247.

become enslaved to them.³³ In this light, Nephi does not promise to liberate Zoram from preexisting bondage, rather to free Zoram from entering bondage to Nephi himself.

A final and simple reason to believe that Zoram was likely a servant and not a slave pertains to the translation process of the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith. If the Hebraic word can be translated to mean both “slave” and “servant,” should we assume that Joseph Smith chose at random which term to use when the word came up in translation? The term *slave* appears five times in the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 2:13; 7:15; Alma 27:8; 27:9; 3 Nephi 3:7), showing that Joseph Smith could differentiate two different meanings while translating. Understanding that the Book of Mormon was translated by the power of God, we can assume that when Zoram is referred to as a “servant,” he is just that. If he were a slave, the Book of Mormon would call him a *slave*. *Slave* and *servant* had different meanings at the time of Joseph Smith,³⁴ but these two terms may not have a meaningful difference in antiquity, which is a counterargument worth taking into account.³⁵

Zoram’s Role in Lehi’s Family

Given Zoram’s occupation under Laban’s command and the skill set he likely held, Zoram must have played an important role in Nephite society. Because there were few people in Lehi’s party, they likely took advantage of all Zoram’s occupational capabilities in developing their new society. We know Nephi was skilled in working with metals and was familiar with the process of melting and forging metals,³⁶ but Zoram may have assisted him in forming the plates of Nephi and may have taught Nephi metal engraving based on his personal experience as scribe of the brass

33. There were prophecies alluding to Babylon’s destruction and invasion of Jerusalem, and Babylon’s invasion could have been discernible considering the political tension with the Babylonian empire. See Irving M. Zeitlin, “The Babylonian Empire” in *Jews: The Making of a Diaspora People* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2012).

34. “Webster’s Dictionary 1828,” <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/Servant> and “Webster’s Dictionary 1828,” <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/slave>.

35. This argument relies on a theory of “tight-control” translation. For more information on tight-control translation, see Royal Skousen, “How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript,” *Journal of Book of Mormon* 7/1 (1998): 22–31.

36. Neal Rappleye, “Lehi the Smelter: New Light on Lehi’s Profession,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 14 (2015): 223–25. Also, 1 Nephi 17:9, 2 Nephi 5:14.

plates. Brant Gardner and Neal Rappleye suggest that Nephi had been trained as a scribe in Jerusalem, an idea worth exploring.³⁷ If Zoram had a military background, he probably assisted Nephi in forming weaponry and military defenses as well. If Zoram was indeed a financial worker in the treasury of Laban, he may have been the one to teach the Nephites about the monetary system and help them establish one.³⁸

Etymology of the Name “Zoram”

All names from ancient scripture have a meaning or special interpretation. There are three possibilities as to the etymology of the name *Zoram* in Hebrew. The first interpretation is that Zoram means “flowing water or rain,” or “refreshing rain,” whereas the second interpretation suggests it could mean “rock,” “their rock,” or “rock of the people.”³⁹ The third suggested meaning is “the one who is high/exalted” or “he of the exalted one.”⁴⁰ All three interpretations are plausible and may shed greater light on Zoram’s character.

If Zoram’s name means “flowing water,” it may be a reference to Zoram’s faithfulness. When Lehi and his family first left Jerusalem, he saw a river and named the river Laman. Lehi uses this river to teach Laman that he should “be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all righteousness” (1 Nephi 2:9). Just as Lehi named the river after Laman in hopes of influencing Laman to pursue righteousness, Zoram may have been named to characterize the “running” or “flowing” of a river to represent his own righteousness.

37. Brant A. Gardner, “Nephi as Scribe,” *Mormon Studies Review*, 23/1 (2011): 45–55. Retrieved from <https://ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/MSR/article/view/35137/32963> and Neal Rappleye, “Nephi the Good: A Commentary on 1 Nephi 1:1–3,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/nephi-the-good-a-commentary-on-1-nephi-11-3/>

38. Lehi’s family was wealthy and would have a general understanding of personal accounting. Once Nephite society expanded, however, societal banking and accounting would need to be established. This could include the implementation of loans (see Exodus 22:25) as well as the establishment of account keeping for contractors (see Robert L. Hagerman, “Accounting in the Bible,” *The Accounting Historians Journal* 7/2 (Fall 1980), 71. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40697656>).

39. “Zoram,” *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson, online at <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/onoma/index.php/ZORAM>, last modified 2015.

40. Matthew L. Bowen, “‘See That Ye Are Not Lifted Up’: The Name Zoram and Its Paronomastic Pejoration,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 16 (2016): 112–15.

With reference to the second interpretation, some⁴¹ believe that Zoram's name means "rock of the people," an allusion to the oath Zoram kept with Nephi. This is entirely plausible, because his name is not mentioned in the Book of Mormon until that oath is taken. "Since rock imagery can convey the idea of steadfastness, faithfulness, or reliability, it may be meant to convey his [Zoram's] faithful commitment to the oath he was making."⁴² Because Zoram was taken from Jerusalem with nothing, it is truly remarkable that there is no evidence of Zoram's murmuring during the journey, and he also remained faithful to the very end (2 Nephi 1:30–31). Zoram may have even received this name at the moment he accepted the oath, the same way Abraham and Israel received new names when they received new covenants and blessings in the Old Testament (Genesis 17:5; 35:10).⁴³

A new explanation regarding this interpretation may refer to Zoram's role in helping Nephi obtain the scriptures. It may have been only Zoram's help that permitted Nephi to obtain the plates. Zoram held the keys to the depository where the plates were kept, perhaps the only person other than Laban who knew the location of the plates within the treasury. Without the plates, the Nephite nation would "dwindle and perish in unbelief" (1 Nephi 4:13), for they "could not keep the commandments of the Lord according to the law of Moses save they should have the law ... [which] was engraven upon the plates of brass" (1 Nephi 4:15–16) and which contained both the law and the gospel. We are taught to "build upon my rock, which is my gospel" (D&C 11:24), which can be done only as we study the scriptures. Just as the Old Testament names of prophets and leaders signified events or blessings they had received, interpreting the name Zoram as "the rock" may signify this provision of the scriptures. Zoram was, in a way, the man who provided the "rock" to the Nephite people.

The third interpretation, "the one who is high/exalted" or "he of the exalted one," is the most recent proposal, made by Matthew Bowen. His argument focuses on the Zoramites' being "lifted up in pride" as well as the reference and parallels to the Zoramite Rameumpton. While this argument strongly connects with the Zoramites, Zoram himself shows submissive characteristics rather than pride, making this meaning

41. Neal Rappleye, "Names and Meaning: Zoram as a Case Study," FairMormon Blog, June 18, 2013, <http://blog.fairmormon.org/2013/06/18/names-and-meaning-zoram-as-a-case-study/>

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

less likely. This argument is also made difficult because the Zoramites were named after a contemporary leader of theirs named Zoram, not the Zoram who joined Lehi's family. However, Bowen does suggest, "Perhaps [Zoram's] name came to connote 'the one lifted up' out of bondage."⁴⁴ Many names and terms used in the scriptures hold such a double meaning.⁴⁵ Interestingly, this correlates with how Nephi "grants him [Zoram] his status as a free man [even 'lifted up' out of bondage], and he becomes known by his *own* name."⁴⁶

Regardless of which of the above translations is correct, each can relate to Zoram's experiences as described in 1 Nephi 4. These strong correlations may suggest the name *Zoram* was given him in the process of metonymic naming "used by Mormon, Moroni, or others" in the Book of Mormon.⁴⁷ Since the name *Zoram* is found on the small plates in the Book of Mormon, Nephi probably initiated the metonymic naming of Zoram. Mormon appears to have continued to take advantage of the rhetorical use of Zoram's name, especially if Matthew Bowen's interpretation is correct, which connects Zoram with the Zoramites throughout the rest of The Book of Mormon. Although the "rock" interpretation is the most inspiring and uplifting, Matt Bowen's interpretation is likely the most accurate etymology, given that its theme can be applied throughout the entire Book of Mormon.

The Oath between Nephi and Zoram

When Zoram followed Nephi outside the walls of Jerusalem, the moment came when Zoram realized that Nephi was not Laban. Overcome by fear, Zoram was about to run back to Jerusalem until Nephi overcame him and offered him the chance to take an oath. The oath Nephi offered, which Zoram accepted, held both temporal and eternal importance.

Here is an analysis of the promises kept on both sides through the oath. Nephi first promised Zoram he "would spare his life" (1 Nephi 4:32). Zoram could have thought Nephi and his brothers were savages or enemies, there to steal the plates at all costs. Nephi, sensing that fear,

44. Bowen, "Name Zoram and Its Paronomastic Pejoration," 114.

45. For example, *Zion* can be a reference to Jerusalem of Judah, the New Jerusalem on the American continent, or any gathering point for the Saints. Also, *Babylon* and its destruction described in Isaiah 13 can refer to Babylon itself in the time of Isaiah as well as the wicked nations at the time of the Second Coming.

46. Rappleye, "Names and Meaning."

47. Gordon C. Thomasson, "What's in a Name? Book of Mormon Language, Names, and [Metonymic] Naming," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 10.

made this promise to help Zoram understand that he and his brothers meant him no harm. For that same reason, Nephi promised that Zoram “should be a free man like unto [them]” (1 Nephi 4:33). Enslavement was another possible way to treat Zoram if he took the plates of brass to any group other than Lehi’s family. One of the most significant promises to Zoram was that Nephi’s “father shal[l] have place for [him]” (1 Nephi 4:34). Robert Lund believes that “Nephi promises Zoram full adoption as a son of Lehi.”⁴⁸ This practice of adult adoption was allowed by Near Eastern law, and “Israel certainly knew the custom” of adult adoption.⁴⁹

Zoram received an inheritance and blessing from Lehi in 2 Nephi 1:30–32, which stands as evidence that an adoption did take place.⁵⁰ Although Zoram “may have been older than all of Lehi’s sons,” he was still not considered the firstborn son after his adoption into Lehi’s family.⁵¹ That title was given to Laman (2 Nephi 4:3). Inheritance as an adopted son was both temporal and spiritual because of Zoram’s faithfulness in keeping his oath. Zoram was promised ownership of the land as long as he remained faithful, and by his obedience to the commandments, the land was promised to become “consecrated ... for the security of [Zoram’s] seed with the seed of [Nephi].”⁵² Zoram’s people lived righteously with the Nephites through most of the Book of Mormon (Jacob 1:13; 4 Nephi 1:36–37; Mormon 1:8). Lund also suggests that “the more important blessing was the eternal inheritance in the land Zoram would receive, ... [that] he would receive eternal life and have a plot of celestial land on this earth” for his obedience and faithfulness.⁵³

48. Lund, “Zoram and the Zoramites,” 7.

49. Douglas A. Knight, *Law, Power, and Justice in Ancient Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press: 2011), 194.

50. The idea of adoption raises a conflict with previously stated assumptions concerning Zoram’s tribal affiliation and assumptions concerning name etymology, which I address later. Zoram could have been Israelite but of a different tribe until he was adopted into Lehi’s family, who were of the tribe of Manasseh (Alma 10:3). Also, Zoram may have had a different name before the adoption, since Zoram is not called by this name until he accepts the oath and therefore accepts the terms of adoption (1 Nephi 4:35). It cannot be conclusively determined if these characteristics were first established and described through the adoption or previously instituted.

51. Keith J. Allred, “Who was Second Nephi?,” *Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought* 42/4, Winter 2009: 3.

52. Lund, “Zoram and the Zoramites,” 8.

53. *Ibid.*, 9.

Zoram, in return, promises Nephi that “he would go down in the wilderness with [the party]” (1 Nephi 4:33) and “tarry with [them] from that time forth” (1 Nephi 4:35), and he appears loyal to this promise, for he seems to stay with the Nephites during his lifetime. He could have escaped or left the traveling family at any time during the journey, but he chose not to. He could have stayed with Laman and Lemuel when the Nephites separated themselves from them. Instead, Zoram accepted the adoption and put forth effort to create a positive relationship with Lehi’s family. Lehi called Zoram “a true friend unto [his] son, Nephi, forever” (2 Nephi 1:30). It is evident that Zoram kept his part of the oath until Lehi’s death and likely throughout his entire life.

Oaths during this time were powerful due to their binding nature. The oath between Nephi and Zoram would have to be strong for their worries to cease so suddenly (1 Nephi 4:35,37). The vocabulary in the oath is crucial to understanding the binding nature of the oath. For an oath “to be most binding and solemn an oath should be by the *life* of something. ... The only oath more awful than that ‘by my life’ ... is the *wa hayat Allah* ‘by the life of God,’ or ‘as the Lord Liveth.’”⁵⁴ Nephi’s promise was “the one oath that no man would dream of breaking, the most solemn of all oaths to the Semite,”⁵⁵ because he swore both “as the Lord liveth, and as I live” (1 Nephi 4:32). These powerful words alone make it easier to understand why the oath was fulfilled with such loyalty and why there was no concern it would be broken from the instant it was accepted.

Zoram’s Legacy

Long after Zoram’s death, his name continues on throughout the Book of Mormon. The Zoramites become a numerous tribe counted among both the Nephites and Lamanites at different times. Zoram’s name also held deep importance to all Lehi’s descendants. Ammoron, a Nephite traitor and declared Lamanite, claims his direct lineage from Zoram as a way to show authority and power over the Nephites (Alma 54:23). For this declaration to hold weight, Zoram had to be an important figure in Nephite communities. Two other people in the Book of Mormon are named Zoram: a Nephite chief captain and a Nephite apostate (Alma 16:5; Alma 31:1). Both were influential. Perhaps these individuals also used their names to spark support from others. This pattern is similar to how Mormon named his son Moroni, following the example

54. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 110.

55. *Ibid.*, 111.

of Captain Moroni,⁵⁶ and Helaman named his children Nephi and Lehi (Helaman 5:6) — a reflection of how high an honor Zoram, servant of Laban, enjoyed in the Promised Land.

However, part of his legacy was skewed by Lamanite influence. Ammoron taught that Nephi and his family “pressed and brought [Zoram] out of Jerusalem” (Alma 54:23). “Pressed” at the time of Joseph Smith meant “urged by force or weight; constrained; distressed.”⁵⁷ Ammoron taught the story of Zoram as if Zoram were given no option but was taken against his will, when in reality, he was given an option. Ammoron’s use of this variation of the legacy of Zoram in a letter to Moroni is an example of how the Lamanites may have used the story of Zoram to fuel their hatred of the Nephites.

Conclusion

When Mormon abridged all the records into the Book of Mormon, he was divinely instructed on what to include (see 3 Nephi 28:25).⁵⁸ Thus, inclusion of Zoram’s story in The Book of Mormon indicates that there is value to the reader in understanding his character. “God intended to bring Zoram to the promised land and allowed him to take part in Lehi’s inheritance.”⁵⁹ Although a minor character, we can learn much from Zoram if we take time to examine his social background, heritage, name etymology, and other aspects of his life. Even though most of Zoram’s life remains conjectural, careful analysis sheds light on his possible background. Viewing Zoram as a Hebrew and from the tribe of Manasseh, working as a free servant of Laban with a military background working in several duties to protect and maintain the treasury of Laban, can be fruitful in making sense of Zoram’s character and potential contributions. We may never know many details of Zoram’s life, but this article provides, I hope, a more comprehensive depiction of Zoram.

56. Gary Layne Hatch, “Mormon and Moroni: Father and Son,” in *Fourth Nephi, From Zion to Destruction*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1995), 107.

57. “Webster’s Dictionary 1828,” <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/pressed>.

58. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon is the Word of God,” *Ensign*, May 1975, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1975/05/the-book-of-mormon-is-the-word-of-god?lang=eng>.

59. Lund, “Zoram and the Zoramites,” 8.

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SEERS AND STONES: THE TRANSLATION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON AS DIVINE VISIONS OF AN OLD-TIME SEER

Stan Spencer

ABSTRACT: Joseph Smith used the term the Urim and Thummim to refer to the pair of seer stones, or “interpreters,” he obtained for translating the Book of Mormon as well as to other seer stones he used in a similar manner. According to witness accounts, he would put the stone(s) in a hat and pull the hat close around his face to exclude the light, and then he would see the translated text of the Book of Mormon. By what property or principle these stones enabled Joseph Smith to see the translated text has long been a matter of conjecture among Mormons, but the stones have commonly been understood as divinely powered devices analogous to the latest human communications technology. An alternative view, presented here, is that the stones had no technological function but simply served as aids to faith. In this view, the stones did not themselves translate or display text. They simply inspired the faith Joseph Smith needed to see imaginative visions, and in those visions, he saw the text of the Book of Mormon, just as Lehi and other ancient seers saw sacred texts in vision. Although Joseph Smith also saw visions without the use of stones, the logistics of dictating a book required the ability to see the translated text at will, and that was what the faith-eliciting stones would have made possible.

And now he translated them by the means of those two stones. ... And whosoever *has these things* is called *seer*, after the manner of old times. (Mosiah 28:13–16)

In this passage, Mormon is speaking of the interpreters, the stones used by King Mosiah in translating the Jaredite record and provided to Joseph Smith for translating the Book of Mormon. Mormon refers to the interpreters as “stones” of a “seer” — seer stones. Joseph Smith

also had and used other seer stones, primarily a brown, oblong one and a slightly smaller, white, egg-shaped one.¹ He used the brown one to receive several of his early revelations and in translating the Book of Mormon. He then gave it to Oliver Cowdery in early 1830.² He retained and continued to use the white seer stone. Both stones are apparently in possession of the Church.³

Joseph Smith and some of his associates referred to the interpreter stones as well as other seer stones as *urim* and *thummim*, considering *urim* and *thummim* to be a class of revelatory instruments.⁴ The term *Urim and Thummim* was used in this sense by Joseph Smith in his comment on the white stone mentioned in the Book of Revelation: “The white stone mentioned in Revelation 2:17 will become a Urim and Thummim to each individual who receives one” (D&C 130:10). The “Urim and Thummim” mentioned in the introductory headings of some of the early sections of the Doctrine and Covenants was, according to David Whitmer, the brown seer stone.⁵ In a meeting on December 27, 1841, Joseph Smith taught some of the apostles about *urim* and *thummim*. Regarding the meeting, Brigham Young wrote in his journal:

I met with the Twelve at brother Joseph’s. He conversed with us in a familiar manner on a variety of subjects, and explained to us the Urim and Thummim which he found with the plates, called in the Book of Mormon the Interpreters. He said that every man who lived on the earth was entitled to a seer stone, and should have one, but they are kept from them in consequence of their wickedness, and most of those who do find one make an evil use of it; *he showed us his seer stone.*⁶

Since Joseph Smith had given his brown seer stone to Oliver Cowdery, the stone he showed the apostles was most likely his white one.⁷ Wilford Woodruff recorded the same experience in his journal, but used a different label for the seer stone: “The twelve or a part of them spent the day with Joseph the Seer. . . . I had the privilege of seeing for the first time in my day *the Urim and Thummim.*”⁸ Less than two months later, Woodruff again called Joseph Smith’s seer stone “the Urim and Thummim” in reference to its use in translating the Book of Abraham,⁹ and apostle Parley Pratt made a similar statement in a church newspaper a few months later.¹⁰ In 1959, apostle Joseph Fielding Smith also referred to Joseph Smith’s seer stone as a *urim* and *thummim*.¹¹ According to a

journal entry of Wandle Mace, Joseph Smith even applied the term *urim and thummim* to a pair of stones brought over from England that had been “consecrated to devils.”¹² For Joseph Smith, a urim and thummim was an object used to obtain revelation, and “*the Urim and Thummim*” was whatever object he was currently using for that purpose.

Joseph Smith’s seer stones and the interpreters had another label in common: *directors*. Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery, who observed Joseph Smith translating with his brown seer stone, called it a “director” in her statement describing the translation; and in the Book of Mormon, Alma refers to the interpreter stones as “directors” and relates them to a prophecy of “a stone which shall shine forth in darkness unto light” to reveal ancient records (Alma 37:21–24, 1830 edition).¹³

The fact that the interpreter stones and Joseph Smith’s own seer stones were referred to in the same way (as seer stones, urim and thummim, and directors) and used interchangeably in translating suggests that they functioned in the same manner. This paper explores a possible mechanism by which these seer stones enabled Joseph Smith to receive the Book of Mormon and other revelations.

Old-time Seers were “See-ers” of Visions

The Book of Mormon, speaking of the two interpreter stones, says that “whosoever has these things is called *seer*, *after the manner of old times*” (Mosiah 28:13–16) and “whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called *seer*” (Mosiah 8:13). To understand how these and other seer stones functioned in the translation of the Book of Mormon, it may be helpful to know what a seer “after the manner of old times” is.

In the Old Testament, *seer* is translated from *rō’eh* or *hōzeh*. Both words, as active participle forms of verbs meaning “to see,” indicate “one who sees” but with the implication that what is seen is not seen in the usual sense. *Rō’eh* is used most often as a title for Samuel “the Seer” but is also used to refer to seers or visions generally, as in Isaiah 30:10 (“Which say to the *seers*, See not”) and Isaiah 28:7 (“they reel while having *visions*” [NASB]). *Hōzeh* is the usual word for seer in the Old Testament. It is closely related to *hāzôn* and *hizzāyôn*, both terms for visions, and indicates a beholder of visions. When Sariah derisively called Lehi a “visionary man” (1 Nephi 5:2, 4), she was likely using this Hebrew word.¹⁴ Visions and dreams were the usual means of revelation to the early biblical prophets, as the Lord reminded Moses’s siblings (Numbers 12:6): “And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision,

and will speak unto him in a dream.”¹⁵ Accordingly, prophets in the earliest biblical times were called seers (1 Samuel 9:9): “Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.” In the Book of Moses also, a seer is one who sees visions (Moses 6:35–36). Although the understanding of what it means to be a seer has evolved in the Church as well as in the broader culture,¹⁶ the Old Testament concept of seer as a “see-er” of visions was still understood in Joseph Smith’s day. Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary defines *seer* as “1. One who sees; as a seer of visions.”¹⁷ By seeing divine visions, a seer becomes a medium for revealing whatever God sees fit to show him. As Ammon explained, “a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed” (Mosiah 8:17). Because of this limitless nature of revelatory visions, “a gift that is greater, can no man have” (Mosiah 8:16).

Old-time seers were beholders of visions. If the possession and use of the interpreter stones made Joseph Smith a “seer, after the manner of old times,” it must have done so by enabling him to see visions. This raises the question of whether the translation of the Book of Mormon, as well as the other revelations Joseph Smith received by seer stone, came to him simply as spiritual visions. If the Book of Mormon text was, in fact, given to Joseph Smith in vision, it was not the first time a keystone scripture was revealed that way. Lehi, the founding seer of the Nephite nation, saw and read a book of scripture in vision. The Book of Mormon begins with an account of Lehi lying on his bed and “carried away in a vision” in which he “thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, [and] ... One descending out of the midst of heaven,” who, in Nephi’s words,

came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read. And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord. And *he read*, saying: Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations! Yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem — that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword, and many should be carried away captive into Babylon. (1 Nephi 1:7–13)

The things that Lehi read in the envisioned book provided his people with an explicit Christ-centered focus for their religion (1 Nephi 1:19; see also 10:2–17), and his written record of this and other visions formed the beginning of the sacred record of the Nephite nation (1 Nephi 1:14–17;

6:1; 9:1). Ezekiel, who lived around the same time as Lehi and also prophesied of the destruction of Jerusalem, saw and read a “roll of a book” in his own vision (Ezekiel 2:8–10). Much later, John the Revelator saw a “little book” in vision (Revelations 10).

If the text of the Book of Mormon was revealed to Joseph Smith in vision, the seer stones may have simply been aids to faith that helped him attain a state of mind conducive to seeing visions. This idea differs from more conventional theories of how the Book of Mormon was revealed. Believers have commonly supposed that “the Urim and Thummim” revealed the translation of the Book of Mormon in some mysterious technological way. Prominent Mormon scholars have imagined these revelatory stones as mechanical devices made by God,¹⁸ as instruments for transmitting light and intelligence,¹⁹ as objects made from celestial material,²⁰ as light-emitting radioactive instruments,²¹ as precision receivers of divine communication analogous to television and radio,²² and as revelation technology analogous to a tablet computer.²³ Others, citing Doctrine and Covenants sections 8 and 9, have emphasized Joseph Smith’s role in working out a translation in his mind.²⁴ Apostle John Widtsoe summarized this view: “As nearly as can be understood, the ideas set forth by the characters were revealed to the Prophet. He then expressed the ideas in English as best he could.”²⁵ Early church leader and historian B. H. Roberts held somewhat of a hybrid view, with Joseph Smith translating in his head based on inspired thoughts and his translation subsequently reflected back to his eyes by the seer stone.²⁶ More recently, Brant Gardner proposed an explanation similar to that proposed by B. H. Roberts, but with the translated text appearing to Joseph Smith as vivid mental images.²⁷

It is not my intent to argue against these or any other theories of how the Book of Mormon was translated. God who turned water to wine might well have turned a stone into a communication or translation device, or he might as easily have given an unlearned farmer the ability to compose the English text. My intent is rather to explore the possibility that neither the stone nor Joseph Smith produced the translated text but rather that it was simply shown to him in vision, just as other texts have been shown in vision to other seers. I will do so by assessing whether this idea is consistent with the way witnesses described Joseph Smith’s revelatory use of seer stones, with the way seer stones were used by others in Joseph Smith’s day, and with the way the scriptures portray the revelation of texts and revelatory use of stones. I will then explore the

possible function of seer stones as aids that helped Joseph Smith focus the faith he needed to see visions.

The Principal Accounts of Translation of the Book of Mormon

In January of 1849, Oliver Cowdery shared with Samuel W. Richards his understanding of how the Book of Mormon was translated. Over 58 years later, on May 21, 1907, Richards recorded his recollection of what Oliver Cowdery had said. According to that recollection, Cowdery told him that when Joseph Smith was translating, words appeared and “remained *in* the *translator*” until transcribed correctly.²⁸ The “translator” could have referred to the interpreters or, alternatively, to Joseph Smith’s brown seer stone. The need for the seer to look “in” the stone agrees with the Book of Mormon’s description of how seer stones are used (Mosiah 8:13). A typed copy was soon made of Richards’s recollection and dated May 25, 1907. Because Richards’s original account did not read smoothly in some spots, someone (probably the typist) did some light editing. As a result of this editing, Oliver Cowdery is represented in the typed copy as saying that the words Joseph Smith saw while translating appeared and “remained *on* the ‘*interpreter*.’”²⁹ These changes in the text reflect assumptions both about what instrument was used and about how it functioned. There may be even greater differences between Richards’s May 21 account and what Cowdery actually said many decades previously — differences due to Richards’s own faulty recollection and assumptions. Because of such probable but unknowable differences, we must use Richards’s account and all other secondhand (and third-hand, and fourth-hand) accounts with caution, if at all.

Even secondhand accounts written shortly after an interview are likely to have errors. In 1881, after an interview that David Whitmer granted the *Kansas City Daily Journal* was published with several errors, he wrote a letter of correction to the editor:

I notice several errors in the interview had with me by one of your reporters as published in the DAILY JOURNAL of June 5th, ‘81, and wish to correct them.

I am reported as saying that “the young men in the neighborhood saw the plates in the hill.” The language used was, that “we saw the place (not the plates) in the hill from which the plates were taken, just as he described them to us before he obtained them.” ... I do not wish to be understood as saying that those referred to as being present were all of the

time in the immediate presence of the translator, but were at the place and saw how the translation was conducted. I did not say that Smith used “two small stones” as stated nor did I call the stone “interpreters.” I stated that “he used one stone (not two) and called it a sun [seer] stone.” The “interpreters” were as I understood taken from Smith and were not used by him after losing the first 116 pages as stated. It is my understanding that the stone refer[r]ed to was furnished him when he commenced translating again after losing the 116 pages.

My statement was and now is that in translating he put the stone in his hat and putting his face in his hat so as to exclude the light and that then the light and characters appeared in the hat together with the interpretation which he uttered and was written by the scribe and which was tested at the time as stated.³⁰

Before the use of recording equipment became standard practice, interviewers had to reconstruct statements from hastily written notes, filling in gaps and smoothing over rough spots with their own words based on their sometimes-faulty memories of what was said and assumptions of what was meant. The chance for error was high. (The problem was made worse by faulty typesetting, such as “sun stone” instead of “seer stone” in the letter quoted above.)³¹ This tendency for error limits the utility of secondhand accounts for reconstructing historical events. For this reason, and for the sake of brevity, I will rely primarily on firsthand accounts for reconstructing the process by which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon. These include accounts written or dictated personally by those who witnessed the translation, as well as interview transcripts that were reviewed and explicitly approved by the interviewed witnesses. I will also include firsthand accounts of those who heard Joseph Smith describe aspects of the translation process. When I do quote secondhand or third-hand accounts, I will make it clear that I am doing so. All the known firsthand accounts that provide details of the translation process are provided or summarized below.

In Joseph Smith’s description of the translation in the earliest manuscript of his history, he says that “the Lord provided spectacles for to read the book.”³² Near the end of his life, in a letter he wrote to the *Times and Seasons*, Joseph Smith quoted Mormon 9:34 and then stated: “Here then the subject is put to silence, for ‘none other people knoweth

our language,’ therefore the Lord, and not man, had to interpret, after the people were dead.”³³ In his other published statements, Joseph Smith provided little additional information, indicating only that he translated “through the medium of the Urim and Thummim ... by the gift and power of God.”³⁴

The only firsthand statement describing the translation we have from Oliver Cowdery is equally spare and vague:

I ... commenced to write the Book of Mormon. These were days never to be forgotten — to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth, as he translated, with the Urim and Thummim, or, as the Nephites whould [sic] have said, ‘Interpreters.’³⁵

In this description, Cowdery has Joseph Smith translating “with the Urim and Thummim” but also dictating “by the inspiration of heaven.” The means of divine inspiration is not specified, and could refer to either thoughts or visual images presented to Joseph Smith’s mind. *Inspiration* in a religious context is often equated with the direct instilling of thoughts by the Holy Ghost, but the word also has a more general meaning of influence, and it is unclear in which sense Cowdery is using it.

Cowdery’s statement is also equivocal regarding the instrument being used to translate. “The Urim and Thummim” could refer to the interpreters or to one of Joseph Smith’s own seer stones. By mentioning “interpreters,” Cowdery may have intended the reader to infer that Joseph Smith translated in his presence with the Nephite interpreters, but that is not exactly what he said. All he necessarily said was that the Nephite term for urim and thummim was *interpreters*: “the *urim and thummim*, or as the Nephites would have said, ‘interpreters.’” Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery both avoided using the term “seer stone” in their public statements. Talk of revelation by seer stone in a society increasingly intolerant of folk religious practices would have only increased the hostility Joseph Smith and his followers faced because of their unconventional religious views. That may have been why, when Joseph Smith was asked during an 1831 conference in Ohio to relate information regarding the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, he opined that “it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the book of Mormon” and “it was not expedient for him to relate these things.”³⁶ The Church has since made efforts to inform the public about Joseph Smith’s use of a seer stone in translating.³⁷

Martin Harris granted an interview to Joel Tiffany, editor of the spiritualist periodical, *Tiffany's Monthly*, in 1859. Tiffany's report of the interview begins by noting efforts to assure that Martin Harris's statements were accurately recorded: "The following narration we took down from the lips of Martin Harris, and read the same to him after it was written, that we might be certain of giving his statement to the world." The account relates Martin Harris's description of the interpreter stones and how they might have been used:

The two stones set in a bow of silver were about two inches in diameter, perfectly round, and about five-eighths of an inch thick at the centre; but not so thick at the edges where they came into the bow. They were joined by a round bar of silver, about three-eighths of an inch in diameter, and about four inches long, which, with the two stones, would make eight inches.

The stones were white, like polished marble, with a few gray streaks. I never dared to look into them by placing them in the hat, because Moses said that "no man could see God and live," and we could see anything we wished by looking into them; and I could not keep the desire to see God out of my mind.³⁸

The two round stones set in a metal frame superficially resembled spectacles. With the dimensions that Martin Harris gave for the interpreters, however, they were too wide to have been worn like eyeglasses. Martin Harris's statement that the interpreters were used by placing them in a hat is corroborated by an account written by Joseph Knight Sr., a close friend of Joseph Smith who remained true to him and the church he established throughout his life. Joseph Knight was present at the Smith home when Joseph Smith first obtained the plates and interpreters. He also provided material support, including paper, for the translation and visited Joseph Smith several times during the translation period. He likely would have been permitted to observe Joseph translating. In his account, Joseph Knight describes Joseph Smith's reaction to obtaining the interpreters and gold plates and how he used the "glasses" in translating.

But he seemed to think more of *the glasses or the urim and thummim* than he did of the Plates for says he I can see any thing they are Marvelous Now they are written in Characters and I want them translated Now he was Commanded not to let no one see those things But a few for witness at a givin time.

... Now he Bing an unlearned man did not know what to Do. then the Lord gave him Power to Translate himself then ware the Larned men Confounded, for he By the means he found with the plates he Could translate those Caricters Better than the Larned. Now the way he translated was he *put the urim and thummim into his hat* and Darkned his Eyes then he would take a sentence and it would apper in Brite Roman Letters then he would tell the writer and he would write it then <that would go away> the next sentence would Come and so on

But if it was not Spelt rite it would not go away till it was rite so we see it was marvelous thus was the hol translated. Now when he Began to translate he was poor and was put to it for provisions and had no one to write for him But his wife and his wifes Brother would sometimes write a little for him through the winter.³⁹

This account confirms that the “glasses or the urim and thummem” were used in translating, not by wearing them, but by placing them in a hat.⁴⁰

Joseph Smith’s brother William may have also witnessed the Book of Mormon translation in the earliest days. If not, he must have been privy to discussions about the process. In a pamphlet that he published in 1883, he wrote,

He translated them by means of the Urim and Thummim, (which he obtained with the plates), and the power of God. The manner in which this was done was by looking into the Urim and Thummim, which was placed in a hat to exclude the light, (the plates lying near by covered up), and reading off the translation, which appeared in the stone by the power of God.⁴¹

William Smith’s statement agrees with those of Knight and Harris that the interpreters were used by placing them in a hat.

The remaining firsthand accounts of translation describe Joseph Smith using a single seer stone rather than the two interpreter stones to translate. David Whitmer indicated in his letter to the *Kansas City Daily Journal* that the interpreters were not used after the loss of the 116 manuscript pages. Whitmer’s statement is supported by a letter written by Emma Smith to Emma Pilgrim in 1870, in which she describes Joseph Smith’s brown seer stone: “Now, the first part

my husband translated, was translated by the use of the Urim, and Thummim, and that was the part that Martin Harris lost, after that he used a small stone, not exactly black, but was rather a dark color.”⁴²

Emma Smith was interviewed in 1879 by her son Joseph Smith III, who was careful to verify that he had recorded her words correctly: “These questions and the answers she had given to them, were read to my mother by me ... and were affirmed by her.”⁴³ In the transcript of the interview, she speaks of the manner of translation and of her belief in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon:

In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us. ... He had neither manuscript nor book to read from. ... If he had had anything of the kind he could not have concealed it from me. ... The plates often lay on the table without any attempt at concealment, wrapped in a small linen table cloth....

Joseph Smith ... could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter, let alone a book like the Book of Mormon....

My belief is that the Book of Mormon is of divine authenticity — I have not the slightest doubt of it. I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for, when acting as his scribe, your father would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him. This was a usual thing for him to do. It would have been improbable that a learned man could do this; and for one so ignorant and unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible.⁴⁴

In early June of 1829, Joseph, Emma, and Oliver Cowdery moved to the Peter Whitmer home in Fayette, New York, to complete the translation, with Oliver Cowdery as the principal scribe. The translation was conducted in plain view of others, as described in 1870 by Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery, David Whitmer’s sister who later married Oliver Cowdery:

I cheerfully certify that I was familiar with the manner of Joseph Smith’s translating the Book of Mormon. He translated

the most of it at my Father's house. And I often sat by and saw and heard them translate and write for hours together. Joseph never had a curtain drawn between him and his scribe while he was translating. He would place the director in his hat, and then place his face in his hat, so as to exclude the light.⁴⁵

Both Elizabeth Cowdery and David Whitmer retained a firm belief in the Book of Mormon the remainder of their lives. David Whitmer, having given many interviews to newspaper reporters and other interested persons and often being misquoted, issued a corrective statement in 1879 through his friend, John Traughber:

With the sanction of David Whitmer, and by his authority, I now state that he does not say that Joseph Smith ever translated in his presence by aid of Urim and Thummim; but by means of one dark colored, opaque stone, called a "Seer Stone," which was placed in the crown of a hat, into which Joseph put his face, so as to exclude the external light. Then, a *spiritual light* would shine forth, and *parchment would appear* before Joseph, upon which was a line of characters from the plates, and under it, the translation in English; at least, so *Joseph said*.⁴⁶

This statement names Joseph Smith as the ultimate source of information.⁴⁷ It also names Joseph Smith's dark seer stone as the instrument used. While Joseph Smith, his mother, Oliver Cowdery, Wilford Woodruff, and some others close to him consistently referred to Joseph Smith's seer stone as urim and thummim, others, including Joseph Knight, Emma Smith, and David Whitmer, were content to call it a seer stone or glass and reserved *urim and thummim* for the interpreters. David Whitmer was a firm believer in the sacred use of seer stones and consistently testified that Joseph Smith translated by the "gift and power of God."⁴⁸

David Whitmer's statement agrees with those of the other translation witnesses that the instrument was placed in a hat, which served to exclude the light. Like Joseph Knight, Whitmer mentions the appearance of words, but describes the translation in terms even more suggestive of a visionary experience. A "parchment would appear" by "spiritual light" and on it, the Book of Mormon text.⁴⁹ This accords with the visionary experiences of Lehi, Ezekiel, and John, in which a text appeared on an envisioned "book." The book Lehi saw in vision would have most likely been a "roll of a book" like that read by Ezekiel in his great vision. The

standard books at the time of Lehi and Ezekiel were rolls of papyrus or leather. By the time John envisioned a “little book,” writing on sheets of parchment was becoming more common.⁵⁰

None of these accounts indicate words appearing *on* a stone, as is sometimes assumed. The words simply “appear” (Joseph Knight’s account), or they appear “in the hat” (David Whitmer’s 1881 letter) or “*in* the stone” (William Smith’s account) or on a “parchment” that “would appear before Joseph” (Whitmer’s 1879 account). Martin Harris had indicated that a person might “see anything we wished” by “looking into” stones placed in a hat. These different descriptions are all consistent with one another if the translation was a visionary experience. In the darkness of Joseph Smith’s hat, a stone may not have been visible at all. As he gazed in the direction of the stone(s) and saw a vision of words on parchment, he may have thought of the vision as appearing in or through the stone(s).

David Whitmer published a pamphlet in 1887 in which he testified that he was “an eye-witness to the translation of the greater part of the Book of Mormon” and again shared his understanding of the translation process:

God gave to an unlearned boy, Joseph Smith, the gift to translate it by the means of a STONE. See the following passages concerning the “*Urim and Thummin*,” *being the same means* and one by which the Ancients received the word of the Lord. (1 Sam. xxviii:6. Neh. vii:65. Ezra ii:63. Num. xxvii:21. Deut. xxxiii:8. Exodus xxviii:30. Lev. viii:8). But this is a great stumbling-block to the people now. They cannot understand why God would work in this manner to bring forth his word; and why he would choose such a man as Joseph Smith to translate it; and they think the canon of scripture is full: and that angels do not minister unto men in these days....

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the *spiritual light* would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment *would appear* and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother

Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated *by the gift and power of God*, and not by any power of man....

At times when Brother Joseph would attempt to translate, he would look into the hat in which the stone was placed, he found he was *spiritually blind* and could not translate. He told us that his mind dwelt too much on earthly things, and various causes would make him incapable of proceeding with the translation. When in this condition he would go out and pray, and when he became sufficiently humble before God, he could then proceed with the translation....

Brother Joseph did not write a word of the Book of Mormon; it was already written by holy men of God who dwelt upon this land. God gave to Brother Joseph *the gift to see* the sentences in English, when he looked into the hat in which was placed the stone. Oliver Cowdery had the same gift at one time.⁵¹

Whitmer's account of the translation process is consistent with those of other witnesses and puts the translation in a larger context of divine revelation. The means by which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon was, according to Whitmer, the same means by which he received other early revelations and the same means by which ancient Israel's high priests received the word of God through the Urim and Thummim. Specifically, "the gift and power of God" by which Joseph Smith translated was "the gift to see."

These are the surviving firsthand accounts of those who witnessed or likely witnessed Joseph Smith translating the Book of Mormon. To these principal accounts can be added the firsthand accounts of those who apparently heard Joseph Smith describe some aspect of the translation process. There are only seven such accounts that provide any relevant information beyond Joseph Smith's stating that he translated by the gift or power of God or by urim and thummim.⁵² Although the authors of these accounts were unbelieving of or even hostile toward Joseph Smith's claims, their statements agree in most details with the accounts of the believing witnesses.⁵³

The earliest known account of the translation process was published in August of 1829 by Jonathan A. Hadley, editor of the *Palmyra Freeman*, after Joseph Smith came to him seeking a publisher for the Book of Mormon. Hadley reported that Joseph Smith had found a "huge pair of Spectacles" with the engraved gold plates and that "by placing the Spectacles in a hat, and

looking into it, Smith could (*he said so*, at least) interpret these characters⁵⁴ Hadley's report that the interpreters were used by placing them in a hat accords with the statements of Harris, Knight, and William Smith.

Ezra Booth, a Methodist minister who converted to Mormonism after meeting Joseph Smith, was one of the first high priests and missionaries in the Church, but he soon became disillusioned with Joseph Smith and returned to his former religion. In a letter to another Methodist minister dated October 24, 1831, Booth notes the similarity between Joseph Smith's visions of celestial beings and his translation of the Book of Mormon:

Smith is the only person at present, to my knowledge, who pretends to hold converse with the inhabitants of the celestial world. It seems *from his statements*, that he can have access to them, when and where he pleases. He does not pretend that he sees them with his *natural*, but with his *spiritual*, eyes; and *he says* he can see them as well with his eyes shut, as with them open. So also in *translating*. — *The subject stands before his eyes in print*, but it matters not whether his *eyes are open or shut*; he can see as well one way as the other.

...

These treasures were discovered several years since, by the means of the dark glass, the same with which *Smith says* he translated the most of the Book of Mormon.⁵⁵

The "dark glass" that Joseph Smith used to translate "most of the Book of Mormon" in Booth's account accords with the stone of "rather a dark color" mentioned by Emma Smith and the "dark colored, opaque stone" mentioned by David Whitmer. Booth's claim that Joseph Smith himself provided this information suggests that, at least in his private conversations, he was initially more open about the translation process and objects used.

According to Booth's letter, Joseph Smith could see the translation of the Book of Mormon whether his eyes were "open or shut," just as when he saw visions of heavenly beings. As traditionally understood, the visions of Lehi, Ezekiel, and other prophets were dreamlike experiences in which persons and objects were seen that were not physically present, or were seen with other than the physical eyes. These are traditionally called "imaginative visions."⁵⁶ *Imaginative* in this sense does not mean *imaginary*. It simply means that a vision is perceived through the brain's imaginative faculty or the mind's eye, as one perceives a dream or other

vivid mental image, rather than through the physical senses. Booth and others of his time would say such visions were perceived by “spiritual eyes” with “spiritual light,” rather than by the “natural eye.” In D&C 76, Joseph Smith relates seeing such a vision: “And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the *eyes of our understandings* and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about. And we ... saw the holy angels, and them who are sanctified before his throne. ... And while we were yet *in the Spirit*, the Lord commanded that we should write the *vision*” (D&C 76:19–28). Imaginative visions include revelatory dreams, which are described in the Bible as visions of the night (Job 4:13; 33:15, Genesis 46:2; Daniel 2:19, 26–18; 7:1–2). Revelatory dreams and visions are also equated in the Book of Mormon, as Lehi said: “Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision” (1 Nephi 8:2).

Nancy Towle, an itinerant preacher who met with Joseph Smith in October of 1831, reported in 1832 that he claimed to have found with the gold plates, “a pair of ‘interpreters,’ (as he called them,) that resembled spectacles; by *looking into* which, he could read a writing engraven upon the plates, though to himself, in a tongue unknown.” The translated book, she learned, was regarded by believers as the “Word of Inspiration.”⁵⁷

In a sworn statement in about 1833, Henry Harris, a neighbor of the Smiths in New York, recalled how Joseph Smith described the translation: “By looking on the plates he said he could not understand the words, but it was made known to him that he was the person that must translate them, and on *looking through the stone* was enabled to translate.”⁵⁸

Peter Bauder, a minister who interviewed Joseph Smith at the Whitmer home in 1830, reported in a book he published in 1834 that Joseph Smith told of having “obtained a parcel of plate resembling gold, on which were engraved what he did not understand, only by the aid of a glass which he also obtained with the plate, by which means he was enabled to translate the characters on the plate into English.”⁵⁹ Bauder refers to the interpreters as a “glass,” a local term for seer stone.⁶⁰

Truman Coe, a pastor in Kirtland, Ohio, reported the following in 1836:

The manner of translation was as wonderful as the discovery. By putting his finger on one of the characters and imploring divine aid, then looking through the Urim and Thummim, he would see the import written in plain English on a screen placed before him. After delivering this to his emanuensi, he would again proceed in the same manner and obtain the

meaning of the next character, and so on till he came to a part of the plates which were sealed up, and there was commanded to desist: and he says he has a promise from God that in due time he will enable him to translate the remainder. *This is the relation as given by Smith.* ...The book thus produced, is called by them The Book of Mormon, and is pretended to be of the same Divine Inspiration and authority as the Bible.⁶¹

Coe's mention that the translated text would appear on a "screen" accords with David Whitmer's mention of the text appearing on "something like parchment." Coe's account differs from those of Whitmer and others in having Joseph Smith interacting physically with the plates, which may describe Joseph Smith's initial perusal of the plates rather than his later manner of translating with the plates covered.

In a letter to his wife in 1840, Mathew Davis, a journalist, summarized a speech he heard Joseph Smith give the previous evening: "The Mormon Bible, he said, was communicated to him, direct from heaven. If there was such a thing on earth, as the author of it, then he (Smith) was the author; but the idea that he wished to impress was, that he had penned it as dictated by God."⁶²

Although "dictated" usually implies that words are spoken aloud, that interpretation is not consistent with any of the other principal accounts of translation. Based on the rest of the statement, Joseph Smith was more likely trying to communicate the idea that the words of the Book of Mormon were divinely revealed. In any case, Davis's account portrays the translation as a revelation of words rather than of ideas or impressions and as a direct revelation from God rather than something produced in Joseph Smith's mind or by a translating device.

These are the principal accounts of the translation of the Book of Mormon. Taken together, they suggest that Joseph Smith would look seemingly "into" or "through" one or more stones in the darkened interior of a hat and see the translation written on a parchment or similar surface. This description is consistent with a visionary experience.

Joseph Smith's Other Revelations by Seer Stone

There are several accounts of Joseph Smith's using a stone to translate or receive other revelations besides the translation of the Book of Mormon. I will here mention those that are most credible.⁶³ In doing so, it is not my intention to settle the discussion of how Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham or the Book of Moses or how he received any other revelation. I will attempt only to demonstrate that when there is credible

evidence that Joseph Smith used a stone to receive a revelation, the evidence is consistent with revelation by imaginative vision.

In April of 1829, during the translation of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had a difference of opinion regarding whether John the Revelator died or was to continue living until the second coming of Christ. In his history, Joseph Smith recounts:

We mutually agreed to settle [it] by the Urim and Thummim, and the following is the word which we received.

A Revelation given to Joseph Smith jr, and Oliver Cowdery in Harmony Pensylvania April 1829. when they desired to know whether John, the beloved disciple, tarried on earth. — Translated from parchment, written and hid up by himself. [D&C 7]⁶⁴

As in David Whitmer's account of the translation of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith is here represented as obtaining a translation from a piece of parchment he apparently saw in vision.⁶⁵

Four individuals close to Joseph Smith made statements suggesting he used a stone in translating the Book of Abraham.⁶⁶ As Wilford Woodruff was assisting with setting the type for the first printing of the Book of Abraham, he recorded in his journal that the Lord was blessing Joseph "the Seer" to "translate through the *urim & Thummim* Ancient records & Hieroglyphics as old as Abraham or Adam."⁶⁷ Upon publishing the first installment of the Book of Abraham in England, Parley Pratt announced, "The record is now in course of translation by means of the Urim and Thummim." According to a report of a discourse by Orson Pratt in 1859, he saw Joseph Smith "translating, by inspiration, the Old and New Testaments, and the inspired book of Abraham from Egyptian papyrus."⁶⁸ In an 1878 discourse, he reportedly spoke of Joseph Smith's translating the Book of Abraham "by the aid of the Urim and Thummim."⁶⁹ Also, Howard Coray, who first met Joseph Smith in 1840 and served as his clerk in 1840 and 1841, wrote in a letter to his daughter that he had "seen him translate by the Seer's stone."⁷⁰

The only firsthand account of the translation of the Book of Abraham is from William Parrish. He served as scribe for a portion of the translation and later reported, "I have set by his side and penned down the translation of the Egyptian Hieroglyphicks as he claimed to receive it by direct inspiration of Heaven."⁷¹ Parrish's use of the word *inspiration* does not rule out the possibility the Book of Abraham was revealed in the same manner as the Book of Mormon, since the statements of Oliver

Cowdery, Emma Smith, Nancy Towle, and Truman Coe all connect the Book of Mormon translation with inspiration as well as with the use of stones. That the heavenly “inspiration” by which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham may have come in visionary form is suggested in the revelation calling Warren Parrish as Joseph Smith’s scribe: “Therefore this shall be his calling . . . the Lords Scribe, for the Lords *Seer*.”⁷² Parrish was called to write for a *seer*. Wilford Woodruff, in reporting the use of the “urim and thummim” to translate the book, also called Joseph Smith a *seer*. John Whitmer’s history of the Church also portrays Joseph Smith as translating the Book of Abraham in the capacity of *seer*: “Joseph the *Seer* saw these Record[s] and by the revelation of Jesus Christ could translate these records.”⁷³

The only other account of the translation of the Book of Abraham from a potential witness is from Lucy Smith, although it is secondhand at best. A group of Quakers who visited Lucy Smith reported in 1846 that she told them that

when Joseph was reading the papyrus, he *closed his eyes*, and held a hat over his face, and that the revelation came to him; and where the papyrus was torn, he could *read* the parts that were destroyed equally as well as those that were there; and that scribes sat by him writing, as he expounded.⁷⁴

This account parallels the account of William Parrish, with the scribe sitting by Joseph and writing as the revelation was received. It also parallels David Whitmer’s account of the Book of Mormon translation, with Joseph Smith reading from a document that appears to him when he covers his face with a hat. And it accords with Booth’s assertion that Joseph Smith claimed to see text while translating with his eyes closed.

Joseph Smith may have also used a *seer* stone in his translation of the Book of Moses. The Book of Moses includes major additions to Genesis revealed to Joseph Smith at the beginning of his translation of the Bible. In 1880, Lorenzo Brown reported having heard Joseph Smith tell of using a stone to “read” the Bible:

After I got through translating the Book of Mormon, I took up the Bible to read with the Urim and Thummim. I read the first chapter of Genesis and I saw the things as they were done. I turned over the next and the next, and the whole passed before me like a grand panorama; and so on chapter after chapter until I read the whole of it. I saw it all!⁷⁵

It is unlikely that Brown could accurately quote Joseph Smith from memory after more than four decades, but this account does suggest that, after translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith somehow used a seer stone for a visionary experience relating to the Bible. If he used a stone for some sort of visionary scan of the Bible, that may help explain a statement he made in June of 1833. As he was nearing completion of his Old Testament translation, he reported, “We have not found the Book of Jasher, nor any other of the lost books mentioned in the Bible as yet; nor shall we obtain them at present.”⁷⁶ *Found* is an odd word to use in the context of translation but would have made sense if Joseph Smith had been translating by seer stone, which, according to Mosiah 8:13, could be used to “look for” things.⁷⁷

On the other hand, Orson Pratt is reported to have said in a discourse in 1874 that he was present many times while Joseph Smith “was translating the New Testament” and wondered “why he did *not* use the Urim and Thummim, as in translating the Book of Mormon.” Joseph Smith reportedly replied that “the Lord gave him the Urim and Thummim when he was inexperienced in the Spirit of inspiration,” but he had now “advanced so far that he understood the operations of that Spirit and did not need the assistance of that instrument.”⁷⁸ This is a late, third-hand account of what Joseph Smith said. Its accuracy is doubtful, since Joseph Smith continued to use seer stones after translating the Book of Mormon, and even after his revision of the New Testament.⁷⁹ He received at least one revelation by seer stone during the period he was translating the Bible.⁸⁰ Even if accurate, this account does not address the translation of the Book of Moses, which was completed before the translation of the New Testament began. Also, the translation of the Book of Moses and the translation of the New Testament likely involved two different processes. While Joseph Smith translated the New Testament mostly by making short edits that served to smooth, modernize, and make doctrinal clarifications in the text,⁸¹ he translated the Book of Moses by dictating a series of long texts, called revelations in the manuscripts, that are more reminiscent of his dictations of the Book of Mormon and other early revelations by seer stone.⁸²

Joseph Smith dictated the first revelations of the Book of Moses to Oliver Cowdery, Emma Smith, and John Whitmer, who had served as scribes for the Book of Mormon translation. Then, in early December, Sidney Rigdon was called as his scribe to “write for him; and the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in mine own bosom” (D&C 35:20). Rigdon took over the duties of scribe from John Whitmer during

Joseph Smith's dictation of a part of the Book of Moses containing the words of Enoch. In his history of the Church, John Whitmer left the closest thing we have to a witness account of the translation of the Book of Moses:⁸³

Now, after the Lord had made known, what he would that his servant Sidney should do, he went to writing the things which the Lord *showed* unto his servant the *seer*. The Lord made known, some of the hidden things of the kingdom of God; for he unfolded the prophesy of Enoch the sevanth from Adam. After they had written this prophecy, the Lord spake to them again, and gave further directions. Behold I say unto you, that it is not expedient in me that ye should *translate* any more until ye shall go to the Ohio; and this because of the enemy and for your sakes.⁸⁴

That the Lord “showed” this record to his “seer” suggests that the translation was a visionary experience.

The introductory headings of D&C sections 3, 6, 7, 11, 14, and 17 indicate that they were given by “the Urim and Thummim,” which was, at the time, the brown seer stone.⁸⁵ Joseph Smith used his seer stones for other revelations as well. Regarding the revelation in D&C 18, David Whitmer stated: “I was present when Brother Joseph received this revelation through the stone.”⁸⁶ Whitmer described how Joseph Smith used the brown stone to receive another revelation soon after completing the Book of Mormon translation: “Brother Hyrum ... persuaded Joseph to inquire of the Lord about it. Joseph concluded to do so. He had not yet given up the stone. Joseph looked into the hat in which he placed the stone, and received a revelation.”⁸⁷ When Orson Pratt asked him for a revelation in November of 1830 (see D&C 34), Joseph Smith is reported to have “produced a small stone called a seer stone, and putting it into a hat soon commenced speaking.”⁸⁸ As this revelation was given after Joseph Smith gave his brown seer stone to Oliver Cowdery, the “small stone” mentioned was most likely the white one.

These statements suggest that Joseph Smith used the same technique — looking “into a hat in which he placed a stone” — to receive his other early revelations, as he used in translating the Book of Mormon and that revelation by seer stone was a visual or visionary experience (he “looked”). Lucy Smith was even more explicit than David Whitmer in equating Joseph Smith's method of translating the Book of Mormon with his method of receiving other revelations by seer stone. In her history

recorded in 1844 and 1845, she reports how Joseph Smith received one unexpected revelation:

As he one morning applied them [“the urim and thummim”] to his eyes to look upon the record *instead of the words of the book* being given him he was commanded to write a letter to one David Whitmore.⁸⁹

The difference between “translating” an ancient record and receiving a commandment by urim and thummim was not the mode of revelation, but the content of the message. There is no indication in any of these accounts that the use of a stone to either translate or to receive other revelations was anything more than a purely visual, or visionary, experience. Joseph Smith was known for his many visions, and there is no reason that his visions could not have included written words. Joseph Smith’s ability to see words in vision is further supported by records of patriarchal blessings he gave to David Whitmer and other leaders at about the same time he was translating the Book of Abraham. After recording Whitmer’s blessing, Oliver Cowdery noted that it was “given like the foregoing blessings, by *vision*, to Joseph Smith, jr. the *Seer*, September 22, 1835.”⁹⁰ Cowdery didn’t say whether a seer stone was used to see these visions, but he did record that a patriarchal blessing given to Newel K. Whitney just two weeks later was “through the Urim and Thummim.”⁹¹

In 1844, William Clayton recorded in his journal that Joseph Smith said he had learned “the g[rand] key word ... the first word Adam spoke,” and that he “found the word by the Urim and Thummim.”⁹² One would normally speak of receiving — not finding — a revelation. As with Joseph Smith’s statement regarding his Bible translation and the Book of Jasher, *found* makes sense here for a visionary experience in light of Mosiah 8:13. This time the use of a seer stone is explicit.

These are the most credible accounts of Joseph Smith’s use of seer stones to receive revelations of texts other than the Book of Mormon. They are consistent with the idea that the revelations came as visions of written documents like those seen by Lehi and other ancient seers. They also illuminate how Joseph Smith may have understood the term *translate* in reference to the ancient records he revealed. To translate as he did was to produce a translated text, not in the conventional manner as a scholar would, but as a seer, by “seeing” the translation and dictating it to a scribe.

Seer Stones and Translation in the Doctrine and Covenants

In D&C 130, Joseph Smith expresses his belief that the celestialized earth, the place where God dwells, and the white stone mentioned in Revelation 2:17 will all be urim and thummim by which things are made manifest to celestial beings.

In answer to the question — Is not the reckoning of God’s time, angel’s time, prophet’s time, and man’s time, according to the planet on which they reside? I answer, Yes. But there are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have belonged to it. The angels do not reside on a planet like this earth; But they reside in the presence of God, on a globe like a sea of glass and fire, where all things for their glory are manifest, past, present, and future, and are continually before the Lord. The place where God resides is a great Urim and Thummim. This earth, in its sanctified and immortal state, will be made like unto crystal and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon, whereby all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order, will be manifest to those who dwell on it; and this earth will be Christ’s. Then the white stone mentioned in Revelation 2:17, will become a Urim and Thummim to each individual who receives one, whereby things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms will be made known; and a white stone is given to each of those who come into the celestial kingdom, whereon is a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. The new name is the key word. (D&C 130:4–11)

The introductory heading of D&C 130 does not present these statements as revelation but calls them “items of instruction given by Joseph Smith.” They represent an informal conversation between Joseph Smith and William Clayton, reconstructed ultimately from an entry in Clayton’s journal from April of 1843, perhaps informed by recollections of the conversation by others.⁹³ They are Joseph Smith’s interpretation of the seas of glass mentioned in Revelation 4:6 and 15:2 and the white stone of Revelation 2:17 that will be given to “him that overcometh.” The manifestations of these urim and thummim, as Joseph Smith portrays them, are visual in nature — writing on a stone; past, present, and future revealed in a sea of glass and “continually before the Lord.” Joseph Smith interprets these biblical references as celestial rather than earthly

phenomena. He applies them to his own seer stones only by analogy. Immediately following the phrase, “continually before the Lord,” in Clayton’s journal is this sentence: “The Urim & Thummim is a small representation of this globe.” The object that served as “the Urim and Thummim” in 1843 was Joseph Smith’s white, egg-shaped seer stone. That stone was not a miniature version of a celestial sea of fire and glass but rather a “representation,” or symbol of one. We need not suppose that Joseph Smith’s stone functioned in the same way as a celestial globe any more than any other symbol functions like the thing it represents. The sacramental bread is a representation of Christ, but the bread itself does not cleanse us of sin. In religious usage, symbols such as broken bread, baptismal water, and anointing oil do not function in some mysterious technological manner. They function as aids to faith. A stone that represented a fiery celestial globe in Joseph Smith’s mind might have served to spark the faith he needed for divine revelation.

