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A. Keith Thompson

# IS FAITH COMPATIBLE WITH REASON?

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Daniel C. Peterson

**Abstract:** *In this article I argue that faith is not only rationally justifiable but also inescapable simply because our decisions regarding ultimate questions must necessarily be made under conditions of objective uncertainty. I review remarks by several prominent thinkers on the subject — both avowed atheists and several writers who have addressed the challenge implicit in issues related to faith and reason. I end my discussion by citing William James, who articulated clearly the choices we must make in addressing these “ultimate questions.”*

That title, our severely limited time, and the diverse character of this FreedomFest<sup>1</sup> audience suggest at least two things: First, my task here isn't to prove faith, as such, *true* but to argue that faith is or can be, “compatible with reason.”

Second, my obligation isn't to demonstrate that any *particular* tenet of any *particular* faith is true. That's not my job.

Now, this is somewhat unsatisfying. After all, few if any people have faith *generically*, without a specific *object* of faith. By analogy, nobody speaks “language.” People speak English, say, or German, or Arabic, or Chinese. Thus too, religious believers assert specific propositions — for

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1. This article, exclusive of one clearly marked addendum at the conclusion, is the affirmative statement with which I opened a debate with the atheist Michael Shermer on the topic “Is Faith Compatible with Reason?” at FreedomFest 2018 in Las Vegas, Nevada, on 12 July 2018. Dr. Shermer, trained as an historian of science, is a prolific author as well as the founder of The Skeptics Society and the editor-in-chief of its magazine, *Skeptical*. Dr. Shermer also writes a monthly column for *Scientific American* under the title “Skeptic: Viewing the World with a Rational Eye.” He did not appear to have a written text with him during the debate. See Daniel Peterson and Michael Shermer, “Is Faith Compatible with Reason?” C-Span video, 55:20. July 12, 2018, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?448000-3/is-faith-compatible-reason>.

example, that Moses received the law on Sinai, that Jesus rose from the dead, that Muhammad encountered Gabriel on Mt. Hira', or that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon "by the gift and power of God."

Thus, my task here today is not only modest but also artificially abstract. Still, we proceed.

As a very blunt statement of unfaith, I choose a passage from the 1903 essay, "A Free Man's Worship," by the great philosopher and logician Bertrand Russell, the most vocal and famous atheist of the twentieth century:

That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins — all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.<sup>2</sup>

Summarizing the views he once held as an atheist, Leo Tolstoy sounds like Lord Russell: "You are a temporary, incidental accumulation of particles."<sup>3</sup> "The meaninglessness of life" is "the only indisputable piece of knowledge available to man."<sup>4</sup> The bottom line, as one American atheist philosopher put it, is that the things that matter most will ultimately be at the mercy of the things that matter least.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to that, I offer a statement from the great Harvard psychologist and philosopher William James:

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2. Bertrand Russell, "A Free Man's Worship," chap. 3 in *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays* (1910; repr., London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1959), 47-48.

3. Leo Tolstoy, *A Confession and Other Religious Writings*, trans. and ed. Jane Kentish (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 39.

4. Tolstoy, *A Confession and Other Religious Writings*, 34.

5. William Pepperell Montague, *Belief Unbound* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930).



Science says things are; morality says some things are better than other things; and religion says essentially two things. First, she says that the best things are the more eternal things, the overlapping things, the things in the universe that throw the last stone, so to speak, and say the final word. ... The second affirmation of religion is that we are better off even now if we believe her first affirmation to be true.<sup>6</sup>

That second affirmation — “that we are better off even now if we believe” — is, I think, demonstrably true. Scores of studies show that religious faith or religious involvement correlates, on the whole, with superior physical, mental, and emotional health. That isn’t my topic for today, however, even though such considerations might be enough, in themselves, to demonstrate that faith is reasonable.

For my remarks today, I will draw heavily upon William James. In his classic 1896 lecture “The Will to Believe,” James responded to the English mathematician and philosopher W. K. Clifford, who had asserted that “it is wrong always, everywhere, and for every one, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.”<sup>7</sup> James was, he said, offering an “essay in justification of faith, a defence of our right to adopt a believing attitude in religious matters, in spite of the fact that our merely logical intellect may not have been coerced.”<sup>8</sup>

I will argue that faith is rationally justifiable and also, as a subordinate and perhaps dispensable point, that faith is inescapable — for the simple and sufficient reason that decisions regarding ultimate questions must be made, and must necessarily be made under conditions of objective uncertainty.

Let me stipulate that there are large issues — the ultimate questions — for which publicly accessible, objective proof is unavailable.<sup>9</sup>

By “publicly accessible, objective proof,” I mean not only the kind of proof we find in mathematics and, par excellence, in geometry — where, if the proof is valid, anybody who understands it *must* logically accept its conclusion — but also the rather looser kinds of proof we sometimes see

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6. William James, *The Will to Believe, Human Immortality, and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956), 25–26.

7. James, *The Will to Believe*, 8.

8. *Ibid.*, 1.

9. In an article I saw only when sorting through my mail after returning from Las Vegas, Dr. Shermer effectively grants this stipulation with regard to theism and atheism (and, for that matter, with regard to subjective personal experience). See Michael Shermer, “The Final Mysterians: Are consciousness, free will and God insoluble mysteries?” *Scientific American* 319, no. 1 (July 2018): 73.

in laboratories and elsewhere. And I specifically mean to exclude personal spiritual experiences, which may convince those who have them to the point of certainty but which, by their very nature, are subjective — meaning not “false” but uniquely accessible to their “subject,” to the person who experiences them — and nontransferable. They may be more or less described, but they cannot be fully conveyed to another, any more than another who hears me describe my headache or my Alpine hike in Switzerland’s Berner Oberland experiences my pain or thereby sees the Lauterbrunnen Valley in the way I saw it. Reading about headaches or the Swiss Alps is simply not the same thing as having a headache or traveling to Switzerland.

“Let us,” proposes William James, “give the name of hypothesis to anything that may be proposed to our belief; and just as the electricians speak of live and dead wires, let us speak of any hypothesis as either live or dead. A live hypothesis is one which appeals as a real possibility to him to whom it is proposed.”<sup>10</sup>

Of course, people will differ on what is possible or not, what is plausible or implausible. As James puts it, “deadness and liveness in an hypothesis are not intrinsic properties, but relations to the individual thinker.”<sup>11</sup>

Responding directly to W. K. Clifford, James observes that

When the Cliffords tell us how sinful it is to be Christians on such “insufficient evidence,” insufficiency is really the last thing they have in mind. For them the evidence is absolutely sufficient, only it makes the other way. They believe so completely in an anti-christian order of the universe that there is no living option: Christianity is a dead hypothesis from the start.<sup>12</sup>

“Next,” he says, “let us call the decision between two hypotheses an option. Options may be of several kinds. They may be — 1, *living* or *dead*; 2, *forced* or *avoidable*; 3, *momentous* or *trivial*.”<sup>13</sup>

We’ve already discussed “living” and “dead” hypotheses. The distinction between “forced” and “avoidable” hypotheses should be fairly obvious: Whether life arose in a warm tidal pool or near a hot deep-ocean vent, for example, has no practical impact on my life. Nor does the question of whether Napoleon ate eggs for breakfast on the morning of the Battle of Waterloo. In such cases — science and the study of history offer many of them — I can avoid deciding.

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10. James, *The Will to Believe*, 2.

11. *Ibid.*, 2-3.

12. *Ibid.*, 14.

13. *Ibid.*, 3.

“Wherever there is no forced option,” says James, “the dispassionately judicial intellect with no pet hypothesis, saving us, as it does, from dupery at any rate, ought to be our ideal.”<sup>14</sup>

Wherever the option between losing truth and gaining it is not momentous, we can throw the chance of *gaining truth* away, and at any rate save ourselves from any chance of *believing falsehood*, by not making up our minds at all till objective evidence has come. In scientific questions, this is almost always the case; and even in human affairs in general, the need of acting is seldom so urgent that a false belief to act on is better than no belief at all. Law courts, indeed, have to decide on the best evidence attainable for the moment, because a judge’s duty is to make law as well as to ascertain it, and (as a learned judge once said to me) few cases are worth spending much time over: the great thing is to have them decided on *any* acceptable principle, and got out of the way. But in our dealings with objective nature we obviously are recorders, not makers, of the truth; and decisions for the mere sake of deciding promptly and getting on to the next business would be wholly out of place. Throughout the breadth of physical nature facts are what they are quite independently of us, and seldom is there any such hurry about them that the risks of being duped by believing a premature theory need be faced. The questions here are always trivial options, the hypotheses are hardly living (at any rate not living for us spectators), the choice between believing truth or falsehood is seldom forced. The attitude of sceptical balance is therefore the absolutely wise one if we would escape mistakes. What difference, indeed, does it make to most of us whether we have or have not a theory of the Röntgen rays, whether we believe or not in mind-stuff, or have a conviction about the causality of conscious states? It makes no difference. Such options are not forced on us. On every account it is better not to make them, but still keep weighing reasons *pro et contra* with an indifferent hand.<sup>15</sup>

But the ultimate questions with which religion and irreligion deal are not of that nature. Back to William James:

We see ... that religion offers itself as a *momentous* option. We are supposed to gain, even now, by our belief, and to lose

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14. Ibid., 21-22.

15. Ibid., 19-20.

by our non-belief, a certain vital good. Secondly, religion is a *forced* option, so far as that good goes. We cannot escape the issue by remaining sceptical and waiting for more light, because, although we do avoid error in that way *if religion be untrue*, we lose the good, *if it be true*, just as certainly as if we positively chose to disbelieve.<sup>16</sup>

At this point, his argument is very similar to Pascal's famous "wager":

A game is going on between you and the nature of things which at the day of judgment will bring out either heads or tails. Weigh what your gains and your losses would be if you should stake all you have on heads, or God's existence: if you win in such case, you gain eternal beatitude; if you lose, you lose nothing at all. If there were an infinity of chances, and only one for God in this wager, still you ought to stake your all on God; for though you surely risk a finite loss by this procedure, any finite loss is reasonable, even a certain one is reasonable, if there is but the possibility of infinite gain.<sup>17</sup>

I've already stipulated above that there are large issues — the ultimate questions — for which publicly accessible, objective proof is unavailable. So I will proceed on the assumption that, on these fundamental questions, the questions with which religion (and its negation) concern themselves, the answers are, so far as publicly demonstrable arguments go, neither 100% certain nor 100% impossible but somewhere in between and, let us say, in the rough vicinity of 50/50. Perhaps — judgments will vary — they're 30/70 or even 5/95.

But "live options" remain, and, on these issues, a decision is inescapable. Theists decide. Atheists decide. Not to decide is also, itself, effectively and unavoidably to decide. To behave agnostically is, practically speaking, to behave atheistically. The choice is forced upon us.

How, though, are we to decide when the objective facts are inadequate to compel our judgment? Decision-making under uncertainty should be very familiar to the risk-takers and investors who flock to this conference. In the end, we have little alternative but to go with what feels right to us.

"Our passional nature," says William James,

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16. Ibid., 26.

17. Ibid., 5-6.

not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds; for to say, under such circumstances, “Do not decide, but leave the question open,” is itself a passional decision, — just like deciding yes or no, — and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth.<sup>18</sup>

Here’s an expressly Jamesian analogy from the contemporary Claremont philosopher Stephen Davis:

Imagine the following situation: while entering a steep downgrade, a truck driver suddenly discovers that her brakes have failed. The truck is starting to pick up speed, and the driver sees that soon she will be in danger. The driver is faced with a choice: she can either immediately jump from the truck, risking bruises and broken bones while escaping the greater danger of a possible crash farther down the hill. Or she can remain in the truck, risking a crash but hoping eventually to guide it down the hill to a level spot. But the driver does not know how long the downgrade is; she cannot see where it ends and this stretch of road is new to her.

It surely seems that this is a genuine option for the driver. It is live, because both possibilities appeal to her as distinct possibilities. It is forced, because there is no third option beside jumping now or staying with the truck (jumping later is a logical possibility, but is clearly too unsafe to be seriously considered). It is momentous, because her life is at stake. And the evidence is ambiguous because, let’s say, neither possibility seems to her any safer or more dangerous than the other. ... James would claim that she now has the intellectual right to choose whichever option she wants to choose, to let her passional nature decide.<sup>19</sup>

Still, wouldn’t it be preferable to follow rigorous logic and irrefutable data here, rather than to take a leap of faith? Yes, it would. But we’ve already stipulated that rigorous logic and irrefutable data are not, in fact, available to fully ground a choice.

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18. Ibid., 11.

19. Stephen T. Davis, *God, Reason and Theistic Proofs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 173-74.

Moreover, James points out, “pure insight and logic, whatever they might do ideally, are not the only things that really do produce our creeds.”<sup>20</sup> We don’t arrive at our moral beliefs or even our political views or economic ideas purely on the basis of indisputable data and irresistible chains of logic. And anyway, James asks rhetorically, “Objective evidence and certitude are doubtless very fine ideals to play with, but where on his moonlit and dream-visited planet are they found?”<sup>21</sup>

In this life, said the apostle Paul, we “see through a glass, darkly.”<sup>22</sup> That’s our situation, and we must do the best that we can. When the facts are uncertain but a decision absolutely must be made, it’s scarcely irrational to make a decision — as both theists and atheists in fact *do*.<sup>23</sup>

I close with the final paragraph from William James’s “The Will to Believe,” in which he himself is citing Fitz James Stephen:

These are questions with which all must deal as it seems good to them. They are riddles of the Sphinx, and in some way or other we must deal with them. ... In all important transactions of life we have to take a leap in the dark. ... If we decide to leave the riddles unanswered, that is a choice; if we waver in our answer, that, too, is a choice: but whatever choice we make, we make it at our peril. If a man chooses to turn his back altogether on God and the future, no one can prevent him; no one can show beyond reasonable doubt that he is mistaken. If a man thinks otherwise and acts as he thinks, I do not see that any one can prove that he is mistaken. Each must act as he thinks best; and if he is wrong, so much the worse for him. We stand on a mountain pass in the midst of whirling snow and blinding mist, through which we get glimpses now and then of paths which may be deceptive. If we stand still we shall be frozen to death. If we take the wrong road we shall be dashed to pieces. We do not certainly know whether there is any right one. What must we do? “Be strong and of a good courage.” Act for the best, hope for the best, and take what comes. ... If death ends all, we cannot meet death better.<sup>24</sup>

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20. James, *The Will to Believe*, 11.

21. *Ibid.*, 14.

22. 1 Corinthians 13:12.

23. At this point in the Las Vegas debate, constrained by time, I chose to sit down. So the remainder of these prepared remarks was not presented there.

24. James, *The Will to Believe*, 31.

**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).





# ON BEING THE SONS OF MOSES AND AARON: ANOTHER LOOK AT INTERPRETING THE OATH AND COVENANT OF THE PRIESTHOOD

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Mark Hamstead

*Abstract: Section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants contains what is commonly known by Latter-day Saints as the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood. Priesthood leaders in the church are expected to teach and explain this Oath and Covenant to prospective Melchizedek Priesthood holders. However, the meanings of phrases within the Oath and Covenant are not well understood. For example: What does it mean to become the sons of Moses and Aaron? In what sense are bodies renewed? Are the promised blessings just for holders of the priesthood or for others as well? This paper discusses several ways that phrases in the Oath and Covenant have been interpreted. To identify differing interpretations, I conducted an extensive review of references to the Oath and Covenant in LDS conference addresses and the words of Joseph Smith using the LDS Scripture Citation Index.<sup>1</sup> After considering these interpretations, I explore other ways the phrases could be interpreted to provide greater understanding of what it means to hold the priesthood and “magnify” it.*

Interpreting scripture can be challenging. In an examination of a sample of Joseph Smith’s words, Jeffrey Bradshaw discussed several factors<sup>2</sup> to consider in interpreting scripture, including:

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1. *BYU LDS Scripture Citation Index*, last updated 2015, <http://scriptures.byu.edu>. This index identifies scriptures referenced in general conferences, the *Journal of Discourses*, and *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*.

2. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Now That We Have the Words of Joseph Smith, How Shall We Begin to Understand them?”, *Interpreter, A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 20 (2016): 47–150.

- understanding the meanings of words and phrases as they would have been understood at the time of writing
- understanding the cultural context at the time of writing
- decoding unfamiliar imagery
- recognizing that words are an attempt to explain spiritual concepts that often can be well understood only by personal revelation.

Additional matters to consider are:

- the surrounding text, as the meaning of the word or phrase would be expected to be consistent with the flow of ideas surrounding it
- meanings of similar phrases from earlier scripture likely alluded to
- consistency with more broadly established doctrine and principles.

The person most likely to have understood what was intended by the phrases in the Oath and Covenant was Joseph Smith, through whom the revelation came. However, I could not find any record of his expounding directly on these verses. Since Joseph's time, many general authorities of the Church have discussed and interpreted the Oath and Covenant, but there have been no definitive statements from the First Presidency to provide authoritative revelatory interpretations.

As stated by President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "the Restoration is an ongoing process; we are living in it right now."<sup>3</sup> A major part of this is the improving and deepening of our understanding of scriptures that have been with us since the early days of the restoration. This has been assisted by an explosion in access to historical records and historical contextual information in recent years.

Interpretational inertia sometimes occurs, whereby a particular interpretation of scripture is quoted and requoted until over time it gains a high degree of acceptance. The authority and integrity of those stating such interpretations are sufficient for many to mandate unquestioning acceptance, even if it began simply as an opinion. This can be an impediment to considering differing interpretations.

In recent years the Church has clarified that not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, necessarily constitutes doctrine. An article in the Church's online Newsroom states: "A statement made

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3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Are You Sleeping through the Restoration?", *Ensign* (May 2014), 59.

by one leader on a single occasion often represents a personal, though well-considered, opinion, not meant to be official or binding for the whole Church. With divine inspiration, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counsel together to establish doctrine.”<sup>4</sup>

In any case, as scriptures are susceptible to multiple interpretations, there is not necessarily one and only one way of understanding them. Additional meanings can be revealed over time that may never even have occurred to those who first recorded them. For example, as Grant Hardy has pointed out, Nephi was not afraid of adapting the words of Isaiah to applications Isaiah himself would have been unlikely to consider.<sup>5</sup>

Hence, while the statements of the general authorities should be given due weight, alternative interpretations consistent with the canon of scripture and established doctrines can also be valid and a source of wisdom and inspiration.

### **Background to Doctrine and Covenants Section 84**

Section 84 was dictated by Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio, over the course of two days, September 22 and 23, 1832.<sup>6</sup> It was initially given in the presence of six elders, but at some point the audience of the revelation shifted from the six elders to ten high priests. As explained in the Joseph Smith Papers Project, an understanding of priesthood was still developing among church members:

The Book of Mormon indicated that authority from God was necessary to perform certain ordinances, such as baptism and conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost ... However, extant records up to June 1831 did not call such authority “priesthood”; that term — while appearing in both the Book of Mormon and in [Joseph Smith’s] Bible revision — did not appear in any other contemporary documents until the minutes of a June 1831 conference which noted that several individuals were

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4. “Approaching Mormon doctrine,” *LDS Newsroom*, May 4, 2007, <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/commentary/approaching-mormon-doctrine>.

5. Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 64.

6. For an in-depth examination of the historical context of Section 84, see Matthew C. Godfrey, “A Culmination of Learning: D&C 84 and the Doctrine of the Priesthood,” in *You Shall Have My Word: Exploring the Text of the Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Scott C. Esplin, Richard O. Cowan, and Rachel Cope (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012), 167–81.

ordained to the “high Priesthood.” Moreover, the “Articles and Covenants” of the church explained the different duties of apostles, elders, priests, teachers, and deacons but did not explicitly associate these offices with the priesthood.

By late 1831, the high priesthood was understood to refer to both the office of high priest and to a broader authority ... A history [Joseph Smith] began writing around summer 1832 suggests that he had received two separate powers with different responsibilities. In that history, [Joseph Smith] noted that “the ministring of — Aangels” gave him an authority that allowed him “to adminster the letter of the Gospel.” He also recorded receiving “the high Priesthood after the holy order of the son of the living God,” which gave him “power and ordinance from on high to preach the Gospel in the administration and demonstration of the spirit.”<sup>7</sup>

Section 84 brought together, clarified, and expanded these doctrines about priesthood, in particular, expounding on the eternal nature of the two priesthoods — their purpose and authority — and the relationship of the previously established offices to the eternal priesthood of God.

For convenience in this paper, the two priesthoods are called the Melchizedek Priesthood and the Aaronic Priesthood, consistent with terminology used in other revelations (e.g. Doctrine and Covenants 107:1) and commonly used today. However, in Section 84 these terms are not used; the Melchizedek Priesthood is referred to as the “Greater Priesthood” (v19), “Holy Priesthood” (v6, 23), “High Priesthood” (v29), and “Priesthood ... after the holiest order of God” (v18). The Aaronic Priesthood is referred to as the “Lesser Priesthood” (v26, 29) and the priesthood “confirmed ... upon Aaron” (v18).

### **The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood**

Section 84 begins by foreshadowing a temple to be built in the city of New Jerusalem on which a cloud would rest, “which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house” (v5). Between verses 5 and 31, there is a digression that describes the two priesthoods. It encompasses the authority of each, how they were passed down anciently, and how they were exercised by Moses and Aaron. It goes on to explain that the sons of

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7. Dean C. Jessee, et. al., *Documents, Volume 2: July 1831–January 1833* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2013), 290.

Moses and Aaron would “offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house” (v31) and would be “filled with the glory of the Lord” (v32).

The part known as the Oath and Covenant follows in verses 33–42:<sup>8</sup>

For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies. They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord; For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me; And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father; And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father’s kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood. Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved. But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come. And wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood which ye have received, which I now confirm upon you who are present this day, by mine own voice out of the heavens; and even I have given the heavenly hosts and mine angels charge concerning you.

In the remainder of Section 84 directions are given to the high priests concerning their responsibility to proclaim the gospel to the world.

To better understand the Oath and Covenant, the following questions are discussed in this paper:

- What does it mean to “become the sons of Moses and Aaron and the seed of Aaron” and why is this important?
- What is meant by “sanctified by the spirit unto the renewing of their bodies”?
- What is the “calling” and how is it “magnified”?

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8. There is some variation in the verses designated as the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood. Some conclude them at verse 39, others at 42, and still others at 48. For the scope of this paper, I conclude with verse 42.

- What does it mean to become “the church and kingdom and the elect of God”?
- Who are those who “receive” this priesthood and consequently the blessings promised by the Oath and Covenant?

### **Becoming Sons of Moses and Aaron and Seed of Abraham**

Section 84 explains that the recipients of the revelation as well as others who were called and sent forth, are sons of Moses and Aaron (v32). It explains that they became sons of Moses and Aaron and the seed of Abraham by “obtaining the two priesthoods” previously spoken of (Melchizedek and Aaronic) and “the magnifying of their calling” (v33–34).

“Obtaining” the priesthood has generally been read to mean the ordination to the priesthood by one having authority. This is consistent with the recitation of priesthood lineage earlier in Section 84 that traces the priesthood of the “sons of Moses,” who received the priesthood as Moses did “under the hand” of his father-in-law Jethro, from person to person back to Abraham, who received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it “through the lineage of his fathers” from Adam (v6–16). Thus, being a “son” is used here as a metaphor suggesting that one who is ordained to the priesthood inherits priesthood authority and responsibility from the covenantal fathers Moses, Aaron, and Abraham, just as a literal blood descendant might inherit rights to a name or title.

This use of “son” is consistent with the metaphorical use of the related term “seed” in the covenant made with Abraham. Abraham, it is recorded, “sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto [he] should be ordained to administer the same” (Abraham 1:2). There is a distinction made here between the blessings that flow from the priesthood (the “blessings of the fathers”) and the holding of the priesthood itself (the “right to ... administer the same”). A person receives the blessings of the priesthood by receiving ordinances with associated covenants. The right to administer those ordinances is given by ordination to the priesthood. Hence, the person who is baptized receives the blessings associated with the baptismal ordinance and covenants, while the priesthood holder ensures the validity of the ordinance but does not himself receive any blessings from that baptism.

Abraham was promised his “literal seed,” meaning his descendants, would bear the priesthood and use it to bless all nations with the blessings of the gospel, even salvation and life eternal. His “seed” is also referred to as his priesthood, implying that those who hold the priesthood are his “seed.”

But those who are blessed through the priesthood are to be accounted his “seed” also (Abraham 2:9–11). The term “seed” is thus used in three ways: firstly, the literal or biological descendants; secondly, those who inherit the priesthood authority Abraham held; and thirdly, those who inherit the blessings of the gospel through the ministration of that priesthood. The context in Section 84 suggests that the sonship referred to is the second of these three: inheriting Abraham’s priesthood — the right to teach and administer the ordinances and covenants of the Gospel — which was passed from Abraham down through the fathers to Moses and Aaron.

### **Sanctified by the Spirit unto the Renewing of Their Bodies**

This phrase has been interpreted in a few different ways. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Orson Pratt interpreted it in context of priesthood holders entering the temple to be built in Jackson County, Missouri. He stated that the Lord would “purify not only the minds of the Priesthood in that Temple, but he will purify their bodies until they shall be quickened, renewed and strengthened, and they will be partially changed, not to immortality, but changed in part that they can be filled with the power of God, and they can stand in the presence of Jesus, and behold his face in the midst of that Temple.”<sup>9</sup> Charles W. Penrose may have had this interpretation in mind when he said “When that holy temple is built in Zion God will take away the veil from the eyes of his servants; and the day is yet to dawn when the sons of Moses and Aaron, having become sanctified to the renewing of their bodies, will administer in that holy house, and the veil will be taken away, and they will gaze upon the glories of that world now unseen, and upon the faces of beings now to them invisible.”<sup>10</sup> I could not find this interpretation reiterated since then.

Hugh B. Brown linked the renewing with a blessing of physical health stating: “that promise has been realized in the lives of many of us. I know that it has been realized in the life of President David O. McKay, that he has been sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of his body, and some of the rest of us are better off today than we were many years ago so far as physical health is concerned — and we attribute that fact

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9. Orson Pratt, “Consecration,” *Journal of Discourses*, reported by David W. Evans 9 March 1873, Vol. 15 (London: Latter-Day Saint’s Book Depot, 1873), 365–66.

10. Charles W. Penrose, “The Word of the Lord,” *Journal of Discourses*, reported by George F. Gibbs 29 November 1879, Vol. 21 (London: Latter-day Saint’s Book Depot, 1881), 49.

to his blessing.”<sup>11</sup> Henry B. Eyring interpreted it similarly: “I have seen that promise fulfilled in my own life and in the lives of others. A friend of mine served as a mission president. He told me that at the end of every day while he was serving, he could barely make it upstairs to bed at night wondering if he would have the strength to face another day. Then in the morning, he would find his strength and his courage restored. You have seen it in the lives of aged prophets who seemed to be renewed each time they stood to testify of the Lord Jesus Christ and the restored gospel. That is a promise for those who go forward in faith in their priesthood service.”<sup>12</sup>

Harold B. Lee associated the phrase “renewing of their bodies” with being spiritually born into the family of God, stating: “The Saints might become one with the Father and the Son, spiritually begotten by baptism and through the Holy Ghost even unto the renewing of their bodies as the Lord tells us, and thus ‘... become the sons of Moses and of Aaron ... the church and kingdom, and the elect of God,’ (D&C 84:34) and thus become adopted into the holy family, the Church and kingdom of God, the Church of the Firstborn.”<sup>13</sup> Bruce R. McConkie similarly associated this phrase with being “born again,” stating:

Those who magnify their callings in the priesthood “are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.” (D&C 84:33) They are born again; they become new creatures of the Holy Ghost; they are alive in Christ.

Of such faithful persons among the ancients, Alma says: “They were called after this holy order” — that is, they held the Melchizedek Priesthood — “and [they] were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb. Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence” (Alma 13:11–12).<sup>14</sup>

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11. Hugh B. Brown, “Participation: The Way to Salvation,” *Conference Report* (April 1963), 90.

12. Henry B. Eyring, “Faith and the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood,” *Ensign* (May 2008), 62.

13. Harold B. Lee, “Let Us Be as One,” *Conference Report* (April 1950), 99.

14. Bruce R. McConkie, “The Ten Blessings of the Priesthood,” *Ensign* (November 1977), 33.



Brent Farley blends a couple of the above interpretations and suggests that a level of physical renewal results from the spiritual sanctification:

To be sanctified is to be made clean through the power of the Holy Ghost and then to have its operative power giving guidance for life's activities. Such influence has a positive effect upon the body. *Renew* is defined as something that restores to a good state, rebuilds, repairs, confirms, revives, makes fresh and vigorous, transforms, implants holy affections, etc. It is not necessarily that the body is visibly transformed (though this could be the case at times), but the positive effects of the Spirit support and invigorate physical and mental well-being.<sup>15</sup>

Farley then goes on to suggest that the reference to renewal of the body is also an allusion to resurrection.<sup>16</sup>

Jeff Bradshaw argues that the renewal of the body relates to the ultimate renewal of the body in the resurrection but that some level of renewal can occur in mortality. He also argues that renewal of the body is done symbolically in the ordinances of the temple.<sup>17</sup>

Some of the interpretations presented above have problems. If the renewal of the body refers to a renewal of the physical body in this life, then it is a blessing given inconsistently, as many presumably worthy priesthood holders — including apostles — have suffered very poor health and died young. The association of bodily renewal with spiritual rebirth leaves open the question of why this is specifically related to priesthood holders and therefore implicitly not to the women of the church who are not ordained to the priesthood. This has been explained by asserting that such blessings also come to women through the eternal marriage covenant. For example, ElRay L. Christiansen said that “Wilford Woodruff, speaking upon this revelation, made note of the marvelous blessings that await the faithful bearers and sharers of the priesthood; our wives are not without the same blessings that come to the men who bear the priesthood.”<sup>18</sup> However, this

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15. S. Brent Farley, “The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood (D&C 84),” *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Craig K. Mancill (Provo, UT, and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, and Deseret Book, 2004), 223.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 28–29.

18. ElRay L. Christiansen, “For Whoso Is Faithful,” *Conference Report* (April 1955), 30.

still seems to restrict this blessing to the eternities for women who are unable to marry in this life.

In the New Testament, Paul uses a body metaphor to represent the church, with the members all united as the “body” of Christ, each having different roles like eyes, ears, hands, and feet, yet all working together and suffering together (1 Corinthians 12:12–28). This metaphoric use of the word “body” could also be applied to the use of the word in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood. The “renewing of their bodies” could mean the renewal of the body of the Melchizedek priesthood and the body of the Aaronic priesthood, becoming together the “church and kingdom.” This would be consistent with its use later in Section 84 where it refers to the priesthood holders as a body that should work together: “Therefore, let every man stand in his own office, and labor in his own calling; and let not the head say unto the feet it hath no need of the feet; for without the feet how shall the body be able to stand? Also the body hath need of every member, that all may be edified together, that the system may be kept perfect” (v109–110).

Another, simpler interpretation for this phrase comes from connecting it to the next phrase within the text. This is further supported by transcripts recently made available of the earliest handwritten versions of the revelation. The two earliest extant handwritten recordings of Section 84<sup>19</sup> include the word “that” just after “bodies” between verses 33 and 34, a connecting word not in the currently published edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>20</sup> With the connecting word included, verses 33–34 read a little differently:

For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies, **that** they become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.<sup>21</sup>

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19. The two handwritten recordings are reproduced in Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers, Revelations and Translations: Volume 1: Manuscript Revelation Books* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press, 2011). The relevant text from Revelation Book 1 (John Whitmer as primary recorder) is on page 216 of the book, with the relevant text from Revelation Book 2 (Oliver Cowdery as primary recorder) is on page 344.

20. The copy of the revelation transcribed into Revelation Book 2, which does not include the connecting “that,” is likely the source of the current published version of Section 84.

21. Capitalization, spelling, and punctuation follows our current scripture. The only change is the addition of the word “that.”

The added “that” directly connects the phrase “renewing of their bodies” with becoming the sons of Moses and Aaron and the seed of Abraham. Since becoming sons is a metaphor for a covenantal relationship, the phrase “renewing of their bodies” is likely part of the same metaphor, with the change that occurs being covenantal rather than physiological.

According to Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language*, the verb “sanctify” had, at that time, several related meanings depending on context.<sup>22</sup> These include:

- To separate, set apart or appoint to a holy, sacred or religious use.
- To separate, ordain and appoint to the work of redemption and the government of the church.

Consistent with this use of the word *sanctify*, the phrase “sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies, that they become the sons of Moses and Aaron and the seed of Abraham” can be read as a metaphor for priesthood holders becoming separated, or set apart, by the Spirit to the holy calling of Moses, Aaron, and Abraham, becoming their “sons” or “seed.” This reading fits well into the flow of meanings in the text.

Being separated or set apart implies a complete devotion to the work, a separation from the world and its desires, being in the world but not of it, serving only one Master (God), such service being given with all one’s heart, might, mind, and strength (D&C 4:2) in the manner of Moses, Aaron, and Abraham.

### **Magnifying Their Calling**

What, then, is the “calling” that priesthood holders are to magnify in order to become sons of Moses, Aaron, and the seed of Abraham, and how is it “magnified”?

Past interpretations have explained it in broad terms as wholehearted service in God’s work. For example, Bruce R. McConkie explained: “Now, to magnify as here used means to enlarge or increase, to improve upon, to hold up to honor and dignity, to make the calling noble and respectable in the eyes of all men by performing the mission which appertains to the calling in an admirable and successful manner.”<sup>23</sup> Carlos E. Asay stated

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22. *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Webster’s Dictionary 1828 — Online Edition, s.v. “sanctify,” accessed March 2, 2018, <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/sanctify>.

23. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), s.v. “Melchizedek Priesthood.”

that one magnifies his priesthood calling: “By learning one’s duty and executing it fully. By giving one’s best effort in assigned fields of labor. By consecrating one’s time, talents, and means to the Lord’s work as called upon by our leaders and the whisperings of the Spirit. By teaching and exemplifying truth.”<sup>24</sup> He referred to Jacob in the Book of Mormon, who testified that he and his brother “did magnify our office unto the Lord, taking upon us the responsibility ... [teaching] them the word of God with all diligence ... [and] laboring with our might” (Jacob 1:19).

The text of Section 84 suggests a more specific interpretation of the calling of priesthood holders. The image of being a son suggests the priesthood holder inherits rights, roles and responsibilities from the covenantal fathers. They are sons of Moses, Aaron, and Abraham, for they do the same priesthood work as their covenantal fathers. Jeffrey Bradshaw mentioned this, stating: “In similitude of Moses and Aaron, priesthood holders assist in gathering latter-day Israel and establishing them as a people of the Lord. They perform temple work wherein they ‘offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord.’”<sup>25</sup> Farley similarly observed that “the corollary between the mission of Moses in ancient Israel and the mission of the sons of Moses in modern Israel is not coincidental.”<sup>26</sup> Later parts of Section 84 suggest that magnifying their calling also requires giving diligent heed to the words of God (v43–44) and remembering and acting according to the new covenant in the Book of Mormon and other commandments (v57).

Section 84 discusses the work of Moses and Aaron in guiding ancient Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land in what is commonly known as the Exodus. Specifically, it states that Moses taught the children of Israel while in the wilderness that without the ordinances and the authority of the higher priesthood, “no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live,” and he “sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God” (v19–23).<sup>27</sup> Further

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24. Carlos E. Asay, “The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood,” *Ensign* (November 1985), 43.

25. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*, 33–34.

26. S. Brent Farley, “The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood (D&C 84),” *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Craig K. Manscill (Provo, UT, and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, and Deseret Book, 2004), 225.

27. The blessing of seeing the face of the Father and living, mentioned here, in my opinion more likely refers to Moses’s preparing his people to finally enter the celestial kingdom, where the Father dwells, and having eternal life, as opposed to seeing God in mortality. The connection between ordinances and seeing God in

allusions to their work are the references to the cloud resting upon the temple as upon the tabernacle of Moses (v5); the world lying under the bondage of sin analogous to the bondage of the Israelites in Egypt (v49); plagues to go forth upon the nations (v97) as happened in Moses' Egypt; and a scourge to be poured upon the children of Zion, lest they pollute the holy land, as happened to many in Israel who rebelled in the wilderness (v58, 59).

The events of the Exodus as set out in the Old Testament can be considered a type of man's journey through life, from the bondage of sin to the presence of the Father in the celestial world. This is shown in the table below.

Exodus Event	Analogous Personal Event
Children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt.	In our fallen state, we are in the bondage of sin.
Children of Israel passed through the Red Sea.	We are baptized.
Children of Israel were fed by manna provided by God, and water obtained from a rock.	We are spiritually fed by 'living water' and the 'bread of life' in our daily lives, and symbolically fed in the ordinance of the sacrament.
Children of Israel went to Sinai where they built a temple (the Tabernacle) and received ordinances, covenants, instruction, and blessings.	We go to the temple where we receive ordinances, covenants, instruction, and blessings.
Priests received the people's sacrifices and offerings, and administered the sacrificial ordinances, on their behalf, in the temple.	We administer the ordinances in the temple on behalf of those who are dead, including commitments to sacrifice and consecration.
Children of Israel wandered for 40 years in the wilderness, until all those who still yearned for Egypt had died. They then entered the promised land.	We endure to the end, becoming saints through the atonement of Christ, sanctified and purified from the effects of sin until we enter the celestial kingdom.

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mortality is not strictly tied to receiving ordinances, as Joseph Smith saw the Father in his First Vision long before he received the ordinances of the priesthood. It could also refer to the symbolic entry into the presence of the Father in the temple, which in the case of ancient Israel was initially intended for all but was, after their disobedience, restricted to the High Priest only.

While animal sacrifice ended with Christ's sacrifice, both ancient and modern temple ordinances, at their heart, have the same fundamentals that make them acceptable to the Lord — the offering upon the altar of a broken heart and contrite spirit (see Psalm 51:16,17; 3 Nephi 9:19, 20).

Moses and Aaron were called to act as God's agents to teach, lead, and help ancient Israel in their journey to the Promised Land. Priesthood holders today, the "sons of Moses and Aaron," likewise have a calling to teach, lead, and help the people of modern Israel to receive and keep the ordinances of the priesthood, to trust and rely on Christ (the living bread and water) from day to day, and to thereby prepare themselves to return to the presence of the Father in the celestial kingdom. Fulfilling the calling of Moses and Aaron is also fulfilling the calling of Abraham their father, through whose seed all the families of the earth would be blessed with salvation and eternal life (Abraham 2:12). Individual priesthood holders fulfill specific callings in various times and places, and have particular responsibility for their own families.

Moroni may have been referring to this work and its connection with Abraham, Moses, and Aaron when he recast Malachi 4:5–6 while speaking to Joseph Smith. He referred to the revelation of the Priesthood which would result in the promises made to the Fathers being planted in the hearts of the children. As we receive the ordinances of the priesthood, we enter into the same covenants (promises) as our spiritual fathers Abraham, Moses and Aaron.

The Book of Revelation may also be alluding to the role of these two priesthoods in the latter days. Chapter 11 refers to two witnesses who would testify in the last days. While modern revelation tells us that these two witnesses are two prophets to be raised up to the Jewish nation in the last days (D&C 77:15), it can also be interpreted (like so many scriptures) as a metaphor of the work of the two priesthoods in the last days. The allusion is supported by references in Chapter 11 to their turning water to blood; smiting the earth with plagues, like Moses; and shutting the heavens, like Elijah (v6).

### **Becoming the Church and Kingdom and the Elect of God**

In addition to becoming the sons of Moses and Aaron and the seed of Abraham, priesthood holders become "the church and kingdom and the elect of God."

Farley, referring to statements by Harold B. Lee and Bruce R. McConkie, asserted that the "church and kingdom" is a reference to the church of the Firstborn — those who are destined to be joint heirs with Christ in

receiving all that the Father hath. He further stated that those upon the earth living to be worthy of such future attainment are also “the elect of God.” They are the portion of church members who are striving with all their hearts to keep the fullness of the gospel law in this life so they can become inheritors of the fullness of the gospel rewards in the life to come.<sup>28</sup>

Bradshaw asserted that: “the phrase ‘the church and kingdom’ refers to the blessings of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood, belonging to one who is made a ‘king and a priest unto God, bearing rule, authority, and dominion under the Father.’ Correspondingly, worthy women may receive the blessings of becoming queens and priestesses.”<sup>29</sup> He went on to associate becoming the “elect of God” with having one’s calling and election made sure, or in other words, as having received a knowledge that they are sealed up to eternal life.<sup>30</sup>

A more straightforward interpretation is that becoming “the church and kingdom” represents forming the backbone to the institutional church on the earth, as that church is formed around the keys and authority of the Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthoods. It is a kingdom in the sense that it is directed by Jesus Christ through his appointed prophets.

As the phrase, “elect of God,” also means, “chosen of God,” a question is raised regarding what these souls are chosen to do. Perhaps this refers to being chosen for eternal life, as Bradshaw has stated, but it could also refer to being chosen to exercise the powers of heaven in fulfilling their callings. Section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants (v34–44) explains that many are called (ordained to the priesthood) but few are chosen, since they do not learn that the “rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected to the powers of heaven” and that those powers can be exercised only in righteousness, through persuasion, long suffering, meekness, love unfeigned, and so on. Thus, the “elect of God” may in this case refer to those priesthood holders chosen, because of the righteous magnification of their calling, to exercise the powers of heaven in fulfilling that calling, as did their covenant fathers, Moses, Aaron, and Abraham.

### Receiving the Priesthood

Section 84 continues with these words (v35–42):

And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me,  
saith the Lord; For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

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28. Farley, “The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood (D&C 84),” 226.

29. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*, 53.

30. *Ibid.*, 59.

And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father; And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood. Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved.

But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come. And wo unto all those who come not unto this priesthood which ye have received.

These verses promise great blessings to those who “receive” the priesthood and, conversely, great condemnation to those who reject it. “Receiving” the priesthood constitutes a covenant, and the Father has made an oath that those who keep that covenant will receive all that He has. On the other hand, those who break the covenant and altogether turn from it “shall not have forgiveness of sins,” and those who “come not unto” it will be in a state of woe.

“Receiving” the priesthood can be interpreted two ways. The first is to have it conferred upon you, and thus to become a priesthood holder. The second is to receive the ministrations of priesthood holders, specifically, to receive ordinances and covenants administered by priesthood holders. Under the first interpretation the blessings and potential condemnation apply to priesthood holders; under the second, they apply to everyone.

Most authorities have assumed the first interpretation.<sup>31</sup> But this begs the question how these blessings relate to those who don't hold the priesthood, particularly women. In discussing this, Russell M. Nelson stated that “men who worthily receive the priesthood” receive all that the Father has. However, he then went on to say that “incredible blessings flow from this oath and covenant to worthy men, women, and children in all the world,”<sup>32</sup> implying that these blessings extend from priesthood holders to others but not explaining how this occurs.

Bradshaw appears to favor the second interpretation, saying, “no one can receive the Father or the Father's kingdom until he has received

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31. See, for example, Marion G. Romney, “The Oath and Covenant Which Belongeth to the Priesthood,” *Ensign* (November 1980), 45; Asay, “The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood,” 43; and Eyring, “Faith and the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood,” 61.

32. Russell M. Nelson, “Covenants,” *Ensign* (November 2011), 88.



the Son, and no one can receive the Son unless he accepts the Lord's authorized priesthood servants," and noting additionally that, "in the last dispensation, the Lord specifically told his Saints to receive the Prophet Joseph Smith's word 'as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.' Conversely, he who rejects the Lord's servants rejects the Lord and the Lord's prophet."<sup>33</sup>

The text itself appears to support the second interpretation more easily than the first, equating "receiving" the priesthood with receiving the Lord's servants, meaning receiving the ministrations of priesthood holders (see also v87 and 88). Consistent with this, a major portion of the rest of Section 84 is devoted to how the elders are to go about their work of ministering to the world.

The nature of this ministry is implied earlier in Section 84 where it states that the lesser (Aaronic) priesthood "holdeth the key of the ministering of angels, and the preparatory gospel; which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments" (v26, 27), and the greater (Melchizedek) priesthood "administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God" and "in the ordinances thereof the power of godliness is manifest" (v19, 20). Considering this, those who "receive the priesthood" can be interpreted as those who repent, are baptized, and receive the ordinances and covenants of the higher priesthood; these are they who will receive "all that the Father hath."

Section 84 goes on to state that those who break their covenant or reject the priesthood will not receive forgiveness of sins (v41–42). The remission of sins is associated with the ordinances of baptism and receiving the Holy Ghost elsewhere in scripture. Therefore, this reading suggests that those who reject the priesthood will not receive forgiveness because they will not receive the required ordinances.

If the second interpretation is adopted, it can also be inferred that the Oath and Covenant of the priesthood is one and the same as the new and everlasting covenant as described in Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Section 132 was recorded in 1843, but may have been given in large part in 1831 prior to Section 84.<sup>34</sup> While Section 132 focuses on the marriage covenant after verse 15, the earlier part is more general, stating

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33. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*, 67.

34. The heading to Section 132 states in part, "although this revelation was recorded in 1843, evidence indicates that some of the principles involved in this revelation were known by the Prophet as early as 1831."

that those who are to receive a fullness of the glory of the Lord must enter into the new and everlasting covenant or be damned (v6). This new and everlasting covenant is described as those covenants administered by priesthood holders acting consistently with priesthood keys (v7). The covenant of marriage is one part of the new and everlasting covenant.

Both the Oath and Covenant of the priesthood in Section 84 and the new and everlasting covenant of Section 132 have outcomes that are effectively the same. The blessings for those who keep the covenants are “all that the Father hath” in Section 84, and “the fullness of the glory of the Lord” in Section 132. The result of not keeping the covenants is “not having forgiveness of sins in the world to come” in Section 84 and “damnation” in Section 132. They may reasonably be assumed to be the same thing expressed in different ways, since there are no alternate paths to obtain salvation.

### Conclusion

While it has been commonly understood that “becoming the sons of Moses and Aaron, and the seed of Abraham” represents inheriting their priesthood, a considered study of adjoining parts of Section 84 suggests that this role can be clarified to mean teaching, leading, and helping the people of today to receive baptism and temple ordinances, to trust and rely on Christ (the living bread and water) from day to day, and thereby to prepare them to return to the presence of the Father in the celestial kingdom. This is shown in type by how Moses and Aaron anciently led their people out of the captivity of Egypt, through the waters of the Red Sea to the temple at Mount Sinai, providing manna and water in the wilderness as they made their way to the Promised Land.

It is proposed that the phrase “renewing of their bodies” is part of the metaphor of becoming sons of Moses and Aaron, the change that actually occurs being covenantal rather than physiological, and that becoming the “elect of God” refers to those priesthood holders who are chosen, because of the righteous magnification of their calling, to exercise the powers of heaven to fulfil this priesthood calling passed down from the fathers.

Lastly, it is proposed that the Oath and Covenant of the Father, including the promise that “all that [the] Father hath shall be given unto him,” can be readily interpreted as applying to those who receive priesthood holders by receiving the ordinances and covenants they administer. It thus applies to both men and women and not just to those ordained to the priesthood. Considered this way, the Oath and Covenant

is another expression of the new and everlasting covenant mentioned elsewhere in the scriptures.

**Mark Hamstead** was born in Sydney, Australia, where he still resides. He is married with four grown children and three grandchildren. Mark joined the Church at age 14, and his Church service includes a mission to England as a young man and he is currently serving a senior mission to Laos with his wife Denise. In between he enjoyed serving in a full range of Church callings including bishop and stake presidency counselor. Mark has bachelors and masters degrees in civil engineering and worked for government water management agencies for 20 years before becoming an independent consultant in water resource management. He is co-author of a university textbook on water resource planning. He is semi-retired but continues to work as a consultant on a casual, part-time basis. Since he was a young man Mark has loved studying the scriptures and learning from the Spirit through doing so. He particularly enjoys spending time reading and discussing scriptures and the gospel with his wife.



# “THE TIME IS PAST”: A NOTE ON SAMUEL’S FIVE-YEAR PROPHECY<sup>1</sup>

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Neal Rappleye

**Abstract:** *The story of believers being nearly put to death before the appearance of the sign at Christ’s birth is both inspiring and a little confusing. According to the Book of Mormon, the sign comes in the 92nd year, which was actually the sixth year after the prophecy had been made. There is little wonder why even some believers began to doubt. The setting of a final date by which the prophecy must be fulfilled, however, suggests that until that day, there must have been reason for even the nonbelievers to concede that fulfillment was still possible; yet after that deadline it was definitively too late. An understanding of Mesoamerican timekeeping practices and terminology provides one possible explanation.*

One of the more interesting — and more perplexing — stories in the Book of Mormon is that of Samuel the Lamanite’s prophecy (and its fulfillment) that Christ would be born in five years (Helaman 14:2–7; 3 Nephi 1:5–21). Samuel’s prophecy is made at some point in the 86th year (Helaman 13:1–2) and declares, “Behold, I give unto you a sign; for *five years more cometh*, and behold, then cometh the Son of God to redeem all those who shall believe on his name” (Helaman 14:2).

Yet as the 92nd year commenced, the sign had not yet appeared (3 Nephi 1:4–5). At this time, some began to say it was too late for Samuel’s prophecy to be fulfilled (3 Nephi 1:5), and it is easy to understand why — the 92nd year was the 6th year since the prophecy had been given (see

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1. The ideas in this paper occurred to me as I was researching and writing, “Why Did Samuel Make Such Chronologically Precise Prophecies?” *KnoWhy*, 184, September 9, 2016, <https://knowwhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/why-did-samuel-make-such-chronologically-precise-prophecies>.

fig. 1). Of course, Samuel's prophecy need not be fulfilled literally five years *to the day*,<sup>2</sup> but even some believers began to doubt (3 Nephi 1:7).

Fig. 1: Years Counted from When Samuel Gave His Five-Year Prophecy	
86th Year	Samuel Gives 5-Year Prophecy
87th Year	1
88th Year	2
89th Year	3
90th Year	4
91st Year	5
92nd Year	6: Prophecy is Fulfilled

Despite believing that the time had passed, the skeptics “set apart” a specific day in the 92nd year as the deadline for the prophecy — literally, they planned to “put to death” all who believed in the prophecy, “except the sign should come to pass” (3 Nephi 1:9). Given this was a planned mass execution, it is safe to say this was not an arbitrary date. There was probably some reason for even the unbelievers to think the prophecy could potentially be fulfilled *before* that day and for believing that *after* that day it would be definitively too late for the sign to come.

So, for this whole story to make sense, there must be (1) good reason to think the prophecy *should* have been fulfilled by the end of the 91st year, yet also (2) good reason to think it could potentially be fulfilled if it came by a certain day in the 92nd year, and (3) good enough reason to think that after that day, the time for fulfillment was definitively passed — hence, those who persisted to believe deserved the death penalty.

It's not hard to find a good reason for the first of these propositions — the 91st year was the fifth year since Samuel had prophesied. John L. Sorenson noted this chronological discrepancy, pointing out “the fulfillment of Samuel's predictions should have commenced in the 91st year. The initial fulfillment is, instead, reported in the 92nd year.” Thus the peoples' expectation that the time had passed, “would make

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2. It is unknown on what day in the 86th year Samuel made his prophecy, so trying to hold the prophecy down *to the day* is difficult. But at some point in the 91st year, five years would have passed from the day Samuel prophesied — so waiting until the *end* of the 91st year probably seemed already to be a lenient interpretation from the skeptics' point of view.

sense in terms of a five-year prediction."<sup>3</sup> At some point during the 91st year, five full years had passed from the day Samuel prophesied. Thus, with that year's completion, it had already been *more than* five years, and many naturally felt the time had passed.

But what made even the skeptics think there was potential for the fulfillment before a certain day? And what made them confident that after that day, it was definitively too late for the sign to come? One potential answer to these questions can be found in a Mesoamerican setting for Samuel's prophecy.

### Samuel's Prophecy in a Mesoamerican Setting

Others have already talked about how Samuel's time-specific prophecies are consistent with important time-periods in the Mesoamerican Long Count calendar system.<sup>4</sup> John L. Sorenson, John E. Clark, and

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3. John L. Sorenson, "The Book of Mormon as a Mesoamerican Record," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1997), 409. Oddly, Sorenson never attributes the Nephites five-year expectation to the timeline Samuel himself gives in Helaman 14:2, but instead speculates that it might be related to a Mesoamerican expectation that the next *katun* would be prophesied of five years in advanced. Hence, Sorenson's full statement is, "In Yucatan at the time of the Spanish conquest, the ruler or his spokesman, the Chilam, had the duty to prophesy five years in advance what fate the next twenty-year *katun* would bring. Samuel the Lamanite prophesied 'in' the 86th year of the Judges (Helaman 13:1–2). If a related *katun* prophecy pattern prevailed then (and of course it might not), the fulfillment of Samuel's predictions should have commenced in the 91st year. The initial fulfillment is, instead, reported in the 92nd year. But the people might have expected the fulfillment sometime in the previous year, for 'there were some who began to say [in the 92nd year] that the time was past for the words to be fulfilled, which were spoken by Samuel, the Lamanite' (3 Nephi 1:5). This response would make sense in terms of a five-year prediction" (p. 409). While this potential Mesoamerican connection is interesting, to be sure (see below), it is unnecessary in order to explain why the people thought the time had passed, as Samuel himself gave the five-year deadline. See also John L. Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex: An Ancient American Book* (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2013), 193, 441.

4. John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985), 272–74; Sorenson, "The Book of Mormon as a Mesoamerican Record," 407–10; John E. Clark, "Archaeological Trends and Book of Mormon Origins," in *The Worlds of Joseph Smith: A Bicentennial Conference at the Library of Congress*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2005), 90; John E. Clark, "Archaeology, Relics, and Book of Mormon Belief," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 2 (2005): 46–47; Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*,

Brant A. Gardner all noted that Samuel's 400-year prophecy correlates with a major time unit in the Long Count, the *baktun*, which consisted of 400 *tuns* (360-day years, see below).<sup>5</sup> Only Mark Alan Wright has pointed out that the five-year prophecy correlates with the *ho'tun*, another significant time unit.<sup>6</sup>

Sorenson did notice another Mesoamerican connection to the five-year prophecy. When the Spanish arrived, some Mesoamerican groups had the custom of prophesying the outcome of the next *katun* five years in advance.<sup>7</sup> Samuel was similarly predicting the outcome of the upcoming *baktun* (Helaman 13:5, 9) five years before it began (Helaman 14:2). While Sorenson cautiously acknowledged that the evidence for this custom was from 1,500 years later, and we cannot be certain the tradition existed in the first century BC, the comparison is nonetheless interesting.

On other hand, we can be confident that the Long Count was known at the right time and the right place. The earliest date recorded in the Long Count system is 36 BC and comes from Chiapas, Mexico, near the Grijalva River.<sup>8</sup> Sorenson and others place the greater land of Zarahemla in Chiapas, with the Grijalva River as the Sidon (see fig. 2).<sup>9</sup> So archaeological evidence attests to the use of the *tun* and the Long Count system in the same time and place as Samuel the Lamanite's prophecy.

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6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 5:176–77; Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex*, 192–95, 434–42; Mark Alan Wright, "Nephite Daykeepers: Ritual Specialists in Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon," in *Ancient Temple Worship: Proceedings of the Expound Symposium*, 14 May 2011, ed. Matthew B. Brown, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen D. Ricks, and John S. Thompson (Salt Lake City and Orem, UT: Eborn Books and Interpreter Foundation, 2014), 252–53.

5. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting*, 274; Sorenson, "The Book of Mormon as a Mesoamerican Record," 409; Clark, "Archaeological Trends and Book of Mormon Origins," 90; Clark, "Archaeology, Relics, and Book of Mormon Belief," 46–47; Gardner, *Second Witness*, 5:176–77; Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex*, 193, 440.

6. Wright, "Nephite Daykeepers: Ritual Specialists in Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon," 253.

7. Sorenson, "The Book of Mormon as a Mesoamerican Record," 409; Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex*, 193–94, 440–41.

8. See Kaylee Spencer-Ahrens and Linnea H. Wren, "Arithmetic, Astronomy, and the Calendar," in Lynn V. Foster, *Handbook to Life in the Ancient Maya World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 255.

9. Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*, 36, 37 (map 5), 46–47, 148–152; Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex*, 128, 131, 581–594; Joseph L. Allen and Blake J. Allen, *Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon*, revised edition (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2011), 650–65, 745–75.





Fig. 2: Earliest Long Count date in the relation to Sorenson's Zarahemla.  
Map by Jasmin Gimenez.

The Mesoamerican setting for Samuel's prophecy also provides a solution to the confusing details about the timing of its fulfillment in an interesting way that preserves the accuracy of Samuel's prophecy and potentially sheds light on other aspects of Nephite chronology.

### **The *Haab* and the *Tun***

Ancient Mesoamericans had two different time-periods that served as a type of "year." One was a 365-day cycle, typically called the *haab*, and the other was a 360-day cycle, commonly known as the *tun* and part of the "Long Count" calendar.<sup>10</sup> While the terms *haab* and *tun*

10. For background on Mesoamerican calendrics, see Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 48–54; Spencer-Ahrens and Wren,

are frequently used by scholars in a way that distinguishes the 365-day period (*haab*) from the 360-day period (*tun*), among the ancient Maya, the terms were interchangeable.

This is made clear by Michael D. Coe and Stephen Houston, who described the “*Ha’b* of 365 days,” but then, while discussing the 360-day *tun*, noted, “in a switch sure to confuse modern readers, the *tun* was really called *ha’b*!”<sup>11</sup> Lars Kirkhusmo Pharo said the Long Count used a “*haab* of 360 days” and then explained, “*Tun* is the Yucatec word for *haab*, which is a Yucatec designation for a year of 365 days.”<sup>12</sup> Pharo laid out an entire *haab*-based lowland Maya terminology for the Long Count system, “with Yucatec designations in parenthesis” as follows:

Pik (Bak’tun): 144,000 days  
 Winikhaab (K’atun): 7,200 days  
 Haab (Tun): 360 days  
 Winal/Winik: 20 days  
 K’in: 1 day<sup>13</sup>

The exceptions to this *haab*-based terminology were five-year intervals in which “the classic inscriptions of the southern lowlands employ the designation *tun* for periods of 5 (*ho’tun*), 10 (*lajun tun*), or 15 (*ho’lajun tun*) *haab*.”<sup>14</sup>

John S. Justeson and Terrence Kaufman likewise explained the interchangeable use of these terms, noting that the Long Count “used 360 days as a canonical year length; among the Mayans, the word *ha7b’* (‘year’) was used for both this period and the older 365-day year,” and the “*tu:n* referred to anniversaries using either year length ... and not, as is often stated, to the 360-day year per se.”<sup>15</sup>

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“Arithmetic, Astronomy, and the Calendar,” 250–63; Janine Gasco, “Calendrics,” in *Archaeology of Ancient Mexico and Central America: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 90–92; John S. Justeson and Terrence Kaufman, “Calendars and Calendrical Systems: Mesoamerican Calendar,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures: The Civilizations of Mexico and Central America*, 3 vols., ed. David Carrasco (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1:121–24.

11. Michael D. Coe and Stephen Houston, *The Maya*, 9th edition (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2015), 64, 67; also see p. 260: “a *tun*, or in Classic times, *ha’b*, of 360 days.”

12. Lars Kirkhusmo Pharo, *The Ritual Practice of Time: Philosophy and Sociopolitics of Mesoamerican Calendars* (Boston: Brill, 2014), 19 n.4.

13. *Ibid.*, 19.

14. *Ibid.*, 19, n.4.

15. Justeson and Kaufman, “Mesoamerican Calendars,” 122.

To avoid confusion, the convention of using *haab* for the 365-day year and *tun* for the 360-day year will be maintained throughout the rest of this article, but it is important to remember that among the ancient Maya, the terms were interchangeable — and periods of either five *haabs* or *tuns* would always be called a *ho'tun*.

### **Samuel's *Ho'tun* Prophecy: Five 365-day or 360-day Years?**

If the Nephites and Lamanites lived in Mesoamerica, they most likely would have been familiar with both the *haab* and the *tun*, and like the Maya, they probably would have used the same word for both types of year. Thus, when Samuel made his five-year prophecy, he would have used the Nephite equivalent term for *ho'tun*, which could have referred to five *haabs* or five *tuns* — which makes for a difference of 25 days (see fig. 3).<sup>16</sup>

This, in turn, could have led to the scenario found in 3 Nephi 1. Some — perhaps everyone, initially — may have interpreted the prophecy to be fulfilled after five *tuns*. When five *tuns* passed at the conclusion of the 91st year, skeptics “began to rejoice” arguing, “Behold, the time is past, and the words of Samuel are not fulfilled; therefore, your joy and your faith concerning this thing hath been vain” (3 Nephi 1:6). Some who believed even feared that they may be right and were “very sorrowful” (3 Nephi 1:7).

Others, however, “did watch steadfastly” for the prophesied sign, “that they might know that their faith had not been vain” (3 Nephi 1:8). For these steadfast believers, the possibility that Samuel meant five *haabs* may have given them hope that it was not too late for the sign to come. The skeptics had to acknowledge this as a viable interpretation of the prophecy, so they marked the day five *haabs* would be completed as the final deadline. If the sign did not come by that day, “all those who believed in those traditions should be put to death” (3 Nephi 1:9).

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16. This presumes that the first *tun* and first *haab* began at exactly the same time. If counting began at the start of the next New Year (whether *haab* or *tun*), there is no telling exactly how much of a time difference there might be, since the start of the new *haab* and the next *tun* could in theory be several months apart.

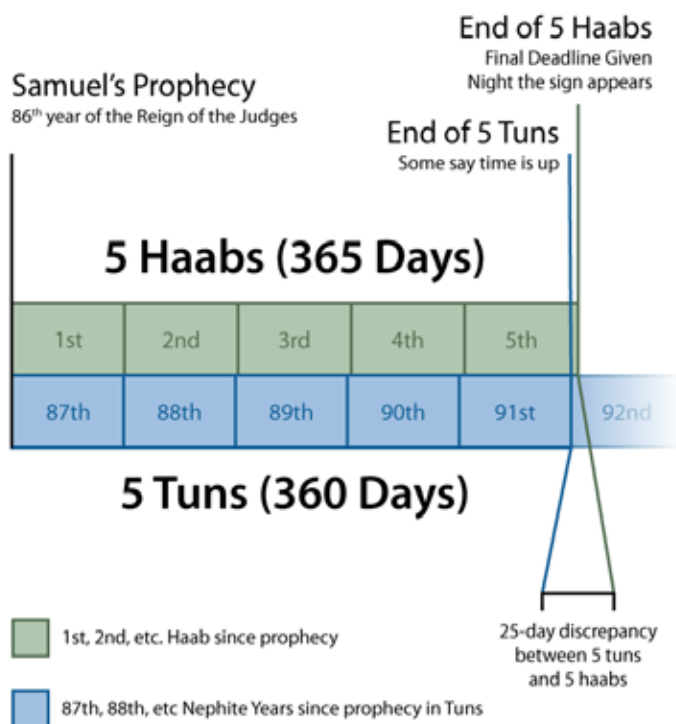


Fig. 3 Dual Timeline Showing the Passing of the *Haabs* and *Tuns*.  
Chart by Jasmin Gimenez.

### Implications for Book of Mormon Chronology

This solution works best if the “years” the Nephites were counting off from the start of the reign of the judges were *tuns* — 360-day years.<sup>17</sup> Otherwise, the passing of the 91st year would have also concluded the passing of the fifth *haab* since Samuel’s prophecy, and there would be no additional 25-day period to hold out hope for.

This would suggest the other Nephite year systems — counting from the time Lehi left Jerusalem and the counting from the time the sign was

17. Theoretically, if the next Long-Count period ending came more than 25 days after the start of the first *haab* after the prophecy, then counting five *tuns* from the start of the first *tun* to being *after* the prophecy would have finished *after* the completion of five *haabs*. I imagine trying to convince one’s executioners of this possibility, however, would be much more complicated than simply pointing out that they had counted only the next five *tuns*, and Samuel might have meant the slightly longer period of the next five *haabs*.

given — were also *tuns*, since these three calendars were in sync with each other (3 Nephi 2:5–7).<sup>18</sup> Proposals by previous scholars that the discrepancy with the 600-year prophecy can be solved by using *tuns*<sup>19</sup> and correlation with Nephite destruction and the *baktun* cycle<sup>20</sup> further supports this possibility.

Ultimately, however, it must be admitted that this is just one possible explanation for the confusing situation set out in 3 Nephi 1. Whereas there is no way to prove this or any other explanation, the additional Mesoamerican connections found in Samuel's prophecy lend support to this idea. At the very least, they suggest the solution to this and perhaps other chronological puzzles in the Book of Mormon can be found in the calendrical practices of ancient Mesoamerica.

**Neal Rappleye** is a research project manager for Book of Mormon Central. He blogs about Latter-day Saint topics at <http://www.studioetquoquefide.com/>

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18. Cf. Mosiah 29:46; 3 Nephi 1:1.

19. Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*, 270–76.

20. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting*, 274; Sorenson, "The Book of Mormon as a Mesoamerican Record," 409; Clark, "Archaeological Trends and Book of Mormon Origins," 90; Clark, "Archaeology, Relics, and Book of Mormon Belief," 46–47; Gardner, *Second Witness*, 5:176–77; Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex*, 193, 440.



# TOO LITTLE OR TOO MUCH LIKE THE BIBLE? A NOVEL CRITIQUE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON INVOLVING DAVID AND THE PSALMS

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Jeff Lindsay

*Abstract: A recent graduate thesis proposes an intriguing new means for discerning if the Book of Mormon is historic or not. By looking at Book of Mormon references to David and the Psalms, the author concludes that it cannot be the product of an ancient Jewish people and that it is, instead, the result of Joseph Smith's "plagiarism" from the Bible and other sources. This paper examines the author's claims, how they are applied to the Book of Mormon, and proposes points the author does not take into consideration. While the author is to be congratulated for taking a fresh perspective on the Book of Mormon, ultimately his methodology fails and his conclusions fall flat.*

Among critics of the Book of Mormon, all is not unity and consensus. For example, one can find critics sharply divided on questions such as this: "Is the Book of Mormon a fraudulent work loaded with horrific blunders from an ignorant farm boy, or the crafty work of a clever con man aided with advanced scholarship from a hefty range of books, magazines, rare maps of Arabia, and expertise in Hebrew?" It's a difficult question to answer correctly because, like many of our most controversial questions in life, it's the wrong question.

A related and more succinct question is the topic of a recent scholarly investigation: "Is the Book of Mormon false because it is too much like the Bible, or too little like the Bible?" Thanks to the latest scholarship from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, we finally have a definitive answer: "Yes!"

"Davidic References in the Book of Mormon as Evidence Against its Historicity," by Kevin Beshears, is a 2016 thesis from the Southern

Baptist Theological Seminary.<sup>1</sup> Beshears, a graduate student pursuing a master of theology degree, takes an interesting approach in rejecting the Book of Mormon for not emphasizing David as much as the Bible does. He raises some novel questions which, though intended to criticize the Book of Mormon, can be helpful to Book of Mormon students seeking to better understand the work. I am grateful for his questions, though troubled by the approach.

Apart from this primary and rather intriguing critique, he provides a reasonable background review along with a variety of other criticisms of the “mormonic” text (“mormonic” is his preferred term, an unnecessarily strange and non-standard term, in my opinion, that strikes me as conveniently too close to “demonic” or “moronic,” both of which are unnecessarily pejorative). Of particular interest is the objection that the Book of Mormon is too much like the Bible in its use of KJV language and heavy citations of Isaiah, which he errantly and repeatedly calls “plagiarism.”<sup>2</sup>

Sadly, an obvious point needs to be frequently restated in dealing with Book of Mormon criticism: openly quoting from a source without intent to deceive is not plagiarism. Indeed, the Isaiah passages that Beshears condemns as “plagiarized” are typically expressly stated to be quoted from Isaiah, something we usually don’t get from the New Testament “plagiarizers” who frequently quote Isaiah without attribution. The polemics around “plagiarism” and the failure to appreciate how KJV language can be a deliberate style choice in translation to be used when “good enough” is a serious weakness in multiple parts of Beshears’s thesis and again often boil down to condemning the Book of Mormon for being too much like the Bible.

Turning to his primary argument, Beshears explains that the Book of Mormon lacks historicity because it fails to give enough attention to the great king of Israel, King David, and fails to rely on the Psalms as much as we would expect from an authentic ancient Semitic work. His approach is declared in the opening paragraph:

Contemporary Mormon scholarship — more appropriately, Latter-day Saint (LDS) scholarship — seeks to validate the historicity of the Book of Mormon (BofM) through textual

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1. Kevin Beshears, “Davidic References in the Book of Mormon as Evidence Against its Historicity,” (Master of Theology thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, May 2016), [http://digital.library.sbts.edu/bitstream/handle/10392/5176/Beshears\\_sbts\\_0207N\\_10331.pdf?sequence=1](http://digital.library.sbts.edu/bitstream/handle/10392/5176/Beshears_sbts_0207N_10331.pdf?sequence=1).

2. Ibid., see particularly 33–37.



criticism by presupposing its historic authenticity, then combing the text for evidence of ancient literary devices such as chiasmus, parallelisms, and thematic elements that may suggest ancient Hebrew authorship. However, given King David's nonpareil influence over the Hebrew cultural and religious identity, the BofM's scant and peculiar nature of references to the fabled king produces a competing testimony against the book's historicity.<sup>3</sup>

First, I must thank Kevin Beshears and his faculty advisor, George H. Martin, for considering the issue of Book of Mormon historicity from a scholarly perspective and for taking some efforts to understand the text of the Book of Mormon and some related LDS scholarship. Beshears cites Hugh Nibley, John Sorenson, Grant Hardy, John Welch, Louis Midgley, Donald Parry, and others. Chiasmus is mentioned. This is progress compared to the neglect of LDS scholarship that often occurs in critical writings.

### Misjudging LDS Scholarship

Unfortunately, Beshears's review of past work at times becomes a caricature as he describes LDS scholars in the hopeless position of having no external evidence to offer any kind of support for the Book of Mormon tale, thus having no choice but to dig instead within its pages for imagined textual evidence.

The complete unawareness of any external evidence relevant to the Book of Mormon is unfortunate, and if he wishes to update his work, I hope Beshears will consider the significance of, say, the many hard evidences (non-LDS archaeological evidence included) from the Arabian Peninsula described in, for example, Warren Aston's *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia*,<sup>4</sup> or works related to the New World such as John Sorenson's *Mormon's Codex*,<sup>5</sup> Brant Gardner's *Traditions of the Fathers*,<sup>6</sup> Jerry Grover's *Geology of the Book of Mormon*,<sup>7</sup> and Brian Stubbs's works

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3. Ibid., 1.

4. Warren P. Aston, *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia: The Old World Setting of the Book of Mormon* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Publishing, 2015).

5. John L. Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex: An Ancient American Book* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2013).

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

7. Jerry D. Grover, Jr., *Geology of the Book of Mormon* (Vineyard, UT: Grover Publications, 2014), <https://www.academia.edu/18172439/>

on Uto-Aztecan language and relationships to Hebrew and Egyptian such as *Changes in Languages from Nephi to Now*<sup>8</sup> and *Exploring the Explanatory Power of Semitic and Egyptian in Uto-Aztecan*.<sup>9</sup>

In Beshears's opening paragraph given above, one can see trouble with the approach and a failure to appreciate what LDS scholars have written and why they write. What he describes is not a fair overview of LDS scholarship about the Book of Mormon.

In my experience, LDS scholars dealing with the Book of Mormon are frequently motivated not by a desperate desire to find any scrap of purported evidence they can, but by a generally cautious quest to understand the *meaning* of the text, including its context, its applications, its allusions to other documents, the possible influence of its cultural or geographic setting, and its relationship to other sources. That scholarship may sometimes yield unexpected gems of evidence, but combing for evidence is not the essence of the large body of scholarship related to the Book of Mormon. Grant Hardy's analysis of the voices of the Book of Mormon, for example, is far less driven by an apologetic impulse to prove anything rather than a desire to understand, but the remarkably distinct voices and agendas he uncovers with literary analysis perhaps unintentionally provide strong evidence in favor of authenticity of the document. Grant Hardy's *Understanding the Book of Mormon* illustrates this concept well.<sup>10</sup>

True, once interesting evidence is identified, such as the existence of extensive and sophisticated chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,<sup>11</sup> some of us may rush too far and too fast in zeal as we sift the text as Beshears

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Geology\_of\_the\_Book\_of\_Mormon.

8. Brian D. Stubbs, *Changes in Languages from Nephi to Now* (Blanding, UT: Four Corners Digital Design, 2016).

9. Brian D. Stubbs, *Exploring the Explanatory Power of Semitic and Egyptian in Uto-Aztecan* (Provo, UT: Grover Publications, 2015).

10. Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon* (Oxford University Press, 2010), especially 11–25, 62–65, 84. See also Daniel Peterson's review in "An Apologetically Important Nonapologetic Book," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16 (2016): 52–75; <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=5076&index=6>.

11. See, for example, John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies*, 10/1 (1969): 1–15, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/chiasmus-book-mormon>; John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Hildesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg Verlag, and Provo, UT: Research Press, Brigham Young University, 1981); John W. Welch, "A Masterpiece: Alma 36," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. J.L. Sorenson and M.J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 114–31, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1111&index=12>. More recently, see Dennis Newton, "Nephi's Use

suggests looking for numerous additional examples, only to later be restrained by scholars, including LDS scholars like John Welch who has explained that many purported examples of chiasmus fail to meet key criteria for assessing their validity.<sup>12</sup> He and others have proposed useful tools to gauge whether a chiasmus is really and intentionally there, though these tools still leave much room for debate.

Evidence also frequently comes when LDS writers are presented with critical attacks on the Book of Mormon and are then alerted to issues requiring further attention. The attention raised by critics often triggers new insights drawn from discoveries outside the LDS world, leading to unexpected evidence that sometimes causes a *reversal*, wherein a former weakness is not merely softened but turned into a strength. An example is the frequent criticism of Alma 7:10, which identifies the “land of Jerusalem” as the future birthplace of Christ, not the nearby town of Bethlehem. Many critics drawing attention to this issue made it more likely for LDS scholars to notice and apply relevant discoveries from non-LDS scholars when they found ancient Jewish documents referring to the region around Jerusalem, specifically including Bethlehem, as the “land of Jerusalem,” turning what was once a glaring weakness into a small but interesting piece of potential evidence of ancient origins that Joseph could not have extracted from the Bible.<sup>13</sup> Many similar examples of reversals could be cited that draw upon modern scholarship to overthrow long-standing criticisms of various details in the Book of Mormon.

The scholarship leading to recognition of the authenticity of the “land of Jerusalem,” the male name Lehi and many other Book of Mormon names, Royal Skousen’s many intriguing discoveries from the painstaking research on the earliest manuscripts of the Book of Mormon, the historical analysis of the witnesses of the gold plates

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of Inverted Parallels,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016): 79-106, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/nephis-use-of-inverted-parallels/>.

12. John W. Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 1–14, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/jbms/4/2/S00001-50aa692ac71b21Welch.pdf>.

13. Daniel C. Peterson, Matthew Roper, and William J. Hamblin, “On Alma 7:10 and the Birthplace of Jesus Christ,” (undated paper, BYU Maxwell Institute, Provo, Utah), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=961&index=1>; Robert F. Smith, “The Land of Jerusalem: The Place of Jesus’ Birth,” *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1110&index=48>; Jeff Lindsay, “Bethlehem vs. the Land of Jerusalem: Is Alma 7:10 a Blunder?,” *JeffLindsay.com* (blog), Last Updated October 27, 2010, [https://www.jefflindsay.com/BM\\_Jerusalem.shtml](https://www.jefflindsay.com/BM_Jerusalem.shtml).

and the translation process or many other issues such as the body of evidence from the Arabian Peninsula related to Lehi's Trail, including three carvings found by non-LDS archaeologists giving hard evidence for the existence in Lehi's day of the tribal name Nihm or Nehem in the right region to relate to the place Nahom along Lehi's Trail in 1 Nephi 16, did not come from a panicked quest for any possible evidence *per se*, but from seeking to understand the Book of Mormon or to answer reasonable questions about specific aspects of the text. Beshears repeatedly criticizes LDS scholarship for presupposing the text is true and then claiming to find glimmers of evidence, but this is not a fair appraisal of some of the most significant work and most significant evidences we have.

In spite of his qualms about LDS scholarship on the "mormonic text," Beshears does review some important works and deserves credit for a reasonable discussion, for example, of the pros and cons of chiasmus and parallelism in the Book of Mormon. His review is hampered somewhat by repeatedly describing LDS scholarship in terms of trying to "prove" the Book of Mormon to be historical. Nevertheless, he does grasp the significance of the issue of historicity for the Book of Mormon and its role in the faith of many LDS people.

### **A Clever and Original Argument**

I was impressed with the cleverness of the closing section of Beshears's background review that beautifully draws upon the arguments of some LDS scholars to set the stage for his primary argument:

Consequently, considering both the amount of attention given to Moses and the Mosaic motif found in mormonic characters, Reynolds suggests, "the fact that Nephi and Lehi both saw themselves as Moses figures demonstrates their awareness of a recognizable feature of preexilic Israelite literature that has only recently been explicated by Bible scholars." In other words, mormonic people knew enough about preexilic Israelite leaders to honor and emulate them not only in the way they lived, but also in the way they wrote about themselves. They showcased their admiration for major biblical characters by crafting thematic motifs. For Reynolds, the appearance of beloved biblical characters through types in the BofM is evidence of its authenticity. He further argued the Hebraic literary tradition of the OT practically demands "that [Nephi and Lehi] presented themselves as antitypes for Moses." So strong is this evidence that Reynolds boldly proclaimed, "it would make sense to

criticize the Book of Mormon had it not made these kinds of strong, natural comparisons.”

These thematic nods and direct references to biblical characters in the BofM demonstrate that the New World Jews were not merely aware of their history as a people, but they desired to sustain their Hebrew cultural identity by referencing and describing their most influential leaders in terms of biblical history. Thus, according to BofM historicism, part of what makes the book authentic is its references and allusions to famous biblical characters, because they suggest continuity between Old and New World Jews.<sup>14</sup>

So if Book of Mormon authors were genuine ancient Hebrews who deeply appreciated archetypes from Moses and the Exodus and respected Abraham, shouldn't they also show great interest in King David and the Psalms? And if David is largely neglected, don't we have a problem? It's a fair question and indeed an interesting one, and Beshears is to be congratulated for asking it. The issue, though, is whether this question can be packed with the rigor to yield meaningful answers, the kind that can properly distinguish bogus Semitic texts from real ones.

### **Beshears's Methodology: A Precise Tool or Dull Bludgeon?**

Beshears introduces an intriguing new tool for separating authentic ancient Semitic writing from fraudulent imitation. He argues that King David played a monumental role in ancient Jewish culture, and thus we should expect him and the Psalms, many of which David wrote, to be emphasized in the Book of Mormon, if it is historic. But Beshears finds that the Book of Mormon has only seven “paltry” references to David and ignores the Psalms, which he feels is hardly compatible with a historic Jewish text:

Readers of the BofM familiar with the immense stature of David in the biblical Jewish identity may find themselves nonplussed at the paltry seven references to Israel's greatest king, especially considering the numerous Abrahamic and Mosaic references.

