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DE PROFUNDIS

Daniel C. Peterson

Abstract: *Is the Gospel profound? Yes, it is. And one of the goals of the Interpreter Foundation is to call attention to that sometimes-overlooked profundity. In one sense, though, the question is a peripheral one. If we were drowning — which, figuratively and from the vantage point of eternity, we absolutely are — we wouldn't complain at a life preserver thrown to us if it were chipped, poorly painted, or unattractive, let alone if it were defective as a work of great art. We would simply be grateful to be saved. In another sense, the Gospel is clearly profound because it answers the deepest and most basic of human questions.*

There are innumerable questions about the Book of Mormon, as there are about the three other canonical works of Latter-day Saint scripture and about the Gospel as a whole. Among the very most important of them, of course, is the question of truth. “Is the Book of Mormon true?” “Is the Gospel true?” (An inescapably related question would be “What exactly does *true* mean?”)

Supposing it to be “true,” another question that presents itself would surely be “But does it have anything to say?” Does the Restoration have anything significant to offer? A proposition might be true but, at least for most people and in most contexts, trivial. The average square foot of grass, for example, contains 3,000 blades. Even the most fanatical lawncare enthusiasts would likely find that fact somewhat less than earth-shattering.

From time to time, in Latter-day Saint circles, I’ve heard the dictum repeated that “Richness is the new apologetic.” I’ve sometimes heard it attributed to James E. Faulconer, though Jim has disclaimed credit for it.

I cannot disagree with it, at least in part. Richness is genuinely an important area of potential apologetic argument. If, for example, the Book of Mormon turns out, upon examination, to be a rich and complex text, the probability of its being the hasty effusion of a thoughtless

frontier charlatan seems to decrease. If the Gospel sheds rich light upon our lives and their meaning, this is a powerful reason on its own for taking the Restoration seriously.

But what, exactly, should we understand by the word *richness*? Must scripture and prophets be profound in order to be true? And, again, what would *profound* even mean?

For the record, I *do* believe the scriptures — including those peculiar to the Restoration — are profound, subtle, nuanced, complex, and almost inexhaustibly rich. (The Interpreter Foundation exists, at least in part, to discover and exhibit such qualities in the texts and doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.) The apostle Paul's exclamation represents my view, too:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33)

To me, though, this is almost — not quite, but almost — a side benefit, an added grace. And so, for the purposes of this short essay, I intend to write as if the profound subtleties, nuanced complexities, and as yet unplumbed richness weren't actually there.

Imagine an elegantly clothed audience gathered at a cinema in a mid-sized American city for a double feature of Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Dekalog* and Jean Renoir's *La Grande Illusion*. The theater is a relatively small one, with only two screens. Directly next door, as it happens, a large and boisterous crowd is thoroughly enjoying a film festival devoted to a Scooby-Doo retrospective. (The proprietor of the establishment cares nothing for what's shown on his screens, as long as the seats are full.)

It's probably impossible for at least some of the *cinéastes* gathered in the first theater not to experience some gratification, not to feel a small *frisson* of hauteur, at the difference between their own well-cultivated *bon gout* and the relative lack of taste manifest by the Scooby-Doo fans gathered in the directly adjacent room. While the latter shove fistfuls of heavily buttered popcorn into their faces, the *Amis du cinéma européen* enjoy an assortment of fine wines and cheeses.

In an obscure part of the theater, however, an employee suddenly notices flames that have already grown to alarming size and well beyond his control. Worried about the safety of those in the building, he runs first to the nearest screening room, where the crowd is watching Fred, Velma, Shaggy, Daphne, and Scooby with engaged and uproarious pleasure.

"Fire!" he yells.

Surprised but abruptly sober, the Scooby-Doo Fan Club exits the building.

Then he races next door. “Fire!” he cries.

The assembled cinephiles turn from a scene in *Dekalog: Six* during which the Polish actor Artur Barciś, arguably representing a supernatural being, has been shown carrying a bag of groceries. Quietly irritated at the interruption, they exchange critical observations among themselves. One of them objects to the fact that the warning wasn’t given in iambic pentameter, and another remarks that it demonstrated no familiarity whatever with Kantian ethical theory. Moreover, several point out, the theater employee who delivered the warning displayed poor vocal quality, evidenced absolutely no fashion sense, and failed to manifest the existential *angst* that such a warning should convey. As such, it lacked authenticity. In the end, they refuse to move.

The fact remains, though, that alerting the two audiences to the presence of threatening fire in the building was exactly the right thing to do, and it was said both truthfully and efficiently. And the appropriate response was to leave the theater.

One of the central and most basic messages of scripture is the similarly simple imperative: “Repent!”

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; as it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. ...

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. (Mark 1:1–5, 14–15)

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name

of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:36–38)

We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Articles of Faith 4)

In the Hebrew Bible and in Jewish tradition, repentance is called *teshuvah*, a Hebrew word that can also be translated as “returning.” One of the Hebrew words for sin is *chet*, which in Hebrew means “to go astray.” Thus, the fundamental idea of repentance in Jewish thinking is a return to the path of righteousness. In the Greek New Testament, repentance is *metanoia*, which, at its base, suggests a transformative change of mind (or, we might say, of heart). Another way of expressing it would be as a “conversion” or a “reformation,” even a repudiation of old ways of thinking.

There is much to be learned by considering the meaning of *metanoia* and *teshuvah*. But, surely, the fundamentally important and urgent thing is, actually, to repent.

In some contexts, the barked command “Hit the brake!” or “Duck!” might be the very thing called for, and in a sense, the richest message because it is the most apt. And it may be the most radical possible answer to the question of what to do or what to think, because it gets to the absolute root or *radix* of the matter at hand.

Surely, as we think about depth or profundity, the so-called “razor” generally attributed to the English Franciscan friar, philosopher, and theologian William of Ockham (ca. 1287–1347) should be relevant. It is related in various forms — e.g., *Numquam ponenda est pluralitas sine necessitate* (“Plurality must never be posited without necessity”) and *Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem* (“Entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity”) — and it is generally taken to mean something like “no more assumptions should be made in explaining something than are necessary for an adequate explanation.” Analogously, I would contend, the answer to a question need be no more complex than is required for an adequate answer to the question.

Of course, not everybody is happy with simplicity. As the illustrious German poet and thinker Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) remarked, “Es ärgert die Menschen, daß die Wahrheit so einfach ist.”¹

1. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, quoted in *Jahrbuch der Illustrierten Deutschen Monatshefte: Ein Familienbuch für das Gesammte Geistige Leben der Gegenwart*,

(“It irritates people that the truth is so simple.”) The Book of Mormon suggests such a case in the prophet Jacob’s reflections upon the people that his parents and older siblings had left behind in Jerusalem shortly before his own birth:

But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them, and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it, that they may stumble.

And now I, Jacob, am led on by the Spirit unto prophesying; for I perceive by the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that by the stumbling of the Jews they will reject the stone upon which they might build and have safe foundation.

But behold, according to the scriptures, this stone shall become the great, and the last, and the only sure foundation upon which the Jews can build. (Jacob 4:14–16)

I’m inclined to agree with the great theoretical physicist and Nobel laureate Richard Feynman (1918–1988), who observed, “You can recognize truth by its beauty and simplicity.”²

Surely, too, any rating of the depth of an answer ought to be correlated with the nature of the question to which it responds. An answer to a fundamental question can be considered “deep,” it seems to me, even if the answer is simple and easily comprehended. When a speeding freight train is bearing down on you, a friend’s urgent suggestion that you step out of its path is far more helpful — and in a sense, therefore, far more “deep” — than another’s fervent admiration of its beautiful coloring and impressive power or yet another’s learned exposition of the evolution of locomotive design.

And the Gospel is all about urgently important and absolutely fundamental questions: Is God real? Does life have a purpose? Are moral values grounded in reality or merely arbitrary? Is there, somehow, genuine right and wrong, or are moral choices no more fundamental than

vol. 46 (Braunschweig: Druck und Verlag von George Westermann, 1879), 218.

2. Richard Feynman, quoted in Thomas Dubay, *The Evidential Power of Beauty: Science and Theology Meet* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 9.

questions of personal taste? Why are we here? Where did we come from? Where are we going? How should we live? What happens at death? Will our relationships continue beyond the grave? Will our personalities, and the personalities of those we love, survive? Is there hope for us from the tragedies, sorrows, sufferings, betrayals, failures, and injustices of this life?

With respectful apologies to my fellow academics, it seems obvious to me that these questions are far deeper than such conventional topics of serious mainstream scholarship as “Stylistic Ambiguity in the Early Novels of Hemingway,” “Florentine Painting and the Representation of Nature,” “Developmental Timelines for *Drosophila melanogaster*,” “Defective Verbs in the Fragmenta of Chrysippus of Soli,” and “Othering the Undead in Japanese *Manga*, 1975–1983.”

The English classical scholar and poet A. E. Housman (1859–1936) was an atheist who, I suspect, wanted to believe but could not. Nevertheless, as his posthumously published “Easter Hymn” suggests, he did not dismiss the question of hope — one might even call it the hope for hope — as a trivial or shallow matter:

If in that Syrian garden, ages slain,
 You sleep, and know not you are dead in vain,
 Nor even in dreams behold how dark and bright
 Ascends in smoke and fire by day and night
 The hate you died to quench and could but fan,
 Sleep well and see no morning, son of man.