The Lord’s instructions to Oliver Cowdery in D&C 9:7–9 to “study it out in your mind” and “ask me if it be right” are sometimes interpreted as a description of the process by which Joseph Smith translated. The context of these verses suggests an alternative view — that these instructions refer to the expediency of Oliver Cowdery’s *desire* to translate rather than to his translating technique, and were provided to teach him how to obtain the faith he would need to overcome his fear so he could translate by seer stone.⁹⁴

During the period Joseph Smith was translating the Book of Mormon, the Lord gave him the following commandment, which provides some context regarding his gift of translation:

And you have a *gift to translate* the plates; and this is the *first gift* that I bestowed upon you; and I have commanded that you should pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this; for I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished. (D&C 5:4)

According to this passage, Joseph Smith’s first and only spiritual gift up to that point was the “gift to translate.” Yet, even before he began translating, he was seeing visions (JS-H 1:21–58). It was his claim of seeing visions that provoked the persecution of ministers who believed divine visions had ceased with the apostles (JS-H 1:21–27, 58). If Joseph Smith’s “gift to translate the plates” was his “first gift,” it must have been the same as his gift for seeing visions.⁹⁵

References to Joseph Smith’s gift elsewhere support this conclusion. Brigham Young referred to Joseph Smith’s use of seer stones as “the gift

of seeing.”⁹⁶ Apostle Orson Pratt equated “the gift of seeing” with the use of the Urim and Thummim, and David Whitmer equated it with the ability to see visions.⁹⁷ Perhaps the Lord was referring to the gift of seeing when he spoke of “the sight and power to translate”:

Behold, thou art Joseph, and thou wast chosen to do the work of the Lord, but because of transgression, if thou art not aware thou wilt fall. But remember, God is merciful; therefore, repent of that which thou hast done. ... Except thou do this, thou shalt be delivered up and *become as other men, and have no more gift*. And when thou deliveredst up that which *God had given thee sight and power to translate*, thou deliveredst up that which was sacred into the hands of a wicked man. ... And this is the reason thou hast lost thy privilege for a season — For thou hast suffered the counsel of thy director [“directors” in the earliest manuscript] to be trampled upon from the beginning. (D&C 3:9–15)⁹⁸

Here again, the Lord indicates that the “sight and power to translate” is Joseph Smith’s only gift — that if he were to lose it, he would “become as other men,” with “no more gift.” Joseph Smith had temporarily lost the use of this gift when the seer stones (“directors”) were taken from him because he had suffered the counsel received through them to be “trampled upon.”⁹⁹ Having lost his access to the “spiritual light” of divine visions, his “mind became darkened” (D&C 10:1–3).

The idea that Joseph Smith produced the inaugural work of his ministry by seeing visions is consistent with these scriptures.¹⁰⁰ It is also consistent with the role of visions in restoration as portrayed elsewhere in scripture. The absence of divine visions is associated with periods of apostasy, as at the time of Samuel’s birth: “The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision” (1 Samuel 3:1; see also Isaiah 29:10; Lamentations 2:9; Micah 3:6). The abundance of visions is associated with periods of restoration or revival: “And I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your ... old men shall dream, your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28; see also Moses 1; 6:27–42; Abraham 3; Nephi 5:2–5; Acts 2:16–17; JS-H 1:11–50). Accordingly, the Book of Mormon speaks of Joseph Smith bringing forth the Lord’s word as a “seer” at the commencement of the latter-day restoration (2 Nephi 3:11–13).

How Young Joseph Smith and His Contemporaries Used Seer Stones

Lucy Smith told of her son's use of "a urim and Thummim" for seeing visions:

The thing which [I] spoke of that Joseph termed a Key was indeed nothing more nor less than a *urim and Thummim* by which the angel manifested those things to him that were shown him *in vision* by the which also he could at any time ascertain the approach of danger Either to himself or the record and for this cause he kept these things constantly about his person.¹⁰¹

Always keeping the interpreters "about his person" would have been difficult because of their size and because he was commanded not to let anyone see them (JS-H 1:42). The urim and thummim by which Joseph Smith monitored the plates and by which the angel showed him things "in vision" likely included one or more of his own seer stones.¹⁰² One of the things the angel showed Joseph Smith in vision was the location of the plates: "While he was conversing with me about the plates, the *vision* was opened to my mind that I could see the place where the plates were deposited" (JS-H 1:42). Although Joseph Smith didn't mention using a seer stone for seeing this vision, people close to him, including Brigham Young, reported that he did use a stone to locate the plates.¹⁰³ Martin Harris, in his interview with Joel Tiffany, also mentioned that Joseph Smith used a seer stone to find the plates, as well as to see visions of other things:

Joseph had a stone which was dug from the well of Mason Chase, twenty-four feet from the surface. *In* this stone he could see many things to my certain knowledge. It was by means of this stone he *first discovered* these plates.

In the first place, he told me of this stone, and proposed to bind it on his eyes, and run a race with me in the woods. A few days after this, I was at the house of his father in Manchester, two miles south of Palmyra village, and was picking my teeth with a pin while sitting on the bars. The pin caught in my teeth, and dropped from my fingers into shavings and straw. I jumped from the bars and looked for it. Joseph and Northrop Sweet also did the same. We could not find it. I then took Joseph on surprise, and said to him — I said, "Take your

stone,” I had never seen it, and did not know that he had it with him. He had it in his pocket. He took it and placed it in his hat — the old white hat — and placed his face in his hat. I watched him closely to see that he did not look one side; he reached out his hand beyond me on the right, and moved a little stick, and there I saw the pin, which he picked up and gave to me. I know he did not look out of the hat until after he had picked up the pin.

Joseph had had this stone for some time. There was a company there in that neighborhood, who were digging for money supposed to have been hidden by the ancients. . . . When Joseph found this stone, there was a company digging in Harmony, Pa., and they took Joseph to *look in* the stone for them, and he did so for a while, and then he told them the enchantment was so strong that he could not see, and they gave it up....

Joseph said the angel told him he must quit the company of the money-diggers. That there were wicked men among them. He must have no more to do with them. He must not lie, nor swear, nor steal. He told him to go and *look in* the spectacles, and he would show him the man that would assist him. That he did so, and he saw myself, Martin Harris, standing before him.¹⁰⁴

Here Martin Harris notes that Joseph Smith looked in his stone as well as in the “spectacles” to see things not present. Joseph Knight recorded in his journal that Joseph Smith saw his future wife, Emma Hale, in a seer stone: “Then he looked in his glass and found it was Emma Hale.”¹⁰⁵ Others who knew the young Joseph told of his ability to look into his stone (his “glass”) and see lost items and other things that were not physically present.¹⁰⁶ As Martin Harris noted, Joseph Smith’s seer stone was not so useful for finding buried money, and he was admonished by the angel to give up money-digging and to refrain from possibly related sins.¹⁰⁷ Isaac Hale, Emma’s unbelieving father, certainly would have agreed with the angel. In an affidavit, he expressed a disdain for Joseph Smith’s money-digging and an associated skepticism of his claim to have found and translated a sacred record:

I first became acquainted with JOSEPH SMITH, Jr. in November, 1825. He was at that time in the employ of a set of men who were called “money diggers;” and his occupation was that of *seeing*, or pretending to see by means of a stone

placed in his hat, and his hat closed over his face. In this way he pretended to discover minerals and hidden treasure.....

Smith stated to me, that he had given up what he called “glass-looking,” and that he expected to work hard for a living, and was willing to do so.....

The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret, was the same as when he *looked* for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat, and his hat over his face, while the Book of Plates were at the same time hid in the woods!¹⁰⁸

Joseph Smith’s preoccupation with the monetary value of buried gold disqualified him from obtaining the gold plates for a time, but he eventually left treasure hunting behind and focused on his prophetic calling.¹⁰⁹ The Lord may have been referring to Joseph Smith’s transformation from a glass-looker and money-digger to an old-time seer and revelator of ancient scripture when he said that “out of weakness” Joseph Smith would be “made strong” in revealing the Nephite record (2 Nephi 3:11–15).

Joseph Smith was not the only one of his time to use stones for “seeing.” Placing stones in hats to look for stolen, lost, or hidden things was an accepted practice among a portion of society in early 19th century America, especially in New England and upstate New York.¹¹⁰ About 1815, an 18-year-old boy in Rochester, New York, found “a round stone of the size of a man’s fist” and used it to search for buried treasure “after adjusting the stone in his hat.”¹¹¹ A local history reported that around 1812 in Maine, a rumor circulated of a boy who “could place a perforated stone which he had in his possession, in his hat, and immediately he could reveal the hiding places of buried treasure.”¹¹² A Palmyra resident, Sally Chase, used a seer stone in the same manner. Her friend said that “she would place the stone in a hat and hold it to her face, and claimed things would be brought to her view. Sallie let me have it several times, but I never could see anything in or through it.”¹¹³

Sally Chase was probably the one who taught Joseph Smith how to use a seer stone, after, according to a secondhand account, he “heard of a neighboring girl some three miles from him, who could look into a glass and see anything however hidden from others and he was seized with a strong desire to see her and her glass.”¹¹⁴ Joseph Smith soon gained the reputation for having “certain keys, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye.”¹¹⁵ The method by which Joseph Smith saw these things and by which he translated the Book of Mormon — looking

into a hat in which he had placed a stone — was not unique. It was the same method by which others saw images of things hidden, distant, or even nonexistent — things that must have been seen, not with the “natural eye,” but rather with the mind’s eye, or by “spiritual eyes.”

We need not assume that all these purported visions — or even all those seen by Joseph Smith — were from the same source. The fact that buried money seen with stones was rarely unearthed suggests some degree of imagination, hallucination, or deception in the purported visions. The Bible warns of lying visions (Ezekiel 13:6–9; Lamentations 2:14; Zechariah 10:2), which could refer to pretended visions, to hallucinations, or to visions from devils. The ancient warnings still apply today. The spiritualist craze beginning in the mid 19th century produced a plethora of communications purportedly from deceased persons, angels, Martians, and other extraterrestrials. These communications included envisioned writing.¹¹⁶ Hiram Page was deceived by Satan in writings he saw with the aid of a seer stone in 1830, perhaps because he was looking for what he “ought not” in seeking revelation regarding matters over which he had no stewardship (D&C 28:11–13; Mosiah 8:13). A few years later, James Brewster, a Mormon boy who had “the gift of seeing in vision distant objects not seen by the natural eye,” also saw religious themed texts in vision. Some of these texts were shown to Joseph Smith, who declared them to be false.¹¹⁷ Other members of the Church in Ohio also experienced strange visions.¹¹⁸ These visions and other unholy spiritual manifestations prompted revelations through Joseph Smith warning the Church of deceptions by false spirits and providing direction on how to avoid and detect false revelations (D&C 46; 50).

According to David Whitmer, even Joseph Smith was temporarily deceived by a false revelation telling some of the brethren to go to Canada to secure and then sell a copyright of the Book of Mormon. When the mission to Canada failed, Joseph Smith, according to Whitmer, “enquired of the Lord about it, and behold the following revelation came through the stone: ‘Some revelations are of God: some revelations are of men: and some revelations are of the devil.’” Whitmer concluded that the revelation was either “of the devil or of the heart of man.”¹¹⁹ Although the thought that Joseph Smith could have been temporarily deceived by a lying vision may be unsettling to some, it need not be. Being called of God does not make one infallible or immune to the deceptions of Satan.¹²⁰

According to Matthew, even Jesus was presented a vision by the devil after many days of fasting (Matthew 4:1–11).¹²¹ Thus, the source of

a revelation cannot necessarily be discerned based solely on the intent of the seeker or on the circumstances under which the revelation is given, whether those circumstances are conventional, such as fasting, or more unusual, such as having one's eyes covered with a hat containing a stone. To avoid deception, one must "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1–3; also 1 Corinthians 12:10; Moroni 7:14–19; D&C 46 and 50).¹²²

The Peculiar Optics of Seer Stones

Both the brown and the white seer stones that Joseph Smith could "look in" to translate or to "see" hidden things were opaque in the normal sense of the word. But what about the interpreters? As far as we know, only Joseph Smith, Martin Harris, David Whitmer, and Oliver Cowdery were permitted to see the interpreters and so could describe their optical qualities from personal observation. In addition, Lucy Smith was permitted to examine the interpreters through a cloth. She reported that they "consisted of two smooth stones con[n]ected with each other in the same way that old-fashioned spectacles are made."¹²³ This statement is consistent with Martin Harris's description of the interpreters quoted previously. All other statements describing the physical characteristics of the interpreter stones appear to be secondhand at best, except for one published by Joseph Smith in 1842 in a short history of the Church known as the "Wentworth Letter."¹²⁴ In this letter, the stones are described as "two transparent stones." This description seemingly contradicts Martin Harris's description of the stones as "white, like polished marble, with a few gray streaks." There are at least three plausible explanations for this seeming contradiction.

First, the description of the stones as transparent in the Wentworth Letter may have not been intended by Joseph Smith. The portion of the letter that describes the interpreters was taken from an earlier publication by Orson Pratt.¹²⁵ Pratt's text describes the stones as "two transparent stones, clear as crystal" (a reasonable assumption for "spectacles" in most circumstances). The phrase "clear as crystal" however, was omitted from the Wentworth letter, suggesting that, whatever optical qualities the stones had, they were not considered to be "clear as crystal" by whoever adapted Pratt's text for use in the letter. Had Joseph Smith written this portion of the letter himself, he might not have even chosen to call the stones "transparent." He did not describe the stones as transparent in any of his other writings. His earlier history simply describes them as "two stones."¹²⁶ Although the Wentworth letter is printed over his name, it is

unclear how involved he was in its composition and how much control he exerted over the text.¹²⁷

Second, as used in the Wentworth letter, *transparent* may have meant merely translucent. The word was sometimes used this way in Joseph Smith's day. For example, British diplomat James Morier published a book in 1818 in which he mentioned hot springs in Persia that produced "that beautiful *transparent* stone, commonly called Tabriz Marble."¹²⁸ Tabriz marble is a somewhat *translucent*, often banded, travertine used as a decorative stone in Persian palaces, tombs, and baths. The interpreter stones, described by Harris as "white, like polished marble, with a few gray streaks," may have been similar in appearance to Tabriz marble and perhaps even more like Joseph Smith's own white seer stone. Richard Robinson, who was shown the seer stone in 1900 by President Lorenzo Snow, described it as "the shape of an egg though not quite so large, of a gray cast something like granite but with white stripes running around it. It was *transparent* but with no holes."¹²⁹ Had Robinson or Morier seen the marble-like interpreter stones, they might have called them "transparent" as well.

Third, Joseph Smith may have been using *transparent* in a mystical or metaphorical sense. According to an 1851 history of the Palmyra area of New York, Martin Harris told Palmyra residents that the interpreter "stones or glass ... were opaque to all but the Prophet."¹³⁰ Ammon, in Mosiah 8:13, might have meant the same thing when he said, "And the things are called interpreters, and no man *can* look in them *except* he be commanded." Nineteenth-century seer stones likewise were transparent only for some individuals. William Stafford, who lived near the Smiths in Manchester, had, according to his son, a "stone which *some* thought they could *look through*."¹³¹ A notice in the 1842 issue of *Times and Seasons* warned of false revelations from a boy (James Brewster) who claimed to have "the gift of seeing and *looking through or into* a stone."¹³² Whether a seer stone was transparent depended not only on who was using it but also on how it was used. An article published in a Palmyra newspaper in 1825 described a stone used for treasure hunting "which *becomes* transparent when *placed in a hat and the light excluded* by the face of him who looks into it."¹³³ After describing the interpreter stones as having the appearance of white marble, Martin Harris said that he dared not "look *into* them by placing them in the hat," as though placing the stones in a hat would have made them transparent. In the same account, he also described Joseph Smith's own seer stone as transparent while in use: "*In* this stone he could see many things to my certain knowledge."

Whether a stone is transparent to physical light becomes irrelevant once it is placed in a hat and “the light excluded.” The stone disappears in the darkness and anything that is seen must be seen, in David Whitmer’s words, by “spiritual light.” According to a report of an interview by James H. Hart in 1884, David Whitmer described the disappearing act of Joseph Smith’s seer stone as it was replaced by a vision of sacred text:

The way it was done was thus: Joseph would place the seer-stone in a deep hat, and placing his face close to it, would see, *not the stone*, but what appeared like an oblong piece of parchment, on which the hieroglyphics would appear, and also the translation in the English language.¹³⁴

Wandle Mace, an early convert to Mormonism, related in his journal how a pair of stones were “looked into” to see visions:

In Staffordshire, a branch of the church was organized at the Potteries and Elder Alfred Cordon was president among those who embraced the gospel at this place were some who had practiced magic, or astrology. They had books which had been landed down for many generations, they also had two stones, about the size of goose eggs, they were *rough uncouth looking stones*, one end was flattened so they could be placed on a table.

When they wished to gain information from this source, they would place these stones upon a table, and kneel down and pray to one who they addressed as Sameazer, which they called charging the stones, when upon *looking into them they saw what they sought*, for instance, a young woman, whose sister joined the church and emigrated to Nauvoo, not hearing from her, became very anxious, and to learn something about her went to one of these astrologers, or magicians to inquire if her sister was well — or something about her. The magician after charging the stones as before explained, told her to *look into them*.

The young woman did so and said she saw her sister....

This is the substance of the narration as I heard it from Uncle John [Smith, uncle to Joseph Smith]. Sometime after I moved to Nauvoo I became acquainted with Elder Alfred Cordon, who related to me the same, he also said, the books with the stones were placed in his hands by these men after they joined

the church, and he gave them to Apostle George A. Smith who destroyed the books, but put the stones in the bottom of his trunk and brought them to Nauvoo. He gave them to Joseph the prophet who pronounced them to be a Urim and Thummim as good as ever was upon the earth but he said, “they have been consecrated to devils.”¹³⁵

This story describes even “rough uncouth” stones being looked into and becoming effectively transparent as they give way to imaginative visions. The story also affirms that visions can come from false spirits as well as from God and that Joseph Smith considered urim and thummim to be any visionary instrument, however profane, rather than a single biblical object.

The description of the interpreters and other seer stones as opaque objects that could nonetheless be looked into is consistent with the idea that Joseph Smith’s use of seer stones was not an interaction with physical light, but with the “spiritual light” of a visionary experience.

Revealed Texts and the Urim and Thummim in the Bible and Book of Abraham

The gift of visions was one of the means by which biblical prophets received revelation. The prophetic visions of Ezekiel and John included written text. Some of the important revelations of other biblical seers may have also involved visions of written text. The words of chastisement and warning that Lehi saw in his vision concerning Jerusalem resemble the prophetic warnings (“burdens” in the King James Bible) provided by vision to Old Testament prophets concerning Jerusalem and other wicked cities. For example, the book of Isaiah begins, “The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.” After the introduction, we read what Isaiah “saw” in vision — Jehovah’s words of warning: “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. ... I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross” (Isaiah 1:1–2). The thirteenth chapter of Isaiah tells of the seer seeing another verbal warning from God: “The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. ... I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness” (Isaiah 13:1–3). The first chapter of Amos is similar: “The words of Amos ... which he saw concerning Israel. ... Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof” (Amos 1:1-3). The first chapter of Micah also has a message from God being seen: “The

word of the LORD that came to Micah ... which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. ... Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field” (Micah 1:1–6).

These passages indicate that God’s messages of warning were somehow seen, and in the first chapter of Isaiah, a vision is explicitly indicated. It is plausible that these prophets saw visions in which the words of warning were only heard or that they saw future events in vision and composed the related messages themselves, but another way of reading these passages is that the prophets saw the messages in vision the way messages are usually *seen* — as writing.

We don’t know if Isaiah and other Old Testament seers used stones to see their visions, but the idea of looking in or on a stone to see written revelation is expressed in Revelations 2:17: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” Some Bible scholars have seen in the white stone an allusion to the Urim and Thummim used by the high priest in ancient Israel.¹³⁶ As indicated in D&C 130, Joseph Smith explicitly identified the white stone as a urim and thummim.

The Urim and Thummim is mentioned by name in the Hebrew Bible only seven times. Four of these are in the Pentateuch:

And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod. ... And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron’s heart, when he goeth in before the LORD: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually. (Exodus 28:28–30)

And he put upon him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and he girded him with the curious girdle of the ephod, and bound it unto him therewith. And he put the breastplate upon him: also he put in the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim. (Leviticus 8:7–8)

Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord. At his command they shall go out and at his command they

shall come in, both he and the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation. (Numbers 27:21 NASB)

And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; (Deuteronomy 33:8)

The Urim and Thummim consisted of one or more objects kept in the ephod, which was part of the sacred garment of Israel's high priest. A national leader who wanted divine counsel would convey his question to the high priest, who would "ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD" (Numbers 27:21; "inquire ... before the Lord" in the NASB).

The Urim and Thummim is next mentioned in 1 Samuel 28:6:

And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

Urim and Thummim is sometimes abbreviated as *Urim*, as it is here and in Numbers 27:21. This suggests that *Urim* represents the main function or idea of the instrument. Alternatively, given the lack of the definite article, *Urim* in this passage may be referring more generally to a class of oracular instruments, not just the divinely sanctioned Urim and Thummim. In fact, Saul could not have inquired of the Lord by *the* Urim and Thummim because Abiathar had fled with the ephod to the camp of David (1 Samuel 23:9). Saul may have attempted to use a different "urim." The last mentions of the Urim and Thummim in the Hebrew Bible are in Ezra 2:63 and Nehemiah 7:65, which are practically identical:¹³⁷

And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim. (Nehemiah 7:65)

Urim and *Thummim* are transliterated Hebrew words. They are traditionally interpreted as "light(s)" and "perfection(s)" based on their Hebrew associations and some renderings in the Septuagint, or as "revelation" and "truth" based on other ancient translations.¹³⁸ In the Septuagint's translation of Ezra 2:63 and Nehemiah 7:65, *Urim* is rendered by forms of the Greek *photizo*, which means "to shine" or "to give light." The translation of *Urim* as light suggests that revelation by Urim and Thummim may have been a visual or even a visionary experience. This interpretation is supported by another early source, the Peshitta. Its translations of these same passages indicate that what was

awaited was a priest who could “inquire” and who could “see.” Since there were presumably priests available who could see in the usual sense, a different kind of sight must have been indicated. The term for “see” here (*hz*) is used of seers in the Old Testament.¹³⁹ This suggests that what was needed may have been a priest who could inquire of God (Numbers 27:21) and “see” the answers in vision. Not all early translations of Ezra and Nehemiah support this idea. In the Vulgate, for example, *Urim* is interpreted more in the sense of enlightenment than of light, and a priest is called for who is “learned and mature” (*doctus atque perfectus*) or “learned and accomplished” (*doctus et eruditus*).

In some Bible translations, explicit mention of the Urim and Thummim also occurs in 1 Samuel 14:41, based on the rendering of this passage in the Septuagint:

Therefore Saul said, “O LORD God of Israel, why have you not answered your servant this day? If this guilt is in me or in Jonathan my son, O LORD, God of Israel, give Urim. But if this guilt is in your people Israel, give Thummim.” And Jonathan and Saul were taken, but the people escaped. Then Saul said, “Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan.” And Jonathan was taken. (1 Samuel 14:41–42 ESV)

This interpretation of the passage is key evidence for the dominant theory that the Urim and Thummim was a lot oracle.¹⁴⁰ The Hebrew Bible (Masoretic Text) does not mention the Urim and Thummim in this passage, but implies that an ordinary lot was used. The King James Bible, following the Hebrew, states,

Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect lot. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped. And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken.

It is not known if reference to the Urim and Thummim was somehow deleted from the Hebrew Bible, or if the Hebrew is correct, and reference to the instrument in the Septuagint was inserted to fill a perceived gap. Based on the available evidence, the latter explanation seems more likely.¹⁴¹ As presented in the Bible, the lot functioned by mechanically selecting among individuals or groups. The phrases used reflect the mechanical, impersonal nature of the selection process: when cast, the lot “came up” (Joshua 18:11; 19:10) or “came out” (Joshua 19: 17, 24, 32, 40; 21:4) or “fell” (1 Chronicles 26:14) to indicate the decision. The Urim

and Thummim, in contrast, functioned by providing verbal answers to explicit questions. In some cases, the answers were short and simple:¹⁴²

And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand. ... And David knew that Saul secretly practiced mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring here the ephod. Then said David, O LORD God of Israel ... Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech you, tell your servant. And the LORD said, *He will come down*. Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the LORD said, *They will deliver you up*. (1 Samuel 23:6, 9–12)

And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said to him, *Go up*. And David said, Where shall I go up? And he said, *To Hebron*. (2 Samuel 2:1)

And David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? will you deliver them into my hand? And the LORD said to David, *Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into your hand*. (2 Samuel 5:19.)

In other cases, the responses were more complex, or even diverged from the question asked:

Now it came about after the death of Joshua that the sons of Israel inquired of the Lord, saying, Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them? The Lord said, *Judah shall go up; behold, I have given the land into his hand*. (Judges 1:1–2 NASB)

And the children of Israel inquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, *Go up; for to morrow I will deliver them into your hand*. (Judges 20:27–28)

Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said to David, *Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah*. And David's men said to

him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? Then David inquired of the LORD yet again. And the LORD answered him and said, *Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into your hand.* (1 Samuel 23:2–4)

And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray you, bring me here the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. And David inquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, *Pursue: for you shall surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.* (1 Samuel 30:7–8)

Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, *Behold he has hid himself among the stuff.* (1 Samuel 10:22)

And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And when David inquired of the LORD, he said, *You shall not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come on them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the LORD go out before you, to smite the host of the Philistines.* (2 Samuel 5:22–24)

Complex and divergent responses like these could not have been readily produced by casting lots. They are more consistent with spiritual impressions or with visionary experiences in which words are heard or seen.

The ancient Urim and Thummim is certainly portrayed as a visionary instrument in the Book of Abraham. Abraham used the Urim and Thummim to see a great vision (Abraham 3:1–11). He not only saw stars and spirits but also heard God speak to him by the Urim and Thummim, which experience he described as talking with the Lord “face to face, as one man talketh with another.”¹⁴³

Seer Stones and Translation in the Book of Mormon

Echoing language in Omni 1:20, the title page of the Book of Mormon states that the book would “come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof. . . . The interpretation thereof by the gift of God.”

Seer stones or translation are described in several other passages in the Book of Mormon, all of which are provided or referenced below. The interpreters were given to the brother of Jared by the Lord:

And behold, these two stones will I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also with the things which ye shall write. For behold, the language which ye shall write I have confounded; wherefore I will cause in my own due time that these stones shall magnify to the eyes of men these things which ye shall write. And when the Lord had said these words, he showed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be; and he withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth. For he had said unto him in times before, that if he would believe in him that he could show unto him all things — it should be shown unto him; therefore the Lord could not withhold anything from him, for he knew that the Lord could show him all things. And the Lord said unto him: Write these things and seal them up; and I will show them in mine own due time unto the children of men. And it came to pass that the Lord commanded him that he should seal up the two stones which he had received. (Ether 3:23–28).

This passage indicates that the brother of Jared saw a great vision immediately after receiving the interpreter stones, with the stones being referenced again immediately after the vision. This suggests that the stones may have enabled him to see that vision, just as the Urim and Thummim would later enable Abraham to see his great vision. The passage also describes translation by the interpreters in an unusual way: “these stones shall magnify to the eyes of men these things which ye shall write.” If read literally, this statement would indicate that the stones had a physical function — to focus light and produce a larger image of the Jaredite engravings. The purpose of the interpreters, however, was to provide a translation, not an enlarged image of an unintelligible text. The statement is best interpreted figuratively, perhaps as indicating that the stones would serve to make the meaning of the Jaredite writing clear.

The Lord later commanded Moroni to again “seal up” the two interpreter stones with his copy or abridgment of the brother of Jared’s writing (Ether 4:5).

Ammon explained the use of the interpreters to King Limhi:

Now Ammon said unto him: I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records; for he has wherewith that he can *look*, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is *a gift from God*. And the things are called interpreters, and no man can *look in them* except he be commanded, lest he should *look for that he ought not* and he should perish. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer. ... And now, when Ammon had made an end of speaking these words the king rejoiced exceedingly, and gave thanks to God, saying: Doubtless a great mystery is contained within these plates, and these interpreters were doubtless prepared for the purpose of unfolding all such mysteries to the children of men. (Mosiah 8:13, 19)

According to Ammon, a seer can translate because he has a “gift from God” — perhaps the gift of visions — that enables him to “look.” He says that the interpreters are an instrument that a person might “look in” to “look for” things. Both Joseph Smith (as quoted by Joseph Knight) and Martin Harris (in his interview with Joel Tiffany) expressed their belief that a person could “see anything” by looking into the interpreters. That effectively describes an object that produces or elicits imaginative visions.

Alma told his son, Helaman, that the translation of the Jaredite record with the aid of the interpreters fulfilled, “thus far,” an old prophecy:

And now, I will speak unto you ... that ye preserve these interpreters. For behold ... the Lord said: I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light, that I may discover unto my people who serve me, that I may discover unto them the works of their brethren, yea, their secret works, their works of darkness, and their wickedness and abominations. And now, my son, these interpreters were prepared that the word of God might be fulfilled. ... And thus far the word of God has been fulfilled; yea, their secret abominations have been brought out of darkness and made known unto us. (Alma 37:21–26)

Alma’s statement that “a stone” would “shine forth in darkness unto light” may simply be a figurative portrayal of the revelation of ancient secrets, but it also accords with David Whitmer’s description of the “spiritual light” of vision that “would shine” in Joseph Smith’s darkened

hat. Moroni later alluded to Alma's words and perhaps to Joseph Smith's darkened hat, in referring to the future translation of the Nephite record:

And blessed be he that shall bring this thing to light; for it shall be brought out of darkness unto light, according to the word of God; yea, it shall be brought out of the earth, and it shall shine forth out of darkness, and come unto the knowledge of the people; and it shall be done by the power of God (Mormon 8:16).

The Book of Mormon's description of its own translation suggests it was revealed in the same manner as the sacred texts seen by Lehi, Ezekiel, and John (and perhaps Isaiah, Amos, and Micah):

Wherefore it shall come to pass, that the Lord God will deliver again the book and the words thereof to him that is not learned; and the man that is not learned shall say: I am not learned. *Then* shall the Lord God say unto him: The learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine own work; wherefore thou shalt *read the words* which I *shall* give unto thee." (2 Nephi 27:19–20)

After delivering "the book and the words thereof" (the gold plates with their inscriptions) to the unlearned man (Joseph Smith), the Lord would then say to him, "thou shalt read the words that I *shall* give thee." It was not the first set of words (the inscriptions on the plates) but the second set of words, given later, that the unlearned man would "read." This passage accords with witness accounts in describing the translation as a matter of *reading* divinely provided words. It also agrees with Joseph Smith's statement in his history that "the Lord provided spectacles for *to read* the book." The scriptures describe at least three ways by which God delivers words to his prophets: as mental impressions by the spirit of prophecy and revelation (D&C 8:2–5);¹⁴⁴ as audible speech, as when he spoke with Moses (Exodus 33:11); or as written text in vision, as when he delivered messages to Lehi and other seers. Of these, only the latter method would have enabled Joseph Smith to "read the words."

These Book of Mormon passages are all consistent with the idea that seer stones function by eliciting visions and that translating by seer stone is a matter of reading words provided in vision.¹⁴⁵

If Joseph Smith merely read the translated text, who composed it? B. H. Roberts proposed that Joseph Smith saw the translated text only after he had composed it in his own mind based on inspired thoughts.¹⁴⁶ Roberts's theory is not without its difficulties, and there are other

plausible sources for the translated text.¹⁴⁷ Perhaps God himself produced it. That may have been the belief of Joseph Smith, who reasoned, based on Mormon 9:34, that “the Lord, and not man, had to interpret, after the people were dead.”¹⁴⁸ Moroni, who was given “the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim” (D&C 27:5), has also been proposed as a possible heavenly translator.¹⁴⁹ God generally has mortals do his earthly work, including translating texts. It is plausible that sometime during the decades or centuries before the plates were delivered to Joseph Smith, one or more unknown mortals translated them by conventional means, and that translation, written on parchment, was what Joseph Smith saw in vision.¹⁵⁰

Why Would Joseph Smith have Needed a Hat and Stone to See Visions?

The hat over Joseph Smith’s face would have served to block out visual distractions so he could better attend to receiving revelation. By depriving his eyes of any clear image to focus on, the hat may have also served to interrupt the normal visual function and allow the brain’s internal imaging system to take over, as happens during dreaming sleep, sensory deprivation, and some forms of scrying.¹⁵¹

Joseph Smith’s seer stone might have had a similar function. One possibility is that it was something he gazed at to focus his attention and clear his mind of other concerns, as one might gaze at an object while meditating. Or, perhaps there is something about the visual appearance of seer stones that serves to disrupt the normal visual function and elicit visions.¹⁵² The problem with both of these explanations is that, with a hat pressed over the face “to exclude the light” in a lamp-lit room (or in the dark of night while money-digging), a seer stone would not have been much to look at, if visible at all. In the dark, a shiny stone would not be reflective, a translucent stone would not transmit light, a colored or patterned stone would fade to gray or black, and a dark stone like the one Joseph Smith used would have not likely been discernible at all. Also, 19th century seer stones were quite diverse, making it unlikely that their effect was due to any particular aspect of their appearance. Joseph Smith’s brown seer stone was smooth, shiny, opaque, dark-colored, and banded, but seer stones of his time could also be rough, dull, translucent, light-colored, plain, or variously patterned. The one physical characteristic 19th century seer stones had in common that set them apart from ordinary stones was that their appearance was *not* ordinary. They were each peculiar in some way that captured the interest

of a seer.¹⁵³ What made these stones effective at eliciting vision must not, then, have been any particular physical characteristic, but rather their psychological effect on or significance to the seer.¹⁵⁴ And that brings us into the realm faith.

Joseph Smith's First Vision came because of faith inspired by James 1:5–6: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith." (JS-H 1:11–16). His next sacred vision also came as a result of his faith, or his "full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation" (JS-H 1:29). Like all spiritual gifts, the gift of visions comes by faith, or in other words, expectation, confidence, or belief (Moroni 10:7–20). In telling the story of the great visions of the brother of Jared, Moroni explained the dependence of visions on belief:

And when the Lord had said these words, he showed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be; and he withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth. For he had said unto him in times before, that if he would *believe* ... that he could show unto him all things — it should be shown unto him; therefore the Lord could not withhold anything from him, for he knew that the Lord could show him all things. (Ether 3:25–26)

If faith is the principal requirement for visions, and if Joseph Smith translated by seeing visions, then his ability to do so would have depended primarily on his faith. The scriptures support this conclusion. When Oliver Cowdery desired the privilege to translate, the Lord told him, "ask ... that you may translate ... and according to your faith shall it be done" (D&C 8:11). In the Book of Mormon, the Lord says, regarding the eventual translation of the gold plates, "I am a God of miracles ... and I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith" (2 Nephi 27:22–24). Ammon observed that a seer could use the interpreters to "look and translate all records that are of ancient date" and that such miracles were possible "through faith" (Mosiah 8:13, 18). Every time Joseph Smith sat down with his scribe to translate, he would have needed the present faith to see a vision of the translated text. How might he have roused that faith?

Enoch was a seer who saw great visions, but not until he followed some rather strange instructions:

And the Lord spake unto Enoch, and said unto him: Anoint thine eyes with clay, and wash them, and *thou shalt see*. And he did so. And he beheld ... things which were not visible to the natural eye; and from thenceforth came the saying abroad in the land: A seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people. (Moses 6:35–36)

For Enoch, it was not looking into a hat, but anointing his eyes with clay, that enabled him to see visions as a seer. The Lord didn't need the clay to open Enoch's spiritual eyes. It was Enoch who needed the clay. Like the brother of Jared, he had to believe that the Lord could show him visions. God's promise that "thou shalt see" was the seed to that belief. The seed grew into sufficient faith as Enoch followed the Lord's precise instructions. Upon pressing the clay to his eyes and washing it off again, Enoch expected a new kind of sight, and that expectation, that belief, was the faith that enabled him to see "things which were not visible to the natural eye."

Expectation, or faith, operates in a similar manner in miraculous healings (D&C 46:19; Acts 14:9, 3 Nephi 17:8). For the most believing, a simple word of assurance may be enough to rouse the faith for the miracle to occur. The centurion's request of Jesus to "speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" was answered by Jesus's assurance, "go thy way; and as thou hast believed, it shall be done" (Matthew 8:5–13). More often, a physical act helps to rouse the healing faith. That physical act may be something that has special significance to the person being healed — a touch to the skin of the leper (Matthew 8:2–3), clay pressed on the eyes of the blind (John 9:6), an upward tug on the arm of the lame (Acts 3:1–6). It is not the action itself, but how that action affects a person's faith that is important. A woman with an issue of blood created her own faith-building scenario:

And a certain woman ... when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up. ... And he said unto her, Daughter, *thy faith* hath made thee whole. (Matthew 5:25–34)

Sometimes a physical object is helpful as an aid to faith. When certain Israelites were bitten by poisonous serpents, the Lord instructed Moses to make a brass serpent and to tell the people that whoever would look upon it would live (Numbers 21:5–9; John 3:14–15). Brass images don't

heal, and God didn't need one to heal the Israelites. But they needed faith to be healed, and the act of looking upon a physical object helped them attain the required faith in the healing power of their otherwise invisible God.

The acts or objects effective at producing faith vary by culture. Metal images representing gods inspired confidence in Moses's day. In Jesus's day, olive oil was associated with healing (Luke 10:34), and so James recommended that prayers by the elders on behalf of the sick be accompanied by "anointing ... with oil in the name of the Lord." (James 5:14–15). Yet James assured his readers that it was "the prayer of faith" that would heal them. Deriving our religious heritage from the New Testament, we follow the same practice of using olive oil in healing blessings. Now, as in James's day, the oil is a recommended aid, not an absolute requirement. Whether the person being anointed believes the oil to be miraculously infused with the healing power of God, or views it simply as a focal point for rousing faith, doesn't matter. What matters is the belief that healing can or will occur. Likewise, it did not matter how Joseph Smith believed seer stones to have functioned or what other purposes they were used for. In his culture, stones were associated with seeing visions, and that is what they would have given him the faith to do.

The function of seer stones in Joseph Smith's culture, then, may have been quite simple. They worked for those who believed in their efficacy and were naturally visionary (that is, who had "the gift of seeing"). For such an individual, a meaningful stone could prompt the faith (expectation) required to see a vision (or mere hallucination) from whatever source.

If Joseph Smith "translated" by seeing visions, he would have needed the faith to see those visions when he was ready to dictate and his scribe was ready to write. He would have needed faith "on demand." Through his earlier experiences of seeing visions with his stone and hat, he had developed an aid to faith that worked for him.¹⁵⁵ A stone in a hat would have been to Joseph Smith what clay on the eyes was to Enoch — a faith-producing ritual. The Urim and Thummim of the Bible may have similarly functioned as an aid to faith for seeing visions at will. Abraham used it for experiencing visions, and it later served to provide quick revelations to Israel's high priest on the battlefield and in other situations of national emergency.¹⁵⁶

The established Christianity of Joseph Smith's day could not teach him how to see divine visions — it rejected their very occurrence in the

modern age. But the art of seeing visions was still alive in folk religion, and so Joseph Smith became a glass-looker. Although that sounds strange in our day, all it means is that he was an old-time seer — a beholder of visions, a “visionary man.” In other words, he was a prophet-seer in the Old Testament tradition.¹⁵⁷

As physical objects used for spiritual communication, seer stones are analogous to the Urim and Thummim and teraphim of the Bible as well as to the crystal balls of spiritualism.¹⁵⁸ But Joseph Smith’s seer stones were neither crystal nor balls, and more important, he was not a wizard. In making use of the stones to receive revelations, he neither sought to conjure up the dead nor to summon familiar spirits, but to “enquire of the Lord” directly in doing God’s work.¹⁵⁹ In this way, Joseph Smith was more like Israel’s high priest, and his stone like the biblical Urim and Thummim.

Conclusions

An unlearned farmer covered his face with a hat containing a stone and dictated a book of over 500 pages — a sophisticated religious text that calls the world to repentance, affirms the Bible, and ardently testifies of the divinity of Jesus Christ and the power and necessity of his atonement.¹⁶⁰ Book of Mormon passages regarding translation suggest that Joseph Smith translated as a “seer after the manner of old times”; in other words, as a beholder of visions. The idea that the translation of the Book of Mormon was revealed as a series of imaginative visions is consistent with the way seer stones were used by others in Joseph Smith’s day, with the way witnesses described Joseph Smith’s use of seer stones in translating and receiving revelations, with the revelatory use of stones as portrayed in scripture, and with the way sacred texts were revealed to old-time seers such as Lehi, Ezekiel, and Isaiah.

In preparing Joseph Smith to be “a seer after the manner of old times,” God met him in his ignorance and folk religious beliefs and perhaps used those beliefs to develop in him the ability to see imaginative visions. As a visionary aid, “the Urim and Thummim” would have been neither magic nor divine communication technology, but simply a meaningful object that, like the clay applied to Enoch’s eyes, helped the seer focus his faith enough to see things “not visible to the natural eye.” Although other explanations of the function of seer stones in the translation of the Book of Mormon are plausible, the idea that the book was received by faith-elicited vision is a relatively simple explanation that fits well within the scriptural tradition of divine revelation.

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Endnotes

1. For an overview of Joseph Smith's use of seer stones, including a photograph of the brown stone, see Richard E. Turley, Jr., Robin S. Jensen, and Mark Ashurst-McGee, "Joseph the Seer," *Ensign*, October 2015, 49–55; also Michael Hubbard MacKay and Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, *From Darkness Unto Light: Joseph Smith's Translation and Publication of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2015); Michael Hubbard MacKay and Nicholas J. Frederick, *Joseph Smith's Seer Stones* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2016). For descriptions and uses of Joseph Smith's seer stones, see Mark Ashurst-McGee, "Pathway to Prophethood: Joseph Smith Jr. as Rodsman, Village Seer, and Judeo-Christian Prophet" (master's thesis, Utah State University, 2000), 230–283. The brown seer stone measures 5.5 cm x 4 cm x 3.5 cm. "Note on Seer Stone Images," The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/site/note-on-seer-stone-images>.
2. Referring to the revelations in D&C sections 3 through 18, David Whitmer wrote, "The revelations in the Book of Commandments up to June, 1829, were given through the 'stone,' through which the Book of Mormon was translated." David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ: By a Witness to the Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon* (Richmond, MO: by the author, 1887), 53. Joseph Smith then gave the stone to Oliver Cowdery in early 1830. Whitmer, *Address to All Believers*, 32.
3. Since Joseph Smith did not have the brown seer stone after 1830 (having given it to Oliver Cowdery), Wilford Woodruff must have been referring to the small white seer stone in possession of the Church when he wrote in his journal in 1888: "I Consecrated upon the Altar the seer stone that Joseph Smith found by Revelation some 30 feet under the Earth [and] Carried by him through life." Wilford Woodruff journal, 18 May 1888,

quoted in Ashurst-McGee, “Pathway to Prophethood,” 251-252, emphasis added. While president of the church, Lorenzo Snow allowed various members of the Church to see the brown and white seer stones. He showed the white stone to a recently returned missionary in January of 1900 and told him it “was the Seer Stone that Joseph Smith used.” Richard M. Robinson, “The History of a Nephite Coin,” typescript, signed by R. M. Robinson 30 December 1934, MS 5147, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter Church History Library), 4–5. After being shown the brown seer stone in 1899, Frederick Kesler wrote in his journal that President Snow “showed me the Seerers Stone that the Prophet Joseph Smith had by which he done some of the Translating of the Book of Mormon with. I handeled it with my own hands. I felt as though I see & was handling a very Sacred thing.” Frederick Kesler diary, 1 February 1899, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, quoted in D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 243.

4. Apostle Orson Pratt taught that “the Urim and Thummim is a stone or other substance sanctified and illuminated by the Spirit of the living God, and presented to those who are blessed with the gift of seeing.” Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:214 (9 December 1877).
5. See note 2.
6. “History of Brigham Young,” *Millennial Star* 26 (20 February 1864): 118–119.
7. Although he had other seer stones, he was not known to have used them in his role as prophet.
8. Wilford Woodruff journal, 27 December 1841, quoted in Richard Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, “Joseph Smith: The Gift of Seeing,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15/2 (1982), 59–60, emphasis added.
9. Wilford Woodruff journal, 19 February 1842, quoted in H. Donl Peterson, “The History and Significance of the Book of Abraham,” in *Studies in Scripture, Volume Two: The Pearl of Great Price*, eds. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Randall, 1985), 169.
10. Parley P. Pratt, “Editorial Remarks,” *Millennial Star* 3 (July 1842): 47.

11. In 1959, Joseph Fielding Smith stated: “We have been taught since the days of the Prophet that the Urim and Thummim were returned with the plates to the angel. We have no record of the Prophet having the Urim and Thummim after the organization of the Church. Statements of translations by the Urim and Thummim after that date are evidently errors. The statement has been made that the Urim and Thummim was on the altar in the Manti Temple when that building was dedicated. The Urim and Thummim so spoken of, however, was the seer stone which was in the possession of the Prophet Joseph Smith in early days. This seer stone is now in the possession of the church.” *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, vol. 3, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), 255. See note 3 herein regarding Wilford Woodruff’s consecration of this seer stone. Regarding the interpreters having been returned with the plates, see Joseph Smith — History 1:60. Also, minutes of a meeting on April 17, 1853 represent Brigham Young as stating that “Joseph put the U.T. back with the plates when he had done translating.” Brigham Young, minutes, 17 April 1853, in *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, vol. 2, ed. Richard S. Van Wagoner (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2009).
12. Wandle Mace autobiography (1809–1846), as told to his wife, Rebecca E. Howell Mace ca. 1890, typescript, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Harold B. Lee Library).
13. “Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery Affidavit, 15 February 1870,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 5, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2003), 260. Regarding Alma’s reference to the interpreters as “directors,” see Stan Spencer, “Reflections of *Urim*: Hebrew Poetry Sheds Light on the Directors-Interpreters Mystery,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 14 (2015): 187–207. See also note 98 regarding “directors” in D&C 3.
14. John A. Tvedtnes, “Notes and Communications: ‘A Visionary Man,’” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 260–61.
15. Although the particular method by which the Lord’s words came to prophets in the Old Testament isn’t always apparent, visions are clearly indicated for the patriarchs and the early prophets that followed them: Abram (Genesis 15:1; 17:1–22), Isaac (Genesis 26:2); Jacob (Genesis 14:2; 28:10–17; 31:10–13; 46:2–

- 4), Joseph (37:1–11), Moses (Exodus 3:2; 24:9–10; 33:18–23), Balaam (Numbers 24:2–9), Samuel, (1 Samuel 3:15) and Nathan (2 Samuel 7:17).
16. As the word is commonly used today, a seer is a person who foresees the future or has supernatural insight. Within the Mormon tradition, Ammon's statement in Mosiah 8:16 is frequently presented as a definition of *seer*: "a seer is a revelator and a prophet also." The context suggests Ammon was not intending to provide a definition but rather an observation in response to King Limhi's statement that "a seer is greater than a prophet" (Mosiah 8:15). Something closer to a definition of *seer* comes three verses earlier, where Ammon speaks of the interpreter stones: "whosoever *is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer*" (Mosiah 8:13). If a seer were simply "a revelator and a prophet also," the designation of the president of the Church as "prophet, seer, and revelator" would be unnecessarily repetitive, as "seer" would encompass the entire meaning. A seer is a revelator if he reveals the content of his divine visions, and a prophet if he preaches it.
17. *Webster's Dictionary 1828 – Online Edition*, s.v. "seer"; <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/seer>
18. Apostle Orson Pratt taught that "the Urim and Thummim is ... something made by the Lord. He is a good mechanic; he understands how to make things." Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:214 (9 December 1877).
19. President John Taylor believed the urim and thummim to be an instrument for "communicating light perfectly, and intelligence perfectly, through a principle that God has ordained for that purpose." John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 24:262–63 (24 June 1883).
20. Mormon scholar Sidney Sperry believed that, "in all probability the active elements in the instrument, that is to say, the two stones, were composed of celestial material. ... Somehow or other, celestial material seems to have helped both ancient and modern seers to bridge the chasm of the unknown." Sidney B. Sperry, *Book of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 29.
21. In a letter he wrote in 1933, B. H. Roberts stated that he had examined the seer stone Joseph Smith used to translate the Book of Mormon and "while handling it had the impression

- that doubtless it was radium or it had been made radio active by contact with radium and hence its power to become luminous when placed in the dark.” B. H. Roberts, letter to C. M. Dewsnap, 30 March 1933, photocopy of original typescript, Scott G. Kenney Research Collection, MSS 2022, Box 4, fd. 19, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, quoted in Don Bradley, “Joseph Smith and the Technologies of Seership,” 2013 Conference of the Mormon Transhumanist Association, 5 April 2013, Salt Lake City, Utah.
22. Apostle Spencer Kimball observed that “precision instruments such as the Liahona and Urim and Thummim ... have far exceeded the most advanced radar, radio, television, or telescopic equipment” and, “exactly how this precious instrument, the Urim and Thummim operates, we can only surmise, but it seems to be infinitely superior to any mechanism ever dreamed of yet by researchers. It would seem to be a receiving set or instrument.” Spencer Kimball, “Spiritual communication,” *Improvement Era*, 7 April 1962, 434–436.
 23. In 2015, Mormon scholar Richard Bushman opined that seer stones “suggest there is a technology of revelation, somewhat resembling iPads, that assist us in getting divine intelligence.” Richard L. Bushman, “On Seerstones,” *By Common Consent*, 5 August 2015; <https://bycommonconsent.com/2015/08/05/on-seerstones/>.
 24. For example, B. H. Roberts, after quoting D&C 8:2 (“I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost ...”) and D&C 9:7–9 (“You must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right ...”), declared, “This is the Lord’s description of how Oliver Cowdery could have translated with the aid of Urim and Thummim, and is undoubtedly the manner in which Joseph Smith did translate the Book of Mormon through the medium of Urim and Thummim.” B. H. Roberts, “Translation of the Book of Mormon,” *Improvement Era*, April 1906, 428–430.
 25. John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith: Seeker After Truth, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1951), 42, quoted in Brant Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford, 2011), 150.
 26. Roberts, “Translation of the Book of Mormon,” 428–430. For a defense of Roberts’s basic idea, see Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 147–277, particularly 148–150 and 274–275.
 27. Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 274–277. In Gardner’s explanation,

the English text is composed in Joseph Smith's subconscious. Although Gardner does not use the term *vision* in his explanation of the translation process, the mental images he describes could be considered divine visions.

28. "Oliver Cowdery Interview with Samuel W. Richards, January 1849," in *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 2, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 500–501, emphasis added.
29. "By Samuel Whitney Richards," signed by S. W. Richards 25 May 1907, Americana BX 8608.Ala #1678, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library.
30. "David Whitmer to Kansas City Journal 13 June 1881," in *Early Mormon Documents*, 5:81–82.
31. "David Whitmer to Kansas City Journal 13 June 1881," 82n1.
32. In about summer of 1832, Joseph Smith wrote in his personal history that "the Lord had prepared ~~spectticke~~ spectacles for to read the Book." "History, circa Summer 1832," 5, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-circa-summer-1832?p=5>.
33. Joseph Smith, *Times and Seasons* 4 (15 May 1843): 194.
34. "Church History," 1 March 1842," 707, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/church-history-1-march-1842?p=2>. Joseph Smith may have found his words in Omni 1:20. For Joseph Smith's other accounts, see John W. Welch, "The Miraculous Translation of the Book of Mormon," in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2005), 121–129.
35. Oliver Cowdery to W.W. Phelps, 7 Sep 1834, *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (Oct 1834), 14, spelling and italics as in the original.
36. "Minutes, 25–26 October 1831," 13, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/minutes-25-26-october-1831?p=4>.
37. For example, Turley *et al.*, "Joseph the Seer," 49–55, n16.
38. "Martin Harris Interview with Joel Tiffany, 1859," in *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:302, 305.
39. "Joseph Knight, Sr., Reminiscence, Circa 1835–1847," in *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:15–18, emphasis added.
40. In this same account, Joseph Knight refers to Joseph Smith's seer stone as "his glass" as opposed to "the glasses or the urim and thummam," meaning the interpreters. "Joseph Knight, Sr.,

- Reminiscence, Circa 1835–1847,” 13.
41. “William Smith, On Mormonism, 1883,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 1, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 497.
 42. “Emma Smith Bidamon to Emma Pilgrim, 27 March 1870,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:532–533.
 43. Joseph Smith III, “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *Saints’ Herald* 26 (October 1, 1879), 290.
 44. Smith, “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” 289–290.
 45. “Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery Affidavit.”
 46. John L. Traughber Jr., “Testimony of David Whitmer,” *Saints’ Herald* 26 (November 15, 1879): 341.
 47. As quoted in 1885 by Zenas H. Gurley, editor of the *Saints’ Herald*, David Whitmer reported Joseph Smith “*stating to me and others that the original character appeared upon parchment and under it the translation in English.*” Questions asked of David Whitmer at his home in Richmond, Ray County, Missouri, 1885, by Elder Z. H. Gurley, manuscript, MS 4633, Church History Library, quoted in Van Wagoner and Walker, “Gift of Seeing,” 54, emphasis added.
 48. See “The Testimony of the Three Witnesses,” The Book of Mormon; also, Whitmer, *Address to All Believers*, 6, 12, 42.
 49. An object appearing out of nowhere would seem to indicate an imaginative vision, unless one surmises that an actual piece of parchment materialized in Joseph Smith’s hat. In our technological world, we might alternatively imagine the seer stone physically projecting an image of a parchment into Joseph Smith’s eyes. Although such a miraculous transformation of stone to projector is plausible, it is not required to explain the witness accounts. Also, none of those who watched Joseph Smith translate reported seeing any light escape from Joseph Smith’s hat, and the light in Whitmer’s account is described as “spiritual,” not physical.
 50. Jack Finegan, *Encountering New Testament Manuscripts: A Working Introduction to Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 19–29.
 51. Whitmer, *Address to All Believers*, 6, 12, 30, 37, emphasis added.
 52. For more accounts of the translation, see Welch, “Miraculous Translation,” 121–198.
 53. The hostility of a witness does not itself justify dismissing a statement as unreliable. Defenders as well as opponents can be

- motivated to misrepresent facts.
54. "Palmyra Freeman, circa August 1829," in *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:221.
 55. Booth's sources of information included "several interviews with Messrs. Smith, Rigdon and Cowdery." "Ezra Booth Accounts, 1831," in *Early Mormon Documents*, 5:308–309, emphasis added.
 56. Supernatural visions that are thought to be perceived by physical light entering through the eyes of the body, or the "natural eye," are traditionally called "corporeal visions." L. Roure, "Visions and Apparitions," in *Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), 15:477.
 57. Nancy Towle, *Vicissitudes Illustrated in the Experience of Nancy Towle, in Europe and America* (Charleston, SC: James L. Burges, 1832), 138–39.
 58. "Henry Harris Statement, circa 1833," in *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:76, emphasis added.
 59. "Joseph Smith Interview with Peter Bauder, October 1830," in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:17.
 60. For examples of the use of "glass" and "glass-looking" in reference to seer stones, see statements by Ezra Booth, Isaac Hale, and Joseph Knight herein. Seer stones were also called diamonds. Quinn, *Early Mormonism*, 171.
 61. "Truman Coe Account, 1836," in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:47. There is no record of Coe's having interviewed Joseph Smith. In his introduction to Coe's account, Dan Vogel suggests that Joseph Smith may have provided the information while preaching to Coe's congregation.
 62. *History of the Church*, 4:79.
 63. I will not discuss, for example, unsubstantiated reports in newspapers of Joseph Smith's using his "spectacles" for translating the Book of Abraham or other records. These are as likely based on rumor as upon reliable sources.
 64. "Joseph Smith History, 1839," in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:74.
 65. The placement of the comma after parchment suggests that it was the record, not the parchment, that was "written and hid up" by John. If so, the parchment could have contained the translated (and perhaps the source) text, as in Whitmer's account of the Book of Mormon translation.
 66. There are no sources of comparable authority that contradict these assertions that a stone was used in translating the

- Book of Abraham. For an overview of Book of Abraham translation theories, see Kerry Muhlestein, “Assessing the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Introduction to the Historiography of their Acquisitions, Translations, and Interpretations,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016):32–39.
67. Wilford Woodruff journal, 19 February 1842, quoted in “Introduction to Book of Abraham Manuscripts,” The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://josephsmithpapers.org/intro/introduction-to-book-of-abraham-manuscripts>.
 68. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:176 (10 July 1859).
 69. His 1878 discourse report reads: “The Prophet translated the part of these writings which, as I have said, is contained in the Pearl of Great Price, and known as the Book of Abraham. Thus you see one of the first gifts bestowed by the Lord for the benefit of His people, was that of revelation — the gift to translate, by the aid of the Urim and Thummim, the gift of bringing to light old and ancient records.” Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 20:65 (25 August 1878).
 70. Howard Coray letter, Sanford, Colorado, to Martha Jane Lewis, 2 August 1889, manuscript, MS 3047, Church History Library. The process of translating the Book of Abraham extended from 1835 into 1842. “Introduction to Book of Abraham Manuscripts.”
 71. Warren Parrish, letter to the editor dated 5 February 1838, *Painesville Republican*, 15 February 1838.
 72. The revelation was given in November of 1835. “Joseph Smith Journal, 1835–1836,” 36, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-1835-1836?p=37>
 73. “John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847,” 76, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/john-whitmer-history-1831-circa-1847?p=80>. John Whitmer had earlier been called to keep a history (D&C 47:1).
 74. *Friends’ Weekly Intelligencer*, 3 October 1846, 211, quoted in “Introduction to Book of Abraham Manuscripts.”
 75. Lorenzo Brown in “Sayings of Joseph, by Those Who Heard Him at Different Times,” Joseph Smith, Jr., Papers, Church History Library, quoted in Robert J. Matthews, *A Plainer Translation: Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible, a History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1985), 25, 25n12. Matthews presents evidence that Joseph Smith’s conversation with Brown was in 1837, not 1832.

76. *History of the Church*, 1:362–363.
77. William Clayton later spoke of Joseph Smith’s using “the Urim and Thummim” when he successfully “found” another text (see note 92).
78. “Two Days’ Meeting at Brigham City, June 27 and 28, 1874,” *Millennial Star* 36 (11 August 1874): 498–99. Pratt made a similar statement in 1871. As recorded in the minutes of the School of the Prophets, “He [Elder Pratt] mentioned that as Joseph used the Urim and Thummim in the translation of the Book of Mormon, he wondered why he did not use it in the translation of the New Testament. Joseph explained to him that the experience he had acquired while translating the Book of Mormon by the use of the Urim and Thummim had rendered him so well acquainted with the Spirit of Revelation and Prophecy, that in the translating of the New Testament he did not need the aid that was necessary in the 1st instance.” Minutes of the School of the Prophets, Salt Lake City, 14 January 1871, Church History Library, quoted in Robert J. Matthews, *A Plainer Translation: Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible, a History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1985), 40.
79. On February 2, 1833, Frederick G. Williams recorded in the Kirtland High Council minutes: “This day completed the translation and the reviewing of the New Testament.” “Kirtland, 2 day of Febry, 1833,” in *Kirtland Council Minute Book*, 2nd ed., eds. Fred C. Collier and William S. Harwell (Salt Lake City: Collier’s Publishing, 2002), 7. See note 91 regarding Joseph Smith’s use of a seer stone in October of 1835.
80. The revelations comprising the Book of Moses were given to Joseph Smith from June into December of 1830. Joseph Smith used a seer stone to receive a revelation for Orson Pratt in November of that year (see note 88).
81. Kent P. Jackson, “Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible,” in *Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 51–76.
82. “Old Testament Revision 1,” 1, 3, 8, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/old-testament-revision-1?p=3>. Major additions to Genesis are found in Moses 4:1–4 (regarding Satan), Moses 5:1–15 (regarding Adam and Eve), Moses 5:23–31 (regarding Cain), Moses 5:49–59 (regarding Lamech), and Moses 6:26–7:69 (regarding Enoch).

83. Orson Pratt spoke in 1859 of seeing Joseph Smith “translating, by inspiration, the Old and New Testaments, and the inspired book of Abraham from Egyptian papyrus” (see note 68). This statement does not necessarily apply to the Book of Moses, which may not have been part of the Bible translation observed by Pratt. Also, “inspiration” has an imprecise meaning. In this statement, Pratt also indicates the Book of Abraham as translated by inspiration, but later spoke of the translation of that book by “Urim and Thummim” (see note 69).
84. “John Whitmer, History, 1831–circa 1847,” 4, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/john-whitmer-history-1831-circa-1847?p=8>. For the manuscript dictated to Whitmer and Rigdon, see “Old Testament Revision 1,” 15.
85. See note 2.
86. Whitmer, *Address to All Believers*, 58.
87. Whitmer, *Address to All Believers*, 30–32.
88. James R. B. Vancleave to Joseph Smith III, 29 Sep 1878, quoted in “Historical Introduction” to “Revelation, 4 November 1830 [D&C 34],” The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-4-november-1830-dc-34>.
89. “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845,” [8], bk. 8, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845?p=100>.
90. “Blessing to David Whitmer, 22 September 1835,” 2, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/blessing-to-david-whitmer-22-september-1835?p=2>.
91. In introducing the blessing, Oliver Cowdery wrote: “The following blessing was given by President Joseph Smith, Jr through the Urim and Thummim, according to the spirit of prophecy and revelation.” “Blessing to Newel K. Whitney, 7 October 1835,” The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/blessing-to-newel-k-whitney-7-october-1835>
92. Clayton reported that Joseph Smith was “conversing with Dr. J. Wakefield and others ... spoke concerning key words. The g[rand] key word was the first word Adam spoke and is a word of supplication. He found the word by the Urim and Thummim. It is that key word to which the heavens is opened.” William Clayton journal, 15 June 1844, quoted in William V. Smith, *A Joseph Smith Commentary on the Book of Abraham: An*

Introduction to the Study of the Book of Abraham, 3rd ed. (Provo, UT: Book of Abraham Project, 2009), 163.