If the mormonic people were truly Jewish, why has King David essentially absconded from their historical and prophetic records relative to biblical Judaism? Is it really possible that

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14. Beshears, “Davidic References in the Book of Mormon,” 19–20.

the BofM, a text that prides itself on incredibly descriptive prophecies of the coming messiah, could neglect to feature one of the most prominent figures in the messianic lineage?

[...] Of all David's contributions to the Hebrew religious identity, two stand out as being particularly influential: his Psalms and the messianic expectation that grew out of his reign. The NT writers seem most interested in these two aspects of David, referencing him almost exclusively in the context of psalmic material or arguments that portray Christ as David's descendant and heir to his eternal throne. At the very least, one would anticipate quotations of Davidic psalms and the hopeful anticipation of an eschatological, Davidic king in the BofM. However, its sermons, prophecies, and epistles never quote Davidic psalms, and almost entirely exclude him from their messianic prophecies.<sup>15</sup>

And then his conclusion:

If the BofM was written by pre- and post-exilic Jews, why are its references to David so rare and atypical when compared to other Jewish texts such as the Old and New Testaments, intertestamental writings, and Qumranic literature? The mormonic treatment of David is inconsistent with what would be expected, given the religious background, texts, and culture from which they claim to have arisen. The venerated Israelite king is nowhere near as prevalent or, in the case of Jacob, esteemed in the BofM when compared to his monumental significance in the Bible and other related Jewish texts, especially in self-consciously messianic movements like those in Qumran or the NT. Consequently, I contend the BofM's peculiar treatment of David in particular testifies against the BofM historicist hypothesis — that it is the product of a historically authentic, Hebrew culture — because it so radically truncates and departs from the known Hebrew literary tradition concerning the great Israelite king. It appears highly suspect that the mormonic prophets and preachers and kings, seeking to continue the heritage of their Old World cousins and promote a messianic tradition comparable to the NT tradition, all but exclude David from their national,

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15. *Ibid.*, 20–22.

historio-religious records, nor situate him honorably among their cultural heroes.

In the absence of any convincing evidence for these incredible BofM historicist claims, we are nevertheless asked to believe that sometime in the sixth century BCE a lost Israelite tribe emigrated from Palestine to the New World with the intent of preserving OT Hebrew messianism, yet without the type or frequency of Davidic references found with their ancestral, Old World cousins. In the end, this desperate search for internal evidences in support of an underlying Hebrew tradition to BofM, as with the search for corroborating external evidences to its supposed ancient historicity, is destined to amount to unproductive digging in the sand. Consequently, I predict that pressing the BofM further in this way will yield similar results.<sup>16</sup>

Is this critique valid? Can the Book of Mormon withstand this new line of attack?

One of the things I would have expected in a scholarly treatment is some evidence that the metric used to evaluate a text has some basis in reality, such as a demonstration that it can give accurate results with relevant texts. Beshears asserts that an authentic ancient Jewish text from after the days of David should naturally speak of David and quote from the Psalms. He cites other scholarship on the general importance of David as well as examples of references to David from the Old and New Testaments and the Dead Sea Scrolls. But citing cases where David is mentioned, for example, does not address the question of historicity when the mentions of David are absent or, in the case of the Book of Mormon, relatively few

Has Beshears applied his tool to other ancient or allegedly ancient texts to evaluate its usefulness? Has he made any effort to establish a threshold frequency for mentioning David to distinguish between authentic and bogus ancient Jewish writings? Is there a reliable threshold for separating authentic Jewish writing from forgeries or non-Semitic texts based on statistics relative to the name David or passages that draw upon the Psalms? The answer, clearly, is no. I will save Beshears some trouble by doing what he should have done in the earliest days of his research: checking his tool by applying it to the books of the Bible itself.

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16. Ibid., 46.

The Bible provides the most obvious collection of documents attributed to ancient Jewish writers whose texts can be tested with the methodology of Beshears.

While Beshears speaks enthusiastically of the *thousand-plus* times David is mentioned in the Bible, the vast bulk of these occurrences are in the historical books that deal with the story of David, his rise, his rule, and the aftermath of his rule (Samuel, Kings, Chronicles). Numerous mentions also naturally occur in the Psalms, and then things taper off quickly with a handful of mentions in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The illustrious King David is mentioned only once in Proverbs, where he is merely identified as the father of Solomon. The same thing occurs in Ecclesiastes: just one mention as the Preacher's father. The only mention in the Song of Solomon is a reference to the "tower of David," but nothing about the glory of that king, though believed to be written by his son.

Critically, *David is not mentioned at all* in the very Jewish books of Esther, Lamentations, Daniel, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi. Once we get past the David-heavy books of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and the Psalms, there are just as many books that don't mention David as there are that do. Even Daniel and Malachi, in spite of eschatological and messianic views, never cite David. Such admissions are not found in Beshears's thesis.

If a large fraction of Old Testament writers fail to mention David at all, do we really need to reject the Book of Mormon for having just seven "paltry" occurrences of the name David? Granted, three of these come from citations of Isaiah (and hardly count since they are "plagiarized," we are told), but the name and influence of David is not entirely absent.

Beshears sees validation for his tool in the emphasis given to David in the New Testament, especially in the Gospels (e.g., six mentions of David in the genealogy in Matthew 1), but Beshears never mentions David's neglect by multiple Jewish authors. The Gospel of John mentions David twice but in only one verse (John 7:42). Paul mentions David three times in Romans, but not at all in 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, and 1 Timothy. There is one paltry mention in 2 Timothy, none in Titus nor Philemon, then two in Hebrews. There is no mention of David in James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, the three epistles of John, and Jude. Revelation has three mentions.

Beshears's tool would seem to eliminate a large portion of the Old Testament and much of the New Testament, which I trust he will see as an undesirable outcome (see, for example, Deuteronomy 4:2 and Revelation 22:18–19).



Beshears's methodology for rejecting the Book of Mormon, however logical it may seem to its inventor, seems hopelessly flawed.

### **More Than Meets the Eye in the Book of Mormon: Allusions to David and the Psalms**

David and the Psalms may not be as absent as Beshears thinks. His claim that no Davidic psalms are quoted may be incorrect, and David as an archetype may be present in places Beshears has missed.

An important scholarly work by Ben McGuire considers Nephi's apparently deliberate allusions to the story of David and Goliath.<sup>17</sup> The basics of this work were first made public in a presentation at the 2001 FAIR Conference. McGuire reviews scholarship on the role of allusions and the use of markers and other tools to call attention to deliberate parallels. His analysis provides a strong case that the Book of Mormon's account of Nephi slaying Laban has been patterned after the biblical account of David, employing similar language and themes:

First, we have the introduction of the antagonist, who is described in terms of his feats of strength and who inspires fear. Then the protagonist responds, claiming that there is no need to fear — the God who has historically acted on the protagonist's behalf will again act to destroy this threat, not only to save the protagonist, but also to ensure that God is recognized in the future. Next the antagonist and protagonist meet, and the text announces to us that the antagonist is delivered into the hands of the protagonist by God. Finally, the antagonist is reduced to a helpless state, and the protagonist takes his enemy's sword, pulls it from its sheath, decapitates the antagonist, and then gathers his foe's armor as his own.

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17. See Ben McGuire, "Nephi and Goliath: A Case Study of Literary Allusion in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 18/1 (2009): 16–31, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1416&index=4>. See also McGuire's related presentation, "Nephi and Goliath: A Reappraisal of the Use of the Old Testament in First Nephi," (2001 FAIR Conference, Provo Women's Center, Provo, Utah), *FAIRMormon*, <https://www.fairmormon.org/conferences/august-2001/nephi-and-goliath-a-reappraisal-of-the-use-of-the-old-testament-in-first-nephi>.

Parallel Passages in 1 Samuel and 1 Nephi	
1 Samuel 17:4–7, 11	1 Nephi 3:31
1 Samuel 17:32	1 Nephi 4:1
1 Samuel 17:34–37	1 Nephi 4:2–3
1 Samuel 17:45–46	1 Nephi 4:6, 10–12, 17
1 Samuel 17:51	1 Nephi 4:9, 18
1 Samuel 17:54	1 Nephi 4:19

The thematic elements follow a relatively simple structural parallel. This parallel being sustained throughout the entire narrative text is a strong indicator that the Book of Mormon narrative is reliant on the biblical text.

Part of Nephi's purpose in patterning his conquest of Laban after David and Goliath is to establish his rightful role as king over the Nephite people, a claim that was strongly disputed by his enemies. The sword of Laban, like the sword of Goliath, would become a revered symbol of Nephite authority and of God's deliverance of the Nephite people. The allusions to David in the Book of Mormon are meaningful and strong and may help temper some of Beshears's concerns about the Book of Mormon.

The Psalms also may be more present in the Book of Mormon than Beshears realizes.

### **Are the Psalms Largely Missing in the Book of Mormon?**

Beshears's literature review did detect one LDS scholar (out of many others who could have been cited) who discussed allusions to the Psalms in the Book of Mormon. Beshears targets a publication by John Hilton III that includes a list of 43 apparent Book of Mormon citations of various Psalms.<sup>18</sup> Beshears, however, is unimpressed and finds the use of similar language to be evidence not of allusions to the Psalms in an ancient record but merely the fruit of Joseph Smith's exposure to the King James Bible. Indeed, Beshears bemoans Joseph's obvious plagiarism, claiming the presence of the very words of the King James

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18. John Hilton III, "Old Testament Psalms in the Book of Mormon" in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament* (2013 Sperry Symposium), ed. Jeffrey R. Chadwick, Matthew J. Grey, and David Rolph Seely (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013), 291–311, <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/ascending-mountain-lord-temple-praise-and-worship-old-testament/old-testament-psalms-book>.

Bible in the Book of Mormon raises a serious problem and points to deliberate plagiarism by Joseph rather than a real translation process that could not possibly give the same words found in the Bible.

[T]he supposed psalmic allusions Hilton brought forward align with the KJV, which is a serious concern for his hypothesis. As with the “Isaiah Problem,” these ancient echoes of the Psalms are translated in the same manner as a seventeenth-century English translation, often word-for-word. For example, Hilton cites the following phrase from Jacob 6:6; “today if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts.” If this truly is a psalmic allusion, then it is an obvious reproduction of the KJV Psalm 95:7-8, “Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.” Likewise, the phrase “none that doeth good ... no not one” in Moroni 10:25 matches exactly with both the KJV Psalms 14:3; 53:3 and Romans 3:12, stepping beyond the mere repurposing of OT Psalms and into the NT Epistles as well. This observation would not come as a surprise to Hilton. In fact, the identical reproduction of the KJV Psalms in the BofM is the reason he found these supposed psalmic allusions in the first place (by running word analysis software).

... Is it likely that Moroni, having been raised in mormonic Jewish culture without a copy of the book of Psalms for nearly a millennium, in the fifth century CE suddenly alluded to the Psalms, by writing in non-extant “reformed Egyptian,” words that happen to be translated into English in the nineteenth century by Joseph Smith as, “none that doeth good ... no not one (Moroni 10:25),” a verbatim copy of the KJV translation of Psalms 14:3; 53:3 and Romans 3:12? Or is it more likely that a nineteenth-century author drew from his knowledge of the KJV translation to construct Moroni’s epistle?<sup>19</sup>

Incidentally, there is no reason why the pre-exilic Psalms could not have been on the brass plates. Beshears argues that since the Psalms are not listed as being on the brass plates, they implicitly were not part of the Nephite canon,<sup>20</sup> but there is no reason to believe that Nephi has given an exhaustive catalog.

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19. Beshears, “Davidic References in the Book of Mormon,” 43.

20. *Ibid.*, 41.

Beshears's tool for dividing real and bogus Jewish texts, which one might call the shears of Beshears, clearly has two sharp blades, one that can swiftly cut away bogus "mormonic" text that lacks the presence of the Psalms and can just as quickly make mincemeat of any "mormonic" text that dares to quote (or rather, "plagiarize" from) the Psalms. The Book of Mormon is certainly doomed with this two-edged approach. I wonder how New Testament writers might fare? Whether guilty of ignoring the Psalms or plagiarizing from them, sometimes with the very language of the Septuagint, I suppose there would be a lot shearing to be done.

Beshears is sharply critical of Hilton. He finds Hilton's collection of 43 phrases linked to the Psalms to present an "insurmountable problem" for the Book of Mormon apologist since there is no way to tell whether these faint echoes are intentional or accidental, or whether they simply come from Joseph Smith regurgitating phrases he had heard for years from the Bible or other popular sources like John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*:

For example, the phrase "pains of hell" [found in Psalms 116:3 and Jacob 3:11, and Alma 14:6, 26:13, and 36:13] was a common colloquialism used by popular figures such as John Bunyan and George Whitfield [sic], both of whom would have been well-known to nineteenth-century Americans. The fact that the phrase only appears once in the entire KJV Bible (Psalms 116:3), but multiple times in the BofM (Jacob 3:11; Alma 14:6; 26:13; 36:13), indicates that the BofM was influenced more by the frequent nineteenth-century use of the phrase rather than ancient writers alluding to the original psalmic expression.<sup>21</sup>

A search of *Pilgrim's Progress*<sup>22</sup> reveals "pains of hell" was used precisely *once*, and a search of the two-volume set of George Whitefield's sermons<sup>23</sup> reveals the term *twice*. Both undoubtedly got the term from

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21. Ibid., 42–43.

22. The search was conducted using Google Books: <https://books.google.com/books?id=qSI8OPlomYIC&pg=RA1-PA129&dq=pilgrims+progress,+%22pains+of+hell%22&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjN0IjA5vfSAhVBwFQKHT8JCJUQ6AEIOjAF#v=onepage&q=pilgrims%20progress%2C%20%22pains%20of%20hell%22&f=false>.

23. The search of Whitfield's work was also conducted using Google Books: [https://books.google.com/books?id=5n9bCwAAQBAJ&pg=PT579&dq=whitfield,+%22pains+of+hell%22&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiMlpO65\\_fSAhWpwVQKHVkhA64Q6AEIHDAa#v=onepage&q=%22pains%20of%20hell%22&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=5n9bCwAAQBAJ&pg=PT579&dq=whitfield,+%22pains+of+hell%22&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiMlpO65_fSAhWpwVQKHVkhA64Q6AEIHDAa#v=onepage&q=%22pains%20of%20hell%22&f=false).

the Psalms. Is their scant use of the term truly evidence that they are a more likely source for the “pains of hell” in the Book of Mormon? More to the point, is their scant use relevant at all to Beshears’s thesis? Even if Bunyan had used the phrase hundreds of times, is that evidence that the Book of Mormon lacks references to the Psalms, which is what Beshears argument is supposed to be?

*Note how Beshears’s argument has shifted.* His scholarship was supposedly addressing whether allusions to the Psalms are found in the Book of Mormon, as he says we should expect if the “mormonic” text came from real ancient Hebrews. However, when similar language is presented by Hilton, the sole author he considers among the many who have treated various aspects of the Psalms in the Book of Mormon, Beshears then dismisses that evidence because those phrases could equally well be found in Joseph’s environment. Lack of allusions to the Psalms damns the Book of Mormon for not being like the Bible, and apparent references to the Psalms damns the book for being too much like the Bible due to Joseph’s plagiarism of related phrases. Too little or too much like the Bible? Again, the answer is a resounding “Yes!” Here Beshears reveals more clearly what the game is all about: it is not academic inquiry, but his own bias that motivates this game. This is the real insurmountable problem before us.

### **Troubling Omissions in Treating Hilton, Or, Say Kiddish for Nephi’s Psalm**

What especially troubled me in Beshears’s swift dismissal of Hilton’s work was his *failure to consider the bulk of Hilton’s analysis* where we have the strongest, most valuable aspects of his work. Perhaps Beshears quit reading after looking at the list of 43 parallels, or perhaps his copy of Hilton’s paper was missing the last half. But the neglect of key findings from Hilton is difficult to excuse in this thesis. In the portions neglected or missed by Beshears, Hilton explores in detail (1) how Jacob makes clever and appropriate use of Psalm 95 to bracket his book, and (2) how Nephi’s Psalm makes extensive use of the Psalms in his own very genuine psalm. Both of these issues point to much more sophistication than a Bible-versed ignoramus plucking random phrases from memory as he dictates out of a hat.

Beshears’s neglect of the strength of Hilton’s work is a serious weakness in his approach. How is it that the analysis of Hilton and the strength of his argument were not even discussed? How is it possible that Nephi’s Psalm, which has been an important topic in LDS scholarship

on the Book of Mormon for decades, would not be mentioned, lacking even a passing reference to 2 Nephi 4 where the influence of the Psalms is readily apparent and far more sophisticated than even skilled readers of the Book of Mormon may realize? It seems that Beshears jumped to his conclusions too quickly or tries too hard to dismiss rather than confront the evidence, as we see with the neglect of much of Hilton's publication.

As we will see, sections of this psalm play a key role in Jacob's book. In Jacob 1:7, he records, "Wherefore we labored diligently among our people, that we might persuade them to come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God, *that they might enter into his rest*, lest by any means *he should swear in his wrath they should not enter in, as in the provocation in the days of temptation while the children of Israel were in the wilderness.*" The italicized portions of this verse bear a clear connection to Psalm 95:8 and 11, which state, "As in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness ... Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest."

This shared text cannot be coincidental. This is doubly the case when we see another allusion to Psalm 95 at the end of Jacob's record. In Jacob 6:6, he exhorts, "*Yea, today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*; for why will ye die?" These words directly echo Psalm 95:7–8: "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." Thus Jacob alludes to Psalm 95 at the beginning of his book (Jacob 1:7) and as he nears the end of it (Jacob 6:6). Moreover, these introductory and concluding allusions use adjoining phrases from Psalm 95. Psalms 95:7–8 reads, "To day if ye will hear his voice harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness." In Jacob 1:7, Jacob quotes the latter portion of these verses "as in the provocation in the days of temptation while the children of Israel were in the wilderness." In Jacob 6:6, he uses the first phrase, "Today if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts," thus alluding to both halves, but reversing their order.

Both Jacob 1:7 and Jacob 6:6 are portions of texts in which Jacob directly addresses readers. They are not part of a continuous discourse; rather, they are broken up by Jacob's sermon at the temple (Jacob 2:1–3:11) and his recording of the allegory of

the olive tree (Jacob 5). Because Jacob is addressing the reader at each of the bookend allusions of Psalms 95:7–8, I believe he uses these two statements to cohesively communicate to readers of his book two of his core themes, those of not hardening our hearts and of coming unto Christ. As I will demonstrate, Jacob uses textual connections to Psalm 95 to develop these themes....<sup>24</sup>

Hilton's analysis becomes even more interesting in the next section under the hard-to-miss title, "The Old Testament Psalms and the 'Psalm of Nephi,'" also neglected by Beshears, where Hilton treats the numerous allusions to the Psalms in what is widely called "the Psalm of Nephi" in 2 Nephi 4:17–35. It is a minor tragedy if Beshears examined Hilton but failed to even note that major section revealing there was such a thing as the "Psalm of Nephi," surely a relevant issue for any attempt at scholarship involving the influence of the Psalms on the Book of Mormon. I hope that this deficiency might be corrected in any follow-up work from Beshears and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

While we can forgive Beshears for not noticing Hilton's treatment of Nephi's Psalm, it is still troubling that the topic of Nephi's Psalm as treated by many others was missed in the search of related publications. One of the first things I expected to find when I began reading Beshears was his response to the obviously psalm-like content of Nephi's Psalm. LDS scholarship on the Book of Mormon abounds with references to Nephi's Psalm and its similarities to the Psalms. Missing this body of scholarship, even when it was a major portion of the primary LDS work he consulted, strikes me as awkward. Hilton's section is lengthy, but I'll share the beginning and ending paragraphs to indicate just how much Beshears has missed from the reference before him:

The previous section focused on Jacob's use of one psalm throughout his entire book. I now discuss Nephi's use of a variety of psalms in one small part of his record, which is popularly called "the Psalm of Nephi." S. Kent Brown has called this passage (2 Nephi 4:17–35) "a most poignant depiction of Nephi's own struggles with sin and with feelings about rebellious members of his family."

It has been noted previously that the Psalm of Nephi shares several features with ancient Hebrew psalms. For example, Matthew Nickerson states that "Nephi's psalm plainly

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24. Hilton, "Old Testament Psalms in the Book of Mormon."

follows the format and substance of the individual lament as described by Gunkel and elaborated upon by numerous subsequent scholars.” Brown points out that Nephi’s psalm “exhibits poetic characteristics found in the Old Testament.” Steven Sondrup finds that “in the ‘Psalm of Nephi,’ just as in Hebrew poetry ... logical, formal or conceptual units are set parallel one to another.”

In addition to these overarching literary patterns, the Psalm of Nephi shares a surprisingly large amount of text with the Old Testament Psalms. It appears that Nephi (perhaps intentionally or perhaps because of his familiarity with Psalmic material), drew on phrases of lament, praise, and worship from the Psalter as he composed his own words. Of the 660 words comprising the Psalm of Nephi, 127 (approximately 20 percent) are key words or phrases also found in the biblical Psalter. While some of these key words or phrases are used frequently throughout scripture ... others are significant and appear only in these two pericopes. The concentration of references to Psalms may indicate intentionality on Nephi’s part as he wrote these words.

[The body of Hilton’s analysis commences here, but we will jump to his concluding comments in this section.]

When the multiple connections to Psalms are added together, Nephi could have alluded to potentially forty-seven different Psalms in just eighteen verses. It stretches one’s imagination to believe that Joseph Smith could have been responsible for making all of these connections, particularly with the understanding that the Psalm of Nephi may have been translated in less than two hours. While some sections of Nephi’s soliloquy have relatively few allusions to Psalms, in other sections the number of connections is impressive. For example, 40 percent of the words in 2 Nephi 4:29–32 also appear in Old Testament Psalms (54 out of 135 words). I believe these allusions stem from Nephi’s meditations on the Psalms and that the high concentration of psalmic references in this pericope indicates that Nephi had access to them (either from the plates or his own cultural experiences in Jerusalem). Nephi’s apparent familiarity and love of the psalms can provide motivation for Latter-day Saints to follow Nephi’s



example and become deeply familiar with the language of praise and worship as found in the Old Testament Psalms.<sup>25</sup>

Other significant works could be cited. For example, Kenneth Alford and D. Bryce Baker fruitfully explore the significant relationships between Nephi's Psalm and Psalms 25–31.<sup>26</sup> That work came after Hilton, who considered many of the most significant relevant works at the time, such as Steven Sondrup's analysis that gives a useful foundation for exploring the poetical structure of Nephi's Psalm.<sup>27</sup> Hilton also called attention to Matthew Nickerson's equally valuable work, in which he applies form-critical tools developed by other modern scholars to compare Nephi's Psalm with the limited number of forms the Psalms take, finding it to be closely related to the category of the individual lament.<sup>28</sup> This form of a psalm tends to have five elements, though not necessarily in order: 1) invocation, 2) complaint, 3) confession of trust, 4) petition, and 5) vow of praise. Nephi's Psalm is shown to fit that pattern closely.

Understanding the tools that have been applied in past scholarship to 2 Nephi 4 can raise awareness about the potential linkages of other parts of the Book of Mormon to the Psalms. For example, in light of Nickerson's review of the features of an individual lament, a similar pattern may be noticed in another psalm-like passage of the Book of Mormon, Alma's oration in Alma 29. While others have noted that Alma 29 has poetic features,<sup>29</sup> its relationship to the Psalms has not been widely

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25. Ibid.

26. Kenneth L. Alford and D. Bryce Baker, "Parallels between Psalms 25–31 and the Psalm of Nephi," in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament* (2013 Sperry Symposium), ed. Jeffrey R. Chadwick, Matthew J. Grey, and David Rolph Seely (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2013), 312–28, <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/ascending-mountain-lord-temple-praise-and-worship-old-testament/parallels-between-psalms-25>.

27. Steven P. Sondrup, "The Psalm of Nephi: A Lyric Reading," *BYU Studies*, 21/3 (1981): 1–16, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/psalm-nephi-lyric-reading>.

28. Matthew Nickerson, "Nephi's Psalm: 2 Nephi 4:16–35 in the Light of Form-Critical Analysis," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 26–42, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1393&index=3>.

29. Harlow Clark, "Gadianton the Nobler, Reflections on Changes in the Book of Mormon, Part III: Poetry, Style and Literary Craft in the Book of Mormon," *Motley Vision*, Feb. 25, 2009, <https://www.motleyvision.org/2009/gadianton-the-nobler-overview-3/>; see also Donald W. Parry, *Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon: The Complete Text Reformatted* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University, 2007), 298–9, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/book/poetic-parallelisms-in-the-book-of-mormon-the-complete-text-reformatted/>.

discussed, yet in light of its psalm-like feel, the following possibilities might be considered in comparing it to an individual lament, though there is overlap allowing some passages to fit at least two aspects of the elements treated by Nickerson:

1. Invocation: “O that I were an angel...” in Alma 29:1, where Alma begins his prayerful plea before the Lord.
2. Complaint: “I would declare unto every soul ... the plan of redemption ... that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth” (v. 2); “But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me” (v. 3); Alma complains of the sorrow in the world and the need to reach many more than he can reach as a mere man. He complains also that his power to help is so limited.
3. Confession of trust: “the firm decree of a just God” (v. 4); “the Lord doth grant unto all nations ... to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; therefore we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true” (v. 8); “I remember his merciful arm which he extended towards me” (v. 10); “I also remember the captivity of my fathers; for I surely do know that the Lord did deliver them out of bondage” (v. 11).
4. Petition: “And now may God grant unto these, my brethren, that they may sit down in the kingdom of God; yea, and also all those who are the fruit of their labors that they may go no more out, but that they may praise him forever. And may God grant that it may be done according to my words, even as I have spoken” (v. 17).
5. Vow of praise: “the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true. I know that which the Lord hath commanded me, and I glory in it. I do not glory of myself, but I glory in that which the Lord hath commanded me” (vv. 8–9).

Mormon’s stirring lament in Helaman 12 may also be compared to some of the Psalms and may be among the most notable literary contributions of the military leader and editor, who usually is more focused on narrative in his editorial role. But the most extensive use of psalm-like material and particularly language from the Psalms

comes from earlier writers like Nephi, Jacob, and Alma, men who were particularly close to the brass plates and frequently cited them.

If allusions to the Psalms were random parallels from Joseph recalling related language, as Beshears suggests, we would expect to find them scattered randomly throughout the text. The distribution is far from random but is consistent with a historical ancient Semitic text from multiple authors with varying degrees of familiarity with the brass plates. Beshears does not discuss this important issue, perhaps because he is unable to recognize the existence of allusions to the Psalms in the first place.

The scholarship on the Psalm of Nephi is worth careful reflection. It not only abounds in references to the Psalms, but includes meaningful examples of chiasmus and other forms of parallelism and even, tentatively, apparent cases of Janus parallelism (a newly discovered but intriguing aspect of ancient Hebrew poetry), where Nephi's writings and especially his Psalm so far appear to have the highest concentration of this recently recognized form of parallelism.<sup>30</sup> Nephi's Psalm is a gem and directly contradicts Beshears's claims that the Nephites were inexplicably unaware of the Psalms, and adds meaningful evidence to the case for the authentic ancient nature of Nephi's writings.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, there are other intriguing examples of Psalms being used in the Book of Mormon. See, for example:

- Matthew Bowen's "Onomastic Wordplay on Joseph and Benjamin and Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon," exploring several wordplays in the Book of Mormon that appear to draw upon language from the Psalms in a way that is compatible with sophisticated ancient origins.<sup>32</sup>
- Matthew Bowen's exploration of a Hebrew/Egyptian wordplay in Alma 44:14, 18 identifies an apparent reliance on language from Psalm 68:21 and Psalm 110:6–7.<sup>33</sup>

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30. Jeff Lindsay, "The Possibility of Janus Parallelism in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 28 (2018): 1–20, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/the-possibility-of-janus-parallelism-in-the-book-of-mormon/>.

31. "Is Nephi's Psalm Really a Psalm?" *Book of Mormon Central*, Feb. 10, 2016, <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/is-nephis-psalm-really-a-psalm>.

32. Matthew L. Bowen, "Onomastic Wordplay on Joseph and Benjamin and Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 255–73, <https://www.mormoninterpreter.com/onomastic-wordplay-on-joseph-and-benjamin-and-gezera-shawa-in-the-book-of-mormon/>.

33. Matthew L. Bowen, "The Scalp of Your Head: Polysemy in Alma 44:14–18," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 20 (2016): 39–45, <http://www>.

- David Larsen's video, "Temple Themes in the Psalms and in the Book of Mormon" at *Book of Mormon Central*.<sup>34</sup>
- "Why Does Nephi Quote a Temple Psalm While Commenting on Isaiah?," at *Book of Mormon Central*.<sup>35</sup>
- Matthew Bowen's treatment of Jacob 5 as a temple text. While highlighting Jacob's usage of Psalm 95, Bowen also shows how Psalm 118:26 and Psalm 40:7–8 are applied by the Lord in 3 Nephi 1:14. A similar allusion occurs in Jacob 5:75.<sup>36</sup>

Hilton's original list of 43 connections, though simply a preliminary effort based on computer searching for identical words, merits much more attention than Beshears gave it. Many intriguing connections are not discussed at all. For example, example #3 from Hilton's list is the "rod of iron" from Lehi's dream, a term also found in Psalm 2:9. The use of that term in 1 Nephi is far more interesting than one would expect from a clumsy plagiarizer plucking a random term from the Psalms (or, as one critic has argued, concocting the concept and all of Lehi's dream based upon Joseph seeing the iron rod of an aqueduct in Rochester, NY<sup>37</sup>), and actually involves a sophisticated wordplay.<sup>38</sup> Rather than swiftly dismissing this and all other connections raised by Hilton and moving on to an *a priori* conclusion, it might have been more appropriate for

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mormoninterpreter.com/the-scalp-of-your-head-polysemy-in-alma-4414-18/#sdfootnote7sym.

34. David Larsen, "Temple Themes in the Psalms and in the Book of Mormon," *Book of Mormon Central*, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYgyZaonGy4>.

35. "Why Does Nephi Quote a Temple Psalm While Commenting on Isaiah?," *Book of Mormon Central*, March 10, 2016, <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/why-does-nephi-quote-a-temple-psalm-while-commenting-on-isaiah>.

36. Matthew Bowen, "I Have Done According to My Will': Reading Jacob 5 as a Temple Text," in *The Temple: Ancient and Restored*, Proceedings of the Second Interpreter Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference, "The Temple on Mount Zion," 25 October 2014, Temple on Mount Zion Series 3, eds. Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation and Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2016): 235–72, with the relevant discussion at 254–55.

37. Rick Grunder's proposal for the origin for Lehi's dream is discussed in Jeff Lindsay, "The Great and Spacious Book of Mormon Arcade Game: More Curious Works from Book of Mormon Critics," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 23 (2017): 161–235, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/the-great-and-spacious-book-of-mormon-arcade-game-more-curious-works-from-book-of-mormon-critics/>.

38. Matthew Bowen, "What Meaneth the Rod of Iron?," *Insights* 25/2 (2005): 2–3, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1313&index=3>.

Beshears to also consider each of Hilton's proposals more carefully. Further, it would have strengthened the research work to recognize that still other connections to the Psalms may be present that would not appear on Hilton's first pass of searching for exactly matching phrases.

As an example of the fruits that might be gleaned with a small amount of additional comparison of our texts, consider Psalm 62:10: "Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them." For readers familiar with the Book of Mormon, this may immediately recall Jacob 2:17–18, where the prophet Jacob warns against the pursuit of wealth and urges using wealth, should it come, as a tool to serve others. However, other passages have a more direct connection to the language of Psalm 62:10, which is the only occurrence in the KJV Bible of the phrase "your heart upon" (although "thine heart upon" is found in Job 7:17 and Ezekiel 40:4, but in a different context). It is also the only verse that involves the combination of *set* + *heart upon* + *riches*. The verse is interesting, in light of possible Book of Mormon relationships, for its further use of the concepts of robbery and vanity, with the word *vain* at the beginning of verse 10 following two instances of *vanity* in verse 9 of this Psalm. Its use of *trust* and *oppression* may also be of interest.

Turning to the Book of Mormon, we find many instances of the concept of setting one's heart upon riches, all with possible relationships to Psalm 62:10. These connections were not identified in Hilton's computer search probably because the Book of Mormon usage excludes the "not" or places it before "set" when discussing the setting of hearts upon riches, but they can be found with Boolean searching of key terms in the same verse using, for example, the LDS Library app.<sup>39</sup> Relevant verses include:

- Mosiah 11:14, where King Noah "*placed his heart upon his riches*." Note also the preceding condemnation of Noah and his priests in v. 5 for being "lifted up in pride," for speaking "*vain and flattering words*" (v. 7) and "*lying and vain words*" (v. 11), and for gaining wealth by oppressively taxing the people (vv. 2–13).
- Mosiah 12:29, "Why do ye *set your hearts upon riches*?"
- Alma 1:30, "they did *not set their hearts upon riches*..." (cf. Alma 1:16).

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39. "Gospel Library," iPhone application, v. 4.0.5, March 23, 2017, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

- Alma 4:8, “For they saw and beheld with great sorrow that the people of the church began to be *lifted up in the pride* of their eyes, and *to set their hearts upon riches* and upon the *vain* things of the world...”
- Alma 5:53, “*setting your hearts upon* the *vain* things of the world, *upon your riches*.”
- Alma 7:6, “I *trust* that ye are not *lifted up in the pride* of your hearts; yea, I trust that ye have *not set your hearts upon riches* and the *vain* things of the world; yea, I *trust* that you do not worship idols, but that ye do worship the true and living God...” This involves much in Psalm 62:10: *trust* + *vain* (also the similar “lifted up in pride”) + *set your hearts upon riches*.
- Alma 17:14 “a people who delighted in murdering the Nephites, and *robbing* and *plundering* them; and *their hearts were set upon riches*, or upon gold and silver, and precious stones; yet they sought to obtain these things by murdering and *plundering*...”
- Helaman 4:12, “*pride of their hearts*, because of their exceeding *riches*, yea, it was because of their *oppression* to the poor, ... *plundering*, lying, *stealing*” (cf. 4 Nephi 1:43).
- Helaman 6:17, “they began to *set their hearts upon their riches*; yea, they began to seek to get gain that they might be *lifted up one above another*; therefore they began to commit secret murders, and *to rob and to plunder*, that they might get gain.” Here we have references to pride, to robbery, and to setting hearts upon riches.
- Helaman 7:21, “ye have *set your hearts upon the riches* and the *vain* things of this world, for the which ye do murder, and *plunder*, and *steal*.”
- Helaman 13:20, “they have *set their hearts upon riches*.”

The plurality of elements such as robbery, vanity, trust, or oppression from Psalm 62:10, which sometimes occur in combination with its unique expression of *set* + *heart(s) upon riches*, creates a plausible case for the widespread influence of Psalm 62 upon the Book of Mormon.<sup>40</sup> Whether

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40. The Book of Mormon’s use of Psalm 62 may also be consistent with the proactive, anti-apostasy intent of this Psalm as interpreted by Davida Charney, “Keeping the Faithful: Persuasive Strategies in Psalms 4 and 62,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 12/16 (2012): 1–13, [www.jhsonline.org/Articles/article\\_178.pdf](http://www.jhsonline.org/Articles/article_178.pdf).

due to Joseph's familiarity with the Bible and modern "plagiarism" or due to the familiarity of ancient authors with the brass plates (ancient "plagiarism," if one accepts Beshears's problematic definition) is a matter for debate, but in any case this example further undermines the claim that the Book of Mormon lacks influence from the Psalms.

### **If Any of You Lack Wisdom**

According to Beshears, "the mormonic Hebrew Bible appears not to have contained the book of Psalms or any other 'wisdom literature.'"<sup>41</sup> But the purported lack of "wisdom literature" does not fit scholarship on the Book of Mormon revealing that themes from the "wisdom literature" play an important role. Wisdom themes in the Book of Mormon were noted long ago by Nibley<sup>42</sup> and have been noted in many ways since then. Taylor Halverson, for examples, offers this abstract with a recent article at *The Interpreter*:

Nephi is the prototypical wise son of the Wisdom tradition. As Proverbs advocates that a wise man cherishes the word of God, so Nephi cherishes the words of the wise. Nephi's record begins with a declaration of his upbringing in the Wisdom tradition and his authenticity and reliability as a wise son and scribe (1 Nephi 1:1–3). His is a record of the learning of the Jews — a record of wisdom. If the Wisdom tradition is a foundation for Nephi's scribal capabilities and outlook, perhaps the principles and literary skills represented by the scribal Wisdom tradition constitute the "learning of the Jews" that Nephi references so early in his account. Thus, if Nephi's is a record of the learning of the Jews — a record of wisdom — we would be wise to read it with Wisdom — that is, through the lens of ancient Israelite and Middle Eastern Wisdom traditions.<sup>43</sup>

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41. Beshears, "Davidic References in the Book of Mormon," 41.

42. Hugh Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989).

43. Taylor Halverson, "Reading 1 Nephi With Wisdom," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016): 279–93, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/reading-1-nephi-with-wisdom/>.

Others discussing wisdom themes in the Book of Mormon include Daniel Peterson,<sup>44</sup> Samuel Zinner,<sup>45</sup> Kevin Christensen,<sup>46</sup> and Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt.<sup>47</sup> The alleged lack of “wisdom” in the Book of Mormon is another case of inadequate review of previous scholarship.

### **The Lack of David in the Book of Mormon**

While Beshears’s reasons for rejecting the Book of Mormon fail on multiple counts, his basic question is reasonable: Why is David not given more emphasis in the Book of Mormon? And in particular, we can extend the question to ask why Book of Mormon kings are not evaluated by comparison to King David, when that seems to be the standard applied to many of the kings in the Bible. The righteous kings like Benjamin and Mosiah are richly praised, but not by comparison to David. Why not?

First, a basic problem here is assuming that there is a “typical” type of Bible text that should be found wherever we look in the Bible, when that is simply not the case. As mentioned above, a large number of books in both the Old and New Testament fail to mention David at all. Since some authors see the Davidic Covenant as central and all-important,<sup>48</sup> Beshears’s perspective is understandable. But there is not a uniform urge to turn to David and the Davidic covenant of an everlasting throne in Jerusalem, even in books like Daniel that look forward to the end days and the final victory of God. For example, the wisdom literature, a type of literature Beshears errantly claimed was absent in the Book of Mormon but in fact shows a strong influence, tends to ignore the Davidic

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44. Peterson, “Nephi and His Asherah.”

45. Samuel Zinner, “‘Zion’ and ‘Jerusalem’ as Lady Wisdom in Moses 7 and Nephi’s Tree of Life Vision,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 12 (2014): 281–323, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/zion-and-jerusalem-as-lady-wisdom-in-moses-7-and-nephis-tree-of-life-vision/>.

46. Kevin Christensen, “Nephi, Wisdom, and the Deuteronomist Reform,” *Insights* 23/2 (2003): 2–3; Kevin Christensen, “Jacob’s Connections to First Temple Traditions,” *Insights* 23/4 (2003): 2–3; Kevin Christensen, “The Temple, the Monarchy, and Wisdom: Lehi’s World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, eds. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 449–522, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1081&index=15>.

47. Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt, “His Secret Is with the Righteous: Instructional Wisdom in the Book of Mormon,” *Occasional Papers: Number 5* (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute, 2007), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=2696&index=6>.

48. Michael A. Grisanti, “The Davidic Covenant,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, 10/2 (Fall 1999): 233–50.



covenant, as Daniel Peterson noted in his widely cited exploration of some aspects of wisdom traditions embedded in the Book of Mormon:

Biblical scholars recognize a genre of writing, found both in the standard, canonical scriptures (e.g., Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon) and outside the canon, that they term “wisdom literature.” Among the characteristics of this type of writing, not surprisingly, is frequent use of the term *wisdom*. But also common to such literature, and very striking in texts from a Hebrew cultural background, is *the absence* of typical Israelite or Jewish themes. We read nothing there about the promises to the patriarchs, the story of Moses and the Exodus, the covenant at Sinai, and *the divine promise of kingship to David*. There is, instead, a strong emphasis on the teachings of parents, and especially on the instruction by fathers. [*emphasis added*]<sup>49</sup>

Since the wisdom-heavy founding documents of the Nephite people paid little attention to the Davidic covenant, it should not be a surprise to see other writers like Alma follow suit in their emphasis of similar themes (including the exodus, not normally emphasized in wisdom literature but obviously an important issue for Nephi and Lehi as they made a literal exodus to a promised land) and a lack of emphasis on the Davidic covenant. This is not to say that any Book of Mormon author wrote exclusively in the wisdom tradition, but there is a significant thread of wisdom influence in the book.

Several more noteworthy factors may contribute to the relative lack of interest in David among Nephite writers. Lehi was not a Jew from David’s tribe of Judah, but was descended from the tribe of Joseph, probably with roots in the northern kingdom, where there was less respect for descendants of David on the throne in Jerusalem. More importantly, Lehi may not have accepted some aspects of Josiah’s reforms that began in 622 B.C. These “Deuteronomist” reforms, triggered by the “discovery” of a book of the law in the temple, believed to be the source of our Book of Deuteronomy, sought to impose centralized worship in Jerusalem and may have introduced the concept of the Davidic covenant — the idea that God would always keep a king descended from David on the throne of Jerusalem, no matter how bad those kings might be. Josiah’s reforms

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49. Daniel C. Peterson, “Nephi and His Asherah,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/2 (2000): 16–25, 80–81, quotation at 23, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/jbms/9/2/S00003-50be458eb2b313Peterson.pdf>.

were actually violent, causing many priests to be killed and sacred relics from the temple to be forcefully destroyed.

Non-LDS scholar Margaret Barker argues that Josiah's reforms were largely destroying many of the things in the old Jewish faith, including the idea of the temple as the place where the presence of God could be encountered, the idea of visions and angels that minister to prophets, and the wisdom tradition.<sup>50</sup> She argues that the reformers, the Deuteronomists, took out much in early Jewish faith during their violent purges. Barker also points to many ways in which the writings of Nephi comply with results of her own research about pre-exilic Jewish religion.<sup>51</sup> Although some LDS scholars disagree with her assessment of Josiah,<sup>52</sup> if she is right, then Lehi, the man of visions, the seeker of wisdom, would naturally be at odds with the Deuteronomists and their scribes, who shaped a great deal of the Bible.

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50. Margaret Barker, "What Did King Josiah Reform?" in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, ed. Jo Ann H. Seely, David Rolph Seely, and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2004) 521–42, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1081&index=16>. See also Neal Rappleye, "The Deuteronomist Reforms and Lehi's Family Dynamics: A Social Context for the Rebellions of Laman and Lemuel," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 16 (2015): 87–99, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/the-deuteronomist-reforms-and-lehis-family-dynamics-a-social-context-for-the-rebellions-of-laman-and-lemuel/>; as well as Kevin Christensen, "The Temple, the Monarchy, and Wisdom: Lehi's World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker," in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, 449–522, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1081&index=15>; and Kevin Christensen, "Prophets and Kings in Lehi's Jerusalem and Margaret Barker's Temple Theology," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 177–93, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/prophets-and-kings-in-lehis-jerusalem-and-margaret-barkers-temple-theology/>.

51. Margaret Barker, "Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion," in *The Worlds of Joseph Smith: The Worlds of Joseph Smith: A Bicentennial Conference at the Library of Congress*, ed. John S. Welch (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press: 2006), Kindle edition. See also Margaret Barker, "Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion," *BYU Studies* 44/4 (2005): 69–82, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/joseph-smith-and-preexilic-israelite-religion>.

52. For examples of scholars who view Josiah positively, see William J. Hamblin, "Vindicating Josiah," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 165–176, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/vindicating-josiah/>; and David Rolph Seely and Jo Ann H. Seely, "Lehi and Jeremiah: Prophets Priests and Patriarchs" in John W. Welch and David Rolph Seely and Ann H. Seely, eds., *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem* (Provo, UT: FARMS 2004), 357–80, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1081&index=12>.

Modern scholarship on the origins of the Bible, including the theories related to the Documentary Hypothesis, provides some related insights that can help us understand the significance of the Davidic covenant Beshears expects the Book of Mormon to emphasize. In Richard Elliot Friedman's famous *Who Wrote the Bible?*, the mystery behind the centralization of worship and the Davidic covenant is unraveled in several intriguing steps.<sup>53</sup> There is a mystery here, for in spite of the strict command in Deuteronomy to centralize worship in Jerusalem, we find David, Saul, Solomon, and Samuel making sacrifices in other places as if they had no awareness of this fundamental command attributed to Moses. This and other issues have led multiple scholars to conclude that the long-lost book of the law mysteriously found in the temple during Josiah's reign was in fact composed at that time, written by someone close to Josiah. And textual and thematic evidence also suggests that the author or school that produced Deuteronomy also produced the following six books: Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. The Davidic covenant given in 2 Samuel 7 was part of that effort. This comes from the Deuteronomists, and not from the other sources proposed for the Bible in the various versions of the Documentary Hypothesis. The Davidic covenant makes sense only if it was written before the exile, when the confident Jews felt the holy city of Jerusalem could never fall. Lehi, warned of Jerusalem's destruction, obviously did not see things that way.

An interesting thing about the Deuteronomists, according to Friedman, is how much emphasis they gave to David. In their writings, every king is evaluated by comparison to David. But that emphasis stops after Josiah, possibly because the bulk of the Deuteronomists writings (most of seven books in all) were done in that day, with only minor additions required to cover the tragic fall of Judah and the last four disastrous kings following Josiah. Friedman explains:

That is not the only thing that changes after the story of Josiah. King David figures in a fundamental way in the Deuteronomistic history. Half of the book of 1 Samuel, all of the book of 2 Samuel, and the first chapters of 1 Kings deal with his life. The majority of the kings who come after him are compared to him. The historian states explicitly, several times, that because of David's merit even a bad king of Judah cannot

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53. Richard Elliot Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997, originally published 1987), 91–124.

lose the throne for the family. Especially among the last few kings down to the time of Josiah, the historian reminds us of David. He compares Josiah himself to David, saying, “He went in all the path of David his father.” [2 Kings 22:2] ... Altogether the name David occurs about five hundred times in the Deuteronomistic history. Then, in the story of the last four kings, it stops. The text does not compare these kings to David. It does not refer to the Davidic covenant, let alone explain why it does not save the throne now the way it did in the reigns of Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijam, and Jehoram. It just does not mention David at all.

Thus two common, crucial matters in the Deuteronomistic history — centralization and David — disappear after the Josiah section.<sup>54</sup>

Friedman explains that caution is needed in applying arguments from silence, but here the silence is deafening. When every king is compared to David, and then suddenly the last four kings are not, and when centralization is viewed as essential up to Josiah and then suddenly is not, “we have evidence of a real break and a change of perspective that are connected to that king.”<sup>55</sup>

While there are some details in the Documentary Hypothesis that can easily be questioned, especially the dating for various sources, the possibility of multiple versions of documents and competing agendas influencing the Bible is actually consistent with information we obtain from the Book of Mormon, not only in terms of how ancient sources were pulled together but also in terms of its report of loss and change that would occur in the records of the Jews.

However the Bible was composed, there is strong evidence that references to David and the Davidic covenant are highly nonuniform in the Bible and are most concentrated in the documents considered to be most influenced by the Deuteronomists. Seeing Lehi as an adherent to the old visionary ways opposed by the Deuteronomists can also help us understand why he might not have bought the new agenda of centralization and the new emphasis on the confident claims of those touting a Davidic covenant that would keep the throne safe, no matter what. The Book of Mormon’s relative silence on David, though not as silent as many other legitimate biblical books, is consistent with the

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54. *Ibid.*, 115.

55. *Ibid.*

view based largely on Barker's work that 1 Nephi accurately portrays the complex religious differences and tensions present in pre-exilic Jerusalem, with some groups not accepting the new reforms and possibly not accepting a new emphasis on security through the Davidic covenant.

Jon Levenson's review of modern scholarship on the problem of the Davidic covenant reminds us that its presence and influence in the scriptures is not as broad as some seem to assume:

The dynastic Davidic Covenant is of another character. There are only a handful of passages that show awareness of it, and the only two that set it out in any detail at all are those we have already discussed, 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89. ... Several considerations, however, militate against the idea that this indicates that the Davidic Covenant commanded the same degree of public awareness and loyalty as the Sinaitic. First, we must notice that Abraham himself was the object of far less attention in the history of the tradition than was Moses. For Abraham, for example, we have nothing even remotely resembling Elijah's rehearsal of Moses' pilgrimage to Sinai/Horeb (1 Kings 19) or the great pseudonymous Mosaic address that has come to be called Deuteronomy. The second point to bear in mind is that the expansion of the empire is not quite the same thing as the Davidic Covenant. In certain Israelite circles, by no means small or ephemeral, kingship came to be as important as we know it was elsewhere in the ancient Near East. But to say that kingship was central and even that in Judah it happened to be held almost always by a Davidide is very different from the assertion that the Davidic Covenant, with all it entails, was a central concern. The truth is that most glorifications of David or his reign do not mention a covenant. In fact, the only reference to an "eternal covenant" with David in the books of Samuel is in the so-called "Latter Words of David" (2 Samuel 23:1-7), and it is by no means certain that even this obscure reference (v. 5) signifies the dynastic commitment of 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89. In short, kingship and the Davidic dynasty were not synonymous.<sup>56</sup>

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56. Jon D. Levenson, "The Davidic Covenant and its Modern Interpreters," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41/2 (April 1979): 205-19, citation at 216-7, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43714665>.

He also explains that in the daily and religious life of an Israelite, the issue of the Davidic covenant was minor compared to the covenant at Sinai:

Even in the religious consciousness of an Israelite for whom kingship was of central importance, the entitlement of the House of David could remain peripheral. That is why, despite the presence of a great quantity of material bearing on royal theology, the specific covenant with David is expounded in clear form so very rarely. Not all royal theology was Davidic, and not all Davidic theology was covenantal. The average Israelite could probably live his life without giving any more attention to the Davidic Covenant than the average American gives to the 25th amendment to the Constitution, which also attempts to regulate the matter of succession to the most important office in the land. The same cannot be said of the Sinaitic Covenant. Therefore, it is wrong to assume, as Bright, for example, does, that emphasis on one must have been at the expense of the other, just as it is wrong to assume, with all the scholars I term “integrationists,” that the dynastic oracle of 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89 rests upon an acute consciousness of the Sinaitic Covenant. It appears that the importance of the Davidic-messianic material in subsequent Judaism and especially in Christianity has led scholars to exaggerate its importance (relative to the Sinaitic material) in the Hebrew Bible, even to the extent of their imagining that the two covenants must have been in some kind of constant conversation, either harmonious or discordant.<sup>57</sup>

As for the centralization of worship that Josiah imposed, Lehi and Nephi obviously had no qualms with ritual worship outside of Jerusalem, even to the point of building a temple in the New World, just as Jews at Elephantine in Egypt did.<sup>58</sup> In fact, Lehi was so at odds with the reigning religious establishment in Jerusalem that his life was in danger. His “apostasy” might have included rejecting some aspects of Josiah’s reforms that began just a few decades before his exodus. Again, what we find in the

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57. Ibid., 217–8.

58. Jared W. Ludlow, “A Tale of Three Communities: Jerusalem, Elephantine, and Lehi-Nephi,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16/2 (2007): 28–41, 95, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol16/iss2/5>. See also Jeff Lindsay, “Lessons from the Elephantine Papyri Regarding Book of Mormon Names and Nephi’s Temple,” *JeffLindsay.com* (blog), May 22, 2004, <https://www.jefflindsay.com/bme20.shtml>.

writings of Nephi makes a good deal of sense in the context of pre-exilic Israel, based on still-tentative research from Margaret Barker and others.<sup>59</sup>

Joseph Smith could have known none of this. If he were making up the Book of Mormon based on average familiarity with the Bible in his day, or even above average graduate-student level familiarity with the Bible in our day, it is indeed reasonable that we would expect him to pick up on the extensive mentions of David, most of which occur in Deuteronomistic writings, and to then imitate that in the Book of Mormon. Praising King David and comparing good and bad kings to him would be the natural thing to do for a Bible-sponge imitating all things biblical.

Beshears's puzzlement about David in the Book of Mormon is understandable. It is only through deeper understanding of the complexities behind the statistics on David's name that we realize the Bible is highly nonuniform regarding David, that there are reasons for sudden changes in the text regarding David, and that there may be good reasons why ancient faithful Hebrews from the tribe of Joseph, ill at ease with the southern Kingdom Jews and their recent violent religious reforms, might not follow suit with the Deuteronomistic writings and their constant awe for David. Those Hebrews, clinging to the old ways of prophecy, revelation, temple worship, and wisdom literature, would respect David as a great but fallen king and could be frank about his disobedience without betraying their Hebrew roots. They could appreciate the parallels between the young righteous David and Nephi, and could name a land after David, but had no need to make David a touchstone of their faith.

When we consider Beshears's valuable questions in light of broader scholarship, we see that once again, we may have an interesting reversal on our hands, where a sloppy blunder in the "mormonic" text that allegedly disproves its historicity in reality leaves it in a surprisingly strong position.

Overall, I appreciate the meaningful questions posed by Beshears, but am gravely disappointed by the neglect of Nephi's Psalm and many other relevant issues, and fear his work is more driven by an agenda rather than a genuine inquiry into the issues before him. I hope it can be updated and revised in light of some of the issues I raise here.

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59. Margaret Barker, "What Did King Josiah Reform?"; Margaret Barker, "Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion"; and Kevin Christensen, "Prophets and Kings in Lehi's Jerusalem."

**Jeffrey Dean Lindsay** and his wife Kendra are residents of Shanghai, China. Jeff has been providing online materials defending the LDS faith for over twenty years, primarily at [JeffLindsay.com](http://JeffLindsay.com). His Mormanity blog (<https://mormanity.blogspot.com>) has been in operation since 2004. He also wrote weekly for Orson Scott Card's Nauvoo Times ([NauvooTimes.com](http://NauvooTimes.com)) from 2012 through 2016. Jeff has a PhD in chemical engineering from BYU and is a registered US patent agent. He serves as Head of Intellectual Property for Asia Pulp and Paper, one of the world's largest paper companies. Formerly, he was associate professor at the Institute of Paper Science and (now the Renewable Bioproducts Institute) at Georgia Tech, then went into R&D at Kimberly-Clark Corporation, eventually becoming corporate patent strategist and senior research fellow. He then spent several years at Innovationedge in Neenah, Wisconsin, helping many companies with innovation and IP strategy. Jeff has been in China for five years, where he works with various APP companies and mills in advancing their intellectual property and innovation. Since 2015, Jeff has been recognized as a leading IP strategist by Intellectual Asset Magazine in their global IAM300 listing based on peer input. He is also lead author of *Conquering Innovation Fatigue* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009). He is active in the chemical engineering community and was recently named a Fellow of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers. Jeff served a mission in the German-speaking Switzerland Zurich Mission and currently serves as counselor in the district presidency of the Shanghai International District. He and his wife Kendra are the parents of four boys and have nine grandchildren.



# THE WORD *BAPTIZE* IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

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John Hilton III and Jana Johnson

**Abstract:** *The word baptize appears 119 times in the Book of Mormon; three speakers (Jesus Christ, Mormon, and Nephi) account for 87% of all of these usages. Each of these individuals have distinctive patterns in how they use the word baptize, indicating that each speaker has his own unique voice. When one accounts for the fact that Christ says relatively fewer words than Mormon, it is evident that per 1,000 words spoken, Jesus Christ uses the word baptize more than any other speaker in the Book of Mormon. This finding holds true for Christ's words both in and outside of 3 Nephi. Among other patterns, we demonstrate that Jesus Christ associates his name with baptism more than any other Book of Mormon speaker and that Christ is responsible for 58% of the Book of Mormon's invitations to be baptized. Additional patterns and their implications are discussed.*

The scriptures teach that baptism is a requirement for entering the Kingdom of God. This message is particularly prominent in the Book of Mormon. *Baptize*<sup>1</sup> appears 119 times in the Book of Mormon (in contrast to 138 times in all other books of scripture combined). Speaking of this emphasis, Noel B. Reynolds has written, “The Book of Mormon accounts make clear that baptism by water is the act wherein repentant

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1. For the purposes of this study, we also include the variants *baptized* and *baptizing*. The noun form, *baptism*, is not considered in this study. *Baptize* is used much more than *baptism* in the scriptures (257 versus 85 times), and particularly in the Book of Mormon (119 versus 26 times).

converts to Jesus Christ can witness to the Father that they have repented and covenanted to keep his commandments.”<sup>2</sup>

In the Book of Mormon, *baptize* first appears in 1 Nephi 10, where Nephi describes a dream Lehi<sup>3</sup> had depicting the work of John the Baptist. Nephi says *baptize* again in 1 Nephi 11:27. The next time the word occurs is in 2 Nephi 9:23, when Jacob states, “And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel.” This is the first mention in the text of the necessity for all people to be baptized. In 2 Nephi 31 (the next chapter in which *baptize* appears), Nephi continues this message, saying, “If the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfill all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water!” (2 Nephi 31:5). While the word *baptize* does not appear between 2 Nephi 31 and Mosiah 18, it does appear in every subsequent book. The final occurrence of *baptize* is in Moroni 8:10: “Teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children” (Moroni 8:10). Thus from the beginning to the

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2. Noel B. Reynolds, “The True Points of My Doctrine,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 5.2 (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute, 1996): 43, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/jbms/5/2/S00002-50be20638eb692Reynolds.pdf>. See also Noel B. Reynolds, “The Gospel according to Mormon,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68 (2015): 218–34, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2474&context=facpub>.

3. While *baptize* does not appear in the Old Testament, it is found in the Book of Moses, which indicates that baptism was an ancient principle with which Lehi and his family would have been familiar. *Baptize* appears six times in the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price; Moses writes that Adam was “baptized, even in water” in Christ’s name (Moses 6:52) and that he also was “baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost” (Moses 6:66). Moses also records that Enoch taught that people should be baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, . . . and of the Holy Ghost” (Moses 7:11), and Noah taught that people must be “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ . . . and . . . receive the Holy Ghost” (Moses 8:24). Noel B. Reynolds has pointed out similarities the brass plates (which Lehi and his family brought with them from Jerusalem) may have had with the Book of Moses (Noel B. Reynolds, “The Brass Plates Version of Genesis,” in *By Study and Also by Faith*: Vol. 2, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990]). The Book of Moses itself addresses the absence of the word *baptize* in our current Old Testament records in Moses 1:41, where the Lord says to Moses, “And in that day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take many of them from the book which thou shalt write . . .”

end, Book of Mormon writers consistently emphasize the importance of being baptized. Table 1 shows how often the word appears in the various books of the Book of Mormon.

**Table 1.** Occurrences of *baptize*  
(and its derivatives) by book.

Book	Occurrences of <i>Baptize</i>
1 Nephi	7
2 Nephi	9
Mosiah	18
Alma	19
Helaman	8
3 Nephi	44
4 Nephi	1
Mormon	5
Ether	3
Moroni	5

### Unique Voices in the Book of Mormon

While one could profitably study the doctrine of what it means to *baptize* or be *baptized* in the Book of Mormon, analyzing how different speakers in the Book of Mormon utilize the word provides an additional lens of examination. The idea that distinct voices can be heard in ancient texts is not new to this study. For example, Dorota Dutsch has examined Roman literature written between 300–200 BC. Her study focused on works written by two male Roman authors (Terence and Plautus). Both these men included female characters in their works, and these female characters were consistently portrayed as having distinctive patterns of speech.<sup>4</sup> Similar analyses have been done on the Book of Mormon.

One specific type of analysis that examines different authorial voices is known as stylometry. Some stylometric studies of the Book of Mormon have confirmed that there are indeed different authorial voices in the

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4. Dorota M. Dutsch, *Feminine Discourse in Roman Comedy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Book of Mormon.<sup>5</sup> Roger Keller's examination of themes and patterns in the words used by Book of Mormon speakers provides one example of how the distinctive ways speakers discuss specific topics can be a useful lens. Keller said that "[s]ince the Book of Mormon is believed by Latter-day Saints to be a compilation of writings from numerous ancient authors, then one should be able to discern the unique content words used by the authors whose messages are preserved within its pages."<sup>6</sup> Keller's study focused on "content words," words that "are theologically, culturally, and historically significant."<sup>7</sup> He created word clusters, related groups of words, and analyzed them to determine if there were statistically significant differences in how they were used.

One word cluster Keller identified was a group of 109 words related to the ancient Near East. This cluster included words such as Babylon, Egypt, Jeremiah, and Moses. Collectively, these 109 words are used 1,179 times in the Book of Mormon. Keller then examined whether certain speakers in the Book of Mormon used these words more frequently than others. He noted, "The authors who are most distant in time from the Ancient Near East context use the words of this group the least, while those nearest in time, use them the most."<sup>8</sup> Keller expected his study of content words and other stylometric studies to support each other, and found that "there are clear and recognizable differences in the content words used and the meanings attached to them by the authors within the Book of Mormon."<sup>9</sup>

### Book of Mormon Speakers' Use of *Baptize*

The present study seeks to further the work of analyzing word patterns of different individuals in the Book of Mormon to see how this elucidates the key word *baptize*. While the word *baptize* appears throughout the Book of Mormon, it is emphasized to different degrees by the different

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5. Matthew Roper, Paul J. Fields and G. Bruce Schaallje, "Stylometric Analyses of the Book of Mormon: A Short History," *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 21, no. 1 (2012), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1380&index=3>.

6. Roger Keller, Roger R. Keller, *Book of Mormon Authors: Their Words and Messages* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1996), xi, <https://rsc.byu.edu/out-print/book-mormon-authors-their-words-and-messages>.

7. Ibid., 4.

8. Ibid., 8. Keller also notes two exceptions to this general pattern, namely Nephi, and Mormon in his sermon materials.

9. Ibid., xiii.

speakers in the book. In order to determine which speakers used the word *baptize*, we used a database known as “The Voices of the Book of Mormon,” created by John Hilton III, Shon Hopkin, Jennifer Platt, Randal Wright, and Jana Johnson. This database parses the text of the Book of Mormon by the person to whom the text is attributed.<sup>10</sup>

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10. In order to identify correctly who is speaking in any given passage, John Hilton III, Shon Hopkin, Jennifer Platt, Randal Wright, and Jana Johnson each independently analyzed the Book of Mormon to identify the different speakers. They then reviewed their individual findings and examined passages in which they disagreed on who was speaking. After creating an integrated version of the Book of Mormon parsed out by the person speaking, they compared their work to other scholars who had made similar efforts, and in some cases made adjustments to their original speaker designations (studied works include Robert Smith’s *Critical Text*, which was based on John L. Hilton and Kenneth D. Jenkins, *A Full Listing of Book of Mormon References by Author and Literary Form*, FARMS Preliminary Report H&J-82 (Provo, UT, 1983), [https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/PreliminaryReports/Set 3/ Prelim Rep/Hilton and Jenkins, All Book of Mormon References by Author and Literary Form, 1983.pdf](https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/PreliminaryReports/Set%203/Prelim%20Rep/Hilton%20and%20Jenkins,%20All%20Book%20of%20Mormon%20References%20by%20Author%20and%20Literary%20Form,%201983.pdf). We also consulted Rencher’s speaker divisions, which were the basis of Wayne A. Larsen and Alvin C. Rencher, “Who Wrote the Book of Mormon? An Analysis of Wordprints,” in Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship*, (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1982), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/book/book-of-mormon-authorship-new-light-on-ancient-origins/>. Finally, we consulted the use of quotation marks in Grant Hardy’s *A Reader’s Edition of the Book of Mormon* to identify how he chose where to begin or end quotes. With Isaiah passages we consulted John D. W. Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary 24: Isaiah 1–33* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985) and *Word Biblical Commentary 25: Isaiah 34–66* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987). The resulting text was incorporated into WordCruncher, which powers the database. Unfortunately, the database is currently not available due to copyright issues (it uses the 2013 Book of Mormon text, which is under copyright). This database is admittedly limited in that it assumes that editors such as Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni accurately recounted the words spoken by specific individuals (rather than paraphrasing) and it assumes a literal translation of the Book of Mormon. This database was also used in writing John Hilton III and Jana Johnson, “Who Uses the Word Resurrection in the Book of Mormon and How Is It Used?” *The Journal of Book of Mormon and Restoration Scriptures*, 21/2 (2012): 30–39, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/jbms/21/2/S00003-510c35663d5553-Hilton.pdf>; and Shon Hopkin and John Hilton III, “Samuel’s Reliance on Biblical Language” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 24 (2015): 31–52, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/jbms/24/JBMS-v24-Hopkin-Hilton.pdf>.

Table 2 shows how many times individual speakers in the Book of Mormon say *baptize*. (The last column is the speaker's total spoken words as a percentage of the total words spoken in the Book of Mormon.)

**Table 2.** Use of *baptize* by major Book of Mormon speakers.<sup>11</sup>

Speaker	Times used per 1,000 words spoken	Times used	Percent of total uses of <i>Baptized</i>	Percent of total words spoken in the Book of Mormon
Jesus Christ	2.54	36	30.3%	5.28%
The Father	0.70	1	0.8%	0.56%
Mormon	0.57	56	47.1%	36.36%
Nephi <sub>1</sub>	0.42	12	10.1%	10.49%
Jacob	0.24	2	1.6%	3.16%
Moroni <sub>2</sub>	0.20	4	3.4%	7.27%
Alma <sub>2</sub>	0.20	4	3.4%	7.47%
The Lord	0.08	1	0.8%	4.46%

As indicated, more than three-quarters of the uses of *baptize* come from Jesus Christ and Mormon. Of the major speakers in the Book of Mormon, Nephi<sub>1</sub> is the only other individual to frequently employ this word. We might expect other major speakers, such as Moroni<sub>2</sub>, Alma<sub>2</sub>, King Benjamin, and Jacob also to utilize this word often, but they do not. Because Jesus Christ, Mormon, and Nephi<sub>1</sub> are the speakers who use *baptize* frequently enough to see unique usage patterns, we will focus only on these speakers throughout the remaining tables in this article, unless specifically indicated otherwise.

Although Mormon uses *baptize* more than any other speaker, it is important to note that Jesus Christ uses the word much more frequently than any other individual in terms of times used per 1,000 words spoken. As we will see, this has interesting implications. While Christ is the most frequent user of *baptize*, the Lord is the least frequent among major Book of Mormon speakers (in terms of times used per 1,000 words spoken).

Admittedly, it is difficult to distinguish between the voices of “God, the Father,” “Jesus Christ,” and “The Lord.” While good arguments could be made for combining these voices, we determined that if a

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11. The word counts in Table 2 (and similar tables throughout this article) are based on the Voices of the Book of Mormon database described in the previous footnote.

statement is specifically attributed to the Father, or if context made it clear that the Father was speaking (e.g. 2 Nephi 31:11), we categorized that statement as being from the Father.<sup>12</sup> We likewise attributed words in which Jesus Christ was textually identified as the person speaking (e.g., 3 Nephi 30:1-2) as belonging to him. Generic references to deity (e.g., Lord, God) were assigned to the Lord.

One interesting insight from isolating instances when Jesus Christ was explicitly identified as the speaker in the Book of Mormon is that it allows us to see subtle differences in the way the words of the Lord are recorded as opposed to those specifically attributed to Jesus Christ. One important difference in their speaking patterns is that the Lord says *baptize* only once, but Jesus Christ says it 36 times. This seems to indicate a significant difference in speaking patterns, since Jesus Christ and the Lord speak approximately the same number of words.<sup>13</sup>

As we analyzed the ways in which Jesus Christ, Mormon and Nephi<sub>1</sub> employ the word *baptize*, we found patterns and idiosyncrasies in the ways each of them do so. The following three sections focus on these unique usage patterns.

### Christ's Use of *Baptize*

It is important to recognize that Christ's emphasis on being baptized is not simply a function of his focus on this topic in 3 Nephi 11. In fact, not only does Jesus Christ say *baptize* more per 1,000 words than any other speaker, he is consistent in his use of *baptize* throughout the text. Table 3 illustrates this point.

**Table 3.** Christ's use of *baptize* inside and outside 3 Nephi 11–28.

Location	Appearances of <i>baptize</i>	Total words spoken	Uses of <i>baptize</i> per 1,000 words
Inside 3 Nephi 11–28	25	9,694	2.58
Outside 3 Nephi 11–28	11	4,467	2.46

Table 3 indicates that in addition to regularly saying *baptize* in 3 Nephi 11–28, Christ also consistently uses the word throughout the entire text of the Book of Mormon. In 3 Nephi 11–28 Christ speaks 9,694

12. While the phrase “eternal father” appears 13 times in the Book of Mormon there are no words that are attributed to the “eternal father.”

13. Jesus Christ speaks 14,161 words, and the Lord speaks 11,909 words.

words and says *baptized* 25 times — 2.58 times per 1,000 words.<sup>14</sup> Outside those chapters he speaks 4,467 words and says *baptized* 11 times — 2.46 times per 1,000 words.<sup>15</sup> In 3 Nephi 11 he gives the specific manner of baptism; however, apart from that deviation, Christ is fairly consistent in his use of *baptize* throughout the text. He typically focuses on the idea that people should be baptized in his name and receive the Holy Ghost (e.g., 2 Nephi 31:12).

Aside from looking at quantitative differences in the use of *baptize* among different Book of Mormon speakers, we can look at how certain collocates of *baptize* are unique to certain speakers. For example, Christ is much more likely than other speakers to associate *name* with *baptize*, as illustrated by Table 4.

**Table 4.** Appearances of *baptize* and *name* in the same verse.

Speaker <sup>16</sup>	Times used per 1,000 words	Number of verses in which <i>baptize</i> appears	Number of verses in which <i>baptize</i> and <i>name</i> appear together	Percent of verses using <i>baptize</i> that also include <i>name</i>
Jesus Christ	2.54	28	17	61%
Mormon	0.57	47	5	11%
Nephi <sub>1</sub>	0.42	7	0	0%

There is a stark difference between these speakers in terms of their propensity to use *baptize* and *name* in the same verse. Christ uses *name* in 61% of the verses in which he utilizes *baptize*. In contrast, Mormon only does so 11% of the time (he is the only person to utilize the phrase *baptized in the name of Jesus*). We never hear Nephi's voice employ *baptize* and *name* in the same verse. Importantly, Mormon's use of *name* and *baptize* appears to be related to Christ's, a point that will be revisited later in this article.

While this example shows a clear difference in voice, it may also expand our understanding and appreciation of the ordinance of baptism. Christ's consistent connections between baptism and his own name can perhaps deepen our appreciation for the nature of baptismal covenants. It

14. For example, see 3 Nephi 11:33-34.

15. For example, see Moroni 7:33-34.

16. Other appearances: The Father, 1; Jacob, 2; Moroni<sub>2</sub>, 1; Alma<sub>2,1</sub>



may also aid us in taking more seriously the concept of baptism when we realize how personal it is for the Savior, given how closely he associates the ordinance with his own name.

Another example of Christ's unique use of *baptized* in the Book of Mormon is in the personal connection he makes between it and himself. Christ uses phrases like "Whoso believeth in *me* and is *baptized* shall be saved" (3 Nephi 11:33) and "Come unto *me* and be *baptized*" (3 Nephi 21:6). When we included every possible reference to Christ (e.g., "come unto *him*, be baptized unto the *Lord*) Jesus Christ still is much more likely to say *baptize* in reference to himself than other speakers are to say it about him.

Christ associates himself with being baptized in 23 verses, which is more than all other speakers combined, making him responsible for 56% of the appearances of *baptize* that relate to Christ. This number is disproportionate with the fact that he is responsible for only 30% of the appearances of *baptize* in the text. Christ's abundant association of himself and *baptize* can help readers of the Book of Mormon recognize the close connection between being baptized and coming to Christ. As with the connection with *name* and *Christ*, this can perhaps deepen our understanding of how important baptism is to Christ.

Of the 119 instances of *baptize* in the Book of Mormon, 12 are invitations or commands to be baptized.<sup>17</sup> Of those who frequently say *baptize*, only Jesus Christ and Mormon issue invitations to be baptized. Table 5 illustrates their relative usage, along with the others who issue invitations to be baptized. From Table 5, we see that while Christ is responsible for about 30% of the instances of *baptize* in the Book of Mormon, he is disproportionately responsible for 58% of the invitations to be baptized. Such direct invitations to be baptized are unique to the Book of Mormon,<sup>18</sup> and Christ predominantly extends these invitations. All of these invitations to be baptized are associated with the concept of repentance. Clearly Christ places emphasis on the importance of being baptized.

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17. There are also two invitations to be baptized associated with the word *baptism* (out of 26 instances of *baptism*).

18. There are no direct invitations to be baptized in the New Testament. The Doctrine and Covenants contains a direct invitation in 39:10 (other instances are commands to missionaries).

**Table 5.** Invitations to be baptized.

Speaker	Times used per 1,000 words	Number of times speaker uses baptize	Invitations to be baptized
Jesus Christ	2.54	36	7 (2 Nephi 31:12, 3 Nephi 11:37, 38, 3 Nephi 27:20, 3 Nephi 30:2, Ether 4:18, Moroni 7:34)
The Father	0.70	1	1 (2 Nephi 31:11)
Mormon	0.57	56	1 (Mormon 7:8)
Alma <sub>2</sub>	0.20	4	2 (Alma 5:62, Alma 7:14)
The Lord	0.08	1	1 (Mormon 3:2)

### Nephi's Use of *Baptize*

Perhaps the most unique aspect of how Nephi<sub>1</sub> discusses baptism is that he is the only speaker to mention the event of Christ's being baptized. He does so in three separate pericopes,<sup>19</sup> demonstrating that this is a topic of importance to him. In connection with his words about Jesus Christ's baptism, he consistently uses the phrase *Lamb of God* and *baptized* together.<sup>20</sup> For example, Nephi states, "And after he had *baptized* the Messiah with water, he should behold and bear record that he had *baptized* the *Lamb of God*, who should take away the sins of the world" (1 Nephi 10:10), and (in an apparent reference back to this verse) "I would that ye should remember that I have spoken unto you concerning that prophet which the Lord showed unto me, that should *baptize* the *Lamb of God*, which should take away the sins of the world" (2 Nephi 31:4).

Alma<sub>2</sub> is the only other speaker to combine these phrases, and he only does so once.<sup>21</sup> This may be more a function of Nephi's relative propensity to employ the phrase *Lamb of God*; nevertheless, it does provide an interesting and unique collocate.

19. 1 Nephi 10:10, 11:27 and 2 Nephi 31:4–7.

20. 1 Nephi 10:10, 1 Nephi 11:26, 2 Nephi 31:4, 5, 6.

21. Alma<sub>2</sub> and Nephi<sub>1</sub> use these words together quite differently. Nephi<sub>1</sub> uses these phrases in his descriptions of Christ's baptism, but Alma<sub>2</sub> says, "Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God." It is possible that Alma<sub>2</sub> could be referencing the words of Nephi<sub>1</sub>, but it is also possible that the uniqueness of these phrases might be a factor of *Lamb* itself being a uniquely-used word in the Book of Mormon.

### Mormon's Use of *Baptize*

Mormon utilizes the word *baptize* throughout his narrative. Most frequently he describes the action of people being baptized. Instances of this include verses such as the following:

Therefore, Alma did go forth into the water and did baptize them; yea, he did baptize them after the manner he did his brethren in the waters of Mormon; yea, and as many as he did baptize did belong to the church of God; and this because of their belief on the words of Alma. (Mosiah 25:18)

“And it came to pass that the work of the Lord did prosper unto the baptizing and uniting to the church of God, many souls, yea, even tens of thousands.” (Helaman 3:26)

In both of these preceding verses, Mormon connects the words *baptize* and *church*, something he has a unique propensity for doing, as evidenced in Table 6.

**Table 6.** *Church* and *baptize* appearing together.

Speaker	Times used per 1,000 words	Number of verses in which <i>baptize</i> appears	Verses in which <i>baptize</i> and <i>church</i> appear together	Percent of total verses using <i>baptize</i> in which <i>church</i> also appears
Jesus Christ	2.54	28	3 <sup>22</sup>	10.7%
Mormon	0.57	47	15 <sup>23</sup>	31.9%
Nephi <sub>1</sub>	0.42	7	0	0%

### Differences and Similarities between the New Testament and Book of Mormon

In addition to how individual speakers within the Book of Mormon use the word, there are also different patterns in how *baptized* is used in the Book of Mormon as opposed to the New Testament.<sup>24</sup>

22. Mosiah 26:22, 3 Nephi 18:5, 16.

23. Mosiah 18:7; Mosiah 25:18; Mosiah 26:4, 37; Alma 4:4, 5; Alma 6:2; Alma 15:13; Alma 19:35; Alma 49:30; Helaman 3:24, 26; 3 Nephi 26:21; 3 Nephi 28:18; 4 Nephi 1:1.

24. Baptize appears about as frequently in the Book of Mormon as in the New Testament. The Book of Mormon contains 283,349 words, and baptize appears

In contrast to his frequent use of *baptize* in the Book of Mormon, Christ speaking in the four Gospels says *baptize* only .25 times per 1,000 words spoken. Put differently, given any 1,000 words, Christ is 10 times more likely to use the word *baptize* in the Book of Mormon than the New Testament. We find one possible explanation for this in 1 Nephi 13:26, where an angel speaking to Nephi says, “for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away ... Wherefore, thou seest that ... there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God.” It is possible that some of the “covenants of the Lord” taken away may be some of Christ’s teachings about baptism in the Bible. If this is the case, it could account for the drastic differences in Christ’s use of baptism in the Book of Mormon and the New Testament.

Another plausible explanation is that the Nephites were particularly confused about baptism. In 3 Nephi 11:28, Christ suggests that there had been arguments among the Nephites about baptism and tells them, “And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been.” Noel B. Reynolds also made this point saying, “Detailed instructions on baptism are given explicitly to settle some earlier (and unreported) disputations”.<sup>25</sup> Christ may have focused so many of his words to the Nephites on baptism because he knew they did not fully understand it.<sup>26</sup>

Christ uses *baptize* differently in the Book of Mormon and the New Testament. Primarily, in the four gospels Christ’s use of *baptize* centers on the phrase “baptized with the baptism that I am baptized

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119 times (0.419 times per 1,000 words). The New Testament contains 188,259 words and baptize appears 77 times (0.409 times per 1,000 words).

25. Reynolds, Noel B. “The Gospel of Jesus Christ as Taught by the Nephite Prophets.” *BYU Studies* 31 (Summer 1991): 39, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2500&context=facpub>.