But if, the grave rent and the stone rolled by,
 At the right hand of majesty on high
 You sit, and sitting so remember yet

Your tears, your agony and bloody sweat,
 Your cross and passion and the life you gave,
 Bow hither out of heaven and see and save.³

Prophetic counsel of the kind typically offered at General Conferences of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints — urging parents to spend time with their children, exhorting fathers to pay more attention to their families rather than being wedded primarily to career, exhorting all of us to chastity before marriage and to fidelity within it, extolling hard work, encouraging provident living, and teaching self-discipline — may often seem humdrum and prosaic, but following such

3. A. E. Housman, “Easter Hymn,” in *More Poems* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1936). This poem, and others, were published posthumously in *More Poems* by Housman’s brother, Laurence Housman.

principles will do far more good for individuals, their families, and society than any number of government programs. Such advice is, yes, deep.

When I was a boy back in the early Paleolithic Age, cigarette ads were still permitted on television. (Yes, we had television then.) In fact, they were not only permitted — they seemed omnipresent. And one of the most common among them featured a catchy syncopated rendition of the jingle “Winston tastes good like a cigarette should.”

Grinchy sticklers for good grammar pointed out, however, that the jingle should properly read “Winston tastes good *as* a cigarette should.” As it stood, the ad confused the preposition *like* with the conjunction *as*. To which the Winston ad campaign unrepentantly responded with a rhetorical question that became yet another effective slogan, “What do you want, good grammar or good taste?”

That response presupposed, probably correctly, that most people would respond “We want good taste!” Of course, I’m an over-educated pedant, so good grammar is really important to me, as well. More than anything, though, even more than either good taste or good grammar, we should prefer a message that doesn’t extol behavior that will ultimately kill us. And my testimony is that, if we take it to heart, the messages of the scriptures won’t kill us. Quite the contrary: They will save our lives.

The Gospel must not be misunderstood as an attempt at a philosophical system. It doesn’t purport to answer every question that might be raised by a graduate seminar in analytic philosophy. That isn’t its purpose. It need not define philosophically precise answers to questions about divine foreknowledge, the nature of preexistent personhood, or the ultimate origins of morality. Such definitions are no part of its intent.

There are good reasons why Latter-day Saints have distinguished themselves in journal-keeping, the recording of history, and historical writing but have not produced systematic theologians. Our scriptural texts are often couched as stories. They are never presented as manuals of doctrine, let alone as theological treatises. The Gospel is about building a relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and about entering into covenants with God. It is not simply a list of propositions to be affirmed, whether deep or shallow.⁴ Our faith rests not merely in a creed. It is firmly placed in a Person and in a relationship to a Person — a Person who, we are told and we have reason to believe, is accessible to us throughout all of existence, however high and however low:

4. Jeffrey L. Thayne and Edwin E. Gantt, *Who ~~What~~ is Truth? Reframing Our Questions for a Richer Faith* (n.p.: Verdand Press, 2019).

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;

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. (D&C 88:6–7)

The Son of Man hath descended below them all. (D&C 122:8)

Here is real depth, and it resides not in doctrines but, again, in a Person. To fully know him and his Father — not merely to know *about* them — is eternal life (John 17:3). Moreover, we are assured, no matter how far we fall, no matter how deep we sink or even attempt to flee, God is there for those who sincerely call upon him. “For I am persuaded,” wrote the apostle Paul,

that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38–39)

Or, as the ancient Psalmist put it,

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. (Psalm 139:7–12)

“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord!” the Psalmist exclaimed.⁵ Or, as St. Jerome rendered that passage in the Latin Vulgate Bible, “De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine.”⁶

New Testament Christianity taught that Christ literally answered such prayers from the righteous dead who were in Hades or Sheol, the realm of spirits, having “descended into the underworld” (*descendit ad inferos*) during the period

5. Psalm 130:1 (English Standard Version).

6. Psalm 129:1 (Biblia Vulgata). The numbering of the Psalms in the Vulgate differs from the numbering in most modern translations of the Bible.

between his crucifixion and his resurrection.⁷ “[H]e went and preached unto the spirits in prison,” says Peter (1 Peter 3:19). “[T]he gospel [was] preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (1 Peter 4:6). He willingly and deliberately “descended ... into the lower parts of the earth,” says the author of the epistle to the Ephesians (Ephesians 4:9). “For,” says the Psalmist, “thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol.”⁸

One of the greatest revelations granted in this last dispensation was a vision given to President Joseph F. Smith on 3 October 1918 that greatly clarified this idea of the Lord’s descent into the spirit world.⁹

God’s willingness to answer us even in our deepest depths has been illustrated from the very first minutes of the Restoration, as reflected in these words of Joseph Smith:

After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

But, exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction — not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being — just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. (Joseph Smith — History 1:15–17)

7. The Latin phrase occurs in both the Apostles’ Creed and the Athanasian Creed.

8. Psalm 16:10 (American Standard Version).

9. See D&C 138.

Those who contribute to the Interpreter Foundation do so not because they like the intellectual sheen of the Gospel, but because they see in it liberation from sorrow, sin, and death and hope for a glorious future for all of our Father's children who will accept it. I want to express my appreciation here to those who have made Interpreter's existence and its flourishing possible through their donations of time, effort, and, yes, money. I'm grateful to the authors, copy editors, source checkers, and others who have created this particular volume, and I especially want to thank Allen Wyatt and Jeff Lindsay, the two managing or production editors for the journal. Like all of the other Interpreter Foundation leadership, they serve as volunteers and without financial or other compensation. We could not function without their efforts.

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 Latter-day Saint 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).

AND THE ONE POINTED THE WAY: ISSUES OF INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION INVOLVING THE LIAHONA

Loren Spendlove

Abstract: *In describing the operation of the spindles in the Liahona, Nephi's statement that "the one pointed the way" in 1 Nephi 16:10 is frequently taken to mean that one of the two spindles indicated the direction to travel. However, Nephi's apparent use of the Hebrew word מַעְכָּד (ha'echad)¹ may imply a different mechanism in which the direction was being shown when both operated as one. If so, there may be added symbolism of unity and oneness inherent in Nephi's and Alma's descriptions of the Liahona. Additionally, I provide a detailed analysis of words and phrases used by Nephi and Alma to describe the Liahona which potentially reveal intriguing Hebrew wordplay in the text.*

After being instructed of the Lord to leave his camp in the valley of Lemuel and travel into the wilderness, Lehi "arose in the morning, and went forth to the tent door, and to his great astonishment he beheld upon the ground a round ball of curious workmanship; and it was of fine brass." Nephi explained that "within the ball were two spindles, *and the one pointed the way* whither we should go into the wilderness" (1 Nephi 16:10). In this article I argue that readers of the Book of Mormon, and those responsible for translating it into languages other than English, have largely misconstrued a key phrase in this verse: *and the one pointed the way*.

In the eighth Article of Faith, Joseph Smith wrote: "We believe the Bible to be the word of God *as far as it is translated correctly*; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God." However,

1. In this paper I use a phonetic style for the transliteration of Hebrew words into roman script.

contemporary issues arising from the process of translation and interpretation can also influence our understanding of doctrines and principles taught in the Book of Mormon. This is especially true for those who rely on foreign language translations of the Book of Mormon. Additionally, some Latter-day Saint authors have expressed the idea that the phrase “and *the one* pointed the way” in 1 Nephi 16:10 should be interpreted as “*one of them* pointed the way.”² For example, in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* we read:

Lehi found the Liahona, provided by the Lord (Alma 37:38), outside of his tent door while camping in the wilderness after leaving Jerusalem (1 Nephi 16:10). As his party traveled through the Arabian desert and across the ocean to the promised land, *one of the spindles* pointed the direction to travel.³

In addition, I checked four different foreign language translations of the Book of Mormon published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and all of them carried this same interpretation.⁴ However, it is my opinion that the English text of the Book of Mormon and comparable biblical Hebrew grammar do not allow this interpretation.

It is important to emphasize that the language of Lehi’s and Nephi’s culture was Hebrew; it was the language of their daily lives, as it was for most living in and around Jerusalem before the Babylonian captivity. We learn from Nephi that the record which he kept consisted “of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians” (1 Nephi 1:2). While his record may have been written in an Egyptian script — if that is how we should interpret the phrase “language of the Egyptians” — it was definitely a “Jewish” record, since it represented the “the learning of the Jews.” My understanding of the phrase “language of the Egyptians” allows the outward form of the record to be written in an Egyptian

2. Cleon Skousen wrote: “In a depression within this device [the Liahona] were two SPINDLES. *One* of them pointed the WAY they should go as they proceeded on their journey.” W. Cleon Skousen, *Treasures from the Book of Mormon*, vol. 1, *1 Nephi 1 to Jacob 7*, (Pleasant Grove, UT: Verity Publishing, Inc, 2016), 94, emphasis added.

3. *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), s.v. “Liahona,” 829–30, emphasis added.

4. Spanish: “una de las cuales marcaba el camino” (*one of which* marked the way); Portuguese: “e uma delas indicava-nos o caminho” (*and one of them* showed us the way); Italian: “e una indicava la direzione” (*and one* indicated the direction); French: “et l’une d’elles montrait la direction” (*and one of them* showed the direction).

script, but I believe the core of the record was still Jewish (Hebrew).⁵ A book of literature, especially prophetic literature, should continue to bear the marks and linguistic characteristics of its source language. For example, Nephi's long citations from Isaiah — even though he may have used an Egyptian script to record them — would most likely still have carried many if not most of the original Hebrew characteristics.

We know the Hebrew language was preserved among the Nephites down to the very end of their civilization (see Mormon 9:33). Mormon and Moroni knew Hebrew, and Moroni told us they would have preferred Hebrew over “reformed Egyptian” were it not for the extra space it required (see Mormon 9:32–33). In addition, Moroni told us that if they could have written their abridged record in Hebrew, there would have been “no imperfection in our record” (Mormon 9:33). I propose that this is either because many of their source documents were written in Hebrew rather than “reformed Egyptian” or because Mormon's and Moroni's primary language was Hebrew, and they would have found it easier to express their thoughts and ideas in Hebrew.