93. "Appendix: William Clayton, Journal Excerpt, 1–4 April 1843," 68–70, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-william-clayton-journal-excerpt-1-4-april-1843/4>.
94. Stan Spencer, "The Faith to See: Burning in the Bosom and Translating the Book of Mormon in Doctrine and Covenants 9," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016):219–232.
95. The gift of visions is not one of the spiritual gifts mentioned by Paul (1 Corinthians 12), but it is mentioned in the seventh Article of Faith. Joseph Smith's visions did not stop. The entry in his journal for April 10, 1843 reads: "It is my meditati[o]n all the day & more than my meat & drink to know how I shall make the Saints of God comprehe[n]d the visions that roll like an overflowing surge before my mind." "Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 2, 10 March 1843–14 July 1843," 144, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-2-10-march-1843-14-july-1843?p=152>.
96. In his Journal entry for May 6, 1849, Brigham Young recorded: "We spent the time in interesting conversation upon old times, Joseph, the plates, Mount Cumorah, treasures and records known to be hid in the earth, the gift of seeing, and how Joseph obtained his first seer stone." Brigham Young, "May 6, 1849," in *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1847–1850*, ed. William S. Harwell (Salt Lake City: Collier's Publishing, 1997), 200.
97. For Orson Pratt's statement, see note 4. While president of the High Council in Zion, David Whitmer condemned false visions seen by members of the Hulet Branch of the Church in Ohio, saying that their "gift of seeing" was of the devil. "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," 530, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834?p=536>.
98. The earliest manuscript of this revelation had "thy directors" instead of "thy director," perhaps referring to the interpreters as well as to the "director" (as Elizabeth Whitmer called his brown seer stone) by which Joseph Smith received his early revelations.

- “Revelation, July 1828 [D&C 3],” 2, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-july-1828-dc-3?p=2>.
99. “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” 11, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-2-3-december-1805-30-august-1834?p=13>. See also Ashurst-McGee, “Pathway to Prophethood,” 325–326.
 100. Joseph Smith’s translation by the “gift” or “power” of God is also mentioned in passing in D&C 6:25 and D&C 20:8.
 101. “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845,” [1], bk. 6, The Joseph Smith Papers, emphasis added; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845?p=69>.
 102. Before Joseph Smith obtained the plates and the interpreters, Josiah Stowell asked for his help finding buried silver, “having heard that he possessed certain *keys*, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye.” Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations*, by Lucy Smith, Mother of the Prophet (Liverpool: S. W. Richards for Orson Pratt, 1853), 91–92, emphasis added.
 103. Minutes of an April 17, 1853 meeting represent Brigham Young as stating, “I have Josephs first seer stone which he had from OC [Oliver Cowdery], the one found in the well by which he got the plates of the B of Mormon.” Brigham Young, minutes, 17 April 1853, in Van Wagoner, *Complete Discourses*.
 104. “Martin Harris Interview with Joel Tiffany, 1859,” 302–304, 309.
 105. “Joseph Knight, Sr., Reminiscence, Circa 1835–1847,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:13.
 106. In an 1826 trial, several people testified of his ability to see lost, hidden, or distant objects by use of his hat and stone. Russell Anderson, “The 1826 Trial of Joseph Smith,” FAIR Conference presentation, 2002; <http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/fair-conferences/2002-fair-conference/2002-the-1826-trial-of-joseph-smith>.
 107. If not for the sins of his youth and the mental anguish they caused him, Joseph Smith might not have sought out God and experienced his First Vision. “First Vision Accounts,” online at <https://www.lds.org/topics/first-vision-accounts>. Had he not continued to struggle with sin, he might not have sought out God again and received his divine commission. Speaking of the

few years after his First Vision when he was involved in treasure hunting, he confessed, “I was left to all kinds of temptations; and, mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. ... In consequence of these things, I often felt condemned for my weakness and imperfections; when, on the evening of the above-mentioned twenty-first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies.” What followed was the appearance of the angel Moroni, who told Joseph Smith that God had a work for him to do (JS-H 1:28–33; D&C 20:5–6). Being called to the work did not purge Joseph Smith of all human weakness, and the Lord continued to chastise and correct him (D&C 3: 4–15; 5:21–22) even as he did Moses (Numbers 20:12) and Jonah (Jonah 4:1–10).

108. “Isaac Hale Statement, 1834,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:284–287, emphasis added.
109. In his 1832 history, Joseph Smith confessed that he “saught the Plates to obtain riches and kept not the commandmen[n]t of that I should have an eye single to the Glory of God.” Joseph Smith, “History, circa Summer 1832,” 5. See also Joseph Smith — History 1:53.
110. Ronald W. Walker, “The Persisting Idea of American Treasure Hunting,” *BYU Studies*, 24/4 (Fall 1984): 429–59.
111. “Imposition and Blasphemy!! — Money-Diggers, &c,” *The Gem, A Semi-Monthly Literary and Miscellaneous Journal* (Rochester, New York), 15 May 1830, 13.
112. J. W. Hanson, *History of Gardiner, Pittston and West Gardiner, with a sketch of the Kennebec Indians, & New Plymouth Purchase, Comprising Historical Matter from 1602 to 1852; with Genealogical Sketches of Many Families* (Gardiner, ME: William Palmer, 1852), 169.
113. “S. F. Anderick Statement, 1887,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:209.
114. “William D. Purple Reminiscence, 28 April 1877,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, 4:133.
115. See note 102.
116. One of the most prolific spiritualist mediums was Pearl Curran,

who received texts from an entity claiming to be the deceased Patience Worth. Curran reported that words came into her mind, along with images: “When the poems come, there also appear before my eyes images of each successive symbol, as the words are given me. ... When the stories come, the scenes become panoramic, with the characters moving and acting their parts, even speaking in converse. ... If the people talk a foreign language, as in *The Sorry Tale*, I hear the talk, but over and above is the voice of Patience, either interpreting or giving me the part she wishes to use as story.” Pearl Curran, “A Nut for Psychologists,” *The Unpartizan Review* 13 (March–April 1920): 359–360. *The Sorry Tale: A Story of the Time of Christ* was a book dictated by Pearl Curran on the life of Jesus that diminishes his divinity and atonement.

117. Dan Vogel, “James Colin Brewster: The Boy Prophet Who Challenged Mormon Authority,” in *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History*, ed. Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 124–126.
118. See “Historical Introduction” to “Revelation, 9 May 1831 [D&C 50],” *The Joseph Smith Papers*; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-9-may-1831-dc-50>.
119. Whitmer, *Address to All Believers*, 31. For the revelation to go to Canada, see “Revelation, circa Early 1830,” *Joseph Smith Papers*; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-circa-early-1830>. It is also plausible that the revelation was from God, that the mission to Canada failed because conditions specified in the revelation were not met, and that Whitmer fabricated the part about the follow-up revelation. Before accusing Whitmer of such a fabrication, however, we might consider that there is nothing in Church doctrine that would preclude the possibility that Joseph Smith and his associates were temporarily deceived. There are several reasons to believe Whitmer was telling the truth and the Canada revelation was not from God. First, the Canada revelation was one of the few items in Joseph Smith’s manuscript book of revelations that he never published. “Historical Introduction” to “Revelation Book 1,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/revelation-book-1>. Second, the revelation is uncharacteristically dramatic for a revelation concerning a business matter (compare D&C sections 48, 51, and 96). Third,

the revelation inexplicably claims to be from “the Father,” while the published revelations are from Jesus Christ, as expected. Fourth, giving up the copyright of the keystone Mormon text to outsiders would not seem to be in the best interest of the Church. Fifth, as Martin Harris discovered, the Book of Mormon was not financially profitable, yet the revelation implies that Joseph Smith and others would profit financially from it if they were righteous, and that the Holy Ghost would inspire someone to invest a large sum of money into buying its copyright. Sixth, Hiram Page, the only other witness who left a record of the events, agreed with David Whitmer that the circumstances under which the revelation was sought were not conducive to beneficial revelation. In a letter to William McLellin, he wrote that plans to sell the copyright came out of a “desire for filthy lucre” that ran counter to previous revelation, that, even before the revelation was received, preparations for the trip were made “in a Sly manor So as to keep martin Haris from drawing a Share of the money,” and that the would-be travelers “were all anctious to get a revilation to go.” “Hiram Page to William E. McLellin, 2 February 1848,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, 5:257–259. This incident happened before Joseph Smith received instructions (D&C 46 and 50) that might have helped him avoid such circumstances. It is unclear from Page’s letter whether he believed the revelation to have been from a non-divine source, although he noted that the Canada trip was a failure and the revelation did not benefit Joseph Smith. Page was commenting on a letter (no longer extant) he had received from McLellin, and he may have felt it unnecessary to repeat assertions that McLellin had already made. B. H. Roberts saw the Canada incident as an important and efficient lesson to Joseph Smith and his followers that “not every impression made upon the mind is an impression from a divine source,” that, in questions of church governance, we must be willing to accept “uncertainty, even errors; manifestations of un wisdom, growing out of human limitations,” and that the “uncertainty in the midst of which we walk by faith, is the very means of our education. What mere automatons men would become if they found truth machine-like, of cast-iron stiffness.” Brigham H. Roberts, “History of the Mormon Church: Chapter XI,” *Americana* 4 (December 1909):1024–1 025.

120. Some might accuse Joseph Smith of being a false or fallen prophet

based on Deuteronomy 18:20; however, that scripture refers to intentional deception. His occasional failings did not mean that Joseph Smith was false or fallen, just fallible. Paul says we should expect prophecies to fail because of human limitations: “whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ... for we know in part, and we prophesy in part ... for now we see through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13: 8–12). Joseph Smith, like the imperfect prophets of whom Paul spoke, may have not always been able to discern what he was seeing through his “glass.” In the case of the Canada revelation, he may have even opened himself up for a deceptive revelation by thinking to profit from the Nephite record, as he had done when first trying to obtain the plates. To be a prophet is not to be a perfect model for emulation and adoration (that is Christ), but to teach, warn, and direct. Prophets are fallible even when acting as prophets. In response to the question, “Do you believe that the President of the Church, when speaking to the Church in his official capacity is infallible?,” President Charles W. Penrose answered in the 1912 *Improvement Era*, “We do not believe in the infallibility of man. When God reveals anything it is truth, and truth is infallible. No President of the Church has claimed infallibility.” Charles W. Penrose, “Editor’s Table — Peculiar Questions Briefly Answered,” *Improvement Era*, September 1912, 1045. The scriptures likewise teach only that *when God is the ultimate source* of a statement is it infallible (D&C 1:38; 68:4).

121. According to Matthew 4:1–11, Satan showed Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world,” which suggests a visionary experience (see also Nephi 11:1; Ezekiel 40:1–4; Revelation 17:3; 21:1–10). Although Satan likely appeared as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), Jesus discerned the vision to be Satanic because of its content.
122. The Book of Mormon itself asks us to test to see if it is of God (Moroni 10). Moroni tells us we can receive a spiritual witness of the book’s truthfulness, but the message of the book also gives us reason to believe in its divine provenance. Nephi’s writings focus on the divinity of Jesus Christ and the necessity and power of his atonement, and subsequent prophets repeat and reinforce his teachings. For example, see witnesses of Christ from Nephi (2 Nephi 25:12–29), Jacob (2 Nephi 9:5–24), Enos (Enos 1), King Benjamin (Mosiah 3:5–11; 5:7–10), Abinadi (Mosiah 15:1–25),

Alma (Alma 7:10–13; 36:12–24; 38:8–11; 42:11–15), Amulek (Alma 34:5–16), Mormon (Moroni 7:41; 9:25–26), and Moroni (Moroni 10:32–24). With Christ as its central message, the Book of Mormon affirms the Bible and becomes “Another Testament of Jesus Christ” for the “convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God” (title page). The Book of Mormon affirms the Bible, not only by directly endorsing it (1 Nephi 13:40; Mormon 7:8–9), but also by echoing its messages, by quoting large sections of it, and by frequent phrasal allusions to its text.

123. “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845,” [7–8], bk. 5, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845?p=61>. This is the original wording in the earliest (1844–1845 “rough draft”) manuscript of her history. In the final (1845 “fair copy”) manuscript, “stones” is replaced by “3 cornered diamonds set in glass and the glass was set in silver bows.” “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845,” 107, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845?p=114>. This phrase was also later inserted in blue ink into the earlier manuscript along with a note indicating that the interpreters had been examined “with no covering but a silk handkerchief.” There is reason to believe that the description of the interpreters as “diamonds set in glass” was not from Lucy Smith, or if it was, that it was speculative. The more authoritative descriptions of the interpreters — Mosiah 28:13, Ether 3:23–24, Ether 3:28, Joseph Smith’s History (JS-H 1:35), Martin Harris’s interview with Tiffany, and Lucy Smith’s original dictation of her history — all referred to them as “stones,” not diamonds or glass. Also, if Lucy Smith examined the instrument only through a cloth, she could have discerned texture (hence her original description of the instrument as “two smooth stones”) but could have only speculated that they were diamonds or glass. Martha Jane Coray and her husband, Howard, composed the 1845 manuscript based on the earlier draft as well as other notes and sources (see the “Historical Introduction” to the 1844–1845 manuscript). The idea that the interpreters were diamonds in glass may have come from one of those other sources or from the Corays’ own understanding and assumptions. Both “diamond” and “glass” were local terms for seer stones (see note 60), and the Corays or their source likely had heard those terms used for

the interpreters at some point. They may have even heard Lucy Smith use them to label (rather than describe) the Nephite stones. Brigham Young believed the manuscripts contained many errors and requested that church historian George A. Smith and Elias Smith produce a corrected text for publication. The description of the interpreters as “diamonds set in glass” was apparently one of those errors. It was struck from the 1845 manuscript and omitted from the corrected history, which was published in book form in 1902. *History of the Prophet Joseph by His Mother Lucy Smith as Revised by George A. Smith and Elias Smith* (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1902). Even if we take the description of the interpreters as “diamonds set in glass” at face value, it does not tell us how clear the “diamonds” were or whether the “glass” was transparent.

124. “Church History,’ 1 March 1842,” 707.
125. “Appendix: Orson Pratt, A[n] Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, 1840,” 13, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-orson-pratt-an-interesting-account-of-several-remarkable-visions-1840/13>.
126. “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” 5, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834?p=5>.
127. See the “Historical Introduction” to “Church History,’ 1 March 1842,” The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/church-history-1-march-1842>.
128. James Morier, *A Second Journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, Between the Years 1810 and 1816* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818), 284.
129. “The History of a Nephite Coin,” 4–5.
130. O. Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham’s Purchase, and Morris’ Reserve: Embracing the Counties of Monroe, Ontario, Livingston, Yates, Steuben, Most of Wayne and Allegany, And Parts of Orleans, Genesee, and Wyoming. To Which Is Added, A Supplement or Extension of the Pioneer History of Monroe County* (Rochester, NY: William Alling, 1851), 215.
131. “Kelley Notes, 6 March 1881,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:87, emphasis added.
132. *Times and Seasons* 4 (1 December 1842): 32. In her history,

- Lucy Smith told of a girl who claimed to discover hidden knowledge and objects by “looking through a certain black stone.” “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1 845,” [8], bk. 14, The Joseph Smith Papers; [http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1 845?p=174](http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845?p=174).
133. “Wonderfull Discovery,” *Wayne Sentinel*, 27 December 1825, 2, quoted in Ashurst-McGee, “Pathway to Prophethood,” 171, emphasis added.
 134. “David Whitmer Interview with James H. Hart, 21 August 1883 & 10 March 1884,” in *Early Mormon Documents*, 5:104.
 135. Wandle Mace, *Autobiography* (1809–1846), emphasis added.
 136. Cornelis Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 30, including notes. The mention of manna sets the temporal reference to the wilderness period of Israel when the Urim and Thummim is first mentioned in the Bible. *White* is translated from *leukēn*, meaning “light,” “bright,” or “brilliant” as well as “white,” echoing “urim,” which is traditionally interpreted as “light” or “lights.” The Urim and Thummim was used by Israel’s high priest, and all who receive a white stone will likewise be made priests (Revelation 1:6). Many traditions have explained the Urim and Thummim as a precious stone or a secret or sacred name seen only by the high priest (Van Dam, 16–3 1). *Stone* is translated from *psēphon*, meaning a small, smooth stone. While most Bible translations have the “new name” written “on” the stone, the King James translator used “in,” perhaps seeing the stone as a visionary instrument.
 137. Ezra has “and with Thummim.”
 138. Although *’ûrîm* can mean “flames” or “fires” in Hebrew, the *Urim of Urim and Thummim* is as likely related to *’ôrîm*, meaning “lights” (as in Psalm 136:7). There is currently, however, no consensus on the word’s origin, and many other derivations have been proposed. For traditional interpretations of *Urim and Thummim*, and *Urim* as “light” or “lights,” see Van Dam, *Urim and Thummim*, 83–95, 132–136. For derivations related to the lot theory, see Van Dam, 94–98. For a short summary of proposed derivations, see Ann Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (New York: Brill, 1996), 210–211.
 139. Van Dam, *Urim and Thummim*, 89n29, 222n17.
 140. Van Dam, *Urim and Thummim*, 34–37, 44n25. Preference among

scholars for the lot theory is not universal. Cornelis Van Dam, for example, believes that *Urim* refers to the verifying light that emitted from what was probably a single gem (p. 230). There are many and diverse traditions of how the Urim and Thummim functioned, but none date back to the time the instrument was used. In his book, Van Dam provides a thorough discussion of the instrument based on tradition and biblical and linguistic evidence.

141. Although no evidence from Qumran is available, the version in the Masoretic Text is supported by *Targum Jonathan* and the Peshitta (Van Dam, *Urim and Thummim*, 200n25, 201). The Old Latin version is not helpful, as it is derived from the Septuagint (Van Dam, 90). For a full review of the evidence, including Biblical evidence, linguistic evidence, and proposed Near Eastern analogues, see Van Dam, 39–44, 197–217.
142. Even though the Urim and Thummim is not mentioned in these passages, it is implied by the presence of the ephod and the use of Hebrew phrases translated as “inquired of the Lord” and “inquired of God” in the NASB. Emil G. Hirsch, W. Muss-Arnolt, Wilhelm Bacher, and Ludwig Blau, “Urim and Thummim” in *Jewish Encyclopedia* 12:384; also, Van Dam, *Urim and Thummim*, 182–189. The passages presented here are those that are considered by both Hirsch et al. (who favor the lot theory) and Van Dam (who does not) as referencing the Urim and Thummim, and in which an answer from the Lord is recorded. Other passages that likely refer to the Urim and Thummim include Joshua 9:14, Judges 20:18–23, 1 Samuel 14:3–37, 1 Samuel 22:10–13, and 2 Samuel 21:1.
143. This suggests the possibility that Moses, who also saw God “face to face” in his great vision on a high mountain (Moses 1:2), was likewise seeing that vision by urim and thummim, which he possessed (Exodus 28:30). Although God’s physical presence might be inferred based on the need for Moses to have been “transfigured” by “the glory of God” (Moses 1:2, 11), transfiguration may also be required to survive the mere visual manifestation of God (see Exodus 33:18–20). That Moses was seeing God with his “spiritual eyes” (Moses 1:11) suggests an imaginative vision, which would have also enabled him to see things not physically present (v. 8). Enoch saw a similar vision in which he talked with God “even as a man talketh one with

another, face to face” and saw things future and distant (Moses 7:4, 9). Moses must have been seeing God in imaginative vision when he perceived him in the flames of a fire and talked with him “face to face” (Deuteronomy 5:4).

144. The spirit of prophecy and spirit of revelation are associated with each other throughout the Book of Mormon, including the title page, and throughout the Doctrine and Covenants, and with mental impressions by the gift of the Holy Ghost in D&C 8:2–5. Joseph Smith’s early revelations were received through the “Urim and Thummim” (as noted in headings of D&C sections 3, 6, 7, 11, 14, and 17), but beginning in about April of 1830, he received revelation more often by “the spirit of prophecy and revelation” (see heading to D&C 20).
145. Although consistent with visions, these passages do not compel belief that translating by seer stone is a visionary experience. In *Joseph Smith’s Seer Stones*, 119–122, MacKay and Frederick refer to some of these same passages and come to the opposite conclusion — that seer stones were *not* “an object meant to inspire visions.” They base this conclusion in part on Nephi’s description of the function of the brass ball, which they see as an instrument resembling seer stones. Even if the instruments are analogous, however, this does not mean they did not function by eliciting visions. The faith-enabled appearances of writing on the brass ball (1 Nephi 16:26–29) could have been visions. The Book of Mormon does not indicate that the writing appeared to anyone but the seer Lehi, but even if it appeared to the group generally, this does not mean it was not a visionary experience. Multiple individuals may see a vision together, as, for example, in D&C 76 (particularly vv. 19–49).
146. See notes 26.
147. Royal Skousen’s monumental study of the Book of Mormon manuscripts suggests that Joseph Smith was dictating a text that he did not compose himself and with which he was unfamiliar. Royal Skousen, “How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 25–31. After reviewing some of the findings from his study, Skousen observed: “These new findings argue that Joseph Smith was not the author of the English-language translation of the Book of Mormon. Not only was the text revealed to him word for word, but the words

themselves sometimes had meanings that he and his scribes would not have known, which occasionally led to a misinterpretation. The Book of Mormon is not a 19th-century text, nor is it Joseph Smith's. The English-language text was revealed through him, but it was not precisely in his language or ours." Royal Skousen, "The Archaic Vocabulary of the Book of Mormon," *Insights* 25/5 (2005): 6. Stanford Carmack has also argued against the idea that Joseph Smith produced the English text. See, for example, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209–262, and "Joseph Smith Read the Words," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 41–64. Also problematic for Roberts's theory are Joseph Smith's poor language skills compared to the sophisticated vocabulary and complex sentence and chiasmic structures in the Book of Mormon, and his lack of biblical knowledge compared to the Book of Mormon's copious phrasal allusions to, and quotations from, the King James Bible. Roger Terry, "The Book of Mormon Translation Puzzle," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 23 (2014): 182–84. While both witness accounts and scripture (2 Nephi 27:20) indicate that Joseph Smith saw words as he translated, neither of those sources indicate that he first formed those words in his mind (see the reference in note 94 regarding D&C 9:7–9).

148. Joseph Smith, *Times and Seasons* 4 (15 May 1843): 194.
149. Roger Terry, "Archaic Pronouns and Verbs in the Book of Mormon: What Inconsistent Usage Tells Us about Translation Theories," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 47/3 (2014): 59–63.
150. Moroni's statement in Mormon 9:34 that "none other people knoweth our language" does not necessarily invalidate this option. God could have directed a surviving Nephite to translate the plates from Reformed Egyptian into Hebrew (which the Nephites used in some form, according to Mormon 9:33) and then had a later individual translate that text from Hebrew into English. Alternatively (or additionally), a Semitic scholar might have used the Isaiah chapters on the plates along with a Hebrew Bible as a sort of Rosetta stone to decipher the Nephite language. In a third scenario, God could have extended the life of a Nephite (perhaps even Moroni) long enough for him to learn English and translate the record, just as he may have extended the life of the

prophet Ether long enough for him to learn the Nephite language and produce a translation of the Jaredite plates, to subsequently be delivered in vision to King Mosiah (Ether 15:33–34; Mosiah 28:10–17). There may be other equally plausible scenarios; and multiple translators and times of translation and editing could have been involved. An obvious weakness of these ideas is that neither scripture nor tradition give any hint of mortal involvement with the plates between the time that Moroni sealed them up (Moroni 10:2) and the time he delivered them to Joseph Smith.

151. For an explanation of how interruption of the normal visual system can induce imaginative vision, see Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 261–274.
152. People in many cultures throughout history have looked into bright, reflective, or clear deep surfaces of glass, metal, crystals, polished stone, ink, water, flames, or other substances to elicit hallucinations or visions. Northcote Whitridge Thomas, *Crystal Gazing, Its History and Practice: With a Discussion of the Evidence for Telepathic Scrying* (London: Moring, 1905), 32–59. Moses’s vision of God in the flames of a burning bush may have been such an experience (Exodus 3). For an experimental investigation of mirror gazing and the physiology of its visions, see Giovanni B. Caputo, “Strange-face-in-the-mirror illusion,” *Perception* 39 (2010): 1007–1008.
153. Ashurst-McGee, “Pathway to Prophethood,” 158–174.
154. A story Martin Harris related in 1870 is sometimes used to argue that seer stones have more than psychological importance to a seer. Harris said he found a stone similar in appearance to Joseph Smith’s seer stone and put it in the hat in place of the regular stone, and that Joseph Smith, upon looking into the hat, paused for a while and said, “Martin! What is the matter? All is as dark as Egypt!” Edward Stevenson’s account of Harris’s Sunday morning lecture in Salt Lake City on 4 September 1870, *Millennial Star* 44 (6 February 1882): 87. There are, however, other explanations for what Harris observed. Joseph Smith may have noticed the different stone and played along, or God may have withheld the revelation because of Harris’s irreverence.
155. The gold plates may have also served to bolster Joseph Smith’s faith. Even though he didn’t use them directly in translating, their presence would have given him confidence that there was

- an ancient record to be revealed.
156. Some authorities have explained the Urim and Thummim as an object for eliciting visions. See, for example, E. H. Plumptre, "Urim and Thummim," in *A Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, ed. W. Smith (Boston: Little, Brown, 1863), 1604–1605. This idea was more widely accepted prior to the 20th century. See J. Aubrey, *Miscellanies upon Various Subjects* (London, 1784), 217; also E. S. Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus* (London: Grimm Library, 1895), 2:17.
 157. See JS-H 1:21–27, 58; 2 Nephi 27: 5–6, 20–26; 1 Samuel 9:9.
 158. A relationship between the interpreters, the Urim and Thummim, and teraphim was suggested in January of the 1833, apparently by W. W. Phelps, in the first Latter Day Saint newspaper. "The Book of Mormon," *Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (January 1833):58. Teraphim were various types of oracular objects going back at least to patriarchal times. Their connotation in the Bible is usually negative, but Rachel had some sort of teraphim (Genesis 31 ASV), and so did David (1 Samuel 19 ASV), as well as others who worshipped the Lord (Judges 17). Teraphim were used to make spiritual inquiries, and sometimes associated with an ephod in place of the Urim and Thummim (Judges 17:5, 2 Kings 23:24 ASV; Hosea 3:4; Ezekiel 21:26 ASV; Zechariah 10:2 NAS), and there is some evidence suggesting that their function could involve (spiritual?) light. Van Dam, *Urim and Thummim*, 149–151, 226–229. Some teraphim may have functioned as the seer stones of their time.
 159. The phrase "inquire of the Lord" or "enquire of the Lord" and variations thereof characterize the use of Joseph Smith's seer stones as well as the biblical Urim and Thummim. For example, speaking of an 1829 revelation now found in D&C 6, Joseph Smith's history states: "I enquired of the Lord through the Urim and thummim and obtained the following revelation." "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," 13, The Joseph Smith Papers; <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/?target=X8A3C8B36-FB0B-4E3B-8858-0CA36CEC99A7>. See also Whitmer, *Address to All Believers*, 31. Regarding "inquiring of the Lord" by the biblical Urim and Thummim, see references in note 142. Both wizards and prophets practice divination, which is the seeking of hidden knowledge by supernatural means. What differentiates wizards from prophets

of God is not so much the methods employed in seeking that knowledge as it is the spiritual contacts made or attempted.

160. For the Book of Mormon as a Christ centered, Bible affirming document, see note 122. The Book of Mormon itself gives reasons it was revealed through an unlearned man. The learned of Joseph Smith's day rejected it (2 Nephi 27: 15–20). God wanted to show the world that he was “a God of miracles ... the same yesterday, today, and forever,” and that he works among his children “according to their faith” (2 Nephi 27:22–26). See also Acts 4:13. If God had revealed the Book of Mormon to the world directly through a scholar or educated cleric, people would have conveniently concluded that the learned man wrote it himself. Public display of the gold plates (if even practicable) would not have necessarily changed anyone's mind, as their authenticity would have been easily doubted. God reveals his work, not primarily through physical evidence, but through witnesses and spiritual confirmation provided to those who desire to believe (2 Nephi 27: 12–14, 23, 26, 29; D&C 46:14; Matthew 13:13–16; Alma 32:27–28).

BARE RECORD: THE NEPHITE ARCHIVIST, THE RECORD OF RECORDS, AND THE BOOK OF MORMON PROVENANCE

Anita Wells

Abstract: This paper looks at the Book of Mormon through the lens of library science and the concept of archival provenance. The Nephites cared deeply about their records, and Mormon documented a thorough chain of custody for the plates he edited. However, ideas of archival science and provenance are recent developments in the western world, unknown to biblical authors or to anyone at Joseph Smith's time. Understanding this aspect of Mormon's authorship and Joseph Smith's translation provides additional evidence to the historical validity of the Book of Mormon.

I often thought of the prophet Mormon as I studied library science and learned about collection development, cataloguing, and archive management. In addition to his roles as author, historian, prophet, and military general, Mormon worked as an archivist, librarian, and records manager. Reading the Book of Mormon with that in mind, some intriguing insights emerge about what is fundamentally a record of records. The concept of provenance, which is the description of a chain of custody used to verify sources, is a prevailing component of Mormon's work. This is vital to claims of authenticity in our modern world but is less evident in Joseph Smith's time or in biblical tradition.

From its creation to its translation and publication, the Book of Mormon is profoundly and essentially a *book* that discusses its own authorship and editing at length. It is self-referential, unique from other books as it examines its own genesis and future. Even a non-LDS writer observed:

The Book of Mormon is about writing books. Every few pages, the story's various narrators describe to us how the writing of this book is going. Every narrator in the Book of Mormon describes how he wrote, why he wrote, where he wrote. ... In a narrative with scores of characters and plots and subplots, the one constant is the story of how this book became a book. Its narrative arc follows the real-world physical process of creating manuscripts, of how the book was written, preserved, edited, and archived and passed along through history, usually under the worst of conditions. A thousand years and thousands of miles separate Nephi on the first page from Moroni, ... and another thousand years and thousands of miles separate those ancient guys from Joseph, the book's translator. But the one steady character throughout the story is the record itself, the book, the various manuscripts that Mormon edited down into the gold plates, which Joseph eventually excavated and translated.¹

That very physicality of the plates is the underpinning of Restoration claims of historicity, and “for those few for whom the Book of Mormon was as tangible as it was for Nephi and Mormon, none denied that physical experience even if they might have questioned later religious experiences.”²

Understanding the importance of records in this narrative and for the Nephite society begins with our very first named author, Nephi, and extends to its translator, Joseph Smith. Both Nephi and Joseph were teens when they first encountered the power that a book would play in their lives. Nephi was commanded by the Lord to retrieve a book at the cost of Laban's life, a pivotal event that influenced his worldview, in which records are instrumental to God's plan. The Book of Mormon's translator confirmed that idea by dying for his own connections to the book:

In the short space of twenty years, he [Joseph Smith] has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two continents; ... has brought forth the revelations and

1. Avi Steinberg, *The Lost Book of Mormon: A Journey Through the Mythic Lands of Nephi, Zarahemla, and Kansas City, Missouri* (New York: Anchor, 2014), 6.

2. Brant A. Gardner, *Traditions of the Fathers: The Book of Mormon as History* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), xvi.

commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many other wise documents and instructions for the benefit of the children of men; ... and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood (Doctrine and Covenants 135:3).

Framed in blood (Nephi's killing to Joseph's martyrdom) like Passover doorposts, the Book of Mormon record is exalted to bring salvation to the world through its testimony of Christ.

As LDS scholar Richard Bushman questioned, "Why all the record keeping? Why the immense effort lasting over centuries? Why the care to convey the records from one generation to the next? Why did Mormon, in the midst of his many troubles, work through the voluminous records to write a history? And going from the record-keepers themselves to their theology, what kind of a God makes so much of records? Why open a dispensation of the gospel with the translation of an ancient book?"³ He continued, "Nephi introduces himself as a record-maker ... and goes on to testify of the record's truth before telling a single event. ... Besides launching us into the story of the family's visions and adventures, Nephi self-consciously informs us about the mechanics of getting it all down and of managing the various records being made. ... The return for Laban's plates lets the reader know that records loom large in this culture."⁴

As modern readers of scripture, this seems absolutely normal to us. Current Latter-day Saints also live in a culture based on paperwork, legal documents, and the religious injunction that "there shall be a record kept among you" (D&C 21:1). We build on the example of prior gospel dispensations that kept books of remembrance to honor "God's dealings with his children ... records of religious ordinances[,] and histories of nations and peoples."⁵ Nevertheless, for an unlearned frontier boy such as Joseph Smith, this was not the expectation. Books and paper were costly and dear, and the normal record keeping of an early American family might extend only to marking family births and deaths in a Bible. Joseph Smith did not live in a world as centered on record keeping as the Nephites he would encounter.

3. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 67.

4. Bushman, *Believing History*, 68.

5. Beverly J. Norton and Daniel H. Ludlow, "Record Keeping," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1195, accessed January 11, 2017, http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Record_Keeping.

Ancient Record Keeping

Lehi's family left a literate Jerusalem. Intriguingly, Lehi had lived through King Josiah's religious reforms, sparked by the "rediscovery of the 'book of the law' in 622 BC, during a renovation of the temple ... [which] had profound impact on Lehi's generation. It showed among other things that the word of God would be preserved and would endure, even though it might be hidden from the world for a time."⁶ Lehi himself kept a record (1 Nephi 6:1) and it is probable that Zoram's custody of Laban's Brass Plates meant that he had scribal training, which he could have passed on to others in the Nephite group. Brant Gardner theorizes that Nephi, as a fourth son not likely to inherit the family business, was himself trained as a scribe.⁷ There is scholarly debate concerning scribal education in ancient Israel, but the presence of a standardized script and continuity in the Hebrew orthography over time suggests academic training that was perhaps state-sponsored.⁸ Scribal training included a curriculum covering "a range of topics, from languages, classic texts, and the interpretation of texts, to public speaking"⁹ and sheds light on Nephi's facility with both Egyptian and Hebrew. In addition, Nephi's proclivity for explaining Isaiah in the text and his "ethnogenesis[,] that is, ... a document designed to establish and legitimize a new people,"¹⁰ match well with a trained scribal background.

To put the origin of Book of Mormon record keeping in historical context, John Welch explained,

As the political scene in Jerusalem grew even more tense and as whole civilizations during this period faced the prospect of extinction, a great urge to recapture and preserve the records of past cultures swept the ancient Near Eastern world. Whether one looks to the attempt made in this period by the pharaohs of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty to recapture the glories of the past Pyramid Age, or to the effort in Assyria to copy

6. John Welch, "They Came from Jerusalem: Some Old World Perspectives on the Book of Mormon," *Ensign* (September 1976), accessed January 11, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1976/09/they-came-from-jerusalem-some-old-world-perspectives-on-the-book-of-mormon?lang=eng>.

7. Brant A. Gardner, "Nephi as Scribe," *Mormon Studies Review* 23/1 (2011): 45–55.

8. Christopher A. Rollston, "Scribal Education in Ancient Israel: The Old Hebrew Epigraphic Evidence," *BASOR* 344 (November 2006), 67–68.

9. Gardner, "Nephi as Scribe," 47.

10. Gardner, "Nephi as Scribe," 50.

and preserve royal libraries, or to Laban's jealous possession of the brass plates, the phenomenon is the same: an intense awareness of civilization's frailty and a grasp in desperation to preserve it, accompanied by a premonition of impending doom. Lehi perceived this precisely.¹¹

He passed that mandate down through his descendants. In the Americas only a generation after their arrival, Lehi's grandson and fellow record keeper Enos prayed fervently that God would preserve the records of his people (Enos 1:13–18).

Other ancient regions and cultures are known for their literary works and impressive documentary caches. Much more has and could be written on the topic; famed libraries of the past include those in Alexandria, Greece, Ebla, India, and Herculaneum. One particular example of ancient archives comes from thirteenth century BC Hittite tablets, which provide evidence of their highly literate society and archival institutions connected to the temple and palace complexes. The Hittite scribes were often tied by kinship and trained within families, just as craftsmen apprentice father to son. Within the administrative sphere, scribal schools there processed records of "long-term significance" and "short-term relevance"¹² in a well-organized system of cataloguing in locations known as Tablet Houses. Documents ranging from land grants to treaties were stored, copied, and retrieved using a shelf system and organized by colophons.¹³ These colophons were informational headers that organized and served as helpful reminders; they are found in our modern Book of Mormon version as italicized headings before most of the books (as LDS scholars including Nibley, Tvedtnes, Mackay, and others have examined).

Although we know less about record keeping in the ancient Americas than in some other civilizations, Mesoamerican glyphs and iconography are still being discovered and studied. Both climate and conquest have obscured much of their past; Spaniards destroyed all the Mayan codices they could find, and the humidity in that region does not promote long-term preservation like the dry desert of the Middle East or the ash of Vesuvius's eruption.

There is abundant proof in the Book of Mormon of a literate civilization with widespread scribal training. Records anchored the

11. Welch, "They Came From Jerusalem."

12. Shai Gordin, *Scribal Families of Hattusa in the 13th Century BCE: A Prosopographic Study* (Master's Thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2008), 14.

13. Gordin, *Scribal Families*, 18.

Nephites to their religion, their language, their history, and their rulers. They were symbols of authority. Beyond the educated religious and political elite, the following scriptural terms indicate a society with frequent written communication: *commandments, prophecies, ordinances, message, lawyers, judges, laws, priesthood, blotted out, proclamation, decree, correspondence, epistles, statutes, calendars, astronomy, scriptures, petitions*. Even the most destitute immigrants are presumed to be literate as Alma asks the Zoramites, “Ye ought to search the scriptures. . . . Do ye *remember to have read* what Zenos, the prophet of old, has said?” (Alma 33:2–3, emphasis added). Further back than the Nephites, it even appears that royal females were educated in Jaredite society, as the conspiring daughter of Jared asked her father if he had not “read the record which our fathers brought across the great deep? Behold, is there not an account concerning them of old?” (Ether 8:9). The Jaredites and Nephites both found inspiration, whether for good or evil, in ancient records. This illuminates the power of their archival practices in preserving documents and their library practices in facilitating access, both of which are in evidence.

The Nephite focus on record keeping permeated societal values and reinforced their superiority over their fellow Mulekites and Lamanites, who had been record-slackers. After all, in Nephi’s mountaintop vision, the idea of “precious things taken away from the book” equaled deep apostasy (1 Nephi 13:28). Righteous Nephites prayed for the future safety of their records (Enos 1:15–16), and wicked Nephites burned records along with believers (Alma 14:8). The function of Nephite record keepers as timekeepers alludes to their priestly status and the fact that righteousness was a factor in record validity (3 Nephi 8:1–2). Records were used to convert (Alma 18:36), to testify, and to condemn (Mosiah 12:29). Record keeping even led Lamanites to prosperity once they were taught how to keep them (Mosiah 24:6–7).

King Benjamin served as a unifier of the record cache; as the king he had possession of the brass plates and large plates history, and then Amaleki gave him the sacred small plates “consolidating for the first time since Nephi [whose records division had taken place several hundred years prior] these important elements of Nephite religious leadership and political power in the hands of a single individual.”¹⁴ When King Benjamin gave his son charge over both the kingdom and

14. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *King Benjamin’s Speech: “That Ye May Learn Wisdom,”* (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 30.

the records, the records were listed as next to the kingdom in importance (Mosiah 1:16). As he explained,

I say unto you, my sons, were it not for these things, which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries, and have his commandments always before our eyes, that even our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things. . . . O my sons, I would that ye should remember that these sayings are true, and also that these records are true. And behold, also the plates of Nephi, which contain the records and the sayings of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now, and they are true; and we can know of their surety because we have them before our eyes. (Mosiah 1:5–6)

Benjamin's final address invoked the sanctity of the written word that will "stand as a bright testimony against this people, at the judgment day" (Mosiah 3:24), and he solemnized the biblical-themed occasion by recording the names of the covenant believers (Mosiah 6:1). Similarly, the main question Alma had for his son Helaman about the future concerned his belief in the records (Alma 45:2).

A Nephite "records reunion" was a poignant event in their history, as disparate groups reunited after generations apart presented and read their respective accounts together (Mosiah 22:14). Bushman theorized that this was symbolic of Nephite place in time and space: "Records, then, in the Nephite conception of the world, were, in effect, surrogates of peoples. They encompassed their revelations and their experience, and when Providence in the end assembled and united all peoples, bringing history to a conclusion, the records stood for the people. At that final day, their records would give the Nephites a part in the grand orchestra of the nations."¹⁵

During Christ's pivotal visit in 3 Nephi, he expected his audience to have both record keeping skills and record-literacy. The resurrected Christ himself examined their records (3 Nephi 23:6–13), gave the people additional scriptures, and corrected what had been missed in earlier records. This hands-on direction reinforced the vital nature of records to the Nephites. "Records guided and sustained culture; without a true record, religion and the social order fell apart. Within the world of the

15. Bushman, *Believing History*, 72.

Book of Mormon, it was perfectly consistent for the resurrected Christ to examine the Nephite records and require their amendment when an omission was found. The maintenance of culture depended on accurate records.”¹⁶ If “true records had the power to revive and redirect a people,”¹⁷ the legacy of the records would save memories and reestablish religious beliefs. What better way to restore a Christian church in the latter days than by producing a new (to us) record such as the Book of Mormon?

Mormon the Archivist

Young Mormon was an unusual boy, with the weight of a prophetic commission from age ten onwards. This influenced his spiritual and secular education, as he “came to maturity in the midst of a society revolutionizing itself. Because of his lofty priestly connections, his noble lineage, and the consequent high degree of literacy he must have commanded, he was thrust into a leadership role with which no average sixteen-year-old would ever have been entrusted.”¹⁸ Mormon’s position in society and his charge from Ammaron gave him perspective and authority as he shaped the Nephite archive into the record we now have,¹⁹ with primary goals that scholars have identified as fulfilling prophecy, testifying of the land of promise, providing spiritual guidance, recording what the Spirit impressed upon him, and affirming that Jesus is the Christ.²⁰

As Mormon worked with the Nephite record trove, the modern concept of library science and records management would have not seemed entirely foreign to him.²¹ Records management is the process of documents moving from primary daily use to historical archives/secondary use, which was happening with the Nephite records from the very beginning. What had

16. Bushman, *Believing History*, 72–73.

17. Bushman, *Believing History*, 73.

18. John L. Sorensen, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 336.

19. See KnoWhy #226, “What Do We Know About Mormon’s Upbringing?” November 8, 2016, accessed January 11, 2017, <https://knowwhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/what-do-we-know-about-mormon%E2%80%99s-upbringing>.

20. KnoWhy #230, “What Was Mormon’s Purpose In Writing The Book of Mormon?” November 14, 2016, accessed January 11, 2017, <https://knowwhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/what-was-mormon%E2%80%99s-purpose-in-writing-the-book-of-mormon>.

21. The Nephite idea of burying records in the ground may even have some connections with the historical Jewish practice of *genizah*, where records with the name of God cannot be destroyed and are thus stored until group burial, read more at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genizah>.

been war epistles or royal speeches or counsel from father to son relevant to daily life became treasured documents from Nephite past. Mormon was therefore involved in long-term storage, access, and retrieval. Librarians and archivists deal with the essential concerns of collection development and cataloguing, which requires both weeding and selection. Mormon inherited an overwhelming amount of Nephite history in the records that Ammaron entrusted to the hill Shim: he repeatedly stated that he could not write the hundredth part of their thousand-year history (Words of Mormon 1:5, Helaman 3:14, 3 Nephi 5:8, 26:6). Mormon had to sift through this material and determine what was consequential to the points he wanted to emphasize in his record.

The requisite skills Mormon needed to edit this collection are impressive. Although we have little sense of how exactly the records were stored, preserved, and organized, Mormon was able to incorporate excerpts from a surprising variety of ancient sources, including letters, diaries, military accounts, and religious writings. Thus some system of cataloguing must have helped him in this endeavor, whether he invented his own or past Nephite chroniclers had a way of organizing and retrieving information. Mormon spent a significant amount of time and space discussing the records themselves: their transmission, their meaning, their translation, and their attribution. Grant Hardy analyzed the complexity of text and multiple records, embedded documents, and letters, explaining that Mormon saw himself as a historian with a strict chronology and distinct narrative style.²² Thomas Mackay detailed these editorial intricacies:

In the Book of Mormon, we have a range of introductory and inserted notations: names of authors for records, speeches, and epistles that are quoted or abridged — imbedded source indicators; genealogical or other authenticating information about the authors; and brief or extended summaries of contents, including subheaders for complex inserts or documents. Nephi himself is in this tradition, a tradition that seems to be evident in what we have from Lehi, too, for he cites prophets from the brass plates. Heir to this literary tradition, Mormon develops it, and he assiduously presents to his readers source documents and texts while retaining a unity of narrative flow by his historical account. Thus,

22. Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 91.

even while transcribing a record, Mormon may paraphrase or summarize and then return to a first-person quotation. The resultant text is clearly the product of a superb ancient historian concerned about naming and adhering to his sources while presenting an edited account that exhibits his own philosophy and purpose.²³

Scholars have determined that the majority of this scribal work was done during a ten-year peace treaty window that coincided with the jubilee year of 350 AD:

It was probably during this time that Mormon ... did the bulk of his work on the Nephite record, exploring the vast historical archive with which he had been entrusted, formulating the narrative he wanted to tell, and abridging and condensing that material into much of the Book of Mormon. Moroni was probably a teenager during this time of peace, working under his father as an apprentice, learning the history of his people, and preparing for his role as the final Nephite record keeper and abridger.²⁴

Combining his multiple roles as prophet, historian, and editor, perhaps Mormon viewed Christ as the ultimate editor, archivist, and historian of his faith. As Mormon's son Moroni concluded this massive archival and editorial undertaking, he referred to the importance of "relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher" of our faith (Moroni 6:4). What a perfect connection for Moroni to describe Christ by that name, as he himself was an author and finisher of the Book of Mormon.

And it Came to Pass ...

Some historic tablets and scrolls indicate that scribes signed their work and noted the lineage of copy transmission.²⁵ Yet the idea of record provenance, which traces the chronology of ownership and custody of records to document their authenticity, was a nineteenth and twentieth

23. Thomas W. Mackay, "Mormon as Editor: A Study in Colophons, Headers, and Source Indicators," *JBMS* 2.2 (1993), accessed December 9, 2016, <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1379&index=7>.

24. KnoWhy #228, "Why Is the 10-Year Peace Treaty Important?" November 10, 2016, accessed January 11, 2017, <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/why-is-the-10-year-peace-treaty-important>.

25. Gordin, *Scribal Families*, 18.

century development by European archivists. In the mid-nineteenth century, American interest in the past grew with the formation of historical societies (such as the Daughters of the American Revolution) to honor the dying colonial generation. However, American society experienced a slow beginning in organizing historical records. As a historian noted, “the handwritten world of colonial records did not adopt a sophisticated recordkeeping system. Discussions on colonial records and recordkeeping mostly focus on individual or organizational negligence or natural damage by fire and water.”²⁶ It was not until the twentieth century revolution of typewriters and duplicators (and further digital transformations) that record keeping changed dramatically.

The resources for a historian in Joseph Smith’s era would have been limited, insofar as library access, organization, and retrieval went. A nineteenth-century frontier historian searching through volumes of early Plymouth history or Harvard College’s records would not have the benefit of alphabetical arrangement, indices, cross-references, and topical searches, as these concepts were in their infancy. Additionally, more advanced archival principles like chain of custody, keeping fonds (an archival group of papers) together (officially known as “respect des fonds”), and archival integrity were nascent at the time Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon.

While archival methodology began to move in new directions around 1830 (interesting coincidence of date) in Europe, it was not until the early twentieth century that these ideas became accepted on a widespread level in the United States:

Although archives have existed for thousands of years, much of the archival paradigm — not unlike that of library science — coalesced between the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Several key treatises and manuals codifying archival theory and practice were published between 1830 ... and 1956. ... The most influential of these was the *Manual on the Arrangement and Description of Archives*, written in 1898 by Dutch archivists ... which brought together the French and Prussian ideas of *respect des fonds* and provenance. The translated manual was widely disseminated and was a major topic of discussion when librarians and archivists met for the first time for an international congress at the 1910 World’s

26. Jane Zhang, “Recordkeeping in Book Form: The Legacy of American Colonial Recordkeeping,” *Information & Culture* (Fall 2014) 49(4), 470.

Fair in Brussels. As a result, the concept of provenance was adopted by the congress as the basic rule of the archival profession.²⁷

Consider how the above information affects our understanding of Book of Mormon studies: the archival profession as we understand it now did not exist in Joseph Smith's time. The concept of provenance (a record of ownership to guide claims of authenticity) and chain of custody (documenting that record of ownership) was not identified. The Bible, Joseph's main resource for an example of ancient writing at the time he translated the Book of Mormon, gave very little indication of who wrote it and how its records were copied and transmitted throughout the ages. These ideas were not something anyone in the mid-nineteenth century could have held a working conceptual knowledge of that would allow their incorporation into the Book of Mormon. Provenance is a modern convention used today and developed in the past century to validate claims (notably in art auctions); Mormon made the chain of custody and provenance of his record abundantly clear from millennia prior. As "questionable provenance can still create an atmosphere of distrust,"²⁸ conversely a secure, credible provenance can foster belief. The Nephite authors were doing something unknown from biblical texts, and unheard of in Joseph Smith's day.

Legal precedent for using chain of custody as documentary evidence in court is also relevant to consider in this context: "A proper chain of custody requires three types of testimony: (1) evidence that a piece of evidence is what it purports to be; (2) evidence of continuous possession by each individual who has had possession of the evidence ... and (3) evidence by each person who has had possession that the particular piece of evidence remained in substantially the same condition from the moment one person took possession until the moment that person released the evidence into the custody of another."²⁹ Not only is this process used for court evidence, but also in tracking materials and products in manufacturing and food supply concerned with product source, origin, and content. Looking at the Book of Mormon through

27. "The Archival Paradigm: The Genesis and Rationales of Archival Principles and Practices," Council on Library and Information Resources, accessed February 12, 2016, <https://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub89/archival.html>.

28. Gardner, *Traditions*, 26.

29. Liriekla Meintjes-Van der Walt, "The Chain of Custody and Formal Admissions," *SAJC* 3 (2010): 373, accessed February 17, 2016, http://www.academia.edu/933101/The_chain_of_custody_and_formal_admissions.

this evidentiary lens, is the record (1) what it says it is, (2) in continuous possession by each individual who had possession, and (3) in substantially the same condition until it passed into the next person's custody?

Book of Mormon Chain of Custody

In the Book of Mormon text itself, Mormon gave us a complete chain of records transmission, clearly establishing its provenance (and thus its authenticity). In Jerusalem around 600 BC, Nephi took the brass plates records from Laban and brought them overseas to the New World, where he began keeping his own small and large plates records. Nephi has a complete explanation of how and why he made his record:

And it came to pass that the Lord commanded me, wherefore I did make plates of ore that I might engraven upon them the record of my people. And upon the plates which I made I did engraven the record of my father, and also our journeyings in the wilderness, and the prophecies of my father; and also many of mine own prophecies have I engraven upon them ... And after I had made these plates by way of commandment, I, Nephi, received a commandment that the ministry and the prophecies, the more plain and precious parts of them, should be written upon these plates; and that the things which were written should be kept for the instruction of my people, who should possess the land, and also for other wise purposes, which purposes are known unto the Lord. Wherefore, I, Nephi, did make a record upon the other plates, which gives an account, or which gives a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people. And this have I done, and commanded my people what they should do after I was gone; and that these plates should be handed down from one generation to another, or from one prophet to another, until further commandments of the Lord. And an account of my making these plates shall be given hereafter; and then, behold, I proceed according to that which I have spoken; and this I do that the more sacred things may be kept for the knowledge of my people. (1 Nephi 19:1–5)

These three different sets of records were divided: large plates and brass plates entrusted to the royal or political descendants, and small plates kept by the prophetic lineage. Nephi gave the small plates to his brother Jacob, after which those records were passed from father to

son through Enos, Jarom, Omni, Amaron, Chemish, Abinadom, and finally to Amaleki, who, lacking an heir, turned the record over to King Benjamin, at which point it joined the royal records collections (see Appendix for details of documented chain of custody). Each of Nephi's eight successors in keeping the small plates followed a mandate from Nephi recorded in Jacob 1:1–4 to keep their genealogy, write personally, and pass the records down,³⁰ thus fulfilling their required scribal duties.

Nephi kept the monarchical large plates, his successor known as King Nephi the Second then kept that record and passed it down to other kings mentioned in the lost 116 pages, and then the large plates record was kept by Mosiah₁, Benjamin, and Mosiah₂. At that point (c. 92 BC) the monarchy transformed into an elected leadership of chief judges, and the complete records collection (large plates, small plates, Jaredite twenty-four gold plates, brass plates of Laban) was given to Alma₂ after the king's sons gave up their birthright.³¹ The records continued down through Alma₂'s descendants for the next several centuries: Alma₂ gave them to his son Helaman₁; upon Helaman₁'s untimely death, his brother Shiblon took over briefly before passing the records on to his nephew, Helaman₁'s young son, also named Helaman₂. From there Helaman₂ gave them to his son Nephi₃, who gave them to his son Amos₁, to his son Amos₂, and to his brother Ammaron, at which point (c. 320 AD) Ammaron was commanded to bury the record collections. He commissioned the child Mormon to retrieve them at age twenty-four. Mormon then abridged these records and gave them to his son Moroni.

The twenty-four gold plates that were abridged into the book of Ether also have a clear custody: taken from Jaredite records found by the Limhites (Mosiah 8), given to Ammon, and then taken to Mosiah₂, who translated them and kept them with the Nephite records; they were then passed down through the same lineage from Alma to Mormon, after which they were eventually abridged by Mormon's son Moroni.³²

30. KnoWhy #74, "Why Do The Authors On The Small Plates Follow A Pattern?" April 8, 2016, accessed January 11, 2017, <https://knowwhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/why-do-the-authors-on-the-small-plates-follow-a-pattern>.

31. Camille Williams noted that Nephihah is one who refused the record keeping job in "Women in the Book of Mormon: Inclusion, Exclusion, and Interpretation," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 11/1 (2002), 113, footnote 99.

32. Beyond the scope in this paper, Valentin Arts addressed the issue of the sealed portion of the Jaredite record in an intriguing examination that posits the existence of a third Jaredite record. Along with the provenance for this and other records, there are artifacts such as interpreters, the sword of Laban, and Liahona to account for in LDS history. He explored the chain of custody of those artifacts in

Moroni buried the records (large and small plates, abridgement of Ether, sealed portion of Jaredite records) and returned to personally deliver them to their translator, Joseph Smith, in 1827. Joseph Smith translated the records, which, according to the earlier chain of evidentiary custody requirements (1) were the plates they purported to be; (2) came through a line of continuous unbroken transmission; and (3) any changes to the records were explained by each subsequent author and editor, and they “retain[ed] their brightness” undimmed by time (Alma 37:5, 1 Nephi 19:5), indicating that they were in their original condition, until Joseph Smith retrieved and translated them.

Richard Bushman noted that “in between Nephi and Moroni, we never lose sight of the records. Their descent is meticulously accounted for ... [and] the Jacobean record tells us step by step of the passage from one record-keeper to another. For a time in Omni, the transmission of the records was nearly all that was written about. Throughout the Book of Mormon, there is a recurrent clanking of plates as they pass from one record-keeper to another. To my mind, it is noteworthy that there is nothing like this explicit description of records and record-keeping either in the Bible or in books current in nineteenth-century America.”³³ Science fiction author Orson Scott Card explained that written hoaxes are a product of their time, easily unmasked by later scientific understanding.³⁴ If the Book of Mormon was purely a Joseph Smith creation, how he did or did not include lineage and custodial authorship information should conform to nineteenth-century manners and ring false to modern readers. Yet the more we learn about archival provenance and chain of custody, the more remarkable it is to discover the precise documentation of such practices in the Book of Mormon.

Scriptural Genealogy

Another related feature to this concept of provenance and transmission is the listing (or lack thereof) of genealogies in scripture. Biblical lineages would have been very familiar to Joseph Smith: the Old Testament “begats” chronicle the sons of various progenitors by their

conjunction with the sealed record. See “A Third Jaredite Record: The Sealed Portion of the Gold Plates,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 11/1 (2002), accessed January 11, 2017, <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1406&index=10>.

33. Bushman, *Believing History*, 68–69.

34. Orson Scott Card, “The Book of Mormon: Artifact or Artifice?” *A Storyteller in Zion, Essays and Speeches* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993), accessed May 17, 2016, <http://www.nauvoo.com/library/card-bookofmormon.html>.

wives and concubines. These genealogies connect characters back to their prominent ancestor and Israelite tribe and sometimes specify ages, professions, and deaths (Genesis 36, 1 Chronicles 1–9). New Testament genealogies tie generations in with symbolic numbers, kings, events, and even deity (Matthew 1, Luke 3). Women are mentioned by name. These do not always match modern ideas of strict historical accuracy because the genealogy is delineated (and sometimes abridged or fictionalized) for a certain purpose, such as establishing rightful kingship.

Did this Israelite affinity for lineage continue through the brass plates into the Nephite tradition? Lehi found the brass plates so delightful partly because he learned his genealogy there (1 Nephi 3:12, 5:16–17), and Nephi continued to keep this genealogy in his large plates record (1 Nephi 19:2). Yet the Book of Mormon editors and translator did not use or imitate biblical lineage protocol despite still being concerned with lineage history. Although we are missing Mormon’s beginning to the Book of Lehi in the lost 116 pages, Mormon may have listed record keepers, prophets, and kings back to Lehi, founder of his starring dynasty. It is likely that his son Moroni’s abridgement of Ether followed a similar pattern to what his father had done. Yet Moroni’s version in Ether 1 does not use the word *begat*, or mention generational numbers or tribes, or specify ages, wives, professions, or deaths: it simply lists the kings as the son of the next progenitor, back for almost three dozen generations of male names (Ether 1:6–33). Scholars suggest that this “carefully crafted” royal lineage “established the authority of Ether and the authoritative nature of his record. By making that king list the organizing principle of the Jaredite story, Moroni authoritatively tied the origins of the Jaredite civilization back to the divine guidance given to the Brother of Jared.”³⁵

However, in other portions of the Book of Mormon where this sort of biblical lineage record might be expected, it likewise does not occur — Mormon, for example, simply notes that he was “a descendant of Nephi (and my father’s name was Mormon)” (Mormon 1:5). If Joseph Smith had been trying to copy familiar biblical style, the result would have been very different. The small plates might instead say, “Now these are the generations of Lehi, who came from Jerusalem. Lehi took Sariah to wife, and she bare Laman and Lemuel and Samuel and Nephi. And while they dwelt in the wilderness, Lehi knew his wife and she begat Jacob and Joseph. These are the names of Laman’s sons: ABC. And the sons of

35. KnoWhy#235, “Why Does The Book of Ether Begin With Such A Long Genealogy?” November 21, 2016, accessed January 11, 2017, <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/why-does-the-book-of-ether-begin-with-such-a-long-genealogy>

Lemuel were XYZ. And the sons and daughters of Samuel were this. And these are the names of Nephi's children. So all the days of Lehi were so many years, and he died" and so forth. Although the commandment to keep their genealogy was a key component of the small plates instructions (Jarom 1:1), and lineage history was a powerful influence on Nephite society (4 Nephi 1:37–38 shows the persistence of these affiliations after centuries), it was not Mormon's primary concern in the record.