26. We might also look to the compilers of these records for an explanation of Christ’s different uses of baptize. With limited space and resources, Mormon had to decide what was most valuable to include in the record. It is possible that Christ spoke very similarly to the Nephites as he did to those in Jerusalem, but Mormon saw baptism as a particularly important concept and other things as being less so. Similarly, those who recorded Christ’s words in the New Testament may have felt it more necessary to focus on certain other points of Christ’s doctrine.

with.”<sup>27</sup> However, Christ never uses this phrase in the Book of Mormon. Similarly, most of the phrases Christ uses in the Book of Mormon are not used in the New Testament.

For example, Christ’s frequent association between *baptize* and *name* stands as a contrast between his teachings in the Book of Mormon and the New Testament. In the New Testament, *baptize* and *name* appear together nine times.<sup>28</sup> However, in only one of these instances does Christ say these words in the same verse (Matthew 28:19). While Christ frequently extends invitations to be baptized in the Book of Mormon, he never employs *baptize* as part of any invitation to others to be baptized.<sup>29</sup>

At the same time there are similarities in Christ’s teachings about being baptized in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. In both books Christ commands his disciples to go forth and baptize others. In Matthew 28:18-19, Christ commands his 11 disciples, saying, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Similarly in 3 Nephi 11:21–25, Christ tells his disciples, “I give unto you power that ye shall baptize this people when I am again ascended into heaven ... saying: ... I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

### Baptized Unto Repentance and the Name of Christ

An interesting phrase that ties together many aspects of this article is *baptized unto repentance* and its derivative phrases.<sup>30</sup> This phrase is utilized 12 times by four individuals<sup>31</sup> in the Book of Mormon, but never appears in the Bible.<sup>32</sup> The first person to employ the phrase is Jesus Christ, when

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27. Matthew 20:22–23, Mark 10:38–39, and Luke 12:50.

28. Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:12, 16; Acts 10:48; Acts 19:5; Acts 22:16; 1 Corinthians 1:13, 15.

29. Neither does he extend any such invitations using the word *baptism*.

30. For a theological examination of what it might mean to be “baptized unto repentance” see Noel B. Reynolds, “Understanding Christian Baptism through the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2012), <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol51/iss2/2>.

31. Alma<sub>2</sub> (Alma 5:62, Alma 7:14), the Angel speaking to many people (Alma 9:27), Jesus Christ (Mosiah 26:22), and Mormon (Alma 6:2, Alma 8:10, Alma 48:19, Alma 49:30, Helaman 3:24, Helaman 5:17, 19, 3 Nephi 1:23, 3 Nephi 7:26).

32. Similarly, the phrase *baptism is unto repentance* appears one time in the Book of Mormon (Moroni 8:11) but never in the New Testament. In contrast, the similar phrase baptism of repentance appears four times in the

speaking to Alma<sub>1</sub>. Christ says, “this is my church; whosoever is baptized shall be *baptized unto repentance*” (Mosiah 26:22). It would be interesting to know if Christ employed similar language in instructing Alma<sub>2</sub>, who later said, “I, Alma, do *command you in the language of him who hath commanded me...Come and be baptized unto repentance*” (Alma 5:61–62). Alma<sub>2</sub> later utilizes this identical phrase (“come and be baptized unto repentance”) when teaching the people of Gideon (Alma 7:14).

Of special interest is how Mormon uses this terminology, particularly when he begins and ceases to employ it. The first time Mormon uses the phrase *baptized unto repentance* is in Alma 6:2 (*after* it was introduced by Christ in Mosiah 26:22). In this verse Mormon states, “whosoever did not belong to the church who repented of their sins were baptized unto repentance, and were received into the church” (Alma 6:2). Similarly, Mormon later writes phrases such as, “they did preach the word of God, and they did baptize unto repentance all men whosoever would hearken unto their words” (Alma 48:19) and “there were thousands who did join themselves unto the church and were baptized unto repentance” (Helaman 3:24).

However a shift takes place after Christ’s extensive emphasis on being *baptized in his name*. As discussed previously, Christ clearly emphasized the connection between his name and baptism. Prior to 3 Nephi 26, Mormon never speaks of being baptized in the name of Christ. However, *after* Mormon provides an account of Christ’s ministry, we see several examples where he might previously have employed the phrase “baptized unto repentance” but now substitutes it with a reference to being baptized in the name of Christ. For example, we read, “as many as were baptized in the name of Jesus were filled with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 26:17), “And they who were baptized in the name of Jesus were called the church of Christ” (3 Nephi. 26:21), and “And as many as did come unto them, and did truly repent of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus” (4 Nephi 1:1).

Table 7 illustrates situations in which Mormon might have employed the phrase *baptized unto repentance* but instead speaks of being *baptized in the name of Jesus*.

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New Testament and never in the Book of Mormon. While it could be argued that this is a textual coincidence, we believe that Book of Mormon speakers’ consistent usage of the phrase baptized unto repentance indicates an ongoing tradition in the Book of Mormon.

**Table 7.** Mormon's descriptions of baptism before and after Christ's ministry to the Lehites.

Mormon writing before 3 Nephi 11	Mormon writing after 3 Nephi 25
"Whosoever did not belong to the church who repented of their sins <i>were baptized unto repentance</i> , and were <i>received into the church</i> " (Alma 6:2).	"And they who <i>were baptized in the name of Jesus</i> were called the church of Christ" (3 Nephi 26:21).
"Nephi went forth among the people, and also many others, <i>baptizing unto repentance</i> " (3 Nephi 1:23).	"The disciples of Jesus were journeying and were... <i>baptizing in the name of Jesus</i> (3 Nephi 27:1)
"There were thousands who did join themselves unto the church and <i>were baptized unto repentance</i> " (Helaman 3:24)	"And as many as did come unto them, and did truly repent of their sins, <i>were baptized in the name of Jesus</i> " (4 Nephi 1:1).

Mormon does not only speak of being baptized in the name of Jesus in his narrative descriptions. In a sermon to his people, Mormon says, "repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus" (Mormon 7:8) a statement that mimics Christ's statements in his personal ministry to the Nephites and is different from Alma<sub>2</sub>'s statement "Come and be baptized unto repentance" (Alma 5:62, Alma 7:14).

Why does Mormon employ the phrase *baptize unto repentance* eight times before 3 Nephi 9 and never thereafter? Why does he five times utilize the phrase *baptized in the name of Jesus* after Christ's visits to the Lehites but never previously? One answer could be that Mormon took his textual cues from the Savior. Perhaps once he understood through his redaction of 3 Nephi the extent to which Christ emphasized being *baptized in his name*, he followed suit. If this is the case, it demonstrates an interesting textual way in which Mormon's voice changes in order to better harmonize with the voice of the Lord. Another possibility is that Mormon wanted to stay true to the text of those who went before them. Perhaps those who wrote on the plates prior to Christ spoke of being *baptized unto repentance* and Mormon simply followed their lead.

### Conclusion

The unique ways speakers in the Book of Mormon use *baptize* support the notion that various speakers within its pages are individuals with

different points of emphasis and different ways of expression. This depth of the characters in the Book of Mormon adds to the overall complexity of the Book of Mormon text. We can see the desires of individual speakers coming to light through their use of certain words and their focus on particular concepts. While the general topic of being baptized is discussed in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon, *baptize* appears differently in each book, and within the Book of Mormon, speakers do not evenly say *baptize*; rather, different individuals focus on different aspects of the word.

Perhaps the most valuable insight that comes from analyzing the different voices that employ *baptize* in the Book of Mormon is that it highlights the importance that Christ places on this ordinance. We see that he focuses on baptism more than any other individual and that he does so in a way that encourages a personal relationship with him. Christ frequently associates baptism with himself and with his name, as evidenced in this verse: “[C]ome unto me, and be baptized in my name” (3 Nephi 30:2). When we understand how Christ views baptism, it may change how we perceive it as well.

**John Hilton III** *is an Associate Professor at Brigham Young University and is the author of over 60 peer-reviewed articles. He has a variety of research interests including the Book of Mormon, the processes of learning and teaching religion, and the effect of open educational resources. He has published in several journals including Educational Researcher, Educational Policy Analysis Archives, The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, Religious Education, and The Journal of Book of Mormon Studies. John and his wife Lani have six children; his favorite hobby is learning Chinese.*

**Jana Johnson** *graduated from Brigham Young University in 2013 with a BA in linguistics and minors in editing and geography. While a student at BYU, she worked as a writing tutor for humanities classes and as a research assistant for John Hilton III. Since graduating from BYU, she has been working in the tech industry and is currently working as a software QA engineer in Lehi, Utah. She continues to love language, research, and education.*



# PUSHING THROUGH LIFE'S PILGRIMAGE TOGETHER

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Mauro Properzi

**Abstract:** *Walking for 500 miles in a foreign country through heat, arduous terrain, and many inconveniences is difficult enough. Add to the equation a man in a wheelchair, and the task appears impossible. The solution? Determination, humility, humor, faith, love, and someone, or many, who give you a push. I'll Push You is a true story and parable for life that will give readers hope and encouragement.*

Review of Patrick Gray & Justin Skeesuck, *I'll Push You: A Journey of 500 Miles, Two Best Friends, and One Wheelchair* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2017). 296 pp. \$24.99 (hardback); \$15.99 (paperback).

Reading or watching the news can be a depressing experience. Most stories feed us excessive amounts of conflict, violence, abuse, and tragedy that can be difficult to digest. If we come to believe that what we see is the full picture of “reality,” falling into cynicism becomes a real possibility. To counterbalance this negativity we need true stories of kindness, sacrifice, faith, and hope to remind us that goodness and God are still very much among us. *I'll Push You* is one such story. It's a story that touches, inspires, entertains, engages, and moves readers to life reflections and examinations. Indeed, the book can be a transforming experience because it is a story written in the language of truth from beginning to end. The experience, characters, relationships, hope, and life lessons presented feel true to the very core. This is, I believe, the greatest gift the book offers: it shows us a reality we may be too distracted to see or too hardened to recognize.

A *pilgrimage* is a journey to a holy, special, or unusual place. In many faith traditions people have travelled often long and dangerous distances

to sacred sites in order to rediscover their faith, connect with God, explore the deepest corners of their souls, or a host of other reasons. One of the most important Christian pilgrimages is the *Camino de Santiago*.<sup>1</sup> The pilgrimage begins in the corner of France at St. Jean Pied de Port, then crosses the Pyrenees into Spain with a first stop at Pamplona, where the famous running of the bulls takes place, and culminates 500 miles to the west in Santiago de Compostela in the Spanish autonomous community of Galicia. According to tradition, Santiago's cathedral contains the human remains of the Apostle James; hence, this "sacred site" functions as the destination of the pilgrimage.

Hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world walk or bike these routes every year, some for spiritual reasons, others as adventurous tourists. Most if not all are transformed by the experience. That Justin Skeesuck from Idaho should make the decision to go on the *Camino* is not newsworthy ... except for the fact that Justin is confined to a wheelchair due to a progressive neuromuscular disease. The only way his dream can come true is through the help of his best friend Patrick, whose response to the invitation provides the very title to the book: "I'll push you."

As readers travel with Justin and Patrick to Spain, they really come to know the two friends in their joys, sorrows, and struggles. The authors display a remarkable amount of transparency and vulnerability by describing not only their remarkable journey, but also their backgrounds and life challenges. The story is thus an account of the spiritual and emotional development of the two authors as they travel to a destination both physical and spiritual. It is also the potential story of every human being because the pilgrimage functions as a broad metaphor for life with its challenges, surprises, hopes, and disappointments — but most of all with its love. Indeed, if the book has a primary theme or a thread that unites the various experiences, relationships, and adventures described, it is that love makes the "mission possible." The depth and sincerity of friendship between the two protagonists is central to this message, but the love they share with their spouses and children, the love they feel from God, and the love and support they receive from fellow travelers, friends at home, and even complete strangers, highlights it as the necessary ingredient of a meaningful life.

Humility is another prominent theme, especially in Patrick's journey. He learns from Justin the importance of letting go of control, of trusting loved ones in the midst of tragedy, and of truly having faith in the God he

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1. The *Camino de Santiago* is known in English as "the way of Saint James" or "the road of St. James."

believes in when obstacles appear insurmountable. Reciprocity surfaces repeatedly. Patrick may be pushing Justin's wheelchair physically, but Justin pushes Patrick in other profound ways. Indeed, most of the encounters with occasional helpers, travel companions, and new friends highlight this dimension of reciprocity. Patrick learns that receiving is as important as giving when he concludes, "I have to let go of the safety I find in my own abilities; I have to let go of the reins so I can embrace the provision of others" (231). In this way the *Camino* becomes transformative. Patrick's subtle invitation is for readers to join him and be transformed in the same way.

While the book is filled with what we may call "life lessons," including memorable insights on rest and the Sabbath, the strength of community, and the power of faith and grit, the story is neither heavy nor moralistic. These lessons flow naturally from the real experiences of the authors, who describe their adventures with great humor and enthusiasm. For example, the impromptu songs that Justin sings to Patrick when he dresses him in the morning highlight the fun dimension of even the most ordinary moments of life. Readers' eyes are also opened to the aesthetics of northern Spain as the writers focus their attention on its beauties, both in its nature and people. Overall, optimism and hope overflow from the book's pages, not as a result of denial of darkness but in recognition of it. The difference is in looking through the darkness in the strength of faith and love.

As Latter-day Saints we know much about sacred journeys; indeed, we are a journey-conscious people. We view the biblical exodus as a foundational event of God's interaction with His people, but we also place great focus on other transforming journeys. The exodus of Lehi's family in the Book of Mormon and the pioneers' crossing of the plains in the history of this dispensation are only two of the more significant examples. These and other travels (like the journey to reach a distant temple) clearly involve sacred destinations — promised lands that assure peace, prosperity, posterity, or spiritual illumination. Yet it is the journey itself that sanctifies the travelers and prepares them to enjoy the destination. Trials, joys, and numberless opportunities to develop faith, love, and mutual support on the journey are not secondary to the destination — they become part of it. Ultimately, life itself is our greatest pilgrimage to be endured but also enjoyed in family and community fellowship until we reach that glorious destination, which is God's eternal presence.<sup>2</sup>

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2. See Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Of Regrets and Resolutions," *Ensign* (November 2012), 21-24.

In reflecting upon the decision that led to the *Camino* adventure, Patrick says his friend Justin “always starts with the *why*. If the *why* is strong enough, the *how* will come together” (29). What many thought was impossible actually came to be. How could that be? Patrick again responds: “Though my *why* has changed, the *how* never has. It has always been *together*” (81). Justin echoes him and adds: “The only people we feel loved by are those who pursue us. They pursue conversation with us, spend time with us, hold us when we are broken, and help us get up when we fall” (178). The right motivation and support will do it: even in the midst of great trials, life may turn out to be a wonderful adventure. *I’ll Push You* opens a window into the friendship between these two Christian Nazarene men from Idaho, and by so doing shows us a real-life example of Christlike love. In a world that often highlights discouragement and isolation, these are the stories we need to read more of!

**Mauro Properzi** is associate professor of world religions, religious outreach fellow, and moral education professor at Brigham Young University. He received graduate degrees in theology and religious studies from Harvard, the universities of Cambridge and Durham in the UK, and the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He is the author of *Mormonism and the Emotions* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2015) as well as several articles published in the *Journal of Research on Christian Education*; the *International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society*; the *Journal of Mormon History*; the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*; *Issues in Religion and Psychotherapy*; and *BYU Studies*.

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MORMON

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Noel B. Reynolds

**Abstract:** *Although scholarly investigation of the Book of Mormon has increased significantly over the last three decades, only a tiny portion of that effort has been focused on the theological or doctrinal content of this central volume of LDS scripture. This paper identifies three inclusions that promise definitions of the doctrine or gospel of Jesus Christ and proposes a cumulative methodology to explain how these definitions work. This approach reveals a consistently presented, six-part formula defining “the way” by which mankind can qualify for eternal life. In this way the paper provides a starting point for scholarly examinations of the theological content of this increasingly influential religious text. While the names of the six elements featured in Mormon’s gospel will sound familiar to students of the New Testament, the meanings he assigns to these may differ substantially from traditional Christian discourse in ways that make Mormon’s characterization of the gospel or doctrine of Christ unique. The overall pattern suggested is a dialog between man and God, who initially invites all people to trust in Christ and repent. Those who respond by repenting and seeking baptism will be visited by fire and by the Holy Ghost, which initiates a lifelong interaction, leading the convert day by day in preparation for the judgment, at which she may finally be invited to enter the kingdom of God.*

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It may seem strange that even though The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is now widely recognized for its membership growth and its increasing social significance, the canonical LDS scriptures receive little scholarly attention outside of Mormondom. While a continually growing literature tries to find new and convincing explanations for the content and production of the Book of Mormon, only a few studies focus on the doctrinal messages of the book itself — on what it teaches. Over 150 million copies of the Book of Mormon have now been published in 82 languages by the Utah-based church,<sup>1</sup> and the book itself is now published by a growing list of academic and secular presses.

The following article finds a consistent “doctrine of Christ” or “gospel of Jesus Christ” taught throughout the text that displays both similarities to and differences from the way to salvation laid out in the Bible. Three definitional passages are identified and analyzed. The full content of this gospel formula can be established through a cumulative analysis of the partial statements included in each of these three passages. It is further claimed that the results of this analysis open the way to a much richer and more systematic interpretation of the numerous sermons and prophecies reported throughout the Book of Mormon. In this way, the text is found to reward readers who are willing to assume that it may be a redacted whole in the same sense that Robert Alter has explained his interpretive approach to Genesis and other materials.<sup>2</sup>

While this paper is not the place for a comprehensive account of the Book of Mormon, a brief description might help some readers understand a few basic things about the book. The text presents itself as an abridgment of the writings of a long series of Nephite prophets who lived in the western hemisphere between 570 BCE and 421 CE. The abridgment was produced by Mormon, one of the last of these prophets, from whom the book takes its title. Mormon describes the first 145 pages (of the current official 531-page LDS edition) as an insertion authored by Nephi, the first of the Nephite writers, and by his immediate successors. Nephi himself characterized that contribution as a condensed rewriting of a much longer record compiled over the three previous decades by both his father and himself. Through a series of circumstances that interrupted the translation process, this account replaces Mormon’s abridgment for the first 400 years of Nephite history. Most of the remaining text

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1. This is based on information posted on the LDS Church’s official website, accessed on January 3, 2015: <http://newsroom.lds.org/article/book-of-mormon>.

2. See Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: Norton, 2004), 12.

— the major portion — consists of Mormon’s abridgment of records from the last half-millennium of Nephite civilization. The final chapters are presented as additions by Mormon’s son Moroni, whom he had charged to wrap up the record and conceal it where it could be preserved for a future prophet who would be called to restore the gospel of Jesus Christ to a Christian world that by then would have lost its way.

While on first impression the book reads like a history of this Nephite civilization, closer analysis reveals that this gospel or doctrine of Christ provides both the animating purpose and the connective thread through the entire text. For most purposes, it is accurate to describe Mormon as the self-proclaimed redactor of the whole text — inasmuch as it was his choice to insert the early Nephi material, and his son’s appendices contain mostly sermons given at some point by Mormon himself — with some closing comments by Moroni. On that basis, it may be fair to refer to the Book of Mormon as “the gospel according to Mormon.”

This study begins with three passages in the Book of Mormon that explicitly promise definitions of the doctrine or gospel of Jesus Christ. But none of the three definitions is presented in the way modern readers might expect. Rather, each offers a series of statements focusing on different actions or events related to each other as parts of *the way* that leads to eternal life. On first reading, these could easily seem disconnected or even contradictory — especially if read from the perspective of traditional Christian theologies. But when all these statements and their main elements are examined cumulatively, a well-defined account of this gospel emerges. The process by which men and women can come unto Christ and be saved is clear and multi-stepped. While the terminology sounds familiar to readers of the New Testament, the assemblage, definitions, and connections do not match up readily with traditional Christian interpretations of the Bible. The picture of the whole is almost never fully articulated in one place. Instead, we find a series of partial statements of this gospel — each of which is designed to add detail and complexity.

### **Three Core Passages Define the Gospel of Jesus Christ**

The Book of Mormon contains three extraordinary, though widely ignored passages or *inclusios*. Each of these is marked off with bookend statements explicitly labeling it as an explanation or definition of the gospel or the doctrine of Jesus Christ. The combination of statements of definitional intent within obvious *inclusios* requires readers to try to understand the included statements as parts of the promised definition. It makes evident that the series of partial statements are to be understood

together as wholes — rather than as the congeries of disparate elements they may seem to be at first reading. The analytical method employed below explicitly collects the repeated elements in each passage and concludes that they are each to be included in the definition.

These three passages are further linked in that each of them presents this message in Christ's own voice and in one case in the Father's voice in tandem with Christ's. Each passage presents the same six basic elements of the gospel message, but only twice do we see a complete list presented in any single statement. Rather the elements are each mentioned several times in different combinations with each other — combinations that enrich and expand the reader's understanding of each as well as their connections to the other elements. But the full list becomes apparent only when all these partial statements are analyzed in a cumulative way. With this analysis in place, it then becomes evident that the Book of Mormon teaches the same message — in this same way — to the end of the book.

The first of these basic passages occurs as a summary teaching by Nephi, the first prophetic writer in the Book of Mormon. Both the second and third passages are recorded by Mormon, the final prophet/writer of the Nephite saga, as part of his abbreviated account of the post-resurrection visit and teachings of Jesus Christ to the Nephite people.

### **1. Nephi's Farewell Address (2 Nephi 31)**

Nephi grounds this presentation of the doctrine of Christ in his new and expanded reportage of a vision received over 40 years previously.<sup>3</sup> We now learn that when he saw the baptism of Jesus Christ in vision, he also heard the voices of the Father and the Son alternating in explaining the meaning and role of baptism and other elements of their gospel. Nephi quotes each of them three times as he gradually unfolds the interrelationship of the six basic elements of the full gospel message.

Nephi's account presents a gospel that describes an active, unending dialogic process by which men can be saved in the kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup> The process begins with Christ's command to all men that they follow him in humbling themselves before the Father (repenting) and in witnessing to the Father by baptism in water, that they take the name of Christ upon them, and that they are willing to keep Christ's commandments. Nephi clarifies a few verses later that these steps require (1) "unshaken faith"

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3. See 1 Nephi 11:27.

4. I have discussed the dialogic character of the gospel process in greater detail in "Understanding Christian Baptism through the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51:2 (2012), 11-13.



or trust in Christ. Nephi sees two stages in this gospel process. The first he labels “the gate by which ye should enter” (2 Nephi 31:17). This is the response of the convert who (2) *repents* and is (3) *baptized in water* as a witness to the Father, thus engaging Christ’s call that she follow his example of obedience to the Father. The second stage of this process begins with the Father’s promised, subsequent response to all who repent “with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent” (v. 13), as he sends them (4) “*a remission of sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost*” (v. 17). This profound spiritual experience raises the convert to a new level of life — the second stage in this dialogic process. For, having received a remission of sins, she can now “speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel” (v. 13). In this response, the Holy Ghost also “witnesses of the Father and the Son” (v. 18), significantly reinforcing and elevating the faith of the convert. This promised response to the sincere convert — who entered the strait gate through faith, repentance, and baptism by water — has now admitted or lifted her to the “straight and narrow path” that leads to eternal life (v. 18).<sup>5</sup> But this is only the second stage of the dialogic process described in this text. The voices of both the Father and the Son are quoted, indicating that only those who (5) *endure to the end* will (6) *be saved* (v. 15). Reviewing, Nephi asks rhetorically if after baptism, “all is done” (v. 19)? The answer is negative. The convert “must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ” and “endure to the end” if she will “have eternal life” (v. 20). For as the Father had previously affirmed, “he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved” (v. 15) — the third and final stage in the dialogic process of coming to Christ and the Father.

While these six basic elements of the doctrine or gospel of Christ are each mentioned multiple times in Nephi’s brief exposition, only at the end does he bring them all together.<sup>6</sup> In all previous discussion, these elements are stated in terms of a multitude of interconnections between different combinations of two or three of them, statements which gradually deepen and extend the reader’s understanding of each one and of its role in the larger process. This mode of presentation makes something else clear: Whenever some pair or selection of these six elements is mentioned, the entire set is implicitly invoked. Each is an essential part of *the way*, and there is no shorter way. When Nephi

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5. Where the wording or punctuation of my references to the text varies from the official LDS edition published in 1981, I am using the Yale critical text. See, Royal Skousen (ed.), *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (Yale University Press), 2009.

6. See 2 Nephi 31:19–20.

quotes the Father saying, “he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved” (v. 15), the reader knows that four other elements — faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, and baptism of both water and of the Holy Ghost — are necessarily implied.<sup>7</sup>

The following analysis demonstrates this pattern in the text of 2 Nephi 31. The full text is presented with interpretive formatting. Bolded headings indicate the various structural elements of the passage — including the opening and closing of the *inclusio*. The 23 statements that include at least one reference to a gospel element are numbered sequentially at the left margin. Additional formatting highlights the parallelism of the final two sentences. Parenthetical insertions identify the gospel elements<sup>8</sup> I find mentioned or implied — either by name or by synonyms. Often these elements will be stated negatively (indicated with ~), but there is little difficulty in deciding which standard element is negated. In some cases, I have interpreted pronouns, etc., as implicit repetitions of previously stated elements. And frequently other synonymous terms or phrases will appear. In most cases, the synonymous relationship can be readily established by reference to associated passages in this same text or other Book of Mormon passages that make the linkage explicit.<sup>9</sup> I have been moderately aggressive in identifying these elements to emphasize their centrality for this passage. But the conclusions would not be weakened by a lower count.

The essential synonymous terms in this passage are listed in the following glossary:

1. The doctrine of Christ = the gospel of Christ or “the way.”
2. Humbling oneself before the Father = repentance.
3. Covenanting that one will obey God’s commandments = repentance.

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7. In a subsequent companion article, I have demonstrated that Nephi here employs the rhetorical device of merismus, which occurs frequently in the Bible. The list form of merismus can invoke a well-known longer list of elements in readers’ minds by mentioning only a few members of the list. This technique is used hundreds of times throughout the Book of Mormon in references to the gospel and particularly in the three definitional passages under review here. See Noel B. Reynolds, “Biblical *Merismus* in Book of Mormon Gospel References,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 26 (2017), 106-34.

8. The six gospel elements are cited as (F), faith in Jesus Christ; (R), repentance; (W), baptism of water; (H) baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; (E), enduring to the end; and (S), saved.

9. For the sake of brevity, I have not provided detailed documentation of these synonymous relationships here.

4. Witnessing to the Father that one has covenanted to obey the commandments = baptism of water.
5. The gate by which ye should enter = repentance and water baptism.
6. The straight and narrow path = enduring to the end.
7. Being saved = eternal life.
8. Getting into the straight and narrow path = repentance, water baptism, and enduring to the end.
9. Relying wholly upon the merits of him = faith in Christ.
10. Pressing forward with steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men = enduring to the end.

## 2 Nephi 31:2 - 21

### Opening

2 Wherefore, the things which I have written sufficeth me, save it be a few words which I must speak concerning **the doctrine of Christ**;

### Preliminary comment

wherefore, I shall speak unto you plainly, according to the plainness of my prophesying.

3 For my soul delighteth in plainness; for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding.

### Setting the context

4 Wherefore, I would that ye should remember that I have spoken unto you concerning that prophet which the Lord showed unto me, that should baptize the Lamb of God, which should take away the sins of the world.

1. 5 And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water (W), to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water (W).

2. 6 And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfil all righteousness in being baptized by water (W)?
3. 7 Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father (R), and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments (W).
4. 8 Wherefore, after he was baptized with water (W) the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove (H).
5. 9 And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straitness of the path (E), and the narrowness of the gate (R, W), by which they should enter, he having set the example before them.
6. 10 And he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me (F).
7. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus (F) save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father (R, W)?
8. 11 And the Father said: Repent ye (R), repent ye (R), and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son (W).
9. 12 And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying: He that is baptized in my name (W), to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost (H), like unto me;
10. wherefore, follow me (F), and do the things which ye have seen me do (R,W).
11. 13 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart (F), acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins (R), witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism (W)—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water (W), according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost (H); yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost (H); and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.

12. 14 But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying: After ye have repented of your sins (R), and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water (W), and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost (H), and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me (~E), it would have been better for you that ye had not known me (~S).
13. 15 And I heard a voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end (E), the same shall be saved (S).
14. 16 And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end (E), in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved (S).
15. 17 Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do (R, W);
16. for, for this cause have they (R, W) 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 (R) and baptism by water (W); and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost (H).
17. 18 And then are ye in this strait and narrow path (E) which leads to eternal life (S); yea, ye have entered in by the gate (R, W); ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost (H),
18. 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 (R, W) ye should receive (H).
19. 19 And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path (R, W, E), I would ask if all is done?
20. Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him (F), relying wholly upon the merits of him (F) who is mighty to save (S).

21. 20 Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ (F), having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men (E).
22. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward (F), feasting upon the word of Christ (H), and endure to the end (E), behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life (S).

### Concluding comment

23. And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way;  
and **there is none other way** nor name given under  
heaven  
whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God  
(S).

### Closing

And now, behold, this is **the doctrine of Christ,**  
and **the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of**  
**the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,**  
which is one God, without end. Amen.

This analysis identifies 23 statements that explicitly mention one or more of the six gospel elements by name or by a synonym that can be linked to that name in the text. The first 11 statements (1–11) focus first on the tight linkage between repentance and water baptism and from then on the distinction between water baptism and the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. The next three statements (12–14) go on to make clear that as wonderful as this spiritual experience might be, it is only an initiation into that straight and narrow path that leads to salvation. Any convert who then denies the Son or fails to endure in obeying the commandments to the end of her life cannot be saved. At this point, five of the six elements have been mentioned explicitly, and the next seven statements review this with doubled emphasis on the four core concepts of repentance and baptism by water and by the Holy Ghost and the necessity of enduring to the end. Approaching his summary, Nephi points to the fact that all those elements are possible only for those who have “unshaken *faith*” in Jesus Christ, “relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty *to save*” (v. 19) — finally stating the most succinct version: naming only the first and last elements of this gospel formula. The final restatement again links this starting point of faith in

Jesus Christ directly to the final or ending elements — enduring to the end and eternal life (v. 20). Nephi then establishes his *inclusio* by linking back to the introduction of “the doctrine of Christ” in verse two and by expanding that mention with his personal witness that “this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the Kingdom of God... . This is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end” (v. 21).

This single passage, with its 23 statements linking key elements of the doctrine of Christ inside one *inclusio* would be sufficient in and of itself to establish this six-point formula as Nephi’s or Mormon’s concept of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But Mormon goes on in later chapters of the book to include two similar passages. Both of these are briefer in length and in the number of separate statements they include. Each is tailored to a different historical context, but there is no variation in the basic six-element formula. And each is presented again inside a similar *inclusio* and in the voice of Jesus Christ — in these instances without interventions or interpretation.

## **2. Jesus’s First Instruction to His Nephite Disciples (3 Nephi 11:31–39)**

The second paradigmatic passage is placed near the beginning of Jesus’s teachings to the Nephites when he appeared to them almost a year after his death and resurrection in Jerusalem. Like the previous one, it stands out as an *inclusio*, beginning and ending with the statement that “this is my doctrine.” It serves as a preface to the Book of Mormon version of the New Testament Sermon on the Mount, which is commonly referred to by students of the Book of Mormon as “the sermon at the temple.” It is presented entirely in the voice of the post-resurrection Jesus Christ. My analysis employs the previous format and identifies 12 statements that mention one or more of the previously identified gospel elements as they occur in 3 Nephi 11:31–39. The analysis also includes two extensions (possibly foreshadowed by the triple opening to the *inclusio*), which add eight more statements from immediately following material, as will be explained below. A brief expansion of the earlier glossary of terms may help readers identify some key synonymous terminology:

11. Believe in me = faith in Jesus Christ.
12. Inherit the kingdom of God = be saved.
13. Be damned = negation of be saved.

14. Receive these things = receive the Holy Ghost.
15. Give heed unto the words of these twelve = faith in Jesus Christ.
16. Believe in your words = faith in Christ.
17. Come down in the depths of humility = repent.
18. Become as a little child = enduring to the end.<sup>10</sup>
19. Look unto me = faith in Christ, repentance, and baptism.
20. Ye shall live = eternal life.

### 3 Nephi 11:31 - 39, 12:1-2, 15:9

#### Triple opening

31 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you **my doctrine**.

32 And **this is my doctrine**,

and **it is the doctrine** which the Father hath given unto me;

1. and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me (H);
2. and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent (R) and believe in me (F).
3. 33 And whoso believeth in me (F), and is baptized (W), the same shall be saved (S);
4. and they (F, W) are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God (S).
5. 34 And whoso believeth not in me (~F), and is not baptized (~W), shall be damned (~S).

#### Intermediate comment

35 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that **this is my doctrine**, and I bear record of it from the Father;

6. and whoso believeth in me (F) believeth in the Father also (F);
7. and unto him (F) will the Father bear record of me (H),
8. for he will visit him (F) with fire and with the Holy Ghost (H).
9. 36 And thus will the Father bear record of me (H),

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10. I am leaning on Mosiah 3:19 and 3 Nephi 9:22 for this interpretation.



10. and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me (H); for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one.
11. 37 And again I say unto you, ye must repent (R), and become as a little child (E), and be baptized in my name (W), or ye can in nowise receive these things (H).
12. 38 And again I say unto you, ye must repent (R), and be baptized in my name (W), and become as a little child (E), or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God (S).

## Closing

39 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that **this is my doctrine**,

## First extension

13. 1 AND it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi,<sup>11</sup> and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve (F) whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants;
14. and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water (W);
15. and after that ye are baptized with water (W), behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost (H);
16. therefore blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me (F) and be baptized (W), after that ye have seen me and know that I am (F).
17. 2 And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words (F) because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am (F).
18. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words (F), and come down into the depths of humility (R) and be baptized (W), for they shall be visited with fire and

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11. For those not familiar with the Book of Mormon narrative, the Nephi referenced here is not the same Nephi referenced earlier in this paper. This particular Nephi lived approximately 600 years after the first one.

with the Holy Ghost (H), and shall receive a remission of their sins.

## Second extension

19. 9 Look unto me (F, R, W), and endure to the end (E), and ye shall live (S);
20. for unto him that endureth to the end (E) will I give eternal life (S).

The first two statements (1–2) do begin at the beginning, making it clear that it is the Father who has commanded all men everywhere to repent and believe in Christ. Again, this emphasizes the dialogic nature of the gospel process, stating the appropriate response for those who receive the Father’s command. The next three repetitions (3–5) omit all mention of repentance, but emphasize the necessity of water baptism for all who believe in Christ, if they will be saved. Or, as stated negatively, those who do not believe and are not baptized will be damned. The next five statements (6–10) introduce the second stage of the dialogic process. Those who have responded appropriately to the Father’s command to believe will receive a visitation of fire and the Holy Ghost sent from the Father, a chief feature of which will be the witness of the Holy Ghost of the Father and of Christ, who also “bear record” of one another. Whereas this may be what is meant by the phrase “blessed are ye” that occurs in some of these passages and in the beatitudes which will follow soon after, I have not included that interpretation in the glossary or in this analysis. The *inclusio* in this passage concludes (11–12) after twice stating that the kingdom of God will be inherited only by those who repent, becoming as little children, and who are baptized in the name of Christ.

What is obviously missing from this passage (1–18) is an explicit reference to the much emphasized requirement in 2 Nephi 31 — that the convert must endure to the end in a new life — an elevated continuation of the dialogic process initiated in the first stage. This may be suggested by the twice-stated requirement that the convert must “become as a little child,” but this is nowhere made explicit. The delayed explicit introduction of this fifth element of the Nephite gospel serves to extend the *inclusio* through the next three chapters, where the rhetorical tension is finally resolved with a double statement of the necessity of enduring to the end to be able to receive eternal life (3 Nephi 15:9).

Between the formal ending of this *inclusio* and the eventual articulation of the missing gospel element, Mormon has placed a version

of the New Testament sermon on the mount. The dramatic shift that sets this insertion apart from the presentation of “the doctrine of Christ” in the prefacing *inclusio* consists of Jesus’s turning from the disciples — to whom alone this preface was given — to address the assembled multitude. For this enlarged audience, Jesus begins with three summary statements of the doctrine he has just presented in greater detail to the twelve disciples — using the format of the beatitudes that will follow. Blessed will be those who heed the disciples’ invitation to be baptized with water, for them will Jesus “baptize ... with fire and with the Holy Ghost.” And blessed will be those who will believe in Christ and be baptized. And blessed will be those who will believe in the disciples’ words about Jesus and “come down into the depths of humility” and be baptized, “for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost,” receiving a remission of their sins (3 Nephi 12:1–2).

The first of these may be offering a definition of the phrase “blessed will be ...” as a reference to the fact that “them will Jesus baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 12:1–2) and not as a reference to eternal life — the ultimate reward of the faithful.

The placement of this sermon immediately after the incomplete presentation of the doctrine of Christ and immediately before the double statement of the missing requirement that all converts must endure to the end to be saved suggests strongly that the intervening sermon material be understood as direction on how converts are expected to endure to the end. The content of the sermon is obviously consistent with that suggestion. My inclusion in this analysis of the additional eight statements that occur after the formal *inclusio* on the doctrine of Christ given to the disciples (13–20) is based on this interpretation.

### **3. Jesus Reaffirms His Gospel (3 Nephi 27:13–21)**

The third paradigmatic passage is presented as an explanation that Jesus gives to his disciples sometime after his first post-resurrection visit to the Nephites. Their prayer was to know the name he wanted them to use for his church. In response, he appears to them once again and explains that his gospel requires them to take his name upon them. And if the church teaches his gospel, it should be known by his name (3 Nephi 27: 5–10). Once again, we have an *inclusio* bounded by the statement that “this is my/the gospel” given in the voice of Jesus Christ. Some new synonyms also require additional expansion of the earlier-presented glossary:

21. Be filled = baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. (See 3 Nephi 12:6)
22. I will hold guiltless = be saved.
23. Hewn down and cast into the fire = not saved.
24. Unclean thing = not repentant.
25. Wash their garments in my blood = faith, repentance, baptism of water, and baptism of the Holy Ghost.
26. Faithfulness unto the end = enduring to the end.
27. Come unto me = enduring to the end.<sup>12</sup>
28. Stand spotless before me at the last day = be saved.

### 3 Nephi 27:13 –22

#### Double opening

13 Behold I have given unto you **my gospel**,  
and **this is the gospel** which I have given unto you

1. —that I came into the world to do the will of my Father (E), because my Father sent me.
2. 14 And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross  
—and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, I might draw all men unto me — that as I have been lifted up by men, even so should men be lifted up by the Father to stand before me to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil. (S or ~S)  
15 And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works (S or ~S).
3. 16 And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth (R) and is baptized in my name (W) shall be filled (H);
4. and if he (R, W, H) endureth to the end (E), behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world (S).

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12. The 2015 version of this paper interpreted *come unto me* as synonymous with faith in Jesus Christ. However, as I have explained at length in “How ‘Come unto Me’ Fits into the Nephite Gospel,” *Religious Educator* 18:2 (2017), 15-29, I now understand this phrase as a reference to the process involved in enduring to the end.

5. 17 And he that endureth not unto the end (~E), the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire (~S), from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father.

### Intermediate comment

- 18 And **this is the word which he hath given** unto the children of men. And for this cause he fulfilleth **the words which he hath given**, and he lieth not, but fulfilleth **all his words**.
6. 19 And no unclean thing (~R) can enter into his kingdom (S);
7. therefore nothing entereth into his rest (S) save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood (F, R, W, H), because of their faith (F), and the repentance of all their sins (R), and their faithfulness unto the end (E).
8. 20 Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth (R), and come unto me (E) and be baptized in my name (W), that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost (H), that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day (S).

### Closing

21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, **this is my gospel**;

### Extension

9. and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do (R, W, E);
10. for that which ye have seen me do (R, W, E) even that shall ye do;
11. 22 Therefore, if ye do these things (R, W, E) blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day (S).

This passage includes 11 partial statements of the gospel elements. The first two (1–2) point out how Jesus endured through to the cross and as a consequence became the judge who will allocate salvation to all men — according to their works. The next three (3–5) advance the central four elements of the gospel as the criteria by which men will be judged

and rewarded. The first of these three introduces the first stage of the dialogic process, specifying repentance and baptism as essential actions by the convert, which will invite the divine response of filling her with the Holy Ghost. The next two implicitly repeat these and link them to the second and third stages of enduring to the end and being saved.

After an intermediate comment identifying the gospel with “the word ... given unto the children of men,” the next two statements (6–7) go on to stress the necessity of faith and repentance and enduring to the end for those who would become clean and qualify for salvation. The eighth statement explicitly summarizes with a five-element version of the gospel without repeating the requirement of enduring just mentioned in the previous sentence. After closing the *inclusio*, this passage continues with a three-statement extension (also possibly foreshadowed by the double opening), in which the convert’s required actions of repentance, baptism, and enduring to the end are implicitly invoked three times as *works* that Jesus has done as *an example* for those who would follow him, implicitly referring back to statement #14 of the first *inclusio* in 2 Nephi 31, with the possible suggestion that the three may form a kind of literary unit.

### Summary and Conclusions

The analyses offered for these three passages identify 150 explicit mentions or implicit references to six repeated elements of the gospel or doctrine of Jesus Christ, as the following chart summarizes:

Gospel Element	2 Nephi 31	3 Nephi 11–15	3 Nephi 27	Totals
Faith	8	15	2	25
Repentance	14	5	9	28
Baptism	19	10	7	36
Holy Ghost	9	8	4	21
Enduring	8	4	8	20
Saved	6	6	8	20
Totals	64	48	38	150

Because many of these identifications rest on interpretations, I would readily allow for some reasonable differences of interpretation. But these numbers could be increased or decreased considerably without changing the basic observation, that in each of these three definitional passages we have numerous repetitions of the same six basic elements of what is presented as a gospel formula or way to human salvation. Although the text

never presents this six-element list explicitly, the method of accumulation proposed here makes it clear that it is assumed by the author.

Analysis of the central religious teachings of the Book of Mormon is not yet well developed in the academic literature. This paper is intended to lay an initial foundation for such studies in the future. Recognizing that the text contains a trio of *inclusios* that claim to articulate a doctrine or gospel of Christ and that the repeated elements of these passages can be identified and accumulated, makes it possible to identify a clear, six-element doctrinal formula. The elements of the formula describe a three-stage dialogic process between the human recipient and the divine provider, a process that begins with the divine invitation to come to Christ through faith and repentance, and concludes with the divine invitation into eternal life

**Noel Reynolds** (*PhD, Harvard University*) is an emeritus professor of political science at Brigham Young University, where he taught a broad range of courses in legal and political philosophy, American heritage, and the Book of Mormon. His research and publications are based in these fields and several others, including authorship studies, Mormon history, Christian history and theology, and the Dead Sea Scrolls..





# JOSEPH SMITH'S UNIVERSE VS. SOME WONDERS OF CHINESE SCIENCE FICTION

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Jeff Lindsay

**Abstract:** *Chinese science fiction works recently have received increasing attention and acclaim, most notably Liu Cixin's The Three Body Problem. Liu's epic trilogy, available in Chinese and English, has received international honors and recognition for its vision, its daring application of advanced physics in a novel, and its highly original ideas about our life in the cosmos. Another Chinese physicist and science fiction author, Jiang Bo, also explores related issues but in a much more distant and wide-ranging trilogy, The Heart of the Milky Way series. Both works have interesting treatments of concepts relevant to Gospel perspectives, particularly the cosmic implications and teachings in the revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith. In the end, the questions they raise and the possibilities they present raise cosmic questions worthy of consideration by seekers of truth and urge us to consider what this cosmos is and where it is going. There are two ultimate possibilities: "Darkness, everything darkness" from the tragic "dark forest" model of Liu Cixin or the model of a benign universe crafted by a loving Heavenly Father. The latter, the cosmos of light, eternal progress, and endless joy is the universe of Joseph Smith and is profound enough to be seriously pitted against the alternative offered by China's brilliant physicists. Their writings treat the physics and metaphysics of the cosmos from a materialist perspective; if materialism rules, then it is tooth and claw, "everything darkness" in the end (though Jiang Bo offers hope of renewal and progress for some after his chaos and final grand calamity at the heart of the galaxy). Joseph Smith's cosmology gives us compelling reasons to see it otherwise and rejoice in the miracle of the actual universe we are in. Along the way, he offers some profound insights that should at least raise eyebrows and stimulate thinking among the physicists and philosophers of our age. These insights, contrary to claims of some critics, are not simply plagiarism or*

*crude reworkings of common ideas from his day, but represent profound and original breakthroughs in thought, solving significant problems in the world's views on life and the cosmos.*

**[Editor's Note:** As stated in the formal mission statement of the Interpreter Foundation, we try to draw upon a “wide range of ancillary disciplines” (including literature and culture) to help illustrate the truths of the gospel and the reality of the Restoration. Even so, some may never have considered how one particular literary genre — science fiction — can fit into such an effort. Indeed, some may scoff at the genre entirely and presume it has no place in academic discourse. Owing to the fact that science fiction attempts to create future worlds and that those worlds necessarily reflect a “world view” consistent with the cultural views of the authors, it can be helpful to at least consider those views. When you further consider that Joseph Smith described and promoted a future world that he credited to revelation and interaction with the divine, we can learn new insights by comparing the man-made views of our potential future with the revealed views of our future. In this paper, author Jeff Lindsay does just that, comparing our place in the universe as viewed through the lens of cutting-edge science fiction with our place in the universe as viewed through the lens of the founding prophet of the Restoration. We found this effort both intriguing and interesting. My hope is that you will consider this somewhat “out of the box” approach both enjoyable and worthwhile.]

“We are certain of only one thing: The universe is dying.”<sup>1</sup>

One of the many surprises I've had since moving to China and striving to learn Chinese has been the richness of modern Chinese science fiction. Westerners often have some idea of the vast treasures of ancient Chinese literature, but our views of modern Chinese culture are often limited by stereotypes of China as a developing nation. Few appreciate how rapidly China has grown in science and technology, often leading the world in R&D and patent filings in many areas such as nanotechnology, material science, pharmaceuticals, solar energy, and numerous other fields. A stroll through some parts of downtown Shanghai, for example,

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1. Liu Cixin, *Death's End (Remembrance of Earth's Past, Book 3)*, trans. Ken Liu (New York: Tor Books, 2017), 559.

can reveal a landscape that looks like something from the cover of a science fiction novel. Science fiction, in fact, is becoming one of China's surprising strengths. The Chinese government has even recognized the importance of science fiction as a means of strengthening the scientific education of its citizens and thus may have begun to actively promote science fiction.<sup>2</sup>

Some of these works touch upon broad cosmological, metaphysical, and philosophical concepts that have touched many people. These concepts merit consideration by thinkers of any faith and may be highly meaningful to LDS people interested in understanding the nature of our vast cosmos and the interactions of scientific thought with their faith. Considering these views from China can be of value for Latter-day Saints, as it can teach us new things or highlight the value of Joseph's contributions to thought. As President Dieter F. Uchtdorf said, "We seek for truth wherever we might find it."<sup>3</sup>

Some Latter-day Saints, especially those in the United States, may not have considered how much there is to learn from China. Many Americans have grown up considering China to be backward, repressed, and burdened with horrific social problems due to its reigning atheism and communism. Many have heard China blamed relentlessly for a variety of American problems. Those who spend time in China may be surprised to see that the society of China is quite different from what they imagined. They may be surprised to see the strong family values and healthy social values that permeate the land, the kindness and wisdom of its many peoples, the sense of entrepreneurial freedom that underlies its rapid economic growth (though it is a highly regulated economy), the beauty of the land and the people, the rise of strong intellectual property rights that support abundant innovation, and many other positives from a nation moving past "developing nation" status to world leadership in numerous areas. There are things we can disagree with and reforms we may hope to see, but there is much to admire and respect and so many positive changes in the past few decades.

Chinese literature has long offered grand treasures invisible to the West, and now the rise of world-class science fiction continues this trend. Do not underestimate how much there is to learn from China.

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2. Frank Zhang, "ScienceFictioninChina:2016inReview," *AmazingStories*, Feb. 23, 2017, <http://www.amazingstoriesmag.com/2017/02/science-fiction-in-china-2016-in-review/>.

3. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "What Is Truth?" (Lecture, CES Broadcast, Provo, Utah, January 13, 2013), <https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/article/ces-devotionals/2013/01/what-is-truth>.

The clever and mind-expanding concepts from the Chinese writers sometimes conflict with and sometimes add to the views given by Joseph Smith, and through consideration of these well-developed Eastern views, we can better appreciate what Joseph Smith has given us and what problems his breakthrough concepts solve.

In the context of contrasting Joseph's views with those of modern scientists turned fiction writers, it is fair also to consider whether Joseph actually has given us anything novel at all — especially in light of highly publicized criticism of Joseph Smith on these issues from Fawn Brodie and, more recently and more vociferously, from the so-called “CES Letter.” Both sources wish to dismiss Joseph's cosmology as little more than a crude borrowing of ideas already developed by others. Responding to those attacks, though peripheral to the issue of Chinese science fiction, is useful in establishing the novelty and value of what we've actually received from Joseph.

### New Perspectives from Chinese Science Fiction

China's best known science fiction writer, both at home and abroad, is Liu Cixin (刘慈欣), a physicist most famous for *The Three Body Problem*. That title is the first book in a trilogy generally called simply *The Three Body Problem* here in China (actually just *Three Body*, 三体), although the published English translation for the trilogy is known as *The Remembrance of Things Past* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2014). I will refer to the entire work as *The Three Body Problem*. The translated trilogy comprises *The Three-Body Problem* (三体, originally published 2007 with the English translation in 2014), *The Dark Forest* (黑暗森林 2008, English translation in 2015), and *Death's End* (死神永生, 2010, English translation in 2015).

Liu Cixin is often said to be the most prolific science fiction author of China with many honors. He is a winner of the Hugo Award, a high honor for science fiction writers. He is also an eight-time winner of the Galaxy Award, the Chinese equivalent of the Hugo award.<sup>4</sup>

A lesser known but also gifted and acclaimed writer is another Chinese physicist, Jiang Bo, author of the epic trilogy, *The Heart of the Milky Way*, which spans the galaxy and long stretches of time, set in a future perhaps one trillion years from now when the wonders of ancient Earth, the original source of much of the intelligent life in the galaxy, are at best a largely forgotten myth among the many forms of humanity and artificial

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4. “Liu Cixin,” *Wikipedia*, last edited March 6, 2018, 05:30, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liu\\_Cixin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liu_Cixin).

intelligence beings who fill many niches across the galaxy. Unfortunately, his works have not yet been published in English. His trilogy consists of: 天垂日暮 or *Horizon's Dusk* (Chengdu, China: Sichuan Science and Technology Publishers, 2011); 暗黑深渊 or *The Dark Abyss* (2013); and 逐影追光 or *Chasing Shadows, Pursuing Light* (2016).<sup>5</sup>

Jiang Bo's volume 3 of *The Heart of the Milky Way* series, *Chasing Shadows, Pursuing Light*, discussed in more detail below, was also honored with China's Galaxy Award in 2017 and China's Nebula Award in 2016 for best novel.<sup>6</sup> In 2015, Jiang's *Way of the Machines* won the silver award for best novella in the sixth global Chinese science fiction Nebula Award competition, and he simultaneously won the best short story award.<sup>7</sup>

*The Three Body Problem* (vol. 1) and *The Heart of the Milky Way* (vols. 1 and 3) have been the texts used in my Chinese language tutoring sessions over the past few months. Slowly reading these imaginative texts has frequently motivated comparison of their themes to related themes in the restored Gospel. Here I wish to present some of my observations that I hope will be useful to LDS readers, whether they are interested in Chinese science fiction or not.

**Spoiler alert:** I will reveal some significant plot developments in both books, especially about the final scenes but barely scratch the surface of the numerous stories and characters in either, and I feel that nothing I give away should deter anyone from enjoying these brilliant works. What I say about the popular first volume of *The Three Body Problem* and the “dark forest” theme of the second volume is widely known among those who have heard anything of substance about the trilogy.

## Two Related Trilogies

Both trilogies, *The Three Body Problem* and *The Heart of the Milky Way* involve not just highly advanced technology but highly advanced beings with godlike powers, and that power leads to a cosmos far from benign. These powers include power over gravity, ability to manipulate the fabric of space and time, and the ability to use higher dimensions for travel in *The Heart of the Milky Way*, while *The Three Body Problem* (especially

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5. The English translations of the titles are mine and may not properly reflect the intent of the author.

6. “Chinese sci-fi award Nebula held in Beijing,” *China Daily*, Sept. 12, 2016, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/culture/2016-09/12/content\\_26770068.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/culture/2016-09/12/content_26770068.htm).

7. “Jiang Bo (江波),” *Baidu Baike*, accessed Feb. 14, 2018, <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%B1%9F%E6%B3%A2/5111101>. This is a Chinese resource similar to Wikipedia.

vol. 3) describes beings whose techniques for warfare include reducing the dimensionality of entire star systems or manipulating the speed of light and other fundamental properties of physics as unstoppable weapons that eventually make the cosmos worse for everybody. Both authors reveal a galaxy with intelligent life scattered broadly, each a potential threat to others. Naturally, there is rampant war in such a universe, but its historic scope, its viciousness, and its impact on the very fabric of space may be startling to readers of both series. Not surprisingly, both works give us a universe with little room for a rational belief in God or eternal purpose in our mortal life other than keeping life going for the next generation. (In many ways, they are generally compatible with the “scientific atheism” that dominates China.) Both teach or imply that a planet with intelligent life might do well to remain unknown rather than to broadcast its location and richness to the universe. This is particularly emphasized in *The Three Body Problem*, which suggests that those broadcasting signals to the cosmos in hopes of attracting attention from other worlds may naively be leading us to our doom.

Reading these two books resulted in more continuous contemplation of Gospel principles than I have experienced in reading almost anything else outside of the scriptures and books overtly dealing with Gospel topics. This began with the first chapter I read in *The Heart of the Milky Way* (vol. 3) as I encountered a super-intelligent artificial life form (immediately raising questions like what is intelligence and who are we?) that was ready to sacrifice its life as a martyr for the cause of truth. It continued as I dealt with the realities of the vastness of the galaxy and questions about where we will be after millions, billions, and then trillions of years. This also occurred as I considered the relationship of earth to other worlds across the cosmos in *The Three Body Problem* and faced the grim image of our universe that has decayed from its idyllic initial state to the degraded, three-dimensional state we now have with the painfully slow speed of light as a barrier to so much that used to be and could have been — if it weren’t for ruthless violence across the galaxies. These ponderings have greatly deepened my appreciation of the magnitude and marvel of the universe and have profoundly increased my appreciation for the revelations given to Joseph Smith that help us understand how the universe operates and who we minute humans are amid such incomprehensible wonders.

### The Universe of *The Three Body Problem*

*The Three Body Problem* begins during the chaos of the Cultural Revolution of China, when many professors and other intellectuals were punished or even killed. Ye Wenjie, the daughter of a physicist brutally slain in public during the Cultural Revolution, becomes hardened about life and as a scientist ends up retreating to a remote military radio telescope facility that has a secret mission: to advance China by gaining assistance from extraterrestrial life, if such exists. Contact with an advanced civilization could not only establish China as a leading scientific force in the world but could also give China a massive competitive advantage over the West. Surprisingly, China's broadcasts to the universe are noted by an intelligent life form only four light years away in the neighboring system at Alpha Centauri, a complex system with three suns orbiting around each other. (It actually does have three suns and may have planets: a great deal in this book draws upon genuine science.)

The three suns of the planet Trisolaris in the Alpha Centauri system raise a surprisingly complex and sometimes beautiful problem in physics, the generally unpredictable orbits of three similar bodies in space, the "three body problem." Our solar system has many planets and moons, but in general, the orbits of the planets are relatively independent, so the orbit of earth around the sun reduces to essentially a simple two-body problem, as does the orbit of the moon around the earth, giving fairly stable orbits with easily predicted perturbations. (In reality, though, there are aspects of some orbits in our solar system where chaotic perturbations occur.<sup>8</sup>) But if the earth, moon, and sun all had similar mass, the interactions would be vastly more complex and, with a few unique exceptions, would not be stable orbits but rather chaotic and sometimes bizarre patterns that even sophisticated computer simulations could fail to predict accurately because of high sensitivity to minute details in the initial conditions and other influences.<sup>9</sup>

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8. Milutin Marjanov, "Three-Body System: Stable and Chaotic Orbits," *Milutin Marjanov* (blog), May 21, 2014, <http://www.milutinmarjanov.com/three-body-system-stable-and-chaotic-orbits/>.

9. For more on the three body problem, see "Three-Body Problem," *Wikipedia*, last edited February 27, 2018, 19:21, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three-body\\_problem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three-body_problem). For examples of specific problems with stable, predictable solutions, see Jon Cartwright, "Physicists Discover a Whopping 13 New Solutions to Three-Body Problem," *Science Magazine*, March 8, 2013, <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2013/03/physicists-discover-whopping-13-new-solutions-three-body-problem>. More recently, hundreds of beautiful solutions have been discovered. See "Scientists discover more than 600 new periodic orbits of the famous three-body

The planet Trisolaris is trapped in unpredictable orbits around its three chaotically interacting suns. The highly evolved, intelligent species on that planet is periodically wiped out by flaming heat or deadly cold as the planet ranges too close to or too far from its suns. In fact, intelligent life on Trisolaris has died out and arisen again roughly 300 times over the eons, aided in part by the ability of their bodies to dehydrate on demand and go into a form of hibernation to await a more favorable “stable era.” The current highly advanced civilization has finally realized that there is no hope for long-term survival in such unstable conditions and have begun a search for signs of hospitable planets capable of sustaining life elsewhere, as they prepare to send fleets in whatever hopeful direction they can identify. At this time they receive a signal from earth and realize that an inhabitable treasure is virtually next door. They feel heaven has smiled on them with such a ripe fruit ready to be plucked in their backyard.

Naïve humans wish to welcome the assistance and wisdom an advanced extraterrestrial civilization can bring. Their treason begins with the unhappy and eventually murderous Ye Wenjie as she works at the remote radio telescope station reaching out to possible life elsewhere in the galaxy. Shortly before receiving the official welcome broadcast from Trisolaris in response to China’s broadcasts, she also receives a warning signal from a Trisolaran pacifist who first received China’s message. He pleads with her not to answer, for her answer will identify the exact distance to earth, when all they have now is a rough general direction. But humanity is too guilty in her mind, too unworthy of their planet, and so she secretly sends a transmission begging Trisolaris to come and reshape human society. She will become a leader of highly organized groups of traitors around the world in the Earth-Trisolaris Organization (ETO). The ETO is initially in contact with Trisolaris, and their work is eventually exposed by authorities through the action of a brilliant, streetwise Beijing cop, one of the most interesting characters in the novels.

In one of many well-developed and notable themes in *The Three Body Problem*, the ETO’s work includes an advanced and addictive video game about the history and challenges of Trisolaris that is used to recruit elite

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problem,” *Phys.org*, October 12, 2017, from Science China Press, <https://phys.org/news/2017-10-scientists-periodic-orbits-famous-three-body.html>. The latter article shares breakthrough results from two leading scientists in China, XiaoMing Li and ShiJun Liao, at Shanghai Jiaotong University, China, who share their results and videos of the resulting orbits at XiaoMing Li and ShiJun Liao, “Periodic orbits for Newtonian planar three-body problem,” *Shanghai Jiaotong University*, accessed Feb. 15, 2018, <http://numericaltank.sjtu.edu.cn/three-body/three-body.htm>.



candidates for the ETO. Many of the traitors want Trisolaris to bring their wisdom and save earth, though one faction wants Trisolaris to eliminate humanity. For those who hope for friendly aliens to lift mankind with their wisdom, disappointment looms, for the leaders of Trisolaris eventually reveal that they view humans as mere “bugs.” They will come to earth not as saviors but as conquerors, colonizers, and perhaps exterminators.

After the beautifully written mysteries, drama, and intrigue, volume one ends with earth apparently facing its doom with a huge fleet of Trisolaran invaders on its way, destined to arrive in just over 400 years. The human traitors of the Earth-Trisolaris Organization have learned that conquest is the plan. In one of the most imaginative and thought-provoking aspects of the book, they have learned the Trisolarans are using sophisticated “sophons”—originally mere protons whose internal higher-dimensional structure was unfolded into huge two-dimensional structures that could be engraved with circuitry to be programmed as artificial intelligence entities. These smart protons are sent to earth at fully the speed of light to interact with key scientific work to continually disrupt scientific progress here (the work of physicists exploring the fundamental properties of matter was a key target, naturally). Humanity must be stopped from advancing scientifically so the conquest will be easy in the 400+ years it will take their space fleet to reach earth. The description of this approach, including the stunning discoveries about the nature of subatomic particles and the intelligence that may be found therein, is one of the cleverest and most creative uses of advanced physics found in science fiction.<sup>10</sup>

Once the authorities understand the threat from Trisolaris, we see China, the NATO countries, and other nations cooperating in a desperate effort to find a way to survive the distant invasion. But it appears to be the sunset of humanity.

In the equally profound second volume, *The Dark Forest*, Liu develops his famous “dark forest” theme to explain not only how life across the cosmos tends to operate (it is inevitably hostile) but also to provide a clever application of his principle to save earth from the invasion. The “dark forest” theory likens intelligent life in the universe to a tribe living in a dark forest on an island with limited resources. One day the tribe learns of the existence of another tribe on another part of the island. How does the tribe respond? Logically, the tribe should recognize that

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10. The startling and profound twists learned from the failure of initial experiments is described near the end of volume 1. That scene alone makes the read worthwhile, in my opinion.

the others, whoever and whatever they are, are now competitors for their limited resources. With survival as the prime directive for any species, the only logical response (in a purely material universe) is to strike rapidly and exterminate the others.

The “dark forest” is a theme developed and applied in many ways throughout this novel. It colors the way surviving human crews on large spaceships act and interact with each other when their only hope for survival seems to be seizing the resources of their peers. It describes the way most intelligent civilizations across the cosmos act, with two “genes” characterizing behavior: the “hide” gene that guides civilizations to lay low and avoid detection and the “cleanse” gene that guides advanced civilizations to seek immediately to exterminate competitors, once detected. This is poignantly illustrated in volume 3 when Singer, an alien monitoring signs of intelligent life, detects earth and is curious to learn more about humans, who seem to lack these basic genes, but his bureaucratic superiors have no time for that and simply give the order to destroy the planet, no further questions asked.

It is through discovering and contemplating the “dark forest” principle that one of the heroes in the book develops humanity’s hope for surviving the Trisolaran invasion in a clever twist on mutually assured destruction.

The pace of science and disaster picks up in volume 3. Earth faces a terrible weapon applied against the solar system. In the complex turn of startling events, new heroes and heroines arise who escape our threatened solar system with speed of light ships using technology fueled by knowledge illicitly gleaned from the Trisolarans in another genuinely remarkable plot twist. (The novel has so many rich ideas.) Those survivors escape to another planet with life and meet a human, Guang Yifan, who was a survivor from one of the ships that escaped the Trisolaran attack from advanced probes against the earth fleet hundreds of years earlier. Expecting earth to be destroyed, that crew had escaped and eventually made contact with less hostile aliens who helped them learn more about the history of the universe.

Guan Yifan has been collaborating with other scientists researching the historical changes in the cosmos. The history he tentatively shares raises some of the most troubling perspectives in the series. Here we learn about the brutal wars across the galaxies, which successively lowered the macroscopic dimensions of the universe from its initial, glorious ten dimensions all the way down to our current poverty of three, and even that is coming under attack as entire solar systems are being

flattened into two-dimensions. We also find our heroes soon trapped in a bubble of reduced speed of light as their region is hit with another deadly weapon based on manipulation of the laws of physics. It is hard to know or even imagine what the laws of physics were like in the Garden of Eden age, since it is possible many of the laws that seem immutable to us now were once weaponized, manipulated to wage war on others. Such gruesome weapons have been in steady use for billions of years. In fact, we learn that the three-dimensional world we now live in is a distant, pathetic downgrade from the splendors of the original universe, once a ten-dimensional cosmos with a “nearly infinite” speed of light that made existence like a Garden of Eden. (This is not my paraphrasing; the phrase “Garden of Eden” occurs 25 times in the English text.) The fall from such grace (my choice of words) came through the darkness of war, as godlike beings warred against others, successively manipulating the laws of physics to limit or eliminate competitors.

Here is a particularly important passage from volume 3:

“You don’t need to pity them [the former inhabitants of Earth]. Really, let me tell you: don’t. The reality of the universe is not something to envy.”

“Why?”

Yifan lifted a hand and pointed at the stars of the galaxy. Then he let the 3G force pull his arm back to this chest.

“Darkness. Only darkness.”

“You mean the dark forest state?”

Guan Yifan shook his head, a gesture that appeared to be a struggle in hypergravity [as their ship accelerated]. “For us, the dark forest state is all-important, but it’s just a detail of the cosmos. If you think of the cosmos as a great battlefield, dark forest strikes are nothing more than snipers shooting at the careless — messengers, mess men, etc. In the grand scheme of the battle, they are nothing. You have not seen what a true interstellar war is like.”

“Have you?”

“We’ve caught a few glimpses. But most things we know are just guesses. ... Do you really want to know? The more you possess of this kind of knowledge, the less light remains in your heart.”

“My heart is already completely dark. I want to know.”

And so ... another dark veil hiding the truth about the universe was lifted before the gaze of one of the only survivors of Earth civilization.

Yifan asked, “Why don’t you tell me what the most powerful weapon for a civilization possessing almost infinite technological prowess is? Don’t think of this as a technical question. Think philosophy.”

Cheng Xin pondered for a while and then struggled to shake her head. “I don’t know.”

“Your experiences should give you a hint.”

What had she experienced? She had seen how a cruel attacker could lower the dimensions of space by one and destroy a solar system. *What are dimensions?*

“The universal laws of physics,” Cheng Xin said.

“That’s right. The universal laws of physics are the most terrifying weapons and also the most effective defenses. Whether it’s by the Milky Way or the Andromeda Galaxy, at the scale of the local galactic group or the Virgo Supercluster, those warring civilizations possessing godlike technology will not hesitate to use the universal laws of physics as weapons. There are many laws that can be manipulated into weapons, but most commonly, the focus is on spatial dimensions and the speed of light. Typically, lowering spatial dimensions is a technique for attack, and lowering the speed of light is a technique for defense.<sup>11</sup>

I find this a highly imaginative take on the possible reasons why we have only three dimensions visible in our universe, when science tells us there may be other higher dimensions wrapped up in such a small scale that we cannot yet detect them, but mathematically their properties can be worked out, and Liu does an excellent job of describing, in two different scenes, examples of humans interacting with remnants of the previous four-dimensional universe that have not yet been completely

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11. Liu Cixin, “Galaxy Era, Year 409: Our Star” in *Death’s End (Remembrance of Earth’s Past, Book 3)*, trans. Ken Liu (New York: Tor Books, 2017), 555-56.

flattened by the weapons (or perhaps, the weaponized laws of physics) that are slowly destroying them.

The theme of lasting darkness takes another twist as the two final heroes of the book escape to a separate “mini-universe” about the size of a cruise ship and race through time, seeking to re-enter a bright new universe billions of years after the current one goes through a “Great Crunch,” when gravity eventually pulls everything back together, followed by a new Big Bang. There are numerous such mini-universes that various advanced civilizations have created to ride out the decay of our universe, waiting to step into a new Garden of Eden later. Sadly, the mass removed from our universe to create numerous small universes has upset the near perfect balance of the cosmos, resulting in insufficient matter to cause the needed Great Crunch. In the end, all will be darkness and doom unless enough matter is returned by those seeking to escape its darkness. The two heroes bravely choose to sacrifice their mini-universe. They return its matter in hopes of restoring the balance and find a hostile planet to try to live on in a doomed and dark cosmos. They and their posterity (if any) will have no lasting hope, and as the novel ends, it seems unlikely there is any hope for a regeneration of the cosmos, either.

*The Three Body Problem* not only shows readers a universe of darkness and endless war, but also the beauty we now see is little more than the post-apocalyptic ruins of unimaginably ugly wars between the gods that ravished a beautiful Garden of Eden, utterly unlike anything a three-dimensional being can imagine. Further, the trash we are left with is doomed for further destruction, loss, and darkness; everywhere darkness. It is all darkness in the end — all civilizations, all life, all love will be forgotten.

### Chasing Shadows, Pursuing Light

While *The Three Body Problem* in the end depicts a dark universe that will become only darker through the wars between godlike beings, Jiang Bo's *The Heart of the Milky Way* is less sanguine and more hopeful, though chaos tends to reign.

My encounter with Chinese science fiction began with a chance purchase of volume 3, *Chase the Shadows, Pursue the Light*. I had heard that Chinese science fiction had come into its own, and I was interested in exploring. I read the first chapter, “Sha Da Ke,” thinking it was a short story and that the book would be a collection of short stories. Only as I continued reading did I realize this was the first chapter in a complex novel within a trilogy. That first chapter, though, could be a stand-alone short story and strikes me as one of the most moving narratives I have

encountered in science fiction — equal, in my opinion, to great stories from, say, Ray Bradbury or Isaac Asimov, famed authors I grew up reading.

In this story, previously discussed on my *Mormanity* blog,<sup>12</sup> including my translation of the closing passages, an ancient Sha Da Ke (pronounced like “shah dah kuh”), the artificial intelligence entity that generally runs all top-tier, massive space ships, has fulfilled his contract with humanity and has chosen to be released from his duty as the overseer of a ship. As I would infer while reading volume 1, the name is probably related to the Sanskrit word *sadhaka*, meaning one who is seeking to achieve a goal, a term used in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.<sup>13</sup> In essence, he has left his physical body (the ship) and become an entity of subspace matter only, apparently pure intelligence that can travel both in subspace and normal space. He is capable of growing, learning, communicating, sharing, and influencing. And he has a mission he must fulfill. He is part of a council, the Truth Council, of similar liberated Sha Da Kes, some embodied with a ship and others disembodied but all united in a quest for truth and in particular, the truth about the origins of humanity. Where is or was the planet where it all started?

The records across the cosmos grow dim beyond roughly 100 million years in the past, long after humanity created the first Sha Da Ke and began exploring and settling the Milky Way. When the mystery of the home planet is solved, the Truth Council is confident that what they will uncover there can unlock many mysteries about the origins of life across the galaxy, including their life. Thus, the Truth Council collaborates to scan the expanse of the Galaxy tirelessly seeking for and sharing clues that can help them solve the ultimate mystery about humanity’s roots. In a sense, their quest is to complete their family history work.

Numerous clues have guided the Truth Council to focus current efforts on finding one unique human, Captain Li Yuesu, a 20,000-year-old

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12. Jeff Lindsay, “Artificial Intelligence and the Nature of Intelligence in LDS Theology,” *Mormanity* (blog), Sept. 28, 2017, <http://mormanity.blogspot.com/2017/09/artificial-intelligence-and-nature-of.html>.

13. “Sadhaka,” *Wikipedia*, last edited February 23, 2018, 19:13, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C4%81dhaka>. The word *Sadhaka* shares a root with *Siddhartha*, “he who has obtained his goals,” the name of Buddha (*Siddhartha Gautama*) before his renunciation. See “*Siddhartha* (novel),” *Wikipedia*, last edited April 6, 2018, 03:34, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siddhartha\\_%28novel%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siddhartha_%28novel%29). An ancient Sha Da Ke is also associated with the image of what I believe is the dancing Lord Shiva, surrounded by flames. See Subhamoy Das, “Nataraj Symbolism of the Dancing Shiva,” *Thoughtco.com*, accessed April 9, 2018, <https://www.thoughtco.com/nataraj-the-dancing-shiva-1770458>.

Ranger — one of the few humans allowed to have access to interstellar travel technology. Captain Li is of interest because he has had contact with a bizarre, other-worldly, godlike being who is believed to know of the primordial home planet. If only Lue Yuesu can be persuaded to help them, their mission might be fulfilled. But rumors are that Li Yuesu, like all other elite humans who historically had access to the resources to regenerate endlessly is growing weary and doesn't want to keep mortality going forever. In his highly aged body, after so much trouble and toil over the years, he's ready to call it quits and simply pass away naturally. This possibility is alarming to Sha Da Ke.

The ancient Sha Da Ke in this story has finally found Li Yuesu and has requested a meeting. Li Yuesu does not like Sha Da Ke entities, for they are far too formal and stodgy. His friend and cohort on his ship is a playful artificial intelligence entity named Pudding he had programmed to be emotional, a genuinely delightful and courageous underdog among AI beings, who works a few brilliant miracles of his own later on and even gets the upper hand for a while on another Sha Da Ke as he infiltrates and hides within the arch villain's mothership.

The ancient Sha Da Ke, visiting Captain Li, makes a very logical plea for Captain Li's help, but Li doesn't value their mission or the truth they seek and refuses to cooperate. He will continue aging and pass away shortly and urges the Truth Council to do their work without him.

The 3D projection of Sha Da Ke continues the discussion as he contemplates what must be done. He barely has time to send off encrypted subspace messages toward the center of the galaxy in hopes they will be intercepted and read by others on the Truth Council, giving them vital new information he has gleaned regarding Li Yuesu and sharing his plans for what comes next and what others must do. Sadly, there is no time to clone himself to ensure his new knowledge is preserved, including information about what is about to happen. He yearns to simply reach into Captain Li's brain and adjust a few neurons to revive his will to live. Such a simple thing it would be, but it would violate the fundamental law engraved in his most ancient circuitry: Sha Da Ke is a servant, not the master, and thus may never violate the free agency of a human. To knowingly do so would trigger automatic self-destruction.

However, the cause of truth will be impaired, maybe lost forever, if Captain Li dies soon. As Sha Da Ke looks at his own reflection in Captain Li's eyes, he sees himself as a sage; an elderly man with white hair and a glow around himself. Sha Da Ke the saint (my word) smiles at Captain Li before parting and gently reaches out with his hand to stroke Captain

Li's temple, gently making an adjustment in a few neurons, as all around Sha Da Ke fades away forever. The divine entity sacrifices his own life for a sacred cause, for truth, and ultimately for humanity.

That chapter sets the stage for numerous rounds of excitement and adventure with Captain Li, his passion to keep moving rekindled. He will soon move into a fresh, newly cloned body and moves forward to keep on helping humanity ward off the threats from the Dark Abyss and finally the greatest threat of all from their villainous leader with a nearly perfect plot to shake up the entire galaxy.

Jiang Bo is highly imaginative as he describes a distant society with millions of inhabited planets descended from humans but in diverse forms. There is a strict division between the terrestrials, who are generally denied the use of advanced technology for interstellar travel, and the elite human Rangers who patrol the galaxy to keep order and prevent war, or, when necessary, to wage it.

Incidentally, it is one thing to acknowledge that the cosmos is vast; it is another to work through details of what it means for intelligent life to fill the galaxy, which, minute a spot as it is in the cosmos, still requires roughly 100,000 years at the speed of light to go from one side to the other. Physicists dealing with the realities of travel and communication across such expanses remind us how misleading popular science-fiction productions like *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* can be. A relatively short trip in one part of the galaxy may still require centuries of hibernation for essentially the entire crew. Journeys are filled with tedium, and when one awakes after long hibernation, the societies one left behind may have changed dramatically, and many of one's loved ones elsewhere in the galaxy may have already passed on. Lasting relationships are not in the cards for the Rangers.

Another practical reality of interstellar distances is the difficulty of gaining information. Even when sent at top subspace speed, information sent from one world to another or one ship to another may be centuries out of date when received. The vacuum of space ultimately leads to grand, enduring information vacuums as well. This can be particularly dangerous when threats to galactic order arise, as they do with a vengeance in Jiang's work.

The Rangers have access to the best technology, including genetic modification and renewal. The technology advantages of the Rangers also include massive, complex ships, hundreds of miles long, accompanied by and run by dazzling artificial intelligence entities such as Sha Da Ke. Ranger ships are capable of subspace travel, entering the eerie, diffuse



realm where travel can be faster than the speed of light, though not enormously faster, perhaps ten to a hundred times faster, depending on the nature of the subspace region from whence one leaps into flight. Subspace also has matter, apparently what we might now call “dark matter,” but with much more structure and importance than anything we currently understand. One of the key traits of Li Yuesu, and a source of great competitive advantage and much mystery until resolved near the end of volume 3, is his ability to sense subspace matter and detect the “subspace profile” of other beings or objects.

Of keen interest in Bo's work is the concept of life based on or employing subspace matter. Only after millions of years of space exploration did humans learn of a completely “other” type of life, the life found in what is called the Dark Abyss. Dark Abyss creatures come in great variety but tend to operate more like a hive than individuals. For a lengthy era after humanity and the Dark Abyss creatures came into contact, they coexisted peacefully, but eventually conflict arose, with the Dark Abyss brutally wiping out entire planets with technology the humans were poorly prepared to counter until a clever space-time bubble is used to entrap them in a large section of the galaxy, somewhat like some of the advanced weaponry in *The Three Body Problem*. But in volume 3, after a million years of crippling isolation, they have escaped and are back, now further evolved/engineered and more deadly than before. And this time they have powerful allies in the form of human traitors who have chosen, or in many cases been compelled, to be under their hive-like control. One of these humans, a leader of the Dark Abyss forces, is a merger between organic human life and Dark Abyss life and is one of the grandest villains of science fiction literature. He launches an elaborate, deceptive plot to overthrow what he sees, perhaps rightly, as the arrogant, godlike leaders at the center of the Milky Way. He succeeds to a degree, though not as he intends, thanks to Captain Li's interference.

The complex journeys, trials, and dangers described in Bo's work, along with the encounters with the immensity and diversity of space, give a Latter-day Saint or anyone much to ponder in terms of our place and role in the cosmos. What will humanity be like in a trillion years? Where will we be, and what will we be doing then? But even more intriguing questions are raised by one of the most interesting aspects of Jiang's trilogy: the advanced artificial intelligence creatures that are also a form of life, a form of intelligence, even intelligence with godlike capabilities and, remarkably, the potential to offer their life as a sacrifice

for the cause of truth. What is intelligence and what is its potential? Who, ultimately, are we?

Jiang's work depicts a universe with deadly dark forces and constant chaos, where even the seemingly benevolent godlike beings such as the mysterious Son of Ai Bo, the AI being believed to be connected to Earth, are agents whose well-intended actions may cause much mischief, based on human standards. Jiang does mention religion several times, but it is a force of superstition among the ordinary planet-bound masses and has no role among the elite, more scientific Rangers. Indeed, the Rangers with their advanced technology may be at risk of being worshipped when they interact with local cultures in the galaxy. The Son of Ai Bo, however, may evoke the concept of the Son of Man/Son of God as a godlike creature linked to Earth who truly seeks to rescue humanity and is advanced beyond any other creature in the galaxy.

As mentioned above, Jiang seems to be more hopeful about the future of humanity and the galaxy than Liu. But in *The Heart of the Milky Way*, the hope we are left with is a faint glimmer that comes only after the downfall of the godlike human creatures who reign at the center of the Milky Way, the lords of the galaxy to whom the Rangers are subservient. Those lords, the "heart of the Milky Way people," see their misguided work of millions of years catastrophically implode in a galactic disaster, completely overthrowing their dominance and causing the majority of the survivors among them to simply commit suicide out of grief for their failure. With their control decimated, there may be new freedom and prospects without the burden of their influence.