Two Spindles

The Book of Mormon's usage of “the one” in 1 Nephi 16:10 is unique in several ways. In this verse, we are told that “within the ball were two spindles, and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness.” In other words, Nephi informed us that there were two spindles inside the Liahona, but he seems to give us further information about only one of the two spindles: “the one pointed the way.” If *only one* pointed the way, what was the function of the other spindle?

In an attempt to resolve this question, I performed a thorough analysis of the Hebrew Bible for every instance where two elements (things or people) are mentioned together *and* where further details are

5. “At least portions of this record [brass plates] were written in Egyptian, since knowledge of ‘the language of the Egyptians’ enabled Lehi, father of Nephi, to ‘read these engravings’ (Mosiah 1:2-4). But whether it was the Egyptian language or Hebrew written in Egyptian script is again not clear. Egyptian was widely used in Lehi's day, but because poetic writings are skewed in translation, because prophetic writings were generally esteemed as sacred, and because Hebrew was the language of the Israelites in the seventh century BC, it would have been unusual for the writings of Isaiah and Jeremiah — substantially preserved on the brass plates (1 Ne. 5:13; 19:23) — to have been translated from Hebrew into a foreign tongue at this early date. Thus, Hebrew portions written in Hebrew script, Egyptian portions in Egyptian script, and Hebrew portions in Egyptian script are all possibilities.” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* s.v. “Book of Mormon Language,” 180.

provided for at least one of the two elements. Of the 79 occurrences I was able to identify, whenever additional details were given about one of the two elements, the second was also further elaborated. This observation held true in every case that I was able to identify. Below are some examples that demonstrate this discovery:

And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring *two of every sort* into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be *male* and *female* (Genesis 6:19, KJV).

And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were *two men* in one city; *the one rich*, and *the other poor* (2 Samuel 12:1 KJV).

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between *two opinions*? *if the LORD be God* [opinion 1], follow him: but *if Baal* [opinion 2], then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. . . . Let them therefore give us *two bullocks*; and let them choose *one bullock for themselves*, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and *I will dress the other bullock*, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under (1 Kings 18:21, 23 KJV).

And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me *two staves*; *the one I called Beauty*, and *the other I called Bands*; and I fed the flock (Zechariah 11:7 KJV).

The same observation holds true for the Book of Mormon as well, except for our passage in 1 Nephi 16:10. Below are examples of the 14 occurrences that fit these criteria in the Book of Mormon:

And he said unto me: Behold there are save *two churches* only; *the one is the church of the Lamb of God*, and *the other is the church of the devil*; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to *the church of the Lamb of God* belongeth to that *great church*, which is *the mother of abominations*; and she is the whore of all the earth (1 Nephi 14:10).

And now, my father had begat *two sons* in the wilderness; *the elder was called Jacob* and *the younger Joseph* (1 Nephi 18:7).

No man can serve *two masters*; for either he will *hate the one* and *love the other*, or else *he will hold to the one* and *despise the other*. Ye cannot serve *God* and *Mammon* (3 Nephi 13:24).

And the country was divided; and there were *two kingdoms, the kingdom of Shule, and the kingdom of Cohor*, the son of Noah (Ether 7:20).

This is a significant detail. A plain reading of 1 Nephi 16:10 seems to describe the function of only one of the spindles without giving us any information about the function of the second spindle. However, of the 93 combined occurrences that I identified in the Bible and the Book of Mormon which mention two elements, and where additional details were given about *one* of the two, we are also given additional information about the *second* — except in 1 Nephi 16:10. As such, it seems unlikely that Nephi was giving us details about only one spindle while omitting details about the second. If this were the case, this verse would stand out as anomalous in the Hebrew Bible and in the Book of Mormon.

Both Spindles Pointed the Way

Nephi told us that *both* spindles, or pointers, in the Liahona served a useful purpose, although he did not clarify what that purpose may have been: “And it came to pass that I Nephi beheld *the pointers which were in the ball that they did work* according to the faith and diligence and heed which we did give unto them” (1 Nephi 16:28). On the other hand, Alma was much more clear about the purpose of the two spindles:

And it [the Liahona] did work for them according to their faith in God. Therefore if they had faith to believe that God could cause that *those spindles should point the way they should go*, behold, it was done. Therefore they had this miracle — and also many other miracles — wrought by the power of God day by day.” (Alma 37:40)

So while Nephi hinted at the operation of the two spindles, Alma appears to clarify that *both spindles* served to “point the way.” Alma’s choice of verbs in this verse, *point*, matches Nephi’s verb choice. Alma did not state that both pointers helped them discover the way or that both pointers gave them information about their path. Rather he added the detail that “those spindles” *pointed* the way. I propose that when Nephi wrote that “the one pointed the way” he was not trying to tell us that *only one* of the spindles functioned as a directional indicator. Rather, I believe that both spindles working in union — as one — pointed the way that

Lehi's party should travel in the wilderness. I will demonstrate below that Hebrew grammatical usage can also support this conclusion.⁶

The One, or One of Them?

Mother Hulda is one of the lesser-known fairy tales written by the brothers Grimm. The story begins with the line "A widow had two daughters; *one* was pretty and industrious, *the other* was ugly and lazy."⁷ The sentence structure used to discuss these two daughters in the story — one was X, the other was Y — is standard English syntax. In Hebrew, however, the syntax for this type of comparison is very different. In Exodus 18 we are told of Moses' and Zipporah's two sons:

And her *two sons*; of which the name of *the one* was Gershom; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land: And the name of *the other* was Eliezer; for the God of my father,

6. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not publish a Book of Mormon in Hebrew. The most widely available translation of the Book of Mormon in Hebrew was published by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ) in 1988. However, this translation contains serious flaws. For example, below I show the following: 1) the Latter-day Saint wording for a portion of Alma 37:40; 2) the equivalent RLDS Hebrew passage (Alma 17:74, the RLDS Book of Mormon uses a different system of chapters and verses); and, 3) my English translation of the RLDS Hebrew text:

1) "If they *had faith to believe that God could cause* that those spindles should point the way they should go."

2) אם האמינו כי מחוגים אלה יורו להם את הדרך, שבה עליהם ללכת

3) "If they *believed* that those hands/spindles would teach/lead them the way they should go."

Two issues arise with the RLDS Hebrew translation. First, the translators replaced the *italicized* phrase "had faith to believe that God could cause" with only one word — "believed." Why did the Hebrew translators of the RLDS Book of Mormon edit this passage so drastically? The only reason I can imagine is that they wanted to remove God from the guiding process of the Liahona. Second, the RLDS Hebrew text seems to be a modern Hebrew, rather than biblical Hebrew, translation. For example, while the word מחוגים (*mechogim*) can mean "hands" or spindles in modern Hebrew, the word is unattested in the Hebrew Bible. A related word מחוגה (*mechugah*, both words are derived from the root ח-ו-ג) appears once in Isaiah 44:13, where it carries the meaning of "circle" or "compass," but not "pointer." In 1 Nephi 16:10 the RLDS Hebrew text used a different word for pointers: צירים (*tsirim*). This word principally means "hinges" in modern Hebrew, but can also mean "pointers." The word is attested 12 times in the Bible (ambassador 4x; pang 3x; messenger 2x; pains 1x; hinge 1x; and sorrow 1x), but never as anything resembling a pointer.

7. J. L. C. and W. C. Grimm, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, (Hertsfordshire, UK: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1993), 129, emphasis added.

said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh (Exodus 18:3–4 KJV).

The syntax of this verse differs from that of *Mother Hulda*. In the fairy tale the two daughters were enumerated as *one* and *the other*, while in this English translation of Exodus, the two sons are listed as *the one* and *the other*. The verse from Exodus demonstrates a slight but noticeable difference from standard English syntax.⁸ I believe this difference is most likely due to syntactic borrowing from Hebrew. The Hebrew text and a word-for-word translation of Exodus 18:3–4 follow:

ואת שני בניה אשר שם האחד גרשם כי אמר גר הייתי בארץ נכריה.
ושם האחד אליעזר כי־אלהי אבי בעזרי ויצילני מחרב פרעה.

And two sons of her that name *the one* Gershom because he said stranger I was in land foreign, and name *the one* Eliezer because God [of] my father in my help and rescuing me from sword [of] Pharaoh.

Although one can get a sense of the original meaning from the word-for-word translation into English, it is clumsy and awkward. Also, as shown in the word-for-word translation, rather than agreeing with the English syntax of *one* and *the other*, the Hebrew syntax in this verse uses *the one* and *the one*. In fact, the word *the one* (האחד *ha'echad*, or האחת *ha'achat*)⁹ is frequently used in the Hebrew Bible, occurring more than 120 times. So Nephi's phrase "and *the one* pointed the way" is a reasonable replication of proper Hebrew syntax, but not good English grammar.¹⁰ Our received

8. The grammatical departure from standard English syntax is that the verse in Exodus refers to the first son as *the one* rather than simply *one*.

9. In Hebrew grammar, the definite article ה (*hey*) can never exist on its own; it must be prefixed to a noun. For example, the English phrase "the man" would be expressed as only one word in Hebrew: האיש (*ha'ish*).

10. A cursory examination indicated that the phrase "the one" could bear the meaning "one of them" in Early Modern English (EmodE), which Royal Skousen and Stanford Carmack have proposed is present in much of the English of the Book of Mormon. See Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), xx, xxxvii–xxxix and Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar, *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 11 (2014): 209–62; <https://interpreterfoundation.org/a-look-at-some-nonstandard-book-of-mormon-grammar/>. When asked about the use of phrases such as "and the one," Stanford Carmack wrote: "In the following passage, we first read 'the one' where it quite clearly means one of the two, but without any later reference to the other: '... they found meanes to refrefh themfelues, and *the one* returned, neere fraught with

English translation has led many to misunderstand “the one” to mean “one of them,” especially in translations into other languages.