The presentation of historical antecedents and custodial male lineage is not only different in the Book of Mormon than in biblical accounts, it also varies greatly from Joseph Smith's milieu. When Joseph Smith authored his own history in 1838, he followed neither the biblical nor Book of Mormon style in detailing his genealogy: Joseph merely listed his parents' and siblings' names (including the women), and the name of his maternal grandfather. Not a single begat or ethnic connection or tribal affiliation: "His family consisting of eleven souls, namely, my father, Joseph Smith; my mother, Lucy Smith (whose name, previous to her marriage, was Mack, daughter of Solomon Mack); my brothers Alvin, ... Hyrum, myself, Samuel Harrison, William, Don Carlos; and my sisters, Sophronia, Catherine, and Lucy" (JS-H 1: 4).

This is exactly what one would expect, given Joseph Smith's circumstances. Despite our current ancestral focus, genealogy was not a matter of great interest to early Americans, including Latter-day Saints. "Because of the difficulty of genealogical pursuits at the time and the additional challenge created by the colonial context and transatlantic distance, such genealogies usually did not reach beyond a writer's father's or grandfather's generation."³⁶ Rather than demonstrating family pride, it showed aristocratic tendencies.³⁷ In the mid-nineteenth century, interest in one's pedigree grew into an acceptable and fruitful new field due to pension legislation for Revolutionary War veterans, the creation of historical societies, and the birth of scholarly genealogy. But until the prophet Elijah restored the sealing keys in 1836, genealogy simply was not a serious consideration for frontier Americans.

36. Francois Weil, *Family Trees: A History of Genealogy in America* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2013), 36.

37. Royal genealogies mattered in European history: heraldry, coats of arms, escutcheons crested on the family silver linked past connections to aspirational power. By the late eighteenth century in America, engraved silver became a way to demonstrate aristocratic connections, yet it is intriguing to note that the Book of Mormon (for all its golden plates, brass plates, steel swords, and balls of curious workmanship) mentions no engraved silver crests validating claims of authenticity.

The Book of Mormon emphasis on record keeping was an inspiration to the early LDS leaders as they began their own history. The Lord commanded them to keep a record (D&C 21:1) just as the church was founded in 1830, and from Liberty Jail in 1838 Joseph pleaded with “great earnestness” of the “imperative duty” to “take statements and affidavits; and also to gather up the libelous publications that are afloat; and all that are in the magazines, and in the encyclopedias, and all the libelous histories that are published, and are writing, and by whom” (D&C 123:4–5, 11, 14). This directive formed the basis of the ongoing Church Archives and historical collections and was unusual for its time and place. Joseph and the early Saints were also schooled in the eternal importance of record keeping for temple ordinance work: “whatsoever you record on earth shall be recorded in heaven, and whatsoever you do not record on earth shall not be recorded in heaven; for out of the books shall your dead be judged ... according to the records which they have kept concerning their dead” (D&C 128:8).

Conclusion

Although he was tutored as he grew in his prophetic role, the translator Joseph Smith was not an archivist nor a genealogist who knew about provenance and documenting the transmission of records. Yet the Nephites cared deeply about the records of their past and their impact on future generations. Although we can only speculate as to what influences shaped their particular culture a thousand years post-Jerusalem in Mormon’s scribal training, his meticulous work to document the record of the records is striking.

As the Book of Mormon account began, Lehi was given a divine book to read about Jerusalem’s coming destruction. This “manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world” (1 Nephi 1:19), yet sharing the contents of this book was deadly. Joseph Smith must have resonated with this scenario, as he too read in a heavenly book of the coming of the Messiah and the future destruction of his people unless they repented, only to find that his own life would be forfeit once he preached this message. The record that caused death, however, is the one that leads us all to eternal life. And the Book of Mormon concludes with Moroni’s warning that when we meet him at the bar of God, we will be judged from the words which were written in this book: “and God shall show unto you that that which I have written is true” (Moroni 10:27–29). Record keeping is of more than merely historical interest; it has eternal significance and consequences.

As John Sorenson noted, “Mormon and Moroni present their ‘brief’ record to their future readers as a unique kind of interpretive history. They conferred it on the ages to come not as a historian’s history but as a powerful moral message intended to school readers in the lessons the two men had learned in long, arduous service to their people and to God. They used the best sources available in the most efficacious way they knew how.”³⁸ That these sources and this “efficacious way” would fit with later-identified archival principles of provenance and chain of custody is yet another compelling testament to the authenticity of Mormon’s editorial work and Joseph Smith’s translation, under the direction of the Author and Finisher (and Archivist) of our faith. Truly we are people of the book that bears record of Him.

[Editor’s Note: The author thanks three anonymous peer reviewers for their encouragement and ideas as well as David Cramer, Liz Hansen, Eliza Wells, Matt Wells, Lia Marie Adam, and Jack Welch for their historical, editorial, technical, and scriptural insights.]

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38. John L. Sorenson, “Mormon’s Miraculous Book.” *Ensign* (February 2016), 41, accessed January 11, 2017, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2016/02/mormons-miraculous-book?lang=eng>.

Appendix: Documented Chain of Custody within the Book of Mormon³⁹

Dates in italics are inferred

BRASS PLATES

Created by unknown Israelite scribes from descendants of Manasseh, possibly Northern Tribes **Laban's ancestors** *c. 600 BC*, Jerusalem, 1 Nephi 5:16

Laban *c. 600 BC*, Jerusalem, 1 Nephi 3:3, 24

Nephi₁ *c. 592 BC*, Jerusalem, 1 Nephi 4:24, 38

Lehi *c. 592 BC*, Arabian Desert, 1 Nephi 5:10–22

Nephi₁ *c. 570 BC*, New World land of Nephi, 2 Nephi 5:12

Second King Nephi *c. 520 BC*, land of Nephi, Jacob 1:11

Third King Nephi *c. 480 BC*, land of Nephi, Jacob 1:11

Nephite kings (lost 116 pages) *c. 450 BC–180 BC*, land of Nephi, Words of Mormon 1:10–11, Mosiah 28:20

Mosiah₁ *c. 170 BC*, land of Zarahemla, Omni 1:14

Benjamin *c. 130 BC*, land of Zarahemla, Mosiah 1:3

Mosiah₂ land of Zarahemla, Mosiah 1:16

Alma₂ *c. 92 BC*, land of Zarahemla, Mosiah 28:11, 20

Helaman₁ *c. 74 BC*, land of Zarahemla, Alma 37:3–4

Shiblon *c. 56 BC*, land of Zarahemla, Alma 63:1

Helaman₂ *c. 52 BC*, land of Zarahemla, Alma 63:11–13

Nephi₂ *c. 40 BC*, land of Zarahemla, Helaman 3:37

Nephi₃ *c. 1 BC*, land of Zarahemla, 3 Nephi 1:2–3

Amos₁ *c. 110 AD*, 4 Nephi 1:19

39. The author created this appendix with her own research and inferences; similar lists with additional details and some variation (particularly in dates) are found in Welch's *Charting the Book of Mormon* (Charts 2–13 through 2–21 found online at <https://byustudies.byu.edu/book-of-mormon-charts>, accessed January 11, 2017) and in Camille Williams, "Women in the Book of Mormon," 113, footnote 99. Grant Hardy also has a thorough explanation of the various plates and their keepers in "Book of Mormon Plates and Records" *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), accessed January 11, 2017, http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Book_of_Mormon_Plates_and_Records.

Amos₂ c. 194 AD, 4 Nephi 1:21

Ammaron c. 305 AD, 4 Nephi 1:47; 320 AD, directed to hide up all sacred records in the Hill Shim of the land Antum

Mormon c. 375 AD, retrieved all records from Hill Shim, Mormon 4:23, Words of Mormon 1:11, hid records in Hill Cumorah c. 385 AD, Mormon 6:6

LARGE PLATES OF NEPHI for royal line

Nephi₁ created in the New World c. 580 BC, 1 Nephi 19:1–2

Second King Nephi land of Nephi, Jacob 1:11

Third King Nephi land of Nephi, Jacob 1:11

Nephite kings (as documented in lost 116 pages) c. 450 BC–180 BC, land of Nephi, Mosiah 28:20

King Mosiah₁ c. 160 BC, took the plates from land of Nephi to land of Zarahemla, Omni 1:12–13, Mosiah 1:16

Benjamin c. 135 BC, land of Zarahemla, Omni 1:23

Mosiah₂ c. 124 BC, land of Zarahemla, Mosiah 1:16

Alma₂ c. 92 BC, land of Zarahemla, Mosiah 28:11, 20

Helaman₁ c. 74 BC, land of Zarahemla, Alma 37:1–2; sent forth copies of all engravings except forbidden parts Alma 63:12

Shiblon c. 56 BC, land of Zarahemla, Alma 63:1

Helaman₂ c. 52 BC, land of Zarahemla, Alma 63:11–13

Nephi₂ c. 40 BC land of Zarahemla, Helaman 3:37

Nephi₃ c. 1 BC, land of Zarahemla, 3 Nephi 1:2–3; these records examined by Christ when he visited the land of Bountiful, 3 Nephi 23:6–13

Amos₁ c. 110 AD, 4 Nephi 1:19

Amos₂ c. 194 AD, 4 Nephi 1:21

Ammaron c. 305 AD, 4 Nephi 1:47; 320 AD, directed to hide up all sacred records; commanded Mormon to retrieve only plates of Nephi in 334 AD, Mormon 1:3–4

Mormon c. 345 AD, retrieved plates Mormon 4:23; Words of Mormon 1:11; abridged large plates into his golden plates record beginning c. 350–360; hid large plates source records in Hill Cumorah c. 385 AD, Mormon 6:6

SMALL PLATES OF NEPHI for priestly line

Nephi₁ created in the New World land of Nephi c. 560 BC (“forty years had passed away;” after death of Lehi, separation of people), 2 Nephi 5:30

Jacob c. 544 BC, land of Nephi, Jacob 1:1–3

Enos c. 420 BC, land of Nephi, Enos 1:23

Jarom c. 399 BC, land of Nephi, Jarom 1:1–2

Omni c. 323 BC, land of Nephi, Jarom 1:15, Omni 1:1–3

Amaron c. 279 BC, land of Nephi, Omni 1:3–4

Chemish c. 240 BC, land of Nephi, Omni 1:8–9

Abinadom c. 205 BC, land of Nephi, Omni 1:10–11

Amaleki c. 170 BC, Omni 1:12, 25, 30: “these plates are full;” added to royal record after righteous Nephites moved from the land of Nephi to Zarahemla

Benjamin c. 130 BC, land of Zarahemla, Omni 1:25

Mosiah₂ c. 124 BC, Mosiah 1:16

Alma₂ c. 92 BC, land of Zarahemla, Mosiah 28:11, 20

Helaman₁ c. 74 BC, land of Zarahemla, Alma 37:1

Shiblon c. 56 BC, land of Zarahemla, Alma 63:1

Helaman₂ c. 52 BC, land of Zarahemla, Alma 63:11–13

Nephi₂ c. 40 BC, land of Zarahemla, Helaman 3:37

Nephi₃ c. 1 BC, land of Zarahemla, 3 Nephi 1:2–3

Amos₁ c. 110 AD, 4 Nephi 1:19

Amos₂ c. 194 AD, 4 Nephi 1:21

Ammaron c. 305, 4 Nephi 1:47; 320, directed to hide up all sacred records in the Hill Shim

Mormon c. 375, retrieved all records from Hill Shim, Mormon 4:23; c. 385, appended Small Plates to his abridgement, Words of Mormon 1:3–6

Moroni c. 400 AD, buried plates c. 421, Moroni 10:1–2, JSH 1:34

Stone box, Hill Cumorah New York September 21, 1823–
September 22, 1827, JSH 1:51–54

Joseph Smith September 22, 1827 Palmyra, New York; Harmony,
Pennsylvania, JSH 1:59

Angel Moroni July–September 1828, D&C 3:14

Joseph Smith September 1828—at least July 2, 1829, when shown to
Eight Witnesses

Angel Moroni returned to his possession sometime after July 2, 1829
and before May 2, 1838, JSH 1:60

JAREDITE RECORD: 24 engraved plates of gold

Brother of Jared c. 2500 BC, created in Old World and brought to New
World, Ether 3:22–27, 4:1, 4–6; unknown Jaredite record-keepers
through the ages

Ether c. 600~200 BC, New World, Ether 15:33–34; plates hidden

43 Limhite explorers c. 121 BC, wilderness discovery, Mosiah 8:9

Limhi c. 121 BC, land of Nephi, Mosiah 8:12, brought plates to land of
Zarahemla Mosiah 22:14

Mosiah₂ c. 93 BC, land of Zarahemla, Mosiah 28:11; translated with
seerstones

Alma₂ c. 92 BC, land of Zarahemla, Mosiah 28:20

Helaman₁ c. 74 BC, land of Zarahemla, Alma 37:21

Shiblon c. 56 BC, land of Zarahemla, Alma 63:1

Helaman₂ c. 52 BC, land of Zarahemla, Alma 63:11–13

Nephi₂ c. 40 BC, land of Zarahemla, Helaman 3:37

Nephi₃ c. 1 BC, land of Zarahemla, 3 Nephi 1:2–3

Amos₁ c. 110 AD, 4 Nephi 1:19

Amos₂ c. 194 AD, 4 Nephi 1:21

Ammaron c. 305 AD, 4 Nephi 1:47; 320 directed by Holy Ghost to hide
up all sacred records in the Hill Shim

Mormon c. 375 AD, retrieved records from Hill Shim, Mormon 4:23;
hid records in Hill Cumorah c. 385 AD, Mormon 6:6

Moroni c. 400 AD, abridged Jaredite plates to create book of Ether,
Ether 1:2

PLATES OF MORMON: gold plates source for our English Book of Mormon translation

Large plates abridgement by Mormon + small plates addition +
Moroni's Jaredite abridgement + sealed Jaredite records, six by eight
by six inches bound with three rings, weighing about fifty pounds

Mormon commenced abridgement c. 350–60 AD, Mormon 3:16–17, 6:1,
Words of Mormon 1:1–2

Moroni c. 385 AD, Mormon 6:6; wrote a few words c. 400 AD; added
Jaredite abridgement and sealed portion Ether 1:2; buried plates c.
421, Moroni 10:1–2, JSH 1:34

Stone box, Hill Cumorah, Palmyra, New York prior to
September 21, 1823–September 22, 1827, JSH 1:51–54

Joseph Smith September 22, 1827, Palmyra, New York; Harmony,
Pennsylvania, JSH 1:59

Angel Moroni July–September 1828, D&C 3:14

Joseph Smith September 1828—at least July 2, 1829, when shown to
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Angel Moroni returned to his possession sometime after July 2, 1829
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“BY THE BLOOD YE ARE SANCTIFIED”: THE SYMBOLIC, SALVIFIC, INTERRELATED, ADDITIVE, RETROSPECTIVE, AND ANTICIPATORY NATURE OF THE ORDINANCES OF SPIRITUAL REBIRTH IN JOHN 3 AND MOSES 6

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Matthew L. Bowen

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Abstract: In chapter 3 of the Gospel of John, Jesus described spiritual rebirth as consisting of two parts: being “born of water and of the spirit.”¹ To this requirement of being “born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit,” Moses 6:59–60 adds that one must “be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; ... For ... by the blood ye are sanctified.”² In this article, we will discuss the symbolism of water, spirit, and blood in scripture as they are actualized in the process of spiritual rebirth. We will highlight in particular the symbolic, salvific, interrelated, additive, retrospective, and anticipatory nature of these ordinances within the allusive and sometimes enigmatic descriptions of John 3 and Moses 6. Moses 6:51–68, with its dense infusion of temple themes, was revealed to the Prophet in December 1830, when the Church was in its infancy and more than a decade before the fulness of priesthood ordinances was made available to the Saints in Nauvoo. Our study of these chapters informs our closing perspective on the meaning of the sacrament, which is consistent with the recent re-emphasis of Church leaders that the “sacrament is a beautiful time to not just renew our baptismal covenants, but to commit to Him to renew all our covenants.”³ We discuss the relationship of the sacrament to the shewbread of Israelite temples, and its anticipation of the heavenly feast that will be enjoyed by those who have been sanctified by the blood of Jesus Christ.



Figure 1. *Nicodemus Comes to Jesus by Night.*

Introduction: What Does It Mean To Be Born Again?

One of the most illuminating stories in the Gospel of John tells of Nicodemus' confidential visit to inquire of Jesus.⁴ John portrays Nicodemus as a prime example of one of those who had initially "believed in [Christ's] name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But," as John explains, "Jesus did not commit himself unto [such], because he knew all men" and "he knew what was *in* man."⁵ Though Nicodemus was one "of the Pharisees,"⁶ "a ruler of the Jews,"⁷ and a "master of Israel,"⁸ he struggled to grasp the meaning of what Jesus tried to teach him.

In contrast to the untutored woman of Samaria in the following chapter of John, who met the Lord in the brightness of high noon,⁹ Nicodemus, then a blind leader of the blind,¹⁰ came to Jesus in the darkness of night.¹¹ Happily, however, "the day dawn[ed], and the day star [arose] in [his heart]."¹² Eventually, Nicodemus must have experienced the "birth from above" that he did not at first comprehend, for John tells us that, at great personal risk, he later defended Jesus before the chief priests and Pharisees¹³ and helped prepare the Lord's body for burial.¹⁴

Like the humble Peter, whose early foibles are candidly presented in the Gospels, Nicodemus was not ashamed to share the private story of his transformation from wondering skeptic to devoted disciple. Indeed, it is possible that he was John's eyewitness source for the account that we will now discuss in more detail.



Figure 2. *Nicodemus Is Confused by Jesus' Words.*

Nicodemus opened the conversation with Jesus. His use of the pronoun "we" in his statement that "we know that thou art a teacher come from God"¹⁵ revealed that he was not merely speaking for himself but also for the governing body of the Jews to which he belonged. As the basis for the council's belief that Jesus was a "teacher come from God," Nicodemus explained: "No one is able to do the miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him."¹⁶

Jesus did not affirm Nicodemus' declaration. Instead, He countered it with a parallel assertion: "No one is able to see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."¹⁷ The Master was saying that Nicodemus and his brethren were mistaken in taking Jesus' miracles as the basis for their confidence in Him as a divine teacher. Though they had seen these signs, they did not see the kingdom of God.

To see the kingdom of God — and eventually to enter within it, said Jesus — one must be born again.¹⁸ Indeed, Joseph Smith taught that seeing the kingdom of God is a prerequisite for permanently entering into it.¹⁹ He further clarified that even to *begin* to see the kingdom of God "from the outside"²⁰ (in the sense of acquiring an initial spiritual understanding of it), individuals must have a "change of heart," "a portion of the Spirit" that would take "the vail from before their eyes,"²¹ as was later experienced by Cornelius.²² At first, however, Nicodemus resisted Jesus' invitation to "behold" with an "eye of faith" those things that are "within the veil."²³

That said, Nicodemus' astonishment at Jesus' teaching was not an entirely negative thing. In later rabbinic literature, "marveling or wondering ... form[ed] an important part of the process of gaining



Figure 3. Firoozeh Navab: *All Things Move from Darkness to Light*.

knowledge.”²⁴ For example, it was said of Rabbi Akiba that “his learning began with wonder and culminated with a crown, a symbol of his power ... to bring hidden things to light.”²⁵ Thus, Jesus’ words to Nicodemus that night, “Marvel not,”²⁶ should not be understood as a peremptory dismissal of his interlocutor’s initial doubts but rather as a spur to his further faith and inquiry, as in His later directive to the wondering Thomas: “be not faithless, but believing.”²⁷

Nevertheless, up to that moment Nicodemus had not had a change of heart. His eyes were still veiled. As a test of Nicodemus’ powers of spiritual perception, Jesus had used a double entendre, or double meaning, in His discussion on the subject of being “born again.” The Greek word *anōthen* and the corresponding Aramaic/Syriac expressions *bar derish* (*bar dērīš*) and *men derish* (*men dērīš*) can mean both “again” — a second time — and also “from above” — literally, “from the head.”²⁸ Each time Jesus repeated the requirement for all men to be “born *from above*,” or in other words, “born of the Spirit,”²⁹ Nicodemus heard only the most obvious, superficial meaning of the Savior’s saying, namely, that one must be “born *again*,” or rather, “born *of the flesh*,”³⁰ mistakenly thinking that Jesus meant coming forth a “second time” from the “mother’s womb.”³¹



Figure 4. “We Speak That We Do Know, and Testify That We Have Seen” (John 3:11).

Gently rebuking Nicodemus’ lack of understanding,³² Jesus continued in verse 8 with a play on words that exploited the double meaning of “wind” and “Spirit” in both Greek (*pneuma*) and Hebrew (*ruach*). Although the invisible, immediate workings of the wind may be indirectly perceived by means of its “sound,”³³ it is beyond the power of physical sensation to reveal “whence it cometh” or “whither it goeth.”³⁴ This being the case with earthly wind, what hope has any mortal, save he is born from above, to understand movements that are governed by the unseen, divine “winds” of God’s Spirit, crucially including Jesus’ own celestial comings and goings?³⁵ Jesus’ description of those who are vaguely sensible to the evidences of the “earthly”³⁶ wind yet

stone-blind to the hidden operations of the divinely discerned “heavenly”³⁷ Spirit parallel His prior disavowal, in verses 2 and 3, of those who see the superficial signs of His mission yet lack the spiritual vision required to see the kingdom of God.

Jesus then directed his remarks more pointedly at Nicodemus and his brethren. Indeed, John’s phrasing of verse 11 seems to connect Nicodemus’ prior use of “we” in reference to the earthly council to which he belonged with Jesus’ use of the pronoun “we” in his reference to Himself and those of His prophetic predecessors who had, like Him, borne eyewitness testimony of the heavenly council: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, *We* speak that *we* do know, and testify that *we* have seen; and *ye* [a plural pronoun referring to the Sanhedrin and its partisans] receive not our witness.”³⁸ As Nicodemus surely realized, Jesus’ testimony implied not merely that He had *seen* the divine council but also that He had there received a divine commission, as echoed in the experience of Isaiah 6:8: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for *us*? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”



Figure 5. J. James Tissot (1836–1902):
The Brazen Serpent, ca. 1896–1902.

Next, intensifying the drama of the dialogue, Jesus further described His commission. In doing so, He made it clear what it was not only to be justified and sanctified by water and the Spirit but also to be “lifted up” with power to traverse the veil in both directions as the “Son of man.”³⁹ Once again, the Lord’s elaboration simultaneously disclosed and obscured⁴⁰ His meaning.⁴¹

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,⁴² even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

To comprehend the meaning of “lifted up” (from the Greek verb *hypsōō*) in Jesus’ words, we must first realize that, in the story of Moses, neither the serpents that bit the Israelites nor the figure on the standard that was “lifted up” by Moses were meant to be seen only as ordinary desert snakes. Rather, they are described in the rich language of Old Testament symbolism with the same Hebrew terms used elsewhere in scripture to refer to the glorious seraphim — divine messengers, proximal attendants of God’s throne,⁴³ and preeminent members of the divine council. If we fail to connect the “fiery flying serpents”⁴⁴ that were both the plague and the salvation of the children of Israel with the burning, godlike seraphim of the heavenly temple, we will lack the interpretive key for Jesus’ central teaching to Nicodemus.

Once we realize that, in another double entendre,⁴⁵ Jesus has not only prophesied His atonement and death but also has compared Himself, as the “Son of Man,”⁴⁶ to the seraphim that surround in intimate proximity the throne of the Father, the meaning of His statement that He was to be “lifted up” becomes apparent. In temple contexts, the essential function of the seraphim was similar to the role of the cherubim at the entrance of the Garden of Eden:⁴⁷ they were to be sentinels or “keep[ers] [of] the way,”⁴⁸ guarding the

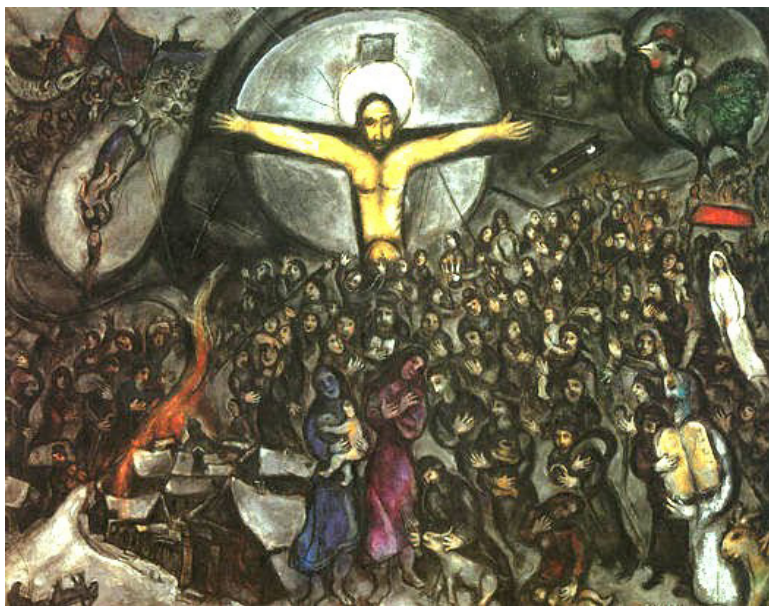


Figure 6. Marc Chagall (1887–1985): *L'Exode*, 1952–1966.

"If I Be Lifted Up from the Earth, [I] Will Draw All Men Unto Me" (John 12:32).

portals of the heavenly temple against unauthorized entry, governing subsequent access to increasingly secure compartments, and ultimately assisting in the determination of the fitness of worshipers to enter God's presence.⁴⁹ Thus Jesus, "lifted up" to God's throne as the better of all the seraphim and the innermost "keeper of the gate,"⁵⁰ could literally and legitimately assert: "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."⁵¹

Jesus' application of the phrase "lifted up" to Himself is appropriate for other reasons. For example, the idea of His being "lifted up" ties back to Isaiah 52:13, a passage from a messianic "servant song": "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be *exalted* and extolled, and be *very high*." Isaiah's language in this chapter describes both the suffering and the exaltation of Jesus Christ. Significantly, however, in the Book of Mormon the resurrected Jesus Christ Himself applies Isaiah's description of a "suffering servant" to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the book of Moses applies similar language to Enoch.⁵² Consequently, it is clear that others in addition to Jesus Christ can be "lifted up" — becoming *sons* of Man⁵³ and receiving "everlasting life"⁵⁴ — through unwavering faithfulness in "the trial of [their] faith."⁵⁵ This is consistent with the explicit teaching in the first chapter of John that "as many as received [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God"⁵⁶ — in other words, to be *born of God* in the ultimate sense.



Figure 7. Harry Anderson (1906–1996): *The Ascension of Jesus*.

Note that the Greek phrase for “sons of God” used here, *tekna theou*, as well as its Hebrew equivalent, *bēnê (hā-)’ēlōhīm*, are gender neutral in this and similar contexts. Although it would be possible to substitute the neutral term “children of God” in its place, we prefer to use the term “sons of God” — or exceptionally, when citing the discourse of King Benjamin, “sons ... and daughters”⁵⁷ of God. Although the Church teaches that *every* mortal, “in the beginning,”⁵⁸ was a child “of heavenly parents,”⁵⁹ there is a distinction made in the Gospel of John and elsewhere in scripture in which only the most faithful of God’s “offspring” are given “power to *become* the sons of God.”⁶⁰

In short, whereas some readers equate the lifting up of Christ exclusively with His suffering in Gethsemane and His death on the cross, the means by which “whosoever believeth in him”⁶¹ may be sanctified and receive “everlasting life” through the shedding of His blood, a more careful examination of the passage makes it clear that John is exploiting a double meaning in the term “lifted up.” Should there be any doubt about the presence of subtle literary artistry in John’s account, consider the explicit confirmation of similar, deliberate wordplay in 3 Nephi 27. Within two verses, the resurrected Savior shifts aptly and seemingly effortlessly among multiple senses of “lifted up,” including “lifted up upon the cross,”⁶² “lifted up by men”⁶³ in unrighteous judgment, “lifted up by the Father”⁶⁴ in righteous judgment, and, ultimately, “lifted up at the last day” in exaltation.⁶⁵

Similarly, in John 3 the "lifting up" of Jesus has as much to do with His heavenly ascent and glorious enthronement as it does with his ignominious death.⁶⁶ Hence, according to Herman Ridderbos, "the crucifixion is not presented [by John] as Jesus' humiliation but as the exaltation of the Son of Man,"⁶⁷ a "birth from above" that He intended to share with His disciples. Thus, those who "look" and "begin to believe in the Son of God"⁶⁸ as He is typologically revealed in the seraphic figure that has been "lifted up" will themselves, if they "endure to the end," receive "eternal life,"⁶⁹ being "lifted up" — in other words, exalted — with their Lord.

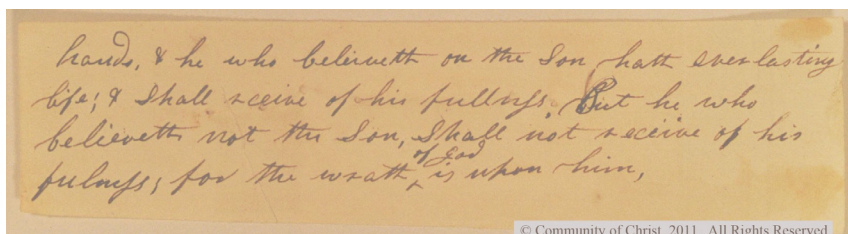


Figure 8. Note Pinned to the JST NT2 Manuscript for John 3:36⁷⁰

As a witness that the Prophet understood the implication of Jesus' words to Nicodemus as we have interpreted them here, a note pinned to the NT2 manuscript of the Joseph Smith Translation of the last verse of John 3 reads in part:⁷¹

He who believeth on the Son hath everlasting life⁷² and shall receive of his fulness.

The experiences that allow disciples to "receive of his fulness" extend beyond the initial ordinances of divine rebirth and the accompanying spiritual enlightenment that would allow them to begin to discern the kingdom of God "from the outside,"⁷³ eventually permitting them to see it from within. Consistent with Jesus' expectation that Nicodemus, as a "master of Israel"⁷⁴ should have already been familiar with this line of interpretation, there is evidence that "some early Jewish [exegetes] in the more mystic tradition may have also understood 'seeing God's kingdom' in terms of visionary ascents to heaven, witnessing the enthroned King." Moreover, the Jewish scholar Philo, a near contemporary of Jesus Christ, "declares that the Sinai revelation worked in Moses a second birth which transformed him from an earthly to a heavenly man; Jesus, by [way of] contrast, came from above to begin with and grants others a birth 'from above.'"⁷⁵

Some scholars have argued that Philo's ideas about a "new birth" that transforms earthly man to heavenly man may have been reflected in Jewish ritual at Qumran⁷⁶ and elsewhere. Such rituals seem to have enacted the liturgical equivalent of actual heavenly ascent.



Figure 9. *Ezekiel and the Resurrection in the Valley of Life,*
Dura Europos Synagogue, ca. AD 254.

As has been detailed elsewhere in connection with the third-century AD synagogue of Dura Europos,⁷⁷ one of several plausible narrative foundations for such rituals was the vision of the resurrection of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37. Donald Carson observed that although many Old Testament writers “look forward to a time when God’s ‘spirit’ will be poured out on humankind,”⁷⁸ the most important of all these is Ezekiel. Carson points out that in Ezekiel 36:25–27, as in John 3, “water and spirit come together so forcefully, the first to signify cleansing from impurity, and the second to depict the transformation of heart that will enable people to follow God wholly. And it is no accident that the account of the valley of dry bones, where Ezekiel preaches and the Spirit brings life to dry bones, follows hard after Ezekiel’s water/spirit passage.”⁷⁹

The culminating passage of Ezekiel 37, like that of John 3, promises exaltation and eternal life to the faithful. This promise is to be fulfilled through a new and “everlasting covenant.”⁸⁰ In imagery that parallels chapters 21 and 22 of the book of Revelation, the Lord promises that in the future day of their salvation Israel will be called His people — meaning that they will be called by His name⁸¹ — that they will be sanctified, and that His “sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.”⁸²

Going further, Carson observes that “Israel, the covenant community, was properly called ‘God’s son,’”⁸³ an idea that can be extended not only corporately but also individually, as described, for example, in Psalm 2:7 and Moses 1:4; 6:68. In chapter 16, Ezekiel describes unfaithful Israel as an abandoned female child on whom He had taken pity. When first born, “thy navel was not cut, neither was thou washed in water to supple thee;

thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.”⁸⁴ However, using the Israelite terminology of adoption and marriage, the Lord relates that He looked upon fledgling Israel with pity, spread His skirt over her to cover her nakedness, and entered into a covenant so that Israel could become His own.⁸⁵ The passage continues in terminology reminiscent of royal investiture and exaltation, with conceptual roots in the First Temple that will recall for Latter-day Saints the symbolism of modern temples: “Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee with brodered work, and shod thee with badger’s skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk, ... And I put ... a beautiful crown upon thine head.”⁸⁶ In reflecting on Jesus’ words, Nicodemus might have recalled prophetic passages like these that describe ritual rebirth in anticipation of the eventual fulfillment of God’s promise to Moses that Israel as a body eventually was to become “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”⁸⁷



Figure 10. J. James Tissot (1836–1902):
Jesus Goes Up Alone unto a Mountain to Pray (detail), 1886–1894.

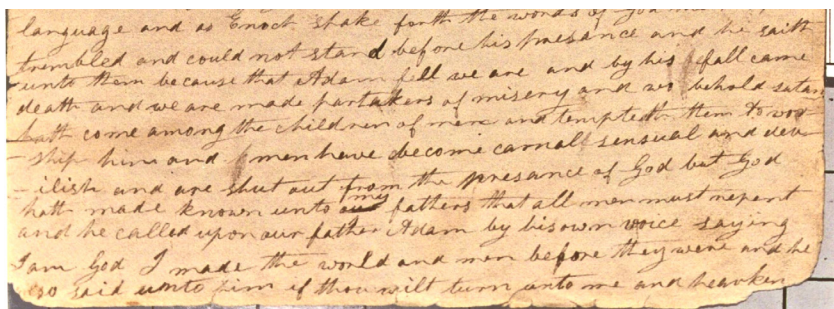
In summary, a careful reading of John 3, using modern linguistic evidence and considering relevant threads in Jewish scripture and tradition, makes it clear that being “born again” — or, rather, being “born from above” or “born of God”⁸⁸ — is not a process that is completed when one is baptized by water and receives the gift of the Holy Ghost. Being *ritually* reborn requires receiving and keeping all the ordinances and covenants of the priesthood⁸⁹ “to the end.”⁹⁰ Being fully reborn *in actuality* happens only after traversing the heavenly veil “to know the

only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent,”⁹¹ having both suffered in His likeness⁹² and also having been “lifted up” to “eternal life” and exaltation as He was. In other words, to qualify for eternal life, each of the Father’s children must be prepared to enter the kingdom of heaven as a son or daughter of God,⁹³ having first been born again by water and “by the Spirit of God through ordinances,”⁹⁴ and then, when sanctified, must be received personally by the Father — all this in similitude of their Redeemer, the Son of God,⁹⁵ their peerless, perfect prototype.⁹⁶

Having concluded from our study of chapter 3 of the Gospel of John that being born again, in its full sense, describes a process that begins before baptism, when one begins to “see the kingdom of God”⁹⁷ from “afar off”⁹⁸ and culminates with “the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come,”⁹⁹ the remainder of this article will draw out additional, complementary details concerning the process of spiritual rebirth that are available through a close reading of Moses 6:51–68 in light of relevant scripture and prophetic teachings. First, we will provide a brief overview of the setting, structure, and burden of these verses. Then we will conclude with deeper examination of issues and insights relating to the three key phrases of Moses 6:60 one by one: “by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified.”

When discussing temple-related matters, we will follow the model of Hugh W. Nibley, who was, according to his biographer Boyd Jay Petersen, “respectful of the covenants of secrecy safeguarding specific portions of the LDS endowment, usually describing parallels from other cultures without talking specifically about the Mormon ceremony.”¹⁰⁰

The Setting, Structure, and Burden of Moses 6:51–68



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Figure 11. JST OT1 Manuscript of Moses 6:42–58a.

14
 unto my voice & believe & repent of all their transgressions &
 be baptised even by water in the name of mine only begotten
 son which is full of grace & truth which is your saviour the
 only name which shall be given under heaven whereby
 salvation shall come unto the children of men & ye shall ask
 all things in his name & what ^{ever} ye shall ask it shall be given
 & our father Adam spake unto the Lord & said why is it that men
 must repent & be baptised by water & the Lord said unto Adam
 what I have forgiven thee thy transgressions in the garden of Eden
 hence come the saying abroad among the people that Christ hath
 atoned for original guilt wherein the sins of the Parents cannot
 be answered upon the heads of the children for they are whole from
 the foundation of the world & the Lord spake unto Adam saying
 as ~~thy~~ ^{much} as thy children are conceived in sin even so
 when they begin to grow up sin conceiveth in their hearts &
 they take the bitter that they may know to prize the good & it is
 given unto them to know good from evil wherefore they are
 agents unto themselves & I have given ~~an~~ ^{unto} you another law &
 commandment wherefore teach it unto your children that all
 men every where must repent for they can in no wise enter
 into the kingdom of God for no unclean thing can dwell there so
 dwell in his presence for in the language of Adam man of
 holiness is his name & the name of his only begotten is the
 son of man even Jesus Christ a righteous judge which shall
 come & give unto you a commandment to teach these things
 freely unto your children saying that all ^{men} ~~men~~ ^{shall} ~~be~~ ^{born} ~~in~~ ^{into} the
 world by the fall which bringeth death by water & the spirit
 which I have made & so become of dust a living soul even
 so ye must be born again of water & the spirit & cleansed by
 blood given the blood of mine only begotten into the mystic of
 the kingdom of Heaven that ye may be sanctified from all sin &
 enjoy the words of eternal life in this world & eternal life in
 the world to come even immortal glory for by the water ye keep
 the commandments by the spirit ye are justified & by the blood
 ye are sanctified that in you is given the record of Heaven the
 comprehension the visible things of immortal glory the touch of all
 things that which quickeneth all things which maketh alive all things
 that which knoweth all things & hath all power according to wisdom
 meekness ^{power} ~~power~~ judgment & now behold I say unto you this is the
 plan of salvation unto all men the blood of mine only begotten which
 shall come in the manifestation of time & before all things has its likeness
 & all things are created & made to bear record of me both things which
 are temporal & things which are spiritual things which are in the heavens
 above & things which are on the earth & things which are in the earth
 & things which are under the earth both above & beneath all things
 are record of me & it cometh to pass when the Lord hath spoken with

Figure 12. JST OT1 Manuscript of Moses 6:58b–64a, p. 2.

Hugh Nibley describes Moses 6:51–68¹⁰¹ as an “excerpt from the Book of Adam.”¹⁰² Perhaps it formed part of the “book of remembrance” mentioned in Moses 6:46. The setting for these verses is a sermon by Enoch. A notation in the handwriting of John Whitmer on the OT1 manuscript above Moses 6:52b reads “The Plan of Salvation.”¹⁰³ The verses that follow were sometimes cited by early leaders of the Church as evidence for the continuity of the plan of salvation from the time of Adam and Eve to our day.¹⁰⁴

Verses 51–68 form a structure of several parts. The introduction (verses 51–52) is a firsthand statement from God the Father wherein He, as the Maker of the world and of men, summarizes the commandments underlying the plan of salvation — namely, to hearken, believe, repent, and be baptized. Then, in verses 53–60, He motivates the commandments one by one in reverse order within a succession of ladder-like rhetorical cascades that culminate in a promise of sanctification through “the blood of [His] Only Begotten.”¹⁰⁵

It should be understood that the sure knowledge provided by the “record of heaven”¹⁰⁶ that is promised to Adam and Eve and their posterity in verse 61 is more than the prefatory witness that comes to those who have “receive[d] the Holy Ghost.”¹⁰⁷ Indeed, elsewhere Joseph Smith equates the “power which records”¹⁰⁸ with the sealing power, or, in other words, the power that “binds on earth and binds in heaven.”¹⁰⁹ Consistent with this idea, in the OT2 manuscript of Moses 6:61, this “Comforter” is described as “the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”¹¹⁰

In response to God’s explanation of the “plan of salvation,” as it is termed in verse 62, Adam hearkened without hesitation to the voice of the Father by obeying the commandments he had been given,¹¹¹ as outlined in verses 64–65. In return for the witness of Adam’s covenant given in his baptism, he receives the promised “record of heaven,”¹¹² described in more detail in verse 66 as the “record of the Father, and the Son” that was declared through “a voice out of heaven.”¹¹³ Having had “all things confirmed unto [him] by an holy ordinance,”¹¹⁴ Adam was “born again into the kingdom of heaven of water, and of the Spirit, and ... cleansed by blood,” having become a “son of God”¹¹⁵ in the full sense of the term. Elder Theodore M. Burton’s explanation of the event leaves no room for doubt about the nature of the occurrence described in verse 68:¹¹⁶

Thus Adam was sealed a son of God by the priesthood, and this promise was taught among the fathers from that time forth as a glorious hope to men and women on the earth if they would listen and give heed to these promises.

Relating this event to the sequence of ordinances and blessings that led up to it, Hyrum L. Andrus further explains:¹¹⁷ "To receive such communion, ordinarily one must be justified, sanctified, and sealed by the powers of the Gospel 'unto eternal life.'"¹¹⁸ In other words, Moses 6:68 witnesses that Adam received "the more sure word of prophecy."¹¹⁹

After declaring the sonship of Adam, the Father solemnly averred that all the posterity of Adam and Eve, both men and women, must follow the same pattern in order to be born again: "Thus [in other words, by doing as Adam did] may *all* become my sons."¹¹⁹



Figure 13. Ron Richmond (1963–): *Triplus, Number 3*, 2005. The contents of the three bowls symbolize water, blood, and spirit.

Spiritual Rebirth by Water, Spirit, and Blood

Having outlined the meaning and import of Moses 6:51–68 as a whole, we will now examine the interrelated symbolism of water, Spirit, and blood that is highlighted in verse 60. Hugh Nibley summarizes the significance of these three elements as follows:¹²¹

The water is an easy act of obedience. ... "By the water ye keep the commandment."¹²² "I know not, save the Lord commanded me."¹²³ That's your sacrifice. Then "by the Spirit ye are justified."¹²⁴ That's the Holy Ghost. ... You've got to be baptized physically, but then it goes beyond that to the Spirit, where[, after having been confirmed,] you [begin to] understand and [become] aware of what's going on. ... Then

the last thing is “and by the blood ye are sanctified.”¹²⁵ You can’t sanctify yourself but by completely giving up life in this world, which means suffering death, which means the shedding of blood. ... [T]he shedding of blood is your final declaration that you are willing to give up this life for the other.

As we will discuss in more detail later on, the temple sacrifices of ancient Israel — which pointed back to Isaac’s arrested sacrifice and pointed forward to Jesus’ *un*arrested sacrifice — the people were to “see” their own arrested sacrifice and redemption, having been spared the shedding of their *own* blood through the atonement of Christ. By means of these sacrifices, ancient Israel could be brought to “see” the Kingdom of God. Likewise, Adam and Eve’s eyes were “opened”¹²⁶ after their transgression and they “saw” their redemption in the garments of skin that God made for them and also in the sacrifices that He commanded them to make.¹²⁷ In a similar manner, Latter-day Saints are meant to begin to “see” the Kingdom of God in the sacrament.

“By the Water Ye Keep the Commandment”

Let us now survey six topics that provide some idea of the richness of ancient traditions and modern revelation relating to the water ordinances of baptism and washing.

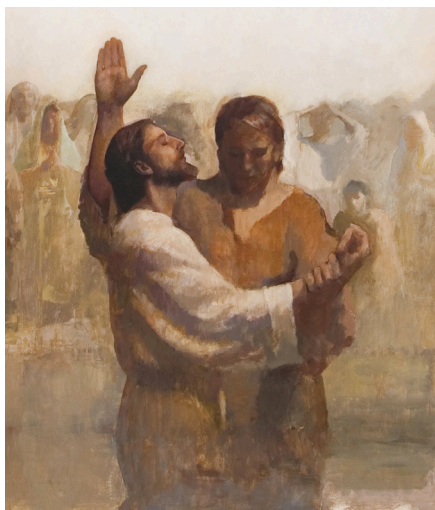


Figure 14. J. Kirk Richards (1977-): *The Baptism of Jesus Christ by John*.

1. Baptism as a commandment and an introduction to the law of obedience. Baptism by water is often described in scripture as a commandment — both a means to demonstrate obedience to the divine directive to *be* baptized and also a sign of willingness to keep the *law of obedience* with respect to all God’s other commandments.¹²⁸

Forexample, Nephi described the baptism of the Savior as a witness to His Father “that he would be obedient unto him in *keeping his commandments*.”¹²⁹ Alma exhorted the people of Gideon to “enter into a covenant

with [God] to *keep his commandments*, and *witness* it unto him this day by going into the waters of baptism."¹³⁰ And Mormon taught that "baptism is unto repentance to the *fulfilling the commandments* unto the remission of sins."¹³¹

Significantly, the blessing on the sacrament bread also specifies that those who partake witness in so doing "that they are willing to ... *keep his commandments*."¹³² This direct association between the sacramental bread and baptism is reinforced by the pointed *omission* of a reference to keeping the commandments in the companion blessing on the emblems of the Lord's blood.¹³³ In addition, only the blessing on the bread mentions that those who partake must be "*willing* to take upon them the name of [the] Son,"¹³⁴ an initial promise that, as Elder David A. Bednar taught, "clearly contemplates a future event or events and looks forward to the temple"¹³⁵ for its fulfillment. The distinctive symbolism of the two parts of the sacrament will be addressed later.

Loren Spendlove¹³⁶ points out that the first meaning of "partake" in Webster's 1828 Dictionary is: "To take a part, portion or share in common with others; to have a share or part; to participate."¹³⁷ He comments: "We all 'share in common' or 'participate' in the benefits that come from the death and resurrection of Christ (as symbolized by the bread), in that we all will resurrect from the dead."¹³⁸ Of course, since we expect to partake in the common benefits of the atonement of Christ, we should expect to partake in the common effort to invite and persuade, by word and example, all men and women to enjoy the full blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This joint participation in the work of salvation is sometimes expressed in the KJV New Testament with the word "fellowship" (Greek *koinonia*). "Fellowship" describes the intimate relationship between the Savior and His disciples, who must partake of what He suffered in order to partake of His glory.¹³⁹

With all this in mind, the importance of the commandment for all people to be baptized cannot be overstated.¹⁴⁰ However, Joseph Smith taught that unless those who are baptized also have "truly repented of all their sins and ... have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins"¹⁴¹ their baptism "is good for nothing," being of no more use than if "a bag of sand" had been baptized in their place.¹⁴²

The teachings of the Prophet are a reminder that there is no magic in earthly elements to cleanse us from sin — neither in the water of baptism itself nor, strictly speaking, in the physical act of eating and drinking the emblems of the sacrament.¹⁴³ As President Brigham Young explained:¹⁴⁴



Figure 15. *Broken Bread.*

Will the bread administered in [the] ordinance [of the sacrament] add life to you? Will the wine add life to you? Yes; if you are hungry and faint, it will sustain the natural strength of the body.¹⁴⁵ But suppose you have just eaten and drunk till you are full, so as not to require another particle of food to sustain the natural body. ... In what consists [then] the benefit we derive from this ordinance? It is in obeying the commands of the Lord. When we obey the commandments of our Heavenly Father, if we have a correct understanding of the ordinances of the House of God, we receive all the promises attached to the obedience rendered to His commandments. ...

It is the same in this as it is in the ordinance of baptism for the remission of sins. Has water, in itself, any virtue to wash away sin? Certainly not, ... but keeping the commandments of God will [open the way for the atoning blood of Christ to]¹⁴⁶ cleanse away the stain of sin.

2. Baptism as the gate to the pathway that leads to eternal life.

Latter-day Saints know that repentance and baptism are symbolized in scripture as a “gate,”¹⁴⁷ the essential access point to the “strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life.”¹⁴⁸ In order to eventually enter the Kingdom of God, to which that path leads, each disciple must additionally receive and keep every other law and ordinance of the priesthood “and continue in the path until the end of the day of probation.”¹⁴⁹ As Elder Bednar expressed this idea: “Total immersion and saturation with the Savior’s gospel are essential steps in the process of being born again.”¹⁵⁰



Figure 16. J. Kirk Richards (1977-):
The Salt Lake Temple.

Associating the gate of baptism with all subsequent laws and ordinances of the Priesthood, Joseph Smith made it clear that baptism was not only a commandment but also a “sign”:¹⁵¹

Baptism is a sign ordained of God, for the believer in Christ to take upon himself in order to enter into the Kingdom of God. ... It is a sign of command¹⁵² which God hath set for man to enter ... [and] those who seek to enter in any other way will seek in vain; for God will not receive them, neither will the angels¹⁵³ ... for they have not obeyed the ordinances, nor attended to the signs which God ordained for man to receive in order to receive a celestial glory. ...

There are certain key words and signs belonging to the Priesthood which must be observed in order to obtain the blessing.¹⁵⁴ ... Had [Cornelius] not taken [these] sign[s] or ordinances upon him ... and received the gift of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of hands, according to the order of God, he could not have healed the sick or commanded an evil spirit to come out of a man, and it obey him;¹⁵⁵ for the spirits might say unto him, as they did to the sons of Sceva: “Paul we know and Jesus we know, but who are ye?”¹⁵⁶

3. The antiquity of water symbolism in rituals of rebirth. We will not attempt to summarize the varied and controversial histories of the water rituals of purification, penitence, and proselytism in Jewish and Christian traditions.¹⁵⁷ Suffice it to say that no credible scholar today doubts that immersion was practiced by Jews for various religious purposes in pre-Christian times, nor would deny that immersion was the standard form of baptism in the early Christian church.



Figure 17. *Ancient Mikveh at the Jerusalem Temple Mount, 2011, recalling Oliver Cowdery’s description of the baptismal font as a “liquid grave.”*¹⁵⁸



Figure 18. *The Penitent Baptism of Adam and Eve. 1340–1351. West façade, detail of the upper tympanum, middle archivolt, Church of St. Théobald, Thann, France.*

With respect to traditions concerning the antiquity of baptism, we note in passing that not only the book of Moses but also several Islamic, Christian, Mandaean, and Manichaean accounts speak of the baptism of Adam and Eve.¹⁵⁹

Some scholars, including Stephen D. Ricks¹⁶⁰ and David J. Larsen,¹⁶¹ have argued that the water symbolism of baptism is better understood when it is compared and contrasted with separate rituals in ancient Israel wherein the king was washed and anointed, both prior to his initiation and also at regular renewals of his right to rule.

For example, Larsen writes:¹⁶²

We learn from the Bible that the ... king was washed and purified, likely at the spring of Gihon.¹⁶³ He was anointed on the head with a perfumed olive oil that was kept in a horn in



Figure 19. *Impression of Seal of Gudea, Tello, Iraq, ca. 2150 BCE.*

the sanctuary.¹⁶⁴ He was clothed in robes and also wore a priestly apron (ephod¹⁶⁵), sash,¹⁶⁶ and diadem/headress.¹⁶⁷ Finally, the king was consecrated a priest “after the order of Melchizedek.”¹⁶⁸

Relevant context for understanding these practices also can be found in the religious literature of ancient Mesopotamia. For example, in the story of *Atrahasis* we can trace the basic conception that water, spirit, and blood — the latter derived from the body of a slain deity — were the life-giving elements used by the gods in the creation of humankind.¹⁶⁹

In the seal of Gudea shown above, the bareheaded and nearly-naked Gudea is introduced by a mediating deity to a seated god. The mediating god presents a vase featuring a seedling and flowing water to the seated god. Water flows from the seated god himself into flowing vases, no doubt anticipating the sprouting of seedlings that have yet to appear. The scene suggested is one of rebirth and transformation: drawing on the phraseology of the Gospel of John we might conjecture that having been “born of water,” the king, in likeness both of the sprout within the flowing vase and the god to which he is being introduced, is also to become a “well of water springing up into everlasting life.” A sculpture of Gudea attests to just such an interpretation, where Gudea himself is shown, with his head now covered, holding a vase of flowing water in likeness of the seated god.

A comparative analysis of the full set of rituals of kingship at Mari in Old Babylon and in the Old Testament¹⁷⁰ concluded that none of the major themes of Mesopotamian kingship ritual, including the roles that water plays in those rites,¹⁷¹ should be unfamiliar to students of the Bible.

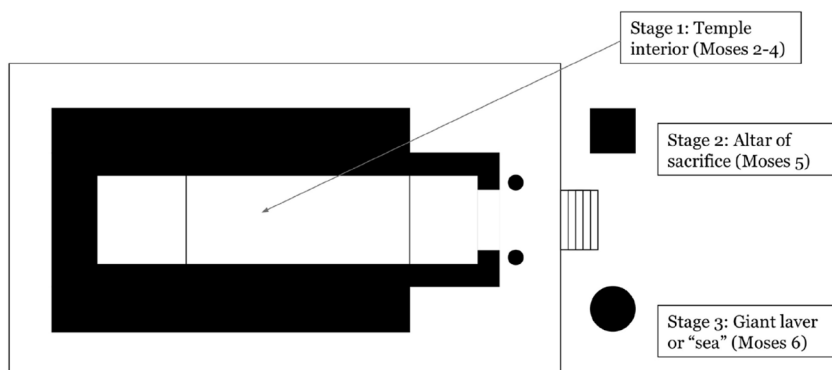


Figure 20. David Calabro: *Floor Plan of the Temple of Solomon, with Suggested Locations of the Ritual in Moses 2–6.*

Indeed, as John Walton correctly observes, “the ideology of the temple is not noticeably different in Israel than it is in the ancient Near East. The difference is in the God, not in the way the temple functions in relation to the God.”¹⁷²

David Calabro has explored the possibility that a text with an outline similar to the book of Moses may have been used in Solomon’s Temple to instruct and guide initiates through specific areas where instruction was given and rituals were performed. Of relevance to the present discussion is the connection he suggests between the text of Moses 6 and the “molten sea” that stood in front of the temple.¹⁷³ After discussing several clues supporting his thesis from the book of Moses, Calabro concludes:

While there is no evidence that the temple laver was used as a baptismal font, it was definitely large enough to suggest such a use, and Joseph Smith’s specifications for a baptismal font modeled after the Solomonic laver for the Nauvoo temple show that he understood it in this connection.

It is evident that two distinct sorts of water ordinances — namely baptism by immersion and washing as part of priestly or kingly initiation — became confused in the first centuries after Christ, making it difficult to know which of which one is meant when Christian scripture or tradition mentions the use of water in religious ritual.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, as religious practices evolved, rituals resembling washing, anointing, and clothing were sometimes performed as part of “baptism.”

For example, in some Christian baptismal traditions the idea of “reversing the blows of death” was represented by a special anointing with the “oil of mercy” prior to (or sometimes after) “baptism,”



Figure 21. Viktor Vasnetsov (1848–1926): *The Baptism of Saint Prince Vladimir*, 1890. “Attendants hold Vladimir’s golden royal robes, which he has removed, and the simple white baptismal robe, which he will put on.”

as the candidate was signed upon the brow, the nostrils, the breast, the ears, and so forth.¹⁷⁵

It was commonly accepted by some Christians that the precedent for such anointings went back to the beginning of time. For instance, in the pseudepigraphal *Life of Adam and Eve*, we can read an incident where Adam, as he lay on his deathbed, requested Eve and Seth to fetch him oil from the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden so that he could be restored to life.¹⁷⁶

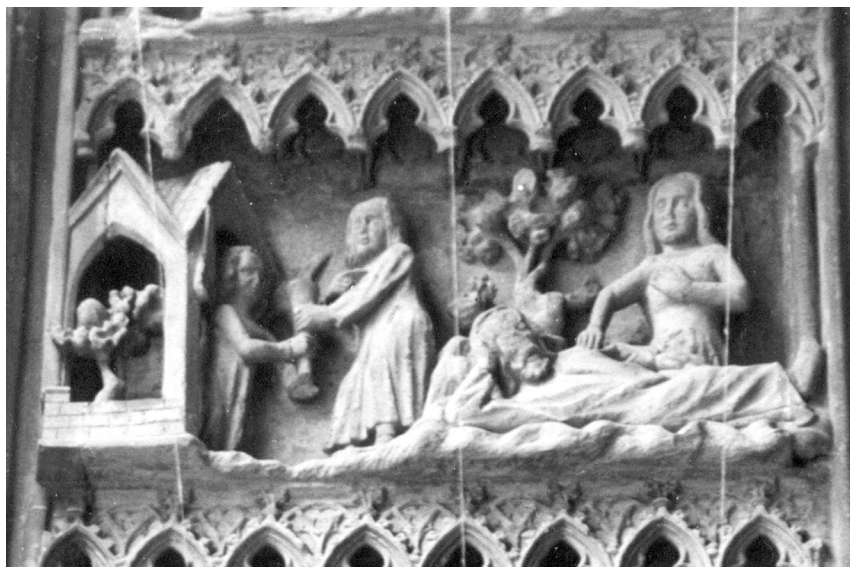


Figure 22. *The Quest of Seth for the Oil of Mercy*, 1351–1360.
Heilig-Kreuz Münster (Holy Cross Minster) in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany.



Figure 23. *Early Christian Painting of a Baptism*, Saint Calixte Catacomb, 3rd century.

Some traditions describe how the baptismal candidate was “stripped of the garments inherited from Adam and vested with the token of those garments he or she shall enjoy at the resurrection.”¹⁷⁷ In other traditions, the baptismal candidates “stood [barefoot] on animal skins while they prayed, symbolizing the taking off of the garments of skin they had inherited from Adam” as well as figuratively enacting the putting of the serpent, the representative of death and sin, under one’s heel. Thus the serpent, his head crushed by the heel of

the penitent relying on the mercies of Christ’s atonement, was by a single act renounced, defeated, and banished.



Figure 24. *Jesus and Nicodemus.*

4. The context of circumcision in Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus about being "born again." A passage from Joseph Smith's translation of Genesis, discussed in more detail below, highlights the importance of the relationship between baptism as revealed in the beginning to Adam and Eve and the later institution of the Old Testament ordinance of circumcision through God's command to Abraham. Samuel Zinner describes the relationship between baptism and circumcision as part of the generally underappreciated context for the dialogue of Jesus and Nicodemus about the importance of being "born again":¹⁷⁸

It is perhaps not usually recognized that implicit in John 3's discussion on the new birth and baptism is the topic of circumcision. Early Christian theology understood baptism as a spiritual circumcision for Gentile adherents of the Jesus sect.¹⁷⁹ Rabbinic sources also understand proselyte immersion as a new and spiritual birth. In John 3:4 Jesus' teaching on rebirth in verse 3 naturally brings circumcision to Nicodemus' mind, so that in effect he asks, how can a male adult return to the state of infancy and be circumcised again? The (rhetorical) confusion in the discussion arises because Jesus is teaching that a circumcised Jewish male adult must be reborn spiritually. Nicodemus' thought is that Jewish males are already spiritually reborn from the time of their

infant circumcision. Only Gentile proselytes stand in need of spiritual rebirth. In fact, Jesus is referring to John's baptism of repentance¹⁸⁰ for Jews, and Jesus' imperative, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," alludes to the necessity of John's baptism of repentance, and forms part of the background of John 3:5's "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God," an allusion to John 1:26's baptism with water and 1:33's baptism with the Holy Spirit.¹⁸¹ Jesus' point in John 3 is that Jews need spiritual circumcision in addition to the physical rite, a traditional enough prophetic *tanakhic* trope.¹⁸² In 1QS V we see that spiritual circumcision is demanded in the "community": "circumcise in the Community the foreskin of his tendency and of his stiff neck" [1QS V 5]. This follows 1QS IV's teaching on immersion, which matches the pattern established already by Ezekiel¹⁸³ who speaks of cleansing water followed by the insertion of a new spirit and heart: ... [Such] Qumran passage[s], like John the [Baptist's] and Jesus' baptismal teachings, [do] not suggest that [baptism] replaces circumcision, but that it complements and perfects it.

5. Circumcision, covenant, and baptism in antiquity and in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. Consistent with the linkages between circumcision, covenant, and baptism suggested by Zinner are many allusions to these subjects both in antiquity and in Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon and the Bible.

For example, consider Isaiah 48:1 as it is quoted in 1 Nephi 20:1. This gloss (clarifying comment) by Joseph Smith first appeared in the 1840 edition of the Book of Mormon:¹⁸⁴

Hearken and hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, *or out of the waters of baptism*, who swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, yet they swear not in truth nor in righteousness.