Regarding the mysterious lords at the heart of the Milky Way, their work and their glory, so to speak, was to use their control over gravity and other aspects of physics to create a massive artificial intelligence subspace being that, once mature enough to awake and become self-aware, will have incredible intelligence, knowledge, and power to further their ends as their cosmic servant. This would give them power to rule more fully and progress more rapidly, but the plan fails miserably when it comes under attack by the arch villain of the novel. He is originally human, then chooses to merge with Dark Abyss life to become a part-human, part-Dark Abyss entity with more in common with Captain Li than anyone could imagine and then finally becomes an artificial intelligence entity merged with his ship and a host of Dark Abyss creatures for the decisive advantage needed to infiltrate the massive cosmic brain at the heart of the Milky Way. His plan nearly succeeds but brings chaos instead and

an end to the cosmic brain he wanted to usurp, as it becomes sealed in a massive black hole.

The arch villain, Gu Li Te, once a trusted leader among human forces, offers many parallels to Satan as depicted in LDS scriptures. We learn that he is like Li Yuesu in that both these unique beings have been infused (in a scene from volume 2) with the subspace matter life of the Dark Abyss, giving them special powers. But while Li Yuesu serves humanity, Gu Li Te rebels and leads humanity's great enemy, the creatures from the subspace realm known as the Dark Abyss. He leads those forces in the guise of attacking humanity, but his real goal is bigger still: conquest of the entire galaxy and endless power for him forever. His rebellion against humanity and the galaxy's godlike overseers at the heart of the Milky Way is justified in great swelling words as an act of liberation and salvation for all in the galaxy, though he will sacrifice all around him in his ruthless quest, beginning with the cruel sacrifice of the Dark Abyss forces in their hopeless battle against the human forces, which is merely a distraction to allow Gu Li Te to pursue and nearly achieve his selfish ends. In the end, though, he is imprisoned forever in the massive black hole created by his failed attempt at gaining the throne of the universe.

Chinese physicists not only have some of the boldest ideas about technology and physics, they also offer stunning ideas about the nature of humanity and intelligent life. Though Chinese writers, like many Western writers, are likely to be anchored in materialism without recognition of deity or the eternal nature of man, I found both books driving me to look at the cosmos in new ways and to contemplate the vast panorama of our existence and God's majestic work, continually calling for a comparison to what Latter-day Saints are taught about the universe in the revelations of Joseph Smith.

### Joseph Smith's Universe

“[T]he light of truth ... is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. ...

As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made. ... Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space.” (Doctrine & Covenants 88:6-12)

Though much brighter and more hopeful, the cosmos of Joseph Smith has some important similarities with the scientific universes in the sci-fi works of Liu Cixin and Jiang Bo. Consistent with modern science, all describe a universe in which great changes occur, including the rise and

passing away of planets. All envision a universe with many intelligent beings and countless inhabited worlds. While both Chinese authors treat interesting aspects of the rise of artificial intelligence, fascinating intersections with the LDS concept of spirit-matter souls arise in Jiang's self-aware AI systems, which can be embodied in a ship or live on in disembodied form comprising the finer matter of subspace and can even choose to sacrifice themselves nobly for greater causes.

The apparently atheistic writers recognize the possibility of highly advanced, godlike beings, whether originating from manmade artificial intelligence or from natural evolution, while Joseph Smith recognizes God the Creator and yet also the potential for humans to become "gods" like our Heavenly Father and perhaps participants in a future council of the gods.<sup>14</sup> All are interested in the longterm future of humanity and our relationship to the cosmos. But the universe Joseph Smith gives us has a radically different nature while still offering conformity to or compatibility with growing scientific knowledge about the universe. Consider Joseph's teachings such as:

- the material nature of spirit (Doctrine and Covenants 131:7–8), including the teaching that there is no such thing as immaterial matter and that spirit matter is a form of matter that is too "fine or pure" to be seen with our mortal eyes, yet is still genuine matter;
- the eternal nature of matter (D&C 93:33), including spirit matter<sup>15</sup> (also compare to the eternal nature of God's creative and governing priesthood power, which is "without beginning of days or end of years" in Alma 13:7–9 and D&C 84:17);
- tangible matter as not only an important tool for God's creative work but is part of who He is, having a physical body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's (D&C 130:22);
- the plurality of worlds inhabited by sons and daughters of God across the immensity of space (D&C 76:24; Moses 1:33, 37–38, 7:30);

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14. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993) p. 348–49, 365. See also Doctrine and Covenants 121:32.

15. Discussing Joseph Smith's teachings about intelligence (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 352–54), Bruce R. McConkie paraphrased, "This spirit element has always existed; it is co-eternal with God." Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), s.v. "Spirit Element."

- the denial of creation *ex nihilo* (Abraham 3:24, 4:1);<sup>16</sup>
- the insistence that the Creation is for a remarkable purpose, namely, God's work and glory, the endless work of bringing about the salvation of his children (Moses 1:39), with the ultimate end being joy (D&C 93:33–34; 2 Nephi 2:25; Moses 5:10–11);
- the crucial purpose in the Creation of our mortal world found in providing mortal bodies and mortal probation for God's children (Abraham 3:23–26; Moses 4:1–4; D&C 29:36–39, 104:17; 2 Nephi 2:3–25);
- the eternal nature of intelligence<sup>17</sup> and the genuine moral agency that God's children have (Abraham 3:21–25; Moses 6:56; Articles of Faith 1:2; D&C 93:29–38), thanks to Jesus Christ, whose loving work of Atonement overcomes mortal death and can free us from our sins in mortality (2 Nephi 2:3–27);
- the existence of multiple hierarchies of laws and kingdoms in space, including diverse fixed “courses of the heavens” in addition to the “course” of the earth (D&C 88: 38, 42–47);
- God's ability to span the vastness of the cosmos and see and interact with all His works (D&C 88:40–41; Moses 1:4–6, 7:36)<sup>18</sup>; and
- the role of light as the great carrier of information and truth and the means of governance, and source of life that spans the immensity of space, reflecting God's power and rule (D&C 88). This light has God as its ultimate source and is most markedly contrasts the hopeful, vibrant, eternal realm of the LDS faith against the dark universe of science fiction.

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16. See also Joseph Smith, “The King Follett Sermon,” repr., *Ensign*, April 1971; <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1971/04/the-king-follett-sermon>.

17. Joseph Smith said, “Is it logical to say that the intelligence of spirits is immortal, and yet that it had a beginning? The intelligence of spirits had not beginning, neither will it have an end. ... Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle.” *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp.353–54.

18. This ability can be compatible with modern science via several possibilities. For example, if God is a Being existing in or capable of interacting across higher dimensions, then interactions with our world could seem contrary to possibility. Consider a 3 dimensional being who could interact with portions of a two-dimensional world (e.g., “Flatland”) in ways that would seem impossible to two-dimensional scientists, but trivial for one who could, say, roll a sheet up and make distance portions in a two-dimensional world to be actually adjacent in three dimensions.

The compatibility with modern science of some of Joseph Smith's revealed views does not necessarily provide proof or "signs" that Joseph was a prophet, for many of the concepts he revealed and discussed have parallels in prior debates and in the discussions of his day. But while details such as the plurality of inhabited worlds can be found among other voices of Christianity and the Enlightenment (e.g., Benjamin Franklin<sup>19</sup>), as Robert Paul has documented,<sup>20</sup> the net effect of what he provided is still arguably revolutionary. Regarding the plurality of inhabited worlds, Paul states that, "On careful examination, these complex issues suggest that the environmental thesis — the view that one's cultural matrix is entirely sufficient to account for the emergence of a coherent set of ideas or conventions — does not provide a wholly adequate explanation of the style and structure of restoration pluralism."<sup>21</sup> Such can be argued for much of Joseph Smith's cosmology and certainly for its overall effect.

The significance of such cosmological concepts has been explored in other works such as Terryl Givens' *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity*<sup>22</sup> and Terryl and Fiona Givens' *The God Who Weeps: How Mormonism Makes Sense of Life*, which explore some of the profound philosophical or theological implications.<sup>23</sup> This includes a discussion of the doctrine of eternal matter that Joseph first introduced in 1833 and then strengthened later with a clear rejection of creation *ex nihilo*,<sup>24</sup> and a discussion of our co-eternal nature with God.<sup>25</sup>

Intriguing scientific aspects of some of Joseph's cosmological statements are explored in light of modern cosmology by Ron Hellings

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19. Benjamin Franklin, "Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion" (paper, 1728), [http://www.beliefnet.com/resourcelib/docs/65/Articles\\_of\\_Belief\\_and\\_Acts\\_of\\_Religion\\_1.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/resourcelib/docs/65/Articles_of_Belief_and_Acts_of_Religion_1.html).

20. Robert Paul, "Joseph Smith and the Plurality of Worlds Idea," *Dialogue*, 19/2 (1986), 13–36, [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V19N02\\_15.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V19N02_15.pdf). While Paul alludes to Benjamin Franklin's views on the matter, more attention to a specific publication on this topic would have been helpful.

21. *Ibid.*, 13.

22. Terryl Givens, *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

23. Terryl Givens and Fiona Givens, *The God Who Weeps: How Mormonism Makes Sense of Life* (Salt Lake City: Ensign Peak, 2012).

24. Givens, "Eternalism," in *Wrestling the Angel*.

25. Givens and Givens, "Man Was in the Beginning With God," in *The God Who Weeps*. See also Givens and Givens, "His Heart is Set Upon Us," in *The God Who Weeps*.

in “Joseph Smith and Modern Cosmology.”<sup>26</sup> That presentation by Dr. Hellings, a research professor in the department of physics at Montana State University, delves into technical details of the Big Bang theory, the inflationary model of the universe, and the relationship between matter and energy, finding that Joseph Smith’s views on the universe fare much better scientifically than do competing religious paradigms, such as creation *ex nihilo* and the contradictory notion of spirit as “immaterial matter.” He finds the scientific concept of conservation of matter and energy within Joseph’s teachings as well as the concept that everything is matter-energy (no immaterial matter) and the concept that the universe is infinite and eternal.<sup>27</sup> See also Dr. Bruce D. Dales’ comments for *Mormon Scholars Testify*, where he notes that Joseph’s statements about the eternal nature of matter (or matter-energy) were not derivable from the science of his day and counts Joseph’s statement about the existence of some forms of matter that we can’t detect with our eyes as one of several scientific bulls-eyes (e.g., consider dark matter, neutrinos, etc.).<sup>28</sup>

Some relatively metaphysical statements pertaining to light, spirit, and knowledge (e.g., D&C 84:45–46; 88:12–13, 40–41; and 93:36) can be construed in light of modern science, including quantum mechanics and astrophysics, to give interpretations flattering to Joseph’s prophetic abilities,<sup>29</sup> but Hellings urges caution because such statements are difficult to construe accurately and could mean a variety of different things without intending to convey information about physics and cosmology.<sup>30</sup> If God wanted Joseph’s cosmology to provide conclusive future proof of his divine calling, Joseph could have made more clear statements such as explaining that the relationship between matter and energy involves the speed of light squared ( $e = mc^2$ ) and as a bonus, given us the speed

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26. Ron Hellings, “Joseph Smith and Modern Cosmology” (presentation, FairMormon Conference, Sandy, Utah, 2009), [https://www.fairmormon.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/2009\\_Joseph\\_Smith\\_and\\_Modern\\_Cosmology.pdf](https://www.fairmormon.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/2009_Joseph_Smith_and_Modern_Cosmology.pdf). See also Ron Hellings, “Joseph Smith and Modern Cosmology,” (Science & Mormonism: Cosmos, Earth & Man symposium, Interpreter Foundation, Provo, Utah, 2013) <http://interpreterfoundation.org/ron-hellings-on-joseph-smith-and-modern-cosmology/>.

27. Ibid, 4–5.

28. “Bruce D. Dale,” *Mormon Scholars Testify*, FairMormon, Sept. 2017, <https://www.fairmormon.org/testimonies/scholars/bruce-e-dale>.

29. Alvin K. Benson, “Joseph Smith on Modern Science,” in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993), 151–67, <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/joseph-smith-prophet-man/12-joseph-smith-modern-science>.

30. Hellings, “Joseph Smith and Modern Cosmology.”

of light to five or six significant figures, explained what a black hole is, and predicted the existence of quasars. But this kind of conclusive proof through ironclad peer-reviewable signs does not seem to be how God promotes faith and spiritual growth in His children, making it foolish to expect such incontestable evidence or a discussion of cosmology that is not linked in some way to the language and knowledge of Joseph's day. In this way, God mercifully leaves plenty of room for those who wish to doubt. Of course, one can argue that the lack of such incontestable signs is because Joseph was a fake prophet. People are free to choose how they approach the issue of faith and evidence.

Nevertheless, there are reasons to see Joseph's cosmology as something far beyond a reflection of his environment. Comparing his expansive, coherent cosmic views relative to the Christian theology of the day, Terryl Givens writes:

From an early Mormon perspective, Christian theology was generally too reticent in probing beyond the bounds of the biblically revealed. What of the time *before* Creation? What was God doing then? Preparing Hell for such as would ask such impudent questions, was the answer Augustine recounted. What of God's other dominions? Why is there man at all? For Milton, it was to compensate for the third of heaven's angels seduced by Satan; the scriptures, however, are silent. What of human destiny in the worlds beyond? What are humans being saved *for*? Dante thought a state of eternal, rapturous contemplation, and few have proffered more specifics than that. Post-redemption theology seems an oxymoron.<sup>31</sup> [*emphasis in original, footnotes omitted*]

Now we examine some particular aspects of Joseph's revelations on the universe as they relate to the views in the works of science fiction reviewed above.

### **A Plurality of Worlds in a Benign Cosmos with a Loving, Weeping God**

Joseph Smith did much more than simply restore and reform Christianity. He gave us profound glimpses into the nature of the cosmos itself and God's work and glory in creating and managing this magnificent realm. For example, we find significant cosmic perspectives in the enigmatic Book of Moses, given by revelation to Joseph as he began making

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31. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, 8.



a “translation” of the Bible based solely on using the KJV English version shortly after completing the Book of Mormon. From Moses 1, we read of the vast expanse of God’s works and the endless nature of His work, including the creation of other inhabited planets:

4 And, behold, thou art my son; wherefore look, and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands; but not all, **for my works are without end**, and also my words, for they never cease ...

6 And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son; and thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth; but there is no God beside me, and **all things are present with me, for I know them all** ...

8 And it came to pass that Moses looked, and beheld the world upon which he was created; and Moses beheld the world and the ends thereof, and all the children of men which are, and which were created; of the same he greatly marveled and wondered. ...

29 And he beheld many lands; and each land was called earth, and there were inhabitants on the face thereof ...

33 And [the Lord God said unto Moses:] **worlds without number have I created** ...

35 But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you. For behold, **there are many worlds that have passed away** by the word of my power. And there are many that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man; but all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them ...

37 And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying: **The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man**; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine.

38 And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words.

39 For behold, this is my work and my glory — to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

What God revealed to Moses was also known to some degree by Enoch, as reported in Moses 7:

28 And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: **How is it that the heavens weep**, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains?

29 And Enoch said unto the Lord: **How is it that thou canst weep**, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?

30 And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations ... [31] **how is it thou canst weep?**

32 The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren ... [33] are without affection, and they hate their own blood ...

37 But behold, their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers; Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them, even all the workmanship of mine hands; **wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?**

A God of cosmic majesty mourns over the rebellion and future suffering of his sons and daughters on earth — a God who weeps due to His love and compassion for us. This concept, treated in detail by Givens and Givens,<sup>32</sup> is an expression of the vast and *benign* universe we find in Joseph Smith's revelations. While benign, it is still a universe where there is much to weep over, in part due to the most terrible and ennobling gift that God gives to His children: agency, allowing them to love Him and each other or to turn against Him and choose darkness and evil. But the tools of life and light that are given in this benign cosmos are meant to lift us and bring us joy, though some will use their gifts to harm themselves and others. Through Jesus Christ, God provides the cure for all that pain in His relentless and infinitely costly efforts to bring us as much joy as we will let Him give us.

The universe revealed to us by God and to some degree by modern science is a universe so vast that if we could number the particles of millions of earths like this one, it would not be a beginning of the number of God's creations. Is that poetic language only, or is it an apt

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32. Terryl Givens and Fiona Givens, *The God Who Weeps*.

comparison? In 1830, the size of the cosmos was limited to our galaxy, for other galaxies had not yet been discovered and recognized. Could Enoch's statement make any sense if taken literally for the Milky Way? "The Milky Way contains between 200 and 400 billion stars and at least 100 billion planets" according to Wikipedia's summary.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the sand on earth's beaches gives us vastly more particles than that.<sup>34</sup> Enoch's statement, if anything but extreme hyperbole, hints at a universe teeming with billions or trillions of galaxies.

The current estimate of the number of stars in the universe, based solely on the galaxies that we can observe or detect (the "observable universe,"<sup>35</sup> which may not even be a "beginning" to the number out there), can be only roughly estimated, but a relatively low and early estimate put it at about 70 sextillion,<sup>36</sup> or about 10 times the number of grains of sand on earth,<sup>37</sup> while a more recent estimate puts it closer to 1 septillion (1 followed by 24 zeroes, or a trillion trillion),<sup>38</sup> over a hundred times more than the number of grains of sand on the earth. Though it may be hyperbole, Enoch's statement, inappropriate for what was knowable in Joseph's day, rings truer now. Joseph Smith's universe — Enoch's and Moses's universe — is vast, and God's endless works have a scope in space and time far beyond human comprehension. The speculative possibility of multiple universes not directly connected to ours further intensifies the possible magnitude of the expanse of what may exist.

In the Book of Moses, we learn not only that there are numberless worlds (Moses 1:27–29, 33, 35) with associated heavens (Moses 1:36–38; are the "heavens" of the various earths the local solar systems associated

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33. "Milky Way," *Wikipedia*, last edited March 16, 2018, 19:06, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milky\\_Way](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milky_Way).

34. Hellings, "Joseph Smith and Modern Cosmology."

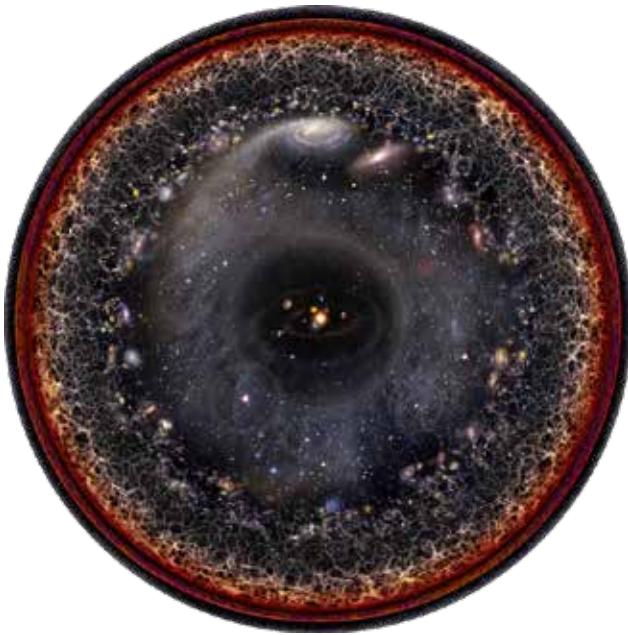
35. "Observable Universe," *Wikipedia*, last edited March 17, 2018, 14:40, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Observable\\_universe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Observable_universe).

36. "Star survey reaches 70 sextillion," *CNN.com*, July 23, 2003, <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/TECH/space/07/22/stars.survey/>. For \$1 = body/analysis of methods, rules, or postulates? on the calculation of the number of grains of sand used in this comparison, see "Are there more stars in the universe than grains of sand on Earth?," *ABC Science*, Aug. 19, 2015, <http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2015/08/19/4293562.htm>.

37. Foranestimatewhichmaketherationofstarstograinsofsandmuchgreater, see Robert Krulwich, "Which Is Greater, The Number Of Sand Grains On Earth Or Stars In The Sky?," NPR.org, Sept. 17, 2012, <https://www.npr.org/sections/krulwich/2012/09/17/161096233/which-is-greater-the-number-of-sand-grains-on-earth-or-stars-in-the-sky>.

38. Elizabeth Howell, "How Many Stars Are In The Universe?," *Space.com*, May 17, 2017, <https://www.space.com/26078-how-many-stars-are-there.html>.

with each of the worlds?), but also that many earths and their heavens have already passed away (Moses 1:38). The statement about worlds having passed away is of interest, for it is surprisingly logical in light of modern science, in which we know that stars and their systems have risen and fallen many times over the billions of years since the apparent beginning of our universe. While the idea of many other worlds was already discussed in Joseph's day,<sup>39</sup> its dynamic and highly perishable state might not have been widely appreciated, with suns and planets dying frequently, their matter recycled in vast cosmic cycles of stellar and planetary death and rebirth.



An artist's logarithmic scale conception of the observable universe with the Solar System at the center, inner and outer planets, Kuiper belt, Oort cloud, Alpha Centauri, Perseus Arm, Milky Way galaxy, Andromeda galaxy, nearby galaxies, Cosmic Web, Cosmic microwave radiation and the Big Bang's invisible plasma on the edge.<sup>40</sup> This is certainly not the way Abraham understood the cosmos, but is an elegant way of visualizing the different structures of our cosmos in a somewhat related geocentric formulation.

39. See the discussion of several sources in Givens, "Eternalism" in *Wrestling the Angel*.

40. Pablo Carlos Budassi, *Observable universe logarithmic illustration*, 2014, Wikipedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Observable\\_universe\\_logarithmic\\_illustration.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Observable_universe_logarithmic_illustration.png). A high resolution version is available at <https://selfy.com/p/9cCF/>.

Interestingly, Hugh Nibley identified the existence of other worlds (including the prior passing away of other worlds) as one of several common themes found in the Book of Moses and the Enoch literature from a variety of ancient documents, mostly ones that simply were not available for Joseph Smith to have studied.<sup>41</sup> The parallels are numerous and suggest at least that ancient traditions about Enoch link him to cosmological issues. Likewise, numerous ancient sources now also link Abraham to ancient cosmology, including the notion that he discussed astronomy with Pharaoh. One of these sources, Josephus, mentions this briefly and theoretically could have been known to Joseph Smith, but nearly all the remaining body of intriguing evidence we have today related to Abraham and astronomy was not even theoretically available to Joseph. The relevant passage in Josephus merely says that Abraham said:

If [said he] these bodies had power of their own, they would certainly take care of their own regular motions; but since they do not preserve such regularity, they make it plain, that in so far as they co-operate to our advantage, they do it not of their own abilities, but as they are subservient to Him that commands them, to whom alone we ought justly to offer our honor and thanksgiving.<sup>42</sup>

### **Sources: God's Motivation for the Creation and Joseph's Ideas on Cosmology**

Other scholars and theologians, though certainly not all and perhaps far from a majority, had proposed that other worlds exist. However, what was taught about God's *motivation* for the creation of many other planets? Joseph's vision is of a God endlessly motivated by the desire

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41. Hugh W. Nibley, "A Strange Thing in the Land," *Ensign*, April 1977, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1977/04/a-strange-thing-in-the-land-the-return-of-the-book-of-enoch-part-11?lang=eng>. Nibley cites the Zohar (Zohar iii: 61a, b, Brody) for the creation and destruction of other worlds before this one; bin Gorion (1:286) for the creation and destruction of seven imperfect worlds before this one and for the existence of 18,000 other worlds known only to God (1:59); and Migne, Book of Adam, in *Dict. Apoc.* (1:225) again for the existence of 18,000 other worlds. Nibley sees the same concepts of other worlds in *Secrets of Enoch* 11 (Charles, *Apoc. & Pseud.* 2:436).

42. Josephus 1.7.1, trans. William Whiston, quoted in John Gee, *An Introduction to the Book of Abraham* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, and Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2017), 159. This was the translation available to Joseph Smith.

to bring His children into His presence as mature, free agents capable of becoming more like Him. This is His work, glory, and passion, and Joseph Smith's universe and cosmology are grounded in this truth. God's endless creation ultimately is the work of a loving Parent raising children, not an overseer of inherently loathsome, "wholly other" creatures of no vital importance to Him but somehow given some matter and energy to toy with to keep them occupied. Here we may struggle to find plausible environmental sources for the sweeping scope of Joseph Smith's cosmology in which the weeping God yearns to bring His sons and daughters home, "without compulsory means" (D&C 121:46), in an endless work that spans space and time, eternally motivated by love for us, His children.

In Arthur Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*,<sup>43</sup> we are reminded that a still important religious concept is the notion that a perfect God does not need man or any of His creations for His perfection and glory. It is a concept drawn from Platonism that is directly antagonistic to the work and the glory of God taught in Moses 1:39. Lovejoy explains that in this Platonic paradigm that dominated Western thought for over 2,000 years (though it was "still potent" in the Twentieth Century when he wrote),

The fullness of good is attained once for all in God; and "the creatures" add nothing to it. They have from the divine point of view no value; if they were not, the universe would be none the worse. ... [It is in this implicit aspect of Platonic] doctrine that we must recognize the primary source of that endlessly repeated theorem of the philosophical theologians that God has no need of a world and is indifferent to it and all that goes on it. This implication of the Platonic Idea of the Good speedily became explicit in the theology of Aristotle. ... It is — to cite by way of anticipation only one or two out of a thousand later examples — this Platonic as well as Aristotelian strain that Jonathan Edwards may be heard echoing in Colonial America, when he declares: "No notion of God's last end in creation of the world is agreeable to reason which would imply or infer any indigence, insufficiency and mutability in God or any dependence of the Creator on the creature, for any part of his perfection or happiness. ..." This eternally serene and impassible Absolute is, manifestly, somewhat difficult to recognize

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43. Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Taylor & Francis, London, 2017), <https://books.google.com.ph/books?id=nRwuDwAAQBAJ>

in the sadistic deity of the sermon on “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”; but Edwards did not differ from most of the great theologians in having many Gods under one name.<sup>44</sup>

If God has no need of a world, he certainly has no need of many worlds peopled with the same kind of offensive, miserable sinners we have here. But in spite of Jonathan Edwards and others failing to recognize that God's work and glory might involve redemptive work on other worlds, such concepts had been proposed in Joseph Smith's day, as noted above. Joseph could have known of such discussions and debates, but that does not provide plausible source material for the cohesive and satisfying cosmological framework of Joseph Smith's revelations, contrary to allegations of critics.<sup>45</sup>

### **Novel Cosmology or a Mere Product of Joseph's Environment?**

Regarding the claims of critics, a notable example is the so-called “CES Letter” which offers a supposedly well-informed argument on this point, claiming that Joseph merely drew upon a book readily available in his day for the cosmology in the Book of Abraham.<sup>46</sup> The book in question is by Thomas Dick, *The Philosophy of a Future State*.<sup>47</sup> Like a number of other evangelical voices of his day, Dick argues for the Christian faith using arguments drawn from science and metaphysics and along the way speculates frequently about life on multiple worlds. This certainly wasn't a novel concept introduced by Joseph Smith. But the CES Letter makes more serious charges of derivation. It claims Joseph owned a copy (at least by 1844, he did have one he donated to the Nauvoo Library), that

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44. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, 43–44. Note: Hugh Nibley in “A Strange Thing in the Land”, paraphrases or misquotes Edwards as cited by Lovejoy to the effect that since “the fullness of good is attained once for all in God ... God has no need of a world and is indifferent to it and all that goes on in it.” It is a plausible paraphrase, but appears to be presented as a quote.

45. Considering our modern Chinese authors again, one can see a plurality of sources and paradigms at play in their thinking and writing. In Jiang Bo's trilogy, for example, while it is true to the materialism and atheistic scientific framework of modern Chinese socialism, it also draws upon a variety of other paradigms such as reincarnation (the regeneration of bodies for humans), symbols of gods such as the dancing Shiva, a glowing saint sacrificing his AI life, spirit-body dualism (at least for AI beings), and mysterious, godlike overseers of humanity.

46. “Book of Abraham,” *CES Letter Foundation*, accessed Feb. 20, 2018, <https://cesletter.org/debunking-fairmormon/book-of-abraham.html>.

47. Thomas Dick, *The Philosophy of a Future State* (E. and G. Merriam, Brookfield, MA, 1830), [https://archive.org/details/philosophyoffutu00dick\\_0](https://archive.org/details/philosophyoffutu00dick_0).

Oliver Cowdery quoted from it in 1836 (December 1836 actually, over six years after Joseph had emphasized the plurality of worlds concept in the Book of Moses – a point not acknowledged in the CES Letter’s treatment of the plurality of worlds concept), and, more importantly, that it might be the source for the idea that matter is eternal and indestructible and for the rejection of creation *ex nihilo*.

Michael Ash in *Bamboozled by the CES Letter*<sup>48</sup> treats this argument, but only briefly. More recently, a more thorough response to this issue was provided by Rick Moser on the *Conflict of Justice* blog.<sup>49</sup> The author is blunt about the CES Letter’s reliance on Klaus Hansen’s claim that Thomas Dick’s book teaches eternal, indestructible matter and rejects creation *ex nihilo*:

False. This is 100% incorrect. Take a look at *Philosophy of a Future State*. It teaches the *creatio ex nihilo* doctrine, in contradiction with the Book of Abraham.

“None but that Eternal Mind which counts the number of stars, which **called them from nothing, into existence**, and arranged them in the respective stations they occupy, and whose eyes run to and fro through the unlimited extent of creation, can form a clear and comprehensive conception of the number, the order, and the economy of this vast portion of the system of nature.

“What successive creations have taken place since the first **material world was launched into existence** by the Omnipotent Creator? What new worlds and beings are still **emerging into existence from the voids of space?**”

It teaches that laws and truth are eternal and that resurrection will be a physical restoration, yes, but there is nothing about Joseph Smith’s and Abraham’s doctrine that matter is eternal.<sup>50</sup> [*emphasis in original*]

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48. Michael Ash, *Bamboozled by the CES Letter* (paper, self-published in electronic format by the author, 2015), <https://www.fairmormon.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Bamboozled-by-the-CES-Letter-Final1.pdf>.

49. Rick Moser, “Did Joseph Smith Get The Book of Abraham Cosmology From *Philosophy of a Future State*?” *Conflict of Justice* (blog), Dec. 30, 2017; <http://www.conflictjustice.com/joseph-smith-book-of-abraham-cosmology-philosophy-of-a-future-state/>.

50. Ibid.



In another passage not mentioned by Moser, Dick mentions “the different periods in duration at which the various habitable globes *emerged from nothing* into existence” [*emphasis added*].<sup>51</sup> Claiming that Dick shared Joseph's views on the Creation seems to lack support.

Terryl Givens, however, sees a denial of creation *ex nihilo* in an earlier work by Thomas Dick:

In 1826, [Thomas Dick] published his *Christian Philosopher*, which attempted to synthesize theology with contemporary science. He expressly challenged the earth's creation *ex nihilo*, insisting that Moses's “sole intention” was to detail the process of creation “from the chaotic materials which previously existed.”<sup>52</sup>

The chaotic materials that already existed, however, are those mentioned in the opening verse of Genesis, telling us that the “earth was without form, and void; and darkness upon the face of the deep,” indicating that the earth was not instantly ready in its fully created state in the same instant that the water and other matter of the earth came into existence. These materials, he said, may have existed for a year or many years before the completion of the creation story. It is not creation *ex nihilo* that Dick disputes, but the *time* between the *ex nihilo* creation of matter and the final arrangement of that matter in Genesis 1 and 2:

For Moses no where affirms, that the *materials* or *substance* of the earth were created, or brought from nothing into existence, *at the period* when his history commences.<sup>53</sup> [*emphasis in original*]

It is a mistake into which too many have been apt to fall, to suppose, that Moses begins his history *at the period* when the first portions of material existence were created out of nothing.<sup>54</sup> [*emphasis in original*]

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51. Dick, *The Philosophy of a Future State*, 228.

52. Givens, “Eternalism,” in *Wrestling the Angel*. See also Thomas Dick, *The Christian Philosopher; or, The Connection of Science and Philosophy With Religion* (Hartford, CT: Robinson, 1833), 165, <https://archive.org/stream/christianphiloso183300dick#page/164/mode/2up/search/previously+existed>.

53. Dick, *The Christian Philosopher*, 164, <https://archive.org/stream/christianphiloso183300dick#page/164/mode/2up/>.

54. *Ibid.*, 165.

On the same page just cited and immediately following the passage mentioned by Givens, Dick goes on to affirm that the opening verse of Genesis declares that it is God who called all matter into existence, but there is no need to assume it happened all at once or all without a 6,000 year time period.<sup>55</sup> Thus, while Dick in *The Christian Philosopher* does not teach that God created the earth in Adam-ready form in an instant with the rest of the universe, he still states that matter was called into being by God out of nothing. Creation *ex nihilo* of matter followed by geologic time scales for further development — a possibility raised by Dick — is still creation *ex nihilo*. Finally, to remove any doubt, Dick later asserts, “In *Creation*, God brought the universe out of nothing, and arranged all its provinces and inhabitants into due order.”<sup>56</sup> There is no conflict between this slightly earlier work and *The Philosophy of a Future State* on this matter.

While Dick does not teach Joseph’s denial of creation *ex nihilo*, in a lengthy footnote he does claim that angels must be material and corporeal though invisible and made from “a finer mould” than mankind.”<sup>57</sup> This could seem to echo Joseph’s statement about the “finer” nature of spirit matter (D&C 131:7). On the other hand, in distinguishing angels from “immaterial substances” and “mind” in that footnote, Dick does not deny the existence of immaterial matter.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, Dick views the soul as immaterial and sees “intelligences” as constantly coming into existence rather than having some eternal aspect:

We are, therefore, necessarily led to the following conclusion: “That, when the human body is dissolved, the **immaterial principle by which it was animated**, continues to think and act, either in a state of separation from all body, or in some material vehicle to which it is intimately united, and which goes off with it at death; or else, that it is preserved by the Father of spirits for the purpose of animating a body in some future state.” **The soul** contains no principle of dissolution within itself, since it **is an immaterial un compounded substance**. . . . And the Creator is under no necessity to annihilate the soul for want of power to support its faculties, for want of objects on which to exercise them, or for want of space to contain **the**

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55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., 302.

57. Ibid., 224–5n.

58. Ibid., 224.

**innumerable intelligences that are incessantly emerging into existence. ...**<sup>59</sup> [*emphasis added*]

Moser points out that seemingly important parallels are shown to have more ancient sources, such as the Bible itself. For example, the notion of innumerable stars, apart from being in other modern works, is found in the Bible in Hebrews 11:12. Further related statements from the CES Letter are shown to be misquotes or serious blunders, such as claiming that Dick's book and the Book of Abraham teach a universe that revolves around the throne of God (wrong in both cases).<sup>60</sup>

Of course, other modern and fairly ancient sources can be found that reject creation *ex nihilo*, and thus pre-existing matter or maybe even eternal matter will be implicitly if not explicitly taught elsewhere. But cherry-picking lone concepts does not create the coherent and satisfying, even breathtaking (for some of us) framework of concepts that arise from Joseph Smith's revelations. Why does Joseph Smith ignore or reject so much of Dick's teachings if that were an influential book for him? If the case for borrowing is so compelling, why must the "CES Letter" stretch it past the breaking point with assertions that don't bear scrutiny?

Dick has some interesting statements about eternity and the opportunity for mankind to learn much and enjoy much during immortality from the wonders of the cosmos. But he obviously did not supply a key element of Joseph Smith's cosmology and theology: that God's work and his glory in His endless creative work is to bring us into His presence, for we are His children, co-eternal in some way with Him. His glory and His joy grows as we grow and accept the infinite grace He offers. In contrast, Dick writes:

The Creator stands in no need of innumerable assemblages of worlds and of inferior ranks of intelligences, in order to secure or to augment his felicity. Innumerable ages before the universe was created, he existed alone, independent of every other being, and infinitely happy in the contemplation of his own eternal excellencies. No other reason, therefore, can be assigned for the production of the universe, but the gratification of his rational offspring, and that he might give

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59. Ibid., 104–105. See also 187.

60. Moser, "Did Joseph Smith Get The Book of Abraham Cosmology From *Philosophy of a Future State*?"

a display of the infinite glories of his nature to innumerable orders of intelligent creatures.<sup>61</sup>

Platonic idealism is at the heart of Dick's framework and also guides Jonathan Edwards, another source frequently cited as an influence on Joseph Smith, but Platonic thought is far from the revelatory and revolutionary framework of Joseph Smith. Such thinking is consistent with much of religious thought in Joseph's day but is hardly a plausible source for the cosmology of the Book of Abraham and the restored Gospel brought through Joseph Smith.

Some scholars and theologians had proposed that other inhabited worlds exist. However, what was taught about God's motivation for the creation of many other planets? Those who recognized from science that other planets probably exist may have proffered reasons such as saving souls [so they could endlessly contemplate God or praise Him] or, as Dick suggested, allowing immortals to learn about the wonders of the cosmos. But if God is perfectly happy without us, why bother?

I have no trouble with language from Joseph's environment, such as the widely used term "intelligences" as a term to describe intelligent life or spirit beings, influencing his use of language to express revealed concepts. I have no problem with terminology and even core concepts from others having influenced his thinking, his choice of words, his inquiries and interests. But for those who are willing to exercise a modicum of faith, there is something much more interesting going on in Joseph's revelations than just trying to generate revenue with some flashy Egyptian relics or bewilder awed believers with fabricated revelations. There is a cohesiveness and richness in his cosmological revelations from the Book of Mormon to the D&C and the Books of Abraham and Moses that answer deep questions in satisfying ways and continue to be worthy topics to contemplate in light of expanding scientific knowledge. Simple borrowing from his environment, even if he had been among the *literati* of his day, lacks explanatory power for what we have, just as popular concepts of God drawn from Platonic philosophy or other traditions fail to explain the source of God's motivation to create so much for so long.

### **The Dark Forest Theory vs. SETI in Light of Joseph Smith**

The "Search for Extra-terrestrial Intelligent Life," or SETI, began in earnest around 1959 and has been an area of ongoing interest and

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61. Dick, *The Philosophy of a Future State*, 62.

disappointment among scientists and others ever since.<sup>62</sup> These efforts include listening for signs of alien broadcasts or activity<sup>63</sup> as well as “Active SETI,” in which we make broadcasts hoping to reach intelligent life and later receive a response.<sup>64</sup> From an academic perspective, Liu Cixin makes an important contribution in explaining why human efforts to reach out to extraterrestrial life may be a dangerous thing. If the universe is purely materialistic and not, as Joseph suggested, inhabited by sons and daughters of God who might see us as fellow children of their God, then an alien civilization may well view our presence as a potential threat or as an opportunity for conquest. In a tooth-and-claw universe, to assume that other intelligent beings out there will naturally be friendly may indeed be one of humanity's most deadly mistakes, not to mention a tragic waste of taxpayer revenues.

In a postscript for *The Three Body Problem*, Liu shared this thought:

There's a strange contradiction revealed by the naïveté and kindness demonstrated by humanity when faced with the universe: On Earth, humankind can step onto another continent, and without a thought, destroy the kindred civilizations found there through warfare and disease. But when they gaze up at the stars, they turn sentimental and believe that if extraterrestrial intelligences exist, they must be civilizations bound by universal, noble, moral constraints, as if cherishing and loving different forms of life are parts of a self-evident universal code of conduct.

I think it should be precisely the opposite: Let's turn the kindness we show toward the stars to members of the human race on Earth and build up the trust and understanding between the different peoples and civilizations that make up humanity. But for the universe outside the solar system, we should be ever vigilant, and be ready to attribute the worst of intentions to any

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62. Steve Garber, “SETI: The Search for ExtraTerrestrial Intelligence,” NASA History Program Office, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA.gov, Sept. 29, 2014, <https://history.nasa.gov/seti.html>.

63. “Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence,” *Wikipedia*, last edited April 9, 2018, 23:30, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search\\_for\\_extraterrestrial\\_intelligence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_for_extraterrestrial_intelligence).

64. “Active SETI,” *Wikipedia*, last edited March 10, 2018, 16:16, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Active\\_SETI](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Active_SETI).

Others that might exist in space. For a fragile civilization like ours, this is without a doubt the most responsible path.<sup>65</sup>

Liu's concern for his fellow humans is commendable — indeed, both Liu and Jiang celebrate heroes who strive to do good for others in spite of the chaos and darkness they face. Latter-day Saints would heartily agree that we should increase the kindness we show toward others here on earth, but Liu is most noted for his observation regarding what we might face from other beings in our galaxy. Since we humans are often brutal toward strangers in the new lands we discover and conquer, why should we expect less from other intelligent beings who might come here one day from distant stars?

Looking at Joseph Smith's universe, we learn of endless inhabited planets inhabited by God's children. That alone does not mean we should put our guard down, for mortal worlds elsewhere at any time may be peopled by destructive, warlike beings similar to us. One interesting aspect of Joseph Smith's revelations, however, is the insight that our planet is unusually wicked, at least based on the assessment that the Lord gave to Enoch — a dreadful statement for our home but relatively speaking perhaps a hopeful indication about the civility of our interstellar neighbors:

Wherefore, I can stretch forth mine hands and hold all the creations which I have made; and mine eye can pierce them also, and **among all the workmanship of mine hands there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren.** (Moses 7:36, emphasis added.)

If so, there is reasonable hope that they will recognize that other intelligent beings are also God's children and thus might be the kind of friendly and perhaps wiser beings that many humans hope to find by reaching out to the stars.

Robert Paul quotes a poem Joseph Smith published in 1843, which elaborates on the concept of plural worlds:

And I heard a great voice bearing record from Heav'n,  
He's the Savior, and only Begotten of God —  
By him, of him, and through him, the worlds were all made,  
Even all that career in the heavens so broad.

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65. Liu Cixin, "Author's Postscript" in *The Three Body Problem (Remembrance of Earth's Past, Book 1)*, trans. Ken Liu (New York: Tor Books, 2014), 395.

Whose inhabitants, too, from the first to the last,  
 And sav'd by the very same Saviour of ours;  
 And, of course, are begotten God's daughters and sons,  
 By the very same truths, and the very same pow'rs.<sup>66</sup>

The universal or even galactic scale of the Atonement of Jesus Christ raises numerous puzzles when one considers other planets that may be remote not only in space but also in time, as in the distant past. Such questions can be resolved and may ultimately reflect our incomplete knowledge of God's work of salvation elsewhere. We need additional information to understand the concept, and it may also be that what was meant in the poem is still vastly incomplete if we wish to make scientific applications. But if Christ created the worlds (under direction of the Father), as taught in Colossians 1:15-16 and Hebrews 1:2, it is reasonable that He should also save them. The Atonement of Christ may be powerful enough not only to reach across time to bring salvation to residents of earth who were temporally separated from the day of Christ but also may reach across the expanse of the cosmos to rescue those removed by great stretches of space.

Such concepts help us to conclude that reaching out to other planets, if they can be reached and heard, poses little risk of bringing destruction upon the earth, and if communication could be established, it would most likely be of much benefit. Of course, finding other planets peopled by humans like us, also aware of Christ and adhering to a recognizable form of Christianity, would provide such compelling evidence about the reality of Christ and the truthfulness of His Gospel that it would seem to jeopardize the need for faith. Such evidence would seem contrary to God's *modus operandi* at this time, so we need not be surprised if the cosmos seem silent in response to our radio signals.

### Necessarily Benign?

Wonderfully, this vast cosmos we live in is benign. It is orchestrated by an all-wise, omniscient being whose relationship to us is perhaps best described by His preferred title of Father, a loving Father characterized by mercy, justice, and compassion. That does not mean that His universe is free of bleak destruction and dark tragedy. The story of the Nephites in the Book of Mormon is one of massive destruction and loss, but that text also offers eternal hope through the power of Christ. Mortality is a time of

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66. *Times and Seasons* 4 (February 1843): 82-85 quoted in Paul, "Joseph Smith and the Plurality of Worlds Idea," 28.

testing that can abound in opposition and affliction but is part of a grand plan to bless us and help us have endless growth, where tears can be wiped away, the ravages of illness and death ultimately overcome, and eternal joy made possible in the presence of God. Though our sojourn in mortality may be one of pain and trials, the Creator of our universe is our Heavenly Father, who loves us and seeks to redeem us if we will let Him. Death and sin can be conquered, and those who wish to accept His grace can have endless joy in His presence, enjoying all the beauty and wonders that He has. It is a universe of ultimate light and hope in spite of current darkness.

We should consider that things could have been different. We know there are other beings who would have gladly taken God's place if they could to rule as cosmic despots. The war in heaven described in the Book of Moses (Moses 4:1–4) shows how persuasive and influential the adversary was. A universe reigned by or even merely left in neglect by such a being would be a fearsome thing, perhaps impossible to imagine. And even in this benign universe, where humans yield to the adversary's influence, it is tooth and claw, blood and horror, with darkness seemingly everywhere. Yet the chains of darkness will be cast off and every tear wiped away by the Savior (Isaiah 25:8), the grand force for good in God's victory over chaos in the cosmos, a battle and victory enacted in ancient as well as modern rituals.

### **A Physical God's Governance of the Cosmos and the Problem(s) with Kolob**

One of the beautiful cosmological revelations given through Joseph Smith is found in D&C 88, which gives some information about God's governance of the cosmos that can be compared with teachings in the Book of Abraham as well:

6 He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth;

7 Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made.

8 As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made;

9 As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made;



10 And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand.

11 And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;

12 Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space —

13 The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.

The role of God and light in “quickenings” our understanding raises interesting questions about what thought is and what intelligence is, with many areas for contemplation and research arising as we contemplate the AI beings of modern Chinese literature.

This section later speaks about the endless extent of order, with kingdoms filling all of space, and each kingdom having its own laws

36 All kingdoms have a law given;

37 And there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or a lesser kingdom.

38 And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions ...

42 And again, verily I say unto you, [God] hath given a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons;

43 And their courses are fixed, even the courses of the heavens and the earth, which comprehend the earth and all the planets.

44 And they give light to each other in their times and in their seasons, in their minutes, in their hours, in their days, in their weeks, in their months, in their years — all these are one year with God, but not with man.

45 The earth rolls upon her wings, and the sun giveth his light by day, and the moon giveth her light by night, and the stars

also give their light, as they roll upon their wings in their glory, in the midst of the power of God ...

47 Behold, all these are kingdoms, and any man who hath seen any or the least of these hath seen God moving in his majesty and power.

To me, this is a remarkably scientific statement, in part because of the great significance of scale in the physics and engineering, with different principles applying and dominating, depending on what scope of space is under consideration. For example, the rules that allow protons to be joined inside the nucleus of an atom have little relationship to the laws that keep planets in orbit around a star or those that expand the galaxies in spite of their gravitational attraction. I will also add that those who have explored the kingdoms of, say, a coral reef and witnessed the incredible complexity among organisms and ecosystems ranging across different scales will also find meaning in the above passage of Section 88. It is a profound and beautifully scientific statement. Of course, if one insists, it can undoubtedly be argued that this, too, was simply extracted from any number of remotely related writings from Joseph's environment.

This physical cosmos with its kingdoms and order, governed by God via "light," a God who can reach out and see and hold all His creations, is a cosmos crafted and managed by a tangible Being. Joseph Smith's universe must be understood alongside the nature and the real, physical characteristics of that Being who created it and steadily governs it through all its endless change.

The tangible nature of God in a corporeal body has an important cosmological implication: it means that God must be somewhere physically, though His influence of course can permeate the cosmos. A tangible God physically connected to the cosmos is one of the wonderful elements of original Christianity and the Restoration and dispels centuries of confusion from misguided philosophers and clerics about our relationship to God. He is not wholly other but, like us, has a Spirit and a material body, though His is perfect and coupled with eternal glory. The existence of a God with a body should be self-evident from the crystal clear depiction of the Resurrection of Christ, who shows His body, urges His disciples to touch His hands and His feet, and even drives the point home later by eating before His Apostles (John 20–21). These teachings make Joseph Smith's universe all the more beautiful and hopeful, for that sublime Being who created it is not abstract, unconnected to us and unknowable, but is our parent, like us in many

ways, made of similar stuff and is of the same species as we are, for He is our Father. Indeed, we are descended from heavenly Parents.

Such a real, tangible, physical God who, as Christ so plainly demonstrated, can be seen and even touched, involves details that make the philosophers cringe, such as the possibility of having a physical location and theoretically perhaps even an actual throne with an actual location, though He has the infinite ability to see and interact with all His creations. In the cosmology of the Book of Abraham, God is said to “reside” somewhere near a great star Kolob. For those steeped in Neoplatonism or atheism, the idea of a God who is physically somewhere is unspeakably ridiculous, and many Bible believers seem unable to recognize how deeply such a concept pervades the Bible. But in the views of many ancient Jews and Christians, this concept was entirely natural.

Those mocking Mormonism often cite Kolob, typically claiming we believe God is an extraterrestrial from a planet of that name. “Extraterrestrial” is intended to create an emotional response. Will they then insist that heaven and its hosts are limited to our planet only? But the Book of Abraham does not say Kolob is a planet (though “planet” is used in parts of the Book of Abraham to refer to celestial bodies such as stars). It is a star near some place of residence for God, whatever that means, and it is a governing star. Even when that is recognized, the critics often seriously misread the text in their zeal to condemn it. Fawn Brodie and the CES Letter claim the Book of Abraham borrows Thomas Dick’s teaching that the universe revolves around God’s throne in addition to the above-mentioned claim that Dick is the source for Joseph’s plurality of worlds. Brodie (the ultimate source behind the CES Letter’s argument here) writes:

Like the philosophic novelist who creates a character greater than himself to voice the distillate of his own speculations, Joseph created Abraham an eminent astronomer who penetrates all the mysteries of the universe. Abraham relates that there is one star, Kolob, lying near the throne of God, which is greater than all the rest. One revolution of Kolob takes a thousand years, and from this revolution God Himself reckons time. Kolob and countless lesser stars are peopled by **spirits that are eternal as matter** itself. These spirits are not cast in the same mold, but differ among themselves in the quality of intelligence as the stars differ in magnitude. **These concepts**, which developed peculiar ramifications in Joseph’s later teachings, **came directly from Dick**, who had speculated that the stars were peopled by “various orders of intelligences”

and these intelligences were “*progressive beings*” [Dick, 230] in various stages of evolution toward perfection.<sup>67</sup> [*emphasis in bold added, italics in original*]

The attached footnote states: “Compare the Book of Abraham with Dick ... pp. 101, 230, 241, 249. Dick held that in all probability, ‘the systems of the universe revolve around a common center ... the throne of God.’”

Brodie has deftly adapted Dick’s teachings to her purpose. Dick contemplates immortal beings doing something more than merely praising and contemplating God but not much more. In their endless contemplation and study of God’s vast creation, they will progress (but never achieve perfection) *in their knowledge of astronomy, philosophy, and history and their admiration of God*.<sup>68</sup> But that’s little more than fleshing out the traditional view of endless contemplation of God and is not the kind of progress Joseph envisioned for those in the divine family of God. The God that intelligent immortals will contemplate in Dick’s system is not One they can see or touch, for Dick adheres to Platonic ideals. His God is an utterly incomprehensible Being unlimited in space who obviously does not have a specific place of residence or actual throne.<sup>69</sup> “The Deity, being a spiritual, uncompounded substance, having no visible form, nor sensible quantities, ‘inhabiting eternity,’ and filling immensity with his presence — his essential glory cannot form an object for the direct contemplation of any finite intelligence.”<sup>70</sup> This deity is furthermore unknowable except by studying His works, for “we have no sensible measures of the attributes of God, but those which are derived from the number and extent of his actual operations.”<sup>71</sup>

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67. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 172.

68. Dick, *The Philosophy of a Future State*, 174–75, where astronomical and scientific knowledge is emphasized. Regarding “history and philosophy,” see 256: “From what has been now detailed respecting the numerous and august objects that may be presented to the contemplation of celestial intelligences, we may conclude, that the chief subjects of study in the heavenly world will be *History* and *Philosophy*. Under the department of history, may be comprehended all the details which will be exhibited to them respecting the origin, progress, and consummation of the redemption of man, and the information they may receive respecting the natural and moral scenery, and the prominent providential occurrences and arrangements of other worlds.” This brand of “history” thus overlaps with astronomy.

69. *Ibid.*, 255.

70. *Ibid.*, 209.

71. *Ibid.*, 255.

The differences in intelligences Brodie mentions are not based on any reference in Dick to premortal humans, but appear limited to non-humans (angels, cherubim, seraphim, etc.) and humans during and after their mortal existence. Dick notes that there must necessarily be differences in intellect and in levels of intellectual progress of these various intelligent beings during their continuing contemplation and study throughout eternity.<sup>72</sup> But this seems irrelevant to the Book of Abraham. Further, Brodie's statement about "spirits being eternal as matter itself" is rather troubling, given Dick's clear acceptance of creation *ex nihilo* and his explicit declaration that the spirits/intelligences of the universe are all created beings. They may now be immortal, but the concept of immortal created souls is modern Christianity 101 and is nothing unique to Dick, nor does it explain Joseph's more unique views on the eternal nature of intelligence and matter.

To claim a parallel between the Book of Abraham's teachings on Kolob and Dick's teachings about the centrality of his abstract throne of God is particularly egregious. The quotation Brodie gives about the throne occurs in a section of Dick's book entitled, "The Throne of God," where Dick speculates that if the term "throne of God" is not merely metaphorical, it might refer to the scientific supposition that the universe may have a common center of rotation, and if so, perhaps that center could reflect God's glory in a way fitting the term "throne of God" as used in the Bible.<sup>73</sup> But in no way does Dick suggest there is a literal throne or that God has a physical body capable of sitting or even being anywhere in particular.

For Dick, God's figurative throne is central, and the universe revolves around it. This *contradicts* the Book of Abraham, where the successive orders above the earth are described with the outermost, highest level where we find Kolob. Kolob, near the throne or residence of God, is at the highest, slowest level, governing the other bodies in lower levels, which rotate more quickly. The fixed reference point in this model is "the earth upon which thou standest" (Abraham 3:3, 5–7). Abraham's cosmology appears to be adapted to a *geocentric* model that the Egyptians can comprehend, suitable for the science of his era.<sup>74</sup> It is radically different from Dick's cosmology, and the teachings on the

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72. Ibid., 222–23, 230–31. See also 283 on seraphim.

73. Dick, *The Philosophy of a Future State*, 249–50.

74. Gee, *An Introduction to the Book of Abraham*, 115–19. See also John Gee, William J. Hamblin, and Daniel C. Peterson, "'And I Saw the Stars' – The Book of Abraham and Ancient Geocentric Astronomy," in John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid,

throne of God seem diametrically opposed. In general, the parallels Brodie finds so convincing are weak, not there, or virtually the opposite of what she claims.

### Conclusion

Joseph Smith's universe gives us a hopeful cosmos that is governed by God. There are rules, there is order, there are times and seasons as well as eternal laws like justice and mercy that will affect our eternal, physical reality. We will have various kingdoms of glory that can be ours, with the ultimate goal to be in the presence of God, a God with a real physical presence and a Son who also has the very real physical, resurrected body that other witnesses have seen and handled, both in the Old World and the New, as we can read in the Book of Mormon. He is a God of mercy, tenderness, and love who fills the cosmos with His light and glory, and invites us to come and partake of all that He has. In contrast to the universes of scientists unaware of God's love and mercy, or the universe of theologians unaware of our true relationship with God and His true work and glory, what universe could possibly offer greater hope and light?

Joseph's benign universe fits into a beautiful, rational framework that provides unlimited capacity for the integration of science and religion. It is a framework that can handle dark matter and dark energy, higher dimensions and endless kingdoms and domains in nature, quasars and black holes, the Big Bang and an inflationary universe, and many of the concepts of modern science and science fiction. It would be incompatible with a doomed, decaying universe or one that is contracting and bound for destruction, but science so far gives no evidence of that. The expansion of the universe — apparently driven by a surprising and mysterious force simply called "dark energy," for lack of a better term — is far greater than scientists had expected. The infinite, vibrant, growing universe of Joseph Smith lines up beautifully with modern cosmology. His universe does more than just acknowledge its vastness but explains its purpose and motivation. Others leave unanswered the grand question, "Why bother?" Joseph begins with the crucial explanation and then adds glory, wonder, hope, and brightness to conquer all the darkness of the world's fictitious narratives, scientific or otherwise.

The bitter cosmos of "darkness, everything darkness" frequently envisioned in science fiction, whether Asian or Western, is what we might expect if what we see — or think we see — is all there is, a terribly

misguided notion completely unsupported by science, which not only reveals that what we can see from earth is not only a tiny fraction of the cosmos, and mostly outdated by millions or billions of years by the time we see it, but also recently has revealed that the energy and matter we can see and handle is actually only about 4% of the cosmos, the rest being still mysterious dark matter and dark energy.<sup>75</sup>

The universe of many modern intellectuals and materialists seems to offer no purpose beyond propagating random genes through survival of the fittest among rare blooms of randomly evolved life in a universe without God and without ultimate purpose, a universe of unspeakable beauty and precision design that supposedly arose out of nothing for the clerics or out of nothingness for the scientists. In such a universe, Liu Cixin's dark-forest model from *The Three Body Problem* reigns where life exists, and our biological imperative relative to intelligent life elsewhere might well be to remain hidden in order to survive and to strike first before competitors can strike us, or in other words, to "do unto others swiftly before they do unto you." It is the "iron rule" that, when followed, smashes much of the beauty of the cosmos and fills many of its local villages here on earth with pain and darkness.

May we embrace the vastly brighter Golden Rule instead, a rule not found in Western religions alone but in numerous religions across the world,<sup>76</sup> including the teachings of Confucius: "What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others" and "Since you yourself desire standing then help others achieve it, since you yourself desire success then help others attain it."<sup>77</sup> May we prefer the infinitely bright vision of the cosmos that God has revealed through Joseph Smith, though still incomplete with many mysteries yet to be probed and revealed. It is a novel, coherent, and intellectually stimulating cosmos that demands further contemplation, investigation, and perhaps more of its own science fiction.

Two noteworthy Chinese works, though lacking the eternal perspectives of the Gospel, help us better contemplate the mysteries of

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75. "Universe," *Wikipedia*, last edited April 15, 2018, 17:26, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universe>. See the subsection, "Composition." Also see Lindsay, "Dark Energy, Dark Matter, and the Things of the Spirit," January 21, 2013, *Mormanity* (blog), <http://mormanity.blogspot.com/2013/01/dark-energy-dark-matter-and-things-of.html>.

76. "Golden Rule," *Wikipedia*, last edited April 12, 2018, 20:27, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden\\_Rule](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Rule).

77. Confucius, *Lunyu* 12.2, 6.30 quoted in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Confucius," last revised March 23, 2013, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/confucius/>.

intelligent life and the expanse and majesty of the cosmos. Without the perspectives of the Gospel, that universe can be a dark place that steadily darkens with little room for lasting hope. The added light and knowledge we have in Joseph Smith's revelations change everything.

**Jeffrey Dean Lindsay** and his wife Kendra are residents of Shanghai, China. Jeff has been providing online materials defending the LDS faith for over 20 years, primarily at [JeffLindsay.com](http://JeffLindsay.com). His Mormonity blog (<http://mormonity.blogspot.com>) has been in operation since 2004. He also wrote weekly for Orson Scott Card's Nauvoo Times ([NauvooTimes.com](http://NauvooTimes.com)) from 2012 through 2016. Jeff has a PhD in chemical engineering from BYU and is a registered US patent agent. He serves as Head of Intellectual Property for Asia Pulp and Paper, one of the world's largest paper companies. Formerly, he was associate professor at the Institute of Paper Science and (now the Renewable Bioproducts Institute) at Georgia Tech, then went into R&D at Kimberly-Clark Corporation, eventually becoming corporate patent strategist and senior research fellow. He then spent several years at Innovationedge in Neenah, Wisconsin, helping many companies with innovation and IP strategy. Jeff has been in China for five years, where he works with various APP companies and mills in advancing their intellectual property and innovation. Since 2015, Jeff has been recognized as a leading IP strategist by Intellectual Asset Magazine in their global IAM300 listing based on peer input. He is also lead author of *Conquering Innovation Fatigue* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009). He is active in the chemical engineering community and was recently named a Fellow of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers. Jeff served a mission in the German-speaking Switzerland Zurich Mission and currently serves as counselor in the district presidency of the Shanghai International District. He and his wife Kendra are the parents of four boys and have nine grandchildren.



## DEHUMANIZATION AND PEACE

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Kent P. Jackson

**Abstract:** *Those who follow world events are painfully aware that peace in the Middle East — and particularly in the Holy Land — seems eternally elusive. From a distance we watch events unfold which we are not able to fully comprehend because of that very distance. There are individuals who are burdened with the devastating reality of living with war and perpetual turmoil in the Holy Land. One of those is Sahar Qumsiyeh, a Palestinian Arab Latter-day Saint who grew up in the West Bank near Bethlehem. Her story of how she converted to Mormonism and learned how to find peace in a troubled world is recommended reading for every Latter-day Saint.*

Review of Sahar Qumsiyeh, *Peace for a Palestinian: One Woman's Story of Faith Amidst War in the Holy Land* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018). 176 pp. \$15.99.

Deseret Book is to be congratulated for its recent publication of *Peace for a Palestinian: One Woman's Story of Faith Amidst War in the Holy Land*. The author of this thoughtful and provocative book is Dr. Sahar Qumsiyeh, a Palestinian-Arab Latter-day Saint who was born in Jerusalem and grew up in the West Bank near Bethlehem. She converted to Mormonism while attending BYU in 1996 and has served since then as a Relief Society president, Primary president, district Relief Society president, and full-time missionary in England. She is now a professor of mathematics at BYU-Idaho.

The foreword to the book was written by Dr. Camille Fronk Olson.

The decision to publish the book was likely not an easy one for Deseret Book. It will take many of its readers out of their comfort zones and expose them to a reality they probably never considered before — the Palestinian side of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The book, however, is not about politics. It is a devotional book that explores religious lessons learned through experience. In its fifteen short chapters, the author describes the process by which she learned to find peace despite the harsh realities of the world around her, growing up in a land occupied by the military of another nation and being deprived of the security and peace Latter-day Saints in many countries take for granted.

The narrative is built around events from Qumsiyeh's life. Perhaps surprisingly, several of those events have to do with the difficulties she faced simply to go from her home near Bethlehem to attend church six miles away in Jerusalem. She describes how hard it was to travel through the various Israeli checkpoints and roadblocks to arrive at the BYU Jerusalem Center, where the local LDS branch meets. Often she had to devise imaginative and dangerous ways to make the journey, including climbing over walls, climbing through holes in walls, and sometimes simply praying that soldiers would not see her as she attempted to pass by them without being noticed. On one occasion, soldiers shot at her as she was attempting to make the trip.

Latter-day Saints in many locations, with Mormon friends and meetinghouses nearby, may have a hard time grasping why she was willing to take so many risks to attend church each week. But with no other Latter-day Saints in the town where she lived, with family members hostile to her conversion to Mormonism, and living in the West Bank with its dangers and degradations, attending church was the only time in her week when she could feel safe and at peace. She explains that to take the sacrament and enjoy the comfort that comes through worship with fellow believers, she was willing to face the uncertainty and danger.

A key strategy employed in the abuse of others is *dehumanization* — viewing one's opponents as less than worthy of concern (they're "the enemy") and thus absolving oneself of the need for empathy toward them. It is this strategy that has allowed soldiers, segregationists, terrorists, and extermination-camp operators to claim they were doing good while they were harming or killing other human beings. Qumsiyeh writes of how she and those around her experienced constant dehumanization from the Israelis, who seemed to her to be totally uncaring of the consequences of their actions on those they were hurting. But the important part about her story is that she also writes candidly of how her experiences led her, in turn, to also dehumanize the Israelis.

A turning point in her life came one day while she was receiving harsh treatment at a border crossing. Suddenly and unexpectedly, she came to see an Israeli soldier as a brother who deserved her love and forgiveness.

She had friends and classmates who were killed by Israeli soldiers, and her family members had suffered brutality from them. But to come to see this one soldier as someone deserving of her love and God's love changed her life and opened her heart to a new perspective on the world. People who really believe that all are brothers and sisters are no longer able to dehumanize anyone, and Qumsiyeh was surprised to find herself in that situation. The title *Peace for a Palestinian* doesn't refer to the political peace we hope will come soon to the Holy Land but rather to the inner peace Qumsiyeh found by more fully following the Prince of Peace.

This book will likely stretch the feelings of Latter-day Saint readers who have come to automatically embrace the idea that God endorses the policies of the State of Israel and that the Arabs are impediments to God's will. Sheltered from the kinds of realities Palestinians face daily, it is not difficult for many American Latter-day Saints to turn a blind eye. But the existence of Arab Latter-day Saints who worship in Arab LDS congregations in Bethlehem, Jordan, and Lebanon should teach Mormons everywhere that all are indeed alike unto God.

Many Latter-day Saints who have lived in the Middle East have come to feel the concerns of their fellow Saints who live under the conditions Qumsiyeh describes. Hopefully, anyone who genuinely cares about others can come to a new perspective, as Qumsiyeh did, by taking to heart words like these: "Race makes no difference; color makes no difference; nationality makes no difference. . . . Our Father does not favor one people over another. . . . Both the Jews and the Arabs are children of our Father. They are both children of promise, and as a church we do not take sides. We have love for and an interest in each."<sup>1</sup>

In *Peace for a Palestinian*, Sahar Qumsiyeh candidly tells of her own conversion to those words. A good place for others to start their own conversion process will be to read her book.

**Kent P. Jackson** retired in June 2017 as a professor of religion at Brigham Young University, where he had taught since 1980. He has a BA in Ancient Studies from BYU and MA and PhD degrees in Near Eastern studies from the University of Michigan. His research interests include the Near East and the intersection of Mormonism and the Bible. He has authored or edited Joseph Smith's Commentary on the Bible; Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts; and A Bible Reader's

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1. Howard W. Hunter, "All Are Alike unto God," 1979 *Devotional Speeches of the Year* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), 35–36.

History of the Ancient World. *Professor Jackson is a former associate dean of religion and former associate director of the Brigham Young University Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies.*

## PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND

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Shirley S. Ricks

**Abstract:** *Living in the Holy Land as a Palestinian Latter-day Saint has created unique challenges and perspective for Sahar Qumsiyeh. In order to attend church meetings in Jerusalem from her home near Bethlehem, Sahar was required to travel under unsafe and stressful circumstances for hours through military checkpoints to cover the few miles' distance (as the crow flies). Sahar's story, Peace for a Palestinian, varies dramatically from our own and reminds us that true discipleship requires sacrifice, which in turn brings blessings.*

Personal response to Sahar Qumsiyeh, *Peace for a Palestinian: One Woman's Story of Faith amidst War in the Holy Land* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018). 176 pp. \$15.99.

How do I relate to an individual whose life seems so different from my own? Perhaps first I can note some similarities between Sahar Qumsiyeh and me. We both grew up in loving families with brothers and sisters and enjoyed associating with extended family members. Both of us lived in homes with fruit trees and a swing. Both of us rode bikes and explored our hometowns with friends. We were both raised in Christian families and were taught to have faith and to pray. Our families valued education and teaching, and both of us earned graduate degrees from Brigham Young University.

But there most of the similarities end, and the differences become stark. While I was raised in a peaceful country and claimed US citizenship with its associated freedoms and blessings, Sahar experienced danger: bullets, tear gas, travel restrictions, curfews, and the death of a fellow university student that began a two-year closure of Bethlehem University, which she had been attending.

Our little family spent two years in Jerusalem (1978–80) while my husband studied at the Hebrew University. We lived in East Jerusalem among many Arab neighbors and enjoyed easy access to all parts of the city and country. In fact, our second son was born the night before Christmas under the care of an Arab doctor in an Arab maternity hospital on the road to Ramallah. Eight years later when we spent another year in Jerusalem, this time in association with the Jerusalem Center, our son was baptized on his birthday in the Jordan River. During that year we again lived in a home in East Jerusalem. We always felt safe, even when the First Intifada, or Arab uprising, began in December 1987.

In January 1988, my visiting teaching companion and I made an unforgettable visit to a member sister living with her Arab in-laws in Ramallah.

We rode an Arab bus into the city, which was rather quiet. We saw some Israeli army trucks in the middle of town. As we approached the bus station, the bus had to maneuver around a burning tire and rocks strewn all over the road. We walked through the mess to get to the home of our sister, whose family encouraged us to stay longer until the Israelis were through cleaning up the mess and rounding up people. They reported a news blackout and that they are not receiving any newspapers (although they can hear the slanted Israeli view on the television or radio). They said that frequent beatings are taking place, even for no apparent reason. They just grab someone and start beating them. Those who work in Israeli industries are supporting the strike and not going into work. Everyone feels that things are different this time, and they are not going to stop striking until some sort of a solution is reached. Obviously it hurts them economically, but for them that is not the issue right now. The Israeli soldiers will force the shops to open, but the shopkeepers do not feel obligated to sell things. The blacksmiths in town seem to be donating their time to repairing doors and locks that the soldiers have broken. Schools are closed. It was interesting to hear an Arab viewpoint from this family. By the time we had hot chocolate and stuffed cabbage leaves, we finally excused ourselves and got back to the bus station with no incident. The road was then free of debris, which had been tossed onto the sidewalk.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Shirley S. Ricks, journal, 27 January 1988.

I mention this experience to show that for a few hours one afternoon I was inconvenienced by some of the policies and politics in this land of conflict. But in contrast, Sahar experienced hours of taxi rides (often through fields or orchards), delays, humiliation, and fear every time she tried to go to Jerusalem to attend her church meetings.

Five years ago I first heard Sahar speak at the home of Jim and Joan Stevens, our neighbors. I recorded in my journal what I learned that evening.

I had never heard such a stark retelling of the Palestinian situation in Israel — they have no state. Before 1948, the entire Holy Land was Palestine. With the wars in 1948 and 1967, the Palestinians are left with no rights, no homeland, no homes, etc. The Oslo Agreement in 1995 allowed them to handle some affairs internally — vital statistics, travel permits, etc. But even areas designated as the Palestinian Authority are not a country — and Israel has been careful to keep those areas unconnected and difficult to get to. Sahar came to BYU on one of the ten annual scholarships it grants to Palestinians, and she joined the Church here in 1996. She is currently the district Relief Society president. I had not known about the 25-foot concrete walls the Israelis are building around Palestinian areas. If the Palestinians have to go outside their area to work, it may take three to four hours to get through the checkpoint. My heart is sickened for this great tragedy against some of God's children.<sup>2</sup>

Recently Jim and Joan invited us into their home to hear Sahar speak again. This time this remarkable woman related her journey from fear and hate to peace. She felt compelled by the Savior's admonition to "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44), but it took her a year of prayer and relying on the Savior's healing before she could view the Israeli soldiers as children of God, beloved of Him.

Sahar came to realize that God loves all his children. "I came to understand that life was a test and that the trials and difficulties we face are allowed by a loving Heavenly Father to help us grow and learn to become like Him. It became clear to me that Heavenly Father loves us all, and He loves us perfectly. He didn't hate the Palestinians, like I used

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2. Ibid., 9 April 2012.

to think! Everything started to make sense — especially the reason and power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ” (57).

Years after praying and expecting to die at the age of 17 because of all the tragedy and turmoil around her, Sahar joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Her obedience to the principles of the gospel enabled her to understand her true identity: “My contentment and joy in life are not dependent on chains, walls, fences, or checkpoints. As long as I know that I have a Father in Heaven that loves me and cares about me, all is well. In His sight, I am precious. There is no reason to care about what others think of me. As long as I know that I am walking in His paths and obeying His commandments, I know that my Heavenly Father will be there to lift me and help me” (29).

Ultimately, Sahar teaches us that peace in the Holy Land can come only through Jesus Christ and his atoning sacrifice. She has gained personal peace in her own life and, in my mind, joins significant figures, such as Corrie ten Boom, Viktor Frankl, and Otto Frank, who learned to love and forgive and depend on God. That long-sought-after peace in the Holy Land will come only as individuals accept Christ and his teachings and perhaps will be fully implemented only when He comes again in his glory.

**Shirley S. Ricks** earned three degrees from Brigham Young University — her PhD was in family studies. She put that education to work in raising three daughters and three sons. She received on-the-job training at the BYU Press working as a proofreader during her undergraduate years. She has worked since 1988 as an editor at the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute, and now the Religious Studies Center and has helped produce many books and periodicals. She and her husband, Stephen D. Ricks, enjoy traveling and have attended all the temples in the United States and Canada.



# WHAT IS MORMON TRANSHUMANISM? AND IS IT MORMON?

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Gregory L. Smith

**Abstract:** *Some sources have described Mormonism as the faith most friendly to the intellectual movement known as Transhumanism. This paper reviews an introductory paper by the past President of the Mormon Transhumanist Association. A syllogism that purports to show that Mormonism is compatible with — or even requires — Transhumanism is analyzed. The syllogism’s premises are shown to misunderstand or misrepresent LDS scripture and doctrine. The proffered Transhumanist conception of “human nature” and the perspective offered by LDS scripture are compared and found to be incompatible. Additional discrepancies between the Transhumanist article’s representation of LDS doctrine and the actual teachings of LDS scripture and leaders on doctrinal matters (the Premortal Council in Heaven, the relationship between substance dualism and LDS thought, and the possibility of engineering or controlling spiritual experiences) are examined. The article does not accurately reflect LDS teachings, and thus has not demonstrated that Transhumanism is congenial to LDS scripture or doctrine.<sup>1</sup>*

In conversation recently, I was asked about *Mormon Transhumanism*, a movement about which I knew very little.<sup>2</sup> A longtime obsession with

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1. In this paper, I speak only for myself and not for any group or organization. I’m grateful to three anonymous peer reviewers whose frank (and often blunt) feedback helpfully improved the final paper. They remain unimplicated in any remaining errors and infelicities.

2. My first and only previous encounter with Mormon Transhumanism was an odd, if not incoherent, claim directed at Boyd K. Packer’s teachings about chastity by someone who styled himself a “Mormon Transhumanist.” See Gregory L. Smith, “Shattered Glass: The Traditions of Mormon Same-Sex Marriage Advocates

science-fiction literature made me aware of *Transhumanism*, which urges the alteration of human nature and capability through science and technology, particularly via GNR — Genetics, Nanotechnology, Robotics and information technology. Chief among Transhumanism's goals are the abolition of death from aging,<sup>3</sup> the enhancement and replacement of biological cognition with machine equivalents, and the emergence of the Singularity, a moment of explosive cultural evolution triggered by the development of a self-improving machine- or biological-machine hybrid-intelligence.<sup>4</sup>

My initial reaction was to conclude that this was not a research program any would think could dovetail well with Mormon thought. I was, however, mistaken — at least a few individuals believe such a reconciliation is both possible and desirable.

The Mormon Transhumanist Association (MTA) describes itself as “the world’s largest advocacy network for ethical use of technology and religion to expand human abilities, as outlined in the Transhumanist Declaration.”<sup>5</sup> As of this writing, they report 591 members, of whom 376 have made their names public.<sup>6</sup>

The MTA website includes an article written by the group’s past president, Lincoln Cannon.<sup>7</sup> It is targeted at a general readership, and Cannon’s other work has been cited in the academic literature as

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Encounter Boyd K. Packer,” *Mormon Studies Review* 23/1 (2011): 64n6, <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1462&index=6>.

3. Aubrey de Grey and Michael Rae, *Ending Aging: The Rejuvenation Breakthroughs That Could Reverse Human Aging in Our Lifetime* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2007).

4. See Vernor Vinge, “Vernor Vinge on the Singularity,” presentation to VISION-21 symposium, NASA Lewis Research Center and the Ohio Aerospace Institute, 30–31 March 1993, <http://mindstalk.net/vinge/vinge-sing.html>. Perhaps the most popular exposition of the idea is Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (Penguin Books, 2005); see also his *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence* (Penguin Group, 1999). For a variety of views on such matters, see *What to Think About Machines That Think: Today’s Leading Thinkers on the Age of Machine Intelligence*, edited by John Brockman (New York: Harper Perennial, 2015).

5. “About the Association,” *Mormon Transhumanist Association*, accessed July 10, 2016, <http://transfigurism.org/pages/about/>. See also, “Transhumanist Declaration”, Humanity +, Inc., accessed July 10, 2016, <http://humanityplus.org/philosophy/transhumanist-declaration/>.

6. “Members,” *Mormon Transhumanist Association*, accessed July 10, 2016, <http://transfigurism.org/pages/about/members/>.

7. Lincoln Cannon, “What Is Mormon Transhumanism?” *Theology and Science* 13/2 (2015): 202–18, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14746700.2015.1023992>. Parenthetical page citations within my review are to this article.

evidence that “the Church of Latter-day Saints [sic] ... is also the tradition that exhibits the most positive attitude toward transhumanism.”<sup>8</sup> This is a somewhat extravagant claim when we consider that the Mormon Transhumanist Association then had only 255 members.<sup>9</sup> If Mormonism represents the most favorable faith, Transhumanism’s stock amongst the religious must be low indeed.<sup>10</sup> An author in *First Things* was more skeptical, writing “rather than rejecting their faith, Mormon transhumanists can come to the movement because of their religion. Or so says Cannon. Mormon authorities, I suspect, would disagree.”<sup>11</sup>

In this essay, I offer a review and reaction to the claims in Cannon’s article from my own believing LDS perspective. I will say nothing about Transhumanism’s scientific claims, though I have enough of the scientist in me to be deeply skeptical about many of them.<sup>12</sup>

It would be impossible to represent every nuance in perspective held by members of the movement in a brief essay such as Cannon’s. Adding to that difficulty is the reputation that Transhumanists have acquired for being diverse and fractious. As one author observed:

Transhumanism is not a static or crystallized doctrine — it has already had its share of schisms and internecine skirmishes. ... This recent but quickly growing movement is part science,

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8. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, “Transhumanism as a Secularist Faith,” *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 47/4 (December 2012): 727.

9. “Member Results Survey — 2012,” *Mormon Transhumanist Association*, accessed 12 July 2016, <https://www.scribd.com/document/139590746/Mormon-Transhumanist-Association-Member-Survey-Results-2012/>.

10. Cannon may be overly pessimistic. See the qualified support for some of the transhumanist project from a variety of religious traditions discussed in Chris Toumey, “Seven Religious Reactions to Nanotechnology,” *Nanoethics* 5 (2011): 251–67.

11. Wesley J. Smith, “New-Time Religion,” *First Things* (December 2014), <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2014/12/new-time-religion>.