Nearly every occurrence of the phrase “one of them” in English Bible translations — with only a few exceptions¹¹ — derives from the Hebrew phrase “one from them” (אחד/אחת מהם/מהנה) *echad/achat mehem/mehenah*.¹² The same can be said for “one of us” or “one of you (plural).” Hebrew syntax in these cases would be “one from X,” where X is a plural pronoun. Below are some examples in the Bible of the phrase “one of us/you/them”:

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become *as one of us*, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever. (Genesis 3:22 KJV)

ויאמר יהוה אלהים הן האדם היה כאחד ממנו לדעת טוב ורע ועתה פן־ישלח ידו ולקח גם מעץ החיים ואכל וחי לעלם.

Send *one of you*, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies. (Genesis 42:16 KJV)

שלחו מכם אחד ויקח את־אחיכם ואתם האסרו ויבחנו דבריכם האמת אתכם ואם־לא חי פרעה כי מרגלים אתם.

He keepeth all his bones: not *one of them* is broken. (Psalm 34:20 KJV)

שמר כל־עצמותיו אחת מהנה לא נשברה

Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things: choose thee *one of them*, that I may do it unto thee. (1 Chronicles 21:10 KJV)

לך ודברת אל־דוד לאמר כה אמר יהוה שלוש אני נטה עליך בחר־לך אחת מהנה ואעשה־לך.

As Table 1 shows, the phrase “one of us/you/them” is most commonly expressed in Hebrew as “one from X” (where X is a personal pronoun), rather than “the one.”

fifth and traine, within two moneths after.” Stanford Carmack, personal email communication to author, October 1, 2020.

11. For example, see Genesis 42:27.

12. As with the definite article ה (*hey*), the word *from* (מן or מ) must be prefixed to a noun. The masculine form of “one of them” is אחד מהם/מהנה (*echad mehem/mehenah*), while the feminine is אחת מהם/מהנה (*achat mehem/mehenah*).

Table 1

Verse	English Translation	Hebrew	English Transliteration
Genesis 3:22	as one of us	כֶּאֱחָד מִמֶּנּוּ	as one from us
Genesis 42:16	one of you	מִכֶּם אֶחָד	from you (plural) one ¹³
Psalms 34:20	one of them	אֶחָד מֵהֶנָּה	one from them
1 Chronicles 21:10	one of them	אֶחָד מֵהֶנָּה	one from them

The Definite Article ה (hey)

So “the one” (הָאֶחָד *ha’echad*) is a common biblical Hebrew expression, but it is not a common way of communicating the idea “one of them.” So what can “the one” (הָאֶחָד *ha’echad*) mean in 1 Nephi 16:10? Before this can be answered we need a short discussion about Hebrew grammar as it relates to the definite article, ה (hey):

Hebrew has a definite article (various forms of *ha*), but its use is not the same as the use of the English direct article, so translators cannot simply rely on a word-for-word translation of Hebrew articles into English. For example, where Hebrew would say “he put the hand in the pocket,” English would say “he put his hand in his pocket.”¹⁴

The example above is fairly straightforward. In this case “the hand” would be simply הַיָּד (*ha’yad*) in Hebrew. However, a unique dimension of Hebrew grammar occurs when a noun + adjective combination is used, and the noun is definite.¹⁵ In this situation, both the noun and the adjective are preceded by the definite article. For example, in describing the palace that Solomon built for himself we read:

And there were four undersetters to the four corners of *one base*: and the undersetters were of the very base itself.
(1 Kings 7:34 KJV)

וארבע כתפות אל ארבע פנות המכנה האחת מן־המכנה כתפיה

13. In Genesis 42:16 the phrase מִכֶּם אֶחָד (*michem echad*) is literally “from you (plural) one,” but it carries the same meaning as אֶחָד מִכֶּם (*echad michem*), or “one from you (plural).” The word order does not alter the meaning.

14. John F. Brug, *Biblical Grammar: Mechanics or Meaning?* (The Wartburg Project, 2019), 18.

15. Nouns can be classified as either *definite* or *indefinite*. In English, definite nouns are preceded by the article “the,” while indefinite nouns are preceded by the article “a.” Hebrew has the definite article ה (hey), but no indefinite article. So “the man” would be translated as הָאִישׁ (*ha’ish*, or *the man*), but “a man” would be simply אִישׁ (*ish*, or *man*).

In this verse, the phrase “one base” is המכנה האחת (*ha’mekhonah ha’echat*), or literally “the base the one.” The word *one* functions as an adjective here, so it follows the noun. And since the noun is definite, both the noun (base) and the adjective (one) are preceded by the definite article ה (*hey*). A large percentage of the occurrences of “the one” in the Bible match this noun + adjective pattern. However, this does not fit the usage in 1 Nephi 16:10 where the word *one* operates as a definite noun rather than as an adjective.

Another significant way that the word *one* is joined with the definite article in the Bible occurs when it is used in the construct state, or סמיכות (*smichut*), a morphological form specific to Semitic and Egyptian languages. The construct state is formed when two nouns are joined together to form a new noun chain, of sorts. For example, the nouns *name* (שם *shem*) and *one* (אחד *echad*) are unrelated, independent words. However, when connected to each other they can form a new noun: שם אחד (*shem echad*), or literally, “name one.” In English we would insert the word *of* between these two nouns to read “name of one.” If we make this phrase definite — “the name of one” — the Hebrew would be שם האחד (*shem ha’echad*), or שם האחת (*shem ha’achat*) if the person or thing being referenced were feminine. A literal translation to English would be “name the one,” but proper English syntax would render it “the name of one.” In the construct state the definite article is appended to the second noun rather than to the first. In Genesis 4:19 we learn that Lamech, a descendant of Cain, had two wives:

And Lamech took unto him two wives: *the name of the one* was Adah, *and the name of the other* Zillah. (KJV)

ויקח־לו למך שתי נשים שם האחת עדה ושם השנית צלה:

A word-for-word translation of this verse could be rendered “And took to him Lemek two women *name the one* Adah *and name the second* Tsilah.” The KJV translation in the first part of this verse — “the name of *the one* was Adah” — reveals a spillover effect from Hebrew syntax. The phrase would be better translated into English as “the name of one,” or “the name of the first.” Since our phrase from the Book of Mormon — “*the one* pointed the way” — does not contain two connected nouns, “the one” in 1 Nephi 16:10 is not a result of the construct state. Because “the one” in this verse does not conform to the Hebrew construct state, or the noun + adjective pattern — which together account for the great majority of occurrences of “the one” in the Bible — we find ourselves in a rare grammatical situation.

היחוד (ha'yachad) — The United, or The One

Members of the ancient Jewish community at Qumran referred to themselves as היחוד (*ha'yachad*),¹⁶ a term that means *the united, the together, or the collective*,¹⁷ but generally translated as *the community* when referring to Qumran. One of the most significant sectarian documents to emerge from Qumran was the סרך היחוד (*serekh ha'yachad*) — also known as 1QS¹⁸ — or Rule of the Community. The idea of community, or *oneness*, at Qumran was so prevalent that the word היחוד (*ha'yachad*) appears 58 times in the *Rule of the Community*. In fact, in the English translation of the document, other than prepositions (*of, and, for, etc.*) and personal pronouns (*his, he, they, etc.*), היחוד (*ha'yachad*) — *the united* — is the most widely attested word, even appearing more than the words *God* (55 times), *spirit* (36 times), or *covenant* (33 times).

Many scholars have theorized that biblical triconsonantal (three-letter) Hebrew roots were originally biconsonantal (two-letter) roots.¹⁹ Benner describes these biconsonantal, or two-letter roots as *parent* roots, and the triconsonantal, or three-letter roots as *child* roots.²⁰

16. Nibley wrote that the Qumran “candidates take on themselves by covenant the law of God to keep all his commandments even at the peril of their lives. With this goes a law of consecration. The society calls itself a *yahad*, meaning oneness or unity, thereby identifying itself with the model church, the Zion of Enoch (the oldest known fragments of any book of Enoch have been discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls), who were ‘of *one* heart and *one* mind’ in both spiritual and temporal things.” Hugh Nibley, “From the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QS),” *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 2, no. 5 (2010): 87.

17. היחוד (*ha'yachad*) literally means *the united, the together, or the collective*.

18. 1QS stands for Cave 1, Qumran, Serekh (Rule). סרך היחוד (*serekh ha'yachad*) could also be rendered as *Rule of the United*.

19. “In Semitic languages, a hypothetical transition from biconsonsonantal (2c) to triconsonantal (3c) language morphology was debated for quite some time. Semitic lexemes derive from roots consisting of predominantly three radicals (i.e., root consonants), termed 3c. However, there is a small corpus of 2c roots ... responsible for most of the irregular Semitic verbs. Are these remnants from a more archaic linguistic phase? One observation favoring this is the relative abundance of 2c body parts and particularly facial features (“eye,” “tooth,” etc.). If this semantic field originated early in language development, then so did the 2c morphology.” Noam Agmon and Yigal Bloch, “Statistics of Language Morphology Change: From Biconsonantal Hunters to Triconsonantal Farmers,” *PLOS ONE* 8, no. 12: e83780, 1. Retrieved from: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0083780>.

20. Jeff A. Benner, *The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible: Hebrew Letters, Words and Roots Defined Within Their Ancient Cultural Context*, (College Station, TX: Virtualbookworm.com Publishing Inc., 2005), 34.