The term "waters" within the phrase "come forth out of the waters of Judah" might be more plainly rendered as "the belly or loins of Judah," a poetical reference to the literal seed of the body out of which the corporeal descendants of Judah are propagated. For this reason, one might see in this phrase an allusion to the covenant of circumcision, a covenant that was not only made necessary for Abraham

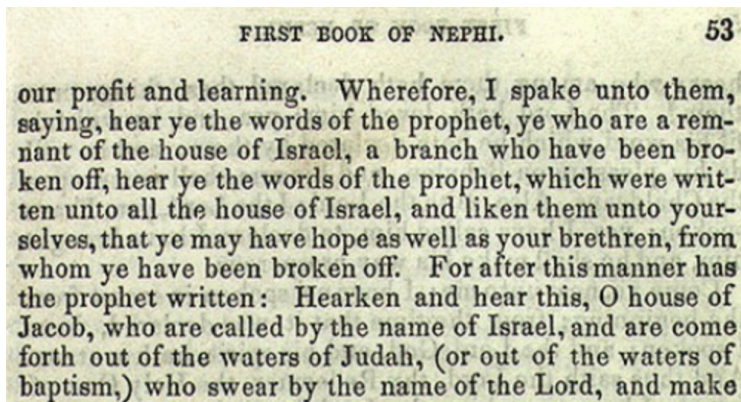


Figure 25. 1 Nephi VI [1 Nephi 20:1], 1840 Edition of the Book of Mormon, p. 53.

and his biological posterity but also, significantly, something to which all those who had been “adopted” into his household were required to submit.¹⁸⁵ Joseph Smith’s gloss — the disjunctive phrase “or out of the waters of baptism” — expands Isaiah’s reference to include Gentiles who could become part of covenant Israel by adoption through proselyte baptism, consistent with 3 Nephi 30:2: “Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; ... and come unto me, and *be baptized* in my name, that ye may receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, *that ye may be numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel.*”¹⁸⁶

An even more pointed reference connecting the themes of circumcision and baptism can be found in the mention of the “blood of Abel” within Joseph Smith’s translation of the book of Genesis. The neglect of this passage by scholars argues for a detailed treatment here.



Figure 26. Jan van Eyck (ca. 1395–1441): *The Offering of Abel and Cain*, 1425–1429

The story of Abel has always been linked with the idea of proper sacrifice¹⁸⁷ — indeed his name seems to be a deliberate pun on the richness of the sacrifice that he will make, in contrast to the stingy offering of Cain.¹⁸⁸ “And Abel [*hebel*], he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof” [*ûmêhelēbēhen* — in other words, from the fatlings, the richest or best part of the herd]. Not only does the Hebrew word *hēleb* denote “fat,” but also the word *ûmêhelēbēhen* “contains within itself the name of *hbl* [Abel] ... reversed” — i.e., *ûmêhelēbēhen*, thus strengthening the pun.¹⁸⁹



Figure 27. J. James Tissot (1836–1902):
Zacharias Killed Between the Temple and the Altar, ca. 1896–1894.

Remember that in the book of Hebrews, the shedding of Abel’s blood was seen as a type of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.¹⁹⁰ With respect to his place among the biblical canon of martyrs, Hamilton writes: “Abel is coupled with Zechariah¹⁹¹ as the first¹⁹² and the last¹⁹³ victims of murder mentioned in the Old Testament. ... Understandably Abel is characterized as ‘innocent.’”¹⁹⁴

The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible connects the death of the righteous Abel to an anomalous ordinance for little children consisting of the sprinkling of blood coupled with “washing” that is denounced in JST Genesis 17:3–7.¹⁹⁵

And it came to pass, that Abram fell on his face, and called upon the name of the Lord.

And God talked to him, saying, My people have gone astray from my precepts, and have not kept mine ordinances, which I gave unto their fathers;

And they have not observed mine anointing,¹⁹⁶ and the burial, or baptism wherewith I commanded them;

But have turned from the commandment, and taken unto themselves the washing or ~~baptism~~¹⁹⁷ of children, and the blood of sprinkling;¹⁹⁸

And have said that the blood of the righteous Abel was shed for sins; and have not known wherein they are accountable before me.

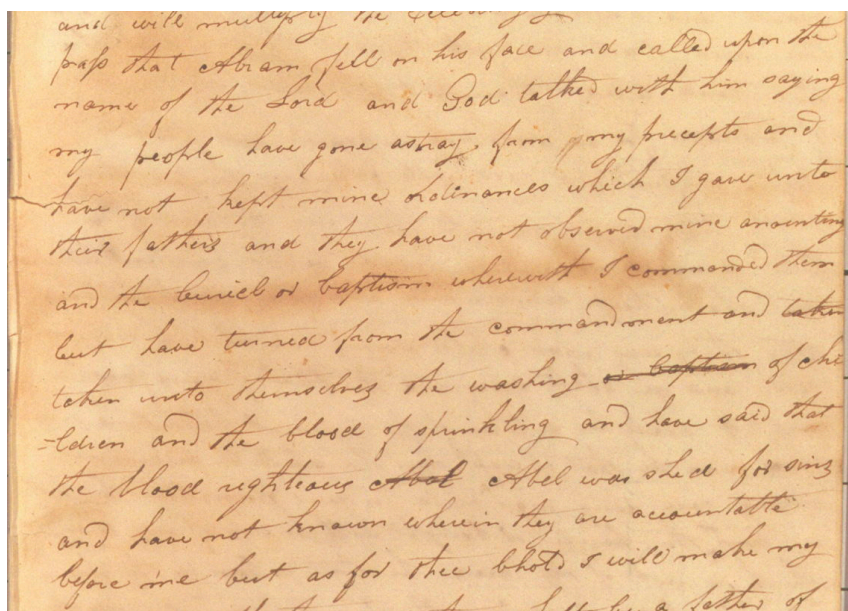


Figure 28. JST OT1 Manuscript of Genesis 17.

To counteract this practice, we are told that the Lord established the covenant of circumcision at the age of eight days,¹⁹⁹ "that thou mayest know for ever that children are not accountable before me till [they are] eight years old."²⁰⁰ D&C 68:25–28, received later in the same year that JST Genesis 17 was translated, also emphasizes that children are not accountable until eight years old.²⁰¹

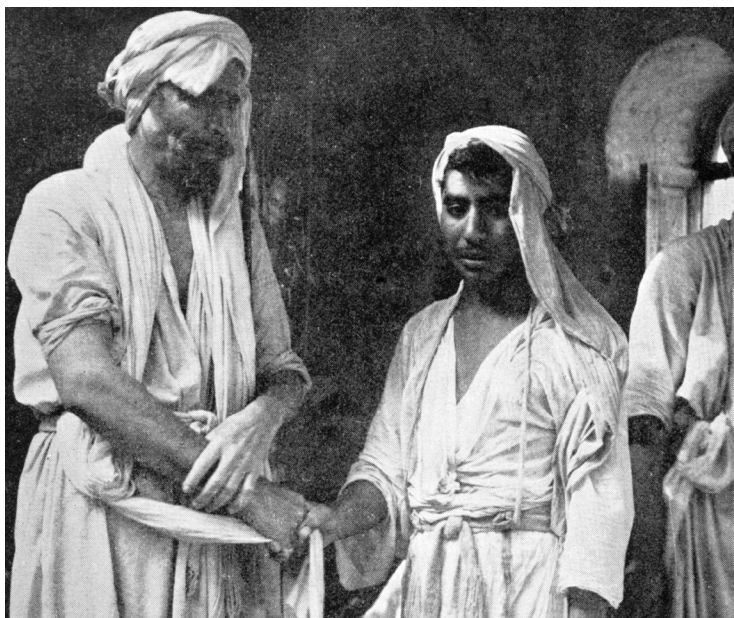


Figure 29. E. S. Drower, 1879–1972: *The Kushta*, 1956²⁰²

In remarkable resonance with Joseph Smith’s translation, the central figure of Abel is associated with the rituals of water immersion among the Mandaeans.²⁰³ Indeed, Abel (often called *Hibil Ziwa* = Abel Splendor), who is often identified with the roles of redeemer and savior, was said to have performed the first baptism — that of Adam, who prefigures every later Mandaean candidate for these repeated rituals.²⁰⁴

Following the ceremonies of immersion, the Mandaeans still continue ritual practices that include anointing and the pronouncing of the names of the gods upon the individual.²⁰⁵ The *kushta*, a ceremonial handclasp, is given three times in the ritual, each one of which, according to Elizabeth Drower, “seems to mark the completion ... of a stage in a ceremony.”²⁰⁶ At the moment of glorious resurrection, Mandaean scripture records that a final *kushta* will also take place, albeit in the form of an embrace, called the “key of the *kushta* of both arms.”²⁰⁷

The concept of an “atoning embrace”²⁰⁸ can be compared with similar imagery in Jacob’s wrestle with the angel²⁰⁹ and his subsequent encounter with Esau;²¹⁰ in the reconciliation of the father with his prodigal son in Jesus’ parable;²¹¹ and especially in the eschatological embraces of Enoch’s Zion and Latter-day Zion described in Moses 7:63: “Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other.”²¹²



Figure 30. *Adam and Eve Outside Paradise, Cain and Abel*, 12th century.

Equally relevant to 1st Genesis 17:3–7 is Hebrews 12:24, which speaks of the saints coming “to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”²¹³ To Craig Koester, this suggests the idea that “Abel’s blood brought a limited atonement, while Jesus’ blood brought complete atonement.”²¹⁴ With reference to Hebrews 11:4, Joseph Smith said that Abel “holding still the keys of his dispensation ... was sent down from heaven unto Paul to minister consoling words, and to commit unto him a knowledge of the mysteries of godliness.”²¹⁵

The practice of swearing “by the holy blood of Abel” is portrayed in early Christian and Islamic accounts of the efforts of the antediluvian patriarchs to dissuade their posterity from leaving the “holy mountain” to associate with the children of Cain.²¹⁶ Serge Ruzer interprets this as evidence for the existence of a group that looked to Abel rather than to Christ for salvation. He concludes that the “emphasis here [is] on the salvific quality of Abel’s blood. ... Swearing by Abel’s blood ... is presented in our text as sufficient for the salvation of the sons of Seth; those who dwell — thanks to swearing by Abel’s blood — on the holy mountain do not need any further salvation.”²¹⁷



Figure 31. *Red Heifer Being Raised in Israel by The Temple Institute and an Israeli Cattleman.*

Additional evidence suggesting a belief in salvific power for Abel's blood comes from a 1 Enoch description of Abel as a "red calf." Patrick Tillier sees this as an allusion to the red heifer²¹⁹ of Numbers 19:1-10.²¹⁹ The great Jewish scholar Maimonides saw the ritual of the red heifer not merely as law of purity, but rather as a matter "of transcendent, even salvific weight and meaning."²²⁰ The red heifer pointedly was a young animal used in purification rites (comprising a washing and a sprinkling of blood²²¹) for those who had come into contact with "one ... found slain" and "lying in the field,"²²² as was Abel. A widely varying set of Islamic accounts attempt to explain the origin of a related Qur'anic story;²²³ what these accounts have in common is the idea that the murderer denied his crime but was identified by the voice of the dead man who was touched by the sacrificial animal.²²⁴ Could this be an echo of the righteous Abel, of whom scriptures says his "blood cries unto [God] from the ground"²²⁵ — wherein "he being dead yet speaketh"?²²⁶

In summary, there is ample evidence from a variety of sources dating to at least the Second Temple period to support the plausibility of the account in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible wherein anomalous rituals for little children purporting to cleanse them by washing and the sprinkling of blood are coupled with the erroneous idea that "the blood of the righteous Abel was shed for sins."²²⁷ As a figure associated anciently with sacrifice, baptism, and innocent martyrdom, Abel arguably could have attracted religious notions of this character. Additionally, the rationale for the institution of circumcision in the Joseph Smith

Translation is also consistent with Samuel Zinner's conclusion about the symbolic connection between circumcision and baptism in its New Testament context: namely, that baptism was not meant to replace "circumcision, but [rather] that it complements and perfects it."²²⁸

6. Digression: Baptism and ritual washings as illustrations of the nature of all ordinances. Before concluding our discussion of the symbolism of water in spiritual rebirth, we digress to show how baptism and ritual washings provide a paradigmatic illustration of the nature of *all* priesthood ordinances. We conclude from our brief discussion of baptism and ritual washings that they, when administered as authentic priesthood ordinances, are *symbolic, salvific, interrelated and additive, retrospective, and anticipatory.*

- *Symbolic.* Hugh Nibley defined the endowment as "a model, a presentation in figurative terms."²²⁹ The same can be said for baptism, which Paul described as a symbol of death and resurrection.²³⁰ Like the parables of Jesus, the ordinances are meant to provide both an understanding of the spiritual universe in which we live and a model for personal conduct within that context. This is why the Lord condemns in such strong terms those who take their fundamental bearings from other, less perfect "instruments." Such individuals are described as those who have "strayed from [His] ordinances," who "seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness" but rather "walk in [their] own way and after the image of [their] own god, whose image is in the likeness of the [telestial, rather than the celestial,] world."²³¹

When our understanding of the universe and our place within it is based on our own warped conceptions instead of the blueprint of the celestial world provided in the ordinances, we will experience the frustration of mistaken ambitions and stunted growth in the personal and social characteristics that matter most in eternity. On the other hand, repeated participation in sacred ordinances over the course of a lifetime allows us to deepen our understanding of "who we are, and who God is, and what our relationship to Him [and to His children] is."²³²

- *Salvific.* President Joseph F. Smith taught:²³³

I frequently hear people say, "All that is required of a man in this world is to be honest and square," and that such a man will attain to exaltation and glory. But

those who say this do not remember the saying of the Lord, that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of [God].”²³⁴

While recognizing the superior forms of pedagogy embodied in the symbolism of the ordinances,²³⁵ Elder Bednar taught that we err if we think that their value is limited to inspired instruction. He said, citing D&C 84:19–21:²³⁶

The ordinances of salvation and exaltation administered in the Lord’s restored Church are far more than rituals or symbolic performances. Rather, they constitute authorized channels through which the blessings and powers of heaven can flow into our individual lives.

In other words, the realization of the promised endowment of knowledge and power promised in the ordinances requires that one be both *informed* and *transformed*.²³⁷ Indeed, the blessing of being “born again by the Spirit of God through ordinances,”²³⁸ in conjunction with the strengthening power of the atonement of Christ, is obtained only as individuals live for it — in a continual effort of obedience and service that strengthens the ties of covenant with which they are freely and lovingly bound to their Heavenly Father.²³⁹ Only by both understanding and conforming to the divine pattern given in the ordinances may individuals gradually experience an increasing measure of the joy of becoming all that God now is.

- *Interrelated and additive.* Elder Bednar explained:²⁴⁰

The ordinances of baptism by immersion, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the sacrament are not isolated and discrete events; rather, they are elements in an interrelated and additive pattern of redemptive progress. Each successive ordinance elevates and enlarges our spiritual purpose, desire, and performance. The Father’s plan, the Savior’s Atonement, and the ordinances of the Gospel provide the grace we need to press forward and progress line upon line and precept upon precept toward our eternal destiny.

That the ordinances must be closely *interrelated* should be obvious — after all, each one is based on the same doctrine of Christ. Illustrating this point, Elder Bruce R. McConkie noted that three different ordinances — baptism, the sacrament, and

animal sacrifice — were instituted at different times, are enacted using different symbolism, and are employed in different settings, however all are performed in association with one and the same covenant.²⁴¹ In other words, although each of these three ordinances fulfills a unique purpose and varies somewhat in what it signifies, all are “performed in similitude of the atoning sacrifice by which salvation comes.”²⁴² As an aside, we note in this connection that any adaptation of an ordinance to different times, cultures, and practical circumstances must be made by proper authority in order to minimize the possibility of changes that may alter it in crucial ways.

It is likewise essential that the ordinances be *additive*. For example, just as baptism must be preceded by faith in Jesus Christ and sincere repentance,²⁴³ so the ongoing process of sanctification — made available to those who are confirmed, receive, and retain the gift of the Holy Ghost — can come only to those who have been prepared previously through baptism. Likewise, the initial budding of “the power of godliness” that is increasingly “manifest”²⁴⁴ in the lives of faithful members of the Church as they renew their prior covenants through the sacrament prepares them for the additional ordinances and covenants they will later receive in the temple.



Figure 32. *Greek Orthodox Icon Depicting the Ladder of Virtues, Thessaloniki, Macedonia.*

Further illustrating the additive nature of the ordinances, we note that faith, hope, and charity served anciently both as symbols of the three degrees of glory represented in the temple and also as stages in the disciple’s earthly experience marked by progression in the ordinances and the keeping of covenants. This same triad was represented both anciently and in the teachings, translations, and revelations of Joseph Smith as a ladder of heavenly ascent that must be mounted rung by rung.²⁴⁵



Figure 33. Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890): *Le Moissonneur*, 1889.

Elder Bednar’s characterization of the “additive pattern of redemptive progress”²⁴⁶ suggests that those who are striving to become saints are passionate, not passive, about their discipleship. Like Abraham,²⁴⁷ they are driven by “divine discontent,”²⁴⁸ not being satisfied with the sort of minimal, negative obedience which requires only that they avoid the “appearance of sin,”²⁴⁹ but rather, seeking to be “anxiously engaged”²⁵⁰ in furthering the Father’s work with “all [their] heart, might, mind and strength.”²⁵¹ By this means, they eventually become capable of enduring all things, being filled with perfect faith, hope, and charity,

their will “being swallowed up in the will of the Father”²⁵² to the point that, after a lifetime of faithfulness to every covenant they have received and through the strengthening power of the Atonement, they begin to approach the “measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”²⁵³

- *Retrospective.* An appreciation of the retrospective regard of the ordinances clears up any confusion about the relationship between baptism and other water ordinances.²⁵⁴ Since the time of Adam, baptism has been the *first*,²⁵⁵ *introductory*²⁵⁶ saving ordinance of the Gospel given in mortal life, and any similarities between baptism and later ordinances of washing are meant to highlight and build upon that resemblance retrospectively.

Further illustrating the retrospective regard of later washing ordinances, we would suggest that their significance harks back before baptism, echoing earlier events that occurred in the premortal life. For example, it appears that the ordinance received



Figure 34. Harry Anderson, 1906–1996:
Moses Calls Aaron to the Ministry.

by Aaron when he was “wash[ed],” “anoint[ed],” and clothed in “holy garments ... so that he [might] minister unto [the Lord] in the priest’s office”²⁵⁷ recapitulated his foreordination to this priesthood calling when he was “wash’d and set apart”²⁵⁸ in the premortal world. Consistent with the teachings of Joseph Smith,²⁵⁹ Alma 13 states that “[high] priests were ordained after the order of [God’s] Son, ... being called and prepared from the foundation of the world ... with that holy calling ... *according to a preparatory redemption* for such.”²⁶⁰ Similarly, President Spencer W. Kimball taught that in premortal life, faithful women were also given assignments to be carried out later on earth.²⁶¹

Speaking of Christ as the premortal prototype for all those who were foreordained to priestly offices and subsequently ordained in mortal life, the *Gospel of Philip* suggests that the general meaning, symbolism, and sequence of the ordinances has always been the same: “He who ... [was begotten] before everything was begotten anew [i.e., “by the water”²⁶²]. He [who was] once [anointed] was anointed anew [i.e., “by the Spirit”²⁶³]. He who was redeemed in turn redeemed (others) [i.e., “by the blood”²⁶⁴].”²⁶⁵

- *Anticipatory*. Because the round of eternity²⁶⁶ is embedded in the ordinances, we would expect them not only to be retrospective but also anticipatory in nature. For example, in Moses 5 Adam learns that the ordinance of animal sacrifice was instituted in explicit anticipation of the sacrifice “of the Only Begotten of the Father”²⁶⁷ — just as, of course, the ordinance of the sacrament looks back retrospectively on that same expiatory sacrifice. With regard to the sacrifice of Isaac, Hugh Nibley asked:

Is it surprising that the sacrifice of Isaac looked both forward and back, as “Isaac thought of himself as the type of offerings to come, while Abraham thought of himself as atoning for the guilt of Adam,” or that “as Isaac was being bound on the altar, the spirit of Adam, the first man, was being bound with him”?²⁶⁸ It was natural for Christians to view the sacrifice of Isaac as a type of the crucifixion, yet it is the Jewish sources that comment most impressively on the sacrifice of the Son. When at the creation of the world angels asked, “What is man that You should remember him?”²⁶⁹ God replied: “You shall see a father slay his son, and the son consenting to be slain, to sanctify My Name.”²⁷⁰

In this regard, we note that Abraham is unique in scripture in that he came to understand Christ’s atonement both from the perspective of a father²⁷¹ and also from that of a son.²⁷²

As another example of the anticipatory nature of the ordinances, recall the witness of JST Genesis 17:11 that the divine introduction of circumcision in the time of Abraham, somewhat like the ordinance of naming and blessing of little children in our day, was important not only in its own right, but also because it pointed forward to the ordinance of baptism. Remember that a primary reason for the institution of the practice of circumcision was “that thou mayest know for ever that children are not accountable before me till [they are] eight years old.”²⁷³ The blood shed in circumcision, whose mark remained in the child as a permanent “sign” in the flesh,²⁷⁴ could be understood as a symbol of arrested sacrifice²⁷⁵ that invited *retrospective* reflection on the universal salvation of little children through the blood of Christ’s atonement. At the same time, the symbolism of



Figure 35. Abraham Bloemaert (1566–1651): *The Circumcision*, 1601.

circumcision also implicitly facilitated a correct, *anticipatory* understanding of the necessity of justification accomplished through “the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins”²⁷⁶ that was meant to accompany the baptism of children when they reach the age of accountability.

Note also that the symbolism of death and resurrection in the ordinance of baptism anticipates the instruction and covenants of the temple endowment that further detail the responsibilities and blessings of those who will pass through the veil to rise in the first resurrection.²⁷⁷ Similarly, the initiatory ordinance of washing, anointing, and clothing²⁷⁸ provides an anticipatory, capsule summary of *all* the ordinances. More specifically, one might conclude that the structure of the initiatory ordinance of the temple reflects the threefold symbolism of water, spirit, and blood found in Moses 6, thus outlining the path of exaltation that is further elaborated in the endowment. In addition, the anticipatory nature of the initiatory ordinance is captured in Truman G. Madsen’s description of it as “a patriarchal blessing to every organ and attribute and power of our being, a blessing that is to be fulfilled in this world and the next.”²⁷⁹



Figure 36. Linda McCarthy (1947–): *City of Enoch*, 2002.

Going further — and consistent with the idea that the temple is a model or analog rather than an actual picture of reality — Elder John A. Widtsoe taught that the essential earthly ordinances anticipate or, perhaps more precisely, prefigure heavenly ordinances in which eternal truths and blessings will be taught and bestowed in a more perfect and finished form:²⁸⁰

Great eternal truths make up the Gospel plan. All regulations for man's earthly guidance have their eternal spiritual counterparts. The earthly ordinances of the Gospel are themselves only reflections of heavenly ordinances. For instance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and temple work are merely earthly symbols of realities that prevail throughout the universe; but they are symbols of truths that must be recognized if the Great Plan is to be fulfilled. The acceptance of these earthly symbols is part and parcel of correct earth life, but being earthly symbols they are distinctly of the earth and cannot be accepted elsewhere than on earth.

In order that absolute fairness may prevail and eternal justice may be satisfied, all men, to attain the fulness of their joy, must accept these earthly ordinances. There is no water baptism in the next estate nor any conferring of the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of earthly hands. The equivalents of these ordinances prevail no doubt in every estate, but only as they are given on this earth can they be made to aid, in their onward progress, those who have dwelt on earth.

The distinction between earthly and heavenly ordinances is perfectly expressed in the OT1 manuscript version of Moses 6:59. It is true that the first part of the verse might seem to imply that the culminating earthly ordinances, whose cleansing power is provided by "the blood of mine Only Begotten," provide a complete initiation "into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" in this life. However, the verse closes by making a distinction between the "words of eternal life" — meaning both the revelations of the Holy Spirit with regard to temple ordinances and, ultimately, the sure promise of exaltation that can only be received in an anticipatory way "in this world" — and "eternal life" itself, which can only be granted "in the world to come."²⁸¹

By way of summary, we might say that the ordinances associated with water, spirit and blood are *saturated with symbolism*. Indeed, Elder John A. Widtsoe specifically described the endowment as being "so packed full of revelations ... that no human words can explain or make [them] clear."²⁸² More specifically, we might say that the ordinances are *overloaded* with a superabundant profusion of meanings, *overdetermined* in the tangible forms that they take, and deliberately *overlaid* in successive refinement so as to facilitate incremental growth of understanding and practical application in the lives of those who receive them. Like the cruse of oil blessed by Elijah and the inexhaustible pitcher of Baucis and Philemon, study of and participation in the ordinances will continually pour out new depths of meaning to those who are spiritually prepared to receive them.²⁸³

As the joint purport of the ordinances is gradually revealed to faithful disciples, they begin to see how their several meanings function as keys to the dense conceptual and practical nexus at the heart of the Gospel; reverberating in harmony throughout the parallel yet interwoven conceptual realms of doctrines, ordinances, and covenants; and ultimately, in their transformative power, unlocking the "power of godliness"²⁸⁴ that constitutes the supreme significance and purpose of Creation.



Figure 37. *Unfurling Heart-Shaped Fern Frond, a Symbol of New Life in the Maori Culture (Koru) and a Manifestation of the Fibonacci Sequence in Nature.*

Both in their additive auto-resemblance and in their Janus-like anticipatory and retrospective regard, the fractal nature of the ordinances is made apparent, with the beauty of their self-similar patterns becoming even more impressive under bright light and increasingly closer examination. There is glory in the details.

“By the Spirit Ye Are Justified”

Now we turn our attention to the second phrase in Moses 6:60: “by the Spirit ye are justified.” As in the previous discussion of the water ordinances of baptism and washings, the symbolic, salvific, interrelated, additive, retrospective, and anticipatory nature of the ordinances of spiritual rebirth associated with the Spirit will become apparent.

Before delving deeper into this subject, we will discuss four fundamental questions about justification and sanctification:

- 1. *What does it mean to be justified?* Simply put, individuals become “just” — in other words, innocent before God and ready for a covenant relationship with Him — when they demonstrate sufficient repentance to qualify for an “*initial* cleansing from sin”²⁸⁵ “by the Spirit,”²⁸⁶ thus having had the demands of justice satisfied on their behalf through the Savior’s atoning blood.²⁸⁷
- 2. *But don’t the scriptures refer specifically to “baptism for the remission of sins”?*²⁸⁸ Because “baptism” and “remission of sins”²⁸⁹ occur together so often in telescoped scripture references, the role of the Spirit as the agent for the process of justification is easily forgotten. However, a survey of scripture will reveal that “remission of sins” is mentioned most frequently in verses that *omit* any mention of baptism. In these and other references, remission of sins is typically coupled with the preparatory principles of faith or repentance rather than with the ordinance of baptism itself.²⁹⁰

Although baptism by proper authority is a commandment that must be strictly observed to meet the divine requirement for entrance into the kingdom of God, it is but the necessary, outward sign of one’s willingness to take upon oneself the name of Jesus Christ and keep His commandments. A significant phrase in D&C 20:37 explains with precision that it is not the performance of the baptismal ordinance that cleanses, but rather the individuals’ having “truly manifest[ed] by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto a remission of their sins” — a requirement that, according to this verse, is clearly intended to *precede* water baptism.²⁹¹ In other words, strictly speaking, it is not baptism but rather the fact of having “received of the Spirit of Christ” as the result of faith and repentance that is responsible for the mighty “change of state” wherewith individuals are “wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost”²⁹² — for “by the *Spirit* ye are justified.”²⁹³

- 3. *How do the ongoing processes of justification and sanctification complement and sustain one another?* To adapt imagery from C. S. Lewis,²⁹⁴ it might be said that the interwoven processes of justification and sanctification are as complementary and mutually necessary as the two blades of a pair of scissors. Just as the Spirit of Christ should be received prior to baptism so that individuals may receive an initial, *justificatory* remission of sins, so the Holy Ghost should be received and cherished after baptism and confirmation, so that individuals may benefit from the availability of its constant,²⁹⁵ ongoing²⁹⁶ *sanctifying* influence.



Figure 38. *Justification and Sanctification as Complementary, Interwoven Processes.*

Without justification, the sanctifying “companionship and power of the Holy Ghost”²⁹⁷ are not operative. For just as “no unclean thing can dwell ... in [God’s] presence,”²⁹⁸ so the “Holy Ghost [cannot] dwell in”²⁹⁹ unclean individuals.³⁰⁰ And without sanctification, those who have been made clean through the justifying Spirit of Christ could never gain access to the strengthening power that will enable them “to keep the commandments of God and grow in holiness.”³⁰¹

The “companionship and power of the Holy Ghost”³⁰² are available for the ongoing work of sanctification only so long as individuals live worthy to maintain its presence. When those on the path of sanctification fail to keep the commandments, they must repent and be made clean again before they can continue their onward growth along the path of sanctification. In this fashion, the complementary processes of justification (remission of sins) and sanctification (the gradual changing of one’s nature that allows individuals to become “new creatures”³⁰³ in Christ) may operate, if we so choose, throughout our lives, preparing us eventually to be spiritually reborn in the ultimate sense.³⁰⁴

Aided by repeated preparation for and participation in the ordinance of the sacrament, we can “*always* retain [a justificatory] remission of our sins”³⁰⁵ and we can “*always* have the Spirit of the Lord to be with us”³⁰⁶ for the ongoing work of sanctification.

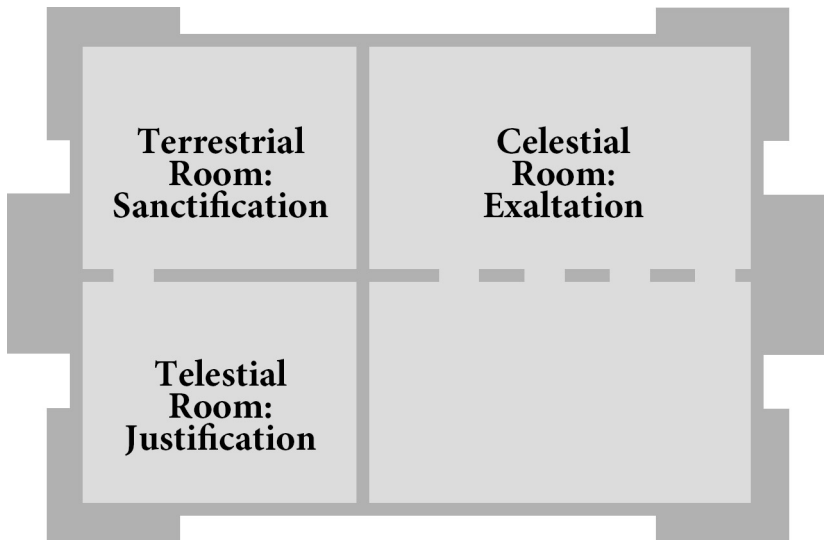


Figure 39. Adapted from Samuel H. Bradshaw (1990–):
Second Floor of the Salt Lake Temple.

This figure superposes the sequence of justification, sanctification, and exaltation upon the layout of ordinance rooms on the second floor of the Salt Lake Temple. It is meant to illustrate how justification and sanctification can be seen from a different but equally valid perspective as sequential steps instead of as interwoven parts of a parallel process.³⁰⁷ Justification and sanctification, the two initial steps of this sequence, are described in imagery from King Benjamin's speech. He exhorts his people, first, to "[put] off the natural man" (without which one cannot be "clothed upon with robes of righteousness"³⁰⁸) and, second, for each to "become a saint," "willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him." He emphasizes that this fundamental transformation, by which a "natural man" may become a "saint" if he so chooses, is made possible "through the atonement of Christ the Lord."³⁰⁹

From this perspective, we might consider the initial *remission of sins* through the Spirit, the ordinance of baptism (distinct from washing, yet related to it through the use of water), and the receiving of the gift of the Holy Ghost after confirmation as accomplishing the first step of *justification*, by which we "put off the natural man."³¹⁰ Through their continued *faith*³¹¹ in Jesus Christ and faithfulness³¹² in keeping the commandments, individuals living in a telestial world may progress to a point where they can be "quickened by a portion of the *terrestrial* glory."³¹³

In the process of *sanctification* associated with progress of a terrestrial nature, individuals may become “saints”³¹⁴ in very deed. Having been “quickened by a portion of the terrestrial glory,” they continue to “receive of the same” unto “a fulness”³¹⁵ through additional ordinances and the ongoing, sanctifying *anointing*,³¹⁶ as it were, of the Spirit of the Lord. Finally — having received a “fulness” of the terrestrial glory, having experienced a “perfect brightness of *hope*”³¹⁷ (as described by Nephi), “a more excellent *hope*”³¹⁸ (as described by Mormon), or “the full assurance of *hope*”³¹⁹ (as described by Paul),³²⁰ and having demonstrated their capacity for supreme self-sacrifice as required by the law of consecration, and being filled with “*charity*[,] ... the pure love of Christ,”³²¹ — these individuals can be “sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the Holy Priesthood.”³²² In this manner, they are sanctified by the blood, “quickened by a portion of the celestial glory”³²³ and made ready to “behold the face of God.”³²⁴

In the process of *exaltation*, individuals who have been previously “cleansed by blood, even the blood of [the] Only Begotten; that [they] might be sanctified from all sin”³²⁵ may then go on to receive additional blessings in the celestial world, being “crowned with honor, ... glory, ... immortality,”³²⁶ and “eternal lives.”³²⁷ The Lord declared that these individuals shall be “*clothed upon*, even as I am, to be one with me, that we may be one.”³²⁸

- 4. *Do justification and sanctification come by the Spirit or through the Savior?* Justification and sanctification are accomplished through the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost³²⁹ and, at the same time, made possible through the atonement of Christ. Therefore, it is no contradiction when scripture testifies both that we are “sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost”³³⁰ and also that it is “by the blood [we] are sanctified.”³³¹ D&C 20:30–31 states that both “justification” and “sanctification” come “through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”³³²

Confirmation, Anointing, and the Sanctifying Influence of the Holy Ghost. Specific gestures have been divinely prescribed for the ordinance of confirmation and for subsequent ordinances of anointing. While the form of baptism recalls the symbolism of death and resurrection, the laying of hands on the head³³³ that is used in confirmation suggests a retrospective regard toward the scriptural account of the creation of Adam wherein God “breathed into his nostrils



Figure 40. William Blake (1757–1827): *Elohim Creating Adam*, 1795–ca. 1805.

the breath of life.”³³⁴ In this respect, recall also the account in John 20:22, when Jesus “breathed on [His disciples], and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” As Joseph Smith highlighted the importance of the manner in which baptism is performed, describing it as a “sign,” so did he refer to the symbolic evocation of the breath of life in “the laying on of hands,” by which the Holy Ghost is given, ordinations are performed, and the sick are healed, as a “sign.” He said pointedly that if such ordinances were not performed in the way God had appointed they “would fail.”³³⁵

In this context, we might recall what Jesus said when Peter wanted him to wash his head and hands in addition to his feet: “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.”³³⁶ The Lord’s reply to Peter suggests why, in similar fashion, the laying of hands on the head within various ordinances equates to a blessing for the entire body.

With regard to ordinances of anointing that are associated with the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, biblical and Egyptian sources associate the receiving of “divine breath” not merely with an infusion of life, but also with royal status.³³⁷ For example, Isaiah attributes the presence of the Spirit of the Lord to a prior messianic anointing — the anointing oil, like divine breath, being a symbol of new life: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; *because* the Lord hath anointed me.”³³⁸



Figure 41. *Samuel Anoints David.* Dura Europos Synagogue, ca. AD 254.

Anointing followed by an outpouring of the Spirit is documented as part of the rites of kingship in ancient Israel, as when Samuel anointed David “and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.”³³⁹

Note that in Israelite practice, as witnessed in the examples of David and Solomon, the moment when the individual was made king would not necessarily have been the time of his first anointing. The culminating anointing of the king corresponding to his definite investiture was sometimes preceded by a prior princely anointing. LeGrand Baker and Stephen Ricks describe “several incidents in the Old Testament where a prince was first anointed to become king, and later, after he had proven himself, was anointed again — this time as actual king.”³⁴⁰ Modern Latter-day Saints can compare this idea to the conditional promises they receive in association with ordinances and blessings, which are to be realized only through their continued faithfulness. Further emphasizing the anticipatory nature of this ordinance, Brigham Young explained that “a person may be anointed king and priest long before he receives his kingdom.”³⁴¹



Figure 42. *Queen Elizabeth II, Dressed in White Linen, Is "Screened from the General View" in Preparation for Her Anointing.*

In modern times one can still see vestiges of the symbolism of anointing, royal status, and the Holy Spirit brought together. For example, prior to the British ceremonies of coronation, in the holiest rite of that service, the monarch is "divested of ... robes," clothed in simple white linen, and "screened from the general view" to be "imbued with grace" through the Archbishop's anointing with holy oil "on hand, breast and forehead."³⁴²

Just as the separate yet interrelated rites of baptism and subsequent washings with water became blurred in early Christianity, so also the distinctive ordinances of confirmation and anointing have become confused in some religious traditions. For example, the Armenian liturgy includes two anointings — "one with unperfumed oil before the baptism and the other, after it, with the myron or perfumed oil."³⁴³

From modern revelation it is clear that just as baptism is the first ordinance of the Gospel, administered by the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood, with later ordinances of washing looking back retrospectively upon it, so confirmation for the gift of the Holy Ghost is the first ordinance administered by the Melchizedek Priesthood. In "interrelated" and "additive"³⁴⁴ fashion, temple initiatory ordinances of washing and anointing echo and build upon the ordinances of baptism and confirmation. Substantiating the idea that anointing ordinances were not meant to be restricted only to a small subset of disciples, Tertullian described how in his day *all* newly "baptized" Christians



Figure 43. *Ampulla 11, inscribed with “Oil from the Tree of Life,” 5th–6th century.*

were anointed. He stated that this was “a practice derived from the old discipline, wherein on entering the priesthood, men were wont to be anointed with oil from a horn, ever since Aaron was anointed by Moses. Whence Aaron is called ‘christ,’ from the ‘chrism,’ which is the unction [or oil of anointing].”³⁴⁵

The initiatory anointing is not only retrospective but also looks forward in anticipation to subsequent confirmatory anointings and sealing blessings wherein disciples imitate the Christ. Indeed, Pseudo-Clement’s *Recognitions* 1:45:2 defines the Greek title “Christ” (equivalent to the Hebrew “Messiah,” meaning “Anointed One”) with reference to an anointing of oil administered by God Himself: “Although indeed He was the Son of God, and the beginning of all things, He became man; Him first God anointed with oil which was taken from the wood of the Tree of Life: from that anointing therefore He is called Christ.”³⁴⁶

C. S. Lewis succinctly expressed the principle behind the practice of anointing all Christians: “Every Christian is to become a little christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else.”³⁴⁷

“By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified”

Of course, becoming a “little christ” is not a process that ends with an anticipatory anointing. There is a double meaning in the phrase “by the blood ye are sanctified,”³⁴⁸ as was expressed in the previously cited words about Christ from the *Gospel of Philip*: “He who was redeemed in turn redeemed (others).”³⁴⁹ Although redemption itself comes only “in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son,”³⁵⁰ it might also be said regarding those who have been “ordained *after the*



Figure 44. Vasily Perov (1833–1882): *Christ in Gethsemane*, 1878.

order of [the] Son":³⁵¹ He who was redeemed with "a preparatory redemption"³⁵² in turn must assist "with all [his] heart, might, mind and strength"³⁵³ to bring about the redemption of others. In brief, those who would follow Christ "to the end,"³⁵⁴ must continue to move beyond the keeping of the initiatory law of obedience and sacrifice toward the complete dedication required by the law of consecration.³⁵⁵

Before saying more on this point, we will examine the role of blood in the context of the ordinances — for "by the blood ye are sanctified."³⁵⁶

Blood as a Symbol of Sanctification. The first explicit mention of "blood" in the Bible is Genesis 4:10–11, when Abel's blood cried to God from the ground as a plea of redress for Cain's murder, and the earth in turn from thenceforth refused to yield its strength to the perpetrator of the crime.³⁵⁷

The deliberate consumption of blood has been practiced in many cultures because "popular thought had it that one could renew or reinforce one's vitality through its absorption of blood."³⁵⁸ Intriguingly, an alternate reading of Moses 6:29 given in the OT1 manuscript, describes a wicked Cain-like people who, "by their oaths, ... have eat[en] unto themselves death."³⁵⁹ If this variant is not a scribal error, it may indicate a corrupt practice where participation by those who were ritually unclean was condemned,³⁶⁰ or perhaps even the "eating" of blood itself. Later, God said to Noah: "the blood of all flesh which I have given you for meat shall be shed upon the ground which taketh the life thereof and the blood ye shall not eat."³⁶¹



Figure 45. Lars Justinen: *The Sanctuary*.

Because blood was a symbol of life,³⁶² it was used in Israelite temples for “the altar [of sacrifice] to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul”³⁶³ — thus symbolizing *justification*.

Consistent with this temple symbolism, Exodus 24:8 recounts how blood was sprinkled on Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai to ratify the divine covenant, thus making it binding. In contrast to this lesser, justificatory sprinkling on all the people, an additional sprinkling of blood on the group that accompanied Moses on his ascent of the mountain symbolized *sanctification*. As a result of this second sprinkling, they were enabled immediately thereafter to see Jehovah standing above what seems to be the *kapporet* or mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, where the High Priest applied atoning blood to the Ark of the Covenant.³⁶⁴ Following a similar description of the appearance of the Lord in the Kirtland Temple, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were told: “your sins are forgiven you [in other words, they were justified]; you are clean before me [in other words, they were sanctified].”³⁶⁵

Related symbolism is apparent in the sixth chapter of Isaiah. When Isaiah was taken up to the presence of God to receive his prophetic commission, “one of the seraphims” flew to him:³⁶⁶

having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.



Figure 46. Benjamin West (1738–1820): *Isaiah's Lips Anointed with Fire*, after 1772.

Presumably the coal, “taken ... off the altar”³⁶⁷ of incense that “purged” (literally “atoned for”³⁶⁸) Isaiah’s sin previously had been sprinkled with sacrificial blood. Thus, symbolically, his lips had been sanctified by blood of Jesus Christ (who, arguably, may have been the very “one of the seraphims” mentioned in the verse), preparing him to speak with God.

Incidentally, the English word “blood” has an interesting derivation that leads back from Old English to a Proto-Germanic term.³⁶⁹ The Old Norse noun *blót* (verb *blóta*), which derives from the same Proto-Germanic root, was the term for both “sacrifice” and “worship.”³⁷⁰ The old roots are also connected with the modern English terms “bliss” and “bless,”³⁷¹ the latter by means of pre-Christian rites where blood was sprinkled on pagan altars or other objects to make them holy.³⁷²

Being “Sealed Up to Eternal Life.”

Elder Bednar has explained: “Purifying and sealing by the Holy Spirit of Promise constitute the culminating steps in the process of being born again.”³⁷³ Those who are sanctified have “their garments washed white through the blood of the

Lamb.”³⁷⁴ Note that the Hebrew word for washing clothes — *kābas* (כָּבַס) — is very similar in sound to a word for “lamb” — *kebeś* (כֶּבֶשׂ), suggesting a possible word play.

Although it is not unusual for lesser blessings, ordinances, and ordinations to be sealed upon the heads of individuals,³⁷⁵ the supreme manifestation of the sealing power occurs when one’s calling and election is “made sure” or, in other words, when one is “sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy.”³⁷⁶ To be sealed in this ultimate sense requires taking upon oneself both the divine name and the divine form — just as Jesus Christ was “the express image”³⁷⁷ of the Father.

In former times, seals provided a unique stamp of identity on important documents — the image of the author being transferred, as it were, to the document itself.³⁷⁸ Similarly, Luke T. Johnson sees the scriptural concept of sealing as both an empowering and an “imprinting” process,³⁷⁹ recalling Alma’s words about receiving God’s “image” in our countenances.³⁸⁰

Using similar imagery, Paul described his beloved Corinthian saints as “the epistle of Christ . . . , written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” These saints, “with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord” were to be “changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”³⁸¹



Figure 47. Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606–1669): *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, 1634.

The Substitute Sacrifice of the Suffering Servant.

“Properly, of course, the sinner’s own blood must be used [on the altar of sacrifice],” explained Hugh Nibley, “unless a *go’el*, a representative substitute advocate or redeemer, could be found to take one’s place. The willingness of the candidate to sacrifice his own life (the *akedah*) is symbolized by the blood on the right thumb and right earlobe, where the blood would be if the throat had been cut.”³⁸²

In the case of Isaac’s near sacrifice by Abraham, a sacrificial ram was supplied in his stead at the last moment.³⁸³ More significant, however, is the fact that:³⁸⁴

Isaac himself was a substitute. “In Jewish tradition,” writes Rosenberg, “Isaac is the prototype of the ‘Suffering Servant,’ bound upon the altar as a sacrifice.”³⁸⁵ Rosenberg has shown that the title of Suffering Servant was used in the ancient East to designate “the substitute king” — the noble victim.

Accordingly, the "new Isaac" mentioned in Maccabees must be "a 'substitute king' who dies that the people might live."³⁸⁶ The starting point in Rosenberg's investigation is Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12, which "seems to constitute a portion of a ritual drama centering about a similar humiliation, culminating in death, of a 'substitute' for the figure of the king of the Jews." ... The [rite of] sacrifice of the substitute king is found all over the ancient world.



Figure 48. *The High Priest Sprinkles Blood on the Altar of Incense That Stood Before the Veil.*

We have already observed that the servant song of Isaiah 52 applies not only to Jesus Christ, but also to others who may eventually qualify to become *sons* of Man or *sons* of God (with a small 's'). While the initial blessing of *justification* comes exclusively by means of a substitutionary offering on the altar of sacrifice in the temple courtyard — "relying *wholly* upon the merits of him who is mighty to save"³⁸⁷ — the culminating step of the process of *sanctification* is a joint effort,³⁸⁸ symbolized by a "second sacrifice" made on the altar of incense that stands before the veil. While that second sacrifice is no less dependent on the "merits, and mercy, and grace" of Christ and the ongoing endowment of His strengthening power, it requires in addition that individuals grow in their capacity to meet the stringent measure of *self-sacrifice* enjoined by the law of consecration — "for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, *after all we can do*."³⁸⁹



Figure 49. Minerva Teichert (1888–1976):
Alma Baptizes in the Waters of Mormon, 1949–1951.

In light of these considerations, it clear that, although the Saints cannot be made clean without God’s own sanctifying power, they must in addition fulfill His requirement to “sanctify *themselves*.”³⁹⁰ This they do by “purify[ing their] hearts, and cleans[ing their] hands and [their] feet” in order that “[I, the Lord,] may make [them] clean ... from the blood of this wicked generation; that I may fulfill ... this great and last promise”³⁹¹ to “unveil [my] face unto [them].”³⁹² Explaining the need for disciples to be made “clean every whit”³⁹³ that they may be ready to stand in the presence of God,³⁹⁴ John W. Welch described the change in law that was announced by Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount:³⁹⁵

The old law of sacrifice was explicitly replaced by that of the “broken heart and contrite spirit,”³⁹⁶ and whereas previously the sacrificial animal was to be pure and without blemish [*haplous*], now the disciples themselves are to become “single” [*haplous*] to the glory of God.³⁹⁷

Within modern temple ordinances, as within the sacrament, animal sacrifice is replaced by the offering of oneself. Such offerings are “*memorials* of ... sacrifices by the sons of Levi”³⁹⁸ — in other words, symbolic rather than literal reenactments of ancient temple practices that required the shedding of blood. Illuminating the difference between the ordinances of the “preparatory”³⁹⁹ Aaronic priesthood and those of the “holy” Melchizedek priesthood “after the Order of the Son of

God,"⁴⁰⁰ Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught 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!"⁴⁰¹

Spiritual Rebirth Within the Succession of Ordinances. We return to the statement of the Prophet Joseph Smith that being "born again comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances."⁴⁰² Indeed, through the ordinances we are *repeatedly* "reborn," our nature transformed over and over, as we experience the cleansing justification of "the Spirit of Christ,"⁴⁰³ the symbolism of death and resurrection through baptism of water,⁴⁰⁴ the new life granted us when we receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost,⁴⁰⁵ the spiritual and physical "renew[al]"⁴⁰⁶ of the initiatory ordinances, and the unfolding stages of the drama of our existence in the endowment. Indeed, the endowment itself enacts our individual progress through multiple "rebirths" — from the spirit world to mortal life, and from thence to becoming the sons and daughters of Christ — and ultimately of the Father Himself, receiving all the blessings of the Firstborn.⁴⁰⁷

Similarly, by the end of Moses 6, Adam had been not only born of water and of the Spirit, but also "born of God," having entered His presence in the same manner described by Alma:⁴⁰⁸

For because of the word which he has imparted unto me, behold, many have been born of God, and have tasted as I have tasted, and have seen eye to eye as I have seen; therefore they do know of these things of which I have spoken, as I do know; and the knowledge which I have is of God.

Changes in Name and Relationship That Accompany Changes in State.

For each change of state that is meant to accompany one's progression through the ordinances, the Father grants a corresponding change in name and relationship to Him. To paraphrase C. S. Lewis, "God turns tools into servants[, servants into friends,] and [friends] into sons."⁴⁰⁹ Moses 6:67–68 makes it clear that to receive the fulness of the priesthood is to become, when divinely ratified, "a son of God" "after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years."⁴¹⁰ This is consistent with the experience of Adam in Moses 6:68 and the royal rebirth formula of Psalm 2:7: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

In Mosiah 5:7, King Benjamin uses a temple setting and context to explain the same general concept: "And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters."



Figure 50. Minerva Teichert (1888–1976):
King Benjamin's Farewell Address, 1949–1951.

Significantly, King Benjamin not only goes on to say that those who keep the covenant will be “found at the right hand of God,”⁴¹¹ thus, in essence, receiving the name of their king, “Benjamin” (meaning “son of the right hand”), but also that they were taking upon them, as royal sons and daughters, a title of the true “Son of the right hand,” namely “Christ.” In so doing, they were also to become, in likeness of Benjamin’s son, little *Mosiahs* (meaning “saviors”) and, in likeness of the Only Begotten Son of God, little *messiahs* (meaning “anointed ones”).⁴¹² Having thus qualified, the Father might then appropriately “seal” them “his.”⁴¹³

Identification of the High Priest with the Lord Himself. To further emphasize that those who enter into the “oath and covenant ... [of] the priesthood”⁴¹⁴ do so in similitude of the Son of God, we note Margaret Barker’s description of how the concept of becoming a son of God relates both to ordinances in earthly temples and to actual ascents to the heavenly temple:⁴¹⁵

The high priests and kings of ancient Jerusalem entered the Holy of Holies and then emerged as messengers, angels of the Lord. They had been raised up, that is, resurrected; they were sons of God, that is, angels; and they were anointed ones, that is, messiahs. ... Human beings could become angels, and then



Figure 51. *Worshipping the High Priest.*

continue to live in the material world. This transformation did not just happen after physical death; it marked the passage from the life in the material world to the life of eternity.

Speaking of the figurative heavenly journey that was enacted in ancient temple ordinances, Matthew Bowen has argued elsewhere that both the king and the high priest, emerging from the Holy of Holies, were seen and worshiped as Yahweh, the Lord.⁴¹⁶ Consistent with this identification, Alma 13 specifically states that high priests were ordained “in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to [God’s] Son for redemption.”⁴¹⁷ Moreover, the reason the ancient ordinances of the high priesthood associated with the temple were given was so “that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God ... for a remission of their sins.”⁴¹⁸

The Ontological Change Accompanying Sonship Is Meant To Be Universal. Significantly, the last verse of Moses 6 includes the words “and thus may all become my sons.”⁴¹⁹ This statement relating to Adam’s exaltation presages the account in the book of Moses of Enoch’s adoption as a son of God, with a right to God’s throne.⁴²⁰ At the end of Moses 7:3 we read: “and as I stood upon the mount, I beheld the heavens open, and I was clothed upon with glory.”



Figure 52. Viktor Vasnetsov (1848–1926): *God of Hosts*, 1885–1896.

The pseudepigraphal books of 2 and 3 Enoch purport to describe in detail the process by which Enoch was literally “clothed upon with glory.” As a prelude to Enoch’s introduction to the secrets of creation, both accounts describe a “two-step initiatory procedure” whereby “the patriarch was first initiated by angel(s) and after this by the Lord”⁴²¹ Himself. In a culminating scene of 2 Enoch, God commanded his angels to “extract Enoch from [his] earthly clothing. And anoint him with My delightful oil, and put him into the clothes of My glory.”⁴²² Philip S. Alexander speaks of this event as an “ontological transformation [that] blurred the distinction between human and divine,” amounting to “deification.”⁴²³ In the first chapter of the book of Moses, Moses underwent a similar transformation.⁴²⁴ He explained that had he seen God without such a change, he would have “withered and died in his presence; but his glory was upon me; and ... I was transfigured before him.”⁴²⁵ After Enoch was changed, he is said to have resembled God so exactly that he was mistaken for Him by the angels.⁴²⁶

Summarizing the ancient Jewish literature relevant to this passage, Charles Mopsik concludes that the exaltation of Enoch should not be seen as a unique event. Rather, he writes that the “enthronement of Enoch is a prelude to the transfiguration of the righteous — and at their head the Messiah — in the world to come, a transfiguration that is the restoration of the figure of the perfect Man.”⁴²⁷

In LDS theology, such a transfiguration is not the result of a capricious act of God but rather a sign of love and trust made in response to an individual’s demonstration of a determination to serve

Him "at all hazard."⁴²⁸ Only such will be privileged to hear the personal oath in the Father's own voice⁴²⁹ that they shall obtain the fulness of the joys of the celestial kingdom "for ever and ever."⁴³⁰

Sanctification, Consecration, Shewbread, and the Sacrament

Giving our all. Hugh Nibley sums up the principle of sanctification "by the blood"⁴³¹ as follows:⁴³²



Figure 53. Alonso Berruguete (1488–1561): *Sacrificio de Isaac*, Museo Nacional del Prado.

The gospel is more than a catalogue of moral platitudes; these are matters of either eternal life or nothing. Nothing less than the sacrifice of Abraham is demanded of us.⁴³³ But how do we make it? In the way Abraham, Isaac, and Sarah all did. Each was willing and expected to be sacrificed, and each committed his or her all to prove it. In each case the sacrifice was interrupted at the last moment and a substitute provided: to their relief, someone else had been willing to pay the price, but not until after they had shown their good faith and willingness to go all the way — "lay not thy hand on the lad ... for now I know."⁴³⁴ Abraham had gone far enough; he had proven to himself and the angels who stood witness (we are told) that he was actually willing to perform the act. Therefore the Lord was satisfied with the token then, for he knew the heart of Abraham. This is the same for Isaac and Sarah and for us. And whoever is willing to make the sacrifice of

Abraham to receive eternal life will show it by the same signs and tokens as Abraham, but he or she must do it in good faith and with real intent.



Figure 54. J. Kirk Richards (1977-):
The Sacramental Emblems.

Understanding the self-sacrifice required to become “a saint”⁴³⁵ enhances the meaning one can take away when participating in the ordinance of the sacrament. As we have argued earlier, the symbolism of the broken bread is strongly coupled to the initial covenant of baptism. Both ordinances are a witness of one’s intention to “keep [God’s] commandments.”⁴³⁶ However, in light of the preceding discussion, we suggest that the emblems of the Lord’s sanctifying blood seem to provide a natural correspondence to the last and most difficult covenant of consecration.⁴³⁷ As Ugo A. Perego succinctly expressed it: “through the partaking of consecrated bread and wine, we also consecrate ourselves.”⁴³⁸ Such an understanding is consistent with

the recent re-emphasis of Church leaders that the “sacrament is a beautiful time to not just renew our baptismal covenants, but to commit to Him to renew *all* our covenants.”⁴³⁹

It is evident that the Saints witness in the sacrament that they are willing to take the Savior’s name upon them in the essential (though strictly limited) sense of accepting the blessing of *justification* made possible by His submitting His will to the will of His Father “even unto death.”⁴⁴⁰ However, in the same ordinance they also affirm their personal willingness⁴⁴¹ “to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [*them*], even as a child doth submit to his father,”⁴⁴² “even unto death,”⁴⁴³ thus preparing themselves for the blessings of *sanctification* that result from keeping the law of consecration. In short, they covenant not only to “give away all [their] *sins* to know [God]”⁴⁴⁴ but also to undertake a deliberate and sustained effort to *know God through giving their all*.⁴⁴⁵

In the carefully measured, specifically tailored manner that God has ordained for those who would endeavor to follow Jesus to the end, disciples of Christ must be willing to suffer — sometimes unjustly and

always uncomplainingly⁴⁴⁶ — that they, in likeness of Christ, “might bring [others] to God.”⁴⁴⁷

In the richly symbolic act wherein the Saints drink the emblems of sanctifying blood, they not only express their remembrance of and gratitude for the “bitter cup”⁴⁴⁸ that the Savior drank on their behalf⁴⁴⁹ but also acknowledge that they are willing to drink to the dregs the individually prepared cup they themselves have been given.⁴⁵⁰ Similarly, in John 19:28–30 it is recorded that Jesus — as His last mortal act before He declared “It is finished” and “gave up the ghost” — in voluntary humiliation swallowed a mouthful of cheap wine from a sponge to fulfill the last iota of His prophetically foretold mission, “knowing that all things were now accomplished.”

The sacrament and the temple shewbread. The sacrament, like every ordinance, is retrospective. It looks back on all the covenants one has already made and, in addition, invites one to remember the unleavened bread of the Passover,⁴⁵¹ the manna from heaven,⁴⁵² and, most pointedly, the life and atonement of Jesus Christ, the “Lamb of God”⁴⁵³ and the “true bread from heaven.”⁴⁵⁴ Less recognized and discussed is the fact that the sacrament is also anticipatory, looking forward to the bounteous table of the heavenly feast that someday will be shared by sanctified souls.⁴⁵⁵ This feast has been the subject of prophecy from Old Testament times to the present.⁴⁵⁶

The bread and wine that will be shared at this eschatological event were symbolized in the furniture of Israelite temples. On the table of the shewbread or “bread of the presence [of the Lord],”⁴⁵⁷ twelve loaves of unleavened bread and utensils for libations of wine and offerings of frankincense were continually set out within the Holy Place of the temple. A meal of this sacred bread and wine, anticipating a future feast that will take place in the full glory of the “presence” of God,⁴⁵⁸ was consumed each Sabbath by the temple priests.⁴⁵⁹

In contrast to the bread offered at the altar of sacrifice in the temple courtyard,⁴⁶⁰ which John S. Thompson views as a preparatory, *Aaronic* ordinance,⁴⁶¹ the offering of shewbread and wine set out in the temple proper emulates the *Melchizedek* feast of bread and wine provided by the priest and king of that name when Abraham received the fulness of the high priesthood at his hands.⁴⁶²

It is likely that the feast shared by Moses and his companions when he was called to meet Jehovah face to face at the top of Mount Sinai was seen as the literal equivalent of the meal that was later ritually typified at the table in the Holy Place. In Exodus, we read that Moses took with him

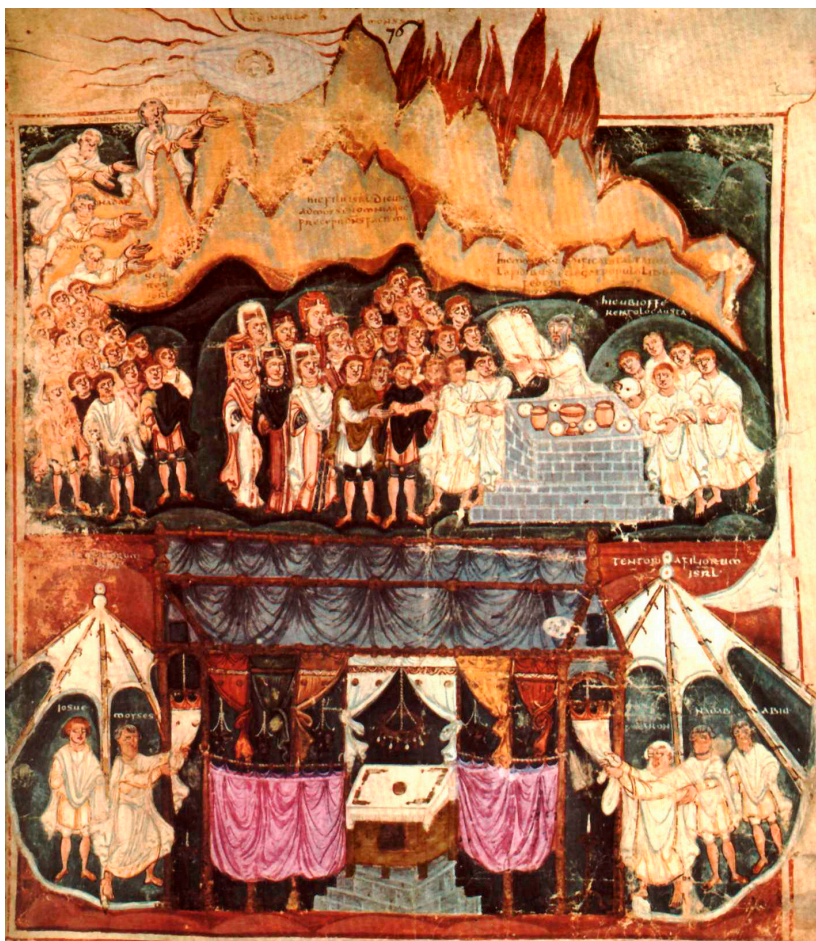


Figure 55. *Mount Sinai and the Christianized Tabernacle*, ca. 600.

“Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel,” and that together they saw “the God of Israel” and “ate and drank” with Him.⁴⁶³

According to Brant Pitre, who has ably summarized the current scholarly consensus that the descriptions of Jesus’ actions in the Gospels mirror the profile of the long-awaited new “prophet-like-Moses” who was described in Deuteronomy 18:15,⁴⁶⁴ Jesus’ blessing of the bread and wine at the Last Supper did not merely follow the pattern of Passover traditions but also paralleled in significant ways the experience of Moses and his fellows in their ascent of Sinai to feast at the divine table.⁴⁶⁵ Note that in contemporaneous Jewish writings, Moses was described not only as a prophet, priest, and king, but also (like Jesus) as a god, having been “changed into the divine” through his initiation into the “mysteries.”⁴⁶⁶

Like Jesus, Moses was described as a hierophant, leading his disciples through these same mysteries so that they could also *see* God.⁴⁶⁷

The deliberate conflation of the offerings on the temple table of shewbread with the sacrament of the Lord's supper by the early Christian church is demonstrated in the image at left. The three registers represent respectively the temple courtyard (bottom), the Holy Place (middle), and the Holy of Holies (top). The ostensible subject of this illustration is Moses (shown as a type of Christ) who, in the top register, "accompanied by Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu [shown as types of Peter, James, and John⁴⁶⁸], approaches the Lord, whose head appears in a cloud at the top of Mount Sinai."⁴⁶⁹ Within the cave in the middle scene, is a gathering of Christians who, following the pattern of ancient Israel, hear a reading the law and make covenants under the direction of Christ, shown here as the new Moses.⁴⁷⁰ The "items on the altar clearly indicate a Christian Eucharist," which is here equated to the offerings on the table of shewbread.⁴⁷¹

In the bottom register, a Christianized version of the Tabernacle courtyard is shown.⁴⁷² Note the prominent *gammadia* (squares) at the corners of the altar cloth, and its central, circular rosette. The same rosette with a border matching the *gammadia* is repeated on the parted veil. The pattern of the cloth strongly resembles depictions of altar cloths in two sixth-century Ravenna mosaics.⁴⁷³ In Roman Catholic tradition, the cloth used for church altars is said to have been patterned after the burial garment of Christ, and garments with similar motifs have been found in Christian burial grounds in Egypt.⁴⁷⁴ In the scene shown here, the Christian leaders of the new Israel part the outer veil, earnestly inviting all those outside the covenant to enter and begin their ascent.

An earlier link between the shewbread and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper appears in the Gospels as part of a passage where Jesus "speaks explicitly about the bread of the presence with reference to His disciples' act of plucking and eating grain on the Sabbath."⁴⁷⁵ According to Pitre, Jesus' words explicitly linked "the priestly identity of Himself and His disciples with the sacrificial bread of the presence,"⁴⁷⁶ just as He later equated His body and blood with the bread and wine He blessed in the Upper Room.⁴⁷⁷

In light of all these considerations, we conclude that the symbolism of the bread and wine blessed by the Lord at the Last Supper, while not inappropriately taken up in the modern LDS sacrament administered by those holding the Aaronic priesthood, should also be studied in connection with ritual practices at the temple table of shewbread and its symbolic association with the priesthood of Melchizedek.



Figure 56. *Sacrament Bread Baked for a Priesthood Leadership Meeting Following the Dedication of the Salt Lake Temple, 1893.*

In the early years of the restored Church, the symbolism of the eschatological heavenly feast typified by the priestly meal of the temple shewbread seems to have been carried forward in priesthood gatherings where the portions of bread used for the sacrament were sometimes large enough to constitute a meal. For example, Zebedee Coltrin stated that at meetings of the School of the Prophets in Kirtland:⁴⁷⁸

the sacrament was also administered at times when Joseph appointed, after the ancient order; that is, warm bread to break easy was provided and broken into pieces as large as my fist and each person had a glass of wine and sat and ate the bread and drank the wine; and Joseph said that was the way that Jesus and his disciples partook of the bread and wine. And this was the order of the church anciently and until the church went into darkness.

When the Salt Lake Temple was dedicated in 1893, one witness recorded in his journal that “Each participant was given a large tumbler with the Salt Lake temple etched into it and a napkin. Presiding Bishop Preston blessed the bread and ‘Dixie’ wine [from southern Utah], and the brethren were invited to eat till they were filled⁴⁷⁹ but to use caution and not indulge in wine to excess.”⁴⁸⁰

There are other reasons, besides the substantial meal of bread and wine that was sometimes consumed for the sacrament on sacred occasions, to believe that Joseph Smith might have viewed the administration of the ordinance of the sacrament in temple contexts under the direction of

the presiding high priest of the modern Church as part of what Ugo A. Perego calls a "pre-sanctification experience."⁴⁸¹ Such experiences were meant to resemble in additional respects the events of the Last Supper. Elaborating on this point, Perego notes that:⁴⁸²

in the Kirtland Temple and in the School of the Prophets, the ordinance of washing of feet was accompanied by the partaking of the sacrament, just like the events that took place in the Upper Room as recorded in the New Testament.⁴⁸³ The partaking of the bread and wine in remembrance of the Savior could not therefore be extrapolated as a stand-alone ritual but as an intrinsic and vital component with all other rites introduced while "feasting" on that last meal.

Conclusion: Anticipating the Heavenly Feast

One of the most stunning archaeological finds of the last century was the accidental discovery in 1920 of the ruins of Dura Europos, located on a cliff ninety meters above the Euphrates River in what is now Syria. Among the structures uncovered by excavation was a small Jewish synagogue with elaborately painted walls, preserved only because the building had been filled with earth as a fortification during the city's destruction by siege. The art of the Dura Europos synagogue constitutes the most convincing physical evidence available that the Jewish mysteries described in ancient sources had a tangible expression in ritual.⁴⁸⁴ As a conclusion to the present study, we will describe the most prominent mural of the synagogue, which highlights the participation of gathered Israel in the heavenly feast as the high point of Jewish anticipation for the last days.

After a study of the paintings of the synagogue, Hugh Nibley concluded that "the most important representation of all is the central composition that crowns the Torah shrine, the ritual center of the synagogue."⁴⁸⁵ This mural had been "repainted several times, until it finally pleased whoever was designing it."⁴⁸⁶ The "successive alterations show that great attention was paid to the problem of what should be represented in it."⁴⁸⁷ Although the mural represents a single overall scene, it is divided into upper and lower parts by a horizontal band. The lower part depicts key events from Israel's past and the upper part its future as envisioned by prophecy.

The major theme of the composition is the restoration and exaltation of gathered Israel in the last days in fulfillment of God's everlasting covenant. At lower left, Jacob is shown lying on his bed while he gives a

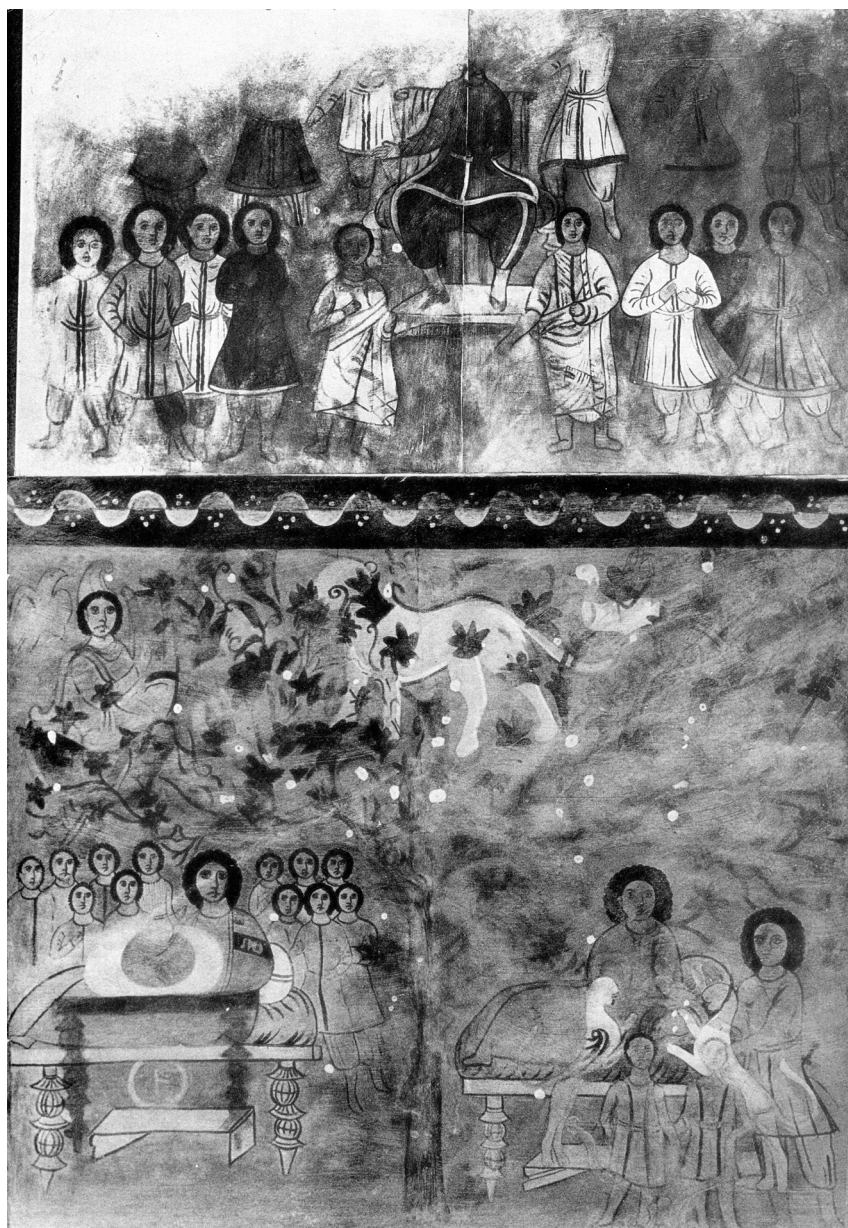


Figure 57. *Composition Above the Torah Shrine as Reconstructed by Herbert Gute. Dura Europa Synagogue, ca. 254.*

last blessing to his twelve sons. At lower right, his blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh is depicted.⁴⁸⁸ The top portion of the mural depicts the realization of these promised blessings: the thirteen who had been blessed by Jacob — the sons of Israel with Ephraim and Manasseh representing

Joseph in double measure — are exalted in the presence of God and his two divine throne attendants,⁴⁸⁹ equivalent in function to the seraphim.

Spanning the upper and lower scenes is a tree. It is rooted in the foundational stories of the covenants and promised blessings of Israel and leads to the throne on high.⁴⁹⁰ In this respect it might be seen as an arboreal "rod of iron,"⁴⁹¹ akin to the symbolism of ancient Jewish and Christian wooden ladders of ascent.⁴⁹² Erwin Goodenough concluded that this central figure represents both a tree and a vine, and Hugh Nibley agreed, observing that such imagery is paralleled in the Book of Mormon.⁴⁹³ "The olive tree that stands for Israel in the Book of Mormon imagery is also a vine; it grows in a vineyard, is planted, cultivated, and owned 'by the lord of the vineyard.'"⁴⁹⁴

The potential for double meaning in the tree-vine was highlighted by Goodenough. He maintained that it might have been more natural for Jewish and Christian viewers alike to conclude that it represented the power of the "hope of Israel"⁴⁹⁵ that was to be demonstrated in the manifestation of the messianic "Redeemer of Israel"⁴⁹⁶ than it would have been for them to see the tree-vine as representing Israel itself generally as a people.⁴⁹⁷

If ... the vine referred to the divine power made available to take one to heaven, ... the chances are overwhelming that the vine meant here not Israel itself but the hope of Israel, the hope that Jews would come to salvation through the Jewish God who was to His people what the vine represented to others. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches"⁴⁹⁸ may originally have been a mystic description of the relation between God and Israel.

The Gospel of John goes further with this kind of imagery when it explicitly describes the person of Jesus as the only means by which disciples could make their climb to heaven. Alluding to the multiple deceptions practiced in the story of Israel/Jacob and Laban, Jesus praised the approaching Nathanael at their first meeting, saying, "Behold an Israelite [i.e., descendant of Jacob] indeed, in whom is no guile!"⁴⁹⁹ Then, referring to the "ladder"⁵⁰⁰ of Jacob's dream, on which angels ascended and descended,⁵⁰¹ Jesus solemnly asserted His preeminence over the revered patriarch, declaring that *He* was the ladder of heavenly ascent personified: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending *upon the Son of man*."⁵⁰² Later in John, when Thomas asked Jesus how His disciples would know the way to His Father's House, Jesus replied: "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*"⁵⁰³

In further consideration of the messianic significance of the central feature of the most important mural of the synagogue, we should not neglect the additional clues about priesthood and kingship that are embedded within the depiction of the tree-vine. Goodenough concluded that the Orpheus figure seated in the branches at left and playing a harp, “was probably called David” who, as shown here in a priestly role, provided “heavenly, saving ... music” through which “Israel could be glorified.”⁵⁰⁴

Kurt Schubert, stressing the aspects of the mural relating to kingship, saw the Lion to the right of David as a symbol of the King Messiah figure seated on the throne in the upper register. It was out of the tribe of Judah, the “lion’s whelp” of Jacob’s blessing, that this King Messiah, the literal descendant and regal heir of David, was to come.⁵⁰⁵ In addition, Schubert saw the depiction of the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh as a probable reference to the “second messianic figure, ... the Messiah from the house of Joseph-Ephraim who was destined to suffer and die.”⁵⁰⁶

The beauty and comprehensiveness of the mural in its representation of the past and future of gathered, glorified Israel is stunning. All we are missing is the bread and wine of the heavenly feast. Or are we? In his careful examination of the layers of repainting in the mural, Gute recognized an intermediate design that included figures flanking each side of the tree-vine.⁵⁰⁷ Goodenough saw ritual significance in these figures, taking the objects on a table to the left of the trunk to represent ceremonial bread, and the serpent-topped felines to the right as decorations for a wine bowl. In the later, final version of the mural, concluded Goodenough, “the symbol of bread and wine could be assumed,”⁵⁰⁸ having been assimilated into the tree-vine itself. In Israel’s exalted state, standing at the top of the tree-vine, they could partake continually of its fruit, the dualized eschatological tree-vine having now merged with the Tree of Life, its protological counterpart.

For the Jews of Dura Europos, the dual, anticipatory roles of David, the anointed king who had eaten the priestly shewbread and later was made “a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek,”⁵⁰⁹ were actualized in the messianic figure on the mural’s throne. For Christians, this long-awaited Messiah had already appeared in the person of Jesus Christ, the long looked-for “Root of David”⁵¹⁰ who was also the “Son of David,”⁵¹¹ the kingly “Lion of the tribe of Judah”⁵¹² and the “high priest after the order of Melchisedec,”⁵¹³ whose body and blood, typified in bread and wine, would sanctify not only His disciples but also the very earth.⁵¹⁴

It is this same Jesus Christ who is destined to “come quickly,”⁵¹⁵ “in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.”⁵¹⁶ May we keep every ordinance and covenant we have received, that when that time comes we may be numbered with the sanctified⁵¹⁷ who will “drink of the fruit of the vine,” the emblems of His blood, “with [Him] on the earth.”⁵¹⁸

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Figure 21. Viktor Vasnetsov (1848–1926): *The Baptism of Saint Prince Vladimir*, 1890. Sketch for the fresco of St. Vladimir's Cathedral, Kiev, Ukraine. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8b/Vasnetsov_Bapt_Vladimir.jpg (accessed September 11, 2016). No known copyright restrictions. This work may be in the public domain in the United States.

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Figure 30. *Adam and Eve Outside Paradise, Cain and Abel*, 12th century. Images copyright Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. From a 12th century illuminated version of the Homilies of James of Kokkinobaphos from Byzantium (Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 35v.). Published in A. Eastmond, *Narratives*, plate 14. http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1162 (accessed January 31, 2017). No known copyright restrictions. This work may be in the public domain in the United States.

Figure 31. *Red Heifer Being Raised in Israel by The Temple Institute and an Israeli Cattleman*. Tapzit News Agency, 2015. <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4681306,00.html> (accessed November 19, 2016). No known copyright restrictions. This work may be in the public domain in the United States.

Figure 32. *Greek Orthodox Icon Depicting the Ladder of Virtues*, Thessaloniki, Macedonia. Licensed from Alamy.com. Image ID: BM2KC6.

Figure 33. Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890): *Le Moissonneur*, 1889. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vincent_van_Gogh_-_The_Reaper.jpg. No known copyright restrictions. This work may be in the public domain in the United States.

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Figure 35. Abraham Bloemaert (1566–1651): *The Circumcision*, 1601. See Abraham Bloemaert: *The Circumcision*. In *Art Institute of Chicago*. <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/215326>. (accessed September 12, 2016). <http://www.wikigallery.org/paintings/386501-387000/386683/painting1.jpg> (accessed January 31, 2017). No known copyright restrictions. This work may be in the public domain in the United States.

Figure 36. Linda McCarthy (1947–): *City of Enoch*, 2002. © Linda McCarthy. With kind permission of the artist granted to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw.

Figure 37. *Unfurling Heart-Shaped Fern Frond, a Symbol of New Life in the Maori Culture (Koru) and a Manifestation of the Fibonacci Sequence in Nature*. <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/b4/22/95/b4229589b12375b3ebf3a00f60c6005d.jpg> (accessed January 31, 2017). No known copyright restrictions. This work may be in the public domain in the United States.

Figure 38. *Justification and Sanctification as Complementary, Interwoven Processes*. http://www.clipartpanda.com/clipart_images/scissors-clip-art-vector-clip-15674945 (accessed November 19, 2016). No known copyright restrictions. This work may be in the public domain in the United States.

Figure 39. Adapted from Samuel H. Bradshaw (1990–): *Second Floor of the Salt Lake Temple*. Compare photograph of original 1893 plans in C. M. Hamilton, *Salt Lake Temple*, p. 78. © Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, 2016.

Figure 40. William Blake (1757–1827): *Elohim Creating Adam*, 1795–ca. 1805. <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/blake-elohim-creating-adam-n05055> (October 8, 2016). <https://www.wikiart.org/en/william-blake/and-elohim-created-adam-1795> (January 31, 2017). Public domain.

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Figure 42. *Queen Elizabeth II, Dressed in White Linen, Is "Screened from the General View" in Preparation for Her Anointing.* BBC - Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0wuIcGSD8g> (accessed November 19, 2016), at approximately 1:07:53. No known copyright restrictions. This work may be in the public domain in the United States.

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Figure 44. Vasily Perov (1833–1882): *Christ in Gethsemane*, 1878. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/waitingfortheword/5602449417> (21 September 2016). No known copyright restrictions. This work may be in the public domain in the United States.

Figure 45. *The Sanctuary.* GoodSalt.com. Image ID: lwjas0595. No known copyright restrictions. This work may be in the public domain in the United States.

Figure 46. Benjamin West (1738–1820): *Isaiah's Lips Anointed with Fire*, after 1772. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Isaiah%27s_Lips_Anointed_with_Fire.jpg (accessed November 19, 2016). From the collection of seven of the twelve extant works from Benjamin West's series *The Progress of Revealed Religion*. Museum and Gallery at Bob Jones University and at Heritage Green, New Memorial Chapel at Bob Jones University (<http://www.bjuml.org/the-benjamin-west-collection/>). Public domain.

Figure 47. Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606–1669): *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, 1634. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rembrandt_Abraham_en_Isaac,_1634.jpg (accessed 16 February 2014). Public domain.

Figure 48. *The High Priest Sprinkles Blood on the Altar of Incense That Stood Before the Veil* http://www.templeinstitute.org/yom_kippur/sprinkle_altar.htm (accessed October 9, 2016). No known copyright restrictions. This work may be in the public domain in the United States.

Figure 49. Minerva Teichert (1888–1976): *Alma Baptizes in the Waters of Mormon*, 1949–1951. Courtesy of Brigham Young University Museum of Art. Minerva Teichert (1888–1976), *Alma Baptizes in the Waters of Mormon*, 1949–1951, oil on masonite, 35 7/8 x 48 inches, 820038109. Appears in J. W. Welch et al., *Book of Mormon Paintings*, p. 93. © Brigham Young University Museum of Art. Permission

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Figure 50. Minerva Teichert (1888–1976): *King Benjamin’s Farewell Address*, 1949–1951. Courtesy of Brigham Young University Museum of Art. Appears in J. W. Welch et al., *Book of Mormon Paintings*, p. 85. © Brigham Young University Museum of Art. Permission granted with the kind assistance of Clyda Ludlow and Trevor Weight, MOA Registration Department.

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Figure 52. Viktor Vasnetsov (1848–1926): *God of Hosts*, 1885–1896. Viktor Vanetzov, WikiArt, <http://www.wikiart.org/en/viktor-vasnetsov/god-of-hosts-1896> (accessed January 31, 2017). No known copyright restrictions. This work may be in the public domain in the USA.

Figure 53. Alonso Berruguete (1488–1561): *Sacrificio de Isaac*, Museo Nacional del Prado. <http://tripwow.tripadvisor.com/slideshow-photo/sculpture-of-abraham...od-member-lindzlu-tudela-de-duero-spain.html?sid=11045092&fid=tp-12> (accessed February 16, 2014). No known copyright restrictions. This work may be in the public domain in the United States.

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Figure 55. *Mount Sinai and the Christianized Tabernacle*, Tours Pentateuch, ca. 600. Public domain, <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/32/AshburnPenatuchtFolio076rMosesReceivingLaw.jpg>. Bibliothèque Nationale, nouv. acq. lat., no. 2334, folio 76 recto.

Figure 56. *Sacrament Bread Baked for a Priesthood Leadership Meeting Following the Dedication of the Salt Lake Temple*, 1893. Courtesy of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers Museum. Item #7274. The description reads: “Bread blessed for sacramental purposes at the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple. President Wilford Woodruff brought it to daughter-in-law Naomi Butterworth Woodruff who was ill at the time. Donor is granddaughter Emmarose Woodruff Christiansen. Maker: Unknown.”

Figure 57. *Composition Above the Torah Shrine as Reconstructed by Herbert Gute. Dura Europa Synagogue, ca. 254. Image from E. R. Goodenough, Dura Symbolism, 11:323. Usage deemed permissible under the fair use policy of Princeton University Press under for non-profit organizations. <http://press.princeton.edu/permissions.html#fair> (accessed January 31, 2017).*

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Endnotes

1. John 3:5. See also 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18; Mosiah 5:7; 27:24–25, 28; Alma 5:14, 49; 22:15; 36:5, 23–26; 38:6; D&C 5:16; Moses 6:49, 59–60, 65–68.
2. Compare 1 John 5:5–8.
3. Elder Neil L. Andersen, "Witnessing to Live the Commandments," General Conference Leadership Training on the Sabbath Day Observance at Church (April 2015, available to priesthood leaders), emphasis added, cited in U. A. Perego, *Changing Forms*, p. 14.

4. John 3:1–20. By way of context for Jesus’ teachings about the symbolism of water, spirit, and blood in John 3, Samuel Zinner observes that they are immediately “preceded in John 2 by the story of Cana involving a transformation of water into wine, after which follows a visit to Jerusalem for Passover, a time of both metaphorical (wine, the blood of the grape) and literal blood (of the Passover lamb)” (S. Zinner, *Gospel of Thomas*).
5. John 2:23–25, emphasis added.
6. John 3:1.
7. John 3:1.
8. John 3:10.
9. See John 4:6: “about the sixth hour.”
10. See Matthew 15:14; Luke 6:39.
11. A point emphasized by its threefold mention by John (John 3:2; 7:50; 19:39). For comments on the contrast of light and darkness in the writings of John and in Qumran, see M. Barker, *King of the Jews*, Kindle Edition: 4564 of 15473.
12. 2 Peter 1:19.
13. John 7:50–53.
14. John 19:39.
15. John 3:2, emphasis added.
16. See John 3:2.
17. See M. M. Thompson, *John*, pp. 78–79, cited in R. Boylan, *Some Comments*.
18. See John 3:3, 5. The verb used “is *opaw* which means simply ‘to see’; it appears 73 times in the Greek of John’s gospel, and never means ‘to enter into’ (e.g., John 1:18, 29, 33, 34, 39 [x2], 46, 47, 48, 50, 51; 3:11, 26, 32, 36, etc.)” (R. Boylan, *Some Comments*).
19. On the requirement of seeing the Kingdom of God as a prerequisite for entering into it, see D&C 131:5–6. Cf. Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12–14, 26; Helaman 15:7.

Joseph Smith stated (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 15 October 1843, Joseph Smith Diary by Willard Richards, p. 256): “[It is] one thing to see the kingdom and another to be in it. [One] must have a change of heart to see the kingdom of God and subscribe [to] the articles of

adoption [i.e., those things necessary to become a "son of God"] to enter therein."

M. Barker, *King of the Jews*, Kindle Edition: 4589 of 15473 explains that in its most complete sense, seeing the Kingdom of God "means seeing the heavenly throne." Continuing, Barker writes (*ibid.*, 4650):

There is no complete account of the royal ascent in the Hebrew Scriptures, nor in the Greek, and so the rituals in the Holy of Holies and their meaning have to be reconstructed from what remains. The first Christians would have known far more than we do, but the pattern that can still be discerned is exaltation, anointing, becoming the Son, and then ruling/coming in judgment. This is the pattern implicit in how Jesus describes himself to Nicodemus: Jesus has been born from above (vv. 3–8; cf. 10:36), raised up and transformed into the Man (vv. 13–15), and then sent into the world to bring the judgment and heal the land (vv. 16–17).

20. Statements of the Prophet about the initial intimations of the spirit of enlightenment that lead faithful disciples through each of the earthly ordinances and eventually to the heavenly counterparts of these ordinances are found in the recollections of Daniel Tyler (D. Tyler, *Recollections*, pp. 93–94):

The birth here spoken of ... was not the gift of the Holy Ghost, which was promised after baptism, but was a portion of the spirit, which attended the preaching of the Gospel by the elders of the Church. The people wondered why they had not previously understood the plain declarations of scripture, as explained by the elders, as they had read them hundreds of times. When they read the Bible it was a new book to them [cf. Joseph Smith — *History* 1:74]. This was being born again to see the Kingdom of God. They were not in it, but could see it from the outside, which they could not do until the Spirit of the Lord took the vail from before their eyes. It was a change of heart but not of state; they were converted, but were yet in their sins.

21. On the "change of heart," the "portion of the Spirit" that would take "the vail from before their eyes," see *ibid.*

22. On Cornelius, see Acts 10:47. Joseph Smith discussed the difference between the initial glimpses of the Kingdom of God that can be given by the Holy Ghost prior to baptism and the more complete and continuous spiritual awareness that is made available through the gift of the Holy Ghost after baptism: “There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not taken [these] sign[s] or] ordinances upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him [see Acts 10:1–48]” (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Wilford Woodruff Journal, 20 March 1842, p. 108, spelling and punctuation modernized. Cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, p. 199).
23. Ether 12:19.
24. S. Zinner, *Gospel of Thomas*. See, e.g., “Now this caused us to marvel, for it was given unto us of the Spirit. And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understandings and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about” (D&C 76:18–19).
25. Ibid.
26. John 3:7. Cf., e.g., Mark 5:20; John 5:20, 28, 7:21; Acts 3:12; Revelation 17:7; Jacob 4:12; Mosiah 27:25; Alma 19:24; 39:17; Helaman 5:49; 7:15; 3 Nephi 15:3; D&C 10:35; 18:8; 27:5; 76:18; 136:37. Samuel Zinner observes that the Gosepl of “Thomas’ use of ‘marvel’ is closer to Qumranic usage than to Greco-Roman philosophy, and ... the two Coptic verbs ... are ultimately derived not from Plato, but from the Book of Daniel [Daniel 2:3–4; 4:2, 6, 16; 5:6, 9, 19; 7:28; 8:17, 27; 12:6]” (ibid., referring to mysteries that can be made known only through revelation).
27. John 20:27. Note the difference in the echo of John 3:5–8 found in D&C 5:16: “Behold, *whosoever believeth on my words*, them will I visit with the manifestation of my Spirit; and they shall be born of me, even of water and of the Spirit.” Lynne Hilton Wilson observes: “Even though both verses focus on the same promise of the Spirit, only one discloses that belief is the operative principle involved” (L. H. Wilson, *A New Pneumatology*, p. 149).

28. See Mosiah 5:7–8, where the idea of being “born of him” and the assertion that “under this head (Hebrew *rōš*) ye are made free” (cf. “born from the head”) are mentioned in two successive verses: “And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives” (Mosiah 5:8). See below for more on this passage from King Benjamin’s discourse.

See Born Again Narrative for a discussion of the Aramaic and Greek terms behind this conversation as well as a critique of Bart Ehrman’s claim regarding the impossibility of its having taken place as reported. “The Greek word translated “from above” in v. 3 can also mean “anew.” ... This is the source of Nicodemus’ misunderstanding” (H. W. Attridge et al., *HarperCollins Study Bible*, p. 1819 n. 3:4. See also C. S. Keener, *John*, 1:538–539). Christ is speaking of a being born of God, whereas Nicodemus thinks, incorrectly, that He is speaking of being born again.

29. John 3:6, emphasis added.

Note that on at least one occasion Joseph Smith applied John 3:6 in a very different way to a contemporary situation. On Sunday evening, 2 April 1843, Joseph Smith touched upon the subject of Jesus’ “conversation with Nicodemus. except a man be born of water & of the spirit” (J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1841–1843*, p. 326; J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Joseph Smith Diary, by Willard Richards, p. 173). The reason for the Prophet’s citation of this story in the context of his discourse is obscure. However, Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook observe that in relation to remarks on eternal marriage given a few months later, Joseph Smith said (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Franklin D. Richards “Scriptural Items,” p. 232): “[That] the earthly is the image of the Heavenly shows that [it] is by the multiplication of Lives that the eternal worlds are created and occupied [for] that which is born of flesh is flesh [and] that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit [see John 3:6].” Ehat and Cook conclude: “The implication is that if your body is not resurrected, your children will be born flesh and bones, but that if your body is resurrected ... your children will be spirits” (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, p. 270 n. 9).

This incident provides a good example of how the specifics of Joseph Smith's interpretations of scripture and doctrinal pronouncements sometimes can be interpreted correctly only with reference to current events. Ben McGuire has argued that in contrast to the traditional view that our job in reading scripture is simply to uncover an absolute, "true" meaning that was meant to be grasped by the original audience, Joseph Smith frequently "ignores the increasing gap between the cultural and societal contexts of the past and present, and re-inscribes scripture within the context of the present" (B. L. McGuire, 7 March 2016). McGuire observes that such a reading strategy is quite foreign to the typical modern exegete (though not to ancient interpreters — see, e.g., J. L. Kugel, *How to Read*, pp. 674, 676): "[Joseph Smith] is consistently re-fashioning his interpretation of past scripture through the lens of his present revelations, and the outcome is something that [might have been] ... unrecognizable to the earlier, original audience" (ibid.). For more on this topic, see B. L. McGuire, *Nephi*, pp. 58–59 n. 21, 68–71, 77; J. M. Bradshaw, *Now That We Have the Words*, p. 52.

30. John 3:6, emphasis added.

31. John 3:4.

32. John 3:10.

33. John 3:8. Samuel Zinner sees a possible understanding of "wind" as "life breath." He also points out, in defense of Nicodemus' interpretation, that the idea of birth "of the water and the spirit" is a clear allusion to Genesis 1:2 (S. Zinner, *Gospel of Thomas*):

The Apocalypse of Paul 45 seems to presuppose the idea of the holy spirit as a mother bird who moves over the waters of creation, but who after creation comes to rest (like a bird) on the tree of life, yet who periodically blows (like wind) through the tree, which causes waters to flow from the tree. This passage may shed light on John 3's maternal spirit who blows, like wind through the trees, and who is by allusion associated with the waters of Genesis 1:2. The hidden nature of the wind's origin is compared to the concealed state of a developing fetus in a pregnant woman's womb in Ecclesiastes 11:5, which may have relevance for the understanding of the spirit as both wind and mother in John 3: "Just as you do not

know how the wind blows, like [developing] limbs in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know how God works, which causes everything." The "wind" can also be understood as "life breath" (Cf. the JPS version: "Just as you do not know how the life breath passes into the limbs within the womb of the pregnant woman, so you cannot foresee the actions of God, who causes all things to happen." As the JPS notes, "into" reads "like" in most manuscripts. The "wind" as "life breath" makes the passage even more relevant to John 3.)

Note that John 3:6–7 joins the themes of flesh and spirit with the term "marvel." This constellation corresponds precisely with Thomas logion 29's central components which describe the fleshly, earthly birth and the spiritual heavenly birth, just as we find in John 3:6–7 and 12. That which is born of the spirit is spirit, or divine, and this leads smoothly into logion 30 with its theme of "gods." The Thomasine connection with the traditions behind John 3 is strengthened by logion 28's isomorphism with further Johannine traditions as reflected in John 1:14. However, it is important to insist that logion 28 is connected more with pre-Christian wisdom traditions than with the actual text of John 1:14, as a comparison with 1 Enoch 42 and logion 28 will reveal. Compare logion 28's theme of thirst with 1 Enoch 42:3's "thirsty land" and logion 28's theme of finding with the same trope in 1 Enoch 42:3. This is not to overlook other features not present in 1 Enoch but shared between logion 28 and John 1, namely the fleshly dwelling in the world.

Regarding John 3:5's spirit and water, usually understood with reference to Genesis 1:2, the waters could naturally have been expanded to include the waters of the four rivers of paradise, which seem to be the waters referred to in Apocalypse of Paul 45 as flowing from the tree of life.

34. John 3:8.

35. John 3:13. John 3:11–13 is but a prologue to Jesus' extended dialogues in chapters 7–10 with those who were reluctant to believe that He was sent by the Father (John 7:16–17, 28–29, 33; 8:18–19, 26, 29, 42; 10:36). Jesus would accomplish all things that the Father sent

Him to do (John 8:26, 28–29, 38; 9:25; 10:25; 19:30); having come down from heaven (John 8:23; 17:5), the place to which He would return (John 7:33) but to which His unbelieving hearers could not go (John 7:34–36; 8:21). Though they “[knew] not from whence he [was]” (John 9:29. Cf. John 7:41–43, 52; 8:14, 29) nor where He would go (John 7:35–36; 8:14, 22), Jesus testified: “I know whence I came, and whither I go” (John 8:14, emphasis added). Thus, Isaiah asked rhetorically: “Who hath believed [His] report?” (Isaiah 53:1). Likewise, Georges Moustaki (Humblement) observed poetically:

*Humblement il est venu
On ne l'a pas reconnu ...
Ce n'était qu'un inconnu
On ne l'a pas retenu.*

36. John 3:12.
37. John 3:12.
38. John 3:11.
39. Later in this article we discuss in more detail the distinction that might be made between being “born of water and the spirit” — the essential steps of justification and sanctification that bring the disciple to the threshold of exaltation — and being “born of God,” wherein one may become His son or daughter. (By way of contrast, 1 John 3:9 and 5:1 seem to use the term “born of God” in a more general fashion.)

In describing what it meant to be “born of God” in the specific sense of the term, Jesus showed not only what had been required of Himself as the Only Begotten, but also of every child of God who would later “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32) as He Himself became “perfect” in likeness of the Father (Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48).

More particularly, in John 3:13 Jesus linked His identity as the “Son of man” to His having descended from and ascended to heaven. The author of Hebrews describes “Jesus the Son of God” as “a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens” (Hebrews 4:14). Specifically, Jesus, “an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” “entereth ... within the veil” of the heavenly temple as a “forerunner” for all disciples who, “through faith and patience,” become fit to “inherit the promises,” “lay[ing] hold” (literally “grasping”) the “sure and stedfast” “anchor of the soul”

"set before" them, thus having "*obtained* the promise" that can be "confirmed" only by the "immutability" of the Father's personal "oath" (Hebrews 6:11–20. Cf., e.g., Psalm 2:7; 110:4; Matthew 25:21, 23; Revelation 4:1; 11:12; 2 Nephi 31:20; D&C 84:40. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 60–62).

Returning to the context of John 3, Nicodemus had to be reminded that Jesus' own fitness to ascend to heaven and "enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5), like the fitness of every disciple who would qualify to do the same, could not be apprehended through outward signs that are seen and commended by men like himself (John 3:2), but only through the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:10–16), who "seeth in secret" (Matthew 6:4, 18) and "knoweth the hearts" (Acts 15:8. Cf. 1 Samuel 16:7). Only the spirit of divine discernment (1 Corinthians 2:14) can reveal whether individuals, in their varied circumstances and capabilities, are following a course that will enable them to finish the work on the earth that God has given them to do (2 Timothy 4:7. Cf. John 17:4; 19:30), their uniquely tailored "errand from the Lord" (Jacob 1:17), which errand the Son of God as their exemplar fulfilled every "jot" and "tittle" (Matthew 5:18).

In other words, Jesus had to teach Nicodemus that the sure sign of His Sonship — and, moreover, the commonality of commission shared by all who would become God's sons and daughters — was not in the approving words of men who "testify of man" (John 2:25. Cf. John 5:41), who "judge ... according to the appearance" (John 7:24. Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:12, 10:7), but rather in the eventual acceptance of one's life and labors by the Father (2 Corinthians 5:9–10. Cf., e.g., John 5:36, 44; 8:17–18, 54. See also Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; 3 Nephi 11:7). As Kierkegaard expressed the supreme state of singleness of mind demanded of disciples: "Purity of heart is to will one thing" (S. Kierkegaard, *Purity*).

Jesus lived in faultless fidelity to the Father's will, demonstrating perfect patience in "tak[ing] up his cross" (Matthew 16:24–25), being "lifted up" (John 3:14) in temporary humiliation so that He might "draw all men unto [Him]" (John 12:32) to enjoy, if they would, exaltation in the eternal world.

40. For an excellent discussion of the topic of simultaneous revelation and concealment generally as it relates to the Gospel of John, see S. Hamid-Khani, *Revelation*.

41. John 3:13–15. Samuel Zinner points out the linkage of “new spirit birth with the ascent of the Son of man to heaven” is also found in “John 6:62, immediately before verse 63’s teaching on the flesh and spirit, which as we have seen is related to Thomas logion 53 as well” (S. Zinner, *Gospel of Thomas*). He further observes:

The joining of the two tropes of new birth and the ascent of the Son of man is intriguing. The implication in John 3:12–13 seems to be that the Son of man’s ascent would cause a greater wonder or marvel than the new spirit birth. Similarly John 6:62–63 seems to imply that the Son of man’s ascent is a greater wonder or marvel than the bread of life discourse. And since verses 62 and 63 seem to constitute a unitive block, the verses naturally suggest that the ascent of the Son of man and the teaching on the flesh that profits nothing and the spirit which is life (which alludes to the same teaching on new spirit birth as we find in John 3) represent equivalent entities.

42. See Numbers 21:4–9.

43. See Isaiah 6. The Hebrew verb *saraph* means “burn.” Most commentators on Numbers 21 associate this description with the serpent’s deadly poison, but in context it seems more fitting to apply the term to describe their fiery *appearance* (i.e., they are “burning” with celestial glory), as references to the seraphim that guard the Divine Throne make clear (J. H. Charlesworth, *Serpent*, pp. 444–445). See pp. 30, 87, 220, 258, 332, 426 and, especially, K. R. Joines, *Winged Serpents*, cited in J. H. Charlesworth, *Serpent*, p. 444.

Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4:6–9 describe beings with a similar function. Charlesworth comments: “The seraphim have wings, faces, feet, and human features; these characteristics have confused some scholars who assume they thus cannot be serpents. Near Eastern iconography ... is replete with images of serpents with faces, feet, wings, and human features” (ibid., p. 444).

The only explicit references in the Bible to seraphim in the Holy of Holies are in Isaiah 6:2, 6. However, Nickelsburg suggests, based on a midrash on Genesis 3:24 that cites Psalm 104:4 (H. Freedman et al., *Midrash*, 1:178) that the “flaming sword” of Genesis 3:24 (Moses 4:31) might be associated more correctly with seraphim rather than cherubim (G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, p. 296 n. 7).

He also sees the "those who were there ... like a flaming fire" in 1 Enoch 17:1 and the "serpents" of 1 Enoch 20:7 as good candidates for the appellation of seraphim (*ibid.*, 17:1 p. 276; 20:7, p. 294).

Of course, the serpent is an ambivalent symbol, as James H. Charlesworth captured in the title of his book *The Good and Evil Serpent*. Not only does the serpent sometimes represent evil, it also impersonates the good, as it apparently did in the Garden of Eden (J. M. Bradshaw et al., *Mormonism's Satan*, pp. 18–19):

Of great significance here is the fact that the serpent is a frequently used symbol of life-giving power (Numbers 21:8–9; John 3:14–15; 2 Nephi 25:20; Alma 33:19; Helaman 8:14–15). In the context of the temptation of Eve, LDS scholars Draper, Brown, and Rhodes conclude that Satan "has effectively come as the Messiah, offering a promise that only the Messiah can offer, for it is the Messiah who will control the powers of life and death and can promise life, not Satan" (R. D. Draper et al., *Commentary*, p. 43. See John 5:25–26; 2 Nephi 9:3–26).

Not only has the Devil come in guise of the Holy One, he seems to have deliberately appeared, without authorization, at a most sacred place in the Garden of Eden (*ibid.*, pp. 42, 150–151). Indeed, if it is true, as Ephrem the Syrian believed, that the Tree of Knowledge was a figure for "the veil for the sanctuary" (Ephrem, *Paradise*, 3:5, p. 92. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *Tree of Knowledge*), then Satan has positioned himself, in the extreme of sacrilegious effrontery, as the very "keeper of the gate" (2 Nephi 9:41. Compare 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4) to the Tree of Life — symbolizing the possibility, under proper circumstances, of "exaltation" in Mormon language. Thus, it seems, Eve's deception consisted in having taken the forbidden fruit "from the wrong hand, having listened to the wrong voice" (M. C. Thomas, *Women*, p. 53).

44. 1 Nephi 17:41. Cf. Numbers 21:6. See also Isaiah 14:29; 30:6; 2 Nephi 24:29.
45. In the Bible, the term is used in two different ways, one stressing the humanity of the referent as a "son of man," i.e., an ordinary human being (e.g., Numbers 23:19; Job 25:6; 35:8; Psalm 8:4; 146:3;

Isaiah 51:12 (cf. 2 Nephi 8:12); 56:2; Jeremiah 49:18; Ezekiel 2:3; Daniel 8:17), and the other clearly signifying the divinity of the Son of the “Man of Holiness” (Moses 6:57) or the Son of God (John 3:13; see the following endnote. See also, e.g., Matthew 25:31–46; Mark 14:61).

In the Doctrine and Covenants, the term “Son of Man” is consistently used, with only one exception (D&C 122:8), in passages referring to the coming of Jesus Christ in His glory (D&C 49:22; 58:65; 61:38; 63:53; 64:23; 65:5; 68:11; 109:5; 130:12, 14, 15, 17).

In the book of Moses, the term “son of man” is used in its first sense by Satan to refer to the mortal weakness of Moses (Moses 1:12) and elsewhere to refer to Jesus Christ, who descended below all things (D&C 122:8) and is made glorious in heaven (Moses 7:24) and at His coming (Moses 7:24, 47, 54, 56, 59, 65; cf. JS–Matthew 1:26, 36, 37, 41, 43, 48). This recalls the prominent use of the title “the Son of Man” in the Book of Parables within 1 Enoch (G. W. E. Nickelsburg et al., *1 Enoch* 2, 46:2–4, p. 153; 48:2, p. 166; 60:10, p. 233; 62:5, 7, 9, 14, p. 254; 63:11, p. 255; 69:26–27, 29, p. 311; 70:1, p. 315; 71:14, 17, p. 320), consistent with the density of its appearances in the vision of Enoch in the book of Moses. The related titles of “Chosen One” (Moses 7:39. Cf. Moses 4:2. See *ibid.*, 39:6, p. 111; 40:5, p. 130; 45:3–4, p. 148; 49:2, 4, p. 166; 51:5a, 3, p. 180; 52:6, 9, p. 187; 53:6, p. 194; 55:4, p. 198; 61:5, 8, 10, pp. 243, 247; 62:1, p. 254. See Isaiah 42:1, Luke 9:35 (best manuscripts have “chosen” rather than “beloved”), 23:35), “Anointed One” (i.e., Messiah. See Moses 7:53. See *ibid.*, 48:10, p. 166; 52:4, p. 187. Cf. Luke 23:35: “the Christ [Messiah], the chosen of God”), and “Righteous One” (Moses 6:57; 7:45, 47, 67. See *ibid.*, 38:2, p. 95; 53:6, p. 194. The term also appears by implication in 39:6, p. 111; 46:3, p. 153; 49:2, p. 166; 62:2–3, p. 254) each appears prominently in both the 1 Enoch Book of Parables and the LDS Enoch story.

In Abraham 1:27 we read: “And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me.” Arguably, the referent could be either the premortal Jesus Christ or the premortal Adam (see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, EXCURSUS 23: The Roles of Christ, Adam, and Michael, pp. 582–584), a reading that has a precedent in the story of Enoch’s

exaltation to become a "son of Man" (G. W. E. Nickelsburg et al., *1 Enoch* 2, 71:14, p. 321).

46. John 3:13. We capitalize "Man" to be consistent with Moses 6:57.

A disputed phrase in John 3:13 ("which is in heaven"), generally accepted as a late gloss, becomes more intelligible in context if we conjecture the possibility that an editor may have intended its referent to be "Man" rather than "Son of Man." Note that the referent appears with two definite articles (*ho huios tou anthrōpou*), i.e., "the Son of the Man" (English capitalization added), giving the reading "the Son of the Man which is in heaven," which can be taken as meaning that "the Man," rather than "the Son" is the one who is currently "in heaven." Other scholars who accept the phrase "which is in heaven" (e.g., R. L. Overstreet, John 3:13) have interpreted it differently as a witness to the omnipresence of Jesus, i.e., that He is simultaneously on earth and in heaven.

For more on the "Son of Man" in this verse, see M. Barker, *King of the Jews*, Kindle Edition: 4618 of 15473.

47. See Genesis 3:24 and G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, p. 296 n. 7. The sword mentioned in scripture is described by Sarna as a "separate, protective instrument, not said to be in the hands of the cherubim" (N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 30). While the function of the cherubim is to selectively admit those authorized to enter, Nibley argues that the fire and steel combined in the sword are specifically meant to repulse the serpent, forever preventing its return to the Garden (H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005), pp. 319-320). For additional discussion of the sword of the cherubim, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, COMMENTARY Moses 4:31-d, pp. 280-281. For related discussion of similar symbolism in the sickle of the laborer (D&C 4:4), the sword of the Spirit (Hebrews 4:12-13. Cf. D&C 6:2; 11:2; 12:2; 14:2; 33:1-2), and the veil of the temple (cf. J. M. Bradshaw, *Tree of Knowledge*), see J. M. Bradshaw, *He That Thrusteth in His Sickle*, pp. 174-176. All these symbols share a common feature: they divide the righteous from the unrighteous — saving the former and condemning the latter.
48. Genesis 3:24; Moses 4:31. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, COMMENTARY Moses 4:31-e, p. 282.
49. D&C 132:19; D. W. Parry, *Garden*, p. 139; B. Young, 6 April 1853 - B, p. 31. See also J. Gee, *Keeper*.

50. 2 Nephi 9:41. Regarding the significance of the location that is “innermost” to the throne of God and the general symbolism of the sacred center, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Tree of Knowledge*, pp. 50–52. For more on Jesus Christ as the “keeper of the gate” in this sense and Satan’s deception in presenting himself as a glorious serpent (i.e., as Jesus Christ, the most glorious of the seraphim), see *ibid.*, pp. 54–56.

On Jesus as the “better of all the seraphim,” see Hebrews 1:3–8, where He is described as the greatest of the divine attendants of the Father — specifically as the “brightness of [God’s] glory, and the express image of his person,” sitting nearer to the throne than any of the seraphim, i.e., “on the right hand of the Majesty on high,” and, in explicit terms, as having been “made so much better than the angels” (see vv. 3–4).

In LDS theology and scripture, angels are not typically understood as beings of a different race than man. Although “Latter-day revelation has not identified or clarified the nature of seraphim or cherubim mentioned in the Bible” (J. E. Jensen, *Spirit*), the argument of Hebrews 1 is that although the angels spoken of resemble in their various honors God’s preeminent Son, He, through the accomplishment of His unique mission as Savior and Redeemer, has “by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Hebrews 1:4).

51. John 14:6. Margaret Barker sees the Book of Revelation as “a record of [Jesus’] heavenly visions and their interpretations” (see, e.g., M. Barker, *King of the Jews*, Kindle Edition: 4619 of 15473). It must be said that Jesus had not only *seen* the members of the heavenly council, but, of course, was Himself preeminent among them.
52. Regarding the application of this prophecy to Joseph Smith, see 3 Nephi 20:43. Cf. 3 Nephi 21:10. Like Alma, one of the “hidden seed” of the Lord prophesied by Isaiah (see Isaiah 53:8, 10; 54:17), who was the sole individual among Noah’s priests to whom “to whom” or “upon whom” (*‘al-mî*) the Lord was “reveal[ing]” his arm as Abinadi’s prophetic successor (Mosiah 17:2 and Mosiah 14:1, quoting Isaiah 53:1. See M. L. Bowen, *Alma*; A. P. Schade et al., *To Whom*), Joseph, son of Jacob, (like Jesus Christ Himself) was not known among his brethren for a time, but eventually revealed himself to them as the one that God had sent away in order to assure their (temporal) salvation (Genesis 45:5).

There also seems to be a textual affinity between Isaiah's prophecy and the story of Enoch in the book of Moses and in the pseudepigraphal book of 1 Enoch. Because of Enoch's continued "faith" (Moses 7:13) and "righteousness" (Moses 7:19), he was "high and lifted up ... in the bosom of the Father and of the Son of Man" (Moses 7:24). The parallel between Enoch being lifted up in this verse and the Son of Man being "lifted up on the cross, after the manner of men" in Moses 7:55 (cf. Isaiah 52:13; John 3:14; 8:28) is noteworthy. In addition, as we have argued earlier in this article, there may be some connection between the idea of being "lifted up" and initiation into the heavenly mysteries like Enoch (Moses 7:59). In the Book of Parables 71:3 Enoch recounts: "And the angel Michael, one of the archangels, took me by my right hand, and raised me up, and brought me out to all the secrets; and he showed me all the secrets of mercy" (G. W. E. Nickelsburg et al., *1 Enoch* 2, 71:3, p. 320). Later in the account, Enoch was proclaimed as the "Son of Man" (ibid., 71:14, p. 321), a concept that may be disconcerting for some readers but which poses no problem for LDS theology (see J. M. Bradshaw et al., *God's Image* 2, OVERVIEW Moses 7, p. 117).

Unlike priesthood ordinations performed by men, the ordinance by which one becomes a "son of God" (= son of Man) is administered directly by God Himself (See J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 59–65), just as this status was conferred upon Enoch as part of his heavenly ascent: "And [the high priesthood after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch] was delivered unto men by the calling of [God's] own voice" (JST Genesis 14:29).

53. See also Samuel Zinner's extensive discussion of the plurality of "sons of man" in the mystical sense of the term in *Gospel of Thomas* Logion 106 (S. Zinner, *Gospel of Thomas*).
54. John 3:16.
55. Ether 12:6. Cf. 1 Peter 1:7. Here, Moroni is speaking specifically of the sure witness that came when Christ personally "showed himself unto our fathers" (Ether 12:7).
56. John 1:12.
57. Mosiah 5:7, emphasis added.
58. D&C 93:23, 38.

59. G. B. Hinckley et al., The family: A proclamation to the world, paragraph 2.
60. John 1:12. Cf. Psalm 2:7; 110:4; John 1:12–13; Romans 8:19; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 7:3; 1 John 3:1–3; Mosiah 5:7; 3 Nephi 9:17; Moroni 7:48; D&C 128:23; Moses 6:22, 68; 7:1; 8:13. See also Joseph Smith’s description of the “sons of God who exalt[ed] themselves to be gods even from bef[ore] the foundat[ion] of the world” (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Thomas Bullock Report, 16 June 1844, p. 381; cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 16 June 1844, p. 375). For additional scriptural references that speak only of *the* Son of God (singular), see Daniel 3:25; Matthew 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 26:63; 27:54; Mark 1:1; 3:11; 15:39; Luke 4:3, 9, 41; 8:28; 22:70; John 1:34; 5:25; 9:35; 11:4; 20:31; Acts 8:37; 9:20; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29; 1 John 3:8; 4:15; 5:5, 10–13; 20; Revelation 2:18.
61. John 3:16.
62. 3 Nephi 27:14. Cf. 1 Nephi 11:33; 19:10; Moses 7:24, 47, 55; 3 Nephi 27:14–15; 28:6; Ether 4:1.
63. 3 Nephi 27:14.
64. 3 Nephi 27:14.
65. 3 Nephi 27:22.
66. Compare Isaiah 6:1; John 8:28; 1 Nephi 13:30, 37; 16:2; Alma 13:29; 36:3; 37:37; 38:5; Helaman 8:14–15; 3 Nephi 27:14–15, 22; Mormon 2:19; Ether 4:19; Moses 7:24, 47, 55, 59. It should be noted that the basic Aramaic/Syriac verb meaning “to crucify,” *zqp, literally means to “raise,” “lift up,” “elevate.”
67. H. N. Ridderbos, *John*, p. 137. For more on the double meaning of “lifted up,” see M. Barker, *King of the Jews*, Kindle Edition: 4618 of 15473. Barker also observes (*ibid.*, 4650 of 15473):

The three themes of this chapter — heavenly birth, lifting up, and a snake bite — are all found in Revelation 12:13–17: the Woman in heaven gave birth to her son, the ancient serpent was ready to bite him, about to “devour” him (Revelation 12:4), and the child escaped by being lifted up to the throne of God. The serpent went on to attack the Woman’s other children, those who were keeping the commandments and bearing witness [of]

Jesus, and presumably these were the snake bites that were an ever-present danger to Jesus' followers. Looking to the exalted Jesus would protect them. The mark of the ancient serpent was worn on the right hand and the forehead of his followers (Revelation 13:16), exactly where the observant pro-Moses group wore their phylacteries (Deuteronomy 6:8).

68. Alma 33:19, 22. B. A. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 4:472–473 notes that, by way of contrast to John, Alma 33:19–22 “emphasizes the healing that resulted from looking upon the symbol. He does not emphasize the ‘raising up.’ While the Nephite prophets had [received divine foreknowledge] of the Savior’s crucifixion (1 Nephi 19:13; 2 Nephi 6:9; 10:3; 25:13; Mosiah 3:9), they did not have direct experience with crucifixion or its social implications, unlike John. Alma’s listeners, with their reliance on the brass plates, did not have the Nephite prophets’ understanding of ‘raising up.’ Thus, the symbolic association so important to John is entirely missing in Alma’s analysis.”
69. John 3:15. Cf. John 3:16: “everlasting life.” Nephi clarifies that to receive “eternal life” one must “endure to the end” (i.e., the veil that conceals both the earthly and heavenly Holy of Holies), where he or she may, if fully qualified, receive the personal oath of “the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:20).
70. S.H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, NT2 (p. 110 [John 3:25–4:9]), p. 448.
71. *Ibid.*, NT2 (p. 110 [John 3:25–4:9]), p. 448.
72. Cf. John 1:12.
73. For Daniel Tyler’s recollection of a statement by Joseph Smith on seeing the kingdom of God “from the outside,” see D. Tyler, *Recollections*, pp. 93–94, reproduced in its entirety above.
74. John 3:10. M. Barker, *King of the Jews*, Kindle Edition: 4564, 4679 of 15473 observes:

As a Pharisee and a ruler, Nicodemus would have known the Hebrew Scriptures, and Jesus addressed him as *the* teacher of Israel, so perhaps John was using him as a representative of that group who did not understand even though they had studied the Scriptures (John 3:10; cf. 5:39–40, the Jews who searched the Scriptures but did

not know what they meant. [See also Mark 4:11–12.]. If the cleansing of the temple had been a conflict with the temple authorities, then this meeting with Nicodemus should be seen as a meeting of the two teachers of Israel. ...

Underlying Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus and the explanation of who He is are three royal texts: Psalm 110; Isaiah 52:13–53:12; and Deuteronomy 32:43, all of which would have been well known to those who studied the Hebrew Scriptures, *but all of which are different in the Masoretic Hebrew from which English Bibles are translated.* ...

It would be possible to conclude from [the] evidence that texts which were important for Christian claims — and indeed for Jesus' own understanding of His role — were removed from the Hebrew text or significantly altered. They may have been removed after Jesus made his claims and in reaction to them, or they may have been royal and temple texts that had already been edited out of some copies of the Hebrew Scriptures during the second-temple period, the work of the “restoring scribes.” If the latter, then Nicodemus could not have recognized and understood what Jesus was saying.

75. On Jewish mystic interpretations of seeing the kingdom of God, see C. S. Keener, *John*, 1:538. For the statement concerning Philo's teachings on becoming a heavenly man through spiritual rebirth, see *ibid.*, 1:563. Cf. John 3:3.
76. See, e.g., C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Heavenly Ascent*; D. J. Larsen, *Angels*.
77. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Ezekiel Mural*. Donald Carson refutes exegetes who see Jesus, in John 3, as “arguing against the ritual washings of the Essenes ... , or perhaps against Jewish ceremonies in general. What is necessary is Spirit-birth, not mere water-purification. But ‘water’ and ‘Spirit’ are not contrasted in [John 3:5]: they are linked, and together become the equivalent of ‘from above’ (v. 3)” (D. A. Carson, *John*, p. 193).
78. D. A. Carson, *John*, p. 194.

79. Ibid., p. 195. John S. Thompson has suggested to the first author that Ezekiel's vision of the "dry bones" was foreshadowed, perhaps, by Adam's creation from dry "dust" that follows hard after a passage about a "mist from the earth" that watered the ground (see Genesis 2:6–7; Moses 3:6–7; Abraham 5:6–7).
80. Ezekiel 37:26.
81. E.g., Jeremiah 15:16; Mosiah 5:7–10. For more on the significance of names and keywords in ancient temple ordinances, see J. M. Bradshaw, *What Did Joseph Smith Know*, pp. 9–15.
82. Ezekiel 37:28.
83. D. A. Carson, *John*, p. 194. See Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy 32:6; Hosea 11:1.
84. Ezekiel 16:4.
85. Ezekiel 16:8.
86. Ezekiel 16:9, 10, 12.
87. Exodus 19:6. 1 Peter 2:9 applies this concept to all Christian converts who are invited to become "a royal priesthood, an holy nation." Similarly, the blessings associated with the divine oath recorded in Psalm 110:4 declaring "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" are extended not only to Jesus Christ (Hebrews 5:8) but also to every one who "patiently endure[s]" to the end and enters, like their "forerunner," "within the veil" to receive the same "oath ... from [the] Father" (see Hebrews 6:13–20; D&C 84:40; J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 61–62). According to D&C 76:56–58, such individuals are made "priests," "kings," and "sons of God":

They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.

Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—
88. 1 John 3:9; 5:1; Mosiah 27:28; Alma 36:26.
89. Joseph Smith taught that to qualify for eternal life, each of God's children must be born again into the kingdom of heaven as a son

or daughter of God (Moses 5:7) through the atonement of Christ, and “by keeping all the ordinances of the house of the Lord” (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 11 June 1843, Wilford Woodruff Journal, p. 213. Compare J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 11 June 1843, p. 308. See also J. W. Welch, *Sermon*, pp. 77–78).

Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook note (in J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, p. 286 n. 25):

Undoubtedly the Church historians decided to amplify this statement based on D&C 124:28, and their knowledge of the Prophet’s teachings on temple ordinances: “If a man gets *a fullness of the priesthood* of God he has to get *it* in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping *all the commandments and obeying* all the ordinances of the house of the Lord” (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 11 June 1843, p. 308; changed words italicized). The essence of the Church historians’ amplification, which is confirmed by the Franklin D. Richards report, is additionally supported in the following statement of Brigham Young in the Nauvoo Temple which includes the Prophet’s teachings on the highest ordinances of the Temple:

Those who come in here and have received their washing & anointing will [later] be ordained Kings & Priests, and will then have received the fullness of the Priesthood, all that can be given on earth. For Brother Joseph said he had given us all that could be given to man on the earth (Heber C. Kimball Journal kept by William Clayton, 26 December 1845, Church Archives).

90. Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; Romans 6:22; 1 Corinthians 1:8; Hebrews 3:6, 14; 6:11; James 5:11; 1 Peter 1:13; Revelation 2:26; 1 Nephi 13:37; 22:31; 2 Nephi 9:24; 31:16, 20; 33:4, 9; Omni 1:26; Mosiah 2:41; 26:23; Alma 12:27; 27:27; 32:13, 15; 38:2; 3 Nephi 15:9; 27:6; 27:11, 16, 17, 19; Mormon 9:29; Moroni 3:3; 6:3; 8:3, 26; D&C 10:4; 14:7; 18:22; 20:25, 29, 37; 31:13; 53:7; 66:12; 75:11, 13, 14; 76:5; 81:6; 100:12; 105:41; 121:32. The many scriptures cited above, which implicitly define “the end” as the end of probation or the time of judgment, can be contrasted with a smaller set of scriptures

Mosiah 4:6, 30; 5:8; Alma 34:33; 41:6 which instead describe this end more generally as the end of mortal life.

91. D&C 132:24. Cf. John 17:3.
92. E.g., Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23; 14:27; Acts 5:41; 9:16; Romans 8:17; Philippians 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:12; 3:12; Jacob 1:8; 3 Nephi 12:30; D&C 23:6; 56:2; 101:35; 112:14. Nevertheless, the followers of Christ are not called to endure the suffering for sin that has already been borne by Jesus Christ (D&C 19:16), though they are sometimes required to suffer "anguish of soul because of the wickedness of the people" (Alma 8:14).

The mourning of the righteous for sin should be contrasted with the mourning of the wicked (Matthew 24:30; Luke 6:25; D&C 45:49; 87:6; 97:21; Revelation 18:11). The "sorrowing of the damned" is attributed by Mormon to their realization that "the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin" (Mormon 2:13).
93. Mosiah 5:7. See also Psalm 2:7; 110:4; John 1:12–13; Romans 8:19; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 7:3; 1 John 3:1–3; 3 Nephi 9:17; Moroni 7:48; D&C 128:23; Moses 6:22, 68; 7:1; 8:13.
94. J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Before 8 August 1839 (1), p. 12. Cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 2 July 1839, p. 162. See D&C 52:13–20; 84:19–25; Moses 6:57–68; JST Exodus 34:1–2.
95. Daniel 3:25; Matthew 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 26:63; 27:54; Mark 1:1; 3:11; 15:39; Luke 4:3, 9, 41; 8:28; 22:70; John 1:34; 5:25; 9:35; 11:4; 20:31; Acts 8:37; 9:20; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29; 1 John 3:8; 4:15; 5:5, 10–13; 20; Revelation 2:18.
96. E.g., Matthew 5:48; Luke 18:22; John 13:36; 14:6; 21:19; 3 Nephi 12:48.
97. John 3:3, emphasis added.
98. Hebrews 11:13.
99. Moses 6:59. Note the distinction between the "words of eternal life" — meaning the sure promise of exaltation that can be received only in an anticipatory way "in this world" (see J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 59–63) through the ordinances that reveal the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, OT1, Moses 6:59, p. 102) — and "eternal life" itself, which will be given "in the world to come"

(see J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 68–71. Cf. H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, p. 279).

100. B. J. Petersen, *Nibley*, p. 354. Petersen added: “This approach earned him a great deal of trust from both General Authorities and from Church members.” Petersen cites a letter of gratitude sent from Elder Dallin H. Oaks to Nibley for his approach to temple scholarship. Along with the letter was a copy of a talk Elder Oaks had given “in which he addressed the manner and extent to which temple ordinances should be discussed outside the temple. Oaks assured Hugh that ‘nothing in this talk is intended to be a criticism of a discouragement of efforts as sensitive as yours. The talk has some targets, but you aren’t one of them’” (*ibid.*, p. 356).

George Mitton recalls Nibley being concerned about the appropriateness of his Egyptian endowment manuscript (H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005)). President Harold B. Lee graciously agreed to read it, and when he had finished he invited Nibley to his office. Nibley was told that there was nothing of concern in what he had written, since he was only describing ancient Egyptian ritual (G. L. Mitton, 22 August 2014).

For Nibley’s views on confidentiality as it relates to temple ordinances, see, e.g., H. W. Nibley, *Sacred*, pp. 553–554, 569–572.

101. In the verses from Moses 6:51–68 given below, emphasis is shown for words and phrases that differ significantly from the published version in the OT1 and OT2 manuscripts. For transcriptions of the original manuscripts of the Joseph Smith Translation, see S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*.
102. H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, p. 277.
103. S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, OT1 (p. 14 [Moses 6:52–64]), p. 101. See J. M. Bradshaw et al., *God’s Image 2*, COMMENTARY Moses 6:51–a, p. 75. See also Moses 6:62.
104. E.g., O. Pratt, 11 September 1859, pp. 251–253.
105. Moses 6:62.
106. Moses 6:61. Note that the concept of heavenly and earthly records is replete within scriptural writings ascribed to John (i.e., John 1:19, 32, 34; 8:13–14; 12:17; 19:35; 1 John 5:6–11; 3 John 1:12; Revelation 1:2; D&C 93:6, 11, 15, 16, 18, 26). See also Job 16:19; D&C 20:27; 42:17; 76:23, 40). Of prime interest is the passage in

1 John 5:5–8 that describes the witness of heaven and earth in conjunction with the three elements of water, spirit, and blood mentioned in Moses 6:59–60:

Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

Notably, on more than one occasion Joseph Smith argued for the separate embodiment of the three members of the Godhead by citing the phrase "these three agree in one" used in 1 John 5:8 (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, McIntire Minute Book, 16 February 1841, p. 63; Thomas Bullock Report, 16 June 1844 (morning), p. 380; George Laub Journal, 16 June 1844 (morning), p. 382; McIntire Minute Book, 16 June 1844 (morning), p. 383).

Although scholarly consensus sees verse 7–8, the so-called "Johannine Comma" that connects the witness of the Godhead in heaven to the symbols of spiritual rebirth on earth, as a late addition to 1 John 5, the Codex Vaticanus "demonstrates that a significant textual variant was known for 1 John 5:7 in the 4th century" (Johannine Comma). An ellipsis mark on the manuscript indicates "lines where a textual variant was known to the scribe" (*ibid.*). In any event, the witness of Moses 6:59–60 attests to the antiquity of the symbolism of water, spirit, and blood in relation to the witness of heaven and earth that underlies both these passages. Verse 63 further expands on these witnesses, declaring not only that these three elements but also "*all things*" in heaven and earth bear record of the Lord.

107. Acts 8:15, 19; 2 Nephi 31:13; 32:5; 3 Nephi 28:18; 4 Nephi 1:1; D&C 25:8; 84:74; Moses 8:24.

108. D&C 128:9.

109. D&C 128:9.
110. K. P. Jackson, *Book of Moses*, s.v. OT2 Page 18 (Moses 6:53–63). Cf. Matthew 16:19: “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
111. Moses 6:64–65.
112. Moses 6:61.
113. Moses 6:66.
114. Moses 5:59.
115. Moses 6:68.
116. T. M. Burton, *Work of Elijah*, p. 532.
117. H. L. Andrus, *Joseph Smith*, p. 122.
118. D&C 131:5.
119. D&C 131:5. See also 2 Peter 1:19. For a detailed analysis and commentary on Joseph Smith’s 21 May 1843 discourse on 2 Peter 1 where he discusses the “more sure word of prophecy,” see J. M. Bradshaw, *Now That We Have the Words*.
120. Moses 6:68, emphasis added.
121. H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, pp. 279–280. See also D. T. Christofferson, *Born Again*, pp. 78–79.
122. Moses 6:60.
123. Moses 5:6.
124. Moses 6:60.
125. Moses 6:60.
126. The initial opening of the eyes of Adam and Eve in Moses 4:13 anticipated the revelatory opening of their eyes as described in Moses 5:10, just as their initial self-clothing in fig leaves (Moses 4:13) anticipated the clothing that God would later give them (Moses 4:27). See J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, COMMENTARY 4:13a, b, pp. 258–259, 4:27a,b, pp. 274–276, 5:10–11, pp. 363–364.
127. See Moses 4:27; 5:4–11.
128. See N. B. Reynolds, *True Points*, pp. 42–44 and N. B. Reynolds, *Understanding Christian Baptism* for a comprehensive discussion

of the Book of Mormon teaching that baptism is an outward "witness to God of one's repentance and commitment to follow Jesus Christ" rather than the cleansing from sin by fire that comes through the operations of the Holy Ghost, as described in a later section of this article. As with baptism, the "prescribed sacrament prayers (Moroni 4:3; 5:2) precisely recapitulate the converts' witnessing to the Father, renewing their prior witness of the covenant they had made to take upon themselves the name of Christ, to keep his commandments, and to remember him always" (*ibid.*, p. 11).

Elder Robert D. Hales once asked (R. D. Hales, *Covenant of Baptism*, p. 8): "How many of our children — how many of us — really understand that when we were baptized we took upon us not only the name of Christ but also the law of obedience?" Elsewhere he explained similarly, citing King Benjamin (R. D. Hales, *If Ye Love Me*, p. 35): "When we are baptized, we 'take upon [us] the name of Christ' and enter 'into the covenant with God that [we will] be obedient unto the end of [our] lives' (Mosiah 5:8)."

Explaining further, L. B. Spindlove (*Comment*) carefully draws a distinction between the act of baptism and the covenant itself by drawing from examples in the Book of Mormon:

I do not disagree with Elder Hales's comments that "when we are baptized, we 'take upon [us] the name of Christ' and enter 'into the covenant with God that [we will] be obedient unto the end of [our] lives.'" However, the Book of Mormon is not so clear on this doctrine. In fact, it may teach this doctrine differently.

Alma Sr. taught: "what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him" (Mosiah 18:10). It sounds like the covenant that he spoke of was made prior to their baptism, and that the baptism was merely a "witness" of the covenant. When baptizing Helam Alma said: "I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead as to the mortal body" (Mosiah 18:13).

We also read that Limhi and his people "had entered into a covenant with God to serve him and keep his

commandments” without the benefit of baptism (Mosiah 21:31). Additionally, we read: “since the coming of Ammon, king Limhi had also entered into a covenant with God, and also many of his people, to serve him and keep his commandments. And it came to pass that king Limhi and many of his people were desirous to be baptized; but there was none in the land that had authority from God. And Ammon declined doing this thing, considering himself an unworthy servant” (Mosiah 21:32–33). Their baptism only came after they had joined the Nephites in Zarahemla (Mosiah 25:17), and well after they had entered into the covenant.

Further, during King Benjamin’s speech it appears that the people likewise entered into a covenant with God and “had taken upon them the name of Christ,” to “be obedient unto the end of your lives” (Mosiah 5:8 and 6:2). There is no mention of baptism at the time of this covenant.

So, it appears that the covenant is separate from the act of baptism. This does not minimize the ordinance of baptism. It is a necessary witness or testimony of the covenant. Instead, I believe that it elevates the covenant. Many of those hearing King Benjamin’s speech had no doubt already been baptized. The covenant can and should be made throughout our lives, without the necessity of baptism or rebaptism. This is essential in the missionary efforts of the church. New converts can and should covenant with God even before their baptism, like Limhi and his people. Their lives need to be on the path of change well before they are baptized.

129. 2 Nephi 31:7. Cf. vv. 10, 14, 18.

130. Alma 7:15. Cf. vv. 16, 23.

131. Moroni 8:11. Cf. v. 25.

132. D&C 20:77. Cf. 3 Nephi 18:10.

133. D&C 20:79.

134. D&C 20:77.

135. Building upon the insights of Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Elder David A. Bednar explains this point as follows (D. A. Bednar, Name, pp. 97–98):

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has explained that in renewing our baptismal covenants by partaking of the emblems of the sacrament, “we do not witness that we take upon us the name of Jesus Christ. [Rather], we witness that we are willing to do so (see D&C 20:77). The fact that we only witness to our willingness suggests that something else must happen before we actually take that sacred name upon us in the [ultimate and] most important sense” (D. H. Oaks, Taking Upon Us, p. 81). The baptismal covenant clearly contemplates a future event or events and looks forward to the temple.

136. L. B. Spendlove, 22 October 2016.

137. N. Webster, *Dictionary*, s. v. partake.

138. L. B. Spendlove, 22 October 2016.

139. J. E. Seaich, Freemasonry. See, e.g.:

- 2 Corinthians 1:7: As ye are partakers (*koinonoi*) of the sufferings [of Christ], so shall you also be of the consolation.
- Philippians 3:10–11: That I might know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings (*koinonian tes pathematon autou*), being conformed to his death, that if [possible] I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.
- 2 Peter 1:4: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might become partakers (*koinonoi*) of the divine nature.

140. See 2 Nephi 31:5.

141. D&C 20:37.

142. “[You] might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, *and* is good for nothing with[out] the other [half — that is, the baptism of] the Holy Ghost” (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 9 July 1843, Joseph Smith Diary by Willard Richards, p. 230, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation modernized).

“The baptism of water, without the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost attending it, is of no use. They are necessarily and inseparably connected” (J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 7 April 1844, 6:213).

143. Cf. D. A. Bednar, *Always Retain*, p. 61.
144. B. Young, 23 October 1853, pp. 3–4.
145. Perego documents how in the early days of the restored Church, the Saints sometimes partook the bread and wine of the sacrament “in a quantity similar to a normal meal.” See U. A. Perego, *Changing Forms*, pp. 7–8 for more on this subject.
146. Our own clarification is added here in brackets to round out what we surmise to be the intended but incompletely expressed meaning of Brigham Young’s words.
147. 2 Nephi 31:9, 17–18; 33:9.
148. 2 Nephi 31:18.
149. 2 Nephi 33:9. See also, e.g., D. A. Bednar, *Ye Must Be Born Again*, p. 21; J. D. Cornish, *Gate*, pp. 46–47.
150. D. A. Bednar, *Ye Must Be Born Again*, p. 21.
151. J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Wilford Woodruff Journal, 20 March 1842, pp. 107–108, spelling and punctuation modernized. Cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, pp. 198–199.
152. Scott Kenney’s transcription has “sign *or* command” (W. Woodruff, *Woodruff*, 20 March 1842, 2:161–162, emphasis added).
153. Cf. D&C 132:19: “they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation.”
154. Brigham Young taught: “Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the house of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to able to give them the key words, the signs and tokens, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood” (B. Young, *Discourses*, p. 416; B. Young, 6 April 1853 - B, p. 31).
155. Cf. Moses 1:21: “Moses received strength, and called upon God, saying: In the name of the Only Begotten, depart hence, Satan.”
156. See Acts 19:13–15.

157. For a sampling of readily available online sources discussions on the topic, see, e.g., History of Baptism; R. Moseley, *The Jewish Background of Christian Baptism*; J. K. Howard, *New Testament Baptism*, pp. 12–34; A. J. Hultgren, *Baptism*; K. Kohler et al., *Baptism*. For a good overview of baptismal symbolism, theories, and practices from an LDS point of view, see N. B. Reynolds, *Understanding Christian Baptism*, especially pp. 15–31.
158. Joseph Smith — History, footnote by Oliver Cowdery.
159. See, e.g., Ephrem the Syrian, *Epiphany*, 12:1, 4, p. 282; S. C. Malan, *Adam and Eve*, 1:1, pp. 1–2; 1:32–33, pp. 34–36; M. i. A. A. al-Kisa'i, *Tales*, p. 61; E. S. Drower, *Prayerbook*, p. 30. Cf. J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, ENDNOTES 5–23, 5–24, pp. 435–436, ENDNOTE B-16, p. 907.
160. E.g., S. D. Ricks, *Coronation*; S. D. Ricks, *Kingship*; S. D. Ricks et al., *King*.
161. E.g., D. J. Larsen, *Ascending*, pp. 181–182. See also J. M. Bradshaw et al., *Investiture Panel*.
162. D. J. Larsen, *Ascending*, pp. 181–182.
163. 1 Kings 1:33, 38.
164. 1 Kings 1:34, 39; Psalm 89:20; Psalm 23:5.
165. See 1 Chronicles 15:27.
166. Isaiah 22:21; “girdle” in KJV.
167. See Ezekiel 21:26.
168. Psalm 110:4.
169. See lines 205–234. See also the related discussion in T. L. Givens, *When Souls*, pp. 9–12, citing J. Bottéro, *Mesopotamia*.
170. J. M. Bradshaw et al., *Investiture Panel*.
171. See especially *ibid.*, pp. 29–30.
172. J. H. Walton, *Ancient*, p. 129.
173. D. Calabro, *Joseph Smith and the Architecture*, p. 166.
174. E.g., Hebrews 6:2. See also John A. Tvedtnes, who wrote: “In early Christianity, following the apostasy, temple initiation eventually merged with the baptismal initiation, which included both washing and anointing with oil, along with donning of white clothing and

sometimes the reception of a new name” (J. A. Tvedtnes, *Early Christian*). See also R. T. Wilkins, *Influence of Israelite Temple Rites*, pp. 91–96.

175. H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005), p. 174. Cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Five*, 21:1–6, 7:149–150.
176. See G. A. Anderson et al., *Synopsis*, pp. 33E–45E.
177. G. A. Anderson, *Perfection*, p. 130.
178. S. Zinner, *Gospel of Thomas*.
179. See Colossians 2:11–12.
180. Matthew 3:11.
181. Cf. Matthew 3:11: “I baptize you with water for repentance ... ; he will baptize you with the holy spirit and with fire” (RSV).
182. See Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4 (cf. especially Romans 2:29; Philippians 3:3). Cf. also Leviticus 26:41; Jeremiah 9:26; Ezekiel 44:7, 9; Acts 7:21; 2 Nephi 9:33; Helaman 9:21.
183. Ezekiel 36:25–26. See also Jeremiah 9:26; Ezekiel 11:19–20; 18:31; Romans 2:29.
184. Emphasis added. Commenting on the status of this comment as an interpretive gloss rather than a part of the original Book of Mormon text, Royal Skousen writes (R. Skousen, *Analysis*, 1:427):

This change can mislead the reader into thinking that this parenthetical comment was actually part of the original text, even perhaps concluding not only that this extra phrase is the original biblical text, but also that some scribe deliberately edited it out of the Hebrew text. ... Joseph Smith’s probable intention was to provide an interpretative reading.

For more on the textual history of this change, see *ibid.*, 1:427–428.

185. See Genesis 17:23.
186. Emphasis added. Cf. Mosiah 18:8–10; Alma 7:15.
187. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 22 January 1834, pp. 58–59.
188. M. Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, p. 92.
189. Genesis 4:4; Moses 5:20.
190. Hebrews 12:24; M.-B. Halford, *Eva und Adam*, pp. 270–271.

191. Matthew 23:35. See discussion of the identity of Zechariah in M. Barker, *Christmas*, pp. 149–150.
192. Genesis 4.
193. 2 Chronicles 24:20–22. Chronicles is the last book in the Hebrew canon.
194. V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, p. 244.
195. See OT1 text in S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, pp. 131–132. These verses were probably received between February 1 and March 7, 1831 (see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, FIGURE 0–2, p. 3). Note that D&C 74, now known to have been received "sometime in the last part of 1830, and not January 1832 as found in all editions of the Doctrine and Covenants," "probably stemmed from discussions about infant baptism" (R. J. Woodford, *Discoveries*, p. 31).
196. The possessive "mine" in "mine anointing" is particularly interesting. Anointings are attested in the temple rites of ancient Egypt (*wrḥ* = anoint, smear on) in Mesopotamia (Akkadian *pašašū* = to anoint, smear; this word is cognate with the Hebrew/Aramaic verb *mšḥ* ["anoint"], whence *māšīaḥ* [messiah = "anointed one"]) and Hittite (*iski[ya]* = "smear, daub, salve, oil, anoint). The "mine" seems to distinguish between the kind of anointing rite sanctioned by God himself versus the anointing practiced in various ancient Near-East cults (implicitly sanctioned by the deities of those cults). God's "anointing" would presumably have to do with the reception of the Holy Ghost. Besides references to "oil of anointing," the noun "anointing" specifically describes a ritual in Exodus 29:29 and 40:15.
197. The crossing out of the words is perhaps intended to disqualify the practice as being "baptism" in a legitimate sense. The words may also foreclose the possibility that a practice incorporating full immersion ("burial") was being described.
198. Cf. Exodus 29:16–21; Leviticus 1:5–11; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:6, 17; 5:9; 7:2; 14:7, 51; 16:14, 15, 19; 17:6; Numbers 18:17; 19:4; 2 Kings 16:15; Isaiah 52:15; Ezekiel 43:18; Hebrews 9:13; 11:28; 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2; 3 Nephi 20:45.
199. Genesis 17:12.

200. JST Genesis 17:11. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, ENDNOTE E-134, p. 734.
201. L. E. Dahl, Joseph Smith Translation, p. 126.
202. For more about this photograph and the Mandaean practice of *kushta*, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, pp. 308 n. 4–32, 317–318 n. 4–66, 436 n. 5–23, 686, 777 n. E-278, 871–873.
203. E. S. Drower, *Mandaeans*, pp. 100–123.
204. W. Barnstone et al., *Gnostic*, p. 533; E. S. Drower, *Prayerbook*, p. 30.
205. A portion of Hibil-Ziwa's own baptism and anointing (which is the model for all subsequent baptisms) is described as follows (E. S. Drower, *Haran*, pp. 53–54):

Then he descended into the jordan and submerged himself thrice [cf. Moses 6:64, where Adam was “caught away by the Spirit of the Lord ... and laid under the water” and Mosiah 18:14, where Alma submerged himself] in the name of Yawar-Rba, and Hibil-Ziwa placed his right hand into the left hand of Ayar-Rba [who] took it and transferred him to his right and set him before him, placing him between himself and his ritual staff. Ayar-Rba signed him thrice with his forefinger [the finger] beside the thumb, upon the forehead from the right ear to the left ear, and so cut off the name [reputation?] of any person who is signed with ‘the sign of the left,’ [the sign] wherewith Yusamin the Peacock signed. ...

When ye gave him [three] palmfuls of water to drink, ye lifted him out of all his pollutions [i.e., blows, see *ibid.*, p. 54, footnote 1] and re-established the mystery of spirit and soul. And when ye recited Let Light shine forth over the wreath and he set it upon his head, the wreath shone; from celestial worlds it came to him and thou didst set it on his head.

And when thou (the Baptist) pronounced the Names upon him [names of the gods are then mentioned] — then Ayar-Rba and the sixty kings of the celestial worlds are established.

And when thou liftest him up and takest his right hand in the *kusta*, thou has mingled the jordan with thy

raiment and his raiment and hast set his mind at peace. And make him this response while his hand is in thy hand, say to him "*Kusta* strengthen thee and raise thee up! Seek and find, speak and be heard" [cf. Matthew 7:7]. And say to him "Thy *kusta* shall be thy witness and thy baptism shall be established and not be in vain [Note that the *kusta* handclasp is a later "witness" to the previously performed ordinance]. The *kusta* ["pad" (sic), i.e., "pact"] that thou hast made with the sixty priests and kings and Ayar-Rba, will deliver thee from all involuntary offences and from pollutions of the darkness which occur in the abode of mortality."

And he shall kiss their hands. ...

And when ye take the oil and say: "Healing, purity and forgiving of sins be there for this the soul of Hibil-Ziwa son of Manda-d-Hiia who descended to the Jordan and was baptized and received the pure sign [It is not clear whether the "sign" is something that was received at baptism itself, or whether it consist of the *kusta* that was given later], then each takes oil in his bowl.

And read We acknowledge and praises [are due] and Thou art the costly oil and Thou wast established, First Life and take oil with the finger next the thumb of your right hand and sign from the right ear to the left ear; [for the] sign of the Right, the Father, is brighter than the sign of the Messiah [a play on words, so that it could read "that was anointed"], of the Mother, for he ruleth in the Land of Darkness and the Left. [Note that the candidate is both washed and anointed in the same way — on the forehead from right to left, using a finger.]

206. E. S. Drower, *Water*, p. 106.

207. M. Lidzbarski, *Ginza*, LG 1:1, p. 429. In this respect, the two-armed embrace of Mandaean ritual can be seen as an intensification and a fulfillment of the handclasp gesture. It is an *intensification* of the handclasp because it signifies not only an unbreakable bond between two individuals but also powerful symbol that signifies absolute unity and oneness between them. It is a *fulfillment* of the handclasp in the same sense that a fully rendered circle and square represent the successful completion of the work that the

tools of the compass and the square were designed to perform. Here is what the *Ginza* says about the culminating moment when the Mandaean exits the mortal world and enters the world of glory through a ritual embrace. It should no surprise that the candidate for admission is known as Seth, since Seth was in the likeness and image of Adam (Moses 6:10), just as Adam and Eve had been made in the image and likeness of God (Moses 6:9, 22):

Sitil [= Seth], the son of Adam ... was brought to the guard house of Silmais, the treasurer [i.e., the keeper of the gate], who holds the nails of glory in his hand and carries the key of the *kushta* of both arms. They opened the gate of the treasure house for him, lifted the great veil of safety upward before him, led him in, and showed him that Vine [i.e., the Tree of Life, envisaged as a grapevine], its inner glory ... They eat [of it] and the joy of life comes and lies upon them. They make wreaths of joy [from the Vine] and lay them on their heads. ... Sitil, son of Adam, spoke: "On this [same] way, the path and ascent which I have climbed, truthful, believing, faithful and perfect men shall also ascend and come, when they leave their bodies [i.e., at death]."

Lidzbarski's German version reads as follows:

Sitil, den Sohn Adams ... stellten ihn an das Wachthaus Silmais, des Schatzmeisters, der die Pflöcke des Glanzes in der Hand hält und die Schlüssel der Kusta auf beiden Armen trägt. Sie öffneten ihm das Tor des Schatzhauses, hoben vor ihm den großen Vorhang der Sicherheit in die Höhe, führten ihn ein und zeigten ihm jenen Weinstock, dessen Inneres Glanz, ... Sie essen, und die Wonnigkeit des Lebens kommt und legt sich über sie. Sie winden Kränze der Wonnigkeit und legen sie sich aufs Haupt. ... Sitil, der Sohn Adams, sprach: "Auf diesem Wege, Pfad und Aufstieg, auf dem ich emporgestiegen bin, sollen auch die wahrhaften, gläubigen, trefflichen und vollkommenen Männer emporsteigen und kommen, wenn sie aus ihrem Körper scheiden."

208. For examples with an extensive discussion, see M. L. Bowen, *And There Wrestled*, pp. 152–157.

209. Genesis 32:24–32. Cf. Enos' wrestle with God in Enos 1:2 (see *ibid.*, pp. 152–153).
210. Genesis 33:22–24.
211. Luke 15:20.
212. See M. L. Bowen, *And There Wrestled*, p. 156; J. M. Bradshaw et al., *God's Image 2*, COMMENTARY Moses 6:62–63, pp. 158–161.
213. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, ENDNOTE E-136, p. 735.
214. C. R. Koester, *Hebrews*, p. 546 n. 12:24a. Cf. H. W. Attridge et al., *Hebrews*, p. 377.
215. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 5 October 1840, p. 169. Cf. E. Lupieri, *Mandaeans*, p. 46. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, EXCURSUS 53: Comparative Explorations of the Mysteries, p. 663. See *ibid.*, ENDNOTE E-137, p. 735.
216. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, ENDNOTE E-135, p. 734.
217. S. Ruzer, *Abel's Blood*.
218. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, ENDNOTE E-138, p. 735.
219. P. A. Tiller, *Animal*, p. 226. Cf. G. W. E. Nickelsburg et al., *1 Enoch*, p. 371 n. 8. Cf. 85:3–6, 89:9, pp. 364, 365.
220. J. J. Neusner, *Without Myth*, p. 99.
221. Cf. JST Genesis 17:6.
222. Deuteronomy 21:1.
223. Qur'an 2:67–71.
224. M. M. Ayoub, *Qur'an* (Vol. 1), p. 117. See also B. M. Wheeler, *Prophets*, pp. 216–217. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, ENDNOTE E-139, p. 735.
225. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, COMMENTARY 5:35-b, p. 383.
226. Hebrews 11:4. Cf. G. W. E. Nickelsburg et al., *1 Enoch*, 22:5–7, p. 300; 9:2, 10, p. 202; pp. 305–306 n. 5–7.
227. JST Genesis 17:7.
228. S. Zinner, *Gospel of Thomas*.
229. H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005), p. xxix.
230. See Romans 6:4–6.
231. D&C 1:15–16.

232. C. Broderick, *Adversity*, p. 129.
233. J. F. Smith, *Dedication*, Remarks at the Memorial Party in Boston, Dec. 24–25, 1905, p. 61.
234. John 3:3.
235. J. A. Widtsoe, *Temple Worship*, pp. 192–193.
236. D. A. Bednar, *Always Retain*, p. 60.
237. B. C. Hafen, *Anchored*, pp. 3–5. This transformation must go deeper than mere outward behavior. As C. S. Lewis wrote:

We might [mistakenly] think that God wanted simply obedience to a set of rules: whereas He really wants people of a particular sort (C. S. Lewis, *Mere*, p. 77).

Nothing gives one a more spuriously good conscience than keeping rules, even if there has been a total absence of all real charity and faith (C. S. Kilby, *Mind*, C. S. Lewis, Unpublished letter, 20 February 1955, p. 141).

238. J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Before 8 August 1839 (1), p. 12. Cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 2 July 1839, p. 162. Cf. D&C 84:19–22.
239. Covenants are often compared to promises or contracts. However, this comparison can be misleading, as Scott Hahn insightfully explains (S. W. Hahn, *World as Wedding*, pp. 6–8):

It is important for us to get this right. But, in order to do so, we have to move beyond certain modern assumptions and retrieve the sense of covenant as it was lived in biblical cultures — and not only in the Hebrew and Christian religious cultures, but also in the Gentile and pagan societies of the ancient world. For covenant was the foundation of these societies. It gave individual persons their sense of kinship, their sense of relationship, their sense of belonging — to a family, a tribe, and a nation. The covenant oath was the foundation of family, national, and religious life.

In today's legal usage, the words contract and covenant are almost interchangeable. But that was not true in the ancient world. Every covenant was based upon a contractual agreement, but a covenant differed from a contract in many ways. I'd like to mention just a few.

- In contracts, the terms are negotiable; in covenants, they are not. God sets the terms of the covenant. The people may freely choose to accept or reject those terms, but rejecting the terms means the loss of any share in the covenant blessings.
- Contracts are based upon the parties making promises; while covenants are only entered through the solemn swearing of an oath (*sacramentum* in Latin).
- Contracts are normally based on profit; covenants are based on love. The former speaks to self-interest, while the latter calls us to self-sacrifice.
- Contracts exchange goods and services; covenants exchange persons.
- Contracts are legal devices; they are conditional, and they can be broken. A covenant is more of a social organism; it is unconditional and ongoing. Even when it is violated, it is not thereby dissolved.
- Contracts are limited in scope; covenants affect many (if not all) areas of life.
- Contracts are limited in duration; covenants last for life, even extending to future generations.

We could list many other differences between contracts and covenants, but these will suffice. For we can see in these differences that every covenant includes a contractual element, but also that the covenant far surpasses the mere contract and establishes a much different kind of relationship.

The differences show us that God's covenantal relationship with humankind is non-negotiable, but freely accepted; that it is based on love; that it involves a sharing of our very lives — and His very life; that it is unlimited in scope. And that it is forever. In all of this, the divine covenant is very much like a marriage.

For an in-depth study of covenants in the Bible, see S. W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*.

240. D. A. Bednar, *Always Retain*, p. 62.

241. See B. R. McConkie, *New Witness*, pp. 294–295.

242. Ibid., p. 294.

243. Elder Bednar has said (D. A. Bednar, *Ye Must Be Born Again*, p. 20): “Proper preparing and cleaning are the first basic steps in the process of being born again.” Joseph Smith taught (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 27 June 1839, Willard Richards Pocket Companion, p. 3, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization modernized):

Baptism is a holy ordinance preparatory to the reception of the Holy Ghost; it is the channel and key by which the Holy Ghost will be administered. The Gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, cannot be received through the medium of any other principle than the principle of righteousness.

244. D&C 84:20.

245. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Now That We Have the Words*; J. M. Bradshaw, Faith, Hope, and Charity. Consistent with an understanding of hope and charity as more than personal virtues or gifts, note that, in contrast to 1 Corinthians 12:1–11 and Moroni 10:7–18, neither hope nor charity are included among the gifts of the Spirit in D&C 46:8–31 and Articles of Faith 1:7 (L. H. Wilson, *A New Pneumatology*, p. 137, Table 2).

246. D. A. Bednar, *Always Retain*, p. 62.

247. E.g., Abraham 1:2: “And finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers.”

248. Elder Neal A. Maxwell used this term on several occasions, once describing it as a condition that consists of having “great expectations, and then [having to] endure the difference between what we could be and what we are” (N. A. Maxwell, *If Thou Endure It Well*), having realized that our “progression [is] mixed with procrastination” (N. A. Maxwell, *Consecrate*, p. 36). He contrasted “divine discontent” with mere “impatience” (N. A. Maxwell, *Patience*), and especially with “the devil’s dissonance,” distinguishing carefully “between dissatisfaction with self and disdain for self. We need the first and must shun the second, remembering that when conscience calls to us from the next ridge, it is not solely to scold but also to beckon” (N. A. Maxwell, *Notwithstanding* (1976)).

249. 2 Nephi 4:31.

250. D&C 58:27.
251. D&C 4:2. For an in-depth discussion of the requirements outlined in this verse, see J. M. Bradshaw, *He That Thrusteth in His Sickle*, pp. 166–169.
252. Mosiah 15:7.
253. Ephesians 4:13.
254. See, e.g., Exodus 40:12–13; Leviticus 16:3–4, 23–24. For descriptions of similar ordinances in modern LDS temples, see, e.g., D&C 124:39; J. E. Talmage, *House of the Lord* (1912), p. 185.
255. See Articles of Faith 1:4.
256. Bible Dictionary, s.v. Baptism, cited in D. A. Bednar, *Always Retain*, p. 60.
257. Exodus 40:12–13. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, pp. 661–662.
258. A poem by W. W. Phelps asserts that "[b]efore this world was known," he was "wash'd and set apart For the glory yet to be." He also wrote that they were also given a "white stone" with a "new name," and that they were to receive these things again when they returned to their heavenly home (*Deseret News*, 6, 416, cited in *ibid.*, pp. 299–300 ENDNOTE 4-9). See also J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 12 May 1844, p. 371; J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 12 May 1844, p. 365; Alma 13:1–8; cf. D&C 138:53–56; Moses 1:6; Abraham 3:23.
259. Joseph Smith stated that "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" (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Thomas Bullock Report, 12 May 1844, p. 367, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation modernized). In Samuel W. Richards' account of the sermon, the Prophet was remembered as specifically mentioning the heads of dispensation and the Apostles (*ibid.*, Samuel W. Richards Record, 12 May 1844, p. 371):

At the general & grand Council of heaven, all those to whom a dispensation was to be committed, were set apart & ordained at that time, to that calling.

The Twelve also as witnesses were ordained.

George Laub records (*ibid.*, George Laub Journal, 12 May 1844, p. 370):

Brother Joseph Smith was chosen for the last dispensation or Seventh Dispensation. The time the grand council Set in heaven to organize this world Joseph was chosen for the last & greatest Prophet to lay the foundation of gods work of the Seventh Dispensation therefore the Jews asked John the Baptist if he was Elias or Jesus or that great prophet that was to come.

One month later, Joseph Smith made reference to the “sons of God who exalt[ed] themselves to be gods even from bef[ore] the foundat[ion] of the world” (ibid., Thomas Bullock Report, 16 June 1844, p. 381; cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 16 June 1844, p. 375).

260. Alma 13:2–3. Cf., e.g., D&C 138:53–56; Abraham 3:22–23; B. R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 290–291; B. L. Top, Foreordination, p. 522; G. O. Brown, Premortal Life, 1123–1124; J. E. Jensen, Spirit, p. 1404.

While not questioning the well-established doctrine of foreordination to the priesthood, Keith Thompson argues for a different interpretation of Alma 13:1–16 that takes the terms “called” and “calling” (see Alma 13:3–6, 8, 11) to refer exclusively to a foreknown “ordination in mortality” (A. K. Thompson, *Were We Foreordained*, p. 259) rather than accepting the conventional interpretation that these terms refer to premortal events that included certain spirits being “called and prepared” (Alma 13:1). Similarly, he restricts the meaning of the term “manner,” describing how such individuals were ordained, to refer to their earthly ordination (ibid., pp. 259–260) rather than allowing the possibility that the “manner” described in scripture includes an actual premortal foreordination (see Alma 13:3, 8) — in addition to the divine foreknowledge that Thompson willingly admits.

Commendably, Thompson seeks by this means to harmonize these verses with the 1978 priesthood revelation found in Official Declaration 2. However, there are other ways to resolve this seeming inconsistency. For example, to say that all men that receive the priesthood in this life were foreordained to the priesthood in the premortal existence is not necessarily to say that all who were foreordained actually receive the priesthood in this life. For reasons known only to God, some blessings promised to all who receive and remain faithful to temple covenants in this life (e.g., temple marriage, posterity) are reserved for certain individuals

only in the next life. Happily, all who have been born on earth without the chance to receive any blessing of the Gospel in this life "who would have received [the Gospel] had they been permitted to tarry" will "be heirs of the celestial kingdom" in the afterlife (D&C 137:7).

Of course, none of these views preclude the argument advanced in Thompson's essay that the ordination of men to the priesthood was conditioned on their "exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God" (Alma 13:10) in *this* life, plausibly the core argument of Alma's "message of repentance" (ibid., p. 254). However, in addition, according to the standard view, foreordination to the priesthood was also conditioned on "exceeding faith and good works" (Alma 13:1) in the *premortal* life (cf. Abraham 3:23).

261. S. W. Kimball, *Righteous Women*, p. 102. See the request Emma Smith wrote for a blessing from the Prophet, where she asked that she might live to "perform all the work that [she] covenanted to perform in the spirit-world" (G. N. Jones, *Emma*, p. 295).
262. Moses 6:60.
263. Moses 6:60.
264. Moses 6:60.
265. W. W. Isenberg, *Philip*, 70:36–71:3, p. 152.
266. See 1 Nephi 10:19; Alma 7:20; 37:12; D&C 3:2; 35:1.
267. Moses 5:7. See Moses 5:6–8.
268. M. J. bin Gorion (Berdichevsky), *Die Sagen* (1913–1927), 2:307–8.
269. See Psalm 8:4.
270. G. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, p. 201. Cf. B. Beer, *Abraham's*, p. 68.
271. See Genesis 22.
272. Abraham 1:12–18 and Facsimile 1.
273. JST Genesis 17:11.
274. See Genesis 17:11; Romans 2:28; Ephesians 2:11.
275. For additional discussion of "arrested sacrifice" see below. With respect to circumcision, Hugh Nibley commented (H. W. Nibley, *Return*): "Circumcision is another form of arrested sacrifice in

which the victim's own blood was shed and a permanent mark was left. It represents the sacrifice of Abraham who initiated it (Genesis 17:10–14; and cf. Exodus 21:6–7)."

276. D&C 20:37.

277. D&C 76:64; 132:19. Cf. D&C 76:50–70; 132:19–20, 26. See also H. W. Nibley, *Sacrifice of Isaac*, s.v. *The Resurrection Motif*; J. M. Bradshaw, *Ezekiel Mural*, pp. 11–12; J. M. Bradshaw, *What Did Joseph Smith Know*, pp. 24–33.

278. B. K. Packer, *Come*, p. 20. Loren Spendlove observes (L. B. Spendlove, 22 October 2016): "The connection between blood and clothing may not seem so readily apparent until we realize that the robes of righteousness that we put on, even with our best efforts, are insufficient as a means of salvation until they are washed white in the blood of the Lamb."

279. T. G. Madsen, *House*, pp. 280–281.

280. J. A. Widtsoe, *Work*, p. 33.

281. H. L. Andrus, *Doctrinal*, pp. 250–251:

Eternal life consists of attaining the endowments of immortal glory in the world to come, coming forth in the resurrection endowed with the divine attributes and powers of truth and light that constitute celestial glory and thereby possessing the same kind of life that God possesses — to be glorified as He is glorified so that man sees as He sees, hears as He hears, and has power to manifest his will in and through all things even as God manifests His intelligence and power throughout universal space. (Eternal life is not to have eternal increase. The term denoting the power to have a continuation of posterity forever and ever is "eternal lives" [D&C 132:55], not "eternal life.") If man has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repents of all sin, is baptized by immersion for the remission of sins, receives the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and endures to the end in the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, the divine promise is that he will attain eternal life in the resurrection.

282. J. A. Widtsoe, *Temple Worship*, p. 196.

283. On the cruse of oil, see 1 Kings 17:16. Commenting on the story of Baucis and Philemon (N. Hawthorne, Pitcher), Arthur Henry King wrote (Afterword, p. 237):

When Jupiter and Mercury left the hospitable cottage of Baucis and Philemon, they gave the old couple the gift of an inexhaustible pitcher; however much was poured out of it, the pitcher remained full. The scriptures are like that pitcher; however much they have given us, they have more to give. We drink them for life; we shall drink them forever.

A word of caution is in order about interpreting symbolism in scripture and in the ordinances. Members of the Church often have a tendency to approach learning about symbols in a piecemeal fashion. For example, they focus their primary attention on understanding the meaning of specific symbols used in scripture and the ordinances. While there is much that can be learned from this kind of study, most of us not only struggle with the meaning of individual concepts and symbols, but also — and perhaps more crucially — in understanding how these concepts and symbols fit together as a whole system. The symbols and concepts of in the scriptures and the ordinances are best understood, not in isolation, but within the full context of the plan of salvation to which they belong (see J. M. Bradshaw et al., *God's Image* 2, ENDNOTE 0-23, p. 30).

G. K. Chesterton has compared our position as mortals struggling to apprehend the divine to that of a "sailor who awakens from a deep sleep and discovers treasure strewn about, relics from a civilization he can barely remember. One by one he picks up the relics — gold coins, a compass, fine clothing — and tries to discern their meaning" (P. Yancey, introduction to G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, p. xiii). Gradually, glimmers of recognition begin to emerge. However, the re-discovery of the significance of each item comes not so much through careful scrutiny of its outward features as it does through specific recollections of its former place as a natural part of the distant world where he once lived. The point of the illustration is that the answers to our most important questions about God cannot be found merely through piecemeal examination of the relics of religion. Specifically, we profit from careful scrutiny of individual religious symbols only in proportion

to our efforts to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 109:7, 14. See also D&C 88:118) about the overall order from which they derive their significance. To the degree we lack revealed knowledge about this sacred order of things, we may be easily distracted by glittering details while failing to ascertain the “weightier matters” (Matthew 23:23) of divine instruction. In short, the greatest benefits will come, not to those who begin their learning by trying to comprehend the minute particulars of the ordinances, but rather to those who are prepared with an understanding of the Gospel as a whole — especially the all-embracing doctrines of the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement as revealed throughout scripture.

284. D&C 84:20–21.

285. D. A. Bednar, *Always Retain*, p. 61.

286. Moses 6:60.

287. See B. C. Hafen, *Broken*, p. 166. Cf. D. A. Bednar, *Clean Hands*. See N. T. Wright, *Justification* for a non-LDS view of justification that avoids the extremes of “grace-alone” interpretations of Paul’s writings on the subject.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained justification in terms of D&C 132:7 and D&C 76:53 (B. R. McConkie, *Law of Justification*, pp. 419–420):

In the early 1830’s, when the Lord was talking to the Prophet about what is called the new and everlasting covenant — that is, about the fulness of the gospel — he revealed this further truth relative to this great law of justification, and I think these following words are a perfect one sentence summary of the whole law of the whole gospel. The Lord said (D&C 132:7):

All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to

hold this power ... are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead.

One more expression in the revelations has bearing on this. The Lord said (D&C 76:53):

the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

Now, to justify is to seal, or to ratify, or to approve; and it is very evident from these revelations that every act that we do, if it is to have binding and sealing virtue in eternity, must be justified by the Spirit. In other words, it must be ratified by the Holy Ghost; or in other words, it must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise.

All of us know that we can deceive men. We can deceive our bishops or the other Church agents, unless at the moment their minds are lighted by the spirit of revelation; but we cannot deceive the Lord. We cannot get from him an unearned blessing. There will be an eventual day when all men will get exactly and precisely what they have merited and earned, neither adding to nor subtracting from. You cannot with success lie to the Holy Ghost.

Now let us take a simple illustration. If an individual is to gain an inheritance in the celestial world, he has to enter in at the gate of baptism, that ordinance being performed under the hands of a legal administrator. If he comes forward prepared by worthiness, that is, if he is just and true, and gains baptism under the hands of a legal administrator, he is justified by the Spirit in the act which has been performed; that is, it is ratified by the Holy Ghost, or it is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise. As a result it is of full force and validity in this life and in the life to come.

If an individual thereafter turns from righteousness and goes off and wallows in the mire of iniquity, then the seal is removed, and so we have this principle which keeps the unworthy from gaining unearned blessings. The Lord has placed a bar which stops the progress of the unrighteous; he has placed a requirement which we must meet. We

must gain the approval and receive the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost if eventually and in eternity we are to reap the blessings that we hope to reap.

The same thing that is true of baptism is true of marriage. If a couple comes forward worthily, a couple who is just and true, and they enter into that ordinance under the hands of a legal administrator, a seal of approval is recorded in heaven. Then assuming they do not thereafter break that seal, assuming they keep the covenant and press forward in steadfastness and in righteousness, they go on in the next world as husband and wife; and in and after the resurrection, that ordinance performed in such a binding manner here has full force, efficacy, and validity.

I think perhaps this doctrine, as almost all other doctrines that we teach in the Church, leads us back to the same central conclusion, which is that it is obligatory upon us to keep the commandments of God if we ever expect to inherit the blessings that he has promised the Saints. We should remind ourselves again and again of these words which he has spoken (D&C 59:23):

he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.

288. D&C 138:33, emphasis added.

289. Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1–7; 2 Nephi 31:17; 3 Nephi 1:23; 7:25; 12:2; 30:2; Moroni 8:11, 25–26; D&C 13:1; 19:31; 20:37; 33:11; 49:13; 55:1–2; 68:27; 84:27, 64, 74; 107:20; 137:6; 138:33; Joseph Smith — History 1:68–69. For arguments by an LDS scholar that Acts 2:38 and Romans 6:1–4 take the view that remission of sins comes through baptism, see R. Boylan, Baptism. By way of contrast, N. B. Reynolds, *Understanding Christian Baptism*, p. 20 holds that Acts 2:38 “still can be understood as a sequential process in which the purification of sin is brought about by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.”

290. The concept of repentance is linked to the remission of sins without any reference to baptism in Luke 24:47; Enos 1:2; Alma 12:34; Helaman 14:13; 3 Nephi 7:16, 23–25; Moroni 3:3;

D&C 21:8–9; 53:3. Remission of sins through faith or belief or “looking forward” to Jesus Christ is mentioned in Acts 10:43; Romans 3:25; Mosiah 3:13; Mosiah 4:3, 12, 20, 26; 15:11; Alma 4:14; 7:6; 13:16; 30:16; 38:8; Moroni 3:3; D&C 53:3. Other references not specifically mentioning baptism include those to the remission of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:28; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 9:22; 10:18; D&C 27:2–3) and some less specific references (Luke 1:77–78; 2 Nephi 25:26; D&C 20:5). Significantly, the idea of the “baptism of *repentance* for the remission of sins” is mentioned in Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3. Cf. 3 Nephi 7:25; D&C 107:20.

291. In addition to clarifying that it is by the Spirit of Christ that individuals are justified through their faith in Jesus Christ, D&C 20:37 clearly dictates this initial justification is a requirement that ought to be fulfilled *prior* to baptism, rather than afterward (see also N. B. Reynolds, *Understanding Christian Baptism*, pp. 11–16). The revelation states that only those who have “received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins ... *shall* be received by baptism into his church.” This requirement became a point of contention for Oliver Cowdery, who apparently felt this passage was in error. The explanation below draws from an account of this and similar instances of contention between Oliver Cowdery and the Prophet that are discussed in J. M. Bradshaw et al., *God’s Image 2, EXCURSUS 1: Revelatory Experiences of Oliver Cowdery*, pp. 441–448.

In June 1829, two months after his failed effort to translate portions of the Book of Mormon, Oliver apparently was given another chance to participate in the revelatory process when he was assigned to prepare a summary of principles and practices for the use of missionaries and for the guidance of the Church. Having asked for help in how to proceed, the Lord gave instructions through the Prophet Joseph Smith that he should rely on what was already written in the Book of Mormon as his guide (D&C 18:1–5).

A subsequent document entitled “Articles of the Church of Christ,” phrased as a revelation from the Lord to Oliver and dated 1829, “contains directions about ordinations, the sacrament, and baptism” (R. L. Bushman, *Beginnings*, p. 156. Oliver Cowdery’s revelation is reprinted in full in R. J. Woodford, *Historical Development*, 1:287–290 and S. H. Faulring, *Examination*, pp. 178–181). Consistent with the Lord’s instructions, many of the

verses were based directly on passages in the Book of Mormon. Although some portions of Oliver's revelation were eventually carried over into Joseph Smith's later revelation on church organization and government recorded in D&C 20, the Prophet in essence received a new revelation. "Roughly one-fifth of section 20 relies on the Book of Mormon for its text, while more than half of Cowdery's Articles are either direct quotations or paraphrases with slight deviations from the Book of Mormon" (*ibid.*, p. 167).

Concerning those who should be baptized, Oliver's manuscript read very simply as follows (*ibid.*, p. 178):

Now therefore whosoever repenteth and humbleth himself before me and desireth to be baptized in my name shall ye baptize them.

Doctrine and Covenants 20:37 greatly elaborated and extended these conditions, in particular adding the requirement that those who were to be baptized should have already received a remission of sins.

In Oliver's study of the Book of Mormon, he had surely encountered the following verses, which seem to imply that the remission of sins does not precede baptism but should follow it (2 Nephi 31:17–18, emphasis added. Cf. 2 Nephi 30: 2. For further discussion of these verses, see N. B. Reynolds, *Understanding Christian Baptism*, pp. 12–13):

Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and *then* cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.

And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive.

Oliver also would have been familiar with Moroni 6:1–4. These verses contain parallels to the elaborated wording in D&C 20:37, yet seem to imply that the spiritual cleansing by the Holy Ghost should follow baptism (emphasis added):

And now I speak concerning baptism. Behold, elders, priests, and teachers were baptized; and they were not baptized save they brought forth fruit meet that they were worthy of it.

Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnessed unto the church that they truly repented of all their sins.

And none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end.

And *after* they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith.

Despite the seeming contradiction of D&C 20:37 with the passages cited above, there are several Book of Mormon examples of the cleansing power of the Holy Ghost operating on repentant individuals before baptism. For example, there is the account of King Lamoni who before his baptism had “the dark veil of unbelief ... cast away from his mind” in a dramatic manner (see Alma 19:6), and the father of King Lamoni who desired to have “this wicked spirit rooted out of [his] breast” (see Alma 22:15). We do not know if Alma the Younger had already been baptized before his conversion experience — if not, his spiritual rebirth recounted in Mosiah 27 and Alma 36 qualifies as an example of remission of sins prior to baptism. If on the other hand, he had previously been baptized, at the very least we can say that the detailed description that he gives seems to be of the same kind as King Lamoni and Alma the Elder.

The Prophet Joseph Smith describes the controversy about verse 37 and its resolution as follows (J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, July 1830, 1:104–105. For additional details about this controversy, see G. Underwood, *Oliver Cowdery's Correspondence*, pp. 114–116):

Whilst thus employed in the work appointed me by my Heavenly Father, I received a letter from Oliver Cowdery, the contents of which gave me both sorrow and uneasiness. Not having that letter now in my possession, I cannot of course give it here in full, but merely an extract of the most prominent parts, which I can yet, and expect long to, remember. He wrote to inform me that he had discovered an error in one of the commandments — Book of Doctrine and Covenants: “And truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto a remission of their sins.”

The above quotation, he said, was erroneous, and added: “I command you in the name of God erase those words, that no priestcraft be amongst us!”

As explanation to Cowdery's mention of priestcraft, *ibid.*, p. 115 explains: “By including in the Articles and Covenants an additional requirement not specified in the Book of Mormon — especially when Cowdery's own 1829 ‘Articles of the Church of Christ’ hewed so closely to Book of Mormon wording — Joseph had, as Oliver saw it, overstepped his bounds. To Cowdery, such arrogation on Joseph's part was nothing less than priestcraft.”

Joseph Smith's account continues as follows:

I immediately wrote to him in reply, in which I asked him by what authority he took upon him to command me to alter or erase, to add to or diminish from, a revelation or commandment from Almighty God.

A few days afterwards I visited him and Mr. Whitmer's family, when I found the family in general of his opinion concerning the words above quoted, and it was not without both labor and perseverance that I could prevail with any of them to reason calmly on the subject. However, Christian Whitmer at length became convinced that the sentence was reasonable, and according to Scripture; and finally, with his assistance, I succeeded in bringing, not

only the Whitmer family, but also Oliver Cowdery to acknowledge that they had been in error, and that the sentence in dispute was in accordance with the rest of the commandment. And thus was this error rooted out, which having its rise in presumption and rash judgment, was the more particularly calculated (when once fairly understood) to teach each and all of us the necessity of humility and meekness before the Lord, that He might teach us of His ways, that we might walk in His paths, and live by every word that proceedeth forth from His mouth.

Note that nothing is mentioned about confirmation in Oliver's revelation. However, D&C 20:41 gives instructions on confirmation "for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost." This verse, not in the original manuscript of the revelation but added in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, "codified in scripture the usage so firmly established in the church" (R. P. Howard, *Restoration* (1995), p. 158).

Regarding the means of bestowal of the gift of the Holy Ghost, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, as an Apostle, wrote "We may correctly believe that the Lord may bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost by other means than by the laying on of hands if occasion requires it" (J. F. Smith, Jr., *Answers*, 4:95). President Joseph F. Smith, as a counselor in the First Presidency, wrote in 1900:

As to the means through which the Holy Ghost confirms the ordinance of baptism, this is by the laying on of hands. If it be asked why this is so, the answer is, simply because God has so ordained. There are two instances on record when the Spirit confirmed baptism without the laying on of hands (so far as we know). The one was that of Christ, the other that of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. In the case of the Savior, the Holy Ghost manifested itself in the sign of a dove, and a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In the case of Joseph and Oliver, "the ordinance of baptism by water was immediately followed by a most glorious baptism of the Holy Ghost." Divine joy and inspiration fell upon the two brethren and each in turn exercised to a remarkable

degree the spirit of prophecy. (See *Millennial Star*, vol. 3, p. 148.)

It will be noticed, however, that these two exceptions mark the beginning of dispensations. There was at hand no one with authority to confer the Holy Ghost by laying on of hands. But even if we had not these good reasons, the simple fact that God ordained that confirmation is to be by laying on of hands must forever dispose of the question.” (“Editor’s Table,” *Improvement Era*, 4 [Nov. 1900]: 52–53), cited in G. A. Prince, *Power*, p. 93).

Writes Gregory Prince: “Once the church was organized, and, aside from the special case of Smith and Cowdery, there is no record of members receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost by other means” (*ibid.*, pp. 93–94).

292. Moroni 6:4.

293. Moses 6:60. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote (B. R. McConkie, *New Witness*, p. 290):

Sins are remitted not in the waters of baptism, as we say in speaking figuratively, but when we receive the Holy Ghost. It is the Holy Spirit of God that erases carnality and brings us into a state of righteousness. We become clean when we actually receive the fellowship and companionship of the Holy Ghost.

294. C. S. Lewis applied this imagery to the relationship between faith and works. To him, the debate about the role of faith vs. works seemed like (C. S. Lewis, *Mere*, pp. 131–132):

asking which blade in a pair of scissors is most necessary. ... The Bible really seems to clinch the matter when [in Philippians 2:12–13] it puts the two things together into one amazing sentence. The first half is, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”—which looks as if everything depended on us and our good actions: but the second half goes on, “For it is God who worketh in you” — which looks as if God did everything and we nothing. ... [This seems puzzling at first, but this is only because we are trying] to separate into water-tight compartments, what exactly God does and what man does when God and man are working together. And, of

course, we begin by thinking it is like two men working together, so that you could say, "He did this bit and I did that." But ... God is not like that. He is [working] inside you as well as outside: even if we could understand who did what, I do not think human language could properly express it. In the attempt to express it different Churches say different things. But you will find that even those who insist most strongly on the importance of good actions tell you you need Faith; and even those who insist most strongly on Faith tell you to do good actions.

295. D&C 121:46.

296. D. A. Bednar, *Always Retain*, p. 61.

297. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

298. Moses 6:57. Cf. 1 Nephi 15:34; Alma 7:21; 11:37; 40:26; 3 Nephi 27:19. See also D&C 94:8–9; 97:15; 109:20.

299. D&C 130:22. See also 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21–22.

300. According to Elder Bruce R. McConkie: "Forgiveness is assured when the contrite soul receives the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle" (B. R. McConkie, *New Witness*, p. 239).

301. H. M. Smith et al., *Commentary*, p. 104. Cf. Helaman 3:35; D. T. Christofferson, *Justification*; H. L. Andrus, *Joseph Smith*, pp. 122–126; H. L. Andrus, *Perfection*, pp. 182–194.

Indeed, for one who receives the Holy Ghost and then "altogether turneth therefrom" (D&C 84:41) — refusing to continue in the process of sanctification to the end — his "last state ... is worse than [his] first" (Luke 11:26). JST Matthew 12:37–38 explains:

Then came some of the Scribes and said unto him, Master, it is written that, Every sin shall be forgiven; but ye say, Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven. And they asked him, saying, How can these things be?

And he said unto them, When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none; *but when a man speaketh against the Holy Ghost, then he saith, I will return into my house*

from when I came out; and when he is come, he findeth him empty, swept and garnished; *for the good spirit leaveth him unto himself.*

302. D. A. Bednar, Always Retain, p. 61.

303. Mosiah 27:36. See also 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15.

304. In an 1839 discourse on the topic of the Second Comforter, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that it is “our privilege to pray for and obtain” (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Before 8 August 1839 (3), p. 14, punctuation modernized) the knowledge that we are sealed up to Eternal Life. Those who pray for this privilege, must also prepare for it. To this end, revelation instructs them to “give diligent heed to the words of eternal life,” and to “live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God” (D&C 84:43–44). The Prophet explained that it is the First Comforter, the Holy Ghost, which “shall teach you” until the joyous moment when, at last, as the Savior promised, “ye [shall] come to Me and My Father” (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, p. 15, punctuation modernized, words in brackets added. Cf. D&C 84:45–47). Encouraging each of his hearers to follow the example of the importunate widow, Joseph Smith then said (*ibid.*, p. 15, punctuation and capitalization modernized):

God is not a respecter of persons. We all have the same privilege. Come to God. Weary Him until He blesses you.

305. D. A. Bednar, Always Retain, p. 62. See Mosiah 4:11–12.

306. *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62. See D&C 20:77, 79.

307. Cf. “Heaven is a place, but also a condition” (S. W. Kimball, *Glimpses*, p. 39).

308. D&C 109:76. Cf. D&C 29:12.

309. Mosiah 3:19.

310. Mosiah 3:19.

311. See J. M. Bradshaw, Faith, Hope, and Charity.

312. See D&C 88:34.

313. D&C 88:30, emphasis added.

314. Mosiah 3:19.

315. D&C 88:30.

316. 1 Samuel 16:13; Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18.

317. 2 Nephi 31:20, emphasis added.
318. Ether 12:32, emphasis added.
319. Hebrews 6:11, emphasis added.
320. See J. M. Bradshaw, Faith, Hope, and Charity.
321. Moroni 7:47. See *ibid.*
322. D&C 131:5.
323. D&C 88:29.
324. D&C 84:23. Cf. Exodus 19:10–11.
325. Moses 6:59. Cf. D&C 88:75.
326. D&C 75:5.
327. D&C 132:24, 55.
328. D&C 29:13.
329. See D&C 121:46.
330. 3 Nephi 27:20. Cf. D&C 84:33: "sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies." For more on this promise, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 28–29.
331. Moses 6:60. Cf. Moroni 10:33:

And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot.
332. Hyrum Andrus provides this succinct explanation (H. L. Andrus, *Doctrinal*, p. 253):

The process of being justified by the Holy Spirit is ... directly related to the process of being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, for the divine agent acts to bring man to realize both objectives in the Gospel. To be sanctified by the blood of Jesus Christ means that though the Holy Spirit leads man to the condition of justification and is the sanctifying power by which he is cleansed from the effects of sin, the divine plan rests upon the blood of Christ, which He shed in making His infinite atonement.
333. Acts 8:14–17; Articles of Faith 1:4.