12. For views of some of the ethical dilemmas of Mormon Transhumanism, see Samuel Morris Brown, “Enhancing evolution: Posthumanous dreams and the moral complexity of biomedical aspirations,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 48/2 (2009): 41–49, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/enhancing-evolution-posthumanous-dreams-and-moral-complexity-biomedical-aspirations>. For a brief overview of selected research challenges relating to Transhumanist claims from a scientific perspective, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Can We Become Immortal and Superintelligent by Uploading Our Brains to Supercomputers?,” *Meridian Magazine*, 27 June 2016, <http://ldsmag.com/can-we-become-immortal-and-superintelligent-by-uploading-our-brains-to-supercomputers/>; and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “How Close Are We to Being Able to Model the Brain?,” *Meridian Magazine*, 4 July 2016, <http://ldsmag.com/how-close-are-we-to-being-able-to-model-the-brain/>.

part philosophy, but also part science-fiction, and I might add, part faith.<sup>13</sup>

Mormon Transhumanists seem no different. Cannon writes, “Mormon transhumanists do not have one vision of the future. We have many visions — many dreams. And we express them in many narratives” (210).

So, I make no claim that the analysis here applies to all Transhumanists, all Mormon Transhumanists, or even all that Cannon has written and said elsewhere. This review serves as a preliminary study, by a newcomer to these ideas, of a single introductory paper intended to help beginners get up to speed.

### A Roadmap for What Follows

In Part 1, I examine a series of syllogisms which Cannon offers as evidence that “Mormonism actually mandates transhumanism” (213). We will find that most of the premises upon which these syllogisms rest are not accurate representations of LDS thought. We will see that Cannon often either misreads or misrepresents LDS scripture. On a superficial reading, his citations may appear to support his argument. A closer look reveals that any support they appear to offer Transhumanism is a mirage.

Of particular significance for orthodox Mormons is my observation that Cannon puts a great deal of emphasis on humanity’s mastering techniques to achieve immortality, which creates what seem to be insurmountable difficulties for his account of LDS doctrine.

In Part 2, I investigate Cannon’s portrayal of human nature and Transhumanism’s purported ability to alter it now and in the future. We find that LDS theology and Transhumanism use the concept of *human nature* in different ways. We note that while Cannon’s account of Jesus highlights the ways in which we might imitate him and adopt his salvific role, it omits discussion of the areas in which his role — as a perfected and glorified celestial being whose Atonement performed a unique and once-and-for-all act to bring immortality and the possibility of eternal life to all mankind — is incommensurate with our role and possibilities as beings living in a fallen world.

In Part 3, I conclude by reviewing some of what I take to be Cannon’s misreadings of LDS doctrine, particularly those focused on matters of dualism, materialism, and the nature of spiritual experiences.

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13. Bob Doede, “Transhumanism, Technology, and the Future: Posthumanity Emerging or Sub-Humanity Descending?,” *Appraisal* 7/3 (March 2009): 40.

### Part 1: Mormonism Mandates Transhumanism?<sup>14</sup>

Cannon advances what he concedes is “a controversial claim.” “Some Mormon transhumanists,” he writes, “contend that ... Mormonism actually mandates transhumanism .... [O]ne cannot be a Mormon without being a transhumanist.” He goes on to assure us that “we can use Mormon scripture to formulate a supporting argument” (213). He offers four premises, accompanied by appeals to LDS scripture:<sup>15</sup>

**P1:** “God commands us to use ordained means to participate in God’s work.”

Supporting statements:

- 1a) 1 Nephi 3:7 — “God prepares ways for us to accomplish God’s commands.”
- 1b) Alma 60:11, 21–23 — “God will not save us unless we use the means God has already provided.”
- 1c) D&C 58:27–28 — “We should engage in good causes without waiting for God to provide specific commands.”

**P2:** “Science and technology are among the means ordained of God.”

Supporting statements:

- 2a) 1 Nephi 17:8–11, 16 — “God commands Nephi to construct a ship to save his family.”
- 2b) Alma 37:38–39 — “God gave Nephi a compass to guide his family to the promised land.”
- 2c) D&C 88:78–79 — “God commands us to study and teach everything from astronomy and geology to history and politics.”
- 2d) D&C 121:26–33 — “We will learn all the physical laws of the world before attaining heaven.”

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14. A video of the same name is featured prominently on the Mormon Transhumanist Association (MTA hereafter) website. Clearly, this is a point of view that MTA is actively advocating. See Mormon Transhumanist Association (website), accessed July 10, 2016, <http://transfigurism.org/>. See also Mormon Transhumanist Association, “Mormonism Mandates Transhumanism,” YouTube video, 2:18, July 6, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VePRByRNIAC>. I here review only Cannon’s printed account.

15. I have here organized Cannon’s claims into schematic form for brevity and clarity. Material in quotes is his from page 241; I have omitted the scripture references provided for P4 (Ether 3:7–16; D&C 76:70; 93:33–36), since I take both P4’s claim and the scriptures offered in its support as noncontroversial among Latter-day Saints.

**P3:** “God’s work is to help each other attain Godhood.”

Supporting statements:

- 3a) 3 Nephi 12:48 — “Jesus commands us to be perfect like God.”
- 3b) D&C 76:58–60, 92–95 — “God would make us Gods of equal power with him.”
- 3c) Moses 1:39 — “God’s work is to make us immortal in eternal life.”

**P4:** “An essential attribute of Godhood is a glorified immortal body.”

Given these four premises, Cannon declares that “we can reason” and thereby draws three conclusions:<sup>16</sup>

**First Conclusion:** “Because God commands us to use ordained means to participate in God’s work [P1], and because science and technology are among those means [P2], we can deduce [C1] that *God commands us to use science and technology to participate in God’s work.*”

**Second Conclusion:** “Because God commands us to use science and technology to participate in God’s work [C1], and because God’s work is to help each other attain Godhood [P3], we can deduce [C2] that *God commands us to use science and technology to help each other attain Godhood.*”

**Third Conclusion:** “Because God commands us to use science and technology to help each other attain Godhood [C2], and because an essential attribute of Godhood is a glorified immortal body [P4], we can conclude [C3] that *God commands us to use science and technology to help each other attain a glorified immortal body.*”

Cannon concludes, “If we began with premises that accurately reflect Mormonism, then Mormonism mandates transhumanism” (214). Even a valid argument (i.e., one that follows the rules of logic) produces truth only if its premises are true — and we will find that none of his premises accurately reflect LDS doctrine.

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16. I have labeled the premises upon which I believe Cannon’s conclusions are based. (These labels are utilized elsewhere in this essay.) Material in quotes is Cannon’s; emphasis is mine to highlight conclusions.

Note that each conclusion depends upon the truth of the conclusion that went before: the first must be true for the second to have any force, while the second is required for the third. A failure at any point destroys the entire argument downstream.

Let us first examine the use to which Cannon's argument puts the scriptures invoked in his first two premises.

### The First Premise (P1)

Few Latter-day Saints would quarrel with the idea that God provides means for mortals to accomplish the purposes he sets them (1a).

Cannon's second scripture is cited to support the idea that "God will not save us unless we use the means God has already provided" (1b). This formulation trades on the fact that the scripture cites Captain Moroni's speaking of being "delivered" (Alma 60:11, 20, 21) from a temporal, military threat — yet oddly Cannon uses the term *save* instead, a term never used in the verses cited.<sup>17</sup> Rendering Moroni's claim as "saved" allows the argument to imply matters of eternal salvation rather than deliverance in war. The remainder of Cannon's argument requires that Moroni's words be understood in a religious sense.

Perhaps without intending to do so, Cannon has already shifted the scriptural ground — a command about using available means to escape a mortal, physical threat in the political realm has been shaded through choice of language into a command about how we ought to approach matters of human salvation (in the eschatological sense). This shift is not an inconsequential move. Either Cannon is unaware of what he has done, or he hopes we won't notice.<sup>18</sup>

This lack of precision is compounded when Cannon's third scripture is used to argue that we "ought to engage in good causes without

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17. "Save" and "salvation" are nowhere used in Alma 60, except in verse 8, where Moroni says the political leaders could have sent armies and "saved thousands" from death in war: clearly a claim about a mortal, temporal outcome that has nothing to do with salvation in the religious sense. (If those who suffered death were righteous, Moroni doubtless would have seen them as *not saved* from the war but *saved* in a religious or eschatological sense.)

18. The technical name for such an error is the *fallacy of equivocation*. This logical error trades on the fact that a word or sentence may have two different meanings. The error lies in invoking the equivocal word or phrase in the first sense in a premise, and then proceeding as if it were used in the second sense in the conclusion(s) drawn. [See Hans Hansen, "Fallacies," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2015 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed 11 April 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/fallacies/>.]

waiting for God to provide specific commands” (1c). Here the argument implicitly lays the ground to assume — without evidence — what it will eventually be enlisted to prove. An admonition to engage in good causes without being commanded in the details (1c) applies in this case only *if the transhumanist approach to salvation is a good one*.<sup>19</sup> But that is ultimately the point at issue. We cannot assume it at the outset.

One is justified, for example, in spending vast human resources, research capital, and intellectual firepower to digitize and upload a human personality only if such an undertaking is (1) possible and (2) desired by God. If such things are either impossible or improper, such efforts are at best a colossal waste of time, money, and talent that could be better spent on a thousand other pressing needs or at worst a type of fatal hubris, sin on a vast scale. They would not then be “good causes” in the sense required by Cannon’s argument, even if they arise out of noble motives with lofty goals.

Let me draw an analogy from technological advancements in my field of study and career (medical science): (P1) God wants happy families and (P2) many scientists have worked wonders to ease the technical and legal obstacles to elective abortion as a contraceptive method. But abortion as contraception is hardly an undertaking that LDS doctrine endorses, even if we believe it will make for a happier family (a good cause!) and even if the means have been “given us” to carry it out.

This analogy is not farfetched. Cannon writes somewhat rhapsodically of one of “many narratives ... reflecting some common expectations and aspirations, and illustrating parallels between Mormonism and transhumanism” (210). He then describes how in one Mormon Transhumanist future, “Reproduction technology permits infertile and gay couples, as well as individuals or groups, to conceive their own genetic children. Some recoil from perceived threats to tradition, while others celebrate perceived gifts to new families” (210).

I have trouble seeing the common aspirations and parallels between this vision of Transhumanism and Mormon thought. As a footnote to this scenario, Cannon refers to D&C 88:33, which I will quote, though Cannon did not: “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon

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19. The scripture in question was addressed to Bishop Edward Partridge, discussing the means whereby he and his counselors could best fulfill the specific calling given them by God and the commandment regarding the establishment of a storehouse. The Lord urged them to “counsel between themselves and me,” regarding “bring[ing] their families to this land [Missouri]” (D&C 58:24–25).



him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift.”

It is not clear how this is relevant to his argument, which is perhaps why the text was not included — does Cannon mean that such capacity for single individuals or groups of more than two individuals or partners of the same sex to create children through technology ought to be seen as a gift from God? Or that Mormon Transhumanists view it as such?

It seems so, since some see these techniques as “gifts to new families.” But in the LDS view, an infertile married couple does not become a “new family” when children arrive — it is a family already. It does not need biological children to become one.<sup>20</sup> And single individuals, homosexual unions, or scenarios which allow a child to have more than two biological parents are not family structures conducive to God’s purposes, given LDS doctrine reflected in the *Proclamation on the Family*.<sup>21</sup>

Cannon seems to classify a negative religious reaction to these projects as merely due to “perceived threats to tradition,” but the Mormon view would probably see it as inimical to the very foundation

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20. “Sweethearts should realize before they take the vows that each must accept literally and fully that the good of the *little new family* must always be superior to the good of either spouse. Each party must eliminate the ‘I’ and the ‘my’ and substitute ... ‘we’ and ‘our.’ Every decision must take into consideration that there are *two or more affected* by it” (Spencer W. Kimball, “Marriage and Divorce: An Address,” [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], 18, emphasis added.) Also reproduced in “Oneness in Marriage,” *Ensign* (March 1977): 4, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1977/03/oneness-in-marriage?lang=eng> and “Chapter 18: Honorable, Happy, Successful Marriage,” *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* (2006), 189–201, <https://www.lds.org/manual/teachings-spencer-w-kimball/chapter-18?lang=eng>.

21. One possible exception might be the use of mitochondria DNA (mtDNA) from a donor egg into which a husband and wife’s genetic material is placed in order to avoid passing maternal mitochondrial disease on to the child. (With rare exceptions only the egg, and thus the mother, contributes to a child’s mtDNA.) In such a case, the child has DNA from three people — the main “autosomal” DNA from his parents, and mtDNA from the egg donor. This at least is a scenario that could potentially harmonize with LDS doctrine and praxis. One suspects, however, that such technology could also be used by polyamorous partnerships to produce a child with three, four, or more “parents,” which LDS doctrine would almost certainly see as deeply problematic. I suspect it is to this latter application that some Mormon Transhumanists refer. This technology was recently approved in the United Kingdom to treat mitochondrial disease. See: Catharine Paddock, “Three-parent embryos approved in UK,” (4 February 2015), <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/288943.php>; Gráinne S. Gorman, *et al.*, “Mitochondrial Donation — How Many Women Could Benefit?,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 372 (26 February 2015): 885–87, <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc1500960#t=article>.

of the divine family and exaltation itself. One begins to suspect this particular Mormon Transhumanist view is not terribly Mormon at all and even hostile to Mormon thought in spots. To cite scripture wholly out of both its context and the broader LDS understanding of these matters is troubling, especially when Cannon aims to provide “premises that accurately reflect Mormonism” (214).

In short, the first premise sets the stage for a circular argument; it prepares to “beg the question” and must twist LDS scripture to do it. This is not an auspicious beginning.

### **The Second Premise (P2)**

The second premise holds that “Science and technology are among the means ordained of God.” As an accurate description of LDS doctrine, this formulation is also flawed, since the argument uses it as if the premise were “*any and all* science and technology are among the means ordained of God.” The implied claim is clearly false — again, we can draw no conclusions about whether or not the technological wonders offered by Transhumanism are consistent with God’s purposes without examining each case. Poison and nuclear weapons are forms of human science and technology, yet God does not necessarily mandate their use.

To pick an example not more extreme than some Transhumanist reveries, one might conceive of a brain-control device that prevents humans from committing acts of sin. God clearly does not want humans to sin, yet using technology to assure that they would not or could not do so is not a righteous act in LDS theology.<sup>22</sup>

The scriptures cited do not help the position that Cannon advances. True, Nephi built a ship to save his family (2a) — but he did so at God’s explicit command, and under God’s tutelage. Nephi emphasizes that he “did not work the timbers [of the ship] after the manner which was learned by men, neither did I build the ship after the manner of men; but I did build it after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me; wherefore, it was not after the manner of men” (1 Nephi 18:2). So Nephi did not use human-inspired or -directed technology at all. He did not undertake a kind of naval Manhattan Project in the pre-Second Temple era. The Lord did not send him to shipwrights and carpenters, though plenty of these existed.

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22. LDS scripture teaches that Satan and his followers were cast out from heaven over precisely the issue of whether tampering with moral agency was a means that justified the desired end (Moses 4:1–4; see also 2 Nephi 2:17, D&C 29:36–37, Abraham 3:27–28).

For the example of Nephi's ship to be on point, we must ask if God has explicitly commanded that we focus our efforts on Transhumanist approaches. Clearly, he has not — and it is this difficulty that the second premise attempts to paper over.

Cannon's second scripture, like the first, makes precisely the opposite point that his argument requires. True, Lehi and family were guided by the compass-like Liahona in their journey (2b), but here again Lehi did not design the device, nor did technocrats help forge it. Instead, it appeared fully-formed outside Lehi's tent. (Alma even insists that its construction was beyond any human ability; see Alma 37:39.) Despite being a material object (and thus "technology" by some definitions) it did not work according to any physical principles or scientific laws known to Lehi or us — instead "it did work for them according to their faith in God". It was a "miracle" like "many other miracles wrought by the power of God". It would stop working when they "were slothful, and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence" (Alma 37:40–41). The Liahona is simply not a model for man's technological prowess contributing to the accomplishment of God's purposes — if anything, it is a call for faith, obedience, humility, and trust in God's revelations.

In neither case do Nephi and Lehi urge their followers to a research program to develop the technocratic tools they think God might want. God simply provides the expertise with the explicit rationale that his purposes need to be accomplished. Nephi's nautical construction does not set off a pre-Columbian shipbuilding renaissance. Lehi does not need to understand the principles by which the Liahona works, much less build his own mass-production line so every Nephite home can have one. Instead, he learns that it works via diligent faith in the arm of God — hardly a Transhumanist virtue. Transhumanism, by contrast, applauds empiricism and technical mastery over nature through humanity's native powers. Nephi's ship and the Liahona help to accomplish a specific purpose and are then retired from use. The Nephites do not continue to use and improve their ocean-crossing tech based on Nephi's prototype; Nephite armies are not equipped with Liahonas.

The third scripture serves Cannon's argument no better. True, the Saints are enjoined to study many topics, even "all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God" (2c). These include "things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of

kingdoms” (D&C 88:78–79). Such study explicitly includes analyzing wars and political strife — yet we do not thereby conclude that war is to be a tool we seize to implement God’s purposes. If anything, a study of war and the like ought to temper any illusions we have about human adequacy to solve the fundamental problems we face through technology.

Why study such things? The scripture tells us, but Cannon’s argument ignores the implications. The recipients are to study so

that ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you. Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor. Therefore, they are left without excuse, and their sins are upon their own heads .... Therefore, tarry ye, and labor diligently, that you may be perfected in your ministry to go forth among the Gentiles for the last time. (D&C 88:80–82, 84)

God does not, we note well, command such study so that his children can solve the technical problems that will enable resurrection or personal continuity beyond the grave. He has already solved those problems and through the Atonement of Christ will provide them freely to all humanity (Alma 40:4). Instead, we are commanded to study such “worldly” or “secular” matters so we will be more able and convincing when we warn others of the need to repent. The little band of Saints was doing and could do nothing whatever to inch humanity along the road to the Singularity. But through their efforts to preach the Gospel, they could prepare mortals to stand singly at the bar of God to answer for their deeds and moral agency.

The fourth and final scripture is even less relevant. Cannon glosses it as saying that “We will learn all the physical laws of the world before attaining heaven,” (2d) but this is misleading. The scripture text describes a method of knowledge acquisition that differs from that of science: “God shall give unto you knowledge *by his Holy Spirit*, yea, by the unspeakable *gift of the Holy Ghost*, that has not been revealed since the world was until now” (D&C 121:26, emphasis added). Such knowledge is not merely the operation of the spirit of Christ on one’s reason or intellect, and it is not the product of inspired scientific research or experiment, however valuable those may be — rather, it is knowledge *revealed* to those who possess the gift of the Holy Ghost.

This revelatory experience will reveal everything — presumably “everything” will include physical laws, but that is not the focus or thrust

of the promise: “A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest” (v. 28). These are simply not in the main the sort of facts with which Transhumanist science — or any science — has anything to do, even though God promises to reveal “glories, laws, and set times” (v. 31).

As for such knowledge coming to mortals “before attaining heaven,” verse 32 avers that God’s council declared such things “should be reserved unto the finishing and the end” of the “dispensation of the fulness of times ... when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest” (D&C 121:31–32). Such revelation does not seem so much a prerequisite to attaining heaven but is instead a final gift of divine self-disclosure that makes heaven possible. Given that the time of their revelation is decreed for “the end,” an aggressive scientific research program is unlikely to reveal them any sooner.

So the second premise, like the first, has elements of circularity baked into it. Here the degree of scriptural distortion and special-pleading is even more pronounced.

### **Taking Stock: The First Conclusion (C1)**

Cannon’s first conclusion fails, since both premises are faulty accounts of LDS thought and scripture. The syllogism is also misleading since it leaves unaddressed the core question: which technologies does God command, and which would he oppose?<sup>23</sup> Cannon evinces no awareness that this question needs to be addressed.

Furthermore, since each subsequent conclusion relies upon this first one, none of his “reasoned” syllogisms produce logical truth. We could stop here, since the argument has been reduced to shambles.

### **The Second and Third Conclusions (C2 and C3)**

The second and third conclusions move even further than the first from anything that can be called an accurate sketch of LDS theology. Cannon tells us that since God’s purpose is to achieve our exaltation, “God commands us to use science and technology to help each other attain Godhood,” (C2) and since godhood requires a physical body, “God

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23. Numerous authoritative statements by general authorities could be provided as to God’s approval, inspiration, or revelation of technology to help hasten his work. It should be noted that such statements are categorically different than concluding that God commands the use of any particular technology or even all technology.

commands us to use science and technology to help each other attain a glorified immortal body” (C3).<sup>24</sup>

### ***Immortality***

What Cannon’s account ignores is the fact that receiving a glorified physical body is something LDS theology tells us has already been taken care of on our behalf. “It is requisite and just,” taught Alma, “according to the power and resurrection of Christ, that the soul of man should be restored to its body, and that every part of the body should be restored to itself,” and thus “there is a time appointed that *all* shall come forth from the dead” (Alma 41:2; 40:4). Christ has already been resurrected, and at that time “many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many” (Matthew 27:52–53). The resurrection is already in motion; God did not need to await human technical mastery to bring it about. Furthermore, no human action is needed to assure a universal resurrection. God’s work and glory certainly targets “the immortality and eternal life” of his children, but the immortality is a done deal. It is strange, then, to see Transhumanists suggest that scientific research is needed or even commanded to accomplish it. There is a point of contact with traditional LDS thought here, but that brief touch quickly veers off on a tangent.

### ***Eternal Life and Exaltation***

In contrast to immortality, the receipt of exaltation, or *theosis*, remains a matter that human agency — coupled with the grace of God — can influence. Each individual must choose to make divinely-ordained covenants as part of priesthood ordinances, and then endure to the end in faithfulness to those covenants. We are surely called to labor in that undertaking, both for our own sakes (D&C 18:15) and the sakes of others (Alma 29:15).

Technology can certainly be enlisted in such efforts — just as hand-copied texts could have wider dissemination than oral preaching, so now printed or digital scriptures are easier to make and cheaper to distribute than handwritten ones. Boats transported the apostle Paul as he preached; intercontinental airlines now deliver modern apostles to their destinations. Telephones and video conferencing help govern

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24. One detects more than a hint of what Alfred Nordman described as Transhumanism’s tendency to use “speculative ethics . . . to invent a mandate for action” (“If and Then: A Critique of Speculative NanoEthics,” *Nanoethics* 1 [2007]: 33).

a worldwide Church while, by contrast, a much smaller primitive Church soon lapsed into apostasy, lacking frequent contact with steadying apostolic hands. In a rapid eclipse of the communication technologies that preceded it, the Internet allows individuals to teach others anywhere in the world in real-time. Thus, in one sense, it is certainly true that “God commands us to use science and technology to help each other attain Godhood,” and few Latter-day Saints would find such uses as I’ve described remarkable or novel in the least. Such means are not, however, the primary substance of Transhumanist hopes.

After all, it is not in this trivially true sense that Cannon’s syllogism intends the idea that God endorses the use of science and technology to help exalt his children. None of these or a thousand other examples have anything to do with the technical implementation of resurrection and exaltation that Cannon’s syllogism mandates.<sup>25</sup> The Transhumanist project of his syllogism ironically focuses on the one thing — personal immortality — that can already be checked off the to-do list under LDS doctrine. These claims risk, then, distracting us from the work still to be done: “Perhaps someday we might transfigure ourselves into ageless bodies” (207).

One would not know it from Cannon’s formulation, but God has repeatedly told us what role we have in accomplishing his purposes. God nowhere says, “Develop the technology to have ageless bodies” (see 207), nor “Go out and resurrect your fellows via ‘complete models of the bodies and brains of our dead ancestors individually’” (see 211). Nor does he say, “Use data-mining to restore lost ecosystems” (see 210–11). He instead tells us, “Say nothing but repentance unto this generation” (D&C 6:9; 11:9). God focuses relentlessly on the nature of our wills, our fallen nature, and our mortal propensity to sin.

The concept offered by Cannon’s syllogism is also egocentric and presentist. In his formulation, the entire world has been waiting for us or our technological near-heirs. There is no way the Israelites — a bunch of Bronze Age pastoralists — could hope to participate in (for example) the project to somehow retrieve and archive all humans’ past genetic codes to assure a universal resurrection (217). At best, for Cannon’s syllogism, the vast majority of humanity is merely marking time, unable to do much of

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25. As one author observed, “But in fact, the Christian concepts of glorification and ascension do not refer to the scales of space, time, power, pleasure, and knowledge used in technological utopianism” (Bruce N. Lundberg, “Hans Jonas on Technology, Mathematics and Human Nature,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 25 No. 1/2 [2013]: 84). One could easily say the same about specifically Latter-day Saint Christian concepts of exaltation.

anything toward achieving God's purposes. Even we, today, cannot do much.

If, instead, the problem is human nature and moral agency — as the scriptures repeatedly affirm — the modern has no privileged place in the sun. Indeed, we may even be at something of a disadvantage if we entertain hubristic dreams of a crescendo of redemptive science and technology. A Palestinian peasant under the Caesars was at least at scant risk of mistaking himself for someone potent, transcendent, or world-changing.

And so the second and third conclusions, like the first, fail to be accurate accounts of LDS theology.

We could, once again, stop our investigation here — Cannon has chosen to conclude his introduction to *Mormon Transhumanism* with a deeply flawed attempt to suggest equivalencies where there are none.

This degree of confusion or muddled thinking is unlikely, however, to exist in a vacuum. As we prod Cannon's argument, we find that when Transhumanism and Mormonism are in conflict, it is Transhumanism that prevails.

## **Part 2: Human Nature and Transhumanism**

Cannon begins his article by announcing:

As transhumanists, we have discarded the old assumption that human nature is or ever was static — not only because science has demonstrated biological evolution, but especially because history itself is cultural and technological evolution. (202)

Such a claim trades on the multiple possible understandings of the term “human nature.” To be sure, if we see the term to refer to something like “human nature began with a hunter-gatherer life-style using stone-age tools,” it is trivially and obviously true that human nature has been and likely will continue to be in constant flux. Literacy, numeracy, metallurgy, moveable type, the scientific method, calculus, materials science, cybernetics, information technology — all have altered “human nature” in this sense, or the nature of the types of lives that humans live.

One sees the same tension around “human nature” in Cannon's footnoted source. He cites Nick Bostrom, a leading Transhumanist philosopher and advocate. Like Cannon, Bostrom holds that:

The new paradigm [of Transhumanism] rejects a crucial assumption that is implicit in both traditional futurology and practically all of today's political thinking. This is the assumption that the “human condition” is at root a



constant. Present-day processes can be fine-tuned; wealth can be increased and redistributed; tools can be developed and refined; culture can change, sometimes drastically; but human nature itself is not up for grabs.

This assumption no longer holds true. Arguably it has never been true. Such innovations as speech, written language, printing, engines, modern medicine and computers have had a profound impact not just on how people live their lives, but on who and what they are.<sup>26</sup>

In Cannon's essay, we see the same conviction that human nature is plastic, "up for grabs." And that human nature is determined and altered by technology, meaning not merely new styles of life, but a change in "who and what [humans] are" at a fundamental level. Cannon appeals to the same types of ideas, invoking technology such as a computing device to read; glasses, contacts, or surgically modified eyes; hearing aids or cochlear implants; clothing; and drugs that target pain, heighten attention, or facilitate growth as examples of changes in human nature wrought by science (206).

In religious terms, however — especially LDS religious terms — none of these shifts represent changes to what is most basic and important in human nature.

To pick one simple case, we are mortal with fallible memories — thus speech, written language, moveable-type printing, and computer information technology can compensate for the fact that fallible memory is part of human nature (in the Cannon/Bostromian sense), and thus these technologies can change "who and what [we] are."

This is not, however, what LDS scriptures address when discussing human nature.

For example, King Benjamin advised his people that "the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord" (Mosiah 3:19).

He does not, we remark, suggest that more rapid access to information or an eidetic memory would change this fundamental aspect of human nature. Instead, only through an exercise of moral agency — a yielding of the will to the Holy Spirit — can human nature be changed. And this

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26. Nick Bostrom, "What Is Transhumanism?," (paper, University of Oxford, rev. 2001) <http://www.nickbostrom.com/old/transhumanism.html>.

change comes not from biotechnology or nanotechnology or drugs or cybernetics — but through the Atonement of Christ enabling us to “put off” the natural man. Without the Atonement, the human nature of the natural man persists eternally.

Nephi too cautioned,

O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God. (2 Nephi 9:28–29)

For Nephi, more learning, more knowledge, and more technical prowess do not change the fundamental dynamic. Indeed, he argues that such things can actually exacerbate the problem — learning and technical mastery can stir us to pride and an exaggerated trust in our own capabilities and perspectives. This can lead us to disregard counsel from God and his Holy Spirit — we therefore do not yield, and we perish despite our knowledge.

Neither Nephi nor I desire to denigrate knowledge — it is better to have knowledge than not to have it — but it is not the scientific or engineering knowledge that saves us. It may, in fact, threaten us if we are not wary.

Alma is blunt and speaks in terms that could be addressed to a modern Transhumanist. Humans have “become carnal, sensual, and devilish, *by nature*” (Alma 42:10, emphasis added).

Modernity seems, to me, to offer very little ground for believing that much about human nature has changed despite our accelerating technical and scientific knowledge. Intelligent and educated modern luminaries such as Rousseau, Marx, Ibsen, Tolstoy, Hemmingway, Bertrand Russell, and Jean-Paul Sartre present a melancholy spectacle with their neglect or abandonment of their children, serial infidelities, mistreatment of women, and the vacuity of their moral lives.<sup>27</sup> The

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27. Historian Paul Johnson made this point forcefully in *Intellectuals* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988). Sadly, Johnson himself proved no more able than the intellectuals whom he criticized to honor marriage vows, saying only that “[if you acquire any kind of fame, that’s the kind of thing that’s liable to happen”—as if his eleven-year affair was simply something that befell him, like a flood or act of God (Elizabeth Grice, “Paul Johnson: ‘After 70 you begin to mellow,’” *The Telegraph* [4 June 2010], <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/7800902/Paul-Johnson-After-70-you-begin-to-mellow.html>). But Johnson’s admitted failure serves simply as one

great physicists of quantum physics fare little better.<sup>28</sup> The problem of the natural man or woman is perennial.

### Mormon Transhumanism and Jesus

Cannon's article makes much, initially, of Mormonism as "an immersive discipleship of Jesus Christ" (203). But after this introductory paragraph, little or nothing is said about Jesus or his Atonement. Even this paragraph paints mortals as "messiahs" and "saviors for each other," though these terms mean something quite different in Mormonism when applied to us than they do in the Transhumanist context — another example of the fallacy of equivocation. Invocation of the terms in that context is less about Jesus than about us. "With Jesus, we would trust in, change toward, and fully immerse our bodies and minds in the role of Christ" (203). Again, the emphasis is on what *we* do — which matches the Transhumanist technocratic approach to the problems of human existence: sickness, scarcity, death, and so forth.

I am not convinced that Cannon's description of discipleship is on target. We do not take on "the role of Christ" except in a very circumscribed sense different from his paper's implication. Cannon appeals to but does not quote from Mosiah 5:9: "whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ" (215n15).

This verse says nothing about taking on the *role* of Christ. Instead, the saved are called by his name because Jesus claims them as his own: "the good shepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ; and if ye will not hearken unto ... the name by which ye are called, behold, ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd" (Alma 5:38). In fact, immediately after the verse cited by Cannon, the scripture continues: "For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served ...? [D]oth a man take an ass which belongeth to his neighbor, and keep him? I say unto you, Nay ... [E]ven so shall it be among you if ye know not the name by which ye are called" (Mosiah 5:13-14). Servants

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more example of my point and takes nothing from the damning facts assembled by him. Similar issues are discussed in E. Michael Jones, *Degenerate Moderns: Modernity as Rationalized Sexual Misbehavior* (Ignatius Press, 1993), though with varying degrees of persuasiveness.

28. Sheila Jones, *The Quantum Ten: A Story of Passion, Tragedy, Ambition, and Science* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 20, 173, 246, 255-79 (Bohr); 175, 241 (Born); 23, 55-58, 57-58, 70-71 (Einstein); 194, 201, 207-8, 238-39 (Heisenberg); 13-14, 23-24, 240-41 (Jourdan); 20-21, 261, 274 (Pauli); 25, 183, 221 (Schrodinger).

and asses do not take upon themselves the master's role or decide that *they* claim the master — it is the *master* who claims them (see also Revelation 22:3–4; 3 Nephi 27:5; D&C 18:23–25, 76:59).

Of the redeemed, the Doctrine and Covenants asserts frankly, “They are Christ’s,” and others less valiant “are Christ’s at his coming” (D&C 88:98–99). Jesus blessed those who gave even a cup of water to his disciples, “because ye *belong* to Christ,” (Mark 9:41, emphasis added). These have taken his name upon them; they have not taken on the messianic role.

Here we see one of Cannon’s many light contacts with an LDS idea, only to have Transhumanism angle off into decidedly non-LDS territory.

Cannon says we should be “consoling and healing and raising, as exemplified and invited by Jesus” (203) — which is certainly true. But this focus on outward ethics and acts leaves unmentioned the problem of the inner nature and its transformation effected by the Atonement, for it is only “by the blood [that] ye are sanctified” (Moses 6:60). Likewise, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “[b]eing born again comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances,”<sup>29</sup> but nowhere are the ordinances mentioned in Cannon’s essay. The ability to meaningfully console, heal, and help in the salvation of others is all predicated upon Christ’s gracious transformation of our nature — and I fear that omitting this fact from mention may not be coincidental because it touches precisely upon those areas Transhumanism reserves for itself.

### Part 3: Mistaking LDS Theology

Given his apparent confusion about how LDS doctrine sees human nature, it is perhaps not surprising that Cannon seems either to misunderstand or misrepresent LDS scripture and theology in other areas.

#### *The Council in Heaven*

Elsewhere, Cannon’s article writes of how “[a]t a grand council in heaven before the creation of this world, the children of God presented two plans. ... God chose the first and war ensued” (204). In fact, LDS doctrine teaches that *God* presented a single plan. Satan offered an

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29. Joseph Smith, Jr., “Discourse, between circa 26 June and circa 4 August 1839-A, as Reported by Willard Richards,” 72, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-between-circa-26-june-and-circa-4-august-1839-a-as-reported-by-willard-richards/10>. Also reproduced in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center — BYU, 1980), 12. Also in *History of the Church* 3:392 and *TPJS*, 162. Ehat and Cook cross reference to: D&C 52:13–20; 84:19–25; Moses 6:57–68; JST Exodus 34:1–2.

alternative scenario, which God rejected. There were not two possible plans, and God did not need to choose between them. There could, in fact, only be one option from God's perspective.<sup>30</sup> God's children could choose to either support or reject God's plan. That Cannon muddles this matter does not increase the reader's confidence that his more speculative attempts to tie Mormonism to Transhumanism will be accurate.

### *Dualism?*

An additional illustrative example is Cannon's discussion of Mormonism and *substance dualism*, the idea that physical bodies and mind/spirit/soul are different types of things. Each has a separate existence, with "mental things ... [lacking] any extension in the physical world":<sup>31</sup>

Mormonism posits a metaphysics, in contrast to classical substance dualism, that is consistent with some accounts of physicalism and naturalism. According to our scriptures, everything is material, including our minds; and everything is embodied, including God. (203)

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30. Russell M. Nelson taught: "A council in heaven was once convened in which we participated. There our Heavenly Father announced His divine plan. It is also called the plan of happiness, the plan of salvation, the plan of redemption, the plan of restoration, the plan of mercy, the plan of deliverance, and the everlasting gospel [Russell M. Nelson, "The Creation," *The Ensign*, May 2000]. Boyd K. Packer emphasized that "The plan of the Eternal Father was sustained" [Boyd K. Packer, "The Play and the Plan" (CES Fireside, Kirkland, Washington, May 7, 1995)]. Neal A. Maxwell: "It's extremely important to get straight what happened in that premortal council. It was *not* an unstructured meeting, nor was it a discussion between plans, nor an idea-producing session to formulate the plan for salvation and carry it out. Our Father's plan was *known*, and the actual question put was whom the Father should send to carry out the plan" [Neal A. Maxwell, *Deposition of a Disciple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 11–12]. Bruce R. McConkie wrote: "Although we sometimes hear it said that there were two plans — Christ's plan of freedom and agency, and Lucifer's of slavery and compulsion — such teaching does not conform to the revealed word. Christ did not present a plan of redemption and salvation nor did Lucifer. There were not two plans up for consideration; there was only one, and that was the plan of the Father: originated, developed, presented, and put in force by him" [Bruce R. McConkie, "Who Is the Author of the Plan of Salvation?," *Improvement Era* 56/5 (May 1953): 322, <https://archive.org/stream/improvementera5605unse#page/n27/mode/2up>].

31. Philosophy Index, s.v. "Substance dualism," accessed 10 July 2016, <http://www.philosophy-index.com/philosophy/mind/substance-dualism.php>; see also *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Dualism," revised February 29, 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dualism/#SubDua>.

The claim that Mormonism is “consistent with some accounts of physicalism and naturalism” lacks a footnote, which is unfortunate — it would be helpful to know more precisely of which accounts Cannon is speaking. *Physicalism* and *naturalism* hold that physical matter of the everyday kind — the sort that makes up tables and flowers and human brains — is all there is. There is no ineffable “spirit” or “mind” which exists on a different plane or level of reality; minds require only physical embodiment. To create an exact copy of my physical brain would be to completely duplicate my mental processes — I am “nothing but” my physical body.<sup>32</sup>

Cannon is correct that substance dualism does not quite capture Mormon doctrine — but it is misleading to leave the matter there with the claim that “some accounts” of physicalism do Mormon thought justice.

Why does this matter? Because the Transhumanist vision insists very strongly upon physicalism or naturalism. One thread of Transhumanist thought is convinced that the road to a posthuman future includes the ability to “upload” human minds to digital computers:

In her celebrated book *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999), N. Katherine Hayles summarizes the features of the posthuman condition: patterns of information are more essential to the state of being than any material instantiation; the embodiment in a biological substrate is seen as an accident of history rather than an inevitability of life; there is no immaterial soul, and consciousness is an epiphenomenon; the body is nothing more than a prosthesis, and to exchange this prosthesis for another is simply an extension of that relation; and a human being is capable of being seemingly articulated with intelligent machines. Posthuman existence meant that there is no demarcation between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot technology and human goals. In the posthuman condition there no separation between humans and their environment, between “the thing that thinks and the thing that is thought,” and “no inherent dichotomy between mind and matter.”<sup>33</sup>

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32. See extensive discussion in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. “Physicalism,” revised 9 March 2015, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/physicalism/>.

33. Tirosh-Samuelson, “Transhumanism as a Secularist Faith,” 714. See also Robert Pepperrell, *The Post-Human Condition* (Bristol, UK, and Portland, OR: Intellect, 2003 [1995]), 33–34.

Given how central such a vision of mind is to Transhumanism, it is not surprising that Cannon focuses on any parallels for it in LDS thought. He seems to invoke these ideas when he writes:

The ability to read and write data to and from every neuron in the brain begins to connect us experientially, both sensorially and emotionally, with each other and with our environment. ... The functions of the brain and body are virtualized, and we begin extending or transitioning our minds into more robust bodies, biological and otherwise — as innumerable and diverse as the stars. ...

Data storage and materials engineering ensures our minds and bodies are maintained or restored as needed in perpetuity, banishing death as we know it. (211)

Visions of reading and writing data to every individual neuron and the ability to “virtualize” the brain and “transition ... our minds” to other bodies (biological and otherwise) all echo the standard Transhumanist line. Likewise, “data storage” which “ensures our minds ... are maintained or restored as needed in perpetuity,” is bread-and-butter Transhumanism with no Mormon gloss whatever.

Nevertheless, Cannon seizes on the fact that LDS doctrine insists that spirit is also material: “There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter” (D&C 131:7).<sup>34</sup> So far, so good, but, he stops his analysis there and ignores the implications of the rest of the verse and the one that follows it:

7 There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter,  
but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by pure eyes;  
8 We cannot see it; but *when our bodies are purified* we shall  
see that it is all matter. (D&C 131:7–8, emphasis added)

Cannon is correct; classical substance dualism is not really at home in Mormonism. But physicalism and naturalism are likewise uneasy boarders in LDS thought. Spirit is matter, true — but a type of matter that cannot be perceived by mortals. This is not an invitation to create better electron microscopes, since glorified, perfected, *purified* bodies are needed to detect it.<sup>35</sup> Spirit matter is not amenable to scientific research,

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34. Cannon cites this verse, though he does not quote it (203; 215n29).

35. Alternatively, mortals can temporarily be aided and allowed to see matter that they do not normally perceive, as in a vision or visitation, for example.

measurement, or manipulation, and it is not simply a subset of “regular” matter. These caveats leave us a metaphysics that looks a lot like dualism.

The implications for a Mormon Transhumanism are substantial — any idea of uploading the mind, “virtualizing” it, off-loading its core functions to silicon, or backing up and restoring it is simply a non-starter. If we cannot detect the finer spirit matter, we cannot measure it. And if we cannot measure its properties and states, we can hardly instantiate it in another coarse physical medium. Reading and writing to each individual neuron — even if possible — is simply not enough.

Likewise, Cannon’s account of “brain and body preservation patients from previous decades [being] resuscitated” is implausible from an LDS point of view — a resuscitated brain requires something else that departs at death: the purer-material spirit.

A standard objection to physicalism is the issue of *qualia* — the interior, subjective *experience* of receiving sense input.<sup>36</sup> A canonical thought experiment involves a scientist who lives in a black and white world — for her entire life she has been surrounded by only shades of black and white. Despite this, she knows additional colors have been reported by other observers. She studies optics and visual processing and manages to learn everything about what happens to eyes and brains when they encounter visible light of the color frequency. Then suddenly one day she is able to walk out of her black-and-white world and into a world of color. She *sees* color for the first time. Does she know something more or something different than she knew before? Non-physicalists argue that she does: she knows what the *subjective* experience of color is like for her. A computer or robot could receive all the same inputs and do all the same signal processing and yet still not have the internal experience a conscious being can have.<sup>37</sup>

Not surprisingly, this remains a contentious issue and is one facet of what has been dubbed “the hard problem of consciousness.”<sup>38</sup> Some regard it as fundamentally insoluble, others as a non-problem.<sup>39</sup>

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36. One classic paper is Thomas Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be A Bat?”, *The Philosophical Review* 83/4 (October 1974): 435–50, [http://organizations.utep.edu/portals/1475/nagel\\_bat.pdf](http://organizations.utep.edu/portals/1475/nagel_bat.pdf).

37. Frank Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (April 1982): 127–37, <http://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil201/Jackson.pdf>. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting I reference this paper in this context.

38. David Chalmers, “Facing up to the problem of consciousness,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2/3 (1995): 200–19, <http://consc.net/papers/facing.html>.

39. An intriguing and highly accessible thought experiment is Arnold Zuboff, “The Story of a Brain,” quoted in Douglas R. Hofstadter and Daniel C. Dennett, eds.,



This entire issue has provoked an enormous philosophical literature. I do not expect that Cannon would have the space to settle or even address such issues, any more than I would attempt to do so here.<sup>40</sup> He should at least help the reader realize, however, that this presumption is a prerequisite for his arguments' cogency. I suspect most Latter-day Saints would be uncertain that physicalism in the sense required for his argument accurately reflects revealed doctrine.

### ***Engineering Spiritual Experiences***

I conclude with a final example of Cannon's thoroughgoing materialism (in the classical sense):

As spiritual experiences become easily reproducible and malleable, teachers shift focus from general encouragement to careful discernment between helpful and harmful esthetics. (211)

Of all Cannon's claims, this one troubled me most. His formulation appears to assume that:

1. "spiritual" experiences are strictly materialist in the scientific sense (or otherwise, they could not be easily reproduced by technology), and
2. these experiences are "malleable," meaning they can be controlled, altered and manipulated at will.

But this is not how LDS doctrine understands the workings of the Holy Spirit upon the believer. Mormons see such experiences as actual communication from one being to another. One can reproduce or manipulate such events with science no more than one could replace my telephone conversation with a friend by manipulating my auditory cortex so that I hallucinate about chatting, even though no one else is on the line. It might be a delightful aesthetic experience but not a conversation.

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*The Mind's I: Fantasies and reflections on self and soul I* (New York: Basic Books, 1981/2001): 202–12, <https://philarchive.org/archive/ZUBTSO-2v1>. Accounts by those who argue for physicalism/reductionism include: Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness* (Cambridge: M.I.T., Revised edition, 1988); Daniel Dennett, *Brainstorms* (Montgomery, VT: Bradford Books, 1978); Patricia S. Churchland, *Touching a Nerve: Our Brains, Our Selves* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2013).

40. A technical collection of recent thought by those who dispute physicalism is Robert C. Koons and George Bealer, editors, *The Waning of Materialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). A more accessible treatment by a leading advocate of this view is Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Thus, the inevitable conclusion from Cannon's approach seems to me to be:

3. Because they are strictly materialist (from a), and because they can be manipulated with technical means (from b), spiritual experiences are not "real" in the sense of being actual communication from a divine being (because a divine being is not needed to manipulate, reproduce, and control them — only science is).

Cannon pictures a future in which a techno-teacher, equipped with the ability to reproduce and alter spiritual experiences, can help the posthuman believer learn to "careful[ly] discern ... between helpful and harmful esthetics."

The point seems not to be the truth of the divine communication — because for Cannon's schema there is no divine being needed, and no "more pure matter" spirit to receive the divine communion. Instead, we have only brute, "common" matter responding on the level of neurons and neurochemicals.

One is reminded of C.S. Lewis' classic essay, *Men without Chests* — for everything is happening in the spiritual pupils' heads:

Values are now mere natural phenomena. Judgements of value are to be produced in the pupil as part of the conditioning. ... The ultimate springs of human action are no longer, for them, something given. They [the springs] have surrendered — like electricity: it is the function of the Conditioners [the Transhumanist technocratic teachers] to control, not to obey them. They know how to *produce* conscience [and spiritual experiences] and decide what kind of conscience [and spiritual experiences] they will produce. [The Conditioners and Transhumanist technocrats] themselves are outside, above.<sup>41</sup>

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41. *The Abolition of Man* (Oxford University Press, 1943), [https://archive.org/details/TheAbolitionOfMan\\_229](https://archive.org/details/TheAbolitionOfMan_229); reproduced in *The Essential C.S. Lewis*, ed. Lyle W. Dorsett (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 451–52, italics in original, material in square brackets is my own. Catholic philosopher Peter Kreeft's book-length discussion of Lewis' essay is well worth reading in this context: *C.S. Lewis for the Third Millennium: Six Essays on the Abolition of Man* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994).

## Conclusion

Like perhaps many readers, I began my study of Cannon's article knowing only a little about Transhumanism, and even less about the Mormon variety.

As should now be clear, I have come away neither convinced nor reassured. Cannon's presentation of even some of the basics of LDS doctrine seems shaky at best. The slightest parallel between Transhumanism and LDS thought is emphasized, but none of the profound and weighty differences are acknowledged or addressed. At best, the Transhumanism presented has a thin skin of Mormon-like terms, hiding a world of difference beneath.

As I concluded my research, I learned that the Mormon Transhumanist Association has annually surveyed its members about their beliefs. Approximately 14% of their membership responded to the 2014 survey: 59% of these were believers in God, while 21% were agnostics, 13% atheists, and 4% had "no opinion."<sup>42</sup> One must wonder in what meaningful sense an organization can embody "Mormon"<sup>43</sup> ideas if roughly 40% do not even affirm the existence of God.<sup>44</sup>

Although I believe what I have read of Mormon Transhumanism seriously misrepresents Mormonism, I do not attribute malign motives to Cannon or others who share his beliefs. The more contentious Transhumanist proposals are, for now, little more than amusing

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42. "Member Results Survey — 2014," *Mormon Transhumanist Association*, accessed 10 July 2016, <http://transfigurism.org/pages/about/member-survey-results/>.

43. It is popular in some circles to argue that anything Mormons do constitutes an authentically "Mormon" activity or belief. In a trivial sense this is true; it remains misleading, however, to conflate anything that some Mormons happen to do with the faith practiced by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or taught in its scriptures. Trying to appropriate the label "Mormon" for anything one wishes to do, say, or believe is more confusing than enlightening.

44. The previous year's survey had 68% theists and noted "Members Are Mostly LDS Theists But A Substantial Proportion Is Not[.] Non-Theist Composition Is Increasing." ["Member Results Survey — 2013," *Mormon Transhumanist Association*, accessed 10 July 2016, 24–25, <https://www.scribd.com/document/217324323/Mormon-Transhumanist-Association-Member-Survey-Results-2013>.] Given the relatively low number of participants in both surveys, and the risk that voluntary respondents are unrepresentative of the entire population, it is difficult to know what this means about the organization as a whole. One presumes that those who answer the survey are more likely to be actively involved in and committed to the organization. Thus the surveys may not perfectly capture the entire group's makeup but probably serve as a useful measure of the more involved members. The MTA, at least, relies upon the data to discuss their group's characteristics among themselves, so they must regard it as reasonably informative.

speculations, much like some of the unfortunate detours taken during High Priests' Group lessons on warm Sunday afternoons.<sup>45</sup> The *implications* of the Transhumanists' views are, however, much less amusing.

I suspect and hope that Cannon and other Mormon Transhumanists do not rely on their mistaken claims and premises to embrace the ultimate conclusions implied by them. That would not be unusual — people often avoid embracing the logical consequences of their beliefs, decreasing error at the cost of internal consistency.

But there is always the possibility that some members or interested outsiders will mistake these mistaken premises for an accurate account of LDS scripture and doctrine. It would be unfortunate if they followed those missteps to their logical end. There are enough Men Without Chests in the world.

**Gregory L. Smith** *studied research physiology and English at the University of Alberta but escaped into medical school before earning his bachelor's degree. After receiving his MD, he completed his residency in family medicine at St. Mary's Hospital in Montréal, Québec. There he learned the medical vocabulary and French Canadian slang that he didn't pick up in the France Paris Mission and won the Mervyn James Robson Award for Excellence in Internal Medicine.*

*He now practices rural family medicine in Alberta, with interests in internal medicine and psychiatry. A clinical preceptor for residents and medical students, he has been repeatedly honored for excellence in clinical teaching. He holds an appointment as an Associate Clinical Professor of Family Medicine at the University of Calgary. Since 2014 he has served as a community medical director for Alberta Health Services.*

*A member of FairMormon since 2005, he volunteers as their FairMormon Answers wiki managing editor. He was an associate editor of the Mormon Studies Review at BYU's Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship from 2011–2012. Smith has a particular research interest in Latter-day Saint plural marriage and has been published in the FARMS Review and elsewhere on this and other topics.*

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45. It is unclear whether the recent dissolution of High Priests' Groups (April 2018) will result in fewer unfortunate detours and amusing speculations.

*With 12 years of classical piano training, he is a lifelong audiophile and owns far too many MP3 files. A self-described biblioholic, he would probably be buried in books had he not discovered the Kindle and is grateful he didn't have e-books to distract him in medical school.*

*He lives happily with his one indulgent wife, four extraordinary children, and two cats.*



# RACE: ALWAYS COMPLICATED, NEVER SIMPLE

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Tarik D. LaCour

**Abstract:** *The concept that race has evolved rather than remaining static is not well understood, both outside and within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In *Religion of a Different Color*, W. Paul Reeve shows how the concept of race evolved from painting Mormons as nonwhite in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to “too white” by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

Review of W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). 352 pp. \$36.95 (hardcover), \$24.95 (paperback).

In December 2013 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints published an online essay titled “Race and the Priesthood.”<sup>1</sup> Who wrote the essay is unknown, but a note at the bottom states that the essay was written with the contributions of multiple scholars. It is not hard to understand why the essay was written; in the 40 years since the revelation on priesthood was received, the issue has not been addressed directly in a general conference talk. Many people have questions about who originally initiated the ban on blacks holding the priesthood: whether it was inspired and whether some of the myths that had permeated LDS culture were accurate. The essay dismissed many of the myths, but it left open the question of whether or not the ban was inspired. So while parts of the puzzle have been resolved, many questions remain.

Enter W. Paul Reeve, author of *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness*. Reeve is a historian and professor at the University of Utah, where he specializes in Utah history,

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1. “Race and the Priesthood,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, December 2013, <https://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood>.

Mormon history and the history of the American West; in other words, he is qualified to write about the issues of race as it relates to the LDS Church. Recently, Reeve was also appointed the first Mormon Studies professor at the University of Utah,<sup>2</sup> so we can expect more books on the history of blacks and the LDS Church in the coming years as Reeve continues his research. Additional reviews of Reeve's book have come from eminent LDS and non-LDS historians, such as Patrick Q. Mason, Richard Lyman Bushman, and Alexandra Griffin.

The subtitle of the book almost seems like an oxymoron: *Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness*. Isn't the problem with Mormons that they are *too* white? After all, at the recent press conference introducing Russell M. Nelson as the 17<sup>th</sup> president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a newspaper reporter raised the point that "the Church leadership is still white, male, American."<sup>3</sup> In addition, in the recent Broadway musical *The Book of Mormon*, all the original missionaries are Americans. There has not yet been an African-American General Authority of the LDS Church. How in the world could the LDS Church "struggle for whiteness"? It seems to be an area in which whites already flourish and even dominate.

Reeve, preempting these responses, says the following in the introduction to his book:

This book argues that one of those transitions was racial: from not securely white in the nineteenth century to too white by the twenty-first century. Being white equaled access to political, social, and economic power: all aspects of citizenship in which outsiders sought to limit or prevent Mormon participation. . . . The process was never linear and most often involved both

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2. Bob Mims, "The University of Utah's first Mormon Studies professor is a historian researching early black converts," *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 20, 2017, <https://www.sltrib.com/news/2017/09/20/u-prof-reeve-named-first-simmons-mormon-studies-professor/>.

3. See "First Presidency News Conference," YouTube video, 46:42, a press conference with the First Presidency held on January 16, 2018, posted by "Mormon Channel," 18:36, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8Cd3vcWYnc>. I will assume the reporter was referring to members of the two highest governing bodies of the Church (the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve) as non-Americans who have been part of the various quorums of the Seventy for at least a couple of decades. In addition, a non-American was recently sustained to the Quorum of the Twelve on March 31, 2018. See "Elder Ulisses Soares," *Newsroom*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, March 31, 2018, <https://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/elder-ulisses-soares>.



sides talking past each other. Yet, Mormons in the nineteenth century recognized their suspect racial position. (3)

This remark is fascinating in and of itself. Most of us (including me) assumed that Mormons were disliked primarily because of their religion, and that is true to a point. However, if Reeve is correct — and it seems he is — the main reason for the marginalization was that Mormons were not seen as being white at all; they were thought of as having formed a new, inferior race.

The cover photo of Reeve's book comes from an April 1904 picture in *Life* magazine. A person named Elder Berry (who looks suspiciously like Joseph F. Smith, the Church's president when the magazine cover first appeared) is shown holding hands with eight of his children. The caption underneath the picture reads: "Mormon Elder-berry — Out with His Six-Year-Olds, Who Take After Their Mothers."<sup>4</sup> Of the eight children, five are white, one is black, one is Asian, and the other is Indian. This picture was an attempt to show that Mormons embraced interracial marriage and hence were also thereby in a state of "racial decline."

Reeve, using this picture as a framework for his book, dedicates one chapter to the four white children, two chapters to the Indian child, four to the black child, and one chapter to the Asian child. He notes that just as in real life, not all children receive equal attention in his book (11).

The chapters on the white children (14–51) shows that while the children are from parts of the world notably white, early critics of the Church saw them as nonwhite because the children were mixed among the other races and because Utah — distant as it was from the eastern cities — was cut off from white-culture society. This was not seen as a joke; medical doctors submitted this thesis to peer-reviewed journals, and their papers were published (16–20). While there was pushback as to whether a race of people could be created in a short amount of time, the general consensus was that Mormons were something close to white but not fully white. As Reeve had noted earlier (6), only white people were fit to rule and lead in that time, so this was taken as evidence that the Mormons were not fit to be in the United States or to be leaders of American territories.

The two chapters on Indians (52–105) show that while the relations between Mormons and their Indian neighbors were largely cordial, the problem of racial regression remained because Mormons were encouraged to marry and did marry Indians. Given that this was the era just after the age of Andrew Jackson, the public had an unfavorable view of Indians, and by association the view of Mormons declined as they intermarried with

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4. Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 2.

them. Furthermore, since the Book of Mormon claims (according to the critics of that time) that the American continent belonged rightfully to the Indians, this led to understandable tension (55-74).

The chapters on blacks cover three main topics: the Church's attitude toward slavery, its attitude toward miscegenation, and the origins of the priesthood ban. Reeve notes that for the most part of his life (after a statement in 1836) Joseph Smith was consistently against slavery and was open to the idea of blacks living among whites, a radical view during that time (126-27). He also proposed that profits from the sale of public lands could be used to pay slave owners for their freed slaves (127). However, Smith was consistently against miscegenation, though the Church had no official policy about the matter during his lifetime (127). It is also well documented that Smith was aware of several black people being ordained to the priesthood and had no qualms about it (106, 126).

During the administration of Brigham Young, things began to change. At the outset, Young generally had the same outlook as Smith: he was against slavery and had no problems with blacks being ordained to the priesthood. In a remark he made to William McCary during an unofficial Church trial, he remarked that Walker Lewis, a black barber, was "one of the best elders" (131). In 1852 he formally announced the priesthood ban before the Utah legislature (rather than in a Church gathering), justifying it by saying that blacks were descendants of Cain and were cursed in regard to the priesthood (144-46), a theme that would recur until the ban was lifted in 1978.

Reeve concludes the book by saying that Mormons have gone from being described as not white at all to too white by the time Mitt Romney ran for president in 2012 (269-72). This does seem to be the case, but if Reeve is correct, it did not have to be that way. Mormons could have been seen as the most progressive Church when it came to matters of race. Instead, it chose to retrench and thereby became seen as one of the most regressive and is paying the consequences in the modern day and age. To be sure, many members of the Church are not white, and the Church is growing most rapidly in nonwhite areas (Africa and Asia, for example). But the afterglow of a checkered racial past remains visible. Only time will correct it.

One of the most important books in Mormon history in the last 50 years is undoubtedly Richard Bushman's biography of Joseph Smith. Why? It helps readers understand Mormonism and Joseph Smith as well as they can be understood and therefore better grasp the community of the Saints that flowed from the divine, special revelations to Joseph

as prophet, seer, and revelator. *Rough Stone Rolling*,<sup>5</sup> coupled with the publication of the Joseph Smith Papers, assists the Saints in doing this. However, given that race is such a fascinating issue in and of itself and the fact that the issue of race in relationship to many things is not well understood by the Latter-day Saints, Professor Reeve's *Religion of a Different Color* adds significantly to understanding the cultural milieu in which the Church was founded as well as understanding one of the more controversial aspects of the Church's subsequent history. Reeve has written a truly commendable book that should be in the library of every member of the LDS Church.

**Tarik D. LaCour** is a philosopher, writer, and senior undergraduate student majoring in philosophy at Utah Valley University. His primary research interests are in the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of biology, and bioethics. In addition to academic pursuits, he is an avid sports fan and blogs at [www.logicalpointofview.com](http://www.logicalpointofview.com).

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5. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling: A Cultural Biography of Mormonism Founder* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005).



## THE CASE OF THE MISSING COMMENTARY

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Brian C. Hales

**Abstract:** *The first published commentary on Doctrine and Covenants Section 132 is a lengthy volume with much material that deals directly with the revelation as well as extended discussions that go well beyond Joseph Smith's dictated text. Much of the included material has been previously published, although several new historical items are presented, including a detailed examination of the provenance of the revelation. An apparent weakness of the book involves key themes mentioned in the revelation but minimized or otherwise ignored in this extended commentary. Examples include the possible meanings of the "law" (v. 6), importance of sealing authority (vv. 7–20), possible polyandry (v. 41), Emma's offer (v. 51), and others.*

Review of William Victor Smith, *Textual Studies of the Doctrine and Covenants: The Plural Marriage Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2018). 273 pp. \$26.95.

As part of their "Textual Studies of the Doctrine and Covenants" series, Greg Kofford Books introduces *The Plural Marriage Revelation* (hereafter *TPMR*) by BYU mathematics professor William Victor Smith. That no theologian or historian has previously published a treatise of what is now LDS Doctrine and Covenants, Section 132 is not surprising. Openly discussing the topic of plural marriage has become more comfortable for mainstream Church members only since the release of the 2013 Gospel Topic essay "Plural Marriage at Kirtland and Nauvoo."<sup>1</sup>

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1. See "Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo," Topics, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, October 2014, <https://www.lds.org/topics/plural-marriage-in-kirtland-and-nauvoo?lang=eng>.

The author of *TPMR* has accumulated a great deal of material in this extensive volume, much of which is directly related to Section 132. He begins by discussing the provenance and publication of the revelation, providing readers with a valuable basic introduction (1–20). Also included is a short chapter addressing the different introductory headings applied to the revelation in each published version. Subtle differences suggest that over time, the revelation may have been viewed differently by Church leaders (23–26).

Chapters three through ten explore Section 132, usually by quoting a few verses at the beginning of a chapter and then using excerpts from verses as subheadings throughout the remainder. The included discussion contains useful explanatory analyses of many parts of the revelation. In addition, the author routinely projects the theme in the verses forward chronologically, sometimes well into the 20th century (47, 53, 67, 75, 79, etc.). This seems to be a primary reason for the increased size of the volume. The additional historical data may interest general readers but may be less helpful to individuals who seek to drill down on the teachings and history of Section 132.

Like many history books by first-time authors, *TPMR* has problems, including historical inaccuracies,<sup>2</sup> indications of insufficient research,<sup>3</sup>

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2. *TPMR*: “Soon after Smith’s death in 1844, sealing of the living to the dead began to be performed in the Nauvoo Temple. These sealings would cease when Brigham Young’s followers began their trek west, and they were not resumed until the temple in St. George, Utah, was completed in 1877 — even though sealings between living persons were being performed in the Salt Lake Endowment House and in Utah homes throughout the intervening time.” (66–67) This is partially inaccurate: 37,715 marital sealings for the dead were performed vicariously between 1846–1877. See Richard O. Cowan, *Temple Building Ancient and Modern* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 1971), 29. See also pages 15–16, 35–36, 58, etc.

3. The author accepts accounts describing how Emma Smith burned the revelation (15, 101, 154) as recounted in Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 17 (August 9, 1874):159. Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses* 13 (October 7, 1869):193. Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 226. But other historical accounts are ignored that portray the destruction differently, as in William E. McLellan, M.D. to President Joseph Smith [III], Independence, Jackson Co. Missouri, July 1872, original in Community of Christ CHL, copy at CHL, MS 9090; Isaac Sheen in Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy* (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Co., 1914), 153; Mary B. (Smith) Norman, Idaho Falls, Idaho, to Ina (Smith) Coolbrith, 27 March 1908, original and typescript, Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, P13, f951, Community of Christ Library Archives. See also pages 15, 101, 149, 154, 156.

redundancies,<sup>4</sup> and other potential deficiencies. I found the overall organization sometimes to be muddled, as primary topics shift rapidly back and forth. The discussion often relies on the same secondary sources, when primary documents might have been more useful.

Yet, rather than focus on these smaller issues, this review will concentrate on several significant topics mentioned in the revelation which *TPMR* seems to ignore or discuss incompletely. It appears that many readers of a commentary like *TPMR* will wish for a more expanded discussion on these subjects. For this reason, the remainder of this article will deviate from the normal book-review format in an attempt to provide a few samples of what that additional analysis might have looked like.

### Verse 41 and Polyandry

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Joseph Smith's polygamy is the accusation of polyandry: the act of a woman having two simultaneous husbands with whom she could experience sexual relations and have children.<sup>5</sup> Verse 41 may allude to such a state:

And as ye have asked concerning adultery, verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man receiveth a wife in the new and everlasting covenant, and if she be with another man, and I have not appointed unto her by the holy anointing, she hath committed adultery and shall be destroyed.

Concerning this verse, *TPMR* explains:

Although a husband and wife might be sealed, the revelation leaves open the possibility of the wife being "appointed" to someone else. Thus, sexual relations with another man would only be adultery if she were not appointed to him. Though the language here is somewhat confusing, it may be interpreted (together with verses 42 and 61) in terms of polyandry or "dual wives." (117-18)

*TMPR* clarifies in a footnote: "Samuel Brown coined the term 'dual wives' for Joseph Smith's sealed wives who were simultaneously married to other men" (118n53).<sup>6</sup>

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4. See "Sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise" subheading (44, 67) and quotations from Clayton's diary (59, 77).

5. See *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary: Complete Text Reproduced Micrographically*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1971), s.v. "Polyandry."

6. It might be argued that "dual wives" provides a clearer explanation than "polyandrous wives," while conveying the same meaning.

Unfortunately, *TPMR*'s commentary here seems to address verse 41 very superficially. A closer look shows that it speaks of a woman who is *first* sealed in "the new and everlasting covenant." Then she is "with" a man she may have been "appointed" to in a "holy anointing."

Up to 14 women with legal husbands were *sealed* to Joseph Smith (in the new and everlasting covenant). None reported that their ceremonies were anointings or appointments. For verse 41 to apply to his circumstances and to create polyandry or dual wives, the following sequence would have needed to occur:

1. A woman is sealed to Joseph Smith in "the new and everlasting covenant."
2. The woman is also appointed to another man in a holy anointing, ostensibly her legal husband (some of whom were not members of the Church).<sup>7</sup>
3. Last, observers must accept the assumption that the holy anointing creates a second husband-wife relationship so she can "be with" the second man without committing adultery. An alternate interpretation is that the appointment superseded the sealing (which would have left the woman with still only one husband).

Rather than investigate these details, *TPMR* offers a rather simplistic if not inaccurate interpretation, declaring that verse 41 refers to polyandry or dual wives. Understandably, *TPMR* may not wish to enter the controversy surrounding the question of polyandry in Nauvoo. Yet explicating the possible meanings of the "holy anointing" and being "appointed" in verse 41 are potentially some of the most important historical and theological discussions *TPMR* could have supplied its readers. Instead, *TPMR* embraces the idea that Joseph practiced polyandry, then quotes a modern author (Sam Brown), then moves on.<sup>8</sup>

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7. Verse 41 describes the woman as first being sealed to a husband and then "with" a second "man" to whom she had been appointed. Unspecified is the timing of the appointment — before or after the sealing? Historically, Joseph was sealed only to his plural wives. Since none of the available accounts of any Nauvoo polygamous unions use the words *appointment* or *holy anointing* to describe the ceremony joining them in plurality, it appears the sealing would have occurred first.

8. It might be argued that the concept of "dual wives" as discussed by Samuel Morris Brown [*In Heaven as it is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2012), 242] fails to address the issue of Joseph Smith's sealings to legally married women either theologically or historically.



When I first started studying polyandry around 2009, virtually every published author who had addressed Mormon polygamy in any depth assured his or her audience that Joseph Smith practiced polyandry.<sup>9</sup> As I researched the historical documentation surrounding the topic, I soon recognized that there is no unambiguous evidence to support it. I wondered why these accomplished writers would be so secure in their conclusions. Several years passed before I realized a possible connection. In their books and articles, these authors portray Joseph Smith as a hypocrite and an adulterer. In their chapters and essays, they may not openly tell their readers or speak critically, but their descriptions of his behavior portray him as contradicting biblical teachings and violating his own instructions in his plural marriage activities.

Evidently for this set of authors, believing that Joseph simply added polyandry (one woman with multiple husbands) to polygyny (one man with multiple wives) didn't take much convincing. Their conclusions were, in my opinion, not based on a critical analysis of the pertinent historical data.

Predictably, observers who already believe Joseph was driven by libido may conclude (without requiring compelling supportive evidence) that he augmented polygyny with polyandry. It seems that in their eyes, Joseph-the-fraud might be expected to behave that way. Because most non-Mormons embrace this perspective by default, it is easy to see how consensus rather than documentation could create and perpetuate social momentum in support of this position.

### **Historical Unreality?**

It seems that reconstructions that depict Joseph Smith as a polyandrist contain an element of unreality regarding the expected reactions of 1840s members, nonmembers, and even detractors. Modern historians have described how Joseph struggled to introduce polygyny, encountering significant pushback from his wife Emma, several leaders, and other potential plural wives, not to mention the onslaught of condemnations from critics. Ironically, those same writers often portray Joseph as introducing polyandry — a much more controversial practice — without any identifiable additional challenges.

It seems Joseph would have faced obstacles to polyandry that didn't exist for polygyny. The Old Testament describes Abraham (Genesis 16:1-6) and Jacob (Genesis 29:30) as engaging in plural marriages. In contrast, polyandry is condemned as "adultery":

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9. Included were Fawn Brodie, D. Michael Quinn, Lawrence Foster, Todd Compton, Gary Bergera, George D. Smith, and others.

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. (Romans 7:2-3.)

Likewise, all known references to polyandry by early Church leaders and members also condemn it. Brigham Young asked in 1852, “What do you think of a woman having more husbands than one?” and then answered, “This is not known to the law.”<sup>10</sup> Six years later Orson Pratt instructed: “God has strictly forbidden, in this Bible, plurality of husbands, and proclaimed against it in his law.”<sup>11</sup> Belinda Marden Pratt wrote in 1854: “Why not a plurality of husbands as well as a plurality of wives? To which I reply: 1<sup>st</sup> God has never commanded or sanctioned a plurality of husbands.”<sup>12</sup> On October 8, 1869, Apostle George A. Smith taught that “a plurality of husbands is wrong.”<sup>13</sup> His wife, Bathsheba Smith, was asked in 1892 if it would “be a violation of the laws of the church for one woman to have two husbands living at the same time.” She replied: “I think it would.”<sup>14</sup> These statements do not mean that Joseph Smith did not practice polyandry, they just indicate that he probably could not have done it *effortlessly*, as some polygamy authors portray.

Here it should be pointed out that it is impossible to prove a negative. The lack of evidence is not the evidence of lack. So no matter what historical documentation is presented to indicate that Joseph did not engage in true polyandry, proof will not be achieved. Despite such limitations, the idea that verse 41 describes dual wives, as *TPMR* suggests, would be strengthened by providing explanations for the following observations:

- There is no unambiguous evidence that a woman in Nauvoo believed she had two husbands at the same time with whom she could experience sexual relations without committing adultery.

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10. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 1 (August 1, 1852):361.

11. Orson Pratt, *Journal of Discourses* 18 (July 11, 1875):55-56.

12. Belinda Marden Pratt, “Defense of Polygamy: By a Lady of Utah, in a Letter to Her Sister in New Hampshire,” *Millennial Star* 16 (July 29, 1854): 471.

13. George Albert Smith, *Journal of Discourses*, 13 (October 8, 1869): 41.

14. Bathsheba Smith, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent’s testimony (part 3), page 347, question 1142.

- There is no evidence of a woman being appointed to a man in a holy anointing in Joseph's lifetime.
- Polyandry would have been an explosive teaching and practice, much more controversial than polygyny.
- No Nauvoo polygamists complained about polyandry, but they did complain about polygyny.
- Section 132 condemns polyandry in verses 42, 61–63.
- No legal husband (of the alleged polyandrous wives) left any complaint against Joseph Smith.
- No alleged polyandrous wife or family member later defended polyandry as an acceptable martial relationship or as a teaching originating with Joseph Smith.
- Antagonists like John C. Bennett, or polygamy-insider William Law, never complained about polyandry.
- No mention of polyandry, either favorably or critically, is mentioned in any publication during Joseph's lifetime or for years afterwards.
- Based on D&C 22:1 and 132:4, it is possible a time-and-eternity sealing ceremony would have caused the legal marriage to be “done away,” thus creating the equivalence of a Church divorce between the woman and her civil spouse.

Polyandry proponents (including apparently the author of *TPMR*) may continue to defend Joseph Smith as a second husband for some Nauvoo women no matter what evidence is presented. Yet transparency in contextualizing the purported behavior provides important insights regarding the possibility that it occurred.

Returning now to verse 41 and possible meanings of the “holy anointing,” traditionally the word *holy* can refer to a temple activity or rite. *Anointing* too is a ceremony that commonly occurs in a temple setting. Temple ordinances that are administered to couples rather than to individuals include marriage sealings and the highest temple ordinances. One interpretation posits that the higher ordinance is the “holy anointing” mentioned.<sup>15</sup> Because there is no evidence that this type of priesthood dynamic — a holy anointing appointment that supersedes a marriage sealing — ever occurred, this interpretation cannot be documented by historical data.

The possibility that Joseph Smith entered into polyandrous relationships will continue to be a lightning rod for critics, despite the evidentiary

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15. I appreciate Don Bradley, who first suggested this interpretation to me.

problems. Regardless, it seems that discussing the various interpretations of verse 41 (and their respective accompanying controversies) would be useful in any book that attempts to explicate Section 132.

### Verse 51 and Emma's "Offer"

One of the more common questions raised by readers of Section 132 involves the "offer" to Emma mentioned in verse 51 (142-43):

Verily, I say unto you: A commandment I give unto mine handmaid, Emma Smith, your wife, whom I have given unto you, that she stay herself and partake not of that which I commanded you to offer unto her; for I did it, saith the Lord, to prove you all, as I did Abraham, and that I might require an offering at your hand, by covenant and sacrifice.

A strength of *TPMR* comes as it discusses possible "offers," including that it was "maybe an economic one" (143). Also in support of either polyandry or a divorce, it mentions giving Emma "the choice of another partner" (143). "[William] Law claimed that Joseph had offered Emma another husband as compensation if she would cease opposition to polygamy. Given the strange relationships and secret practices of Nauvoo, Law's accusation can't be dismissed completely" (144).

*TPMR's* discussion of divorce and a possible financial settlement is commendable; it provides new research and previously unpublished data (148). However, a problem for me occurs as it stops by listing only three potentialities (divorce, polyandry, or an economic offer).

A fourth interpretation — the most likely in my view — is that the offer represented a physical separation, perhaps a local move or even taking their children to New York for a time, where she would be away from the tensions and turmoil of plural marriage. Mary Ann Barzee Boice recalled that at one point, "It was rumored ... that she [Emma] got in such a rage about it [plural marriage] that she left home and went down to Quincy, but came back again while I was there."<sup>16</sup> The timing of this incident is unknown. Nauvoo Church member Joseph Lee Robinson recalled the more substantial plan:

She [Emma] was determined he should not get another [plural wife], if he did she was determined to leave and when she heard this, she, Emma, became very angry and said she

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16. John Boice and Mary Ann Boice, "Record," MS 8883, Microfilm of manuscript, 1884-1885, 178-79.

would leave and was making preparations to go to her people in the State of New York. It came close to breaking up his family. However, he succeeded in saving her at that time but the prophet felt dreadfully bad over it.<sup>17</sup>

Rather than supporting one of the possibilities as the most likely, the issue is left open-ended in *TPMR*.

### ***TPMR's Polygamy Tunnel Vision***

Another discussion that seems to be missing from *TPMR* is the exploration of the different views regarding the importance of plural marriage in Joseph Smith's overall cosmology. Instead, it consistently manifests a type of polygamy tunnel vision of a "seeming inseparability of polygamy and eternal sealing" (2). "So much of Mormon theology [is] centrally tied to plurality" (4). "The ability to retain or remit sins in the context of the revelation highlights the importance of plural marriage in Joseph Smith's broader narrative of salvation and exaltation" (132).

Consistent with this view, *TPMR* refers to Section 132 as the "plural marriage revelation" 159 times and as the "polygamy revelation" three times. In contrast, it is referenced as the "celestial marriage revelation" or "eternal marriage revelation" zero times. These latter two labels could also be appropriately used, depending on context, but that context is generally absent in *TPMR* (see below).

This view is important, especially when interpreting the word "law" in verse 6: "And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God." What is this "law" that must be obeyed to avoid damnation?

*TPMR* offers an opinion: "The meaning of the word 'law' in this particular revelation was historically interpreted as referring to authorized polygamy" (37) and further explains: "The revelation [makes] clear that after receiving knowledge of the *law of plural marriage*, a failure to participate resulted in damnation (v. 4)" (86; emphasis added). This narrow interpretation is reflected elsewhere: "In order to be exalted in God's presence one must fulfill all of the sacraments including, in this case, participation in polygamy" (35).

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17. Joseph Lee Robinson, *The Journal of Joseph Lee Robinson: Mormon Pioneer*, Dr. Oliver Preston Robinson and Mary Robinson Egan, ed., 82. See also W. Wyl, pseud. [Wilhelm Ritter von Wymetal], *Mormon Portraits, or the Truth about Mormon Leaders from 1830 to 1886* (Salt Lake City: Tribune Printing and Publishing Co., 1886), 57.

While LDS leaders and members in the past have used words like *law*, *covenant*, *practice*, *principle*, and *commandment* interchangeably, plural marriage was more commonly referred to as a *doctrine*, *principle*, or *practice*. A review of references to the practice in early general conference discourses shows that polygamy and plural marriage were seldom referred as a *law*.<sup>18</sup> (See the summary in the table on the opposite page.)

In addition, it doesn't appear that Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and John Taylor ever taught that polygamy was God's law commanded of all peoples in all places and times.<sup>19</sup> In 1883, President Taylor recognized a distinction between the "law of celestial marriage" and the "principle of plural marriage": "He [God] has told us about our wives and our children being sealed to us, that we might have a claim on them in eternity. He has revealed unto us the law of celestial marriage, associated with which is the principle of plural marriage."<sup>20</sup>

Between the early 1840s and 1890, plurality was taught as a commandment to Church members, who were generally expected to comply. Yet like the religious practices of circumcision or animal sacrifice in past millennia, polygamy was historically a temporary commandment, not an eternal law. Teachings from the New Testament church and the Book of Mormon demonstrate that polygamy was not then practiced or commanded.

### Monogamists "Receive Me Not?"

*TPMR* drives home its troubling interpretation that the "law" is strictly polygamy in a subsection entitled "They Receive Me Not" (82), which quotes a portion of verse 25: "Broad is the gate, and wide the way that leadeth to the deaths; and many there are that go in thereat, because they receive me not, neither do they abide in my law." According to *TPMR*, this verse makes "the revelation a natural touchstone for later claims of polygamy being a requirement for the highest of heavenly exaltations" (76).

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18. See LDS General Conference Corpus, Brigham Young University, accessed March 30, 2018, <https://www.lds-general-conference.org/>.

19. Joseph F. Smith explained that plural marriage "is a law of the Gospel pertaining to the celestial kingdom, applicable to all gospel dispensations, when commanded and not otherwise, and neither acceptable to God or binding on man unless given by commandment, not only so given in this dispensation, but particularly adapted to the conditions and necessities thereof." Joseph F. Smith, *Journal of Discourses* 20 (July 7, 1878):26-27.

20. John Taylor, *Journal of Discourses* 24 (1883):229; emphasis added.

	All	1800s					1900s										2000s	
		'50s	'60s	'70s	'80s	'90s	'00s	'10s	'20s	'30s	'40s	'50s	'60s	'70s	'80s	'90s	'00s	'10s
Doctrine of Plural Marriage	14		2	3	6			1	1	1								
Doctrine of Polygamy	12	3	4	3	2													
Doctrine of Plurality of Wives	17	5	5	6	1													
Doctrine of a Plurality of Wives	5	4		1														
Principle of Plurality of Wives	6	1	3	1	1													
Principle of Plural Marriage	10		1	3	3	2			1									
Principle of Polygamy	2		1	1														
Practice of Polygamy	6	2	1		1			2										
Practice of Plural Marriage	9				1	1	2			1	3					1		
Practice of a Plurality of Wives	1				1													
Practice of Plurality of Wives	1			1														
Law of a Plurality of Wives	0																	
Law of Polygamy	1			1														
Law of Plural Marriage	2				1									1				
Law of Plurality of Wives	0																	
Polygamy Law	0																	
Plural Marriage Law	0																	

Wording used to refer to plural marriage in LDS General Conferences, by decade.