According to Benner, the Hebrew words אחד (*echad*) meaning “one,” and יחד (*yachad*)²¹ meaning “united,”²² are both derived from the same parent root חד (*chad*), meaning *unity* or *oneness*.²³ A similar comparison can be made with English words that originate from Latin. For example, the English word *united* is derived from the Latin word *unus*, meaning *one*. Additional English words derived from *unus* include *unit*, *unique*, *union*, and *unity*. While some of these words imply singleness of number (*unit* and *unique*), others (*union* and *unity*) signify togetherness and harmony.

As demonstrated previously, Nephi’s use of האחד (*ha’echad*) — “the one” — is most likely not a reference to *only one* of the spindles. Rather, I propose that Alma’s description of the Liahona and biblical Hebrew usage indicate that it was Nephi’s intent to describe the two spindles as working in unison with each other — היחד (*ha’yachad*) — for that is the most likely way that “those spindles should point the way they should go” (Alma 37:40). With the understanding that אחד (*echad*) and יחד (*yachad*) derive from the same etymological root it seems probable that Nephi’s use of “the one” was simply his way of expressing that the two spindles “together” pointed the way. Perhaps Nephi’s words could be rendered better as “within the ball were two spindles, and together they pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness.” This interpretation removes the Hebrew grammatical obstacles that face us, and it also harmonizes better with Alma’s explanation that “those spindles” pointed the way.

The Purpose of the Second Spindle

In his article titled *The Design of the Liahona and the Purpose of the Second Spindle*, Robert Bunker begins with the traditional assumption that the Liahona “contained two pointers, only one of which was necessary to provide directional information.”²⁴ However, Bunker also asserts that a single pointer or spindle would be an unreliable way of indicating direction, since it always pointed somewhere:

21. In Genesis 22:2 Abraham was told to take his יחיד (*yachid*), or “only son” to “the land of Moriah,” where he was to make a burnt offering. Rather than implying *togetherness* or *community*, יחיד (*yachid*) — derived from יחד (*yachad*) — means “only one.”

22. In Modern Hebrew, the infinitive לאחד (*leachad*) means to “unite, consolidate,” or “join.”

23. Benner, *Ancient Hebrew Lexicon*, 118-19.

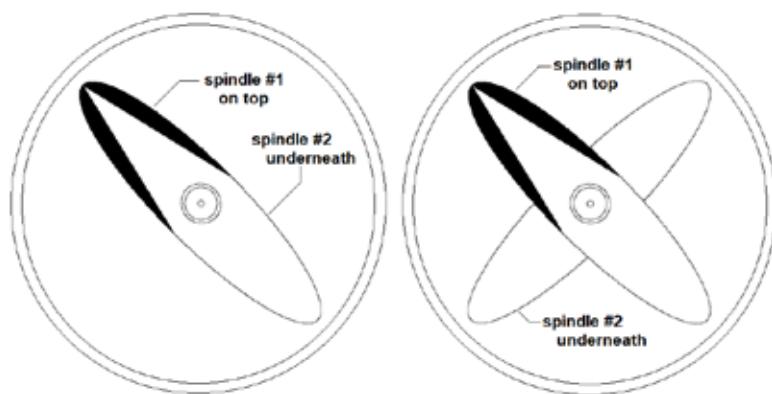
24. Robert L. Bunker, “The Design of the Liahona and the Purpose of the Second Spindle,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3, no. 2 (July 1994): 1.

Since a single pointer is always pointing a direction, it was likely the role of the second pointer to provide the necessary additional information about whether the Liahona was “operational,” meaning that the pointing information from the first pointer was reliable.²⁵

In other words, without a second spindle to confirm that the first spindle was pointing in the correct direction, how would Lehi’s party know if the Liahona was functioning properly? Bunker postulated that the only way for them to know where they should travel would be if the second spindle pointed in unison with the first, confirming the correct direction. Bunker continued:

There is but one engineering approach that provides the necessary functionality and meets all of the above requirements both efficiently and simply. This is how it would have worked: if an observer viewed the pointers and saw only a single pointer, as seen in Figure 1, then they were both aligned in the same direction, one on top of the other, and the director was providing correct information. Lehi’s party could then follow the indicated direction with confidence that it was the Lord’s instruction. If, on the other hand, the two pointers were cross-ways to each other — forming an “x” as shown in Figure 2 — then the device was not functioning, and the pointing information was not reliable.²⁶

Figures 1 (left). “Proceed as indicated.” Figure 2 (right). “Not in service.”²⁷



25. Bunker, “Design of the Liahona,” 6.

26. Bunker, “Design of the Liahona,” 6-7.

27. Ibid., 7. Used with permission.

The Symbolism of Oneness

Unity, or oneness, is a prevalent theme in the Book of Mormon and the Bible.²⁸ The aging Lehi exhorted his sons to “be *determined*²⁹ in *one mind* and in *one heart*, united in *all things*” (2 Nephi 1:21). We also read that “when king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord,” the people “all cried aloud with *one voice*” (Mosiah 4:1–2). Likewise, when Jesus visited the remnant of the Nephites, he prayed, “And now Father, I pray unto thee for them, and also for all they which shall believe on their words, that they may believe in me, that I may be in them as thou Father art in me, *that we may be one*” (3 Nephi 19:23). As with Lehi’s exhortation for unity among his sons, and the people of King Benjamin crying aloud in unison, Jesus’s prayer was for a spiritual rather than physical oneness. Unity is a construct that transcends physical boundaries and limitations.

The Liahona, with its two spindles, presents us with an excellent *type* of this oneness and unity. If we are willing to unite, or reconcile, our will with that of God, he can lead and guide us through our spiritual wilderness (cf. 2 Nephi 10:24; 2 Nephi 33:9). Alma told us that the members of Lehi’s party “were slothful and forgot to *exercise their faith and diligence*.”³⁰ And then those *marvelous works* ceased, and *they did not progress* in their journey. Therefore they tarried in the wilderness, or did not travel a direct course” (Alma 37:41–42). He continued:

I would that ye should understand that these things are not without a shadow. For as our fathers were slothful to give heed to this compass — now these things were temporal — they did not prosper; even so it is with things which are spiritual. For behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ,

28. “I am going to take the stick of Joseph — which is in Ephraim’s hand — and of the Israelite tribes associated with him, and join it to Judah’s stick. I will make them into a single stick of wood, and they will become one in my hand” (Ezekiel 37:19 NIV).

29. In Hebrew, this verse could be rendered: להיות נחוש בנפש אחד ובלב אחד מאוחדים בכל הדברים. The word *determined* in this verse can be translated as נחוש (*nachush*), meaning “brass” or “bronze,” with a connotation of being *strong* or *firm* (cf. Job 6:12). If Lehi used this word it would reveal probable wordplay on the design of the Liahona. The possibility is intriguing, since his admonition was for his sons to be *firm* and *strong* like the brass of the Liahona, and to be *one* like its spindles.

30. By way of speculation, Alma may have been referring to the two spindles — which he may have appropriately named *faith* and *diligence* — when he accused Lehi’s family of being slothful in the wilderness.

which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them a straight course to the promised land. And now I say: Is there not a type in this thing? For just assuredly as this director did bring our fathers by following its course to the promised land, shall the word of Christ, if we follow its course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise. O my son, do not let us be slothful because of the easiness of the way; for so was it with our fathers. For so was it prepared for them that if they would look, they might live. Even so it is with us: the way is prepared; and if we will look, we may live forever. (Alma 37:43–46)³¹

Alma's counsel to Helaman was delivered in rich parallelistic patterns (see Table 2). In essence, Alma taught that what is required of us is no different from what was required of Lehi's family; just as they were required to "give heed to this compass" by exercising "faith and diligence," we must *exercise* our *faith* and *diligence* by *giving heed*³² to the *word of Christ*. If we will not *forget* to unite our will with God's we can also be directed in a straight course to "a far better land of promise." The spindles in Lehi's Liahona united through faith and diligence. Eventually, Lehi's party was successfully led to the promised land by the proper operation of the Liahona. Likewise, we must unite our will with God's to obtain our land of promise (cf. 1 Nephi 5:5).

Table 2

Verse	Lehi's Family	Verse	Alma's Counsel to Helaman
43	these things are not without a shadow.	45	is there not a type in this thing?
43	our fathers were slothful	46	do not let us be slothful
43	to give heed to this <i>compass</i>	44	to give heed to the <i>word of Christ</i>
43	now these things were temporal	43	even so it is with things which are spiritual
44	would point unto them a straight course	44	will point to you a straight course
44	to the promised land	44	to eternal bliss
45	this <i>director</i> did bring our fathers	45	shall the <i>word of Christ</i> , ... carry us
45	by following its course	45	if we follow its course

31. Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*.

32. To *give heed* is represented by the Hebrew root ב-ש-ק (*qashav*), meaning to "pay attention, to hearken," or to "listen."

Verse	Lehi's Family	Verse	Alma's Counsel to Helaman
45	to the promised land	45	into a far better land of promise
46	for so was it prepared for them	46	even so it is with us: the way is prepared.
46	if they would look, they might live	46	and if we will look, we may live forever

Alternative Theories — Fayette Lapham and Gladden Bishop

In his book *The Lost 116 Pages*, Don Bradley recounts portions of stories told by Fayette Lapham and Gladden Bishop that relate to the Book of Mormon and other restoration events. Among these stories are narratives that mention the Liahona, which make them relevant for this article. While Bishop was excommunicated from the Church in 1842 for heresy, Lapham was a local resident of Palmyra, New York, who never became a member of the Church, and who purportedly gained the information for his story from an interview with Joseph Smith, Sr.