334. Moses 3:7. In Genesis, two Hebrew words *nishma* (e.g., Genesis 2:7; 7:22) and *ruach* (e.g., Genesis 6:17; 7:15, 22) are associated with the “breath of life.” While *ruach* is applied to God, man, and animals, the use of *nishma* is reserved for God and man alone (V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, p. 159).
335. J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Wilford Woodruff Journal, 20 March 1842, p. 108, spelling and punctuation modernized. Cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, pp. 198–199. In context, the statement reads:

What is the sign of the healing of the sick? The laying on of hands is the sign or way marked out by James [James 5:14–15] and the custom of ancient saints as ordered by the Lord [Acts 8:18; 1 Timothy 4:14; Hebrews 6:2], and we should not obtain the blessing by pursuing any other course except the way which God has marked out. What if we should attempt to get the Holy Ghost through any other means except the sign or way which God hath appointed. Should we obtain it? Certainly not. All other means would fail. The Lord says do so and so, and I will bless so and so.

There are certain key words and signs belonging to the priesthood which must be observed in order to obtain the blessings. The sign of Peter was to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, with the promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and in no other way is the gift of the Holy Ghost obtained. ... Had [Cornelius] not taken [these] sign[s or] ordinances upon him ... and received the gift of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of hands, according to the order of God, he could not have healed the sick or commanded an evil spirit to come out of a man, and it obey him [cf. Moses 1:21: “Moses received strength, and called upon God, saying: In the name of the Only Begotten, depart hence, Satan.”] for the spirits might say unto him, as they did to the sons of Sceva: “Paul we know and Jesus we know, but who are ye?” [see Acts 19:13–15].
336. John 13:10.
337. E.g., Lamentations 4:20. See V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1–17*, pp. 158–159.
338. Isaiah 61:1, emphasis added. See also Luke 4:17–22.

339. 1 Samuel 16:13. Further describing the blessing of the spirit of the Lord that is meant to be given in the anointing, Margaret Barker writes (M. Barker, *Lord Is One*):

The holy anointing oil was used only in the temple. Any imitation for personal use was forbidden (Exodus 30:31–33). The meaning of the oil was found only within the teachings of the temple, and any secular use would make no sense. This was because the oil imparted knowledge. The temple understanding of holiness included illumination of the mind. Isaiah said that when the king was anointed, he received the spirit of the Lord, that is, the spirit that transformed him into the Lord. He received the spirit [that is, the angel] of wisdom, of understanding, of counsel, of might, of knowledge and of the reverence due to the Lord ["the fear of the Lord"]. His perfume [not "delight"] would be the reverence due to the Lord (Isaiah 11:2–3). In other words, the anointed one retained the perfume of the oil, and this identified him as the Lord. Paul said that Christians were spreading the perfume of the knowledge of the Anointed One, which did not mean knowing about Jesus; it meant having the knowledge that Jesus had because He was the Anointed One (2 Corinthians 2:14).

340. L. L. Baker et al., *Who Shall Ascend*, p. 353. See also additional discussion on pp. 354–358 and, e.g., 1 Samuel 10:1, 15:17, 16:23; 2 Samuel 2:4, 5:3; 1 Kings 1:39; 1 Chronicles 29:22. Cf. J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, pp. 519–523.
341. J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 6 August 1843, 5:527.
342. B. Nichols, *Coronation*, pp. 18, 14. For more on ablutions and anointing of kings in other cultures, see S. D. Ricks et al., *King*, pp. 241–44, 254–255. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, EXCURSUS 52: Washing, Anointing, and Clothing Among Early Christians, p. 661.
343. M. E. Stone, *Angelic Prediction*, p. 125.
344. D. A. Bednar, *Always Retain*, p. 62.
345. Tertullian, *Baptism*, 7, p. 672. Margaret Barker observes (M. Barker, *Lord Is One*):

All [early] Christians were ... anointed — the name means anointed ones — and so they were heirs to the high priestly role: “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9).

346. Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitions*, p. 89. Cf. F. S. Jones, *Recognitions* (1995), pp. 76–77.
347. C. S. Lewis, *Mere*, p. 154.
348. Moses 6:60.
349. W. W. Isenberg, Philip, 70:36–71:3, p. 152.
350. Alma 13:5.
351. Alma 13:2, emphasis added.
352. Alma 13:3.
353. D&C 4:2. See J. M. Bradshaw, He That Thrusteth in His Sickle, pp. 156–159, where it is argued that “a careful examination of the Hebrew of Deuteronomy 6:5, a companion scripture to D&C 4:2, will reveal that it is essentially a statement of the law of consecration, the crowning law of the ordinances.”
354. Matthew 10:22; 24:13; Mark 13:13; Romans 6:22; 1 Corinthians 1:8; Hebrews 3:6, 14; 6:11; James 5:11; 1 Peter 1:13; Revelation 2:26; 1 Nephi 13:37; 22:31; 2 Nephi 9:24; 31:16, 20; 33:4, 9; Omni 1:26; Mosiah 2:41; 26:23; Alma 12:27; 27:27; 32:13, 15; 38:2; 3 Nephi 15:9; 27:6; 27:11, 16, 17, 19; Mormon 9:29; Moroni 3:3; 6:3; 8:3, 26; D&C 10:4; 14:7; 18:22; 20:25, 29, 37; 31:13; 53:7; 66:12; 75:11, 13, 14; 76:5; 81:6; 100:12; 105:41; 121:32. Contrast Mosiah 4:6, 30; 5:8; Alma 34:33; 41:6 which describe this end explicitly in terms of the end of mortal life, rather than as the end of probation or the time of judgment as in most other scriptural references.
355. See E. T. Benson, Vision. Other summaries of the temple covenants by General Authorities in our day can be found in J. E. Faust, Who Shall Ascend, p. 4; B. R. McConkie, Obedience; G. B. Hinckley, *Teachings* (1997), 10 April 1996, p. 147; J. E. Talmage, *House of the Lord*, p. 55; B. K. Packer, *Holy Temple*, p. 163; R. D. Hales, *Return*, pp. 4–5.
356. Moses 6:60.
357. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, COMMENTARY Moses 5:35–36, pp. 383–384.

358. N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 61.
359. S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, p. 99. The canonized version of Moses 6:29 resulted from a correction in the handwriting of Sidney Rigdon that is found in OT2 (*ibid.*, p. 610): "by their oaths, they have brought upon themselves death."
360. Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:27–30.
361. JST Genesis 9:4. See S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, p. 116. Joseph Smith taught that resurrected bodies would not contain blood, but rather would be "quickened by the Spirit" (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 12 May 1844, Thomas Bullock Report, p. 368). See also *ibid.*, 12 May 1844, George Laub Journal, pp. 370–371; *ibid.*, 20 March 1842, Wilford Woodruff Journal, 20 March 1842, p. 109.
362. E.g., Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:14; Deuteronomy 12:23. See also John 6:53–54.
363. Leviticus 17:11. See Leviticus 17:11–14; Deuteronomy 12:23–24, which provide "the basis of Jewish dietary laws governing the koshering of meat, the purpose of which is to ensure the maximum extraction of blood from the flesh before cooking" (N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 61).
364. See Exodus 24:9–11.
365. D&C 110:5.
366. Isaiah 6:6–7.
367. Isaiah 6:6.
368. Hebrew *těkuppār*, literally, "atoned" **kpr*.
369. D. Harper, Dictionary, s.v. blood.
370. *Ibid.*, s.v. bless.
371. *Ibid.*, s.v. bless, bliss. Commenting on Moses 5:10, 12, where Adam and Eve "blessed" God, Hugh Nibley asks (H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, 19, pp. 235–236):

How can you bless God? Does he need blessing? ... A blessing can go in both ways. A blessing is full approval and full acceptance of another ... Bless has a double etymology. One says it's from the Old English word, *blotsian*, connected with our word "blood." To make a

blood sacrifice; to bless in that sense. But bless is also connected with the word “bliss,” a complete approval ..., a complete acceptance when you bless God. So people can bless each other. You can bless your father or your mother as well as they can bless you.

Harper comments that the meaning of “bless” “shifted in late Old English toward “pronounce or make happy,” by resemblance to unrelated bliss” (D. Harper, Dictionary, s.v. bless).

372. Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster New Book of Word Histories*, p. 50; D. Harper, Dictionary, s.v. bless.
373. D. A. Bednar, *Ye Must Be Born Again*, p. 22.
374. Alma 13:11. See also Exodus 19:10, 14; Ether 13:11; Revelation 7:14. For more on this subject, see N. B. Reynolds, *Understanding Christian Baptism*, pp. 14–16.
375. For example, as early as 25 January 1832, Elder Sidney Rigdon “sealed upon [the head of Joseph Smith] the blessings which he had formerly received” (O. Pratt, *Orson Pratt Journals*, p. 11). Joseph Smith recorded an experience that took place in the Kirtland Temple, just prior to his vision of the celestial kingdom: “my father anointed my head, and sealed upon me the blessings of Moses, to lead Israel in the latter days, even as Moses led him in days of old; and also the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 21 January 1836, 2:380).
376. D&C 131:5. Cf. 2 Corinthians 1:21–22, Ephesians 1:13, 4:30; Revelation 7:2–4, 9:4.
377. Hebrews 1:3. Cf., e.g., 1 John 3:2. N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 12 sees this idea in the creation of mankind “in the image of God,” concluding that “each person bears the stamp of royalty.”
378. Explains Nibley (H. W. Nibley, *Sacred*, p. 559):

The word *seal*, which is so important, is simply the diminutive of *sign*, *sigillum* from *signum*. It is a word rendered *peculiar* in Deuteronomy. Like the other tokens, it can represent the individual who bears the king’s seal, who bears the authority. Its particular value, however, is as a time-binder. The seal secures the right of a person to the possession of something from which he or she may be separated by space and time; it guarantees that he

shall not be deprived of his claim on an object by long or distant separation. The mark on the seal is the same as that which he carries with him. And when the two are compared, his claim is established, but only if neither of the tokens has been altered. This is the control anciently exercised by tally-sticks, such as the Stick of Joseph and the Stick of Judah [see Ezekiel 37:16–20].

379. L. T. Johnson, *Religious Experience*, p. 78 and p. 78 n. 44.

380. Alma 5:14.

381. 2 Corinthians 3:3, 18. The contrast between the writing on tables of stone and the writing on the fleshy tables of the heart of the disciples in v. 3 draws on imagery from Ezekiel 36:26–27 and Jeremiah 31:33 (S. S. Lee, *Jesus' Transfiguration*, p. 59):

The new heart and Spirit in Ezekiel 36 are the vehicles of God's inwardly established commandments and the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31 is identified with those commandments inscribed in human hearts. In this association, the stone with the extraordinary value of endurance appears as a condition of a hardened heart. According to Jeremiah, the New Covenant with new heart and Spirit has to come about because of Israel's breaking of the Mosaic Law, the Old Covenant, due to their stubborn hearts. Here, the stone tablets clearly refer to the tablets of the Law which Moses received at Mount Sinai.

According to Lee, the believer's transformation in v. 18 (*ibid.*, p. 69):

results from gazing upon the glory of the risen Christ with an unveiled face [i.e., as opposed to their requiring, in their unrighteousness, a veil to cover the face of the glorified Moses], a risen Christ who is now the Lord in Paul's Gospel.

382. H. W. Nibley, *Return*, p. 58. D&C 19 makes it clear that "every man must repent or suffer ... even as I" (D&C 19:3, 17). Remember that in Isaiah's prophecy of the Second Coming of Christ, the Lord is appareled in red garments. Of the unrepentant wicked who will not accept their Redeemer, the Lord says: "*their* blood shall be sprinkled upon *my* garments" (Isaiah 63:3).

383. Genesis 22:13.

384. H. W. Nibley, *Abraham* (2000), pp. 336, 338, <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1093&index=11> (accessed October 15, 2016).

385. R. A. Rosenberg, *Jesus, Isaac*, p. 385p. 385.

386. *Ibid.*, pp. 383, 385.

387. 2 Nephi 31:19.

388. Although we enter the gate of repentance and baptism by exercising “unshaken faith,” “relying *wholly* upon the merits” of Christ (2 Nephi 31:19), it is intended that we grow spiritually through a combination of our efforts and His strengthening power in gradual fashion until, someday, we come to “be like him” (1 John 3:2; Moroni 7:48). Certainly there is truth in Stephen Robinson’s emphasis on the difference in magnitude between the “61 cents” we contribute toward our salvation and the unfathomably costly contribution that Jesus Christ made on our behalf (S. E. Robinson, *Believing*, pp. 31–34). However, there are major differences between Latter-day Saint beliefs and extreme versions of “grace-oriented” theologies — as exemplified by Charles Spurgeon’s famous line: “If there be but one stitch in the celestial garment of our righteousness which we ourselves are to put in, we are lost” (cited in B. B. Warfield, *Plan*, p. 51).

Just as Jesus Christ will put all enemies beneath his feet (1 Corinthians 15:25–26), so Joseph Smith taught that each person who would be saved must also, with His essential help, gain the power needed to “triumph over all [their] enemies and put them under [their] feet” (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 14 May 1843, p. 297. See also 17 May 1843, p. 301; 21 May 1843, p. 305), possessing the “glory, authority, majesty, power, and dominion which Jehovah possesses” (L. E. Dahl et al., *Lectures*, 7:9, p. 98; cf. 7:16 — note that it is not certain whether Joseph Smith authored these lectures).

As Chauncey Riddle explains (C. C. Riddle, New, p. 228), “the covenant of baptism is [not only] our pledge to seek after good and to eliminate all choosing and doing of evil in our lives, [but] also our receiving the power to keep that promise,” i.e., through the gift of the Holy Ghost. For Latter-day Saints, Jesus Christ is not only their Redeemer but also their literal prototype, the One who demonstrates the process of probation that all people must

pass through as they follow Him (Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 16:24; 19:21; Mark 2:14; 8:24; 10:21; Luke 5:27; 9:23, 59, 61; 18:22; John 1:43; 10:27; 12:26; 13:36; 21:19, 22).

389. 2 Nephi 25:23. In our opinion, the word "after" should not be read mistakenly in a temporal sense, but rather in line with the atemporal Old English sense of "more away, further off" (cf. Greek *apotero*) — meaning essentially that "all we can do" is always necessary but never sufficient. In spirit, this is similar to Stephen E. Robinson's line of thinking (S. E. Robinson, *Believing*, pp. 91–92):

I understand the preposition "after" in 2 Nephi 25:23 to be a preposition of separation rather than a preposition of time. It denotes logical separateness rather than temporal sequence. We are saved by grace "apart from all we can do," or "all we can do notwithstanding," or even "regardless of all we can do." Another acceptable paraphrase of the sense of the verse might read, "We are still saved by grace, after all is said and done."

Although Alma 24:10–11 defines "all we *could* do" [note the past tense, emphasis added] solely in terms of repentance, we are of the opinion that one of the purposes of the process of sanctification is to allow us to grow in holiness, gradually acquiring a capacity for doing "more" — specifically, *becoming* "good" like our Father (see Matthew 19:17; Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19) and "*doing* good" (Acts 10:38, emphasis added) like the Son, an evolution of our natures jointly enabled by the Atonement and our exercise of moral agency. Despite all this, of course, it must never be forgotten that even repentance itself, which is "all we can do" at the time we first accept Christ, would be impossible had not the merciful plan of redemption been laid before the foundation of the world (Alma 12:22–37). And, of course, it is His continuous grace that lends us breath, "preserving [us] from day to day, ... and even supporting [us] from one moment to another" (Mosiah 2:21).

For the reference to the "merits, and mercy, and grace" of Christ, see 2 Nephi 2:8. On the idea of the "second sacrifice" that is represented in a later part of the temple endowment, see B. C. Hafen, *Disciple's Journey* (cf. B. C. Hafen, *Anchored*, Deseret Book Bookshelf edition, 25–30 of 119):

As we approach the second barrier of sacrifice, we move symbolically from the moon to the sun. All of the moon's light is reflected from the sun — it is borrowed light [cf. book of Abraham, explanation of Facsimile 2, Figure 5]. Heber C. Kimball used to say that when life's greatest tests come, those who are living on borrowed light — the testimonies of others — will not be able to stand (O. F. Whitney, *Kimball*, May 1868, pp. 446, 449–450; J. Golden Kimball, 8 April 1906, pp. 76–77; 4 October 1930, pp. 59–60; H. B. Lee, *Watch*, p. 1152. Cf. B. Young, 8 March 1857, pp. 265–266; A. M. Lyman, 12 July 1857, pp. 36–38; Orson Hyde, 8 March 1857, pp. 71–72; C. W. Penrose, 20 May 1883, p. 41. See also Matthew 25:1–13). We need our own access to the light of the Son.

Baptism represents the first sacrifice. The temple endowment represents the second sacrifice. The first sacrifice was about breaking out of Satan's orbit. The second one is about breaking fully into Christ's orbit, pulled by His gravitational power. The first sacrifice was mostly about giving up temporal things. The second one is about consecrating ourselves spiritually, holding back nothing. As Elder Maxwell said, the only thing we can give the Lord that He didn't already give us is our own will (See N. A. Maxwell, *Mentor*, p. 17). Seeking to be meek and lowly, disciples gladly offer God their will. As our children sing, "I feel my Savior's love. ... / He knows I will follow him, / Give all my life to him" (*Children's Songbook*, "I feel my Savior's love," pp. 74–75). And then what happens? In President Benson's words, "When obedience ceases to be an irritant and becomes our quest, in that moment God will endow us with power" (cited in D. L. Staheli, *Obedience*, p. 82).

The pleasing scent of "sweet incense," burned at the altar "before the vail ... every morning" (Exodus 30:6–7), with the annual offering of blood (Exodus 30:9–10), not the "blood of the grape" (Ben Sira 50:15), represent the "second sacrifice" of prayer and consecration by one who has been made clean, in contrast to the "sweet savour" (with unpleasing smell) of animal sacrifice that represents an atonement for sin (Genesis 8:21; Exodus 29:18, 25, 41).

The challenge of offering a perfect sacrifice to the Lord is aptly expressed by Shakespeare: "Laud we the gods, And let our crooked smokes climb to their nostrils From our blest altars" (W. Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, 5:4:474–475, p. 85). His brilliant use of "crooked" to describe the altar smoke refers obviously to its upward curling movement, while also reflecting on the stubborn perversity of human nature in every act of sacrifice, where deficient attempts to meet its unbending requirements to turn wholeheartedly and bow in complete submission before God are most evident.

390. D&C 88:74–75.

391. D&C 88:74–75.

392. D&C 88:68. For an extensive discussion of D&C 88:68–69, 74–75, see B. R. McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, pp. 582–584, 594–595. See also B. R. McConkie, *New Witness*, p. 492.

393. John 13:10.

394. For an extensive discussion of what it means to stand in the presence of God, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Standing in the Holy Place*.

395. J. W. Welch, *Sermon*, <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1095&index=6> (accessed December 19, 2016).

396. 3 Nephi 12:19; D&C 59:8. See also 2 Nephi 2:7; 4:32; 3 Nephi 9:20; Ether 4:15; Moroni 6:2. These scriptures make it clear that this sacrifice is directly connected with baptism.

397. See Matthew 6:22; 3 Nephi 13:22.

398. D&C 124:39, emphasis added. M. B. Brown, *Gate*, p. 242 observed that Malachi 3:3 (cf. D&C 128:24):

... does not say that blood sacrifices would be offered to the Lord... The Hebrew word used to designate the "offering" in this passage is *minchah*, which is commonly used in Old Testament temple texts to designate a "bloodless" sacrifice ... (cf. The Testament of Levi, where angel priests offer bloodless sacrifices in the heavenly temple [H. C. Kee, *Testaments*, Levi 3:4–6, p. 789]). [Moreover, the] Lord helped to clarify the meaning of the Prophet's teachings when he revealed on 19 January 1841 that within the walls of the Nauvoo Temple he would restore "the fulness of the priesthood" (D&C 124:28), and there the latter-day "sons of Levi" would offer sacrifice in

the manner of a memorial, meaning in symbolic fashion (D&C 124:39). On 6 September 1842, shortly after the Nauvoo temple ordinances were first bestowed, Joseph Smith quoted Malachi 3:2–3 and clearly stated that it was the “Latter-day Saints” who were to “offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” in the “holy temple” (D&C 128:24). He also indicated that the offering he was referring to was of a bloodless nature (D&C 128:24).

Similarly, in Genesis 14:18 Melchizedek does not offer animal sacrifices to God, but “presents only the *memorials* of sacrifice, bread and wine” (G. J. Scofield, *Scofield Reference Bible*, Genesis 14:18, p. 23, emphasis in original).

For more on this topic, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, EXCURSUS 33: The Restoration of Sacrifice, pp. 609–610.

399. D&C 84:26.

400. D&C 107:3.

401. N. A. Maxwell, *Deny*, p. 68.

402. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 2 July 1839, p. 162.

403. D&C 20:37.

404. See Romans 6:4–6; J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 9 July 1843, p. 314.

405. Acts 8:15, 19; 2 Nephi 31:13; 32:5; 3 Nephi 28:18; 4 Nephi 1:1; D&C 25:8; 84:74; Moses 8:24.

406. D&C 84:33.

407. Truman G. Madsen explains (T. G. Madsen, *Foundations*, pp. 2, 5–6):

You have all been born as spirit children, and as such have a divine nature. You have now been born of mortal parents, and have been privileged, then, with a body, which is a step forward in your progression, not a step back. . . . We are . . . to proceed to watch and pray, that it may be developed into the very likeness of our spirits, which are divine, and ultimately, then, to become, as it were, a product of another birth, which is the birth we call Jesus, who becomes, in the process of ordinances, our father. That’s a proper use of the word “father” for Jesus, for He says in [D&C] 93:22, “all those who are begotten

through me (through the ordinances) are partakers of the glory of the same (meaning His role as first-born), and are the Church of the Firstborn." Imagine. He has sacrificed for us in order that we can inherit what He alone could have claimed to be, the first-born. He's saying, "It will be as if you were [the Firstborn]; all of the blessings and powers that have been bestowed upon Me are now transmitted to you, if you are willing to come to Me." They are "begotten through me" and are "partakers of the glory of the same."

... [T]here will be another birth ahead of us, and that's called the resurrection. And then the promise that we can be like Him will be literal and complete.

408. Alma 36:26; cf. Mosiah 27:28. By way of contrast, 1 John 3:9 and 5:1 seem to use the term "born of God" with a more general meaning.

Alma described the experience of being "born of God" in terms that emphasize the personal nature of the encounter that accompanies this experience. After telling of his vision of "God sitting upon his throne" and his subsequent missionary labors (Alma 36:22–24), he testifies that "many have been born of God, and have tasted [of exceeding joy] as I have tasted, and have seen [God] eye to eye as I have seen; therefore they do know of these things of which I have spoken, as I do know; and the knowledge which I have is of God" (Alma 36:26; cf. Mosiah 27:28; D&C 84:22). Describing the knowledge that can be had only through keeping every ordinance of the Melchizedek priesthood, which ordinances hold "the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God" (D&C 84:19), Joseph Smith taught: "No one can truly say he knows God until he has handled something, and this can only be in the holiest of holies" (J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 1 May 1842, 4:608. See also *ibid.*, February 1835, 2:195–196, 198). Cf. B. R. McConkie, *New Witness*, p. 492; B. R. McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, pp. 582–584, 594–595; Luke 24:39; John 20:19–29; 3 Nephi 11:14–15).

409. C. S. Lewis, *Screwtape*, Preface [1961 edition], p. 9. The original statement reads: "God turns tools into servants and servants into sons, so that they may be at last reunited to Him in the perfect freedom of a love offered from the height of the utter individualities

which he has liberated them to be.” For more on this topic, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 75–79.

Note that within modern revelation, the highest order of the priesthood is known by different names. For example, in the Doctrine and Covenants we read about “they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory” (D&C 76:56). They are described in relation to variously named orders as being “after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was [ultimately] after the order of the Only Begotten Son” (D&C 76:57. Compare B. Young, 26 June 1874, p. 113).

- 410. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 53–65; B. R. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 1:229; B. R. McConkie, *Ten Blessings*, p. 33.
- 411. Mosiah 5:9.
- 412. See M. L. Bowen, *Onomastic Wordplay*, p. 269.
- 413. Mosiah 5:15; Alma 34:35.
- 414. D&C 84:39.
- 415. M. Barker, *Christmas*, pp. 5, 12. Compare W. J. Hamblin, *Sôd of YHWH*, pp. 147, 151.
- 416. M. L. Bowen, *They Came*, pp. 72–73. Ben Sira 50:1–21 describes such a scene, which is reminiscent of 3 Nephi 11–19; 17:9–10; and Hebrews 1:5; 5:1–10; 7:1–28; 9:1–28:

[1] Simon the high priest, the son of Onias, who in his life repaired the house again, and in his days fortified the temple:

[2] And by him was built from the foundation the double height, the high fortress of the wall about the temple:

[3] In his days the cistern to receive water, being in compass as the sea, was covered with plates of brass:

[4] He took care of the temple that it should not fall, and fortified the city against besieging:

[5] *How was he honoured in the midst of the people in his coming out of the sanctuary!*

[6] He was as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon at the full:

[7] As the sun shining upon the temple of the most High, and as the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds:

[8] And as the flower of roses in the spring of the year, as lilies by the rivers of waters, and as the branches of the frankincense tree in the time of summer:

[9] As fire and incense in the censer, and as a vessel of beaten gold set with all manner of precious stones:

[10] And as a fair olive tree budding forth fruit, and as a cypress tree which groweth up to the clouds.

[11] When he put on the robe of honour, and was clothed with the perfection of glory, when he went up to the holy altar, he made the garment of holiness honourable.

[12] When he took the portions out of the priests' hands, he himself stood by the hearth of the altar, compassed about, as a young cedar in Libanus; and as palm trees compassed they him round about.

[13] So were all the sons of Aaron in their glory, and the oblations of the Lord in their hands, before all the congregation of Israel.

[14] And finishing the service at the altar, that he might adorn the offering of the most high Almighty,

[15] He stretched out his hand to the cup, and poured of the blood of the grape, he poured out at the foot of the altar a sweet-smelling savour unto the most high King of all.

[16] Then shouted the sons of Aaron, and sounded the silver trumpets, and made a great noise to be heard, for a remembrance before the most High.

[17] Then all the people together hasted, and fell down to the earth upon their faces to worship their Lord God Almighty, the most High.

[18] The singers also sang praises with their voices, with great variety of sounds was there made sweet melody.

[19] And the people besought the Lord, the most High, by prayer before him that is merciful, till the solemnity of the Lord was ended, and they had finished his service.

[20] *Then he went down, and lifted up his hands over the whole congregation of the children of Israel, to give the blessing of the Lord with his lips, and to rejoice in his name.*

[21] And they bowed themselves down to worship the second time, that they might receive a blessing from the most High.

417. Alma 13:2.

418. Alma 13:16. Some LDS scholars have conjectured narrative portions of temple liturgy in former times may have been derived in part from an ancient text somewhat like the book of Moses (J. M. Bradshaw, *LDS Book of Enoch*; D. Calabro, *Joseph Smith and the Architecture of Genesis*; M. J. Johnson, *The Lost Prologue*). The second half of Alma 12, which opens with a question about the resurrection of the dead and a reference to the “mysteries of God” (Alma 12:8–9), segues to the story of Adam and Eve’s transgression in the Garden of Eden (cf. Moses 3–4), the plan of redemption as revealed by angels to them (Alma 12:28–35; cf. Moses 5:5–8, 58), and the ordinances of the high priesthood after the order of the son of God (Alma 13:1–20; cf. Moses 5:59; 6:59, 66–68). A careful study of the relationship between the book of Moses and Alma 12–13 is overdue.

419. Cf. John 1:12–13; Romans 8:14–21; D&C 39:4.

420. See Moses 7:59. Compare P. Alexander, 3 Enoch, 10:1, 3, pp. 263–64.

421. A. A. Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron*, p. 102.

422. F. I. Andersen, 2 Enoch, 22:8 [J], p. 138. See also J. J. Collins, *Angelic Life*, p. 239.

423. P. S. Alexander, *From Son of Adam*, pp. 103, 105.

424. See Moses 1:2, 11, 13–15, 18, 25, 31.

425. Moses 1:11.

426. P. Alexander, 3 Enoch, 16:2–3, p. 268. Compare a similar confusion in identity between God and the newly created Adam in J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah* vol. 1, 8:10, pp. 82–83. Cf. also P. B. Munoa,

Four Powers, p. 101. See more generally C. R. A. Morray-Jones, Transformational.

427. C. Mopsik, *Hénoch*, p. 214. For a consideration of arguments by scholars discounting the possibility that the Enoch Son of Man and the Jesus/Pauline Son of Man concepts grew out of the same soil, see the discussion in J. M. Bradshaw et al., *God's Image* 2, pp. 190–91, ENDNOTE M7–14.
428. History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842], addenda p. 9 (June 27, 1839), CHL, available at Church Historian's Press, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842?p=544>.
429. 2 Nephi 31:20. For extensive discussions of this and related topics, see B. R. McConkie, *NT Commentary*, 3:325–50; B. R. McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, 1:570–95; J. M. Bradshaw, *Now That We Have the Words*; J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 59–65.
430. See Revelation 11:15 (“he shall reign for ever and ever”) and compare Revelation 22:5 (“they shall reign for ever and ever”).
431. Moses 6:60.
432. H. W. Nibley, *Return*, p. 59.
433. D&C 101:4.
434. Genesis 22:12.
435. Mosiah 3:19.
436. See, e.g., D&C 20:77 and Alma 7:15.
437. While not explicitly linking the second part of the sacrament with the law of consecration, U. A. Perego, *Changing Forms*, p. 12 cites the following statement by President Heber J. Grant that associates the sacrament with two covenants rather than one (H. J. Grant, *Ninety-First*, p. 650, emphasis added):

I rejoice in the inspiration of Joseph Smith, in translating the Book of Mormon, and giving to us those two wonderful sacramental prayers, those *two marvelous covenants* that all Latter-day Saints make when they assemble together and partake of the sacrament.
438. U. A. Perego, *Changing Forms*, p. 5.

439. Elder Neil L. Andersen, “Witnessing to Live the Commandments,” General Conference Leadership Training on the Sabbath Day Observance at Church (April 2015, available to priesthood leaders), cited in *ibid.*, p. 14, emphasis added. The entire statement by Elder Andersen on this topic reads as follows:

The title ‘renewing our baptismal covenants’ is not found in the scriptures. It is not inappropriate. Many of you [gesturing to the audience] have used it in talks. We [gesturing to those on the stand] have used it in talks, but it is not something that is used in the scriptures. And it can’t be the keynote of what we say about the sacrament. Spirituality is not stagnant and neither are covenants. And hopefully, what we pray, is that all of us as members are moving along a progressive growth both in our spirituality and in our covenants. Covenants bring not only commitments, but they bring spiritual power. We should teach our members that we are moving towards our Heavenly Father. The sacrament is a beautiful time to not just renew our baptismal covenants, but to commit to Him to renew all our covenants, all of our promises, and to approach Him in a spiritual power that we did not have previously as we move forward.

For other statements that explicitly state or imply that the sacrament is meant to renew more than the baptismal covenant, see, e.g., J. E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (1899), p. 179; J. F. Smith, Jr., *Doctrines*, 2:345–346; D. L. Stapley, *This Pearl*, p. 1112; N. E. Tanner, *Keep Your Covenants*, p. 1136; S. W. Kimball, *Teachings* (1982), pp. 112, 220, 226–227, 503; A. T. Tuttle, *Covenants*; D. B. Haight, *Remembering*; J. E. Mackay, *What Covenants Do We Renew*; G. B. Hinckley, *Teachings* (1997), p. 561; R. M. Nelson, *Worshiping*, p. 25; L. T. Perry, *As Now*, p. 41; C. M. Stephens, *Do We Know*, p. 12.

For an excellent discussion of Elder Andersen’s renewed emphasis as part of the current understanding of the sacrament, see U. A. Perego, *Changing Forms*, especially pp. 11–14. For a contrasting view of this issue, see M. Clayton, *Covenant Renewal*.

440. Mosiah 15:7. Cf. Matthew 26:28

441. Elder Oaks has explained (D. H. Oaks, *Taking Upon Us*, p. 83):

Our willingness to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ [in the sacrament] affirms our commitment to do all that we can to be counted among those whom he will choose to stand at his right hand and be called by his name at the last day. In this sacred sense, our witness that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ constitutes our declaration of candidacy for exaltation in the celestial kingdom. Exaltation is eternal life, "the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7).

That is what we should ponder as we partake of the sacred emblems of the sacrament.

442. Mosiah 3:19.

443. Alma 24:19; Moroni 9:10; D&C 101:36.

444. Alma 22:18, emphasis added.

445. Francis Webster was remembered for his eloquent testimony that he and others in his handcart company became "acquainted with [God] in our extremities," by this means obtaining an "absolute knowledge that God lives" (C. M. Orton, Francis Webster, p. 140). "Like a human father, the heavenly Father ... teach[es] his children courtesy, persistence, and diligence. If the child prevails with a thoughtful father, it is because the father has molded the child to his way. If Jacob prevails with God, it is Jacob who is wounded (Genesis 32:22–32)" (D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, p. 186). Citing the experience of Stephen, who saw the Lord "in the agonies of death," Elder Orson Hyde taught (O. Hyde, 6 October 1853, p. 125):

True it is, that in the most trying hour, the servants of God may then be permitted to see their Father, and elder Brother. "But," says one, "I wish to see the Father, and the Savior, and an angel now." Before you can see the Father, and the Savior, or an angel, you have to be brought into close places in order to enjoy this manifestation. The fact is, your very life must be suspended on a thread, as it were. If you want to see your Savior, be willing to come to that point where no mortal arm can rescue, no earthly power save! When all other things fail, when everything else proves futile and fruitless, then perhaps your Savior and your Redeemer may appear; His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, nor His ear heavy that He cannot

hear; and when help on all sides appears to fail, My arm shall save, My power shall rescue, and you shall hear My voice, saith the Lord.

President John Taylor spoke on this same subject (J. Taylor, 18 June 1883, p. 197):

I heard the Prophet Joseph say, in speaking to the Twelve on one occasion: “You will have all kinds of trials to pass through. And it is quite as necessary for you to be tried as it was for Abraham and other men of God, and (said he) God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God.”

On another occasion, he said (J. Taylor, 24 June 1883, p. 264):

I heard Joseph Smith say and I presume Brother Snow heard him also — in preaching to the Twelve in Nauvoo, that the Lord would get hold of their heart strings and wrench them, and that they would have to be tried as Abraham was tried. ... And Joseph said that if God had known any other way whereby he could have touched Abraham’s feelings more acutely and more keenly he would have done so. It was not only his parental feelings that were touched. There was something else besides. He had the promise that in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; that his seed should be multiplied as the stars of the heaven and as the sand upon the sea shore. He had looked forward through the vista of future ages and seen, by the spirit of revelation, myriads of his people rise up through whom God would convey intelligence, light and salvation to a world. But in being called upon to sacrifice his son it seemed as though all his prospects pertaining to posterity were come to naught. But he had faith in God, and he fulfilled the thing that was required of him. Yet we cannot conceive of anything that could be more trying and more perplexing than the position in which he was placed.

President George Q. Cannon wrote of Abraham’s great trial (G. Q. Cannon, *Truth*, 9 April 1899, 1:113):

Why did the Lord ask such things of Abraham? Because, knowing what his future would be and that he would be the father of an innumerable posterity, He was determined to test him. God did not do this for His own sake for He knew by His foreknowledge what Abraham would do; but the purpose was to impress upon Abraham a lesson and to enable him to attain unto knowledge that he could not obtain in any other way. That is why God tries all of us. It is not for His own knowledge for He knows all things beforehand. He knows all your lives and everything you will do. But He tries us for our own good that we may know ourselves; for it is most important that a man should know himself.

He required Abraham to submit to this trial because He intended to give him glory, exaltation and honor; He intended to make him a king and a priest, to share with Himself the glory, power and dominion which He exercised. And was this trial any more than God himself had passed through?

Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote ("Link Truths, Students Told Wednesday." *Daily Universe* (7 Oct. 1983), 37:11, as cited in R. J. Matthews, *Great Faith*, p. 259): "God knows what his children can become and tries them to help them reach their potential. ... In time each person will receive a 'customized challenge' to determine his dedication to God."

For additional quotations and examples, see *ibid.* For insightful discussion with applications of the related principle of "waiting upon the Lord," see B. C. Hafen et al., *Contrite Spirit*, pp. 96–127.

446. 1 Peter 2:19–21; 3:18. For a recent analysis of the concept of reciprocity and suffering in these verses, see T. B. Williams, *Reciprocity and Suffering*. On p. 438, he observes insightfully:

Evaluated from the perspective of the ancient system of reciprocity, 1 Peter portrays unjust suffering as a binding responsibility which has been placed on the readers in view of the bountiful munificence which God (their divine benefactor) has lavished upon them. ... In this way, the Christian identification with suffering takes on a new dynamic. Patient endurance during times of trial is not simply a means of achieving divine favor; it has

become the very definition of how a Christian relates to God.

447. 1 Peter 3:18.

448. 3 Nephi 11:11; D&C 19:18. See also Matthew 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 18:11

449. “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). Referring to this verse, Ugo Perego writes (U. A. Perego, *Changing Forms*, p. 4):

As biblical scholar Margaret Barker has stated, “[the] phrase ‘for the remission of sins’ immediately identifies [the sacrament] as the temple covenant, the covenant renewed by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement” (M. Barker, *Creation theology*. See Leviticus 16). Barker continues placing particular emphasis on the necessity of saving the Creation through the Lord’s own life and preserving the eternal covenant by the removal of sins. Thus, on the Day of the Atonement, the High Priest would first wash himself and then take the blood of the sacrificial goat (representing the life the Lord gave in our behalf) to sprinkle on the Mercy Seat and on the drapes of the Holy of Holies. Additionally, a second goat was released in the wilderness, symbolically carrying away the sins of Israel and mending the spiritual gap caused by the Fall.

The depth and totality of Jesus’ atonement, His suffering and death to enable our joy and life, can be likened to these words from Georges Moustaki’s “L’homme au Coeur Blessé”:

*Dans le jardin de l’homme au cœur blessé,
L’herbe est brûlée. Pas une fleur.
Sur l’arbre mort, plus rien ne peut pousser.
Rien que les fruits de sa douleur.*

In the garden of the man with the wounded heart,
The ground is burned. Not one flower.
On the dead tree, nothing more can grow.
Nothing but the fruits of his suffering.

450. Cf. Matthew 20:22–23; Mark 10:38–39.

451. Exodus 12:8, 15, 17, 18, 20, 39. With respect to the drinking of wine at Passover, B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, p. 385 notes that the book of Jubilees, "written centuries before Jesus' day," claimed "that at the very first Passover in Egypt the Israelites 'remained eating the flesh of the Passover and drinking wine' (Jubilees 49:6)." By the time of Jesus, Philo of Alexandria "explicitly states that the Passover sacrifice would be accompanied by the drinking of 'wine' and the singing of 'songs of praise' to God (Philo, *Special Laws*, 2:146–148)."
452. Exodus 16:14–15. See also John 6:31 where the manna is described as "bread from heaven."
453. E.g., John 1:29, 36.
454. John 6:32.
455. President John Taylor stated: "In the sacrament we shadow forth the time when He will come again and when we shall meet and eat bread with Him in the kingdom of God" (J. Taylor, 20 March 1870, cited in U. A. Perego, *Changing Forms*, p. 4).
456. The foundational Old Testament reference for this event is Isaiah 25:6–9, which forms a part of longer descriptions of the coming day of the Lord (Isaiah 24–27):

6 ¶ And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.

9 ¶ And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, p. 449 highlights several aspects of Isaiah's description:

First, the coming feast is no ordinary banquet; it is an eschatological event. This eschatological dimension is evident from the fact that the banquet culminates in the overthrow of suffering and death: God will “swallow up death for ever” and wipe away “tears” from “all faces.” Indeed, just a few verses after describing the banquet, Isaiah goes on to speak about the resurrection of the “bodies” of the “dead” (Isaiah 26:19). As Joseph Klausner suggests, the overall context of the banquet is Isaiah’s vision of “the cessation of death and the resurrection of the dead in the Age to Come.” Second, the banquet is a feast of redemption; it will be tied to the forgiveness of sins. At the time of the banquet, God will take away “the reproach of his people” and give them salvation (Isaiah 25:8–9). Third, the coming feast will be a cultic or sacrificial banquet. This is the meaning of the strange imagery of “fat things” and “wine on the lees.” This is technical terminology for sacrificial offerings of the Temple cult, as when Deuteronomy speaks of “the fat of their sacrifices” and “the wine of their drink offering” (Deuteronomy 32:37–38; cf. Leviticus 3:3; 4:8–9). This cultic dimension is important to stress, since Isaiah explicitly states that the banquet will take place on “the mountain of the Lord,” which in context refers to “Mount Zion ... in Jerusalem” (Isaiah 24:23). Fourth, in Isaiah, the eschatological banquet will be an international banquet, which will include both the restored tribes of Israel and the Gentile nations. The feast will be “for all peoples” and will result in the “veil” that is cast over all the “nations” or “Gentiles” (*goyim*) being lifted. This is a startlingly universal vision of salvation, nestled right in the heart of one of the most widely read prophets of the Old Testament.

Fifth and finally, ... it is significant that several scholars have suggested that the banquet in Isaiah 25 alludes to and is modeled on the heavenly banquet of Moses and the elders atop Mount Sinai (cf. Isaiah 24:23). In his commentary on Isaiah, Otto Kaiser writes:

Just as Yahweh once revealed himself on Sinai before the elders of his people in the whole fullness of his

light when the covenant was made (cf. Exodus 24:3ff., 9f.), he will once again show himself to the elders of Israel in order ... to ratify the covenant for all time.

B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, pp. 448–511 provides an extensive overview of the messianic banquet in early Judaism, in early Christianity, and in the teachings of Jesus. The most extensive description of this divine, sacramental feast in modern scripture is given in D&C 27:5–15.

457. Exodus 25:30. Hebrew *lechem ha-panim*, literally "bread of the faces." Although the traditional understanding of this general term is that the shewbread "functions as a visible sign of the invisible heavenly 'face' (*panim*) of God" (B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, p. 125. See also p. 124, where it is noted that "in the ancient world, cakes of bread that were offered in temples (and later, in churches), were often stamped with some symbol of the deity (cf. Jeremiah 7:18; 44:19)."), more study of the subject is needed. Elsewhere, I have discussed how temple prayer seems to have been understood by Paul as not only a preparation for beholding the face of God, in likeness of Moses (Exodus 33:11; D&C 84:19–24), but also to enable participants to acquire the glorious likeness of God in their own faces. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, Appendix 5: Paul on Women's Veiling of the Face in Prayer, pp. 111–116.

Stressing the importance of this ordinance, B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, pp. 128, 132, 133 notes that:

the bread of the presence is not depicted as just any kind of sacrifice, but as the premier sacrifice of the Sabbath. Indeed Leviticus is quite clear that the bread of the presence is to be offered "every Sabbath day" by Aaron the high priest and his descendants (Leviticus 24:8). This link is important to stress, because it reveals an often-overlooked cultic activity that characterizes the biblical Sabbath. Not only is the Sabbath a day of rest, it is distinctively characterized by the weekly offering of the unbloody sacrifice of the bread and wine of the presence, as a "remembrance" of the "everlasting covenant" between God and the twelve tribes of Israel [cf. D&C 59:12]. ...

[T]he bread of the presence was the most holy of all sacrifices, with the possible exception of the Day of Atonement. ...

[Texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls suggest], as Matthew Black has argued, ... that “the sacred meal of bread and/or wine of the Qumran priestly sect was not only an anticipation of the messianic banquet, but also a foretaste of the full Temple rite when that had been fully restored in the New Jerusalem” — a rite that was not just the sacrificial consumption of just any food, but specifically of the bread (and wine) of the presence.

458. The symbolism of the actualization of the eschatological feast (rather than merely the prefiguration in the showbread eaten in the Holy Place) may be represented in the golden pot of manna said to have been kept in the Holy of Holies (Exodus 16:33–34; Hebrews 9:4).

459. Although some scholars argue that the libations were meant merely to be poured out by the priests, B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, p. 123 cites “the position of Menahem Haran, who makes a strong case that [Exodus 25:23–30] envisages the wine being drunk by the priests, just as the bread is eaten by the priests, in a sacred banquet of bread and wine (cf. Leviticus 24:5–8).”

Pitre (*ibid.*, pp. 133–134) also cites Philo’s account of the Therapeutae, a first-century Jewish sect, “who celebrated a sacred meal of bread and wine directly modeled on the bread of the presence of the Tabernacle of Moses” (Philo, *Contemplative Life*, 81–83, 85–88). Notably, both men and women participated in the feast, with the “male and female leaders of the banquet ... deliberately modeling their actions on Moses and Miriam.”

460. Leviticus 2:1.

461. J. S. Thompson *How John’s Gospel*, p. 313. In this study, which compares the structure of the Gospel of John to Israelite temples, Thompson sees Jesus’ sermon on the bread of life (John 6:35, 53–56) as corresponding to this first, preparatory offering and thus also to the modern ordinance that is administered by the Aaronic priesthood each Sunday during LDS sacrament meetings.

462. Genesis 14:18; JST Genesis 14:25–40. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 53–58. Genesis Rabbah interprets

Melchizedek's giving of bread and wine to Abraham as follows: "He handed over to him the laws governing priesthood" and "The bread stands for the show-bread, and the wine stands for the offerings" (J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah* vol. 2, 43:6, pp. 119-120).

J. S. Thompson, *How John's Gospel*, p. 314 observes:

The Passover is a small simple meal in the spring at the beginning of the harvest when the first-fruits of barley are also brought to the temple. Starting in chapter 7, John specifically links the next series of events in Jesus' life to the autumnal festivals, particularly the Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles, which is a larger more elaborate meal at the end of the harvest. This feast is typically associated with the ascension and coronation of kings, the reestablishment of law, and the dedication of temples (1 Kings 8:2, 63; Ezra 3:1-4; 2 Maccabees 1:9; 2:9-12; G. Yee, *Jewish Feasts*, p. 87; M. Coloe, *God Dwells*, pp. 148-149). Similarly, the temple program appears to reflect two meals: small preparatory meals associated with the sacrificial altar in the courtyard and a grander meal represented by the table of shewbread inside the holy place of the temple. [A similar pattern of an initial small meal in connection with being clothed in simple linen followed by a large meal in connection with being clothed in more kingly regalia appears in the earliest rituals of the ancient Egyptians. See John S. Thompson, *Context*, pp. 176-177.] Whereas the events of Jesus' life during the Passover in the early chapters of John appear to reflect temple courtyard concepts, John's record of the events in Jesus' life during the Feast of Tabernacles and its closely associated Feast of Dedication have greater connection to the symbolism found in the Holy Place of the temple.

463. Exodus 24:1-11.

464. See B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, pp. 53-147.

465. B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, pp. 122-145. Additional echoes of Moses' ascent of Sinai can be seen in the experience of Jesus, Peter, James, and John at the Mount of Transfiguration (see J. M. Bradshaw, Adam, Eve, and the Three Wise Men).

466. Philo, *Exodus*, p. 70. For more on the specifics of how this description of the deification of Moses might be understood, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Ezekiel Mural*, pp. 41–42, Endnote 68. See also *ibid.*, pp. 19–21. For an excellent, though now somewhat dated, general overview, see, e.g., W. A. Meeks, *Moses*.
467. Observes C. T. R. Hayward: “Philo saw nothing improper ... in describing Moses as a hierophant: like the holder of that office in the mystery cults of Philo’s day, Moses was responsible for inducting initiates into the mysteries, leading them from darkness to light, to a point where *they are enabled to see* [God]” (C. T. R. Hayward, *Israel*, p. 192, emphasis in original). Hayward’s view is consistent with D&C 84:21–23:

21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

22 For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

23 Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God.
468. See B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, pp. 138–141.
469. D. H. Verkerk, *Pentateuch*, p. 90. See Exodus 24:9–18.
470. *Ibid.*, p. 90. See Exodus 24:4–8. This eucharistic scene takes place in the presence of presbyters [elders], deacons, “the canonical widows, and subdeacons and deaconesses and readers [and] those who have gifts” (J. Cooper et al., *Testament*, 1:23, p. 70; cf. D. H. Verkerk, *Pentateuch*, pp. 90–97.).
471. *Ibid.*, p. 90. Note also the square opening for the Christian reliquary beneath the altar table.
472. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
473. For reproductions and descriptions of these two Ravenna mosaics, which depict Abel, Melchizedek, and Abraham simultaneously offering sacrifice at a similar altar, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, EXCURSUS 20: The Circle and the Square, p. 573.
474. In Roman Catholic tradition, the linen altar cloth, called the corporal (Latin *corpus* = body), is said to be modeled after the burial garment of Christ. Thus, both literally at the Redeemer’s

death and figuratively in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, the cloth was meant "to cover and enfold the Body and Blood of Christ" (H. Thurston, *Corporal*, p. 387).

In his catalogue of textiles from Greco-Roman times found at Egyptian burial grounds, Kendrick notes the prominence of the symbol of the square in various contexts, including clothing, and explicitly links these decorations to the Ravenna mosaics (A. F. Kendrick, *Textiles 1*, pp. 32, 36, 37, 38–39. Thanks to Bryce Haymond for pointing out this reference). In addition, a photograph by C. Wilfred Griggs of well-preserved clothing at an Egyptian burial site showed an "early Christian garment... made of wool [that] was placed next to the body. The garment has a woven rosette over each breast, a hemmed cut on the abdomen, and a rosette above the right knee" (C. W. Griggs, *Evidences*, p. 227). Griggs also found that some burials included "one or more robes with linen strips wrapped around the upper half of the body and gathered into a knot on either the left ... or, more commonly, on the right shoulder," indicating priestly authority.

In a Hellenistic Jewish context, Goodenough discusses the appearance of *gammadia* at Dura Europos. These symbols were not only depicted in murals of holy figures, but also were found in a cache of white textile fragments discovered at the site that "may well have been the contents of a box where sacred vestments were kept, or they may have been fetishistic marks, originally on sacred robes, that were preserved after the garments had been outworn" (E. R. Goodenough, *Garments*, p. 225; cf. E. R. Goodenough, *Dura Symbolism*, 9:127–129). Goodenough points to similar findings on Christian robes, in hellenized Egypt, Palmyra, and on Roman figures of Victory which "so commonly appears as a symbol of immortality" (E. R. Goodenough, *Dura Symbolism*, 9:163). John W. Welch mentions Goodenough's conclusions, and reports similar findings at Masada and elsewhere (J. W. Welch et al., *Gammadia*).

475. B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, p. 141. See Matthew 12:1–8; Mark 2:23–27; Luke 6:1–5.

476. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

477. See Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20. Note also that, immediately after speaking of the new covenant represented by His blood, Jesus alluded to the wine of the divine feast, saying

that He would “drink it new with [His disciples] in [His] Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29. Cf. Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18).

Paraphrasing W. W. Wiersbe (*Bible Exposition*, 1:43), it is of interest that in His response to the Pharisees, Jesus appealed — as a Prophet, Priest, and King Himself — to the actions of a king (Matthew 12:3–4), to the practice of priests (Matthew 12:5–6), and to the words of a prophet (Matthew 12:7). Note, too, Wiersbe’s observations regarding the three “greater than” statements that Jesus made in the same chapter: with respect to the priests, He is “greater than the temple” (Matthew 12:6); with respect to the prophets, He is “greater than Jonah” (Matthew 12:41); and with respect to the kings, He is “greater than Solomon” (Matthew 12:42.) In direct affirmation of these “greater than” statements, Jesus declared Himself “Lord of even of the Sabbath day” (Matthew 12:8), thus unequivocally averring His equality with God.

478. Z. Coltrin, Remarks of Zebedee Coltrin, 3 October 1883.
479. Cf. 3 Nephi 18:4, 5, 9; 19:13, 24; 20:8–9, where the connotation of “filled” might be taken as including both physical and spiritual aspects.
480. John Franklin Tolton, diary, 20 April 1893, as cited in U. A. Perego, *Changing Forms*, pp. 7–8.
481. U. A. Perego, *Changing Forms*, p. 8.
482. Ibid. The sacrament that Jesus blessed at the Last Supper (which was prefigured in part by both the Passover and the priestly feast of shewbread) is also given regularly today under the direction of the presiding high priest of the Church. The fact that the ordinance of the sacrament is still sometimes administered in the temple in the context of additional ordinances, e.g., the washing of the feet (cf. John 13:1–17) and formal, sacred prayer (cf. John 17), enriches its meaning and confirms Perego’s conclusion that the sacrament is not simply a “stand-alone ritual but [is also] an intrinsic and vital component with all other rites [Jesus] introduced while ‘feasting’ on that last meal.”

For a discussion of the similar but distinctive ordinances of the washing of the feet of the apostles by Jesus and the anointing of Jesus’ feet by Mary in light of modern scholarship and the

teachings and translations of Joseph Smith, see J. M. Bradshaw, *What Did Joseph Smith Know*, pp. 78–85 ENDNOTE 46.

For a firsthand account describing the purpose of early washings in Kirtland, instituted before the more complete version of the temple ordinances were given to the Saints in Nauvoo, see O. Pratt, 20 May 1877, p. 16. For additional background on the revelation of temple ordinances in Kirtland, see J. M. Bradshaw et al., *How Thankful*.

In 1979, President N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency described the continuing place of the sacrament as part of regular temple meetings that include instruction and sacred, formal prayer (N. E. Tanner, *Administration*).

483. K. W. Perkins, *Kirtland Temple*.
484. For a more complete discussion of this possibility, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Ezekiel Mural*.
485. H. W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, p. 189.
486. E. R. Goodenough, *Summary*, 12:160.
487. E. R. Goodenough, *Dura Symbolism*, 9:78–79.
488. *Ibid.*, 9:105.
489. Goodenough stresses that the “The enthroned king surrounded by the tribes in such a place reminds us much more of the Christ enthroned with the saints in heaven ... than of any other figure in the history of art.” And Nibley observes: “As this is the high point in the Dura murals, so was it also in Lehi’s vision [in 1 Nephi 1]” (Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, p. 192, quoting Goodenough, *Dura Symbolism*, 10:200, 201).
490. Nibley’s description illustrates how the placement of the mural evokes the grounding of the tree in God’s covenant with Israel (H. W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, p. 189; see also H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:135, 137): “Directly above the shrine, as if springing directly from the Law itself, is depicted a splendid tree. ... ‘Out of the Torah shrine ... grew the tree of life and salvation which led to the supernal throne’ (Goodenough, *Dura Symbolism*, 10:200).”
491. 1 Nephi 8:19, 20, 24, 30; 11:25; 15:3.
492. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Faith, Hope, and Charity*.

493. See J. A. Tvedtnes, Vineyard.
494. H. W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, pp. 189, 191. See, e.g., Jacob 5:8.
495. Jeremiah 14:8; 17:13.
496. Isaiah 49:7ff.
497. E. R. Goodenough, *Dura Symbolism*, 9:80–81.
498. John 15:5.
499. John 1:47.
500. N. Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, p. 74 sees a likeness to the “ladder” (i.e., stairway, ramp) of Jacob’s dream:

The dream looks suspiciously like a description of a Babylonian ziggurat, in all probability the temple tower in Babylon. This had an external, monumental stairway leading to the top story, which represented heaven, the dwelling-place of the gods.

The Akkadian word *bāb-ili* means “gate of the god.” (For the Akkadians, the god was likely Marduk.) In practical terms, this means that “the Babylonian Tower was intended to pave a way for divine entrance into the city” (L. R. Kass, *Wisdom*, p. 229). Jacob will later claim a name with similar meaning to the Akkadian “gate of the god” for the place of his vision: “gate of heaven” (Genesis 28:17).

For more on the ancient Near East background of the Jacob’s dream and the related accounts of the Tower of Babel and the great and spacious building in Lehi’s dream, see J. M. Bradshaw et al., *God’s Image* 2, pp. 382–406.

501. Genesis 28:12.
502. John 1:51, emphasis added.
503. John 14:6, emphasis added.
504. Goodenough, *Dura Symbolism*, 10:201. In this picture, Goodenough maintained, the artist was trying to show “the glorification of Israel through the mystic tree-vine, whose power could also be represented as a *divine love* which the soul-purifying music of an Orpheus figure best symbolized” (Goodenough, *Dura Symbolism*, 10:201, emphasis added). Nibley connected this Orpheus-David figure in a tree with the tree representing “the love

of God" that Lehi and Nephi saw in vision (1 Nephi 11:21–22), with Alma's "song of redeeming love" (Alma 5:26), and with the "new song" sung by the hundred and forty-four thousand redeemed before the throne of God (Revelation 14:3).

Nibley noted that the Orpheus theme was also associated with the ancient annual celebration of the new year, the *hilaria*, which "was the occasion on which all the world joined in the great creation hymn, as they burst into a spontaneous song of praise recalling the first creation." Further associating this event with the Day of Atonement reiterated in the Dura image of the sacrifice of Isaac, he notes that the Greek term for "mercy seat" is *hilasterion* — the place of the *hilaria* (H. W. Nibley, *Atonement*, pp. 563–566, drawing on E. R. Goodenough, *Dura Symbolism*, 9:89–104. See also H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 2:228–230).

505. See Genesis 49:9–10. The extant Hebrew of these verses, and indeed much of the rest of the text of Jacob's blessings, presents many difficult problems in translation, as it contains several obscure and archaic terms and phrases. In particular, the phrase "until Shiloh comes" (Genesis 49:10) has been particularly troublesome to scholars and has required modern translators to employ conjectural emendation to reconstruct the text. For example, many scholars today reconstruct the phrase "until Shiloh comes" as "until he comes to whom it belongs" (cf. Ezekiel 21:25–27).

Though controversy continues over the particulars of this passage, there is no doubt that to Jewish exegetes of the Second Temple era, these verses had messianic significance. With respect to verse 9, which referred to Judah as a "lion's whelp," Nahum Sarna observes that "under the influence of this verse, the 'lion of Judah' became a favorite motif in Jewish art and acquired messianic associations" (N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 336). With respect to verse 10, a Targum that is dated to sometime between the first and fourth century gives the following reading:

Kings shall not cease from the house of Judah, nor yet scribes teaching the law from the sons of his sons, until the time that the anointed king comes, to whom belongs the kingdom. (*Targum Neophyti*, Genesis 49:10, as cited in J. L. Kugel, *Traditions*, p. 472.)

The Joseph Smith Translation understands this verse as referring to the "Messiah" (see JST Genesis 50:24).

506. K. Shubert, *Jewish Pictorial*, p. 173. For more on Messiah ben Joseph, see R. Patai, *Messiah*, pp. 165–170; T. G. Hatch, *Messiah ben Joseph*; J. A. Tvedtnes, *Lord's Anointed*.
507. For a reproduction of Gute's reconstruction, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Ezekiel Mural*, p. 16, Figure 7.
508. E. R. Goodenough, *Summary*, 12:162.
509. Psalm 110:4.
510. Revelation 5:5. Cf. Isaiah 11:1–5.
511. Matthew 9:27; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9, 15; Mark 10:47–48; 12:35–37; Luke 18:38–39.
512. Revelation 5:5.
513. Hebrews 5:10; 6:20; 7:11, 21.
514. See Genesis 2:3; D&C 77:1, 12; 130:9; Moses 3:3; 7:45–69; Abraham 5:3; Articles of Faith 1:10.
515. Revelation 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20; D&C 39:24; 41:4; 54:10; 88:26.
516. JS–Matthew 1:36. Cf. Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26; D&C 45:16, 44.
517. U. A. Perego, *Changing Forms*, p. 15 cites Truman G. Madsen as follows (T. G. Madsen, *Savior, Sacrament, Self-Worth*):

the fullest flow of the Spirit of God comes to us through His appointed channels or ordinances. The sacrament is the central and oft-repeated ordinance that transmits that power to us. Indeed, it is the ordinance that gives focus to all other ordinances. ... Eventually, through a lifetime, His spirit can sanctify the very elements of our bodies until we become capable of celestial resurrection. In baptism we are born once — born of the water and of the spirit. In the sacrament, we are reborn, over and over, of the bread and of the wine or water and we are truly what we eat.

518. D&C 27:5.