In other words, rejecting polygamy is the same as not receiving Christ. “By 1935, Church leaders had reached a point where they encouraged law enforcement to break up polygamist families and raid collective compounds where polygamists gathered to practice their way of life. ... The Church gradually took a strong adversarial position after 1910” (83). For *TPMR*, Church leaders and members who rejected the unauthorized polygamists “after 1910” were guilty, according to D&C 132:25.

Section 132 mentions the word *law* 32 times. A few seem to refer specifically to plural marriage (see vv. 64–65), but *TPMR* leaves no room for other interpretations. This view will please Mormon fundamentalists who continue to marry polygamously. Critics too will enjoy an interpretation that alleges that all Church members today are going to be damned because they are monogamists.

*TPMR* defends this position by quoting Brigham Young: “The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy. Others attain unto a glory and may even be permitted to come into the presence of the Father and the Son; but they cannot reign as kings in glory” (77).<sup>21</sup> However, earlier in the same discourse President Young proclaimed the more general commandment that the Saints were obligated to follow, telling the congregation, “If you desire with all your hearts to obtain the blessings which Abraham obtained, you will be polygamists *at least in your faith*, or you will come short of enjoying the salvation and the glory which Abraham has obtained.”<sup>22</sup> Brigham Young pointed out that the principle of plural marriage, which constitutes one aspect of celestial marriage, must be faithfully accepted by all exalted beings, whether they practice it or not.

### How Important Is Sealing Authority?

In defense of *TPMR*’s strict interpretation of the word *law*, the revelation was given in response to Joseph Smith’s question about plural marriage:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines. (D&C 132:1)

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21. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 11 (August 19, 1866):269.

22. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.



However, the possibility that Joseph's question elicited a broader response from God, one that included plural marriage but was not limited to it, is not considered. This situation occurred in 1833 when Joseph Smith asked God concerning the use of tobacco during Church meetings.<sup>23</sup> The Lord responded by giving the Saints a general health code we now call the "Word of Wisdom" (D&C 89). God's answer to Joseph's question included a discussion of tobacco use, but that topic comprised just one verse (v. 8) in a much broader explanation of health issues.

Three observations indicate that the "law" in verse 6 might be more than just polygamy. First, after verse 1, plural marriage is not specifically mentioned again until verse 34. Second, God states that he is revealing a *new* and everlasting covenant (vv. 4, 6); polygamy would not have been new to Joseph, who had been reading the Bible for many years. Last, the next 19 verses introduce and describe a novel theological concept — an authority that can seal marriages so they persist beyond death (see Figure 1.)<sup>24</sup>

The idea that priesthood authority could seal a marriage so that it would continue after the resurrection was essentially unheard of in the 1840s. A few other religious authors had promoted the possibility of the continuation of gender and even marriage after death.<sup>25</sup> Yet, describing a priesthood authority that could create such unions and even seal children to their parents constituted a doctrinal innovation far more singular than polygamy.<sup>26</sup>

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23. See Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 12 (January 12, 1868):157–58.

24. Several scriptures known to Joseph refer to a general binding or sealing authority. Christ declared to Peter: "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" (Matthew 16:19). Similarly, a divine promise to a prophet named Nephi in the Book of Mormon explains: "Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people" (Helaman 10:7). Neither reference specifies marriages as within the scope of the sealing authority promised, but both mention a power that could create a bond that would persist into the afterlife.

25. For example, Swedish scientist, theologian, and minister Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) taught that marriage could continue in heaven. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and its Wonders and Hell from Things Heard and Seen* (Swedenborg Foundation, December 1, 2001), trans. George F. Dole, 382–83; and *The Delights of Wisdom Pertaining to Conjugal Love* (New York, American Swedenborg Printing and Publishing Society, 1892), 27–56.

26. *TPMR* discusses sealing a person up to eternal life, as mentioned in D&C 68:12: "And of as many as the Father shall bear record, to you shall be given power to seal them up unto eternal life." For example, Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner wrote that

1 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto my servant Joseph, that whosoever as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, saith that my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, in touching the promise and blessing of their having many wives and concubines:  
 2 Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.  
 3 Therefore, prepare the heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you, for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same.  
 4 Now behold, I reveal unto you a new and an everlasting covenant, and if ye abide not that covenant, there are condemnations, for ye are not obedient to the commandment, and ye are not obedient to the law which I have given unto you.  
 5 For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world.  
 6 And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was revealed for the fathers of my glory, and he that receiveth a father thereof must abide under this law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.  
 7 And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, connections, 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 saith, saith as well for time and for all eternity, and that too must hold, by revelation and confirmation through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and he that is given that power in the earth is he on whom the power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred), are of no effect, virtual, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead, for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead.  
 8 Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion.  
 9 I will accept of an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name?  
 10 Or will I continue at your hands that which I have not commanded?  
 11 And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I said my Father, command unto you, before the world was?  
 12 I am the Lord thy God, and I give unto you this commandment—that no man shall come unto the Father but by me, or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord.  
 13 And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or jurisdictions, or powers, or things of like nature, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me in my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God.  
 14 For whatsoever things remain are by me, and whatsoever things are not by me shall be broken and destroyed.  
 15 Therefore, if a man marry here a wife in the world, and for many her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her as long as he is in the world and with her when they are divorced and marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world, therefore, they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are appointed angels in heaven, with the Father, to minister for those who are worthy of a full man, and an exalting, and an eternal weight of glory.  
 16 For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not given, but are angels of God forever and ever.  
 17 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity, if that covenant is not by me or by my word, which is my law, and is not sealed by the holy Spirit of promise, though he when I have anointed and appointed unto this power, then it is not valid neither of force when they are out of this world, because they are not joined by me, saith the Lord, neither by my word when they are out of the world it cannot be received there, because the angels and the gods are appointed there, by whom they cannot pass, they cannot, therefore, inherit my glory, for my house is a house of order, saith the Lord God.  
 18 And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood, and it shall be said unto them that they shall come forth in the first resurrection, and it shall be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection, and shall inherit exaltation, kingdoms, principautés, and performances, all things and together, then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that he shall come so much more surely to that eternal blood, and it shall be in my presence, and cannot be shaken; and he shall be sealed unto that eternal blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath said unto them, in time, and through all eternity, and shall be of full force when they are out of the world, and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are not flesh, to

**Question about plural marriage (verse 1).**

**The next 19 verses discuss sealing authority.**

Figure 1.

## God's Four-Example-Tutorial Teaching about Sealing Authority

One of the more remarkable and singular aspects of Section 132 is found between verses 7 and 20, where God provides a short tutorial to help His followers understand the sealing authority. Verse 7 begins by declaring that without special authority from God, “All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations” made between men and women on this world will end at death.

Verse 7 also announces a priesthood authority that can circumvent this natural order of dissolution, but it is strictly controlled: “One” man (who is described as “anointed” and “appointed”) must authorize all sealing ceremonies, and “there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred.”

in 1831, Joseph Smith had been inspired “to seal me up to everlasting life.” (Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, “Statement” signed February 8, 1902, typescript, Vesta Crawford Papers, copy, MS 125, bx 1 fd 11, Marriott Library. Original owned by Mrs. Nell Osborne.) These early sealings were performed for individuals, not couples, and were not seen as influencing relationships in the hereafter.

The next five verses (8–12) reemphasize the rigid regulations associated with this power: God’s house is a “house of order,” and the Lord will not receive “that which I have not appointed.”

The subsequent eight verses give four specific examples of how the sealing power functions:

- Example 1 (verses 13–14) deals with “everything that is in the world” that is not sealed by God’s word “shall not remain after men are dead.”
- Example 2 (verses 15–17) narrows the scope by dealing with marriage relationships. It declares that “if a man marry him a wife” but not using sealing authority, then their marriage is “not of force when they are dead.” To further emphasize the need for proper authority, these verses describe in some detail the eternal status of unsealed men and women:

Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.

For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever. (D&C 132:16–17.)

The consequences are clearly described. Without the sealing authority (controlled by the “one” man), people on earth might be civilly married, but those unions do not persist. In the next life they live “separately and singly” and are “without exaltation.”<sup>27</sup> We don’t know how that kind of eternal existence contrasts with an

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27. *TPMR* might disagree, instead insisting that the temple endowment ceremony somehow contributed the needed authority: “For a marriage covenant to continue into the afterlife, the angels and gods guarding heaven must be able to recognize the authority by which that covenant was made. This may have referenced the endowment ritual” (68).

eternal marriage relationship, except that within the context of the revelation, it is a form of damnation.

- Example 3 (verse 18) explains that “if a man marry a wife, and make a covenant with her for time and for all eternity,” even employing the language of a temple sealing, if that ceremony is not authorized “through him whom I have anointed and appointed unto this power, then it is not valid neither of force when they are out of the world.” Toward the end of this verse God reiterates: “my house is a house of order.”

In other words, freelance ordinances mimicking the verbiage of an official ceremony will not be acceptable. Although participants might be sincere and claim personal revelations (whatever their source), the permission of the key holder is needed in every case.

- Example 4 (verses 19–20) represents a sort of climax of the lesson. After three examples of failed eternal sealings, these verses explain the rewards of a covenant entered into through proper authority. “If a man marry a wife,” that is, a monogamous couple, and the ceremony is performed “by him who is anointed” and they live worthily, then the marriage “shall be of full force when they are out of the world.”

Not only does their marriage persist beyond death, they receive “exaltation and glory in all things” and “shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them.”

Joseph Smith had alluded to these incomprehensible blessings in a discourse delivered three months earlier: “Here then is Etl. [eternal] life[,] to know the only wise and true God you have got to learn how to be a God yourself.”<sup>28</sup> Verses 19–20 describe this process, called *deification*.

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28. Andrew F. Ehat, and Lyndon W. Cook, eds. *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 350.

It requires a sealing ordinance performed by proper authority of a worthy couple. Polygamy is not mentioned.

Within verses 8–20, the revelation goes to great lengths to teach readers so they will understand (and not misunderstand) the new concept being revealed. As a divine teaching device, it may be unique in all scripture.

### **Nauvoo Teachings of Eternal Marriage Without Plural Marriage**

While available accounts of Joseph Smith’s discourses contain few references to eternal marriage, a January 5, 1844, letter from Nauvoo Church member Jacob Scott to his daughter Mary Warnock indicates that such doctrines were known by rank-and-file members in late 1843. Scott wrote, “Several Revelations of great utility, & uncommon interest have been lately communicated to Joseph & the Church; but where you are you cannot obey them; one Tis that all Marriage contracts or Covenants are to be ‘Everlasting[’, that is: The parties (if the[y] belong to the Church) and will obey the will of God in this relationship to each other; are to be married for both Time and Eternity.”<sup>29</sup> He then discusses proxy marital sealing ordinances:

And as respects those whose partners were dead, before this Revelation was given to the Church; they have the privilege to be married to their deceased husbands, or wives (as the case may be) for eternity, and if it is a man who desires to be married to his deceased wife; a Sister in the Church stands as Proxy, or as a representative of the deceased in attending to the marriage ceremony; and so in the case of a widow who desires to be joined in a everlasting covenant to her dead husband.<sup>30</sup>

Next, paraphrasing the information found in verses 16–17, Scott explained to his daughter, “if they are not thus married for Eternity, they must remain in a state of Celebacy [sic], & be as the angels, ministering spirits, r [are] servants to the married to all eternity, and can never rise to any greater degree of Glory.”<sup>31</sup>

Remarkably, Scott then described how the teaching *and practice* were expanding and how he anticipated his “second nuptials”: “Many members

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29. Jacob Scott, Letter, to Mary Warnock, (Trafalgar, U.C.), January, 5, 1844, Paul M. Hanson Papers, P12-1, f5, Community of Christ Archives, [https://archive.org/stream/jacobscott/jacobscott\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/jacobscott/jacobscott_djvu.txt).

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

of the Church have already availed themselves of this privilege, & have been married to their deceased partners ... & I intend to be married to the wife of my youth before I go to Ireland, I would be unspeakably glad to have you all here to witness our Second Nuptials. The work of Generation is not to cease for ever with the Saints in this present life.”<sup>32</sup>

Jacob Scott lived outside of Nauvoo’s polygamy insider circle, but according to this letter, he possessed a working understanding of eternal marriage ceremonies while making no mention of a connection to plural marriage or a need to engage in polygamy in order to be eternally sealed.

TPMR, quoting briefly from Scott’s letter (citing it from a secondary source), concludes: “Scott’s remarks reflect public explanations in the face of the rumored revelation” (60fn56). A full examination of the letter indicates that the “public explanations” were rather detailed concerning eternal marriage and proxy sealings without tying them to plural marriage.

### Sealing Authority Used for More than Plural Marriage

The sealing authority mentioned in D&C 132: 7–20 applies not just to eternal marriages, it can also create eternal families. John Taylor explained in 1866:

The times of restitution spoken of by the prophets must take place; the restorer must come “before that great and terrible day of the Lord.” The hearts of the fathers must be turned to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, or the earth will be cursed. *This great eternal marriage covenant lays [sic] at the foundation of the whole*; when this was revealed, then followed the other. Then, and not till then, could the hearts of the fathers be turned to their children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers; then and not till then, could the restoration be effectually commenced, time and eternity be connected, the past, present, and future harmonize, and the eternal justice of God be vindicated. “Saviors come upon Mount Zion to save the living, redeem the dead, unite man to woman and woman to man, in eternal, indissoluble ties; impart blessings to the dead, redeem the living, and pour eternal blessings upon posterity.”<sup>33</sup> (emphasis added)

The sealing authority allows two types of ordinances: sealing husbands and wives (horizontally) and sealing children to parents

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32. Ibid.

33. John Taylor, *Journal of Discourses* 11 (April 7, 1866): 222–23.

(vertically). Joseph Smith alluded to this in 1844: “Again the doctrine or sealing power of Elijah is as follows if you have power to seal on earth & in heaven then we should be Crafty, the first thing you do go & seal on earth your sons & daughters unto yourself, & yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory, & go ahead and not go back, but use a little Craftiness & seal all you can.”<sup>34</sup> Brigham Young explained, “The ordinance of sealing must be performed here [on earth] man to man, and woman to man, and children to parents, etc., until the chain of generation is made perfect in the sealing ordinances back to father Adam.”<sup>35</sup>

*TPMR*’s approach to the teachings of sealing authority found in verses 7–20 seems to assume it was needed in order to establish plural marriage. But Joseph could have easily restored one without the other. He could have said, “Abraham had plural wives and I’m restoring that practice,” without mentioning eternity. He also could have said, “I’ve received authority to seal marriages,” without referring to polygamy as a commandment.

Polygamy is certainly more controversial and more enticing for authors to discuss, but it is not an ordinance, a covenant, or a ceremony. Plural marriages are simply a repetition of the sealing rite, except the man had been sealed before — a fact that did not need to be divulged, although the first wife may sometimes place the new wife’s hand on her husband’s hand to show approval.

In contrast, the authority to seal not only allows eternal marriage but creates eternal couples who, if they live worthily, are promised exaltation. Polygamy without the sealing authority makes no such promises. It seems the significance of Joseph Smith’s plurality is not in multiple wives but in the authority that seals those wives — authority that can also seal eternal families.

While *TPMR* might insist the “law” in verse 6 requires polygamy, verses 16–17 teach that those who are not sealed in a marriage (no mention of plurality) using the newly restored priesthood authority remain eternally single, which is damnation all by itself. Whether the law also demands plural ceremonies (apparently to avoid additional damnation) will likely remain controversial.<sup>36</sup>

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34. Ehat and Cook, eds. *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 331–32.

35. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 12 (February 16, 1868):165; see also Brigham Young, “Discourse,” *Millennial Star* 31 (March 27, 1869) 13:203.

36. I don’t wish to present a straw-man argument regarding *TPMR*, but if its author insists that the “law” in verses 17 and 19 means plural marriage rather than speaking of monogamous marriages joined by proper priesthood authority, it would require that the promises of *not* living “separately and singly” (in verses 16–17) and of exaltation (in verse 19) would apply to the man and wife only after

## Polygamy and Sealing — What is the Relationship?

At this point, an unanswered question persists: “Why would God respond to Joseph’s inquiry about polygamy with an immediate and detailed discussion of sealing authority? What is the relationship — if any?”<sup>37</sup>

It seems that even if Joseph had introduced sealing authority without mentioning polygamy, the issue would have soon emerged because his brother Hyrum was a widower. Could a man be sealed to a living wife and a dead wife? Joseph might have said, “Nope, a man can only be sealed to one woman” — end of discussion.

Within the first 20 verses is a possible answer to the question. Those verses establish that all exalted beings will have been previously sealed in a marriage ceremony authorized by the “one” man holding the keys. As quoted above, those who are not so sealed remain “separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity.”

If there were going to be more worthy women than men at the final judgment, then polygamy (in the form of polygyny) could allow those women to enter into the requisite eternal marriage sealings. This seems to be Brigham Young’s conclusion:

If men, since fall [of Adam], had done right, had kept the commandments of God, women would have been willing to go with them and be Saints; and at the present time there are thousands and millions of females who will receive the gospel whose husbands, fathers, and brothers will reject it, and it crowds the necessity of taking more wives than one upon the elders of Israel; for if they were not to do a great many women never could attain to the same exaltation.<sup>38</sup>

The fact is, let the pure principles of the kingdom of God be taught to men and women, and far more of the latter than

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the man marries a second time. The first sealing would not bring those blessings until the man became a polygamist. This extreme interpretation has never been defended by presiding Church authorities.

37. *TPMR*’s polygamy focus is again detected in its perceived purpose for plurality: “Indeed, reproduction seems to be the primary purpose behind polygamy” (156). If D&C 132 is a revelation about strictly polygamy, and reproduction is the primary purpose behind it, the conclusion that the revelation is about sex might be advanced by critics.

38. Richard S. Van Wagoner, *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2009), 3071; see also Scott G. Kenney, ed. *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, Typescript. 9 vols. (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983–85), 6:470–71.



the former will receive and obey them. What shall we do with them? They want exaltation, they want to be in the great family of heaven, they do not want to be cast off, then they must be taken into the families of those who prove themselves worthy to be exalted with the Gods.<sup>39</sup>

He even speculated on what might happen if men were more righteous:

If we could make every man upon the earth get him a wife, live righteously and serve God, we would not be under the necessity, perhaps, of taking more than one wife. But they will not do this; the people of God, therefore, have been commanded to take more wives. The women are entitled to salvation if they live according to the word that is given to them.<sup>40</sup>

This apparent connection between polygamy and sealing authority may be the only connection, but there are potential problems. First, Brigham did not attribute this idea to his own revelations or to Joseph Smith's teachings, a suggestion that it might be a logical conclusion rather than a revealed doctrine. Second, this interpretation has not been embraced and repeated by modern apostles as the reason for restored plural marriage. For example, the Gospel Topics Essays on plural marriage do not mention it.

A third issue involves the idea of *eternal* polygamy and what such a marital dynamic might look like in eternity. On earth plural marriage is unequal — meaning unfair, even sexist. Observers today sometimes assume that if eternal polygamy exists in the next life, it is also unfair. They further claim that women in the Church today should fear it, denounce it, and even feel victimized by the possibility.<sup>41</sup> This is unfortunate because we know almost nothing of eternal marriage and even less about eternal plural marriage.

Fearing the unknown — xenophobia — is useless, especially in light of God's promises of eternal joy for the exalted. His plan is the "great plan of happiness" (Alma 42:8, 16) and not a plan of coercion or eternal submission. Specific fears about relationships in the next life could be contextualized within promises that exalted beings "shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10).

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39. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 18 (June 23, 1874): 248-49.

40. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 16 (August 31, 1873): 166-67.

41. See Brian C. Hales, "Opportunity Lost," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 23 (2017): 91-109, <https://www.mormoninterpreter.com/opportunity-lost/>.

## Conclusion

The discussions above are but a few examples of the types of narratives I would have liked to see in William V. Smith's *Textual Studies of the Doctrine and Covenants: The Plural Marriage Revelation*. Whether readers agree or disagree with my interpretive elements is probably less important than whether they wanted additional analyses anchored closer to the revelation.

Publishing a commentary on Section 132 is a bold undertaking, and a successful commentary will likely require deep research into every nook and cranny of the revelation. *TPMR* certainly contains much useful information that repeatedly expands beyond the revelation itself. Whether it treats the background history and thematic messages of the revelation comprehensively enough to negate the need for someone to publish an additional commentary on Section 132 remains to be seen.

**Brian C. Hales** is the author of six books dealing with polygamy, most recently the three-volume, Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology (Greg Kofford Books, 2013). His *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: The Generations after the Manifesto* received the "Best Book of 2007 Award" from the John Whitmer Historical Association. He has presented at numerous meetings and symposia and published articles in *The Journal of Mormon History*, *Mormon Historical Studies*, and *Dialogue* as well as contributing chapters to *The Persistence of Polygamy* series. Brian works as an anesthesiologist at the Davis Hospital and Medical Center in Layton, Utah, and has served as the president of the Utah Medical Association.

# MUCH MORE THAN A PLURAL MARRIAGE REVELATION

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Craig L. Foster

**Abstract:** *Textual Studies of the Doctrine and Covenants: The Plural Marriage Revelation is a textual study of Section 132. It offers some interesting information as the author attempts to understand and place within context the revelation, which is, as the heading for this section in the scriptures reads, “relating to the new and everlasting covenant, including the eternity of the marriage covenant and the principle of plural marriage.” The book has its strengths but is also hampered by some weaknesses, as discussed in this review.*

Review of William Victor Smith. *Textual Studies of the Doctrine and Covenants: The Plural Marriage Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2018), 273 pp. \$26.95.

Near the beginning of William Victor Smith’s<sup>1</sup> ambitious attempt of an in-depth discussion of Doctrine and Covenants section 132, he noted that “short introductions of varying complexity have been supplied over the years” (23). Section 132 is perhaps one of the most complex and controversial in the Doctrine and Covenants, and various articles, essays, and books have attempted to study the revelation within a historical and social context. Smith has produced a textual analysis and has provided some very interesting and enlightening information, which readers will certainly enjoy.

Scholars and their works reflect certain worldviews and idiosyncrasies, and the idea of being completely neutral is more fantasy than reality. Usually, the best scholars and authors can do is to recognize their biases, address them, and at least acknowledge differing points

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1. The author is hereafter referred to simply as “Smith.” To avoid confusion, references to other Smiths (such as Joseph Smith) will include first names.

of view, even if only to show where they disagree. In spite of what appears to be a significant amount of research and some very interesting insights interspersed throughout, Smith's book suffers from evident (but seemingly unrecognized) biases, inaccuracies, and idiosyncrasies.

These problems can be distilled down to several issues: ignoring authors and works with which he disagrees, ignoring or misunderstanding aspects of history, and demonstrating unrecognized bias. I will address each of these issues.

### Ignoring Authors and Works

The author tends to ignore works with which he doesn't agree. In one case, I was astounded not at what he included in his analysis but what he did not include. In one part, Smith mentioned the possibility of a woman's being married to one man but appointed to another and thus able to have sexual relations with both men. Citing Samuel M. Brown's *In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death*, Smith stated that "it may be interpreted (together with verses 42 and 61) in terms of polyandry or 'dual wives'" (117–18). He also mentioned, "Rumors of [Joseph] Smith's involvement of married women were circulating from the time of John C. Bennett," and stated that Joseph Smith's proposal to Sarah Pratt caused "a deep fissure between her and husband Orson Pratt" (118n53).

The above was not shocking and certainly did not plow new ground in the history of LDS plural marriage. However, while Smith cited Samuel Brown and made reference to John C. Bennett's claim, he cited none of the works of Brian C. Hales. He didn't cite Hales' "John C. Bennett and Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Addressing the Question of Reliability,"<sup>2</sup> which called into question Bennett's claims concerning Joseph Smith. He didn't cite "Joseph Smith's Personal Polygamy,"<sup>3</sup> nor did he mention Hales' 2012 FairMormon talk, "Joseph Smith's Sexual Polyandry and the Emperor's New Clothes: On Closer Inspection, What Do We Find?"<sup>4</sup> and didn't mention Hales' essay, "Joseph Smith and the Puzzlement of

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2. Brian C. Hales, "John C. Bennett and Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Addressing the Question of Reliability," *Journal of Mormon History* 41, no. 2 (April 2015): 131–81.

3. Brian C. Hales, "Joseph Smith's Personal Polygamy," *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 163–228.

4. Brian C. Hales, "Joseph Smith's Sexual Polyandry and the Emperor's New Clothes: On Closer Inspection, What Do We Find?" 2012 FairMormon Conference, accessed 12 May 2018, <https://www.fairmormon.org/conference/august-2012/joseph-smiths-sexual-polyandry-and-the-emperors-new-clothes-on-closer-inspection-what-do-we-find>.

Polyandry.”<sup>5</sup> He didn’t even mention Hales’ lengthy discussion about polyandry in his three-volume *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy* series, in spite of the fact they were published by the same publisher.<sup>6</sup>

This does not seem to be an oversight, given that in a footnote later in the book (164n29) the author writes about “romantic love often being a part of plurality, even ‘polyandrous’ or dual wives.” For this assertion, he references Turner’s *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* and Hinton’s “John D. T. McAllister: The Southern Utah Years, 1876-1910.”<sup>7</sup> That is fine and good — as far as it goes — but the author completely ignores Hales’ work relative to polyandry. This is despite the fact that Hales is regarded by many as the premiere authority on the topic, and he is even cited in the LDS Gospel Topics essay “Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo.”<sup>8</sup> Hales’ interpretation of Nauvoo polyandry was completely ignored in *The Plural Marriage Revelation*, an oversight (or choice) by the author that is never explained.

As another example, Smith discusses how “the revelation created an expanding network of interconnected familial sealings with dynastic overtones” (3). Later, he noted “the establishment of sealing networks, in which families were joined to each other through sealing bonds” (137). These thoughts are similar in some ways to a discussion in *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy* of how the sealing ordinances would connect the Saints to each other. “They would be an eternal family, with one generation sealed to another in a continuous chain from God the Father to Adam and from Adam down to the present.”<sup>9</sup> And also:

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5. Brian C. Hales, “Joseph Smith and the Puzzlement of Polyandry,” in Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster, eds., *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy* (Independence, MO: John Whitmer Books, 2010), 99–151.

6. Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy* (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2013).

7. John G. Turner, *Brigham Young: Pioneer Prophet* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2012), 134–35; and Wayne Hinton, “John D. T. McAllister: The Southern Utah Years, 1876–1910,” *Journal of Mormon History* 29, no. 2 (2003): 86–125.

8. “Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo,” Gospel Topics, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed 12 May 2018, <https://www.lds.org/topics/plural-marriage-in-kirtland-and-nauvoo?lang=eng>.

9. Craig L. Foster, “Doctrine and Covenants Section 132 and Joseph Smith’s Expanding Concept of Family,” in Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster, eds. *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy* (Independence, MO: John Whitmer Books, 2010), 94.

Joseph Smith's expanding theology regarding salvation and the eternal family allowed Latter Day Saints to believe family relationships did not stop with mortality nor with the traditional nuclear family. The concept of family extended to more distant relations; as well as went beyond the grave and became multigenerational. This was eventually accentuated even further by the numerous and intricate family relationships created through plural marriage.<sup>10</sup>

While some of these concepts are similar to Smith's discussion of "interconnected familial sealings" and "sealing networks" that joined families to each other, the latter work was neither quoted nor cited. My own essay<sup>11</sup> was not referenced, though it specifically deals with Doctrine and Covenants 132, whereas both essays on Section 132 by my co-editor, Newell Bringhurst, were cited. Bringhurst's essay, "Section 132 of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants: Its Complex Contents and Controversial Legacy,"<sup>12</sup> was cited twice (1 and 23) while his other essay, "RLDS Church reactions to the LDS Doctrine and Covenants' Section 132: Conflicting Responses and Changing Perceptions,"<sup>13</sup> was also referenced.

Why did the author quote from and reference only Bringhurst's essays? I can only conclude that, like Smith's not agreeing with and thus ignoring Brian Hales' extensive work regarding Joseph Smith and non-sexual polyandry, he did not agree with my published assertion that plural marriage was just one aspect of D&C 132 that also deals with sealing and an eternal concept of family. Bringhurst's essays, on the other hand, emphasize the polygamy part of Section 132, with which Smith apparently agrees.

### **Ignoring or Misunderstanding Aspects of History**

In at least a handful of instances, Smith appears to have misunderstood aspects of Mormon history and doctrine. For example, while discussing

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10. Ibid., 98.

11. Ibid., 87–98.

12. Newell G. Bringhurst, "Section 132 of the LDS Doctrine and Covenants: Its Complex Contents and Controversial Legacy," in Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster, eds., *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy* (Independence, MO: John Whitmer Books, 2010), 59–86.

13. Newell G. Bringhurst, "RLDS Church reactions to the LDS Doctrine and Covenants' Section 132: Conflicting Responses and Changing Perceptions," in Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster, eds. *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy* (Independence, MO: John Whitmer Books, 2010), 257–83.

the revelation's meaning regarding adultery and that the guilty "shall be destroyed" (D&C 132:41, 63), Smith writes, "In the isolation of Utah, such adultery was called out as a capital offense." He quotes a *Deseret News* editorial regarding adultery, which stated, "Public opinion here pronounces the penalty of death as the fitting punishment for such crimes." And in the footnote he mentions Jedediah M. Grant's instructing missionaries to teach that "every adulterer should die" (118n55).

Perhaps too much is being read into the Latter-day Saint reaction to adultery, but the comment about "the isolation of Utah" appears to suggest that such sentiment was present and accepted only in isolated communities of Mormon-controlled Utah. That would give an incorrect impression or suggestion of nineteenth-century Mormon fanaticism and a level of violence dissimilar to the rest of the nation — particularly over sexual crimes like adultery.

That simply was not the case; it is a misrepresentation of history. In most of nineteenth-century America, crimes such as adultery and seduction were looked upon with abhorrence. While legal statutes might not have been as severe, extra-legal justice could range from tarring and feathering to beating and whipping, being ridden out of town on a rail, and even castration or death.

In addition, the forms of death could be rather gruesome. In 1880, a man in Georgia was arrested for running away with his wife's sister. An angry mob took him out and beheaded him.<sup>14</sup> There were a number of cases of shooting one aggrieved party or the other in wide-ranging places such as California, Illinois, Louisiana, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Texas, Virginia, and even Canada. The Canadian shooting resulted in the death of the adulterer and arrest of the cuckolded husband who was, in turn, found innocent by a jury ruling the killing as justifiable homicide.<sup>15</sup>

Punishment against seducers could be even more violent and was more often condoned by the general public. There are numerous examples of victims of seduction shooting their seducers. These actions were met with sympathy and approval by much of society, and such sentiments were expressed in more than one news article of the time. One news editorial stated, "The Georgia juror who would convict a

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14. *Weekly Herald* (Cleveland, Tennessee), 26 August 1880. It is not known if any mob members were arrested. Some of these acts and the perpetrators of extralegal punishment were then legally punished by the law. However, many of these acts were ignored by law officials and were lauded in the press.

15. "Miscellaneous News," *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 21 March 1857.

man for shooting another man for seducing his daughter was kicked to death by a well-educated mule more than forty years ago.”<sup>16</sup> While not as colorful, similar thoughts were expressed in the *Sacramento Daily Union*, which reported a young woman being seduced and then shooting the seducer. The article ended with “society looks with lenient judgement on the deed.”<sup>17</sup> Two Minnesota newspapers also commented on seduction: “Death and destruction to the seducer,”<sup>18</sup> and “Our written law says that killing is murder, but there is an unwritten law which says that he who slays a seducer shall be justified in the act.”<sup>19</sup>

Another example from Smith’s book seems to combine a misunderstanding of history with the author’s negative bias. The author mentions several of Joseph Smith’s plural wives in the book. While Emily and Eliza Partridge are described as “young wives,” only the ages of Helen Mar Kimball and Nancy Maria Winchester are given. They, of course, were the two 14-year-old wives. The question is why the ages of the 14-year-olds were given when the ages of no other plural wives were provided. I suspect the answer relates to shock value. Why else would their ages be given, other than to assault our twenty-first-century sensitivities?

While the thought of an adult marrying a 14-year old is foreign, even repulsive, to most modern Americans, the historical reality is that early marriage age was not uncommon and was socially acceptable. In other words, people in the past had a different understanding and definition of childhood, adolescence, and the appropriate age to marry. As Nicholas Syrett explained, “For most of American history there was no distinction between the marriage of two minors or that between one party who was older (sometimes considerably so) and one who was younger.” Furthermore, according to Syrett, “[M]arrying at the age of fourteen was not at all uncommon ... throughout the nation in the middle of the nineteenth century.”<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, the issue of teen marriage and the ages of some of Joseph Smith’s wives was specially addressed in a book the author cited for

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16. *Milan Exchange*, 11 June 1874.

17. “The Lady and the Pistol,” *Sacramento Daily Union*, 30 June 1886.

18. “Beecher-Tilton — Incidents of the Great Trial,” *Grange Advance*, 19 January 1875.

19. “Are We Invoking a Shower of Fire and Brimstone?” *St. Paul Daily Globe*, 22 March 1885.

20. Nicholas L. Synett, *American Child Bride: A History of Minors and Marriage in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2016), 3 and 1.



different purposes.<sup>21</sup> But once again, the author appears to have ignored this essay because it doesn't fit his worldview. While demonstrating a lack of knowledge regarding nineteenth-century American marriage, Smith seems to have focused on the ages of the youngest wives because of bias.

### Unrecognized Bias

There are other examples of bias throughout the text, but perhaps the main example is a disdain for plural marriage, which seems to permeate the book. For example, the author states, "One alternative in dealing with [Section 132], given that it focuses on a practice that is forbidden in the present LDS Church, is to simply delete it from the Doctrine and Covenants" (180). He also suggests a possible revision of the section "modified to eliminate the imperative to practice plural marriage" (181). While the revised revelation was interesting to read and consider, it served to reinforce the feeling of disgust toward plural marriage on the author's part. At another point he mentions "inherent male-female balances [caused by plural marriage that] leave its imprint on Mormons still" (157) but does not give any examples or source citations.

Perhaps the most perplexing indication of bias is the almost constant use of the phrase "the plural marriage revelation" throughout the book. I could not figure out if the overuse of this phrase was to reinforce the idea that Doctrine and Covenants Section 132 is just the plural marriage revelation (which Smith would like to significantly modify or completely expunge from the canon) or if he just wanted to reinforce the theme and subtitle of his book.

Either way, the phrase, which appears 159 times in the book,<sup>22</sup> started out as distracting and quickly became annoying. Two pages included the phrase five times, two of them appearing in one sentence right after the other (138–39). So intent was the author in pushing this phrase that when quoting Joseph F. Smith about the background of Section 132, he added the phrase so the quote would read as follows, "When the [plural marriage] revelation was written, in 1843, it was for a special purpose" (179).

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21. Craig L. Foster, David Keller, and Gregory L. Smith, "The Age of Joseph Smith's Plural Wives in Social and Demographic Context," in Newell G. Bringham and Craig L. Foster, eds. *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy* (Independence, MO: John Whitmer Books, 2010), 152–83.

22. I would like to thank Brian Hales, who demonstrated more patience and fortitude than I by taking the time to count the number of times the phrase was used, for allowing me to use the number he came up with.

I actually do not blame the author for the overuse of the phrase; I blame the editors. Every author wants to make sure the message is getting across to the reader and he or she sometimes goes overboard in trying to do so. Smith, not trusting in the art of gentle persuasion, seemingly decided to hammer the book's theme over the reader's head. It was up to the editors to suggest to the author that perhaps he was using that phrase too many times and then to strike out at least half of those phrases.<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion

Ultimately, there is much more to Doctrine and Covenants Section 132 than just plural marriage. This is not to downplay the importance of plural marriage in either this section of scripture or in Church history and doctrine. Plural marriage and the attempt by Church members to live this principle played an important role in Church history as well as the cultural social fabric that, in part, made us the "Mormon people" we are today. Unfortunately, the author has downplayed the other essential teachings found in this section, such as eternal marriage, so that they have practically been lost by the author's reductive emphasis on the "plural marriage revelation." And that is truly a shame, as there is a rightful place and doctrinal cohesion for all of the teachings in this pivotal revelation.

While the book does include some good information, that information has been selectively gleaned and presented, as already discussed. In the end, I believe the problems far outweigh the positives of the book, and I would be very hesitant to recommend it — especially for those without a firm understanding of a sensitive topic and a prickly era of our history.

**Craig L. Foster** earned an MA and MLIS at Brigham Young University. He is also an accredited genealogist and works as a research consultant at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. He has published articles about different aspects of Mormon history. He is the author of two books, coauthor of another, and coeditor of a three-volume series discussing the history and theology of plural marriage. Foster is also on the editorial board of the *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*.

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23. Another complaint I have with the publisher's side of the project is that the index is not comprehensive. If I had not made careful notes, I would have had a very difficult time finding Helen Mar Kimball, Nancy Winchester, or Emily and Eliza Partridge, given that their names do not appear in the index. Surely the plural wives of Joseph Smith warranted appearance in the index.

# ISAIAH 56, ABRAHAM, AND THE TEMPLE

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Taylor Halverson

**Abstract:** *In the days of the first Israelite temple, only certain individuals were allowed into the temple and sacrificial services; foreigners and eunuchs were excluded. However, in Isaiah 56:1–8, formerly excluded individuals are invited into the presence of God at the temple. This paper will explore how metaphorically connecting Isaiah's words with Abraham, the eponymous father of the covenant faithful, may demonstrate that even the most unlikely candidates for the presence of God are like Abraham; they too will inherit the ancient covenants according to their faithfulness.*

In the most basic sense, God's everlasting covenant is represented by these things: a promised land, priesthood, posterity, to be blessed, and to be a blessing to others (Genesis 12:1–3).<sup>1</sup> All God's children have access to these promises. But how does reading Isaiah 56 with Abraham in mind make the case that all people can be heirs to God's promises? Primarily, Abraham is an excellent example of one who practiced fidelity to God and received a fullness of God's promises. However, had Abraham lived during the first temple period (ca. 10<sup>th</sup> century BC to 6<sup>th</sup> century BC) — according to a metaphorical interpretation of biblical law to be explained a bit further into the paper — he may have been excluded from the temple and sacrificial services (Exodus 12:43–45; Leviticus 22:25; Deuteronomy 23:1–3).<sup>2</sup> Only later were such exclusionary prohibitions

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1. Throughout this paper, God's everlasting covenant to Abraham will be expressed interchangeably with the phrases *everlasting covenant*, *God's promises*, *God's covenants*, *the Abrahamic promise*, and *the Abrahamic covenant*.

2. In this paper, I use the words *stranger* and *foreigner* interchangeably. I speak of Abraham in a semantic category of being a stranger or a foreigner. I also interpret the Deuteronomy 23 exclusion of foreigners from the temple (Ammonites and Moabites) to represent strangers and foreigners in general who, not being letter

lifted (see Isaiah 56). What are the qualities of Abraham that possibly would have excluded him from the temple? He was like a stranger or a foreigner in the land of Canaan (Abraham 1–2; Genesis 12). And he was like a eunuch, incapable of having posterity with his wife Sarah until there was miraculous intervention (Genesis 11:30; 21:3).

In this article, I'll review the story of Abraham and the covenantal promises that God offered him. I'll then explore Isaiah 56:1–8 verse by verse to call upon the memory of Abraham to argue that all people, even those considered most excluded from the promises of God, as symbolized by exclusion or inclusion to the temple, will be brought into the fold if they are willing to practice justice (keep the *torah* = law of God) and observe the Lord's sabbaths.<sup>3</sup>

### Abraham: Exemplar of Covenantal Faithfulness

One of the best starting points to lay the foundation for understanding God's everlasting covenant is with the story of Abraham.<sup>4</sup> In this story, readers learn of God's promises, his testing the faith of Abraham, the faithful response by Abraham, and the eventual fulfillment of all promises. The story of Abraham essentially begins in Genesis 12 when God speaks to Abraham, commanding him to leave his homeland. Without much explanation, God also guarantees Abraham's posterity,

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of the law Israelites, would be excluded from the temple. Using this reasoning, had Abraham been alive during the first temple period, letter of the law interpretations of biblical law may have, ironically, identified Abraham as a non-Israelite. There are a variety of Hebrew words that underlie the English *stranger* or *foreigner* in the King James Version translation of the Bible. In Genesis 15:13 God calls Abraham a *ger*, a Hebrew word with the basic meaning of *stranger*, *newcomer*, *sojourner*, *temporary dweller*. Other Hebrew words underlying the English words *stranger* and *foreigner* are *zar* (a stranger to a family or household, one who is not part of the family or tribe) and *nekar* (a foreigner, pertaining to another tribe or family). Isaiah 56 uses *nekar* repeatedly, not *ger*. And Deuteronomy 23 does not use the words *ger*, *nekar*, or *zar* specifically. Instead, a certain class of strangers or foreigners to Israel are identified: ancient enemies or antagonists of Israel, the Ammonites and Moabites.

3. Living God's law qualifies one for the fullness of God's promises, for then one is living the stipulations of the covenant. The theme of the law of God (such as the *torah* or the 10 commandments) serving as the stipulations of a divine treaty or covenant between God and his people is explored in RoseAnn Benson and Stephen D. Ricks, "Treaties and Covenants: Ancient Near Eastern Legal Terminology in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005), 48–61.

4. There are several key scriptural episodes that constitute the pronouncement of the Abrahamic promises: Genesis 12:1–3, 13:14–17, 15:1, 15:5, 17:1–9, 22:17–18; Abraham 1:1–4, 1:16, 1:18–19, 2:6, 2:8–11, 2:19, 3:12, 3:14.

a promised land, and endless blessings. These are promises anyone would aspire to obtain. Curiously, in the Genesis version of the Abraham story, God pronounces the covenant blessings without any indication as to why Abraham was the chosen recipient. Only as his life story plays out in Genesis do we see Abraham's consistent faithfulness to the Lord, which qualifies him for the promised blessings.

The contrast between the introductions to the character of Abraham in Genesis and the Book of Abraham is stark. The Book of Abraham gives us a more robust introduction into the character and righteous desires of Abraham *before* God interacts with Abraham. We learn in Abraham 1:2 that Abraham, having been "a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, [he] became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers." In all likelihood, Abraham went to the temple to receive a fullness of these blessings. However, later Israelite laws (Exodus 12:43–45; Leviticus 22:25; Deuteronomy 23:1–3) might have excluded someone like Abraham from the temple and sacrificial services, the very place where he most likely would have encountered fulfillment of these righteous desires.

As Abraham 1 continues we learn that wicked priests targeted Abraham for execution. God came to save him with these words, "Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee, and to take thee away from thy father's house, and from all thy kinsfolk, into a strange land which thou knowest not of" (Abraham 1:16). Then the promise from God, "I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee" (Abraham 1:18). Core themes in these verses include "put upon thee my name" and "strange land." We'll explore these themes further in Isaiah 56:1–8 to demonstrate that even though Abraham was metaphorically a stranger and a eunuch, characteristics that could potentially exclude one from the temple, according to certain readings of Israelite law (e.g., Exodus 12, Leviticus 22, Deuteronomy 23), he still qualified for God's covenant. Abraham had full access to the temple and to the promises of God. Isaiah speaks comfort to those who worry they may be excluded from the temple and God's promises; if they keep the law of God and his sabbaths, they will be invited in. If they are faithful

like Abraham, they receive the promises of Abraham, which are fully expressed in the temple.

### **Instructive Irony in the Abrahamic Promises and the Story of Abraham**

The promise of land and posterity pervade the Abraham story and are key elements of God's everlasting covenant. Ironically, these are the very aspects of the divine promises to Abraham that appear to be most in jeopardy throughout the Abraham story. Why? Because Abraham is like a stranger in the land and is like a eunuch who cannot have children.

Isaiah promises such individuals (strangers and eunuchs) that they can be admitted into God's temple and receive his everlasting name. I see a compelling and instructive connection to Abraham in the words of Isaiah. Let us review Abraham's position as a stranger and a eunuch of sorts and learn from the instructive irony that the Abraham story presents to us.

Abraham was commanded to leave his homeland and wander as a stranger in a new land (Genesis 12:1–3). Then as now, strangers or foreigners often struggled in new lands to adapt to new cultures, languages, environments, peoples, laws, and social networks and norms. Being a stranger was seldom seen as an advantage. Strangers were often on the margins of society with little to no access to “blessings” the larger society had to offer.<sup>5</sup> Strangers usually had no legal right to land or inheritance. And if they had no posterity, they would have no one to maintain their memory or family,<sup>6</sup> no one to provide them proper burial rights.<sup>7</sup> Not only did Abraham arrive as a stranger in his promised land, when he arrived the land was blighted with devastating famine (Genesis 12) — not very promising! Again he uprooted, leaving behind his new homeland to become a stranger in the land of Egypt.

In addition to being a wandering stranger in and out of his promised land, the blessings of posterity also eluded him. Abraham and Sarah

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5. The story of Ruth in the Old Testament is an excellent example of how a stranger is at the mercy of the individuals in the host nation. Ruth was a Moabitess herself, one specifically called out in Deuteronomy 23 for exclusion from the temple.

6. We see this principle in action — of the importance of a posterity for maintaining the memory of parents or family — with the words of Boaz in reference to why he married Ruth: “Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye *are* witnesses this day” (Ruth 4:10).

7. Genesis 23, 24:10, 35:19, 47:29–31, 50:5–14.

were barren (Genesis 11:30). This major obstacle to the fulfillment of God's promises was only later rectified through divine intervention (Genesis 21). Significantly, God tested this promise to Abraham as well. As soon as Abraham arrived in Egypt, Pharaoh took Sarah away (Genesis 12). How could Abraham have posterity without his covenant wife? Sarah was later liberated. But sometime after Abraham and Sarah returned prosperous to the Promised Land, the famine having abated, king Abimelech took Sarah from Abraham with the intent to make her his wife (Genesis 20). Once again, the promise of posterity was put in peril only to be resolved after a period of testing. Though Abraham and Sarah are often revered for their faithfulness, God truly put to the test their trust in him and their trust in his promises.

On other occasions, Abraham and Sarah attempted to fulfill God's promises on their own. Abraham adopted his servant Eliezer as his son and heir (Genesis 15). God came to Abraham to reaffirm the covenantal promises and explain that they would be fulfilled in other ways. Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham as a means to have posterity (Genesis 16). Though God had blessings in store for Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16:10), God clarified that he would yet fulfill his promise to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 17:19). Indeed he did, through the birth of Isaac. But soon thereafter God put Abraham to test yet again, commanding him to sacrifice Isaac, his beloved son (Genesis 22). The subsequent salvation of Isaac is well-known. What is central to the story is that God faithfully fulfills his promises to his servants if they trust in him and live his law.

As can be seen there is much irony in the Abraham story. Abraham is introduced as the man of promise. God offers him all that a righteous individual could desire. And yet at every turn, those blessings are just out of reach or potentially put in jeopardy. However, Abraham trusted the Lord and eventually realized all his righteous desires. Because of his faithfulness, Abraham has become an example for millions of people throughout the ages that even the most unlikely of individuals can have God's divine name securely in their lives, granting them access to God's greatest blessings. These blessings are symbolically represented by returning to the presence of the Lord in his temple.

### **Exclusion from the Temple**

Before we can appreciate the nature of the message of Isaiah 56, we must first understand how aspects of the Law of Moses may have placed significant barriers against entry into the temple or sacrificial services for some types of individuals. One scholar explains, "Although all Israel

must keep a heightened level of moral and ritual purity, there are indeed gradations of holiness as one more closely approaches the divine presence. One finds a ring-like structure in Priestly texts in which God occupies the holy of holies, with the high priest at the next level of holiness. At a lower level are the other priests who work in the sanctuary, who in turn are followed by the Levites who maintain, move, and guard God's sanctuary. Finally, one has the other Israelite tribes along with anyone else residing in the Holy Land, which is the land made holy by God's presence."<sup>8</sup>

In addition to this layering of admissibility to the temple, certain categories of people were barred from the presence of God and hence from the fullness of his blessings. Several Old Testament quotes should help to establish this reality, "He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD. A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD. An Ammonite or Moabite [i.e., a foreigner] shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever" (Deuteronomy 23:1–3).

Deuteronomy 23 seems to exclude certain classes of people from the temple. Anyone who was a non-Israelite, that is, a foreigner or a stranger is excluded (in this passage the non-Israelites are identified as Ammonites and Moabites, historic enemies of Israel). Also excluded are eunuchs, that is, someone who could not procreate. They were permanently barred from the temple.

Other Old Testament passages also appear to exclude strangers or foreigners from temple or sacrificial services. For example, Exodus 12:43–45 gives instructions about who is included or excluded from the Passover sacrificial rituals, "And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This *is* the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof: But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof." We read later in this chapter that only foreigners who convert to the worship of Yahweh (through circumcision) and thus are no longer considered foreigners will be allowed to keep the Passover.

Later we read in Leviticus 22:25, in the context of instructions to priests regarding how to enact the sacrifices at the temple, "Neither from a stranger's hand shall ye offer the bread of your God of any of these; because their corruption *is* in them, *and* blemishes *be* in them: they shall not be accepted for you" (emphasis added). Again, a stranger is barred

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8. Joel S. Kaminsky, "Loving One's (Israelite) Neighbor: Election and Commandment in Leviticus 19," *Interpretation* 62, no. 2 (April 2008): 126.



from offering the sacrifice, though apparently the priest could make the sacrifice *on behalf* of the stranger or foreigner.

In light of these Old Testament passages, Isaiah's message was revolutionary that God's "house shall be called an house of prayer for *all* people" (Isaiah 56:7, emphasis added) and that those individuals formerly barred from the temple and sacrificial services are now openly admitted.

### **Isaiah 56:1–8**

I have introduced Abraham as an exemplary faithful follower of God and yet one who may have been excluded from the first Israelite temple according to some Mosaic laws. I'll now explore Isaiah 56:1–8, interpreting these verses in light of the Abraham story. I'll also consider additional themes and ideas in these Isaiah passages, connecting them to Abraham and other illustrative scriptures where appropriate. Major themes are justice and judgment; servants, strangers, and eunuchs; sabbaths and covenants; and everlasting names and memorials.

### **Isaiah 56:1**

Isaiah 56 opens with statements that God's redemptive salvation is near to come and therefore everyone should prepare, which nicely echoes the themes in the opening chapter of Isaiah:

Zion shall be redeemed  
with judgment [justice],  
and her converts [repentant people]  
with righteousness. (Isaiah 1:27)

Those who practice justice and righteousness toward others and themselves will find redemption through the justice and righteousness of the Lord. Abraham was certainly one who exercised righteous judgment with the intent to help redeem others as demonstrated by his bargaining with the Lord to save Sodom and Gomorrah if but ten righteous individuals were found in the cities (Genesis 18:23–33)

### **Isaiah 56:2**

Isaiah 56:2 further describes the state of those who keep judgment and do justice. They are blessed, they keep the sabbath, and they eschew evil. The importance of sabbath observance will be addressed in the Isaiah 56:4 section of the paper. Let us focus a moment on the phrase, "blessed is the man." It also appears in Psalm 1. This psalm serves as the overriding

thesis statement for the entire book of Psalms and contains direct links to the message of Isaiah 56 as well as subtle connections to Abraham.

Several valuable insights can be drawn from Psalm 1 that relate to Isaiah 56 and to Abraham. Through God's miraculous intervention, Abraham brought "forth his fruit [i.e., the promised child Isaac] in his season," in the season that God had ordained. Furthermore, God prospered Abraham in all things (Genesis 13:2; 14:18–20; 20:15–16; 21:22; 22:17–18). Psalm 1 also identifies the blessed man as the one who delights in the law of the Lord. The Hebrew word *torah* underlies the English word *law* in Psalm 1. The law of the Lord (*torah*) can refer to any and all of the laws of God, though over the centuries interpreters have often equated *torah* specifically with the Law of Moses, especially as found in the Five Books of Moses. That man who meditates day and night on the *torah* is compared to a fruitful tree planted by living waters. This tree will live, grow, prosper, and never die. Such imagery echoes themes in Isaiah 56. Indeed, the Lord tells the eunuch of Isaiah 56:3 not to call himself a dry tree. Instead the eunuch who keeps the Lord's sabbaths will be more prosperous than if he had many sons and daughters. So too, Abraham was for a time like a eunuch, not able to have children. But eventually Abraham had many children. He became like a fruitful tree planted by the rivers of water.<sup>9</sup>

### Isaiah 56:3

Isaiah 56:3 introduces readers to two key constituents who desired to come to the Lord in his temple but had legitimate reasons for voicing their concerns that they would be excluded. The stranger worries that he will be separated from the people of God and thus be cut off from the presence of God while the eunuch identifies the cause of his inadmissibility into the temple. I have already established thematic linkages between Abraham and each of these constituencies. To make those thematic connections more apparent, let us consider additional Abrahamic passages from Genesis.

In Genesis 17, God visits Abraham, now nearly 100 years old, and renews the promise that he will have land and posterity. To provide evidence for the promises, God renames Abraham (from Abram) and says, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto

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9. Significantly, at times in the Bible trees represent life, even eternal life (see Genesis 1:9). The fruit of trees may represent posterity or the ability of the lineage of that tree to be perpetuated potentially indefinitely.

thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Genesis 17:7–8).

This Genesis passage plays upon themes of Abraham’s foreignness in the Promised Land. But that quality of Abraham does not preclude access to “everlasting possessions” or knowledge that “I will be their God.” So too, Isaiah argues, is it for the foreigner who “hath joined himself to the Lord.”<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the eunuchs would find comfort in remembering Abraham. Concerned about being “dry trees,” they could look to Abraham who “planted a grove [of trees] in Beersheba [at the seven wells], and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God” (Genesis 21:33). Just as Abraham called on the name of God and received God’s promises, so too could faithful eunuchs hope for such blessings from the Lord.

### Isaiah 56:4

After Isaiah identified the concerns followers of God had in preceding verses, he transitions to explain in concrete terms what God expects of the faithful. In summary, God expects observance of sabbaths, attentiveness to things that please him, and holding fast to covenants. We will consider briefly here the sabbaths and why this requirement was so essential for access to God.

Keeping the sabbath was a sign of God’s covenant with Israel. “Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, *for* a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever” (Exodus 31:16–17). Those people formerly excluded from the temple and God are now included with the expectation that they keep the sabbath holy days.<sup>11</sup>

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10. Paul likewise preaches in Ephesians 2:17 the promise that outsiders are invited into the assembly of God.

11. Isaiah stresses the importance of keeping sabbaths in chapter 56. Consider that the words *sabbath* and *sabbaths* are used only once in all of Isaiah 1–55. But here in Isaiah 56, these words appear three times. Certainly, Isaiah makes the case that keeping the sabbaths underscores any opportunity for receiving the redeeming salvation offered through God’s promises. “Respect for the Sabbath now permits entrance into the house of the Lord in the same way that profanation of the Sabbath demands exclusion.” Bernard Gosse, “Sabbath, Identity, and Universalism Go Together after the Return from Exile,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 29, no. 3 (2005): 367.

Inclusion into God's everlasting covenants is not automatic, however, because covenants are reciprocal.<sup>12</sup> Each party brings something to the agreement. In this instance, what must the potential covenantal candidate do? Keep the sabbaths. Notice that "sabbaths" is in the plural in Isaiah 56:4. Does this plural represent attending church each Sunday? No, this plural signifies that the sabbaths were any sacred day set aside to worship and celebrate God (Exodus 23:14–17; 34:18–23; Deuteronomy 16:1–17). Examples include the following: (1) The weekly Sabbath, to celebrate the creation of earth and the deliverance from oppression (Exodus 20:8–11; Deuteronomy 5:12–15); (2) The sabbath festival of Passover, to celebrate God saving the Israelites from Egypt (Leviticus 23:5; Deuteronomy 16:1–8); (3) The sabbath of Pentecost, to thank God for the prosperity and abundance of the earth (Deuteronomy 16:9–12); (4) The sabbath festival of booths, to celebrate God's presence among the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 16:13–17); and (5) The sabbatical year, every seventh year, to celebrate that God gave Israelites the land (Leviticus 25:1–22). Many of these sabbaths required people to

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12. According to the rhetorical logic of Isaiah 56, keeping the sabbaths qualifies one to enter into the temple of the Lord. Unfortunately, such inclusion was not always practiced at the Jerusalem Temple after the time of Isaiah (see the stories of Ezra and Nehemiah). In the days of Jesus, a prominent warning sign placed at the wall that separated the court of the gentiles from the other courts read, "No foreigner is to go beyond the balustrade and the plaza of the temple zone. Whoever is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his death which will follow." That warning was no jest. The Apostle Paul found himself in a serious trouble and potential bodily harm at the Jerusalem Temple when he brought gentile converts into the temple. "Then Paul took the [gentile converts], and ... with them entered into the temple. ... The Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all *men* every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. ... And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar" (Acts 21:26–28, 30–31). Paul and the converts would have likely walked right past the temple warning sign, knowing they could face death for coming into the temple that excluded all non-Jews. Paul was seeking to make a point Isaiah had sought to make hundreds of years earlier. One's birth and nationality no longer mattered for access to the temple or God's everlasting name. What mattered was that one was willing to follow the Lord. Ironically, had Abraham arrived at the wall of separation within the Herodian Temple soon after his leaving Haran, he may have been barred from entering or possibly even been killed.

go to the temple and make offerings to the Lord; it was a holy day that involved the act of pilgrimage worship. Significantly, the temple was central to these sabbaths. If some people were excluded from the temple, how could they keep the sabbaths or covenants with God? And if people were not keeping the sabbaths of God, how would they be making full use of their access to him through the temple? That is to say, if they were not celebrating the sabbaths, they likely were not attending the temple, and if they did not have access to the temple, they could not keep the sabbaths. Isaiah rectifies that. Those formerly excluded from the temple could have access if they kept the sabbaths, which required that they enter the temple and participate in the religious rites and festivals that occurred there on holy days.

### Isaiah 56:5

Some of the most powerful themes in Isaiah 56 are found in verse 5. Here we learn that God will give a place to the strangers and eunuchs in the temple. Indeed, he gives them an everlasting memorial in the temple.<sup>13</sup> That everlasting memorial is his name, which these new servants have taken upon themselves. They will never again be cut off from the presence of the Lord.<sup>14</sup>

If the stranger and eunuch are willing to agree to these terms and conditions, to keep the sabbaths, they are then admitted into the temple. But then God offers everlasting blessings. God promises that even if they do not have living posterity in this life, he will give them a place and a name better than sons and daughters, a name that will never perish. The phrase “place and a name,” Hebrew *yad vashem*, seems to be a rather insignificant phrase in English. However, in Hebrew and ancient Israelite culture this phrase was permeated with everlasting significance. It signified a monument or a memorial, but more importantly it represented God’s eternal hand of fellowship and his everlasting name. Instead of one’s immortality secured by the memorializing of a name on stone or of having a large and growing posterity, God assures immortality by

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13. D. W. Van Winkle, “The Meaning of *yadvašem* in Isaiah LVI 5”, *Vestus Testamentum* 47, no. 3 (July 1997), 378–85.

14. “Cutting off” comes from the Hebrew root word *krt*, a word frequently associated with cutting covenants. Isaiah artfully calls to mind a whole host of references throughout the Old Testament where covenants are made by cutting. Jared Parker, “Cutting Covenants” quoted in D. Kelly Ogden, Jared Ludlow and Kerry Muhlestein, eds., *The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament: The 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Brigham Young University Sperry Symposium* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2009), 109–28.

naming his faithful servants, by placing his name on them. And his name is everlasting. We see this doctrine taught clearly in the Book of Mormon. In Mosiah 5:5–9, King Benjamin teaches that those willing to covenant with God receive an eternal name, that of the children of Christ. They will be called Christians, Christ.

Let us take a moment to explore further what is in a name.<sup>15</sup> Why is a name so important?<sup>16</sup> A name (or a noun) is a way of identifying

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15. Moshe Garsiel, “Homiletic Name-Derivations as a Literary Device in the Gideon Narrative: Judges VI–VIII,” *Vetus Testamentum* XLIII, 3 (1993), 302–17. Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991).

16. “Between a character’s name and the surrounding narrative, an intricate relation can be observed, especially in ancient literature. Names beget narrative, and narrative begets names. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, for instance, the name of the wise Ūta-napišti — “He reached life” — underlies the unfolding of the plot: reaching the faraway Ūta-napišti, who will show him where to find the plant of life, becomes the ultimate goal of Gilgamesh’s quest for immortality. Similarly, in archaic Greek poetry the name of Achilles (Achilleus), the main character of the Iliad, matches his role in the epic: Achilles is the one who brings about *achos*, “grief,” to his laos, the “people” of the Achaeans.... In biblical narrative the link between name and plot is pervasive; suffice it to mention the bearing of Ishmael’s, Isaac’s, and Jacob’s names on the plot of Genesis. The play on Isaac’s name (יצחק) “He will laugh”) is well known: it stretches from Sara’s skeptical laughter in the annunciation scene (Genesis 18:12–14) to her humorous conclusion after the birth of the child (“God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me” [Genesis 21:6]). The meaning of Ishmael’s name (ישמעאל, “God hears”) is brought into play three times in the story by God or his angel: while helping his mother, Hagar (“You shall name him Ishmael, for Yhwh has heard [שמע] of your misery” [Genesis 16:11]), then in support of Abraham, his father (“And as for Ishmael, I have heard you [שמעתיך]” [Genesis 17:20]), and finally on account of the child himself (“God has heard [וישמע] the boy crying as he lies there” [Genesis 21:17]). The process goes even further in the next generation, that is, in Jacob’s story. As in the cases of Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob’s name (יעקב) is a key to the narrative: it connects the hero’s tricky birth in Genesis 25:26, gripping his brother’s heel (עקב), and his tricky dealings in regard to Esau’s birthright and benediction (עקב, “to supplant”; see Genesis 27:36). Yet the name of the third patriarch is also deconstructed and reconstructed in Genesis 32–33 in the narrative of Jacob’s wrestling with the mysterious Other and of the brothers’ reunion. Mixed up with the words יבֶקֶד (Yabboq), אִבֶּקֶד (“to wrestle, rolling in dust”), יִקַּע (“to be dislocated”), and חִבֵּק (“to embrace”), Jacob’s name undergoes a semantic recasting, which expresses the hero’s new birth.” Jean-Pierre Sonnet, “*Ehyeh asher ehyeh* (Exodus 3:14): God’s ‘Narrative Identity’ among Suspense, Curiosity, and Surprise,” *Poetics Today* 31, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 332.

something, defining its character, characteristics, features, function, role, boundaries, purpose, past history, or future potential.<sup>17</sup> For example, the name “Adam” is the masculine form of the Hebrew word *adamah*, which means “dirt or earth” (Genesis 2:7).<sup>18</sup> Eve’s name is also specifically given due to her role. Her name is a form of the Hebrew word *hawwah* which means, “life.” She truly was the mother of all living people (Genesis 3:20), therefore her name was given to identify a key aspect of her character as well as future potential.

Abraham had two names, both of which identify his character, purpose, and future potential. His original name was *Abram* (Genesis 12:1), a combination of two Hebrew words “ab” = father and “ram” = high, lofty, exalted. His original name identified his future potential, character, and role. Indeed, Abram is now an exalted father (D&C 132:20). His original name could also have served as a testimony of the characteristics of God the Father, that is, that Heavenly Father is an Exalted Father. Later, Abram’s name was changed to Abraham (Genesis 17). This new name derived, once again, from the combination of two Hebrew words “ab” = father and “raham” = multitudes. This name speaks to the character, characteristics, role, and future potential of Abraham, that he would be a father of multitudes. Today millions upon millions of people identify Abraham as their father (see Genesis 22:15–18). Sarah, Abraham’s wife, also had a name change. She originally was named Sarai, which meant “my princess” (Genesis 11:29). Later Sarai’s name was changed to Sarah (Genesis 17:15), which in Hebrew means “princess.”<sup>19</sup> As a faithful daughter of God her name appropriately identified her character and role as a princess.

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17. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and David Weston Baker, Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), s.v. “creation.”

18. Adam’s name relates to his past history and perhaps serves as a reminder to him and all of us for our need to be humble. Since we are children of Adam, we are reminded that we are nothing but dust (see Mosiah 2:25; 4:11) and therefore should be humble. The word *humble* derives from the Latin *humilis*, which originated from the Latin word for earth, soil, and dirt.

19. The change to her name (“my princess” changed to “princess”) does not appear to be of major significance. Perhaps the change to “princess” from “my princess” was evocative of a newer, less delimited role. “My princess” may have meant that Sarah was defined by her relation to someone else who “owns” her. Perhaps the title “princess” is more universal for her. She is no longer a princess because of someone else (such as an earthly king or prince that might call her “my princess”). Rather, now, she is a princess by divine decree.

Naming in ancient Israel carried weighty significance. The namer had authority over or responsibility for what was named.<sup>20</sup> For example, Adam had the responsibility to name the animals at creation (Genesis 2:19–20). Adam’s naming of animals signified that Adam had responsibility for being a good steward of the animals of the earth in addition to his role as the keeper of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). When God names someone, or places his name on them, he has defined that individual’s character, characteristics, role, and future potential. Furthermore, by naming people, God takes responsibility for the stewardship of those individuals that they might flourish. He allows them to fully participate in his love, protection and covenants. When God names someone, that individual becomes part of his dominion and kingdom.<sup>21</sup>

God wants to make his children great through his name. Unfortunately, humans tend to try to make their own names great.<sup>22</sup> They try to make a name for themselves instead of having God make

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20. “In the Ancient Near East, the name is the soul and essence of the person who receives it, and the one who names binds the meaning of the name to the person as a fate or destiny. The only way that the fate or destiny can change is if a creature of higher power changes the name. As long as the name of the being exists, the being will exist throughout eternity as part of the fabric of the divine order.” Nicholaus Benjamin Pumphrey, “Names and Power: The Concept of Secret Names in the Ancient Near East” (master’s thesis, Vanderbilt University, 2009), 6–7.

21. “[I]n the patriarchal stories, Abraham’s name change is a symbol that he belongs to the God, YHWH, who named him. Sarah’s name change from Sarai is an extension of this transformation emphasizing her covenant with YHWH to become the first matriarch.” (Pumphrey, 26)

22. We see this human tendency at play in the story of King Saul. One of the reasons that Saul, first king over united Israel, fell from grace is that he sought to honor and memorialize himself and his own name by “setting him up a place” instead of memorializing God and God’s name (1 Samuel 15:12). Though it sounds innocuous in English, the phrase “set him up a place” literally means that Saul established a monument to his own name and memory. Instead of having God create a lasting name and memory for him, he tried to do it on his own. In the very chapter where Saul takes his immortality into his own hands (that is, he tries to achieve immortality through reputation and memorials to his own name and deeds) God rejected Saul from being king of the Israelites (1 Samuel 15:22–23). These stories (Saul and Gilgamesh) exemplify the human desire to create a name and memory that will persist across the ages and immortalize the individual. What we find in Isaiah 56 is different. God wants to give his children an everlasting name. Those who accept his name accept his covenants and have a place at the temple. All who trust in him and keep his sabbaths are welcomed in.



them great through his name.<sup>23</sup> Isaiah 56 and the story of Abraham intersect on this point.

In Genesis 11, the people of the earth settle the plain of Shinar and devise a plan to build a great city and tower whose top could touch the heavens. Their rationale for such an undertaking? “Let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4). They wanted to make and secure their own name by physical, man-made objects and monuments to avoid being scattered across the earth as if human efforts could provide the lasting safety they wanted. In stark contrast stands Abraham, introduced in the same chapter as the tower of Babel. God comes to Abraham in Genesis 12:2 and says, “[Abraham], I will ... make thy name great.” Instead of seeking to make his own name great, Abraham let God make Abraham’s name great. When individuals seek to establish their own promised lands without the direction of God, their only recourse to “immortality” is human-made, the physical objects and memorials that humans can create. But these eventually will crumble to the dust. If instead people are like Abraham, they can follow God, who will make their names great by leading them to their promised lands where they will find refreshment and eternal life.

### Isaiah 56:6

Isaiah 56:6 promises that those who love his name and join themselves to him will become his servants. In the Old Testament, servants can refer to a variety of individuals or groups: Moses, other prophets, King David, King Solomon, Davidic kings, the people of Israel, and all those who have bound themselves to the Lord through covenant.<sup>24</sup> In Isaiah 56,

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23. Instead of being named by God and being within his domain of stewardship, humans typically want independence to create their own forms of immortality. This they attempt by the posterity they create, the monuments, buildings, or institutions that they name in their own honor, or by doing great deeds that they hope will be remembered in songs and stories across the ages. The Epic of Gilgamesh is an excellent example of how many in the ancient Near East believed that immortality was only possible by the deeds one accomplished in this life and the great name one built for himself. Tzvi Abusch, “The Development and Meaning of the Epic of Gilgamesh: An Interpretive Essay”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121, no. 4 (2001): 614–22. Esther J. Hamori, “Echoes of Gilgamesh in the Jacob Story”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 4 (2011): 625–42.

24. Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Servant and the Servants in Isaiah and the Formation of the Book,” quoted in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretative Tradition*, eds. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997), 155–75.

servants refer to the covenant people of God, those willing to obey the *torah*. Other Old Testament passages broaden our understanding of what it means to be a covenant-keeping servant of God while also echoing Abraham and key ideas in Isaiah 56.<sup>25</sup>

“O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen. He *is* the LORD our God: his judgments *are* in all the earth. He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations. Which *covenant* he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, *and* to Israel *for* an everlasting covenant” (Psalm 105:6–10).

Correspondences between Psalm 105, Abraham, and Isaiah 56 are many. First, Abraham is identified as the Lord’s servant in Psalm 105. This connects to Isaiah 56:6, where we see the formerly excluded strangers and eunuchs identified as servants to God. Second, the covenant that God initiated with Abraham is remembered in Psalm 105. This is the very covenant the servants of God (the eunuchs and strangers) must take hold of in Isaiah 56:6. Third, themes of the law (*torah*) and everlasting covenants (which are secured by obedience to God’s law) are invoked in Psalm 105. Isaiah 56 plays on both themes of law and everlasting covenant. Insofar as people keep the law, they will be admitted into the temple where God will place his everlasting name upon them as a sign that they have eternal right to the everlasting covenants of Abraham. Finally, the barrenness of Abraham is but a memory in Psalm 105 (and will be for the eunuchs as well) as thousands of generations of posterity are acknowledged.

### Isaiah 56:7

In Isaiah 56:6–7 we learn that the strangers and eunuchs have become servants to God and that once in the temple, these servants joyfully participate in prayer and worship. Perhaps these strangers and eunuchs sang Psalm 113 in the temple. Psalm 113 plays upon the themes of servants, barrenness, and praise, which connect both to Isaiah 56 and the Abraham story, “Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. . . . He maketh the barren woman to keep house, *and to be* a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD,” (Psalm 113:1, 9). Just as Sarai was originally described as “Sarai was barren; she *had* no child” (Genesis 11:30), now because of the promises

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25. Ulrich Berges, “Who Were the Servants? A Comparative Inquiry in the Book of Isaiah and the Psalms,” in *Past, Present, Future: The Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets*, eds. Johannes C. de Moor and Harry F. van Rooy (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000), 1–18.

of God, she became a joyful mother of children. In fact the meaning of her son Isaac's name, "he will laugh" is poetically connected to Sarai's laughter at becoming a mother (Genesis 18:13, 15; 21:6). Psalm 113 also connects to Isaiah 56 thematically because the servants are commanded to praise the *name* of the Lord. As we explained above, the name of God is a permanent symbol to the righteous recipients of it, of their everlasting access to his promises and presence.

Isaiah 56:6–7 are also poetically parallel to Isaiah 56:4–5. Once again, God addresses the non-Israelites, the strangers. He promises that inasmuch as they keep his sabbaths, and lay hold to the covenants they will be brought into the temple. God's holy mountain and house of prayer are synonyms for the temple as multiple scriptural references illustrate.<sup>26</sup> The temple is where God will accept the prayers and offerings of *all* the covenant faithful.

Though we have focused primarily on specific groups excluded from the temple (e.g., strangers and eunuchs) throughout this paper, the promises of the temple that Isaiah describes here are for *all* people. The phrases in Isaiah 56:2 "blessed is the man"<sup>27</sup> and "the son of man" (literally in Hebrew *ben adam* = son of Adam) are both generic phrases referring to any human. Isaiah is here speaking of a day when the covenant will be universally available to any man or woman, regardless of his or her circumstances, regardless if under the Law of Moses he or she would have been excluded from God's assembly at the temple. Everyone who keeps the law and the sabbaths will be invited into the divine covenants and be counted as God's people. In this regard, Isaiah transitions from focusing on specific cases of exclusion to proclaiming that *all* people, whether eunuch or stranger or some other temple-excluded group, can be brought into the temple. Isaiah ends the 56:1–8 pericope on this note.

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26. References in the Old Testament to "holy mountain": Isaiah 11:9, 56:7, 57:13, 65:11, 65:25, 66:20; Ezekiel 20:40, 28:14; Daniel 9:16, 9:20, 11:45; Joel 2:1, 3:17; Obadiah 1:16; Zephaniah 3:11; Zechariah 8:3. References in the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) to "house of prayer": Isaiah 56:7, Matthew 21:13, Mark 11:17, Luke 19:46.

27. All references in the Old Testament to the phrase "happy is" or "blessed is": Deuteronomy 33:29; 1 Kings 10:8; 2 Chronicles 9:7; Job 5:17; Psalms 1:1, 2:12, 32:1, 33:12, 34:8, 40:4, 41:2, 65:4, 84:5, 84:12, 89:15, 94:12, 106:3, 112:1, 119:1, 127:5, 128:1, 137:8, 144:15, 146:5; Proverbs 3:13, 8:32, 8:34, 14:21, 16:20, 20:7, 28:14; Ecclesiastes 10:17; Isaiah 30:18, 32:20, 56:2; Daniel 12:12.

## Isaiah 56:8

Isaiah 56:8 indicates that God seeks to gather in from the dispersed corners of the earth not just the outcasts of Israel, he wants to gather in all of his children. God will gather in non-Israelites as well and make them part of his covenant if they are willing. Jesus testifies of this doctrine in John 10:16, where he explains to his disciples, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” We know this message was descriptive of scattered Israel and those who are adopted into Israel through baptism. These God seeks to bring into the fold as the Allegory of the Olive tree (Jacob 5) so beautifully and symbolically represents. The gathering takes place at the temple. The temple is where the fullness of the Abrahamic promises are made and realized. It is at the temple where the faithful take God’s name upon themselves yet again, as they do in other saving ordinances such as baptism.

## Conclusion

God wants to give us a name, that of Jesus Christ. For the faithful, God’s everlasting name includes access to the temple and covenants. Through temples and the blessings of this covenantal name of Christ, *all* the righteous who keep God’s law and honor his sabbaths will be like Abraham. They will have a fullness of the Abrahamic covenant, the promise of enduring posterity, and rest in a promised land. God’s temple embodies these promises and covenants. He stands ready to welcome in all who would faithfully hold fast to his covenant and join him in his holy mountain in joyful prayer and worship.

**Taylor Halverson** is a BYU Teaching and Learning Consultant; a member of the Book of Mormon Central executive committee; founder and co-director of the BYU Virtual Scriptures Group; a columnist for the Deseret News; founder and co-director of the BYU Creativity, Innovation, and Design group; a travel leader to Mesoamerica and the Holy Land; and the Chief Innovation Officer at Vereo Training. At BYU Taylor has taught Book of Mormon, Old Testament, History of Creativity, Innovation Boot Camp, Basic Entrepreneurship Skills, and an interdisciplinary design course called “Illuminating the Scriptures: Designing Innovative Study Tools.” His education includes: BA in Ancient Near Eastern Studies (BYU), MA in Biblical Studies (Yale University), MS in Instructional Systems Technology (Indiana University), PhD in Instructional Systems

*Technology (Indiana University), and PhD in Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity (Indiana University). Taylor has published and presented widely on scripture, innovation, entrepreneurship, technology, teaching, and learning. (More at [taylorhalverson.com](http://taylorhalverson.com).)*



# TOWARD A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING: HOW ONOMASTIC WORDPLAY AIDS UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE

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Amanda Colleen Brown

**Abstract:** *Matthew L. Bowen's book compels readers to consider both the Book of Mormon's construction and the significance of names in the text. Bowen and his coauthors invite readers to contemplate not only scripture but its stages of construction to completion, be they first draft, editing, final abridgement, or translation. Bowen's work reveals how, in the endeavor to sacralize the act of scripture reading, specific details like names and their meanings can invigorate one's understanding of the narrative and its theology, preventing such reading from becoming a rote endeavor.*

Review of Matthew L. Bowen, *Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays on Onomastic Wordplay and the Temple in Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2018). 408 pp., \$24.95.

There is a rich and complex tradition for names and their etymologies in both biblical texts and subsequent scholarly tradition, collectively referred to as *onomastics*. In *Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays on Onomastic Wordplay and the Temple in Mormon Scripture*, Matthew L. Bowen not only builds from this tradition but catapults into broader territory. His understanding of the linguistic aspects of his material is as comprehensive as it is attentive to data and grammar. In addition, he includes in his narrative an exposition of the more technical aspects of his selected text. Through careful, intentional analysis of Book of Mormon names and their meanings in selected passages, Bowen highlights the internal awareness of these texts that are independent units, and yet he is mindful of the traditions from which they are built. This book succeeds in narrowly examining how onomastic wordplay

informs the text while simultaneously maintaining a firm perspective on the larger narrative and explaining its relevance for modern readers.

The premise of this book is to explore the meaning that a study of onomastics provides to selected texts. The introduction states that “[a]n awareness of the meaning of names in their narratological context often leads to a deeper understanding of the messages intended by ancient authors and editors and enhances our appreciation of the meaning of the temple and its ordinances which are, among many things, very name-centric” (lviii). Each of the book’s 16 chapters expands on this through well-researched etymological exposition that is both grounded in the grammar of ancient Semitic languages and previous work done by Nibley, Tvedtnes, and others. This is no easy feat, as there is often no primary text available for comparison, a fact that severely limits definitive linguistic answers. Despite this limitation, Bowen conscientiously extrapolates an astounding amount of data from what is recorded in the translated text.