Concerning the Liahona, Lapham recounted that it was “a gold ball” and that it “went before them”³³ [Lehi’s family], having two pointers, one pointing steadily the way they should go, the other the way to where they could get provisions and other necessities.”³⁴ While Lapham’s account appears to provide us with valuable information regarding the functioning of the Liahona, a few observations may argue against this conclusion:

While Bradley admits that “it becomes clear that Lapham *garbled some of what he heard*,”³⁵ a reading of Lapham’s full account³⁶ reveals a story that only tangentially resembles the restoration accounts related by Joseph Smith, Jr. For example, although not identifying him by name, Lapham described how Moroni appeared to Joseph in a “dream” as “a very large and tall man ... dressed in an ancient suit of clothes, and the clothes were bloody”; and that “in order to prevent his making

33. Lapham’s wording — “a gold ball went before them” — most likely reveals confusion between the story of the Liahona in the Book of Mormon and the pillar that “went before” the Israelites in the wilderness: “And the LORD *went before them* by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way” (Exodus 13:21).

34. Fayette Lapham, “Interview with the Father of Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, Forty Years Ago. His Account of the Finding of the Sacred Plates,” *The Historical Magazine and Notes and Queries concerning the Antiquities, History, and Biography of America*, 7, Second Series, May 1870, 309.

35. Don Bradley, *The Lost 166 Pages: Reconstructing the Book of Mormon’s Missing Stories*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2019), 146, emphasis added.

36. Lapham’s original account is available for download at https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Historical_Magazine_and_Notes_and_Qu/x7MTAAAYAAJ?hl=engbpv=0

an improper disclosure, he [Moroni] was murdered or slain on the spot, and the treasure had been under his charge ever since.”³⁷ None of these elements resembles the story recounted by Joseph Smith Jr. (see *Joseph Smith History* 1:30–35).

The alleged interview with Joseph Smith Sr. was recorded when Lapham was 75 years old, two years before his death, and 40 years after he claimed that the interview had occurred. Of Lapham’s interview, Bradley wrote: “Despite the lapse of years and the account’s *occasional garbling of fact*, Lapham’s narration is filled with *firsthand information* that demonstrates his reliance on a *primary source with knowledge of the actual information and events*.”³⁸ Contrary to Bradley’s statement, Lapham’s narration at best could be considered third-hand information, since he allegedly heard it from Joseph Smith Sr., who possibly heard it from his son, Joseph Smith Jr. Additionally, Lapham’s alleged source cannot be considered “primary.” Bradley consistently tries to minimize Lapham’s errors and omissions by stating that he “garbled *some* of what he heard,” or referring to his “*occasional garbling of fact*.” However, while someone acquainted with the restoration would most likely recognize a familiar echo running through Lapham’s story, most of what he retold does not correlate with “the actual information and events” as we know them.³⁹

37. Lapham, “Interview with the Father,” 306.

38. Bradley, *The Lost 166 Pages*, 122, emphasis added.

39. Lapham related the following regarding one of the introductory stories in the Book of Mormon: The Book of Mormon “was the record of a certain number of Jews, who, at the time of crossing the Red Sea, left the main body and went away by themselves; finally became a rich and prosperous nation; and, in the course of time, became so wicked that the Lord determined to destroy them from off the face of the earth. But there was one virtuous man among them, whom the Lord warned in a dream to take his family and depart, which he accordingly did; and, after traveling three days, he remembered that he had left some papers, in the office where he had been an officer, which he thought would be of use to him in his journeyings. He sent his son back to the city to get them; and when his son arrived in the city, it was night, and he found the citizens had been having a great feast, and were all drunk. When he went to the office to get his father’s papers he was told that the chief clerk was not in, and he must find him before he could have the papers. He then went into the street in search of him; but every body being drunk, he could get but little information of his whereabouts, but, after searching a long time, he found him lying in the street, dead drunk, clothed in his official habiliments, his sword having a gold hilt and chain, lying by his side — and this is the same that was found with the gold plates. Finding that he could do nothing with him in that situation, he drew the sword, cut off the officer’s head, cast off his own outer garments, and, assuming those of the officer, returned to the office where

Given the many inaccuracies and “garbling” spread throughout Lapham’s record it would be unwise for us to accept as factual his brief description of the “gold ball” that “went before” Lehi’s family in the wilderness.

The information provided by Gladden Bishop is more complicated, and even less reliable. In a booklet that he produced, Bishop described in detail the Liahona, which he called *Directors*:

The last of the sacred things to be named, is a curious *Ball*, spoken of in the Book of Mormon, and called *Directors*,⁴⁰ from the circumstance, of there being in it *two* steel points, (called spindles, in the Book of Mormon,) which points directed the enquirer by faith the proper course to take. This instrument is composed of a small brass ball, about three inches in diameter, having *two* steel points coming out of it, in opposite directions. Around each of these points, are 12 squares, and between these 24 squares on the ball, are figures of various descriptions, representing various things on the earth, as vegetation, animals, running streams of water, c. This ball represents the earth, and the two steel points represent the power of God, as exhibited in the two priesthoods; the twelve squares on one side, represent the twelve tribes of Israel; the other twelve represent the twelve Apostles. In a word, this instrument represents the earth as the Kingdom of God, and this the seventh sacred article, is put into the hand of every one, both male and female, who is found worthy to receive the crown of Life. And this explains the words of Jesus — “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit [or possess] the earth;” for this ball, as before remarked, represents the earth as the Kingdom of God; therefore in the figure of the ball in the hand, is represented the saints possessing the kingdom of God, which is so commonly spoken of in the scriptures, that a quotation on this point is unnecessary.⁴¹

the papers were readily obtained, with which he returned to where his father was waiting for him.” (Lapham, “Interview with the Father,” 308.)

40. The Liahona is referred to three times in the Book of Mormon as “director,” but never in the plural as “directors” (cf. Mosiah 1:16, Alma 37:38, and Alma 37:45). DC 17:1 does mention “the miraculous directors which were given to Lehi while in the wilderness.” While one can assume that this reference relates to the Liahona, it is not specifically mentioned.

41. Francis Gladden Bishop, *An Address to the Sons and Daughters of Zion, Scattered Abroad, through all the Earth*, (Kirtland, Ohio, 13 May 1851), 13. In this

In his book, Bradley argues that Bishop received his information about the Liahona, the sword of Laban, the gold plates,⁴² and other sacred artifacts from Martin Harris.⁴³ However, Bishop himself did not claim to learn details about these artifacts from Harris. Rather, Bishop

same booklet Bishop described each of the “Sacred Things” in great detail, including the two crowns. Concerning these two crowns, Bishop wrote: “I said the first crown was called the crown of Israel, and it is so called, because it represents the twelve tribes of Israel, as it is composed of silver and gold and curiously wrought into stars, and adorned with twelve precious stones of the same kind as those in Aaron’s breastplate. See Ex. 32: 10 to 13; and also the two stones of a *Urim and Thummim*. All of which are curiously set in the border of the crown. The second is called the crown of Glory, as it represents the glory of God, which shines through all worlds forever. Therefore this crown is composed of fine gold, curiously wrought into stars and half moons, and adorned with thirteen luminous diamonds, of a very large size, twelve being set in the border, and one on the center of the top of the crown. The diamonds represent Jesus Christ as the Father, with his twelve Apostles as equal with him, or like him, who represent the Church of the First Born. Therefore these two crowns, used as one, represent the fullness of the power and glory of God, and when set upon the head of those who are to be endued with power from God, make them *equal* and *one* with the *Father*, and thus they receive his *fullness*, and become one with him *forever* and *ever*.” (Bishop, *Address to Zion*, 12)

42. Regarding the sealed portion of the gold plates, Bishop wrote: “On the front plate of the sealed part, is the Title Page, upon which is engraved in large reformed Egyptian characters the title of this division, and also a caution engraved in Hebrew to the finder of the Record, not to break the seals thereof. The translation of the title page as seen through the Interpreters, or Urim and Thummim, (as rendered in the English language,) is as follows: The Book of Life. Being a revaluation [sic] from the beginning of the world, and containing the knowledge of Sacred things, which are not to be made known until the days, when God will set up his Kingdom on the Earth. The following is in the pure Hebrew: Whoever finds this Record is forbidden to break the seals thereof, for behold they contain Sacred things which are not to be revealed until the last days, when God will set up his Kingdom on the Earth.” (Bishop, *Address to Zion*, 48)

43. Bradley wrote: “Martin’s Kirtland, Ohio, neighbor and confidant Francis Gladden Bishop, who acquired considerable information from Martin, gave this description in 1850” (Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 23); “Additional details from Martin on the physical appearance of the lost manuscript come to us by way of his longtime associate Francis Gladden Bishop, who published extensive descriptions of Book of Mormon artifacts, drawing much of his information from Martin” (Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 83). “In his *An Address to the Sons and Daughters of Zion*, Bishop offered further information for which Martin Harris is the likely source” (Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 141). “Bishop, likely being given information from Martin Harris, provides even more details” (Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 149). “It is thus significant that Francis Gladden Bishop, while in Martin Harris’s confidence, identified Nephi’s sword as not only the sword of Joseph, forged in

wrote that he received physical possession of them from the “Ancient of Days” himself:

At length I was wrapt in vision, and stood before a Glorious Throne, and he that sat thereon reached forth the crowns, now two in one, and set them on my head, and he also placed the Sword in my right hand and the Golden Plates (with the Interpreters in the same) in my bosom, which was covered by the Breastplate which was put upon my breast, after which he placed in my left hand the Directors [Liahona]. Now the character upon the Throne, from whom I received the Sacred Things, as before stated was the “Ancient of Days.”⁴⁴

Bishop alleged that he received seven “Sacred Things” from the “Ancient of Days,” whom he declared to be John the Revelator. Bishop also informed us that Nephi, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, “who was the same Holy Angel who first appeared to Joseph,”⁴⁵ had showed these “Sacred Things” to Bishop before he received them from the “Ancient of Days,” and that Nephi, not Martin Harris, gave him a history of each item.⁴⁶ In addition to the seven “Sacred Things,” Bishop also wrote that he was given the lost 116 pages by the “Ancient of Days.” In a separate vision, Bishop claimed that in the summer of 1832 he was ordained a “High Priest” by a heavenly visitor:

Suddenly there appeared between me and the window ... a person of God-like majesty, yet he seemed as perfect meekness itself. He was of the middle stature, and somewhat thick set in his person, with auburn hair, which hung in graceful curls upon his shoulders; his complexion was ruddy, and his features somewhat round and full, and his eye piercing; his appearance indicated a person of near the middle age. He was dressed in a *white*, loose flowing *robe* of fine texture, which reached to his feet, and which appeared to be plain and without seam; the sleeves reached to the hand and the bosom was open. He had nothing else upon his person, and his presence inspired me with the deepest awe. He approached

Egypt, but also as the sword of Joshua, by which he led the work of the conquest” (Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages*, 177)

44. Bishop, *Address to Zion*, 29.

45. *Ibid.*, 27.

46. “The history of each of the sacred things was also given by the Angel, as they were severally presented.” Bishop, *Address to Zion*, 28.

to the bedside, and making a solemn pause, regarded me for a moment with a look seemingly of the deepest intensity. I was alone in the room, the door of which was closed, and as it was about the hour of midnight, a solemn silence reigned around me. He then raised his hands and placed them on my head, at which I experienced the same sensation as when the Ancient of Days smiled upon me, for I was filled with the Holy Spirit in a manner that tongue cannot express, when he said “I ordain you a High Priest,” and in a moment was again invisible.⁴⁷

As a “High Priest,” and being in possession of the seven “Sacred Things,” Bishop claimed to be the rightful successor of Joseph Smith, even claiming that Smith was a fallen prophet. For much of the time after his baptism, Bishop engaged in missionary work for the church, but he consistently ran afoul of church doctrines and authority, having his license to preach revoked multiple times. Finally, in 1842, after causing a decade of grief for the leadership of the church, Bishop was excommunicated.⁴⁸ At Bishop’s trial, Joseph Smith commented that Bishop “was a fool and had not sens [sic] sufficient for the Holy Ghost to enlighten him.”⁴⁹ Curiously, Bradley does not mention any of these details in his book. He appears to accept uncritically the parts of Bishop’s account that seem to fit his theory of the 116 lost pages while ignoring the rest of the sordid story.⁵⁰

Bradley concluded by trying to harmonize the description of the Liahona given by Nephi (the son of Lehi), Lapham, and Bishop:

47. Bishop, *Address to Zion*, 29-30.

48. Benjamin Ferris, not a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, wrote the following: “Brigham managed to slide more easily into the superstition and idiosyncracies [sic] of the Saints, and led the mass to Great Salt Lake; but he, too, has his troubles from this source, and is now more especially plagued with *Gladdenism*, so called from Gladden Bishop, who profanely claims to be as much superior to Joseph Smith as our Lord was to John the Baptist. This Gladden gave Joseph much trouble; was cut off from the Church, and taken back, and rebaptized *nine* times; but, proving obstinate in heresy, was finally given over to the buffetings of Satan for a thousand years.” Benjamin G. Ferris, *Utah and the Mormons: The History, Government, Doctrines, Customs, and Prospects of the Latter-Day Saints, from Personal Observation During a Six Months’ Residence at Great Salt Lake City* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1854), 326.

49. Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, vol. 2, *Journal, 1832-1842* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 369 n. 1.

50. The full version of Bishop’s booklet can be accessed here: <https://archive.org/details/addressstosonsdau01bish/mode/2up>.

While it is difficult to visualize the device precisely as Bishop intended, it is clear that on his model there were pictures around the spindles. So while one spindle pointed a *direction*, the other spindle could point to a *picture*. This detail, if correct, could help fill a gap in the published Book of Mormon's description of the Liahona. Nephi says that "within the ball were *two* spindles; and the *one* pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness" (1 Nephi 16:10), but he leaves the function of the second spindle unaccounted for. Lapham's report corrected this deficiency, indicating that the second spindle pointed "the way to where they could get provisions and other necessities." Bishop's account also indicates that the second spindle may have aided in the finding of provisions, but his description implies that the Liahona did so by pointing to a picture rather than by pointing a direction. A composite of all three descriptions suggests a possible model for how the Liahona worked: the first spindle mandated the *direction* of travel; the second spindle, by pointing to one of the picture symbols around it, identified the *purpose* of travel. Together, the two spindles could show the Liahona's users where to go and what they would find when they got there.⁵¹

Although Bradley proposed a design for the Liahona that was "a composite of all three descriptions" (Nephi, Lapham, and Bishop), I believe his proposal falls short. Bradley posits that one spindle — as in Lapham's description — pointed in "the direction of travel" while the second spindle — possibly following Bishop's description — pointed "to one of the picture symbols around it." The most obvious problem with this solution is that Bishop's and Lapham's models are mutually exclusive; there is no practical way to harmonize the two accounts. I cannot conceive of any way that Bishop's and Lapham's descriptions can be unified into a cohesive theoretical construct.

Lapham's model described two spindles, each pointing to a location external to the ball. On the other hand, Bishop visualized two steel points, and "around each of these points, are 12 squares, and between these 24 squares on the ball, are figures of various descriptions, representing various things on the earth, as vegetation, animals, running streams of water, c."⁵² To complicate matters, Bishop became so wrapped up in the

51. Bradley, *The Lost 166 Pages*, 149-50.

52. Bishop, *Address to Zion*, 13.

symbolism of the Liahona that he never got around to explaining how these “points” and “figures” related to each other. One can assume that his spindles pointed to the figures surrounding them, but how would that signal the direction of travel? There is no indication from Bishop’s description that either spindle pointed to a location external to the ball itself. The best I can theorize from Bishop’s description is the following example: if Lehi’s party needed to hunt for food, one spindle may have pointed to the figure of a gazelle while the other could have pointed to the figure of a tree, indicating that a gazelle was standing next to a tree. However, this information would be of little practical value, since the hunter would still not know in which direction to travel to find the tree, or for that matter, under which tree the gazelle might be standing.

In summary, Lapham’s account reflects such grave confusion and errors as to render his story of little use for serious scholarship. On the other hand, Bishop, in my opinion, was either a religious con man or he was troubled by delusions brought on by serious mental illness. Either way, Bishop’s words cannot be trusted to have originated with either Martin Harris, Joseph Smith Jr., or any other trusted primary source.

Moses’s Serpent, Brass Plates, and Liahona

While preaching to the Zoramites, Alma cited the prophecies of several ancient prophets to prove the future coming of the Son of God. Among the prophecies mentioned by Alma was the raising up of the serpent of brass [נחש נחשת *nechash nechoshet*] by Moses:

Behold, he [Christ] was spoken of by Moses; yea, and behold *a type was raised up in the wilderness, that whosoever would look upon it might live. And many did look and live. But few understood the meaning of those things, and this because of the hardness of their hearts. But there were many who were so hardened that they would not look, therefore they perished. Now the reason they would not look is because they did not believe that it would heal them.* (Alma 33:19–20)

In these verses Alma taught the Zoramites that “whosoever would look upon [the serpent of brass] might live.” In his instructions to his son Helaman in chapter 37, Alma used nearly identical wording:

And now I say: Is there not *a type in this thing?* For just assuredly as this *director* did bring *our fathers* by following its course to

the promised land, shall the *word of Christ*⁵³, if we follow its course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise. O my son, do not let us be slothful because of the easiness of the way; for *so was it with our fathers*. For so was it prepared for them that *if they would look, they might live*. Even so it is with us: the way is prepared; and *if we will look, we may live forever*. And now, my son, see that ye *take care of these sacred things*, yea, see that ye *look to God and live*. (Alma 37:45–47)

In this passage, Alma told Helaman that the Liahona (director) brought “our fathers” (Lehi’s family) to the promised land. In like manner, the word of Christ (our Liahona) can bring us “into a far better land of promise.” Just as the ancient Israelites needed to look at the serpent to live, Lehi’s family was required to look at the Liahona, and we need to look to the word of Christ. By using the same language — look and live — Alma linked these three seemingly unrelated narratives into one cohesive whole. According to Kristian Heal,

Alma’s wording seems to indicate that he saw the Liahona as a complementary type to the brazen serpent. For example, the only instances in the Book of Mormon of the word *slothful* occur in Alma’s sermons about the brazen serpent and the Liahona (compare Alma 37:41, 43, 46; Alma 33:21). The phrase “easiness of the way” is also used only in connection with the story of the Liahona and the story of the brazen serpent (1 Nephi 17:41; Alma 37:46), a fact that provides another link between Nephi’s record and Alma’s instruction to his son. Similarly, the combination of the words *look* and *live* is used in the Book of Mormon almost exclusively in passages about the Liahona or the brazen serpent (compare Numbers 21:8; Alma 33:19; Alma 37:46–47; Helaman 8:15), with only one exception. However, the exception is significant: during his sermon to the Nephite remnant, Jesus admonishes the congregation to “look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live” (3 Nephi 15:9). Christ’s use of the words *look* and *live* in this way suggests a connection back to the stories of the

53. Although the current LDS edition of the Book of Mormon contains the phrase “words of Christ,” *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* indicates that the original wording was most likely “word of Christ.” Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*.

brazen serpent and the Liahona and points to Jesus as the true type adumbrated in each.⁵⁴

Another important element also joins these three narratives. The serpent, the Liahona, and the word of Christ (recorded on the plates of Laban) were all made of the same material: brass. Alma identifies each of three objects — the brass serpent (נחש נחשת *nechash nechoshet*), the brass ball (דור נחשת *dur nechoshet*),⁵⁵ and the brass plates (לוחות נחשת *luchot nechoshet*) — as symbols of Christ. However, symbols cannot replace the real object of adoration. As such, Alma's final injunction to Helaman was to "look to God and live" (Alma 37:47), which parallels Christ's injunction "look unto me and endure to the end, and ye shall live" (3 Nephi 15:9).