For example, in chapter 13, “Place of Crushing: Heshlon,” co-written with Pedro Olavarria, the authors discuss the possibility that the name of the plains in which Coriantumr and Shared battle (Ether 13:28) is a toponym originally translated by Mosiah from the Jaredite record. In his abridgement of the text, Moroni later augments the name through a chiasmic construction of the passage. The authors demonstrate that Joseph Smith left the toponym untranslated, as opposed to those of Desolation and Bountiful, which emphasize place meaning over name (Alma 63:5, 3 Nephi 3:23; see also 237). They further show how, “...the untranslated toponym ‘Heshlon,’ serves as a kind of literary cenotaph for what eventually happened to both the Jaredites and Nephites due to their failure to heed prophetic warnings: they were crushed and ultimately destroyed” (238). This discussion of the etymological background of Ether establishes an additional layer in the Book of Mormon translation process, yet the authors navigate the potential historical and linguistic implications with a studied grasp of the text.

Linguistic extrapolation aside, the book reveals its true strength in Bowen’s dedication to broadening onomastic wordplay from literary device into theological commentary. He utilizes onomastic analysis as a springboard to discuss the larger theological composition of the text and the meaning it provides. “‘See That Ye Are Not Lifted Up’: Zoram and the Rameumptom” (141) is an exemplary model of the type of multi-layer onomastic wordplay central to Bowen’s proposed readings. In this chapter, the wordplay begins with Zoram himself (1 Nephi 4 and 2 Nephi 1) and continues with “several of Zoram’s descendants



(e.g., Zoram<sup>3</sup>, Jacob<sup>2</sup>, Amalickiah, Ammoron, and Tubaloth) [as they become] some of the most infamous and notorious figures in the long Lamanite-Nephite history as Mormon recounts it. The name Zoram (one who is high/exalted) receives distinctly pejorative treatment from the time of the great Zoramite apostasy and the rise of Amalickiah” (141).

Using the momentum gained from the proposed etymology of Zoram, Bowen proceeds to connect both the texts that deal with the thematic element of being high/lifted up (1 Nephi 11:34–36 and Jacob 2:13, Alma 31:8–14, 21, etc.) and the figures who are specifically named as having Zoramite heritage. Bowen then presents a new analysis of the history of those who identify as Zoramites throughout Book of Mormon, questioning whether their status as a clan/tribe was similar to that of the Nephites and their subsumed tribes (148). By drawing out Zoram’s silent character through analysis of wordplay on his name and establishing him as a founding figure whose people are then individualized outside the foremost tribal dichotomy, the identity attached to Lamanite and Nephite tribes is recast into a more complex societal structure.

Herein Bowen’s holistic approach to the narrative is highlighted. Reaching across history and authors, he analyzes the text’s construction with the abridger in mind, seeking out that which was intended by the original author(s) and connecting it to the abridger’s discourse. By coupling this viewpoint with precise analysis of the narrative’s poetic structure, emphasis on thematic words/phrases, and more, expanded patterns emerge and provide new insight into the nuanced nature of the text in question. That nuance is then applied to the narrative’s argument, showing that “The Zoramites and their apostasy represent a type of Latter-day Gentile pride and apostasy, of which Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni warned repeatedly” (liv). A greater relevance for narratological structure is achieved by connecting the text to the author’s intent toward the reader.

If Bowen’s intention was to convince his readers that no scripture is written in a vacuum, he has greatly succeeded. Across the 306 pages of this work, he unravels the intricacies that name-based literary constructions produce. He expands the texts in question to match the rendered data, thereby elucidating greater connection and meaning for the entire work. Each suggestion is tendered with impeccable linguistic and grammatical analysis and is appropriately attentive to the detail such an examination requires. Even while tackling more challenging passages, the nuanced arguments admit limitation while simultaneously pushing the envelope regarding meaning and intent. On a personal note, I found that *Name as Key-Word* provided new perspective and gave me

the framework to approach Mormon scripture with fresh eyes, bridging previously isolated pockets of information into a new, more connected viewpoint on the narrative I love. The book achieves its intended goal. Through study of the meaning and placement of names in Mormon scripture's narrative, Bowen provides readers with internal theological perspective as well as an expanded commentary on the utility of the text in answering today's religious questions.

**Amanda Colleen Brown** is a graduate student in Bible and the Ancient Near East at The Hebrew University at Jerusalem, where she focuses on Akkadian literature, Israelite popular religion, and women in the Hebrew Bible. She previously graduated from Brigham Young University with a bachelor's degree in Ancient Near Eastern Studies. She is also passionate about percussive dance styles, literature, and travel.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME? PLAYING IN THE ONOMASTIC SANDBOX

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Kevin L. Barney

**Abstract:** *Name as Key-Word brings together a collection of essays, many of them previously published, whose consistent theme is exploring examples of onomastic wordplay or puns in Mormon scripture in general and the Book of Mormon in particular. Without a knowledge of the meaning of these names, the punning in the scriptural accounts would not be recognized by modern English readers. Exploring the (probable) meanings of these names helps to open our eyes to how the scriptural authors used punning and other forms of wordplay to convey their messages in a memorable way.*

Review of Matthew L. Bowen, *Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays on Onomastic Wordplay and the Temple in Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2018). 408 pp., \$24.95.

Matthew L. Bowen, an Assistant Professor of Religious Education at BYU-Hawaii, who received his PhD in biblical studies from Catholic University of America, has for some time now been publishing short studies that explore onomastic wordplay in Mormon scripture. Many of these essays have been previously published, often in the pages of *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*.<sup>1</sup> The adjective *onomastic*

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1. Matthew L. Bowen, “‘This Son Shall Comfort Us’: An Onomastic Tale of Two Noahs,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 23 (2017): 263–98; Bowen, “‘See That Ye Are Not Lifted Up’: The Name Zoram and Its Paronomastic Pejoration,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 19 (2016): 109–143; Bowen, “Onomastic Wordplay on Joseph and Benjamin and Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 255–73; Bowen, “‘Most Desirable Above All Things’: Onomastic Play on Mary and Mormon in the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 13 (2015): 27–61; Bowen, “‘And There Wrestled a Man with Him’ (Genesis 32:24): Enos’s Adaptations

derives from the Greek *onomastikos* “of or relating to names or naming” (from Greek *onoma* “name”).<sup>2</sup>

Bowen’s work on proper names in scriptural texts unavoidably brushes up against knotty issues in Book of Mormon translation theory (such as loose v. tight control, the extent of linguistic evolution over a 1,000-year period, creolization with other languages, the whole concept of “inspired” translation, what the “learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians” from 1 Nephi 1:2 is supposed to mean, and so forth). Two methodological notes (at pages xlviii–xlix and 18–19) make clear that he is thoroughly familiar with these issues, but if we had to solve them first before commenting meaningfully on Book of Mormon language, we would never get anywhere, so he essentially brackets such issues and takes 1 Nephi 1:2 as warrant for treating Hebrew and Egyptian as relevant languages for the Book of Mormon text, which strikes me as a fair way to proceed. (Some of these theoretical issues concerning Book of Mormon translation are also touched on briefly by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, a moving force behind the publication of this volume, in a six-page foreword [ix–xv].)<sup>3</sup>

Here I will critique and comment on the first essay in the volume. I have also included an appendix written by Bowen himself and included in the book, which provides complete summaries of all 16 chapters.

### ON “NEPHI’S GOOD INCLUSIO”

Chapter 1, titled “Nephi’s Good Inclusio,” essentially posits that (1) the name *Nephi* means “good”; (2) Nephi plays on the meaning of his own name when he refers to the goodness of his own parents or the goodness of God; and (3) such wordplay occurs both at the beginning and at the end of his corpus, thus forming a rhetorical framing device called an *inclusio*. The three words in his title for this chapter correspond to the three propositions he makes. I will comment on these propositions in order.

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of the Onomastic Wordplay of Genesis”, *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 10 (2014): 151–60.

2. The noun *onomasticon*, which derives from the neuter form of the Greek adjective *onomastikos*, refers to a learned work that explores the derivation and semantic fields of the proper names (both personal and place) occurring in a given book or literature. Of particular relevance for the volume under review is the *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, last modified March 8, 2017, <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu>.

3. The foreword features 75 endnotes, surely some sort of record!

## Nephi

For the suggested wordplay to be meaningful, we must posit that the name *Nephi* meant “good” (and that Nephi knew this). There have been various suggestions for the etymology of Nephi, but the *Book of Mormon Onomasticon* opines that the “most likely” derivation of the name Nephi is ancient Egyptian *nfr* “good, beautiful.”<sup>4</sup> At first blush this seems unlikely, since the final *r* is not represented in Nephi, but that is not actually a difficulty, since the final *r* can elide.<sup>5</sup> Bowen explains that during and after Lehi’s time the word would have been pronounced something like *neh-fee*, *nay-fee* or *nou-fee*. The word came into Coptic as *noufi* (in northern dialects) or *noufe* (in southern dialects). I remember reading John Gee’s treatment of this name in 1992 and in subsequent work, and it struck me as persuasive. So if the name *Nephi* is of ancient origin, I think Bowen is justified in considering it as deriving from the Egyptian *nfr*.

## Good

Nephi opens his record with these words:

I, NEPHI, having been born of **goodly** parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of **the goodness** and the mysteries **of God**, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days. (1 Nephi 1:1, emphasis added)

So Nephi begins by reciting his own name, which means “good,” and then plays on that meaning in referring to the goodness of his parents and the goodness of God. (This verse is the opening frame of the posited inclusio, discussed further below.)

A significant issue arises whether the *goodly* in “goodly parents” actually means “good” or something else. Over the past decade and

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4. See *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. “Nephi,” last modified November 10, 2017, <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/NEPHI>; citing John Gee, “A Note on the Name Nephi,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (1992): 189-91; John Gee, “Four Suggestions on the Origin of the Name Nephi,” in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch, and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 15.

5. William F. Edgerton, “Stress, Vowel Quality, and Syllable Division in Egyptian,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6, no. 1 (1947): 10-17.

earlier, this has become an important and contested point, and I would like to devote some discussion to this question.

The traditional reading of this passage is that *goodly* = good (perhaps with the connotation *righteous*). One way to demonstrate this is by consulting translations of the English Book of Mormon into other languages, in which a word for *good* is generally used, such as Spanish *buenos*.

Some time ago another theory for how to take the word *goodly* in this passage arose, of which I first learned from the late Marc Schindler. The basic idea was to take *goodly* in the sense of “possessed of goods,” thus meaning “wealthy, affluent.” Nephi was able to receive an education, an expensive proposition, because his parents were affluent and could afford such.<sup>6</sup> I thought it was an intriguing idea, and *goodly* seemed like it might bear such a meaning in Jacobean patter, but I took an agnostic stance on the suggestion until I could look into it further.

Six years ago I decided to take a crack at this issue.<sup>7</sup> The first thing I did was actually look up *goodly* in the dictionary, and I was surprised to learn that it does not actually mean “good,” according to lexical sources. The dictionary I keep in my office has “1. Pleasantly attractive; 2. Significantly large: CONSIDERABLE (a [goodly] number).”<sup>8</sup> The 1828 Webster’s, often consulted because of its proximity to the production of the Book of Mormon, had the following:<sup>9</sup>

Being of a handsome form; beautiful; graceful; as a *goodly* person; *goodly* raiment; *goodly* houses.

1. Pleasant; agreeable; desirable; as *goodly* days.
2. Bulky; swelling; affectedly turgid.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* had the following:<sup>10</sup>

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6. The idea appears to have originated with a suggestion made by Hugh Nibley that *goodly* here actually meant “wealthy” or “of elevated social status.” See Grant Hardy, “Approaching Completion: The Book of Mormon Critical Text Project,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2018): 164, citing Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, 2d ed., 6 parts (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies; Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017), 1:55.

7. See Kevin Barney, “‘Goodly Parents’ Revisited,” *By Common Consent* (blog), January 1, 2012, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2012/01/01/goodly-parents-revisited/>.

8. *Webster’s Ninth Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1987), s.v. “goodly.”

9. *Webster’s Dictionary 1828 – Online Edition*, s.v. “goodly,” accessed April 30, 2018, <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/goodly>.

10. *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), s.v. “goodly”.

1. Of good appearance, good looking; well favoured or proportioned; comely, fair, handsome.
2. Notable or considerable in respect of size, quantity, or number (frequently with mixture of sense 1).
3. Of good quality, admirable, splendid, excellent. Also, well suited for some purpose, proper, convenient (often with implication of sense 1).
4. Gracious, kind, kindly disposed.

So I quickly saw that I faced a dilemma. Did *goodly* in 1 Nephi 1:1 mean “good” per the traditional LDS reading, did it mean “attractive” per the lexical meaning, or did it mean “wealthy” per the revisionist reading?

Ultimately, context trumps the dictionary. The word *therefore* in the Book of Mormon text requires a causal relationship between Nephi’s parents being “goodly” and Nephi’s being taught somewhat in all the learning of his father. Since Lehi and Sariah as pleasantly attractive would have nothing to do with Nephi’s being so taught, the primary lexical meaning of the word simply does not work in our passage, which would seem to leave us where we started: with a choice between the traditional “good” and the revisionist “wealthy.”

I decided the best way to gain some insight into this question would be to examine the usage of the word *goodly* in our scriptural canon. The word appears 38 other times in our scriptures (29 times in the KJV Old Testament, four in the KJV New Testament, four in the Doctrine and Covenants, and one other time in the Book of Mormon). I thought the usage in the KJV would be especially probative because there we could check the underlying Hebrew and Greek words to determine the intended shade of meaning. The results of my inquiry are set forth below:

1. Genesis 27:15. And Rebekah took goodly raiment. Hebrew *chemdah*, that which is desired, pleasant, excellent.
2. Genesis 39:6. Joseph was [a] goodly [person], and well favoured. Hebrew *toar*, beautiful (in form).
3. Genesis 49:21. he giveth goodly words. Hebrew *shepher*, beauty, elegance (of words).
4. Exodus 2:2. she saw him that he [was a] goodly [child]. Hebrew *tob*, good (in various senses: fair, beautiful).
5. Exodus 39:28. goodly bonnets. Hebrew *p̄er*, an ornament, tiara, turban.

6. Leviticus 23:40. the boughs of goodly trees. Hebrew *hadar*, ornament (i.e., “ornamental trees”).
7. Numbers 24:5. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob. Hebrew *tob*, good in various senses (beautiful, pleasant).
8. Numbers 31:10. all their goodly castles. Hebrew *tirah*, a fortress, enclosure.
9. Deuteronomy 3:25. that goodly mountain. Hebrew *tob*, good in various senses.
10. Deuteronomy 6:10. to give thee great and goodly cities. Hebrew *tob*, good in various senses.
11. Deuteronomy 8:12. hast built goodly houses. Hebrew *tob*, good in various senses.
12. Joshua 7:21. a goodly Babylonish garment. Hebrew *tob*, good in various senses (fair, beautiful).
13. 1 Samuel 9:2. Saul, a choice young man and a goodly. Hebrew *tob*, good in various senses.
14. 1 Samuel 16:12. of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. Hebrew *tob*, good in various senses.
15. 2 Samuel 23:21. an Egyptian, a goodly man. Hebrew *mar'eh*, form, appearance.
16. 1 Kings 1:6. and he also [was a] very goodly man. Hebrew *tob*, good in various senses.
17. 2 Chronicles 6:10. with the goodly vessels. Hebrew *chemdah*, that which is desired, pleasant.
18. 2 Chronicles 6:19. all the goodly vessels. Hebrew *machmad*, object of desire, grace, beauty, something precious.
19. Job 39:13. gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks. Hebrew *nenanim*, meaning uncertain (something having to do with the sound of the wings).
20. Psalms 16:6. I have a goodly heritage. Hebrew *shaphar*, pleasing.
21. Psalms 80:10. the goodly cedars. Hebrew *‘el*, mighty (lit. godlike).
22. Jeremiah 3:19. a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations. Hebrew *tsebi*, splendor, glory (i.e., beautiful).



23. Jeremiah 11:16. a green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit. Hebrew *tuar*, a beautiful form, i.e., beautiful.
24. Ezekiel 17:8. that it might be a goodly vine. Hebrew ‘*addereth*, wide, ample, thus magnificent, splendid.
25. Ezekiel 17:23. and be a goodly cedar. Hebrew ‘*addir*, large, great, mighty, powerful, magnificent.
26. Hosea 10:1. they have made goodly images. Hebrew *tob*, good in various senses.
27. Joel 3:5. my goodly pleasant things. Hebrew *tob*, good in various senses.
28. Zechariah 10:3. as his goodly horse in the battle. Hebrew *hod*, splendor, freshness, beauty, and thus majestic.
29. Zechariah 11:13. a goodly price that I was prised as of them. Hebrew ‘*eder*, magnificence, thus “magnificence of price” (said ironically).
30. Matthew 13:45. goodly pearls. GR *kalos*, beautiful, pleasing in form.
31. Luke 21:5. adorned with goodly stones. GR *kalos*, beautiful, pleasing in form.
32. James 2:2. goodly apparel. GR *lampros*, shining, brilliant, and thus splendid, magnificent.
33. Revelation 18:14. all things which were dainty and goodly. GR *lampros*, shining, brilliant, and thus splendid, magnificent.
34. Mosiah 18:7. there were a goodly number gathered together at the place of Mormon.
35. Doctrine and Covenants 99:7. thou mayest go up also to the goodly land, to possess thine inheritance. [Note that in Hebrew, *tob* when used of land has the connotation “fertile.”]
36. Doctrine and Covenants 97:9. planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream. [Note that in Hebrew, *tob* when used of land has the connotation “fertile.”]
37. Doctrine and Covenants 103:20. possess the goodly land. [Note that in Hebrew, *tob* when used of land, has the connotation “fertile.”]

38. Doctrine and Covenants 103:24. to drive you from my goodly land. [Note that in Hebrew, *tob*, when used of land, has the connotation “fertile.”]

The other Book of Mormon occurrence, Mosiah 18:7, “there was a goodly number gathered together at the place of Mormon,” is an attested lexical usage and means “there was a *considerable* number gathered together at the place of Mormon.” The four Doctrine and Covenants occurrences all reflect a particular idiom connecting goodly with land, where “*goodly* land” means “*fertile* land.” The four New Testament occurrences are clearly within the lexical range of meaning, two a translation of Greek *kalos* “beautiful,”<sup>11</sup> and two a translation of Greek *lampros* “shining.”

The Old Testament usage of the word *goodly*, which is by far the most extensive in the scriptures, reflects substantial diversity in the underlying Hebrew. Of the 29 occurrences, 18 different Hebrew words are translated with English *goodly*, many with various nuances of the lexical meaning. The other 11 occurrences of *goodly* in the KJV Old Testament are all renderings of the Hebrew word *tob*, which fundamentally means “good” (with various shades of meaning). The English translational tradition sometimes renders these occurrences simply with “good,” other times with English words that would better fit the lexical meanings of English *goodly*, such as “fine” and the like.

Nowhere in the KJV Bible is the word *goodly* used in the sense of “wealthy.” In fact, I am unaware of any example in the English language where “goodly” is used to mean “wealthy,” which is why that meaning is not so catalogued in lexical sources.

In the comments to my blog post on this subject, someone pointed out that Joseph used this same expression in his 1832 history:

I was born in the town of Charon [Sharon] in the <State> of Vermont North America on the twenty third day of December AD 1805 of goodly Parents who spared no pains to instruct<ing> me in <the> christian religion[.]<sup>12</sup>

*Goodly* here cannot bear the meaning “wealthy,” a term surely never applied to his own parents. If it meant “wealthy” in 1 Nephi 1:1,

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11. Compare the Greek expression *kalos kagathos*, “beautiful and good,” an expression that reflected the virtuous ideal of the aristocracy.

12. Karen Lynn Davidson, David J. Whitaker, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers: Histories, Volume 1: Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2012), 11, as quoted in Bowen, 11n6.

Joseph misunderstood the word when he used it here. I think the more parsimonious reading is that in Joseph's usage *goodly* simply meant "good." I suspect he used *goodly* rather than simply *good* to give the word a bit of an archaic flavor.<sup>13</sup>

Accordingly, I concur with the conclusion of Bowen as expressed at the end of a lengthy note on the issue that "the idea that 'goodly parents' means 'wealthy parents' cannot be sustained."<sup>14</sup>

Note: After I had written the above, the most recent edition of *BYU Studies Quarterly* appeared in my mailbox, which includes an article by Grant Hardy, "Approaching Completion: The Book of Mormon Critical Text Project,"<sup>15</sup> which includes a paragraph relevant to this question. Grant Hardy had written a letter to Royal Skousen in which he wondered whether Nephi's self-description as one who had been "born of goodly parents" might be a mistake for "born of godly parents." Hardy describes Skousen's analysis of his suggestion:

On the one hand, "goodly" does not exactly mean "good" ... and a search of *Early English Books Online* yields no instances of "goodly parents," but 1,185 occurrences of "godly parents," including forty passages with "born of godly parents," some of which date back to the seventeenth century. On the other hand, *goodly* more or less works (Skousen states that "the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides evidence that one archaic meaning for goodly was, in fact, "good"), and there are no

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13. In some measure, I anticipated Bowen's argument about the threefold use of *good* in 1 Nephi 1:1. "I can certainly see the need for money for a scribal type of education. But is that what the text is alluding to, I wonder, when it says that Nephi was taught somewhat in all the learning *of his father*? Unless Lehi were a scribe, that doesn't seem to be the particular point Nephi is making here, even if it is otherwise true.

Two further points:

1. Later in the verse, Nephi refers to the goodness of God. I wonder if that might be a verbal echo of *goodly*?
2. Some scholars have suggested that Nephi's name is derived from Egyptian *nfr*, which means "good" and that perhaps there is a wordplay on his name involved in the use of *goodly* here." (Barney, January 1, 2012, comment on Barney, "'Goodly Parents' Revisited.")

14. Bowen, 12n6.

15. Grant Hardy, "Approaching Completion: The Book of Mormon Critical Text Project," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2018): 159-79.

examples of scribes ever mixing up *god* and *good*, so in the end he rejects the proposed emendation.<sup>16</sup>

Hardy notes that he agrees with Skousen's final judgment and observes that "the OED (which is ultimately more useful than Webster) never actually offers 'good' as a definition for *goodly*, but it does list 'virtuous,' 'excellent,' and 'fine' as archaic usages, so good enough." Of the Nibley proposal that *goodly* = wealthy, Hardy comments as follows:

Since these definitions appear idiosyncratic to Nibley, with no precedents in the English language listed in the OED, I would rule them out of bounds. And I would similarly disagree with Skousen's insistence that the education provided to Nephi by his "goodly parents" was secular rather than religious (the latter would better fit precedents for "godly parents"), since that distinction strikes me as anachronistic with regard to ancient literacy, especially when the only text Nephi ever cites is the brass plates, whose Egyptian script (Mosiah 1:4) he could read thanks to "the learning of [his] father," which included "the language of the Egyptians." (1 Nephi 1:1-2)<sup>17</sup>

Hardy's discussion simply cements in my mind the conclusion I had already reached, that in 1 Nephi 1:1 *goodly* simply means "good."

## Inclusio

An *inclusio*<sup>18</sup> is a type of distant parallelism between material at the beginning of a section of text and that at the end of the section, thus framing or bracketing the material in the middle. For example, in an article on Mother in Heaven I identified an *inclusio* in Proverbs 3:13-18, which happened to be chiastic in nature:

A. happy [v. 13; *'ashre*]

B. Wisdom [v. 13; *chokmah*]

[Framed material in verses 14 through 17]

B. a tree of life [v. 18; *'ets chayyim*]

A. happy [v. 18; *me'ushshar* (same root as *'ashre*)]

16. Ibid., 164.

17. Ibid., 164-65.

18. The word *inclusio* is the Latin nominative form of the word; our English derivative *inclusion* comes from the accusative form *inclusionem*.

The word *happy* was often used to allude to the Goddess Asherah due to similarity of sound (especially during times in Israelite history unfavorable to the goddess). Lady Wisdom was one of the ways Asherah was reconceptualized over time, and the tree of life alludes to her worship.<sup>19</sup>

One question I had when reading Bowen's argument was whether or not *inclusio* occurred at such distances as he posited (i.e., the whole of 1 and 2 Nephi). Turning to that fountain of all human knowledge, Wikipedia (s.v. "Inclusio"),<sup>20</sup> the section on Hebrew Bible focused on several distant examples in the writings of Jeremiah, Lehi's contemporary. For instance, consider this distant *inclusio* between chapters 1 and 24, which also happens to be chiasitic:

A. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant. [Jeremiah 1:10]

B. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. [Jeremiah 1:11]

[Framed material between Jeremiah and 24.]

B. Then said the LORD unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. [Jeremiah 24:3]

A. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. [Jeremiah 24:6]

So, returning to Bowen's argument, recall that he posited 1 Nephi 1:1 with its threefold focus on good/goodness as the opening frame of his posited *inclusio*. The closing frame is a threefold emphasis on doing good in 2 Nephi 33, the final chapter of his corpus.

First comes 2 Nephi 33:4:

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19. Kevin L. Barney, "How to Worship Our Mother in Heaven (Without Getting Excommunicated)," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 41, no. 4 (Winter 2008):128-29.

20. "Inclusio," Wikipedia, last edited November 20, 2017, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inclusio>.

And I know that the Lord God will consecrate my prayers for the gain of my people. And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them; for it **persuadeth them to do good; it maketh known** unto them of their fathers, and it speaketh of Jesus, and **persuadeth** them to believe in him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal.

Bowen notes that Nephi starts by referring to “the words which I have written” in the plural but then conceptualizes his plural words as a singular with “it persuadeth to do good” and subsequent singular forms, apparently conceptualizing his record as a single, unified production.<sup>21</sup>

Second comes 2 Nephi 33:10:

And now, my beloved brethren, and also Jew, and all ye ends of the earth, hearken unto these words and believe in Christ; and if ye believe not in these words believe in Christ. And if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ, and he hath given them unto me; and they teach all men that they should **do good**.

Bowen notes that the verb *believe* is repeated five times in this verse alone, and the end of such belief is that all should do good.

Third and finally comes the next to last verse of his corpus, 2 Nephi 33:14:

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

So does this threefold mention of good/goodness in Nephi’s final words suffice to constitute a close bracket to the open bracket of the threefold invocation of *good* in 1 Nephi 1? I think it does. And I take it that the point of this inclusio is to highlight the importance of the goodness of God as a conceptual theme throughout his writings. By my count Nephi uses the terms good/goodness a total of 31 times throughout his writings (only four of which derive from the lengthy Isaiah material incorporated in toto in 2 Nephi), so his emphasis on the goodness of God does seem to be a major theme of his work.

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21. On the phenomenon of deflected agreement in number between subject and verb see Andrew Smith, “Deflected Agreement in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 21, no. 2 (2012): 40–57.

Bowen also points out that later writers imitated Nephi’s introduction in writing their own. I was particularly impressed by his comparison of the introduction of Enos with that of Nephi.

1 Nephi 1:1	Enos 1:1
<i>I, Nephi [Egyptian <i>nfr</i> (nfi) = good(ly)] having been born of goodly parents therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father</i>	<i>I, Enos [Hebrew ‘enos = “man”] knowing my father that he was a just <b>man</b> for he taught me in his language</i>

What particularly impressed me about this presentation was that where Nephi makes a pun on his name (meaning “good”) by referring to his goodly parents, Enos similarly makes a pun on his own name (meaning “man”) by referring to his father as a just man.

Conclusion

I found Bowen’s exploration of the significance of names and wordplay concerning them in Mormon scripture to be both fun and interesting. He obviously has the background knowledge and personal interest to do this and do it well. Reading these passages through the lens of Bowen’s insights helps to bring the text to life. I recommend the book to those who enjoy this type of detailed scriptural study.

**Kevin L. Barney** is the managing partner of the Chicago office of Kutak Rock LLP, an Omaha-based law firm, where he practices public finance law. He received a BA in classics from Brigham Young University in 1982, a JD from the University of Illinois College of Law in 1985, and an LLM in taxation from DePaul University in 1990. His primary interest in Mormon Studies is as a scripturist. He blogs at [bycommonconsent.com](http://bycommonconsent.com).

Appendix: A Synopsis of the Sixteen Essays

*[Editor’s Note: This appendix is reproduced from Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays on Onomastic Wordplay and the Temple in Mormon Scripture, l-lviii. Footnote references have been changed to reflect numbering in this review.]*

**Nephi's Good Inclusio.** In the opening chapter I endeavor to demonstrate that Nephi's name<sup>22</sup> and its meaning (adj. "good," "goodly," "fine," "fair"; noun = "goodness") was not only important in terms of Nephi's autobiography<sup>23</sup> but also was the overarching message of his writings. Nephi concludes his personal writings on the small plates using the terms "good" and "goodness of God." This terminological bracketing, a literary device used anciently, is called *inclusio*. Nephi's literary emphasis on "good" and "goodness" not only befits his personal name but fulfills the Lord's directive, "Thou shalt engraven many things ... which are *good* in my sight" (2 Nephi 5:30), a command which also plays on the name Nephi. This essay further shows how Nephi's autobiographical introduction and conclusion proved to be enormously influential on subsequent writers. Some of Nephi's successors modeled autobiographical and narrative biographical introductions on 1 Nephi 1:1–2 and based sermons — especially concluding sermons — on Nephi's "good" conclusion in 2 Nephi 33. An emphasis in all these sermons is that all "good"/"goodness" ultimately has its source in God and Christ.

**"Most Desirable Above All Things."** This volume's second essay examines the linguistic connection between the names Mary (Egyptian, "beloved"), Mormon, and the "love of God." The names Mary and Mormon most plausibly derive from the Egyptian lexeme *mr(i)*, "love, desire, [or] wish." Mary denotes "beloved [i.e., of deity]" and is thus conceptually connected with divine love, while Mormon evidently denotes "desire/love is enduring." Upon seeing Mary ("the mother of God," 1 Nephi 11:18, critical text) bearing the infant Messiah in her arms in vision, Nephi, who already knew that God "loveth his children," perceived that the meaning of the fruit-bearing tree of life "is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore it is the most desirable above all things" (1 Nephi 11:17–25). Many generations later, Alma the Elder and his people entered into a covenant and formed a church based on "love" and "good desires" (Mosiah 18:21, 28), a covenant directly tied to the waters of Mormon and "desire" (Mosiah 18:8–11). Alma the Younger, in the next generation, recalled the "song of redeeming love" that his father and others had sung

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22. John Gee, "A Note on the Name Nephi," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 189–91; idem, "Four Suggestions on the Origin of the Name Nephi," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 1–5.

23. Matthew L. Bowen, "Internal Textual Evidence for the Egyptian Origin of Nephi's Name," *Insights* 22/11 (2002): 2; idem, "'O Ye Fair Ones': An Additional Note on the Meaning of the Name Nephi," *Insights* 23/6 [2003]: 2–3.



at the waters of Mormon (Alma 5:3–9, 26; see Mosiah 18:30). Mormon, whose father Mormon named his son after himself and the land of Mormon and its waters (3 Nephi 5:12), repeatedly characterized charity as “everlasting love” or the “pure love of Christ [that] endureth forever” (Moroni 7:47–48, 8:16–17, 26). All of this has implications for Latter-day Saints or “Mormons,” who, as children of the covenant, must endure to the end in Christlike “love” as Mormon and Moroni did, particularly in days of diminishing faith, faithfulness, and love (see, e.g., Mormon 3:12; contrast Moroni 9:5).

**Joseph, Benjamin, and Gezera Shawa.** The third essay endeavors to show how the Book of Mormon contains several quotations from the Hebrew Bible that have been juxtaposed on the basis of shared words or phrases, this for the purpose of interpreting the cited scriptural passages in light of one another. Nephi and his successors employed an exegetical technique — one that Jesus himself used — that came to be known in later rabbinic times as *Gezera Shawa* (“equal statute”). In several additional instances, the use of *Gezera Shawa* converges with onomastic wordplay. Nephi uses a *Gezera Shawa* involving Isaiah 11:11 and Isaiah 29:14 twice on the basis of the *yāsap* verb forms *yōsîp/yôsîp* (2 Nephi 25:17 and quoting the Lord in 2 Nephi 29:1) to create a stunning wordplay on the name “Joseph.” In another instance, King Benjamin uses *Gezera Shawa* involving Psalm 2:7, 2 Samuel 7:14, and Deuteronomy 14:1 (1–2) on the basis of the Hebrew noun *bēn* (“son”; plural *bānîm*, *bānôt*, “sons” and “daughters”) on which to build a rhetorical wordplay on his own name. This second, sophisticated wordplay, which further alludes to Psalm 110:1 on account of the noun *yāmîn* (“right hand”), was ready-made for King Benjamin’s temple audience, who, on the occasion of Mosiah’s coronation, were receiving their own “endowment” to become “sons” and “daughters” at God’s “right hand.” The use of *Gezera Shawa* was often christological — e.g., Jacob’s *Gezera Shawa* on *’eben* (“stone”) in Jacob 4:15–17 and Alma’s *Gezera Shawa* on Zenos’s and Zenock’s phrase “because of thy Son” in Alma 33:11–16 (see Alma 33:4–17). Taken together, these examples suggest that we should pay more attention to scripture’s use of scripture and, in particular, the use of this exegetical practice. In doing so, we will better discern the ancient prophetic messages preserved in the Book of Mormon.

**“What Thank They the Jews?”** In the fourth essay I examine a wordplay on the name Judah/Jews against the backdrop of etiologies for the name Judah in Genesis 30 and 49, and the Lord’s repeated warning against Gentile (including gentile Christian) antisemitism in the Book of

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

**“And There Wrestled a Man with Him”: Jacob, Enos, Israel, and Peniel.** In the fifth chapter I propose several instances in which the Book of Mormon prophet Enos uses wordplay on his own name, the name of his father “Jacob,” the place name “Peniel,” and Jacob’s new name “Israel” in order to connect his experiences to those of his ancestor Jacob in Genesis 32–33, thus infusing them with greater meaning. Familiarity with Jacob and Esau’s conciliatory “embrace” in Genesis 33 is essential to understanding how Enos views the Atonement of Christ and the ultimate realization of its blessings in his life.

**Young Man, Hidden Prophet: Alma.** In the sixth chapter I examine how the biographical introduction of Alma the Elder into the Book of Mormon narrative (Mosiah 17:2) also introduces the name Alma into the text for the first time, this in close juxtaposition with a description of Alma as a “young man.” The best explanation for the name Alma is that it derives from the Semitic term *ġlm* (Hebrew *‘elem*) — “young man,” “youth,” “lad.” This strongly suggests the possibility of an intentional wordplay on the name Alma in the Book of Mormon’s underlying text: Alma became “[God’s] young man” or “servant.” Additional lexical connections between Mosiah 17:2 and Mosiah 14:1 (quoting Isaiah 53:1) suggest that Abinadi identified Alma as the one “to whom” or “upon whom” (*‘al-mi*) the Lord was “reveal[ing]” his arm as Abinadi’s prophetic successor. Alma began his prophetic succession when he “believed” Abinadi’s report and pled with King Noah for Abinadi’s life. Forced to flee, Alma began his prophetic ministry “hidden” and “concealed” while writing the words of Abinadi and teaching them “privately.” The

narrative's dramatic emphasis on this aspect of Alma's life suggests an additional thread of wordplay that exploits the homonymy between Alma and the Hebrew root \**ʾlm*, forms of which mean "to hide," "conceal," "be hidden," or "be concealed." The richness of the wordplay and allusion revolving around Alma's name in Mosiah 17–18 accentuates his importance as a prophetic figure and founder of the later Nephite church. Moreover, it suggests that Alma's name was appropriate: the details we learn of his life demonstrate that he lived up to the positive connotations latent in his name.

**Father Is a Man: Abish.** In the seventh essay I begin with the observation that the mention of "Abish" and a "remarkable vision of her father" (Alma 19:16) is itself remarkable, since women and servants are rarely named in the Book of Mormon text. As a Hebrew-Lehite name, "Abish" suggests the meaning "Father is a man," the midrashic components *ʾab*- ("father") and *ʾiš* ("man") being phonologically evident. Thus, the immediate juxtaposition of the name "Abish" with the terms "her father" and "women" raises the possibility of wordplay on her name in the underlying text. Since *ʾab*-names were frequently theophoric — i.e., they had reference to a divine Father (or could be so understood) — the mention of "Abish" ("Father is a man") takes on additional theological significance in the context of Lamoni's vision of the Redeemer being "born of a woman and ... redeem[ing] all mankind" (Alma 19:13). The wordplay on "Abish" thus contributes thematically to the narrative's presentation of Ammon's typological ministrations among the Lamanites as a "man" endowed with great power, which helped the Lamanites understand the concept of "the Great Spirit" (Yahweh) becoming "man." Moreover, this wordplay accords with the consistent Book of Mormon doctrine that the "very Eternal Father" would (and did) condescend to become "man" and Suffering Servant.

**"They Were Moved with Compassion."** The eighth essay explores hebraistic toponymic wordplay on the names Zarahemla and Jershon in the Lamanite emigration narratives. As in Hebrew biblical narrative, wordplay on (or play on the meaning of) toponyms, or "place names," constitutes a discernable feature of Book of Mormon narrative. The text repeatedly juxtaposes the toponym Jershon ("place of inheritance" or "place of possession") with terms "inherit," "inheritance," "possess," "possession," and the like. Similarly, the Mulekite personal name Zarahemla ("seed of compassion," "seed of pity"), which becomes the paramount Nephite toponym as their national capital after the time of Mosiah I, is juxtaposed with the term "compassion." Both wordplays occur and recur at crucial points in Nephite-Lamanite history. Moreover, both

occur in connection with the migration of the first generation Lamanite converts. The Jershon wordplay recurs in the second generation, when the people of Ammon receive the Zoramite (re)converts into the land of Jershon, and wordplay on Zarahemla recurs subsequently, when the sons of these Lamanite converts come to the rescue of the Nephite nation. Rhetorical wordplay on Zarahemla also surfaces in important speeches later in the Book of Mormon.

**“See That Ye Are Not Lifted Up”: Zoram and the Rameumptom.**

In the ninth essay I propose that the most likely etymology for the name Zoram is a verbal (third person singular perfect *qal* or *pô'al*) form of the Semitic-Hebrew lexeme *\*zrm*, meaning, “He [God] has [is] poured forth in floods.” However, the name could also have been heard and interpreted as a theophoric *-rām* name, of which there are many in the biblical Hebrew onomasticon (e.g., Ram, Abram, Abiram, Joram/Jehoram, Malchiram; cf. Hiram [Hyrum] or Hiram), whether or not it originated as such. Thus analyzed, Zoram would connote something like “the one who is high,” “the one who is exalted,” or even “the person of the Exalted One [or high place].” This has important implications for the later pejoration of the name Zoram and its gentilic derivative Zoramites in Alma’s and Mormon’s account of the Zoramite apostasy and the attempts made to rectify it in Alma 31–35 (cf. Alma 38–39). Mormon also describes the Rameumptom as a high “stand” or “a place for standing, high above the head” (Hebrew *rām*; Alma 31:13) — not unlike the “great and spacious building” (which “stood as it were in the air, high above the earth”; see 1 Nephi 8:26) — which suggests a double wordplay on the name “Zoram” in terms of *rām* and Rameumptom in Alma 31. Moreover, Alma plays on the idea of Zoramites as those being “high” or “lifted up” when counseling his son Shiblon to avoid being like the Zoramites and replicating the mistakes of his brother Corianton (Alma 38:3–5, 11–14). Mormon, perhaps influenced by the Zoramite apostasy and the magnitude of its effects, may have incorporated further pejorative wordplay on the Zoram-derived names Cezoram and Seezoram in order to emphasize that the Nephites had become lifted up in pride like the Zoramites during the judgeships of those judges. The Zoramites and their apostasy represent a type of Latter-day Gentile pride and apostasy, of which Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni warned repeatedly.

**“He Is a Good Man.”** The tenth essay returns to the subject of the name Nephi and its significance within the Helaman narratives. Mormon, as an author and editor, was concerned to show the fulfillment of earlier Nephite prophecy when such fulfillment occurred. Mormon

took care to show that Nephi and Lehi, the sons of Helaman, fulfilled their father's prophetic and parenetic expectations regarding them as enshrined in their given names — the names of their “first parents.” It had been “said and also written” (Helaman 5:6–7) that Nephi's and Lehi's namesakes were “good” in 1 Nephi 1:1. Using onomastic play on the meaning of “Nephi,” Mormon demonstrates in Helaman 8:7 that it also came to be said and written of Nephi the son of Helaman that he was “good.” Moreover, Mormon shows Nephi that his brother Lehi was “not a whit behind him” in this regard (Helaman 11:19). During their lifetimes — i.e., during the time of the fulfillment of Mosiah's forewarning regarding societal and political corruption (see Mosiah 29:27) that especially included secret combinations — Nephi and Lehi stood firm against increasingly popular organized evil.

**My People Are Willing: Aminadab.** The eleventh essay explores how Aminadab, a Nephite by birth who later dissented to the Lamanites, played a crucial role in the mass conversion of three hundred Lamanites (and eventually many others). At the end of the pericope in which these events are recorded, Mormon states: “And thus we see that the Lord began to pour out his Spirit upon the Lamanites, because of their easiness and willingness to believe in his words” (Helaman 6:36), whereas he “began to withdraw” his Spirit from the Nephites “because of the wickedness and the hardness of their hearts” (Helaman 6:35). The name Aminadab is a Semitic/Hebrew name meaning “my kinsman is willing” or “my people are willing.” As a dissenter, Aminadab was a man of two peoples. Mormon and (probably) his source were aware of the meaning of Aminadab's name and the irony of that meaning in the context of the latter's role in the Lamanite conversions and the spiritual history of the Nephites and Lamanites. The narrative's mention of Aminadab's name (Helaman 5:39, 41) and Mormon's echoes of it in Helaman 6:36, 3 Nephi 6:14, and elsewhere have covenant and temple significance not only in their ancient scriptural setting, but also for latter-day readers of the Book of Mormon.

**Getting Cain and Gain.** The twelfth chapter explains how the biblical etiology (story of origin) for the name “Cain” associates his name with the Hebrew verb *qny/qnh*, “to get,” “gain,” “acquire,” “create,” or “procreate” in a positive sense. A fuller form of this etiology, known to us indirectly through the Book of Mormon text and directly through the restored text of the Joseph Smith Translation, creates additional wordplay on “Cain” that associates his name with murder to “get gain.” This fuller narrative is thus also an etiology for organized evil — secret

combinations “built up to get power and gain” (Ether 8:22–23, 11:15). The original etiology exerted a tremendous influence on Book of Mormon writers (e.g., Nephi, Jacob, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni) who frequently used allusions to this narrative and sometimes replicated the wordplay on “Cain” and “getting gain.” The fuller narrative seems to have exerted its greatest influence on Mormon and Moroni, who witnessed the destruction of their nation firsthand — destruction catalyzed by Cainitic secret combinations. Moroni, in particular, invokes the Cain etiology in describing the destruction of the Jaredites by secret combinations. The destruction of two nations by Cainitic secret combinations stands as two witnesses and a warning to latter-day Gentiles (and Israel) against building up these societies and allowing them to flourish.

**Place of Crushing: Heshlon.** Chapter thirteen, co-written with Pedro Olavarria, explains how the name Heshlon, attested once (in Ether 13:28) as a toponym in the Book of Mormon, most plausibly denotes “place of crushing.” The meaning of Heshlon thus takes on significance in the context of Ether 13:25–31, which describes the crushing or enfeebling of Coriantumr’s armies and royal power. This meaning is also important in the wider context of Moroni’s narrative of the Jaredites’ destruction. Fittingly, Moroni’s mention of the name Heshlon itself serves as a literary turning point in the chiasmic structure of a text that describes the fateful reversal of Coriantumr’s individual fortunes and the worsening of the Jaredites’ collective fortunes. Moroni, who witnessed the gradual crushing and destruction of the Nephites, seemingly mentioned this name in his abridgement of the book of Ether on account of the high irony of its meaning in view of the Jaredite war of attrition which served as precursor to the destruction of the Nephites.

**“In the Mount of the Lord It Shall Be Seen” and “Provided.”** Chapter fourteen examines the ancient temple as a place where, for ancient Israelites, sacrifice and theophany (i.e., seeing God or other heavenly beings) converged. The account of Abraham’s “arrested” sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22) and the account of the arrested slaughter of Jerusalem following David’s unauthorized census of Israel (2 Samuel 24, 1 Chronicles 21) served as etiological narratives — explanations of “cause” or “origin” — for the location of the Jerusalem temple and its sacrifices. Thematic wordplay on the verb *rā’â* (to “see”) in these narratives creates an etiological link between the place-names “Jehovah-jireh,” “Moriah,” and the threshing floor of Araunah/Ornan, pointing to the future location of the Jerusalem temple as the place of theophany and sacrifice *par excellence*. Isaac’s “arrested” sacrifice and the vicarious

animal sacrifices of the temple anticipated Jesus's later "un-arrested" sacrifice since, as Jesus himself stated, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day" (John 8:56). Sacrifice itself constituted a kind of theophany in which one's own redemption could be "seen," and the scriptures of the Restoration confirm that Abraham and many others, even "a great many thousand years before" the coming of Christ, "saw" Jesus's sacrifice and "rejoiced." Additionally, theophany and sacrifice converge in the canonized revelations regarding the building of the latter-day temple. These temple revelations begin with a promise of theophany, and mandate sacrifice from the Latter-day Saints. In essence, the temple itself was, and is, Christ's Atonement having its intended effect on humanity.

**Founded Upon a Rock: Peter's Surnaming.** The fifteenth chapter recommends that the famous *Petros/petra* wordplay in Matthew 16:18 does not constitute Jesus's identification of Peter as the "rock" upon which his Church would be built. This wordplay does however identify him with that "rock" or "bedrock" inasmuch as Peter, a small "seer-stone" (cf. JST John 1:42), had the potential to become like the Savior himself, "the Rock of Ages" or "Rock of Heaven" (Moses 7:53). One aspect of that "rock" is the revelation that comes through faith that Jesus is the Messiah. Other aspects of that same rock are the other principles and ordinances of the gospel, including temple ordinances. The temple, a symbol of the Savior and his body, is also a symbol of the eternal family — the "sure house" built upon a rock.<sup>24</sup> As such, the temple is the perfect embodiment of Peter's labor in the priesthood, against which hell will not prevail (Matthew 16:18).

**You More Than Owe Me This Benefit: Philemon and Onesimus.** The sixteenth chapter analyzes Paul's use of wordplay and punning involving the names Philemon (Φιλήμων, "affectionate one") and Onesimus (Ὀνήσιμος, "useful") and their meanings in his letter to Philemon, the believing (anachronistically "Christian") owner of a converted slave named Onesimus. It further notes and analyzes concomitant paronomasia involving the name-title Χριστός (*Christos*) and various homonymic terms. All of this wordplay constitutes a key element in Paul's polite, diplomatic, and carefully worded letter. Paul artfully uses Philemon's own name to play on the latter's affections and to remind him that despite whatever Onesimus may owe (ὀφείλει, *opheilei*) Philemon, Philemon more than owes (προσσοφείλεις, *prosopheileis*) his very self — i.e., his life as a Christian and thus his eternal wellbeing — to Paul. Hence, Philemon "more than owes" Paul his request to have Onesimus

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24. Matthew 7:24–25; cf. 1 Samuel 2:35, 25:28; 2 Samuel 7:16; 1 Kings 11:38.

— who was once “useless” or “unprofitable” and “without Christ,” but is now “profitable” and “well-in-Christ” — as a fellow worker in the gospel. In a further (polyptotonic) play on Onesimus, Paul expresses his urgent desire to “have the benefit” (ὀναίμην, *onaimēn*) of Onesimus in the Lord out of Philemon’s own free will and with his blessing, since all three are now brothers in Christ, and thus slaves to Christ, their true “master.” In the context of Paul’s use of -χρηστός (*-chrēstos*) and ὀναίμην (*onaimēn*), Paul’s desire for Philemon’s voluntary “good deed” or “benefit” (τὸ ἀγαθόν σου, *to agathon sou*) is to be understood as the granting of Onesimus and as the point and climax of this publicly read letter.

In these sixteen chapters, it is hoped the reader will recognize the enormous importance of names in ancient scriptural narrative — not only the in Hebrew Bible, but also in the New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Pearl of Great Price. An awareness of the meanings of names in their narratological context often leads to a deeper understanding of the messages intended by ancient authors and editors and enhances our appreciation of the meaning of the temple and its ordinances which are, among many things, very name-centric.



# THE HABEAS CORPUS PROTECTION OF JOSEPH SMITH FROM MISSOURI ARREST REQUISITIONS

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A. Keith Thompson

**Abstract:** *This is the first of two articles discussing Missouri's requisitions to extradite Joseph Smith to face criminal charges and the Prophet's recourse to English habeas corpus practice to defend himself. In this article, the author presents research rejecting the suggestion that the habeas corpus powers of the Nauvoo City Council were irregular and explains why the idea that the Nauvoo Municipal Court lacked jurisdiction to consider interstate habeas corpus matters is anachronistic. In the second article, the author analyzes the conduct of Missouri Governor Thomas Reynolds in relation to the requisitions for Joseph Smith's extradition. Even by the standards of the day, given what he knew, his conduct was unethical.*

Former Illinois Governor Thomas Ford and the *Warsaw Signal* editor Thomas Sharp, together with Sharp's correspondents, popularized the view that the use Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints made of the English writ of habeas corpus during the Nauvoo period was suspect.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it was Missouri's willingness to pursue Joseph Smith's extradition, even though it had dismissed the underlying indictments, that forced

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1. Thomas Ford, *History of Illinois, From Its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847* (Chicago: S.C. Griggs and Co, 1854), 265. Note that Governor Ford had criticized the Mormon use of powers under the Nauvoo Charter in his letter to the Saints dated 22 June 1844 which was published by Thomas Sharp in the *Warsaw Signal* on 29 June 1844.

Smith's recourse to the now-misunderstood English habeas corpus process and seeded the resentment of later enemies.<sup>2</sup>

In his *History of Illinois* in 1854, Ford wrote that the Nauvoo Charter's provisions were "unheard of, and anti-republican in many particulars; and capable of infinite abuse by a people disposed to abuse them."<sup>3</sup> Though he had formerly held office as an Illinois Supreme Court Justice,<sup>4</sup> objectivity was not to be expected from Governor Ford. He had promised Joseph Smith safe conduct if he went to Carthage<sup>5</sup> and was thus considered responsible for the martyrdom by the Latter-day Saints.

Thomas Sharp quoted Charles Foster in his newspaper, suggesting that "Joseph's escape from arrest through habeas corpus writs in the Nauvoo municipal court,"<sup>6</sup> was just one example of "galling oppression"<sup>7</sup> by the Mormon majority in Nauvoo. Sharp began his relationship with the Mormons as a "neutral observer"<sup>8</sup> who "reported the issuance of the Nauvoo Charter without editorial comment" in January 1841,<sup>9</sup> but he became a Mormon-hater within a few months, largely because of the Mormon reaction to his criticism of John C. Bennett's appointment

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2. See, for example, Jeffrey N. Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism, Joseph Smith's Legal Bulwark for Personal Freedom," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (2013), 4–97. I discuss Judge Thomas Reynolds' dismissal of the underlying indictments in my following article, "Missourian Efforts to Extradite Joseph Smith and the Ethics of Governor Thomas Reynolds of Missouri," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* (forthcoming).

3. Ford, *History of Illinois*, 265.

4. "Thomas Ford," *Governors of Illinois*, Online Biographies (website), accessed February 8, 2018, <http://www.onlinebiographies.info/gov/il/ford-t.htm>.

5. Letter from Governor Ford to Joseph Smith, June 22, 1844, History of the Church 6:533–537, accessed April 23, 2016, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/carthage/fordletter.html>. Note that Governor Ford sets out some of his objections to the Nauvoo Charter and the Nauvoo Municipal Court's exercise of its habeas corpus powers in this letter. However, note also that Governor Ford had earlier received Joseph Smith favorably and cooperated with him and his counsel, Justin Butterfield, in connection with the dismissal of his predecessor's warrants to arrest Joseph in connection with the attempted murder of former Governor Boggs in Missouri.

6. Richard Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling, A Cultural History of Mormonism's Founder* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 533; quoting from January 10, 17, and February 7 editions of the *Warsaw Message* in 1844, and from Charles A. Foster's letter to the Editor of the same newspaper renamed the *Warsaw Signal* on April 12, 1844.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., 427.

9. Ibid.

as Mayor of Nauvoo and his concern about “the political power of the growing number of Mormons in Hancock County.”<sup>10</sup> That political power was demonstrated in Sharp’s loss in the 1842 Hancock County election for the Illinois legislature to William Smith, the Mormon Apostle and brother of the Prophet.<sup>11</sup>

Joseph Smith became something of an expert in the law<sup>12</sup> as a result of the many legal cases in which he was involved.<sup>13</sup> The purpose of this article is to show that neither he nor the other Latter-day Saints misused the English writ of habeas corpus in connection with Missouri’s efforts to extradite him to face criminal charges in that state. Indeed, the habeas corpus power in the Nauvoo Charter and the use that was made of it was reasonable, predictable, and legal according to the standards of the times.

I have approached this task in four parts. First, I summarize the nature of the habeas corpus powers provided to Nauvoo by its charter, and I concur with the assessment of James L. Kimball and Jeffrey N. Walker that despite what Governor Ford wrote in 1854, there was nothing particularly unusual about those powers when they were granted in 1840.

Second, to correct misunderstanding as to how habeas corpus worked in Illinois in the 1840s, I trace the history of the habeas corpus writ from England into the Western United States during the period before the Civil War, and I reject the notion that this writ predated Magna Carta and was always an instrument designed to protect the rights of prisoners. I provide this review so that readers will understand what happened in Joseph Smith’s habeas corpus cases in light of the law and practices that

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10. Marshall Hamilton, “Thomas Sharp’s Turning Point: Birth of an Anti-Mormon,” *Sunstone Magazine*, October 1989, 21, <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/073-16-23.pdf>.

11. James B. Allen and Glen E. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1976), 177.

12. Perhaps referring to his ironic legal experience, Joseph Smith once observed: I am a lawyer; I am a big lawyer and comprehend heaven, earth and hell, to bring forth knowledge that shall cover up all lawyers, doctors and other big bodies. This is the doctrine of the Constitution, so help me God. The Constitution is not law to us, but it makes provision for us whereby we can make laws. Where it provides that no one shall be hindered from worshipping God according to his own conscience, is a law. No legislature can enact a law to prohibit it. The Constitution provides to regulate bodies of men and not individuals. (*History of the Church*, 5:289–290).

13. Joseph I. Bentley says that the Joseph Smith Papers Project team has counted “about 220 cases involving Joseph Smith as plaintiff, defendant, witness or judge” from 1819 when he was thirteen until his death in 1844” (“Road to Martyrdom, Joseph Smith’s Last Legal Cases,” *BYU Studies Quarterly*, 55, No. 2 (2016): 8–9).

then applied, rather than in terms of practices after the Civil War, which have received more attention in American historical and legal literature. I believe this excursion is necessary to correct the misunderstanding that happens when historical practices are interpreted through the lens of modern understanding. During Joseph Smith's time, habeas corpus processes were almost completely English, and United States courts at all levels had not yet resolved the question of whether municipal or state courts, granted habeas corpus powers by their charters and constitutions, could exercise those powers in federal cases.

In Part III, I further reject the idea — prominent in 19<sup>th</sup>-century American legal scholarship and which has found its way into the historiography of the Missouri extradition episodes — that it was American judges who pioneered review of the facts behind habeas corpus returns (written explanations of why jailers were holding their prisoners). I will explain that the Mormons did not abuse the habeas corpus process that had been developed by English judges and which was applied in a very English fashion in the United States before the Civil War.

In Part IV, I discuss the two causes of action cited for the Missouri requisitions for Joseph Smith's arrest and extradition from Illinois to Missouri between 1840 and 1843. The first requisition, issued in 1840, was based upon Joseph Smith's escape from Missouri while in transit to Boone County, where he was to be tried for arson, riot, burglary, treason, and receiving stolen goods during the Mormon War and extermination order period (what I will call the "first Mormon War requisition").<sup>14</sup> The affidavit supporting the second requisition for Joseph's arrest by Missouri in August 1842 alleged that he was an accessory before the fact in the attempted murder of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs on May 6, 1842, (the "accessory before the fact" requisition). The third requisition was a revival of the first cause of action and was peremptorily dismissed by the Nauvoo Municipal Court on double-jeopardy grounds (the "second Mormon War requisition").

I argue that the first Mormon War requisition was a sham from start to finish since the indictments in the underlying cause of action had been dismissed before the extradition request was made, even though Joseph Smith and his team did not know that until late 1843. I also observe that if the first Mormon War requisition was invalid because the underlying cause of action had been dismissed, then as a necessary consequence, any warrant based upon those same charges was also invalid, even if a new indictment had been issued by a different court.

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14. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 382.

Since Judge Nathaniel Pope of the United States Circuit Court for the District of Illinois had found the accessory before the fact requisition invalid on January 5, 1843,<sup>15</sup> I argue that the Nauvoo Municipal Court's previous conduct in that matter was not unreasonable or oppressive. I also suggest reasons why Judge Pope's ruling in *Ex parte Smith*<sup>16</sup> was cited with approval as a precedent in the United States for more than 100 years afterwards.<sup>17</sup>

Even though Mormon critics argue that the Nauvoo Municipal Court exceeded its authority when dismissing the second Mormon War requisition, I argue that the process involved in the issue of that requisition was illegal and unethical in accordance with the principle of double jeopardy.

I conclude that criticism of the use of the writ of habeas corpus in Nauvoo between 1840 and 1843 on the basis that it was preferential, capricious, or overreaching is not substantiated by the law, the facts, or the practice of the period. Not all may agree that the actions taken by Nauvoo's leaders during the *Nauvoo Expositor* episode were wise, but this analysis suggests that we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should pause before passing judgment on 19<sup>th</sup>-century English legal practices in the US without proper understanding. (This analysis is also relevant to the use of the writ of habeas corpus during the *Nauvoo Expositor* episode, although that is not the focus of this article.)

## Part I — City Habeas Corpus Powers in Illinois between 1837 and 1840

In 1971, James L. Kimball, Jr. was the first to publish a research article confirming that Nauvoo was not the only chartered Illinois city with a municipal court that had been granted habeas corpus powers by 1840.<sup>18</sup> Chicago was chartered first in March of 1837, Alton four months later in July 1837, Galena in 1839, and Springfield, the state capital along with Quincy, in 1840. Nauvoo was the sixth Illinois city to receive a charter and received it from the 12th Illinois legislature on December 16, 1840,<sup>19</sup>

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15. *Ibid.*, 479.

16. *Ex parte Smith*, 22 F. Cas. 373 (C.C.D., Ill., 1843) (No. 12, 968); 3, McLean, 121.

17. Jeffrey N. Walker, "Invoking Habeas Corpus in Missouri and Illinois" quoted in Gordon A. Madsen, Jeffrey N. Walker and John W. Welch, eds., *Sustaining the Law, Joseph Smith's Legal Encounters* (Provo UT: BYU Studies, 2014), 393.

18. James L. Kimball, Jr., "The Nauvoo Charter: A Reinterpretation," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, University of Illinois Press 64, no. 1 (Spring 1971): 67–68. This article developed ideas that Kimball had researched in his Masters thesis at the University of Iowa in 1966.

19. *Ibid.*, 70. The Nauvoo Charter was effective from February 1, 1841.

effective February 1, 1841. Though each city charter was different, Nauvoo's 28-section charter closely followed the others.<sup>20</sup> Kimball has noted differences,<sup>21</sup> the largest in his view being Nauvoo's omission of a residence or American citizenship requirement for public office. Kimball speculated that was because of Nauvoo's wish to press recent Canadian and English converts into municipal service as soon as possible.<sup>22</sup>

While the original charters of Chicago and Alton did not specifically endow their municipal courts with habeas corpus powers,<sup>23</sup> habeas corpus writs were popular, and Alton's charter was amended in 1839 to include a habeas corpus power<sup>24</sup> before Nauvoo's charter was even drafted. Effective June 3, 1839, the habeas corpus power amendment to Alton's charter read as follows:

*Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly, That the judge of the municipal court of the city of Alton shall have power, and is hereby authorized, to issue writs of habeas corpus, writs ne exeat, writs of injunction, and writs certiorari, within the jurisdiction of said court; and the same proceedings shall be had thereon before said judge*

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20. Ibid., 68–70.

21. Ibid., 70–74. Kimball's list of differences includes:

- i.) the absence of a residency requirement for city leaders,
- ii.) the city council's right to remove city offices "at will,"
- iii.) the large number of alderman and councilors who, with the Mayor, formed the Council,
- iv.) the fact that the principal judge of Nauvoo was also ex officio the Mayor, who thus conducted city business as Chief Judge with the aldermen functioning as Associate Justices.

However, the requirement that appeals from the Nauvoo Court would be heard in the Hancock County Circuit Court was more restrictive than equivalent provisions in the Chicago and Alton charters that granted their local courts "concurrent jurisdiction with the circuit courts of their respective counties" and thus allowed them to bypass the local circuit courts which could hear Nauvoo in jury trial cases.

22. Ibid., 70.

23. *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, s.v. "Act of Incorporation for the City of Chicago, 1837," <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/11480.html>. The original powers of its municipal court are set out in clauses 69–78.

24. <https://papersofabrahamlincoln.org/documents/D271113b>.

and court as may be had in like cases before the circuit judges and circuit courts of this State, respectively.<sup>25</sup>

The right of Chicago's municipal court to issue writs of habeas corpus is not so obvious. It was there from the beginning in 1837 in consequence of the language of section 69 which read:

That there shall be established in the said city of Chicago, a municipal court which shall have jurisdiction concurrent with the circuit courts of this State in all matters civil and criminal, arising within the limits of said city, and in all cases where either plaintiff and defendant or defendants, shall reside at the time of commencing suit, within said city, which court shall be held within the limits of said city in a building provided by the corporation.<sup>26</sup>

Jeffrey Walker calls this an express grant of habeas corpus power since Illinois' circuit courts had the power to issue writs of habeas corpus.<sup>27</sup>

The habeas corpus power in Nauvoo's charter documents, written 18 months later, was expressed slightly differently but without tangible difference in legal consequence:

The Municipal Court shall have power to grant writs of habeas corpus in all cases arising under the ordinances of the City Council.<sup>28</sup>

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25. Ibid., Section 1 from "An Act to amend an act, entitled 'An act to incorporate the city of Alton.'"

26. *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, s.v. "Act of Incorporation for the City of Chicago, 1837," <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/11480.html>, 19.

27. Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 33.

28. This was a portion of section 17 of the Nauvoo charter. The whole read:

The Mayor shall have exclusive jurisdiction in all cases arising under the ordinances of the corporation, and shall issue such process as may be necessary to carry such ordinances into execution and effect; appeals may be had from any decision or judgment of said Mayor or Aldermen, arising under the city ordinances, to the Municipal Court under such regulations as may be presented by ordinance; which court shall be composed of the Mayor as Chief Justice, and the Aldermen as Associate Justices, and from the final judgment of the Municipal Court to the Circuit Court of Hancock county, in the same manner of appeals are taken from judgments of the Justices of the Peace; provided that the parties litigant shall have a right to a trial by a jury of twelve men in all cases before the Municipal Court. The Municipal Court shall have power to grant writs of habeas corpus in all cases arising under the ordinances of the City Council.

Kimball observed that the charters of Chicago, Alton, Quincy, Galena, Springfield, and Nauvoo all “illustrate early nineteenth century tendencies towards democratization in government.”<sup>29</sup> In other commentaries, that localization trend is attributed to Jefferson’s government<sup>30</sup> and has much in common with the 21<sup>st</sup> century European concept of subsidiarity.<sup>31</sup> While Kimball does not elaborate on the trend to encourage local government and judiciary, he concludes his discussion of the habeas corpus power possessed by the Nauvoo Municipal Court with the view that those provisions followed state precedent and “the powers of the court were well hedged and easily within the era’s allowable range of acceptance.”<sup>32</sup> Walker’s summary is similar:

The drafting of the Nauvoo Charter was undoubtedly influenced by the Mormons’ experiences in Missouri and the perceived threat of additional efforts by the Missourians to apprehend Mormon leaders, especially Joseph Smith. Yet its grant of rights to issue writs of habeas corpus cannot be seen as entirely unique.<sup>33</sup>

The original habeas corpus powers in the Nauvoo charter documents were not tailored to respond to Missouri efforts to extradite Joseph Smith, since those efforts did not begin until September 1841. However, the Nauvoo City Council did later amend its ordinances to respond to the

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See [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Nauvoo\\_Charter](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Nauvoo_Charter).

29. Kimball, “The Nauvoo Charter: A Reinterpretation,” 70.

30. For example, L.K. Caldwell, “Thomas Jefferson and Public Administration,” *Public Administration Review* 3, no. 3 (Summer, 1943): 240–53, where the author explains that Jefferson’s idea that administration should be delegated to the local level unless locals could not perform the relevant tasks was the tonic that undid the centralization that Alexander Hamilton drove through during Washington’s administration. Bushman has also observed that “[t]he charter implemented the Jeffersonian principle of distributing power to the level of society closest to the people” (Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 412).

31. The ideas of subsidiarity and sphere-sovereignty from Catholic and Calvinist social teaching from the late nineteenth century have roots in Aristotle and Aquinas and were also prominent in De Toqueville’s *Democracy in America* published in 1835. For more detail on contemporary applications of these ideas, see Michelle Evans and Augusto Zimmerman, eds., *Perspectives on Subsidiarity*, (Dordrecht, 2014). In its essence, the idea behind subsidiarity is that best government occurs when decision making authority is delegated to the level where the governmental decisions take effect.

32. Kimball, “The Nauvoo Charter: A Reinterpretation,” 75.

33. Walker, “Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism,” 33.



Missouri requisitions.<sup>34</sup> Richard Bushman has suggested that the original Missouri requisition for Joseph Smith's arrest on Mormon War charges was a response to Mormon redress petitions in the nation's capital. Those petitions had embarrassed Missouri because they argued that the absence of any extradition proceedings to that point was a tacit admission of Missouri's culpability in the Mormon War and extermination order.<sup>35</sup>

Missouri's embarrassment and desire to arrest and incarcerate the citizen of another state did not invalidate the habeas corpus right. Citizen protection in the face of official displeasure was the very essence of that right — protection from what Joseph Smith had described as unrighteous dominion after his earlier and more famous incarceration without trial for nearly six months in jails at Richmond and Liberty, Missouri. Habeas corpus had been developed by English judges and parliamentarians to protect its citizens from the capricious and arbitrary conduct of an angry monarch, and its adoption into United States state charters was intended to do the same.

## Part II — The History of the Writ of Habeas Corpus

The Latin phrase *habeas corpus* literally means that a court required the body of the person charged in court so that it could make a decision in light of the facts. From as early as the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, English courts would issue orders using this phrase to make sure parties were in court so civil cases could proceed. But the “modern” use of the writ by courts to review arrests by members of the executive English government can only be traced to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>36</sup>

Walker observes that a complete history of the idea of habeas corpus would review “a series of writs from the Middle Ages” before Magna Carta in 1215, which provided protection from imprisonment.<sup>37</sup> While Magna Carta does foreshadow the writ of habeas corpus, since clauses 38 to 40 of

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34. *Nauvoo Neighbor* 1, No. 33 (13 December 1843): 1, which was described as “an extra Ordinance for the extra case of Joseph Smith and Others.” This amendment was passed five days earlier on 8 December 1843. This amendment, and the Missouri action that prompted it, is discussed in the author's sequel article, “Missourian Efforts to Extradite Joseph Smith and the Ethics of Governor Thomas Reynolds of Missouri,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 28 (forthcoming).

35. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 397, 405, 505.

36. R.J. Sharp, *The Law of Habeas Corpus*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1989), 1–3.

37. Walker, “Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism,” 8.

the original version denied arbitrary imprisonment without prompt trial,<sup>38</sup> the writ of habeas corpus extolled as the engine of practical liberty was a much later judicial innovation.<sup>39</sup> The English legal historian Edward Jenks observed that when it first appeared, the king's high writ of habeas corpus was about getting people into prison rather than getting them out.<sup>40</sup> The counter-intuitive origin of the writ of habeas corpus in English history will not surprise readers familiar with English legal history; they know the impartial English jury was actually a tool of the king, who summoned people who were likely well-informed about their neighborhoods. There was originally no trace of an impartiality requirement in their selection. The first jurors were chosen because they likely knew, or would be able to discover, the detail and value of property in their towns and the identity of people likely to have committed notorious crimes.

The Canadian scholar Robert Sharp has confirmed that by the 16<sup>th</sup> century the writ of habeas corpus was being used to combat executive committals. The writ was not originally connected with liberty but involved an element of due process because the courts were unwilling to decide anything in connection with a case without the physical presence of the defendant in court.<sup>41</sup> However, the medieval rule held that the king's writs were not available when imprisonment was by the king's order.<sup>42</sup> The original writs were part of the marketing of the king's justice

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38. William S. Holdsworth, *A History of English Law*, 3rd ed., (London: Methuen & Co, 1945), 2: 215. Note that the original 1215 version of Magna Carta was revoked by the Pope within three months of its finalization in June 1215. The numbering of these clauses is changed in the later 1217, 1225 and 1297 issues of the Great Charter where slightly abbreviated versions of the clauses that conceptually prefigure the writ of habeas corpus are numbered 28 and 29.

39. For example, in his judgment in favor of Joseph Smith in *Ex parte Smith* 22 F. Cas. 373 (C.C.D. Ill 1843) (No. 12,968), Judge Nathaniel Pope wrote:

All who are familiar with English history, must know that it was extorted from an arbitrary monarch, that it was hailed as a second magna carta, and that it was to protect the subject from arbitrary imprisonment by the king and his minions, which brought into existence that great palladium of liberty in the latter part of the reign of Charles II. It was indeed a magnificent achievement over arbitrary power. Magna Carta established the principles of liberty; the habeas corpus protected them. (377)

40. Edward Jenks, "The Story of Habeas Corpus," *Law Quarterly Review* XVIII, (1902) reprinted in *Select Essays in Anglo-American Legal History*, (New York: The Lawbook Exchange, 1992): 532.

41. Sharp, *The Law of Habeas Corpus*, 1-3.

42. *Ibid.*, 4.

as a desirable alternative to local and franchise courts.<sup>43</sup> The adaptation of the writs to achieve other purposes, including prompt peer trials, was a trial and error effort that took centuries to unfold. It was not really secure until the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Parliament had acquired the power to force the king to accept the *Petition of Right* in 1628 and the first *Habeas Corpus Act* following the Restoration of the monarchy in 1679.

Jenks has explained that the innovation which developed the habeas corpus writ as an instrument of liberty came when the writ was paired with the idea of privilege.<sup>44</sup> That is, if a writ of habeas corpus could remove a trial from a local court into the king's court, then a person of high breeding could similarly insist that his case should always be heard in a higher court. This idea also resonated with the Magna Carta's idea that barons were entitled to a trial by their peers.<sup>45</sup> Its potential was amplified in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century when Sir Edward Coke asserted that his common-law courts had authority to hear cases traditionally heard in other courts, including the king's ecclesiastical courts.<sup>46</sup> These ideas appealed in colonial America, and they appealed to Joseph Smith from the pages of William Blackstone's famous 18<sup>th</sup>-century English law commentaries because a corrupt court could be called to account by another court with completely different jurisdiction.<sup>47</sup>

The judicial innovation that saw the writ of habeas corpus used to test arrests by lesser members of the King's Executive took much longer to settle. The efforts of the king's common-law judges to use the writ of habeas corpus to protect high-born folk against orders made by the king's equity (Chancery and Exchequer Chamber) and prerogative (Star Chamber and High Commission) courts, resulted in furious

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43. Holdsworth, *A History of English Law*, 5:300. See also Sharp, *The Law of Habeas Corpus*, 4. As a matter of practice, no one ever queried the king's orders one on one. They were only successfully (and safely) challenged by collectives as when the barons challenged King John in connection with Magna Carta in 1215 and when Parliament secured the Petition of Right from King Charles I in 1627.

44. Jenks, "The Story of Habeas Corpus," 538–40.

45. Note that the trial by peers envisaged in Magna Carta did not extend to all classes and was not a jury trial. The trial of peers in the House of Lords was not abolished until 1948 (The *Criminal Justice Act* (UK)). During the 12<sup>th</sup> century, juries discovered facts for the king on the basis of personal knowledge. Jury impartiality was not well established until the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Theodore Plucknett, *A Concise History of the Common Law* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1956), 129–30).

46. Plucknett, *A Concise History of the Common Law*, 243–44.

47. Bentley, "Road to Martyrdom, Joseph Smith's Last Legal Cases," 36, 54–55. Bentley notes that Joseph Smith and the Nauvoo Municipal Council often referred to Blackstone as their bible of the law absent modern in-house counsel.

jurisdictional battles.<sup>48</sup> But in an age when judges were still appointed and dismissed at the pleasure of the king, a return that cited the king's personal authority behind an imprisonment engaged a wholly different level of political consideration. Would a judge risk his career and possibly his life by ordering the release of a man if he were convinced the king had indeed ordered the imprisonment challenged by a particular writ of habeas corpus?<sup>49</sup> If a lesser departmental official of the king was behind the arrest, the personal safety of the judge was not so large an issue.

*Darnell's case* in England in 1627<sup>50</sup> focused on the practical question of whether a judge would countermand the king's personal order of imprisonment; the resulting judicial back-down was redressed by the House of Commons the following year when Sir Edward Coke authored the *Petition of Right*. Because King Charles I needed funding for his military campaign in France,<sup>51</sup> the House of Commons required him to concede that his judges could issue the writ of habeas corpus in cases where the imprisonment had been the result of Executive direction, including his own personal direction.

The story of habeas corpus in England after *Darnell's case* in 1627 and the *Petition of Right*, which immediately followed, tells of English judges looking behind the returns provided by jailers when responding to habeas

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48. Sharp, *The Law of Habeas Corpus*, 6–8. Note that while English habeas corpus history did not feature jurisdictional battles between state and federal jurisdictions, the battles between the common-law courts, the ecclesiastical courts, and the king's prerogative courts were much more furious, largely because twentieth-century ideas of jurisdiction did not yet exist.

49. *Ibid.*, 10. Sharp suggests that the practical questions revolved around when the court had to accept on good faith a statement in the jailer's return that the king had ordered the imprisonment and whether the king's executive power so exercised superseded the common-law adjudicatory process.

50. In this case, which is also known as the Five Knights' case (3 How. St. Tr. 1 (K.B. 1627)), the warrant that resulted in the imprisonment had been personally signed by two members of the king's privy council. Though the court of King's Bench had issued the writ of habeas corpus, when the return was duly provided confirming direct Privy Council engagement on the king's behalf, the judges backed down, retreating to the old rule which had held since medieval times that the king's executive orders were an exception to the general habeas corpus rules that applied in other cases.

51. For example, Gregorio F. Zaide, *World History* (Quezon City, Philippines: Rex Printing Company Inc., 2000 reprint), 221–22. Zaide reports that Parliament's price in supporting the king's request for additional fundraising was the *Petition of Right*, which was prepared by the Commons and supported by the Lords.

corpus writs.<sup>52</sup> When jailers sought to deny judicial review by claiming the prisoner was held by personal order of the king, judges refused to accept those simple assertions, and if proper reasons were not given on the face of the record or by testimony, the prisoners were released.

Robert Sharp says that although the king flouted his promise to give reasons for all imprisonments after the *Petition of Right* (1628) as soon as his urgent need for finance had passed, the practice of providing reasons gradually took hold.<sup>53</sup> And in a short time, that practice was reinforced by the first English *Habeas Corpus Act* in 1640, and others soon followed. The 1679 *Habeas Corpus Act* (UK) was passed to curtail a variety of Executive abuses that developed to get around the writ. These included the arrest of prisoners when the courts were not in session and the removal of prisoners to places like Scotland and the Channel Islands, where the writ did not reach.<sup>54</sup> Certainly, errors on the face of the record enabled court interference in cases of Executive arrest,<sup>55</sup> but section 3 of the 1816 *Habeas Corpus Act* (UK) confirmed again that the courts were authorized to examine the truth of the reasons given in cases where liberty was infringed by an act of the Executive.<sup>56</sup> If not so, state officials and inferior tribunals would have been free to determine the

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52. When a writ of habeas corpus was issued by a competent court, it was issued to the person “holding the body” of the person in custody, who was simply the jailer. It directed the jailer to bring the person concerned to the court making the order and go explain why the person was being so held. Since jailers were often not familiar with the procedural niceties of the laws under which an arrest had been made, when questioned as to the reason they were holding someone, they would answer simply, saying “by order of the king” or similar. In time, as writs of habeas corpus became more common, they would read a script. But these simple recitations would not always satisfy the ordering judge, who would order the release of prisoners if adequate and just cause could not be shown.

53. Sharp, *The Law of Habeas Corpus*, 15.

54. See Amanda L. Tyler’s extensive discussion of the influence of the 1679 *Habeas Corpus Act* (UK) on the embodiment of the privilege and the suspension practice that was both endorsed and limited in the US Constitution. (“A ‘Second Magna Carta’: The English Habeas Corpus Act and the Statutory Origins of the Habeas Privilege,” *Notre Dame Law Review* 19 (2016): 1949.) See also Geoffrey Robertson, *The Tyrannicide Brief* (New York: Anchor Books, 2007), 349. Robertson observed that the US Supreme Court relied on the 1679 *Habeas Corpus Act* (UK) to invalidate similar executive overreach by the US government when it established the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, partly for the reason that prisoners held there would be beyond the reach of US habeas corpus.

55. Sharp, *The Law of Habeas Corpus*, 25.

56. *Ibid.*, 71.

limits of their own powers when it came to imprisonment,<sup>57</sup> and the laws requiring all matters affecting the liberty of the subject to be construed strictly would be without effect.<sup>58</sup>

For English judges, the core of the writ of habeas corpus was to review the sufficiency of the evidence, especially if that was not clear from the face of the return.<sup>59</sup> English habeas corpus principle and practice was well known, respected, and followed by US judges at the time of Joseph Smith's habeas corpus experiences. Subsequent American commentators have stated that American innovation first saw the courts examine the sufficiency of evidence rather than take arrest warrants at face value<sup>60</sup> but that American reinterpretation completely ignores how the English developed the writ as a check on Executive power. It also ignores how the English Parliament bargained with the king — before American independence — to make sure English judges were authorized by habeas corpus Acts to look beyond simple summaries of the reasons for imprisonment that jailers gave in response to habeas corpus writs.

During Joseph Smith's lifetime, habeas corpus practice in America remained decidedly English. The supremacy of federal courts lay in the future, but some of the seeds of that future were planted by Justin Butterfield, who served as the United States District Attorney for Illinois and represented Joseph Smith before federal circuit judge Nathaniel Pope. Joseph Smith's first Illinois habeas corpus hearing before Judge Stephen A. Douglas in the Illinois Supreme Court (state) in response to the first Missouri Mormon War requisition<sup>61</sup> did not result in any jurisdictional argument. Butterfield advised that the charge that Joseph Smith had been an accessory before-the-fact in the attempted murder of the former governor of a state should be brought in the Illinois

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57. *Ibid.*, 73.

58. *Ibid.*, 55.

59. *Ibid.*, 79.

60. For example, Jeffrey Walker says that habeas corpus was primarily used as “a vehicle to protect from misuse of the judicial processes or procedures,” and that it was the American courts that “began ‘looking behind the writ’ to review the underlying charges” (Walker, “Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism,” 15).

61. See, for example, Walker, “Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism,” 53–56. The hearing of the second warrant case in Judge Nathaniel Pope's federal circuit court also avoided the possibility that the relevant Illinois Supreme Court judge might be sympathetic to an extradition request from Governor Thomas Reynolds of Missouri, who had previously served as Chief Justice of the State of Illinois.

Circuit Court (federal). Bringing that second Illinois habeas corpus case in federal court was innovative and was strenuously opposed by Josiah Lamborn, arguing for the State of Illinois.<sup>62</sup> But Lamborn's challenge did not sway the presiding federal judge, Nathaniel Pope, and his decision in favor of Joseph Smith was cited as a precedent for more than 100 years afterwards.<sup>63</sup>

### Part III — How US Habeas Corpus Practice Was Innovative

However, to give a fair overview of this practice in United States history and so readers interested in LDS history may properly understand Joseph Smith's legitimate and "English" use of the writ of habeas corpus, I will briefly explain what was and remains innovative in US habeas corpus practice.

The English Courts never developed a post-conviction habeas corpus practice because they did not have to deal with imaginative efforts to confirm the liberty of former slaves.<sup>64</sup> That was partly because of the success of the anti-slavery politics of William Wilberforce, partly because England did not have a federal constitution entrenching a federal version of habeas corpus, and partly because English jurisprudence has always had an aversion to any interference with the finality of the trial process.<sup>65</sup> Robert Sharp says the essential reason the United States developed the writ of habeas corpus as a post-trial remedy was because of the belief that any claim that a criminal trial breached constitutional law was best

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62. On the first day of the hearing (Wednesday, January 4, 1843), Josiah Lamborn as Attorney-General for the State of Illinois, argued that the federal court had no jurisdiction to hear the matter, but Judge Pope accepted the contrary argument for Joseph Smith that the federal court had exclusive jurisdiction "because Joseph Smith was in custody 'under color of US Law.'" (Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 60–61).

63. Walker says that "the first official 'legal' version of the report was published in 1847 in *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Circuit Court of the United States for the Seventh Circuit* (Cincinnati, OH: Derby, Bradley and Co., 1847) as 3 McLean 121 and includes a synopsis of the case, selected pleadings (Bogg's affidavit, Reynold's request for extradition, and Ford's arrest warrant), and the opinion from the court." He continues that "the preferred official version was published in 1896 as 22 F. Cas. 373 in *The Federal Cases Comprising Cases Argued and Determined in the Circuit and District Courts of the United States*" ("Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 68n210).

64. During the same period that the United States was being reconstructed physically and legally after the Civil War, the English Parliament simplified its own formal appeals process to deal with unsafe convictions in the *Judicature Acts* of 1873 and 1875 (respectively 36 & 37 Vic. c 66 and 38 & 39 Vic. c 77).

65. Sharp, *The Law of Habeas Corpus*, 146.

heard by a forum divorced from the guilt-finding process.<sup>66</sup> But that is also a simplification of a process developed over an extended period.

In a 1965 article in *The University of Chicago Law Review*, Dallin H. Oaks wrote that most of the states followed the English *Habeas Corpus* Act of 1679 when they sought to provide the habeas corpus guarantee in their state constitutions. However, that state legislation was passed only after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, in consequence of the English Crown's previous position that the writ of habeas corpus was not available in the colonies.<sup>67</sup> While most of the state statutes that implemented habeas corpus were "patterned after the English act,"<sup>68</sup> there were variations. Generally, the benefits of the writ did not "extend to persons properly charged with felony or treason or to 'persons convict' or in execution under civil or criminal process."<sup>69</sup> But there was variation as to whether the writ was available only in criminal matters or whether it extended to the restraint of liberty for any cause, including civil matters.<sup>70</sup> There was also variation as to whether writs of habeas corpus could be issued when the courts were not in session, and some jurisdictions extended the English template to authorize judges not just to allow bail when they perceived a defect in process or evidence but to release such prisoners completely.<sup>71</sup>

In effect, when passing their state constitutions, the American states added to the remedial work done by the English *Habeas Corpus* Act of 1679 and codified the English common-law practice that developed during the century after that Act was passed. Before 1865, there is no evidence that the US courts were using the writ of habeas corpus to review convictions unless it could be shown that the impugned proceedings were somehow void *ab initio*.<sup>72</sup>

Habeas corpus petitions brought after conviction fell under the shadow of state legislation patterned after [the English Act

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66. Ibid.

67. Dallin H. Oaks, "Habeas Corpus in the States 1776–1865," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 32, no. 2 (Winter 1965): 251. See also Tyler, "A 'Second Magna Carta': The English Habeas Corpus Act and the Statutory Origins of the Habeas Privilege," 1985–87.

68. Oaks, "Habeas Corpus in the States 1776–1865," 254.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid., 262–63. That is, void from the beginning of the relevant process.



of 1679 and still] ... withheld the benefits ... from 'persons convict or in execution by legal process'.<sup>73</sup>

Thus, Oaks confirmed that once states had claimed the writ of habeas corpus for themselves, the only pre-Civil War innovations to the law related to adjusting the categories where the English writ was applicable. The emergence of the writ of habeas corpus as a post-conviction remedy lay in the future. But slavery cases before the Civil War hinted at the development of the writ of habeas corpus that was to come, and Justin Butterfield made reference to the use of habeas corpus writs in northern slave cases before the Civil War when he defended Joseph Smith against the accessory before the fact requisition in federal court. Josiah Lamborn for Illinois, on behalf of Missouri, had argued that the case should have been brought in the Illinois Supreme Court because the matter was between two states and did not involve the federal government. Butterfield replied that the federal court had exclusive jurisdiction to hear Smith's case. It had been held, in a case seeking the return of a Louisiana slave in the New York Court of Errors, that "the state process could not circumvent federal process" or the US Constitution. After that, he asked rhetorically, "Has not my client, Joseph Smith, the rights of a [slave]?"<sup>74</sup>

### **Slavery Cases before the Civil War**

Before the Civil War, Oaks reports, the way habeas corpus issues were decided in slavery cases had more to do with geography than doctrine.<sup>75</sup> In the North, when a writ of habeas corpus for a slave was returned to the court, a hearing was held to determine whether or not he was a slave, and if proven to be so, the court would remand him to his master's custody. If he was proven to be a free man, he was released. In the South, however, the writ of habeas corpus was not available for a colored person because the master was entitled to a jury trial before being deprived of his property. Some southern courts held that there was no point to the use of the writ in slavery cases since a master could claim the slave again. But Oaks claims that reasoning is suspect since English law ruled against

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73. *Ibid.*, 261. Oaks reports that there were few such applications before 1850 but many afterwards but he could not find any "explanation" for that increase.

74. Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 62–64.

75. Oaks, "Habeas Corpus in the States 1776–1865," 267.

those recapturing a person who had been discharged following a hearing on a writ of habeas corpus.<sup>76</sup>

Before the Civil War, two writs were available to determine slave cases. Bail-like arrangements were normally made until trial when the issues would be heard by a jury rather than by a judge, as was the invariable practice in habeas corpus cases. Juries allowed community sentiment a place in the process, but the process also allowed slaves to escape on terms of bond forfeiture — a price that some abolitionist plaintiffs were prepared to pay.<sup>77</sup> But the choice as to which writ was most likely to secure a party's objectives in slavery cases before the Civil War differed from state to state and from North to South.

### Slavery Cases after the Civil War

After the Civil War, US *Habeas Corpus Act* 1867 tipped the federal-state balance in favor of the federal government.<sup>78</sup> Congress passed the *Habeas Corpus Act* of 1867 at the same time that it implemented the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment. Before the Civil War, state courts in abolitionist states had resisted slavery by requiring detailed evidence of title to slaves before they would release runaway slaves to slaveholders and federal marshals in accordance with the federal *Fugitive Slave Act* of 1850. After the Civil War, it was the federal courts that were skeptical about black arrests because they appeared to be enforcing slavery.<sup>79</sup>

Though congressional understanding of the legal history and development behind the Habeas Corpus Bill in 1866 was limited, the new Bill was drafted to enlarge and strengthen federal court power.<sup>80</sup> The final language of the *Habeas Corpus Act* confirmed that federal courts could hear writs of habeas corpus filed by prisoners held under state law. It also permitted the federal courts to do their own fact-finding about those cases and allowed appeals to the Supreme Court.<sup>81</sup>

The spirit of federal court cooperation with federal government policy is manifest in the decision in *In re Turner* (1867), given shortly after

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76. Ibid., 268, 277.

77. Ibid., 281–82.

78. William M. Wiecek, “The Great Writ and Reconstruction: The Habeas Corpus Act of 1867,” *The Journal of Southern History* 36, no. 4 (Nov. 1970): 548.

79. Mark M. Arkin, “The Ghost at the Banquet: Slavery, Federalism and Habeas Corpus for State Prisoners,” *Tulane Law Review* 70, no. 1 (Nov 1995): 4–5.

80. Wiecek, “The Great Writ and Reconstruction,” 538–39.

81. Ibid., 539.

the Bill was passed into law.<sup>82</sup> The case was decided by Salmon P. Chase, the sixth Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court acting in his capacity as a Circuit Court Judge. He had previously served as Abraham Lincoln's Treasury Secretary. Justice Chase ordered the release of an ex-slave who was bound to her former master under the Maryland *Apprenticeship Act*.<sup>83</sup> He struck down the Maryland law because it attempted to impose involuntary servitude contrary to the Thirteenth Amendment.<sup>84</sup> Other federal courts took similar action to disallow southern judicial enforcement of the Black Codes.<sup>85</sup>

The 1867 *Habeas Corpus Act* empowered US federal courts to issue writs of habeas corpus "in all cases where any person may be restrained of his or her liberty in violation of the constitution, or any treaty or law of the United States."<sup>86</sup> But its innovation was the authorization of federal court review of cases already decided in state courts. The political justification for this intrusion into state rights and sovereignty was the supremacy of federal law as confirmed by the outcome of the Civil War, but the underlying argument about the bounds of state rights has never been authoritatively resolved.<sup>87</sup> However this history is interpreted, the federal judiciary's insistence that state courts could not decide federal constitutional issues was well entrenched by 1880.<sup>88</sup>

### **Habeas Corpus in Joseph Smith's Federal Case before the Civil War**

On the first day of Joseph Smith's habeas corpus hearing in federal court before Judge Nathaniel Pope, Josiah Lamborn (for Illinois and Missouri) and Justin Butterfield (for Joseph Smith) argued about jurisdiction.

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82. Ibid., 541.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid. See also Charles Olmsted, "In re Turner (1867)" (paper, Legan History Publications, 2005), 1. [http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=mlh\\_pubs](http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=mlh_pubs).

85. Ibid. The Black Codes were laws passed by the Southern States after the Civil War to restrict the freedom of former slaves by requiring them to work for low wages and sometimes, to clear artificially created debt.

86. *An Act to amend "An Act to establish the judicial Courts of the United States," approved September twenty-fourth, seventeen hundred and eighty-nine*, Session II, Chapter 28, 14 Statute 385 (1867). See also <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/40th-congress/session-2/c40s2ch34.pdf>.

87. Wiecek, "The Great Writ and Reconstruction: The Habeas Corpus Act of 1867," 544.

88. Ibid.

Their jurisdictional argument would not have been necessary *after* the Civil War since the federal jurisdiction would have prevailed. But an assumption by many modern lawyers and historians of federal jurisdictional prevalence is not appropriate in Joseph Smith's habeas corpus cases *before* the Civil War; it did not yet exist. Lamborn (for Illinois and Missouri) was justified in arguing at this time that the federal court had no jurisdiction in Smith's case because it was a matter between two states. But Butterfield asserted that the federal courts had a legitimate claim to jurisdiction. Butterfield's argument was easily upheld since the judge in this case was a federal judge. While the legal argument was unsettled in 1843, the recommendations of Butterfield, Judge Douglas, and Governor Ford that this case should be brought in the federal court show the new federal jurisdiction beginning to unfold.<sup>89</sup>

For the purposes of this article, the important point is that US habeas corpus practice largely followed English practice until the *Habeas Corpus Act of 1867* was passed following the Civil War. That legislation was a part of the Reconstruction package, which included the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution. It authorized federal courts to review state judicial practices that enabled slavery under another name. Though habeas corpus writs were used in slavery cases before the Civil War, practices varied from North to South depending on whether the relevant court was part of a state inclined to free slaves or to preserve them as a form of property.

This brief summary of that history shows how the writ of habeas corpus was changed in the United States after the Civil War. Those changes did not affect the habeas corpus doctrine or practice in Nauvoo, Illinois, during the early 1840s. But the early use of the writ of habeas corpus in some pre-Civil War slavery cases enabled Justin Butterfield, Joseph Smith's lead advocate before the US Circuit Court in 1843, to rhetorically ask whether his client, Joseph Smith had at least the rights of a slave.<sup>90</sup>

#### **Part IV — The Missouri Warrants for Joseph Smith's Arrest between 1840 and 1843**

In the unabridged version of his article entitled "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth Century Mormonism,"<sup>91</sup> Jeffrey Walker has confirmed that

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89. Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 62–64.

90. *Ibid.*, 64.

91. *Ibid.* Note that an abridged version of the unabridged article was reprinted in Walker, "Invoking Habeas Corpus in Missouri and Illinois."

the State of Missouri sought the extradition of Joseph Smith to stand trial in Missouri on multiple occasions but on only two grounds.

The first of those grounds was that Joseph Smith was a fugitive from Missouri justice and had never been tried on charges “ranging from arson, burglary and robbery to treason and even murder.”<sup>92</sup> These were the charges that famously resulted in Joseph Smith’s imprisonment, first at Richmond, Missouri, and then, following transfer, at Liberty, near modern-day Kansas City.

The second Missouri warrant for Joseph Smith’s arrest asserted that he was an accessory before the fact in the attempted murder of former Governor Lilburn W. Boggs on May 6, 1842. This idea seems to have been spawned by anti-Mormons including John C. Bennett in Illinois.<sup>93</sup>

### The Mormon War Charges

Walker is gentle when he discusses the Mormon War charges, especially in light of the information he has uncovered in connection with them. He has written:

In early April 1839, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Lyman Wight, Alexander McRae, and Caleb Baldwin were taken from Liberty Jail ... to Gallatin, Daviess County, where a grand jury was empanelled ... to consider the charges ... against them, including the ... treason. There, after a two-day hearing ... Judge Thomas Burch granted a request to change venue to Boone County due to the fact that he had been the prosecuting attorney in the preliminary hearing before Judge Austin King. En route to Boone County, all of the prisoners either escaped or were released and made their way to Illinois to join the body of the Church.

Sixteen months later, on September 1, 1840, Governor Boggs sent a requisition to Illinois Governor Thomas Carlin seeking the extradition of Joseph Smith and five others to Missouri based on these outstanding indictments. The extradition request was supported by the indictments, of which Governor Boggs had secured certified copies in July 1839. *What is not clear is whether Governor Boggs knew that in August 1839 all of these indictments had been dismissed based on a motion by the Boone County prosecuting attorney.* The judge in Boone

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92. Ibid., 23.

93. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 468.

County was Governor Boggs's successor, Thomas Reynolds ... The hearing started on a procedural matter, since the underlying indictments from the Missouri courts had not been attached to the arrest warrant as required by law. As this procedural irregularity could result in further postponement, both sides stipulated that such indictments existed. Ironically, *had Joseph Smith's counsel further investigated this issue, they would have discovered that in fact no indictments existed, all of them having been dismissed in August 1840 by the now sitting Missouri Governor Reynolds* (emphasis added).<sup>94</sup>

I discuss the legal and ethical issues in the State of Missouri's conduct that Walker has raised in his research in my second, shorter article about the Missouri requisitions for Joseph Smith's arrest. The purpose of this article is to show that there was nothing improper or even unwise in Joseph Smith's response to these requisitions. Given the malevolent attitudes that existed toward him in Missouri, the only other course Joseph Smith could have taken was to run away and hide, and that would have been interpreted by the world as well as Church members as an admission of guilt.

The first Mormon War requisition for Joseph Smith's arrest was never dealt with by the Nauvoo Municipal Court. Rather, that warrant was handled by Illinois Supreme Court Justice Stephen A. Douglas in June 1841 in Monmouth, Illinois. Judge Douglas considered the merits of the requisition following the issue of an arrest warrant by Illinois Governor Thomas Carlin, after Joseph Smith was arrested at the Heberlin Hotel in Bear Creek 28 miles south of Nauvoo. The writ of habeas corpus that had permitted Joseph to return home until Judge Douglas could hear the merits of the case a few days later at Monmouth<sup>95</sup> was issued by Charles Warren, an equity court official in Quincy. Bushman says Judge Douglas decided the case on a technicality that gave the Latter-day Saints the result they wanted but without vindicating them.<sup>96</sup> Bushman has also suggested that the favorable judgment was part of Douglas's "mission to recover [the LDS vote and the balance of power] for the Democrats" in future elections.<sup>97</sup>

Walker's analysis of the legal issues is more nuanced. Judge Douglas heard witnesses from both sides and could have looked behind the writ,

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94. Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 34–37.

95. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 425–26.

96. *Ibid.*, 426.

97. *Ibid.*

but he did not need to. The original warrant for Joseph's arrest on the Mormon War charges had been issued in September 1840 by Illinois Governor Carlin following Missouri requisition, but the warrant was spent because it had been returned to Governor Carlin.<sup>98</sup> Walker has explained that, despite the suggestion that Douglas made the decision in favor of the Prophet to garner Mormon political support,<sup>99</sup> the ruling was legally correct, and it is misleading to suggest that the case was decided on a technicality. A returned warrant was *functus officio*, meaning it could not be reused or resurrected in any way. It was dead. There was a variety of sound judicial precedent for that decision,<sup>100</sup> but Walker has observed that even if Judge Douglas had not been able to deal with the case on the basis that the warrant was spent, there was ample evidence before him that the warrant had been issued "by fraud, bribery and duress."<sup>101</sup> That evidence meant he would have been able to decide the case in favor of the liberty of Joseph Smith in accordance with established precedent, even if the warrant was not spent. It is also clear that if Judge Douglas had known the underlying indictments had been dismissed by then-Justice Reynolds in August 1840, he would have had a third reason to order Joseph set free.

### The Accessory Before the Fact Charges

While he was reading the newspaper in his Missouri home at about 9pm on May 6, 1842, someone tried to kill Lilburn W. Boggs, the former governor of Missouri.<sup>102</sup> Bushman says that early suspicion fell on Boggs' political opponents "in a heated campaign for a state senate seat."<sup>103</sup> However, two weeks later, anti-Mormons in Illinois started reporting rumors of Joseph Smith's involvement — ranging from an alleged prophecy that Boggs would suffer a violent death within a year to John C. Bennett's more direct allegations in letters to the *Sangamo Journal*. Bennett alleged therein that Joseph "had offered a five-hundred dollar reward for Boggs' death" and that "Orrin Porter Rockwell [w]as the likely assassin."<sup>104</sup>

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98. Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 39.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid., Walker cites decisions to the same effect by the New York Supreme Court in 1821 (*Filkins v Brockway* 19 Johns 170, 171) and the Maryland Court of Appeal in 1834 (*Hall v Hall* 6 G. & L. 386, 411).

101. Ibid., 38.

102. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 468.

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid. See also Andrew H. Hedges and Alex D. Smith, "Joseph Smith, John C. Bennett, and the Extradition Attempt," quoted in *Joseph Smith, the*

Bushman records that Rockwell was living in Independence, Missouri, near his in-laws at the time because he was awaiting the birth of his fourth child, but he says that Rockwell left Independence immediately after the shooting. Bennett then “traveled to Missouri to publicize his suspicions,” which were plausible because of Boggs’ history in mistreating the Mormons.<sup>105</sup> Missouri Sheriff, J. H. Reynolds eventually arrested Rockwell for attempted murder and held him for a year, but Rockwell was defended by Alexander Doniphan and acquitted of all charges.<sup>106</sup>

In the meantime, and so as to protect Joseph Smith should an arrest warrant be issued premised on these allegations, the Nauvoo City Council utilized their habeas corpus power and passed an ordinance empowering them to examine all outside arrest warrants and issue writs of habeas corpus.<sup>107</sup> The Council also asked Illinois State Governor Carlin to disregard the false reports of John Cook Bennett, but “[b]y August 8, the extradition papers had passed from Governor Thomas Reynolds of Missouri through Carlin to the deputy sheriff of Adams County,” who then arrested both Orrin Porter Rockwell and Joseph Smith in

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*Prophet and Seer*, Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson, eds. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 437–66, <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/joseph-smith-prophet-and-seer/joseph-smith-john-c-bennett-and-extradition-attempt-1842>. Bennett’s letter in the *Sangamo Journal* as follows:

In 1841, Joe Smith predicted or prophesied in a public congregation in Nauvoo, that Lilburn W Boggs, ex-Governor of Missouri, should die by violent hands within one year. From one or two months prior to the attempted assassination of Gov. Boggs, Mr. O. P. Rockwell left Nauvoo for parts unknown to the citizens at large. I was then on terms of close intimacy with Joe Smith, and asked him where Rockwell had gone?

‘Gone,’ said he, ‘GONE TO FULFILL PROPHECY!’

105. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 468.

106. In fact, the Independence grand jury never indicted Rockwell for the attempted murder of Boggs, and the only trial that Rockwell faced was in respect to a failed escape attempt. (Walker, “Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism,” 47n129). See Robert Nelson, *Enemy of the Saints: The Biography of Lilburn W. Boggs of Missouri*, (Baltimore: Publish America, 2011). Nelson reports that Sheriff Reynold’s initial suspicion fell on a local hired man named Tomkins because of evidence provided by the shopkeeper whose stolen pepperbox pistol was found abandoned at the scene of the crime. But Reynolds did not persist with those inquiries when public attention shifted to Joseph Smith’s possible involvement. See also Monte B. McLaws, “The Attempted Assassination of Missouri’s Ex-Governor, Lilburn W. Boggs,” *Missouri Historical Review* 60, no. 1 (1965): 50–62.

107. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 468–69.



Nauvoo.<sup>108</sup> The City Council then issued writs of habeas corpus for both men, and “[u]nsure of his legal grounds, [the sheriff] went back to Carlin for instructions.” In the meantime, both men disappeared.<sup>109</sup>

Various officials continued to search for Joseph for the next few months, and Governor Carlin “offered a \$200 reward for Joseph’s capture.” But the searching ended in December 1842 when Joseph Smith agreed to submit to a further habeas corpus hearing in Springfield Illinois. The United States District Attorney for Illinois, Justin Butterfield, had been approached to act for Joseph Smith and had opined “that the extradition of the Prophet was unconstitutional.”<sup>110</sup> This was an opinion in which Judge Stephen A. Douglas concurred.<sup>111</sup> According to Butterfield, the proposed extradition was unconstitutional because the US Constitution allowed only the extradition of a “fugitive from justice.” Joseph Smith could not be a fugitive from justice in Missouri on accessory or attempted murder charges since he was in Illinois rather than Missouri at all material times and had never been charged with those crimes. While Emma had made this same argument to Governor Carlin in two letters in July that year and had been sharply dismissed,<sup>112</sup> the US District Attorney’s sophisticated version of the same argument gave the new Governor, Thomas Ford pause.<sup>113</sup> Butterfield had thus advised Joseph to voluntarily take the matter “to the state supreme court, assuring him the justices were unanimously in his favor.”<sup>114</sup> But ultimately the matter was taken before Judge Nathaniel Pope of the United States Circuit Court in Springfield, Illinois, on December 31, 1842, with Justin Butterfield now retained as counsel. A decision in Joseph’s favor was handed down on January 5, 1843.<sup>115</sup>

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108. Ibid., 469.

109. Ibid.

110. Ibid., 479.

111. Walker, “Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism,” 53.

112. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 474.

113. Ibid., 479.

114. Ibid. Also, Walker reports that Stephen A. Douglas had advised Joseph to petition Governor Ford to revoke the arrest warrant and reward but went with him to discuss the matter further with Justin Butterfield (Walker, “Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism,” 53n153)

115. Note that other authors have dealt with the detail of this second warrant case in greater detail than I can within the confines of this article. For example, see Morris A. Thurston, “The Boggs Shooting and Attempted Extradition: Joseph Smith’s Most Famous Case.” *BYU Studies* 48, no. 1 (2009): 4–56. Readers interested in viewing copies of the original documents may also be interested to view them and read commentary in Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers, Journal, Volume 2: December*

Before the matter came before the court, Butterfield was careful to satisfy every procedural requirement. Governor Carlin's old warrant for Joseph's arrest was still in the possession of Sheriff King more than 100 miles away in Quincy, and obtaining it in a timely manner would cause significant delay. So cooperative arrangements were made for a new arrest warrant to be issued by Governor Thomas Ford. Justin Butterfield then filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus with the United States Circuit Court in Springfield, and Joseph was duly arrested by General Wilson Law of the Nauvoo militia.<sup>116</sup> Butterfield asked the court to issue a writ of habeas corpus on the grounds that Joseph could not be a fugitive from Missouri justice since he was not in Missouri at the time of the crime. Judge Pope set the matter down for hearing on Monday, January 2, 1843. On that day, Illinois Attorney-General Josiah Lamborn sought a continuance to allow more preparation time, and the matter was adjourned till Wednesday, January 4<sup>th</sup>.

Walker has provided detailed commentary on the motions filed and the arguments made by both sides in the contest. The procedural cooperation of the parties, the decision to try the matter in a federal court because of its constitutional significance in the 1840s, and the fact that the resulting decision was cited in other habeas corpus cases for more than 100 years afterward demonstrate that this event had significance well beyond the municipal city limits of Nauvoo. *Ex parte Smith* in 1843<sup>117</sup> was a test case with national significance. That the United States Circuit Court so readily issued a writ of habeas corpus shows that the Nauvoo Municipal Court's issue of a similar writ, four months earlier on August 8, 1842, was soundly based on habeas corpus law and practice in the pre-Civil War United States.

Judge Pope considered himself called upon to decide a matter of wide significance. He explained the US Constitution's requirement that important interstate matters, including extraditions, should be decided in the federal courts. He then explained that the protection afforded by the writ of habeas corpus against arbitrary imprisonment at the behest of the executive, in the spirit of Magna Carta, was of foundational

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1841–April 1843 (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press, 2011): 194–236; and "Appendix 1: Missouri Extradition Attempt, 1842–1843, Selected Documents, Introduction," The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/appendix-1-missouri-extradition-attempt-1842-1843-selected-documents-introduction/1>.

116. Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 55–56.

117. *Ex parte Smith* 22 F. Cas. 373 (C.C.D. Ill 1843) (No. 12, 968).

importance to the framers of the US Constitution. This was something English that must be retained:

All who are familiar with English history, must know that it was extorted from an arbitrary monarch, and that it was hailed as a second magna charta (sic), and that it was to protect the subject from arbitrary imprisonment by the king and his minions, which brought into existence that great palladium of liberty in the latter part of the reign of Charles II. It was indeed a magnificent achievement over arbitrary power. Magna Charta (sic) established the principles of liberty; the habeas corpus protected them.

He then confirmed why his federal court had jurisdiction to finally settle the matter as Justin Butterfield had advised:

The matter under consideration presents a case arising under the 2d section, 4th article of the constitution of the United States, and the act of congress of February 12th, 1793 [1 Stat. 302], to carry it into effect ... This court has jurisdiction. Whether the state courts have jurisdiction or not, this court is not called upon to decide.

Judge Pope then moved to the substance of the arguments behind the extradition warrant. He examined the warrant for Joseph's arrest and the Boggs' affidavit in support, and he concluded that neither provided any evidence of Joseph's complicity in a crime. The highest argument against Joseph Smith was suspicion in the minds of others. He accepted Justin Butterfield's argument refuting the "fugitive from justice" claim, and then he pontificated upon the State's paramount duty to defend citizen liberty, for as citizens surrender their liberty to the state in the interests of law and order, they do so with an expectation that the state would protect a citizen's liberty in return:

Man in a state of nature is a sovereign, with all the prerogatives of king, lords and commons ... But when he unites himself with a community, he lays down all the prerogatives of sovereign, (except self-defence,) and becomes a subject. He owes obedience to its laws and the judgments of its tribunals, which he is supposed to have participated in establishing, either directly or indirectly. He surrenders, also, the right of self-redress. In consideration of all which, he is entitled to the aegis of that community to defend him from wrongs ... It would be a gross violation of the social compact, if the

state were to deliver up one of its citizens to be tried and punished by a foreign state, to which he owes no allegiance, and whose laws were never binding on him. No state can or will do it. In the absence of the constitutional provision, the state of Missouri would stand on this subject in the same relation to the state of Illinois, that Spain does to England. In this particular, the states are independent of each other. A criminal, fugitive from the one state to the other, could not be claimed as of right to be given up.

Judge Pope then observed that Missouri could have asserted that Smith was an accessory before the fact in the commission of a crime in Missouri but had not done so nor provided any evidence that would have enabled that conclusion. After examining Boggs' affidavit, Judge Pope concluded that Missouri really sought Smith's extradition on unfounded suspicion, and suspicion of a crime was not grounds on which to deprive a man of his liberty. He therefore had no option but to dismiss the warrant and set Joseph Smith at liberty:

It is not averred that Smith was accessory before the fact, in the state of Missouri, nor that he committed a crime in MO: therefore, he did not commit the crime in Missouri — did not flee from Missouri to avoid punishment ... Mr. Boggs' opinion, then, is not authority. He should have given the facts ... Is the constitution satisfied with a charge upon suspicion?... "to say that he was complained of, or was examined, is no proof of his guilt; and then to say that he had cause to suspect him, is too cautious; for who can tell what they count a cause of suspicion, and how can that ever be tried? At this rate they would have arbitrary power, upon their own allegation, to commit whom they pleased." From this case, it appears that suspicion does not warrant a commitment, and that all legal intendments are to avail the prisoner. That the return is to be most strictly construed in favor of liberty ... No case can arise demanding a more searching scrutiny into the evidence, than in cases arising under this part of the constitution of the United States. It is proposed to deprive a freeman of his liberty — to deliver him into the custody of strangers, to be transported to a foreign state, to be arraigned for trial before a foreign tribunal, governed by laws unknown to him — separated from his friends, his family and his witnesses, unknown and unknowing ... The mis-recitals and overstatements in

the requisition and warrant, are not supported by oath, and cannot be received as evidence to deprive a citizen of his liberty, and transport him to a foreign state for trial. For these reasons, Smith must be discharged.

There were two reasons why this should have been an end of the matter for Joseph. The first reason was evidentiary. While the charges against Orrin Porter Rockwell were not dealt with in Missouri until a year later,<sup>118</sup> there was no evidence that Joseph had hired Rockwell to assassinate Boggs. If there had been such evidence, as might have been the case if a Rockwell trial had adduced such evidence, then Joseph Smith could have been re-arrested on accessory charges.<sup>119</sup> But more compellingly, the accessory before the fact requisition had now been tested in federal court before an independent federal judge. Joseph had been represented by the US District Attorney for Illinois (though acting in a private capacity for a private client), and the Illinois State Attorney-General had presented Missouri's case after being allowed time for preparation. If Missouri had taken the matter further, their mistreatment of Joseph Smith and the extermination order against the latter-day Saints may have been brought into stark focus. The absence of an evidentiary connection between Joseph Smith and the Missouri facts could easily have been interpreted as evidence of Missouri's vindictiveness against the Latter-day Saints in the court of public opinion.

### The Revived Mormon War Charges

The third Missouri requisition for Joseph Smith's arrest was based on a new indictment for treason issued by the Daviess County Circuit

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118. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 468. Note again that Rockwell was never tried for this crime. He was arrested for the crime on March 6, 1843, and then indicted and convicted of jailbreak, but the Missouri grand jury found there was insufficient evidence "to justify an indictment for shooting ex-Governor Boggs [and so] ... did not indict him for that offence." He was released from prison on December 13, 1843 (William Ogden Niles, *Niles' National Register*, September 30, 1843, Washington, <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/MA/nilesre2.htm>).

119. The relevant double-jeopardy provisions appear as Article VIII clause 11 of Illinois' 1818 Constitution and Article XIII clause 10 of Missouri's 1820 Constitution. Neither an earlier arrest on those charges nor a habeas corpus trial to determine whether there was cause to deprive Joseph Smith of his liberty pending trial would have counted as a trial as an accessory before the fact, engaging the double-jeopardy rules that applied under the constitutions of both Illinois and Missouri.

Court in Missouri in June 1843.<sup>120</sup> Hedges confirms that this new indictment was a renewal of the old Mormon War charges dismissed in August 1839.<sup>121</sup> Governor Reynolds, who issued the third requisition, knew the old charges had been dismissed because he was a Missouri Supreme Court Justice at the time and had dismissed them shortly before he became Governor. This requisition should never have been issued on double-jeopardy grounds, since jeopardy had attached and the case had been dismissed in a competent Missouri court. Perhaps Reynolds interpreted the double-jeopardy provision in the State's 1820 Constitution as allowing this action because the underlying matters had never come before a jury for trial despite the attachment of jeopardy.<sup>122</sup> But for a man who had served as a Supreme Court Justice in both Illinois and Missouri, that is unlikely.<sup>123</sup>

What seems inescapable is that Governor Reynolds knew neither Joseph nor his lawyers knew at the time that the underlying indictments had been dismissed, and so they did not know (and were unlikely to find out) that constitutional double jeopardy was in play.<sup>124</sup> Even though legal ethics were not well defined in the U.S. in the 1840s, and Governor Reynolds may not have considered himself bound to observe applicable legal ethics since he was no longer practicing as a lawyer or a judge,

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120. Andrew H. Hedges, "Thomas Ford and Joseph Smith, 1842–1844," *The Journal of Mormon History* 42, no. 4 (October 2016): 106.

121. Ibid, see also Andrew H. Hedges, "Extradition, the Mormons, and the Election of 1843," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 109, no. 2, (2016): 127–47, and Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 34–7.

122. Clause 10 of Article XIII of the 1820 Missouri Constitution states:

That no person, after having been once acquitted by one jury, can, for the same offence, be again put in jeopardy of life or limb, but if, in any criminal prosecution, the jury be divided in opinion at the end of the term, the court before which the trial shall be had, may, in its discretion, discharge the jury, and commit or bail the accused for trial at the next term of such court.

123. There is also a thin argument that the matter should have been decided against Missouri on grounds of judicial precedent, since Illinois Supreme Court Judge, Stephen A. Douglas had already decided the same matter previously in Joseph Smith's favor.

124. Note, however, that they appear to have discovered the dismissal of the underlying charges later that year since the Municipal Council passed its *nolle prosequi* Ordinance amendment on December 8, 1843. This ordinance is quoted and discussed in the author's sequel article, "Missourian Efforts to Extradite Joseph Smith and the Ethics of Governor Thomas Reynolds of Missouri," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 29 (forthcoming).

there was nothing honorable about the abuse of process which he twice condoned against Joseph Smith. Whether he was complicit in the issue of the new Daviess County indictments in June 1843 to try and cover this abuse of process is not something that is likely to be uncovered, unless he referred to such a plan in correspondence that has been preserved.

### **Mormon Reliance on Habeas Corpus Review in the Nauvoo Municipal Court Did Not Overreach the Court's Chartered Jurisdictional Powers**

Governor Ford and Thomas Sharp of the *Warsaw Signal* had stated that the Mormons abused their city's habeas corpus powers to protect Joseph Smith from legitimate warrants for his arrest. The argument that the habeas corpus powers of the city of Nauvoo were an overreach appeals to modern readers who do not expect a city to have the power to invalidate arrest warrants issued by a state or federal authority. But that is an anachronistic assumption. If Nauvoo and the other cities of Illinois that were given habeas corpus powers in the late 1830s and early 1840s were able to exercise those powers only in respect to arrests made under city authority, then those powers would have been redundant from the date of their issue. Habeas corpus powers were always controversial because judges with modest authority were authorized by those powers to hold the exercise of high executive power to independent account. Joseph Smith and his colleagues merely applied English precedents of this law to similarly evade the abuse of executive power.

The power to grant writs of habeas corpus afforded to the City of Nauvoo under its December 1840 Charter was unremarkable. Suggestions that this power was anti-republican or oppressive are best explained by the agendas of those who suggested irregularity. In accordance with Jeffersonian principle in the 1840s, the State of Illinois was in the business of distributing power, including judicial power, to local people and institutions unless they were incapable of exercising that power.<sup>125</sup> The Mormons in Nauvoo were no exception to that trend.

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125. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 412. See also Thomas Jefferson, *Summary View of the Rights of British Americans* (Williamsburg, VA: Clementina Rind, 1774). Jefferson's own expression of the modern principle of subsidiarity is perhaps best seen when he protested to King George III and the English Parliament that only a body elected by the people could exercise its power, which power would revert to the people if their elected body was dissolved. Though Bushman says there was little debate when the Nauvoo Charter was originally passed in 1840, Firmage and Mangrum have observed that one Illinois assemblyman thought it should have been renamed "A

Rather, in 1840 the Mormons were seen by the Illinois legislature as the very epitome of a people prepared to rule themselves.

Anthony Gregory has identified a decentralized approach to the habeas corpus power in America generally when he wrote that even “the language of the [federal] Constitution” intended “a lower court power over the central state’s detention authority.”<sup>126</sup> Indeed, while it is shocking to modern Americans to understand that the Suspension Clause provisions in the federal Constitution were included to protect state power, including state “power to review federal detentions,” this was “a radical states’ rights power and was intended as an institutionally diffuse check on federal authority.”<sup>127</sup> Gregory is certain of this, despite the “common assumption that the Framers intended the Suspension Clause to protect the power of federal courts to test the validity of federal detentions.”<sup>128</sup>

James L. Kimball has made a similar decentralization point in relation to the habeas powers that were conferred upon the city of Alton by amendment of that city’s Charter in 1839. He wrote:

[T]he Alton Charter provided that “the judge of the Municipal Court of the city of Alton shall have power ... to issue writs of *Habeas Corpus* ... with the jurisdiction of said court; and the same proceedings shall be had thereon before said judge and course as may be had ... before the circuit courts of this state.” Alton’s court thereby limited the power of the Madison County Circuit Court. In Alton and Nauvoo, then, the lesser government unit had influence over the greater one, at least for a time.<sup>129</sup>

The revocation of the Nauvoo Charter on January 27, 1845, was the result of majoritarian politics in the greater State of Illinois and confirms

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Bill for the Encouragement of the Importation of Mormons”! (Edwin Brown Firmage and R. Collin Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988) 85.) B.H. Roberts also considered it passed easily because all the political parties in the legislature at the time were courting the Mormon vote (Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 volumes, ed. Brigham H. Roberts, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 4: xxi).

126. Gregory, “The Writ Reconstructed,” 64.

127. *Ibid.*, 63.

128. *Ibid.* Gregory goes further and says that the federal “Constitution does not actually grant any federal entity with the power to issue the writ. Habeas is not mentioned in Section 8 of Article 1, which spells out the powers of Congress, but rather in Section 9, which enumerates restrictions.” Federal habeas power only came as Congress created federal courts other than the Supreme Court and gave them habeas power.

129. Kimball, “The Nauvoo Charter: A Reinterpretation,” 75.



only that outside forces had broken down the rule of law in Nauvoo by then.<sup>130</sup> The fact that the habeas corpus power had been conferred by the Illinois State Legislature when Nauvoo was chartered indicates that the Nauvoo Municipal Court did indeed have the power to hear and decide cases arising within its jurisdiction. To suggest that the Nauvoo City Council's power usurped the powers of the Supreme Court of Illinois or of the United States Circuit Court in that state is to misunderstand the legal context of the time.

## Conclusion

The nature of the habeas corpus power exercised in pre-Civil War America had a very English character. As yet, there was only limited recourse to the writ of habeas corpus in slavery matters, and its development as a post-conviction remedy lay in the future. In Nauvoo, as elsewhere in America in the 1840s, the courts followed established English practice and used the writ of habeas corpus to review the form and the substance of arrests and incarcerations by executive authority, including high executive authority where no trial had yet taken place. Suggestions in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century American scholarship that US courts were the first to look behind the official reasons given for incarceration when prisoners were presented at court following the issue of writs of habeas corpus misunderstands or misrepresents the nature of the English habeas corpus practice that America inherited. Certainly, the availability of this great writ was denied in the colonies for 100 years after the remedial *Habeas Corpus Act* (UK) of 1679 was passed, but as soon as independence was declared, the right to seek habeas corpus writs was proclaimed by a series of state enactments in completely English terms. The right for state courts to seek the writ in federal cases was also confirmed when the Constitution was drafted.

Suggestions that the Nauvoo Municipal Court's habeas corpus practice unfairly protected Joseph Smith from Missouri's extradition warrants are also unfounded. I have not discussed the Nauvoo Municipal Court's use of the writ to test the Hancock County arrest warrants issued in the wake of the destruction of the Expositor Press. However, the suggestion that standard habeas corpus practice was abused or departed from in Nauvoo in the earlier 1841–1843 period has no substance. The Nauvoo Municipal Court dealt with habeas corpus writs in connection with Governor Carlin's 1842 warrant for Joseph Smith's arrest on the

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130. See, for example, Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1975): 228–38.

charge that he was an accessory before the fact in the attempted murder of former Governor Boggs of Missouri, and in connection with Governor Ford's June 1843 warrant issued in respect of treason Joseph Smith was alleged to have committed during the Mormon War in 1838. In the Boggs' attempted murder case, the Nauvoo Municipal Court's decision to grant the writ was effectively affirmed by the United States Circuit Court in early January 1843 when the court freed Joseph Smith after looking behind the warrant and finding the charge was unfounded.

Both Missouri requisitions for Joseph Smith's arrest on grounds that he was a fugitive from Missouri justice in matters connected with the Mormon War and extermination order were an unethical business from start to finish. While Missouri Governor Boggs may not have known that the indictments against Joseph Smith had been dismissed before he issued Missouri's first requisition for Joseph Smith's arrest, the new Missouri Governor Reynolds was well aware, as he himself dismissed those indictments at the insistence of the Boone County Prosecutor. Reynolds did not withdraw Missouri's request for Joseph Smith's extradition from Illinois, and he issued a further requisition founded on the same facts, even though the 1820 Missouri State Constitution included a double-jeopardy clause intended to make such an act an unconstitutional abuse of process. While legal ethics on the frontier were still developing, it is indisputable that Reynolds acted dishonorably. Both Missouri governors who sought Joseph Smith's extradition from Missouri had dirty hands.

**A. Keith Thompson, LLB (Hons); M Jur; PhD** is an associate professor and the associate dean at the University of Notre Dame Australia School of Law, Sydney. He also practices commercial and property law in New South Wales and Victoria, Australia. He formerly served 20 years as International Legal Counsel for the Church in the Pacific and Africa Areas and has also served in the Church as bishop, stake president, and mission president. He and his wife, Anita, have eight children and twelve grandchildren.

# MISSOURIAN EFFORTS TO EXTRADITE JOSEPH SMITH AND THE ETHICS OF GOVERNOR THOMAS REYNOLDS OF MISSOURI

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A. Keith Thompson

**Abstract:** *This is the second of two articles discussing Missouri's requisitions to extradite Joseph Smith to face criminal charges and the Prophet's recourse to English habeas corpus practice to defend himself. In the first article, the author discussed the English nature of pre-Civil War habeas corpus practice in America and the anachronistic modern idea that the Nauvoo Municipal Court did not have jurisdiction to consider interstate habeas corpus matters. In this article, he analyzes the conduct of Governor Thomas Reynolds in the matter of Missouri's requisitions for the extradition of Joseph Smith in light of 1840s legal ethics in America. That analysis follows the discovery that Governor Reynolds had dismissed the underlying 1838 charges against Joseph Smith when he was a Missouri Supreme Court judge. It also responds to the revelation that Missouri reissued indictments based on the same underlying facts in June 1843 despite the existence of a double-jeopardy provision in the Missouri Constitution of 1820.*

In my earlier article entitled “The Habeas Corpus Protection of Joseph Smith from Missouri Arrest Warrants,”<sup>1</sup> I explained that the steps taken to protect Joseph Smith from Missouri warrants were both reasonable and legal when read in their 1840 Illinois context. The criticism regarding the use of the English writ of habeas corpus to defend Joseph Smith came

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1. A. Keith Thompson, “The Habeas Corpus Protection of Joseph Smith from Missouri Arrest Requisitions,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 29 (2018): 273–306, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/>.

from two corners: first, Governor Thomas Ford, who had guaranteed the Prophet's safety in transit and while at Carthage and was being blamed by Smith's followers for his death, and second, Thomas Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw Signal*, who had become an avowed anti-Mormon by late 1841 in large part because he was concerned about "the political power of the growing number of Mormons in Hancock County" and because the Saints had overreacted to his criticism of John C. Bennett's appointment as mayor of Nauvoo.<sup>2</sup> I took time to explain the English habeas corpus practice followed in the United States before the Civil War because many are apt to think Ford and Sharp were right in their criticism. It might appear to 21<sup>st</sup>-century readers that a city court in a frontier town like Nauvoo did not have the legal authority to invalidate an interstate arrest warrant. That anachronistic understanding had not yet been rebutted by contemporary LDS historians, and an understanding of the history of habeas corpus in America before the Civil War provides the background to do so.

In the course of clarifying that history, I drew attention to a concern that Jeffrey Walker raised in his research about the conduct of Missouri Governor Thomas Reynolds. Walker did not press this point home,<sup>3</sup> perhaps out of respect to the governor in light of his tragic and premature death.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of this article is to explain Walker's insight and take it further, since Andrew Hedges has uncovered more evidence of Missouri's continuing conspiracy against the Latter-day Saints after they were expelled during the so-called "Mormon War" of 1838.<sup>5</sup>

After he served as the Chief Justice of Illinois, Thomas Reynolds worked as a Missouri Second Circuit judge before he was elected to succeed Lilburn W. Boggs as governor of Missouri.<sup>6</sup> In his role as

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2. Marshall Hamilton, "Thomas Sharp's Turning Point: Birth of an Anti-Mormon," *Sunstone Magazine* (October 1989): 21. (<https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/073-16-23.pdf>).

3. Jeffrey N. Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism, Joseph Smith's Legal Bulwark for Personal Freedom," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (2013), 35, 37.

4. Governor Reynolds committed suicide on February 9, 1844.

5. Andrew H. Hedges, "Extradition, the Mormons, and the Election of 1843," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 109, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 143n1.

6. Reynolds served as Chief Justice of Illinois from 1822–1825 as representative and speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives from 1826–1828 and moved to Missouri around 1829. He also served in that state as a representative and speaker of the House of Representatives (1832–1834) before serving as a judge of the second judicial circuit (1837–1840) before his election as Governor in 1840.

"Thomas Reynolds," People, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, last updated 2018, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/thomas-reynolds>.

a Missouri Supreme Court judge, Governor Reynolds had dismissed the Mormon War charges against Joseph Smith and his colleagues in August 1839, more than twelve months before he took office as governor of Missouri in September 1840.<sup>7</sup> While that knowledge probably did not infect his requisition for Joseph Smith's arrest in connection with the attempted murder of Governor Boggs, it likely did infect the various requisitions which Missouri issued for Joseph Smith's arrest in connection with the Mormon War charges. Nor is this bad faith act mitigated by Andrew Hedges' discovery that a subsequent effort was made to reissue the Missouri War warrants from a different Missouri judicial district in 1843,<sup>8</sup> despite the existence of a double-jeopardy provision in the Missouri Constitution of 1820.

Governor Reynolds' involvement in the requisition for Joseph Smith's arrest in connection with the attempted murder of former Missouri Governor Boggs is also ethically suspect, since an objective governor arguably would not have issued such a warrant based only on suspicion expressed in media reports.

I have approached the task of analyzing Governor Thomas Reynolds' possible bad faith in four parts. First, I summarize the charges and the extradition attempts that Missouri made against Joseph Smith in connection with the Mormon War of 1838 and the attempted assassination of former Governor Boggs in 1842.

Second, I review Governor Reynolds' personal knowledge of those facts and of the law and legal ethics that applied to lawyers and judges during the 1840s in the United States.

In Part III, I discuss the political pressures that might have caused a governor of Missouri to want to hide the dismissal of the Mormon War charges against Joseph Smith in August 1839 and then reissue very similar indictments in 1843.

Finally, in Part IV, I discuss what a reasonable governor who had held office as both a supreme court judge of one state (Missouri), and as the chief justice of the supreme court of another state (Illinois), should have done given his knowledge.

I conclude that Governor Reynolds' conduct in relation to the attempted extradition of Joseph Smith to face criminal charges in Missouri in connection with the Mormon War was unethical and likely

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7. Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 34–37, particularly n94.

8. Andrew H. Hedges, "Thomas Ford and Joseph Smith, 1842–1844," *The Journal of Mormon History* 42, no.4 (October 2016): 106n29.

calculated to protect Missouri's reputation against damage caused by the Latter-day Saints redress petitions in Washington. I also suggest that the warrants Governor Reynolds issued for Smith's arrest in connection with the attempted murder of former governor Boggs were flawed by the lack of an evidential base and because of his anti-Mormon prejudice; Governor Reynolds should have declined to issue them.

### **Part I — Joseph Smith's Alleged Crimes in Missouri and Extradition Attempts**

When they "escaped" from Missouri custody in 1839 while they were being transferred to a new trial venue, Joseph Smith and other Latter-day Saint leaders became fugitives from Missouri justice on charges "ranging from arson, burglary and robbery to treason and even murder" (the "Mormon War charges").<sup>9</sup> These were the charges under which Joseph Smith had been imprisoned first at Richmond, Missouri, and then, following an earlier transfer, in Liberty Jail near modern-day Kansas City. There is debate as to whether these Latter-day Saint leaders escaped or were unofficially released, but the cause of their departure from Missouri to Illinois did not negate their position as fugitives from justice under Missouri law for four months until August 1839, when then-Judge Thomas Reynolds of the Missouri Supreme Court's Second Circuit dismissed all those charges.

The second Missouri warrant for Joseph Smith's arrest asserted that he was an accessory before the fact in the attempted murder of former Governor Lilburn W. Boggs on May 6, 1842 (the "Accessory Before the Fact charges"). The suggestion that Joseph Smith was complicit in this attempted murder was spawned by anti-Mormons in Illinois, including former Nauvoo Mayor John C. Bennett.<sup>10</sup>

Since I have already discussed these charges in some detail in my earlier article, I will summarize only the legal problems with the Missouri extradition requisitions which were premised on these charges.

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9. Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 34–37. The other leaders who escaped with Joseph Smith were Hyrum Smith, Lyman Wight, Alexander McRae, and Caleb Baldwin. They were *en route* to the jail in Boone County because the assigned judge at Liberty (Judge Thomas Burch) had been the prosecuting attorney in the preliminary hearing before Judge Austin King and needed to recuse himself from officiating at the trial.

10. Richard Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling, A Cultural History of Mormonism's Founder* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 468.

## The Mormon War Indictments — Legal Problems with the Warrants and the Underlying Extradition Requisitions

The essential problem with any warrant premised on the Mormon War charges is that the underlying charges had been dismissed by Judge Thomas Reynolds in the second judicial district of the Missouri Supreme Court in August 1839, even though Joseph Smith and his colleagues and counsel did not know of that dismissal.<sup>11</sup> If those dismissals had been disclosed to either of the Illinois governors who issued warrants based on the 1840 or the 1843 Missouri requisitions, it is unlikely they would have issued those warrants because they would have been seen in their true light as the vexatious writs Joseph Smith claimed them to be.

English courts had developed a common-law rule that would allow them to dismiss indictments deemed invalid or suits premised upon facts already ruled upon.<sup>12</sup> That rule was called the *res judicata* principle, literally, “the thing had already been decided.” Because the English Crown had proven dexterous in making small changes to indictments to get around the *res judicata* principle, particularly in the case of colonial revolutionaries, many of the United States included written double-jeopardy protections into their state constitutions to prevent vexatious lawsuits in criminal cases.<sup>13</sup> The practice was to interpret those constitutional provisions liberally to avoid the use of criminal litigation for the purposes of harassment or persecution by the State.<sup>14</sup> The 1818

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11. Walker, “Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism,” 35.

12. See for example, Robert Von Moschzisker, “*Res Judicata*,” 38 *Yale Law Journal* 3 (1929). <http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3328&context=ylj>. The principle has earlier origins in Roman law.

13. Jay A Sigler, “A History of Double Jeopardy,” *The American Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 7, No. 4, (October 1963): 298–301, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/844041.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A5ce02b96211c915d2b2234fbc5dc927f>.

14. See, for example, “Fifth Amendment — Double Jeopardy,” *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 66, no. 4, (Northwestern University School of Law, 1975): 428–35, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/1142881?seq=8#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1142881?seq=8#page_scan_tab_contents). In response to a newly amended Criminal Appeals Act, the Supreme Court found that once jeopardy had attached, “the Constitution bars appeal of those decisions which would require a second trial to finalize proceedings” (435). But note also the concern of Ronald Jay Allen, Bard Ferrall, and John Ratnaswamy in “The Double Jeopardy Clause, Constitutional Interpretation and the Limits of Formal Logic,” *Valparaiso University Law Review* 26, no. 1 (1991): 281–310, <https://scholar.valpo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2138&context=vulr>, that dual sovereignty was an illogical exception to the double-jeopardy principle in *Heath v Alabama* 474 U.S. 82 (1985).

and 1820 constitutions of Illinois and Missouri included such provisions. The Missouri clause said:

That the general, great, and essential principles of liberty and free government may be recognized and established, we declare ...

That no person, after having been once acquitted by one jury, can, for the same offence, be again put in jeopardy of life or limb, but if, in any criminal prosecution, the jury be divided in opinion at the end of the term, the court before which the trial shall be had, may, in its discretion, discharge the jury, and commit or bail the accused for trial at the next term of such court.<sup>15</sup>

The first Missouri requisition to Illinois for Joseph Smith's arrest was issued by Governor Boggs as one of his final acts as governor on September 1, 1840, 16 months after Joseph Smith and his colleagues had escaped to Illinois. Governor Boggs had obtained certified copies of the indictments in July 1839, but it is unclear whether he knew they had been dismissed by Judge Reynolds in August 1839 when he issued his requisition for Joseph Smith's arrest 13 months later in September 1840.<sup>16</sup> However, it is certain that when Governor Reynolds took office later that month, he knew the underlying indictments had been dismissed, making the requisitions invalid under the Missouri State Constitution because he was the judge who had dismissed them. But before we consider whether Governor Reynolds had an ethical obligation to recall his State's requisition for Joseph Smith's arrest before it was carried out on June 5, 1841, it is worth examining Governor Reynolds' actions following the failure of both the first Mormon War requisition in Judge Stephen A. Douglas' courtroom in Monmouth, Illinois, and the requisition for attempted murder in Judge Nathaniel Pope's US Circuit Court in Springfield, Illinois.

Judge Stephen A. Douglas found that Governor Carlin's warrant to arrest Joseph Smith was already dead (*functus officio*) by the time it was used to arrest Joseph Smith in June 1841, as the officer first assigned to arrest Joseph Smith had not been able to find him in Nauvoo and had returned the warrant unfulfilled to the governor. The governor's procedural mistake, according to Judge Douglas, was that he had not issued a new warrant but simply gave the old warrant to a new official to try and arrest Joseph Smith again. As a result, the question was if

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15. 1820 Missouri State Constitution; <http://librarytrekker.x10host.com/MOConstitution/1820Page3.html>. Clause 10 of Article XIII endured until 1865.

16. Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 35.



the whole process had to start again in Missouri, or whether the Illinois governor could issue a new warrant based on Governor Boggs' original requisition. Perhaps because Judge Douglas had also heard abundant testimony that the warrant was fraudulent, Governor Carlin in Illinois did not issue a new warrant after Judge Douglas' decision, which decision put the ball back in the Missouri governor's court.

When Governor Reynolds became involved in efforts to extradite Joseph Smith back to Missouri, there was an allegation that Joseph Smith was an accessory before the fact in the attempted murder of former Governor Boggs. But when that extradition attempt failed in Judge Pope's US Circuit Court in January 1843 and perhaps because of the noise the Mormon redress petitions were causing in Washington, Missouri sought to resurrect the old Mormon War treason charges as the foundation for a new extradition attempt.<sup>17</sup>

Since Judge Douglas' dismissal of the warrant based on the Mormon War facts responded only to the inadequacy of Governor Carlin's arrest warrant in Illinois, Governor Reynolds should have been able to simply ask the new governor of Illinois, Thomas Ford, to issue a new warrant premised on the existing unsatisfied requisition. But since Governor Carlin had not voluntarily taken that step, and since Governor Ford had been skeptical about Missouri's requisition for Joseph Smith's arrest for the attempted murder of former Governor Boggs even before Judge Pope ruled it invalid, it appears that Missouri thought it better to start again with the 1838 Missouri War extradition request.

But Andrew Hedges' research has shown that Missouri chose not to simply issue a new requisition premised on the original 1838 indictments that had been certified by former Governor Boggs in July 1839. Rather, Missouri chose to issue fresh indictments in a different Missouri judicial circuit as the foundation for a brand new, third requisition. Absent additional evidence explaining Missouri's reason for that course, we do not know for sure whether the third requisition was issued because Missouri wished to avoid formally disclosing that the original Boone County indictments had been dismissed in August 1839 or not. But it is difficult to discern any other reason for that change. That there was a change at all demonstrates that Joseph Smith was justified in labelling this third requisition by Missouri as vexatious. The double-jeopardy principle written in many state constitutions, including the Missouri Constitution of 1820, was intended to prevent just such gerrymandering of criminal charges by government officials. That is, if the underlying

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17. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 397, 405.

facts upon which indictments had been issued were the same facts as those upon which earlier indictments had been issued, then any new indictments were constitutionally unsound regardless of where they were filed and whether they had been tweaked in some way.

Even though Governor Reynolds may not have conceived the idea of avoiding or hiding the Boone County dismissal of the first indictments, when he issued the third Missouri requisition for Joseph Smith's arrest he was fully aware of the abuse of process involved and its breach of both *res judicata* and the constitutional double-jeopardy principle.

The only possible mitigation of that conduct may be found in the words of the double-jeopardy clause in the 1820 Missouri Constitution quoted above, but that possibility is a stretch. That interpretation rests on a technical interpretation of the words regarding double jeopardy, for although Joseph Smith had not been tried by a jury when Judge Reynolds dismissed the indictments against him, he had been "put in jeopardy of life or limb." But that interpretation ignores the reason double-jeopardy provisions were included in American state constitutions in the first place. This gerrymandering by Missouri was exactly the kind of official mischief that double-jeopardy provisions were designed to prevent.

While this interpretation may enable some historians to dismiss Governor Reynolds' official involvement in Missouri's state persecution of Joseph Smith as the sophistry of a careful lawyer, a review of the ethical obligations of a lawyer, particularly one who had held office as both a supreme court judge and chief justice of a supreme court, suggest otherwise. Before discussing the ethical considerations involved in the three Missouri requisitions for Joseph Smith's arrest, however, I have briefly identified the reason that the requisition for Joseph Smith's arrest and extradition to Missouri in connection with the attempted murder of Governor Boggs failed, suggesting once more that Missouri's willingness to press that requisition, despite its obvious flaws, can be reasonably interpreted as evidence of persecution of Joseph Smith by the state of Missouri.

### **The Attempted Murder of Former Governor Boggs**

On May 6, 1842, someone attempted to murder former Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs by shooting him through a window in his house while he was reading a newspaper. Though suspicion initially fell on a man named Tompkins<sup>18</sup> because of a tense Missouri Senate election

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18. Tompkins was a silversmith alleged to have told others of his intent to kill Boggs (Monte B. McLaws, "The Attempted Assassination of Missouri's ex-Governor

campaign,<sup>19</sup> anti-Mormon newspaper reports implicated Joseph Smith within two weeks of the attempted murder, and thereafter, other avenues of inquiry were not pursued. In due course, former Governor Boggs swore an affidavit attesting his belief that Joseph Smith was an accessory before the fact in his attempted murder. On the strength of those allegations, Governor Reynolds addressed a requisition for the extradition of both Joseph Smith and Orrin Porter Rockwell to Illinois Governor Thomas Carlin, but both were released following habeas corpus hearings in Nauvoo. (Because I explained pre-Civil War habeas corpus practice in detail in my earlier article, I will not belabor those details here.)

While Governor Carlin believed that the Nauvoo Municipal Court did not have the judicial authority to rule on his warrant and that the ordinance passed by the Nauvoo City Council exceeded its legislative authority,<sup>20</sup> he did not appeal the Nauvoo decision and relied instead on the issue of a proclamation offering a reward for the capture and arrest of Smith and Rockwell.<sup>21</sup> When Thomas Ford became governor of Illinois in November of that year (1842) in company with other prominent lawyers, he agreed with the suggestion to Joseph Smith's delegation that the Boggs' extradition requisition could be acceptably resolved if Joseph would voluntarily appear before a clearly independent court in Springfield.<sup>22</sup> Though Governor Ford considered that his predecessor's arrest warrant was probably illegal, he was not certain that he had the legal authority to rescind it.<sup>23</sup>

The legal problems did not end with Governor Carlin's arrest warrant. If the State of Illinois were to defeat Joseph Smith's habeas corpus challenge on behalf of Missouri, the Illinois defenders of the warrant would need to prove both that there was substance to the allegations and that Joseph Smith had fled Missouri justice in relation to this matter. The first point of proof would be difficult if a habeas corpus hearing looked behind the allegations at the substance of the case, but the second problem was insuperable because Joseph Smith had not been present in Missouri since April or May 1839. The significance of the first flaw may have been a matter of legal opinion, though it is likely a former state supreme court

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Lilburn W. Boggs," *Missouri Historical Review* 60, no. 1 (1965): 50). Tompkins was acquitted within a week (55).

19. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 468.

20. Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 49–51.

21. *Ibid.*, 52.

22. *Ibid.*, 53–54.

23. *Ibid.*, 53n153.

justice would have considered that an extradition request based solely on suspicion could not be maintained. But the second deficiency must have been obvious to Governor Reynolds as a former supreme court justice. The question to be addressed is whether it was unethical for him to have issued a flawed extradition requisition and for Governor Carlin to have issued an arrest warrant premised upon that.

## **Part II — Governor Reynolds’ Knowledge of Missouri Law and Legal Ethics**

Legal ethics in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were not codified but were rather a combination of the variable dictates of a lawyer’s personal conscience and the sense of honor required by his profession.<sup>24</sup> The concept of a lawyer acting as an officer of the court does not appear to have been defined until 1854.<sup>25</sup> However, it still seems inconsistent with any sense of honor for Governor Reynolds to have concealed the fact that the underlying Mormon War indictments against Joseph Smith had been dismissed 13 months before Governor Boggs sought his extradition from Illinois on those charges. Michael Ariens says that the legal and ethical duty of a lawyer to zealously represent his client underwent a transition in the 1830s.<sup>26</sup> He explains that transition with a reference to David Paul Brown’s 1856 statement that there was a world of difference between a lawyer unknowingly defending an unjust case for a client and that same lawyer doing so knowingly, however much he might “plate sin with gold.”<sup>27</sup> If Governor Reynolds had revealed that the indictments against Joseph Smith and his colleagues had been dismissed, it is doubtful a governor of another state would have issued an arrest warrant based on those indictments or pursued a warrant that had thus been issued by mistake but which was still alive.

Richard Bushman has suggested that the reason Missouri pursued Joseph Smith on the old 1838 charges in 1840 was that the Latter-day Saints had argued in Washington, DC, that Missouri’s failure to bring extradition proceedings against Joseph Smith was a tacit admission that Missouri was culpable and even complicit in the atrocities and

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24. Michael Ariens, “Lost and Found: David Hoffman and the History of American Legal Ethics,” *Arkansas Law Review* 67 (2014): 571.

25. Ariens, “Lost and Found: David Hoffman and the History of American Legal Ethics,” 606.

26. *Ibid.*, 598.

27. *Ibid.*

destruction of property which were committed against the Mormons.<sup>28</sup> One reading of this implication is that Joseph Smith was the author of his own misfortune in the extradition cases since he had shamed Missouri by his entreaties in Washington, however unsuccessful those entreaties may have been. That argument continues that, despite any ethical duties which Governor Reynolds may have owed the justice system as a lawyer and judge, he may have felt politically justified in taking whatever steps he could against Joseph Smith to preserve the honor of the State of Missouri. However, it remains difficult to understand how he could have remained mute in the matter of his predecessor's request for Joseph Smith's extradition to Missouri on the strength of charges he knew had been dismissed.<sup>29</sup>

But it is more difficult to understand how Governor Reynolds could have issued a second requisition for Joseph Smith's arrest in 1843 based on the Mormon War treason charges, since he had personally dismissed the underlying indictments even though they had been reissued in a different judicial district.<sup>30</sup> Not only did Governor Reynolds know that the underlying indictments had been dismissed, he also knew that the Missouri Constitution of 1820 contained a double-jeopardy provision intended to prevent someone from facing trial twice on the same underlying charges.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps Governor Reynolds justified his action in avoiding the double-jeopardy provision in the 1820 Missouri Constitution because that clause could be interpreted to mean that no double jeopardy would attach unless the accused had been subject to a formal jury trial before the case against him was dismissed. But that interpretation is doubtful even by the ethical standards of the 1840s, since the dismissal of a case that was to be heard by a jury was a legal end to that case.

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28. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 397, 405, 505.

29. Walker, "Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," 36n94.

30. Andrew H. Hedges, "Thomas Ford and Joseph Smith, 1842–1844," *The Journal of Mormon History* 42, no.4 (October 2016): 97, 106. While Hedges acknowledges that the new indictment for treason "amounted to a renewal of the charges that led to his release in Monmouth two years earlier," he does not discuss the double-jeopardy provision in the 1820 Missouri Constitution or the fact that Governor Reynolds must have known that the charges on which he was issuing an extradition warrant were an abuse of process. See also Hedges, "Extradition, the Mormons, and the Election of 1843."

31. 1820 Missouri State Constitution, Article XIII, Clause 10; <http://librarytrekker.x10host.com/MOConstitution/1820Page3.html>.

The likely reason for Missouri's decision to reissue indictments against Joseph Smith for treason and other crimes during the Mormon War of 1838 was a concern that the Boone County dismissal of the original indictments in July 1839 might be discovered by Joseph Smith's legal team if they relied upon the old charges. But that deceptive logic does not escape *res judicata* and double-jeopardy principle. Ironically, the discovery of the dismissal of the original Boone County indictments appears to have come about as a consequence of the issue of the third Missouri requisition by the Daviess County Circuit Court. Indeed, the words of a new ordinance passed by the Nauvoo City Council when the new Missouri indictments were discovered show that the third requisition greatly concerned the Saints because it showed that Missouri was willing to abuse legal process to pursue Joseph Smith without regard to underlying legal principle or ethics. The new ordinance says:

Whereas Joseph Smith has been three times arrested and three times acquitted upon writs founded upon supposed crime or charges preferred by the State of Missouri; which acquittals were made from investigations upon writs of Habeas Corpus; namely, one in the United States Court for the district of Illinois; one in the Circuit Court of the State of Illinois and one in the Municipal Court of Nauvoo; and whereas a *nolle prosequi* has once been entered in the Courts of Missouri upon all the cases of Missouri against Joseph Smith and other: and whereas there appears to be a determined resolution by the State of Missouri to continue these unjust (Illegible Line) for the body of General Joseph Smith; and whereas it has become intolerable to be thus continually harassed and robbed of our money to defray the expences of these prosecutions; and whereas, according to the Constitution of Illinois "all men are born equally free and independent; and have certain inherent and indefeasible rights; among which are those of enjoying and defending, life and liberty, and of acquiring, possessing and protecting property and reputation, and of pursuing their own happiness;" And whereas it is our bounden duty by all common means, if possible, to put a stop to such vexatious law suits and save expense: Therefore

SEC. 1 Be it ordained by the City Council of the city of Nauvoo, according to the intent and meaning of the Charter for the 'benefit and convenience' of Nauvoo that hereafter, if any person or persons shall come with process, demand or

requisition founded upon the aforesaid Missouri difficulties, to arrest said Joseph Smith, he or they shall be subject to be arrested by any officer of the city, with or without process, and tried by the Municipal Court; upon testimony and if found guilty, sentenced to imprisonment in the city prison for life, which convict or convicts can only be pardoned by the Governor with the consent of the Mayor of said city.

SEC. 2. And be it further ordained that the preceding section, shall apply to the case of every and all persons that may be arrested, demanded or required, upon any charge founded in the aforesaid Missouri difficulties.

SEC. 3. And be it further ordained, that the Jury that makes the presentment, in any case above specified, shall not, nor either of them, act as Jurors on the final trial, but the trial shall be conducted according to the fifth and sixth articles of the amendment to the constitution of the United States.

Passed December 8, 1843.

JOSEPH SMITH, Mayor. L. A.

WILLARD RICHARDS, Recorder.<sup>32</sup>

While the words of the new Nauvoo municipal ordinance did not expressly refer to the *res judicata* and double-jeopardy doctrines, the ordinance's reference to Missouri's *nolle prosequi* in the preamble made it clear that Joseph Smith and his legal team knew by December 1843 that the 1838 indictments had been dismissed. Both requisitions based on the Mormon War charges were vexatious because the underlying indictments had been dismissed before the requisitions were issued. And the accessory before the fact requisition was simply unsustainable because Joseph Smith had not been in Missouri at the time of the attempted murder.

### **Part III — Political Pressures on Missouri Arising Because of the Mormon Redress Petitions**

Bushman attributes the idea to present redress petitions in Washington to Sidney Rigdon. Rigdon wanted "to ask state legislatures for resolutions in support of the Saints, and then request reparations for the Missouri

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32. *Nauvoo Neighbor*, 13 December 1843. It was described as "an extra Ordinance for the extra case of Joseph Smith and Others." This amendment was passed five days earlier on 8 December 1843.

losses from Congress,”<sup>33</sup> and he had obtained letters of introduction for that purpose. But ultimately, Joseph Smith, and “Judge” Elias Higbee bore the weight of the mission to Washington because Rigdon fell ill with a recurrence of malaria.<sup>34</sup> Joseph Smith and Elias Higbee visited President Martin Van Buren on November 29, 1839, in the company of John Reynolds, an Illinois congressman who was happy to assist an influential constituent. Though President Van Buren did not make his famous statement that their “cause was just but he could do nothing for them” until two months later, that was the spirit of his response from the outset. The President faced an election the following year, and he did not wish to disturb Missouri, which had been one of his strongholds in 1836.<sup>35</sup>

Joseph Smith and Elias Higbee were better received by Illinois’ congressmen and senators, who heard them in a committee room of the Capitol and arranged for them to make a presentation to Congress. But the discussion and result there was not a lot different than it had been with President Van Buren. One congressman even repeated the president’s view that the Latter-day Saints should take their redress petitions to the Missouri court, although others recognized that would not work.<sup>36</sup> Ultimately, Senator Richard Young from Illinois offered to present the collected Latter-day Saint petitions to the Senate.<sup>37</sup>

While modern Latter-day Saints are apt to think that the general response in Washington was indicative of general antipathy toward any minority sect in the United States, particularly at a time when a new presidential election campaign was about to begin, that interpretation treats the politicians and the president a little unfairly.<sup>38</sup> The new republic

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33. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 391.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., 393.

36. Ibid. There were 678 redress petitions in total, and the claims made ranged from 63 cents to \$505,000 for a total of approximately \$2 million. See also Clark V. Johnson, ed, *Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833-1838 Missouri Conflict*, Vol 16, *Religious Studies Center Monograph Series*, Bookcraft, Inc. 1992, <https://rsc.byu.edu/out-print/mormon-redress-petitions-documents-1833-1838-missouri-conflict>.

37. Ibid., 393–94.

38. Bushman says that “[c]ommentators have overemphasized the relevance of states’ rights doctrine in tying Van Buren’s hands” since the Saints were asking for compensation rather than intervention. He says that “states’ rights was a background issue” (Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 638n20). But Bushman himself ignores the practical question of where such compensation would come from if not from Missouri, and compensation could only be justified if the Saints’ claims were upheld against Missouri in a full and fair hearing.



and its Constitution were barely 50 years old, and the federal government did not yet have the power to hold the states to the letter of the Federal Constitution, much less to the religion clauses in the First Amendment. That federal power did not begin to be recognized until after the post-Civil War reconstruction nearly 30 years later, when the Fourteenth Amendment began to make the Bill of Rights' protections binding upon the states. Even those reforms did not offer minority religion any practical protection until the Jehovah's Witnesses began to make some headway in the US Supreme Court during the Second World War.<sup>39</sup>

After these initial meetings in November 1839, the Prophet preached to congregations in the eastern states and returned to Washington at the end of January 1840. Then he and Higbee worked with sympathetic Illinois senators and congressmen to polish the combined petition for presentation before the senate judiciary committee to which it had been referred.<sup>40</sup> The Missourians were invited to attend, since their State was accused, and they responded by replaying the script from Judge Austin King's initial hearings at the end of the Mormon War in November 1838. That script maintained that the Saints had been the aggressors, the action taken was necessary for the defense of the peace, and that the Mormons did whatever their Prophet told them regardless of the law of the land, and there was no reasoning with them.

The senate judiciary committee could not resolve the matter because they lacked the tools to do so, and they did not have the resources or the time to conduct a full investigation. The senate judiciary committee retreated to the position that the Prophet and Judge Higbee had been told from the beginning in their meeting with the President: that the matter could only be dealt with in the Missouri courts. Higbee stayed on in Washington until the Senate accepted that recommendation on March 23, 1840, and the Saints ignored the recommendation because they considered it futile. Higbee wrote to Joseph Smith that the mission for redress in Washington had failed.<sup>41</sup> However, he and Joseph Smith had argued that Missouri's failure to follow up the escapes of early 1839 with extradition requests demonstrated that the Missourians did not think they could succeed in court because their position was unjust<sup>42</sup> and that many other politicians and officials had considered that the Latter-

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39. See *Cantwell v Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296 (1940) and *West Virginia Board of Education v Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943).

40. The hearing took place between February 20 and 22, 1840.

41. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 397.

42. *Ibid.*, 397, 405, 505.

day Saints had been poorly dealt with. The result of this experience was that however much the doctrine of the Mormons was maligned in the press afterward, they were ever afterward “a persecuted minority who had suffered unjustly for their religious beliefs.”<sup>43</sup>

So why did Governor Reynolds wait until 1843 to issue his own version of Governor Boggs’ 1840 requisition for the arrest of Joseph Smith in connection with the Mormon War charges? Probably because he believed that Joseph Smith was implicated in the attempted murder of Boggs and had escaped those charges because of technicalities. He probably also harbored some residual anger that his state’s reputation had been sullied nationally by the Mormon arguments in Washington that continued in the press afterwards. In that context, a non-lawyer governor might have felt that a further requisition was justified since Smith had used the law to avoid justice. But Reynolds was a lawyer with continuing ethical obligations of justice and honesty.

#### **Part IV — What Governor Reynolds Should Have Done Given What He Knew**

If Governor Reynolds suspected that Joseph Smith was complicit in the murder of Governor Boggs, then he had a variety of choices. None of them were very appealing, though that remains the nature of the enforcement of criminal law to this day. He could have instructed state officers to investigate further, although that would likely not have accomplished much against Joseph Smith, since Orrin Porter Rockwell was taken before a grand jury in Independence, Missouri, but not indicted for the attempted murder of Boggs.<sup>44</sup> The gathering of additional material confirming that Joseph Smith had prophesied Boggs’ death within a year did not have the potential to prove Joseph Smith’s complicity in attempted murder beyond reasonable doubt and accordingly would have been a fruitless exercise. That Tompkins was also charged, tried, and acquitted within a week<sup>45</sup> suggests either that the investigation in that matter was substandard or that the investigators had already left no stone unturned.

But the legitimate options for criminal process against Joseph Smith in connection with the Mormon War were even more limited. That is, unless a credible account of Joseph Smith’s personal involvement in some criminal atrocity that had not been alleged in the original 1838 indictments came to

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43. *Ibid.*, 398.

44. Walker, “Habeas Corpus in Early Nineteenth-Century Mormonism,” 47n129.

45. *Ibid.*, 45n123.

light, the governor's hands were legally tied if he chose to be law-obedient and to signal law-obedience to his staff and other officials in the State of Missouri. Anything more than that amounted to state harassment or persecution, since Joseph Smith had been indicted, arrested, incarcerated, and otherwise subjected to criminal process for months in respect to those same matters before the state decided to dismiss those charges of its own volition. The prospect of a credible account of uncharged crime against Joseph Smith coming to light was negligible because nothing else had come to light despite his unpopularity. The scrutiny which his life attracted ever since confirms that there was nothing new and damning against Joseph Smith that could be discovered.

The result was that Governor Reynolds could legitimately defend the reputation of the State of Missouri only in the press; allegations of atrocities against the Mormons could be met with printed rebuttals of the charges, descriptions of the evil the Mormons had done, and denigrations of their faith. There was plenty of anti-Mormon material available, and with time, many newspaper editors obliged.

While much of the damage that was the subject of the Mormon reparation petitions in Washington was personal to individual Latter-day Saints, Governor Reynolds' personal involvement suggests it was reasonable to attribute much of the Mormon losses to the State of Missouri; the extermination order remained in place, and the state did not use its militia resources to protect the saints nor to return and protect their property.

## **Conclusion**

In my earlier article, I explained that Joseph Smith's use of habeas corpus practice was legally and morally unobjectionable, despite the contrary claims of his detractors. In this article, I have shown that Governor Reynolds of Missouri knew that all the Mormon War charges against Joseph Smith had been dismissed, yet he not only allowed his State's unfounded 1840 requisition for Joseph Smith's extradition to remain in place, but he issued a new requisition for Joseph Smith's extradition on the strength of contrived new indictments. That is abuse of process which amounts to official state persecution of an innocent man who had been released because the prosecutor had abandoned a case he could not prove.

Governor Reynolds' involvement in the requisition for Joseph Smith's arrest on suspicion of complicity in the murder of former Governor Boggs is less objectionable on legal and ethical grounds, as there is no suggestion from available records that Governor Reynolds knew those allegations were contrived. But as a former chief justice of the Illinois Supreme Court,

it is likely he recognized how thin the underlying case was. In the context of Missouri's obsession with the persecution of Joseph Smith and his followers, he should have paused before adding his personal imprimatur to the interstate pursuit of Joseph Smith on those charges.

While legal ethics on the frontier were still developing, Governor Thomas Reynolds' involvement in requisitions for the arrest and extradition of Joseph Smith to face contrived charges was dishonorable from start to finish.

**A. Keith Thompson, LLB (Hons); M Jur; PhD** is an associate professor and the associate dean at the University of Notre Dame Australia School of Law, Sydney. He also practices commercial and property law in New South Wales and Victoria, Australia. He formerly served 20 years as International Legal Counsel for the Church in the Pacific and Africa Areas and has also served in the Church as bishop, stake president, and mission president. He and his wife, Anita, have eight children and twelve grandchild.'