A Hebrew Interpretation of Liahona

Jonathan Curci proposed an etymology for the word *Liahona* which can be understood as meaning "'to Yahweh is the whither' or, by interpretation, 'direction of-to the Lord.'"⁵⁶ His interpretation is based on the following arrangement of three Hebrew words: ל-יהו-(א)נה, or *le-yaho-(o)nah*.⁵⁷ ל (*le*) means "to" or "toward," יהו (*yaho*) is an abbreviation for Yahweh, and אנה (*ona*) can be translated as "where or wither." Curci also outlined earlier efforts by Hugh Nibley, Reynolds and Sjodahl, and Sidney Sperry to derive an etymology for *Liahona*. Recently, Matthew Bowen presented a new explanation for the derivation of *Liahona* by

54. Kristian S. Heal, "Look to God and Live," *Insights* 26, no. 2 (2006), 3, 6.

55. Two additional examples of wordplay perhaps exist: 1) Alma used the word *generation* four times in Alma 37 (verses 4, 14, 18 and 19). The word for ball (דור *dur*, see Alma 37:38) is the same spelling, and derives from the same root, as generation (דור *dor*); 2) according to *HALOT*, דור (*dur*) principally means a "round," or "rotation," and only "by context ball." Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "דור." This creates another possible connection to God's course as "one eternal round" (Alma 37:12); see Matthew L. Bowen "Look to the Lord! The Meaning of Liahona and the Doctrine of Christ in Alma 37-38" in *Give Ear to My Words: Text and Context of Alma 36-42: The 48th Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, ed. Kerry Hull, Nicholas J. Frederick, and Hank R. Smith (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2019), 275-95.

56. Jonathan Curci, "Liahona: 'The Direction of the Lord': An Etymological Explanation," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16, no. 2, 60.

57. On a minor note, if Curci's proposal is correct, one would expect the word *Liahona* to end with the letter *h* in English (*liahonah*), since the final letter in his proposed Hebrew etymology is ה (the letter *h* in the Latin alphabet). However, since *Liahona* ends in the letter *a* in English, it is more plausible for the Hebrew source word to end in the letters א (aleph) or ע (ayin).

relying only on Egyptian as its source. In essence, his proposed meaning parallels Curci's: "To Yahweh, whither?" but perhaps more particularly an imperative, "To Yahweh, look!" — that is, 'Look to the Lord!' or 'Look to God!'"⁵⁸ Bowen added:

There is a general consensus among those who have attempted etymological explanations of *Liahona* that the first element of the expression — "Liaho—" — is a combination of the Hebrew preposition *le*, meaning "to," with the theophoric element *yāhō*, a form of the divine name Yahweh (or Jehovah) — that is, "to Yahweh," "to the Lord," or "to God."⁵⁹

I would like to offer yet another possible explanation for *Liahona* with its derivation based on the Hebrew language. As many Latter-day Saint scholars have speculated, I also believe that the initial part of the word derives from the Hebrew לִיָּהוּ (*le'yaho*, meaning "to or toward Jehovah"). Generally speaking, the various explanations often vary from each other only in the final syllable of the word *Liahona*, *-na*. I propose that that final syllable in *Liahona* comes from the Hebrew particle נָא (*na*), described by Koehler and Baumgartner as a "particle giving emphasis,"⁶⁰ and by Brown, Driver and Briggs as a particle of "entreaty or exhortation."⁶¹ It has also been described as a "pleading for what is desired."⁶² In the Hebrew Bible this word is translated most often as *now, please, oh!, I beseech thee, or I pray thee*.⁶³ However, none of these translations really do service to this Hebrew word. I would describe נָא (*na*) as an exclamation without any translatable meaning in English.

58. Bowen, "Look to the Lord!"

59. Ibid.

60. Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. "נָא."

61. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), s.v. "נָא." Hereafter cited as *BDB*.

62. Jeff A. Benner, *The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible: Hebrew Letters, Words and Roots Defined Within Their Ancient Cultural Context*, 179.

63. "The particle נָא (*na*) is the common Hebrew particle of entreaty: please! At times it's also used admonishingly or even exhortatory. This particle shows up tied to all kinds of verbs: אָמַרְיִי־נָא (*amari-na*), literally meaning speak please, or simply: say! (Genesis 12:13). שֶׂא־נָא (*sa'na*), meaning lift please (your eyes; look! — Genesis 13:14)." "Abarim Publications' Biblical Dictionary: The Old Testament Hebrew word: נָא," Abarim Publications, updated February 9, 2021, <https://www.abarim-publications.com/Dictionary/n/n-a.html>.

Perhaps it could be best rendered as simply ! (exclamation point).⁶⁴ If we join the particle נָא (*na*) to the initial part of *Liahona* לִיהוֹ (*le'yaho*) we arrive at לִיהוֹ-נָא (*le'yaho-na*), *to Jehovah!*, or *toward Jehovah!*

This rendering of *Liahona* as לִיהוֹ-נָא (*le'yaho-na*) allows the name of the ball discovered by Lehi to be derived solely from his native tongue, Hebrew. In addition, it also supplies the emphatic phrase that Bowen and others have proffered. However, this etymology also creates a linguistic problem that arises from biblical Hebrew usage. The particle נָא (*na*) most often follows a verb in the Hebrew Bible (see Genesis 12:13, Numbers 20:10, and Ruth 2:2). It is also used following another particle, as in הִנֵּה-נָא (*hinneh-na*, or *behold!*, see Genesis 12:11), or אֲלֵ-נָא (*al-na*, or *not!*, see Genesis 13:8) to provide emphasis. With only one exception נָא (*na*) is never used to give emphasis to a noun, but that exception is noteworthy!

In Numbers 12 we are told that “Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married” (12:1). As a result, “the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; ... and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow” (12:9–10). Moses then intervened on her behalf: “So Moses cried out to the LORD, “Please, God, heal her!” (12:13, NIV). The Hebrew for this verse is: וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל-יְהוָה לֵאמֹר אֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא לָהּ.

The italicized section in this verse — אֵל נָא רַפָּא נָא (*el na refa na*) — can be rendered *God! Heal!* The addition of the final word לָהּ (*lah*, “to her”) would render the phrase “God! Heal her!” My translation of the full verse is as follows: And Moses cried out to Jehovah saying: “God! Heal her!” In what *BDB* describe as an anomaly in biblical Hebrew usage, the imperative particle נָא (*na*) in this verse follows both the substantive,

64. Another Hebrew interjection similar to נָא (*na*), but perhaps even more emphatic, is אָנָּה (*anna*, also spelled אָנָּה *annah*). Psalm 118:25 is organized into two connected, imperative phrases: אָנָּה יְהוָה הַצְלִיחָה נָא and אָנָּה יְהוָה הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא. The KJV translation for this verse is “Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.” The New International Version (NIV) translation provides an improved reading from the Hebrew: “LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success!” A literal translation of the verse could be tentatively rendered “Oh! Yahweh save! Oh! Yahweh grant success!” The word אָנָּה (*anna*) at the beginning of each phrase reinforces this imperative exclamation. Each of the two phrases begins with the interjection אָנָּה יְהוָה (*anna Yahweh*) and ends with the interjection נָא (*na*), which is rendered simply by an exclamation point in the NIV translation. אָנָּה יְהוָה (*anna Yahweh*) is a difficult clause to translate accurately into English, which is why the NIV omitted the word אָנָּה (*anna*) from its translation.

God, and the verb, *heal*.⁶⁵ This unique occurrence is relevant because my proposed etymology for Liahona — לִיהוֹנָא (*le'yaho-na*, *to Jehovah!* or *toward Jehovah!*) — relies on a similar grammatical arrangement. In both instances the particle נָא (*na*) follows a title or name of the deity, and acts as an emphatic exclamation or interjection.⁶⁶ The symbolism embedded in my proposed word for Liahona (לִיהוֹנָא *le'yaho-na*) also harmonizes with Alma's admonition to Helaman to "look to God and live" (Alma 37:47).

Conclusion

Gaining a correct understanding of how the Liahona functioned, and of Nephi's use of "the one" (הָאֶחָד *ha'echad*) in the phrase "and the one pointed the way" (1 Nephi 16:10) helps us appreciate his message of unity and oneness in the design of the "round ball of curious workmanship." Based on Alma's words that both spindles pointed the way, and because common biblical Hebrew does not support the use of "the one" as "one of them," readers and translators of the Book of Mormon would be well-served to reevaluate long-held interpretations of this verse.

The two pointers, or spindles, of the Liahona were not designed to function independently. Rather, when Lehi's family members properly exercised their faith and diligence — uniting their will with God's — the spindles united (הַיָּחָד *ha'yachad*) to point the way they should travel in the wilderness and over the "many waters" to the promised land. Alma

65. "The connection of the particle נָא [*na*] with אֵל [*el*] is certainly unusual, yet it is analogous to the construction with such exclamations as אֵי [*oy*] (Jeremiah 4:31; Jeremiah 45:3) and הִנֵּה [*hinneh*] (Genesis 12:11; Genesis 16:2, etc.); since אֵל [*el*] in the vocative is to be regarded as equivalent to an exclamation; whereas the alteration into אַל [*al*], as proposed by J. D. Michaelis and Knobel, does not even give a fitting sense, apart altogether from the fact that the repetition of נָא [*na*] after the verb, with אַל [*al*] נָא [*na*] before it, would be altogether unexampled." "Commentary on Numbers 12," Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, Study Light, <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/kdo/numbers-12.html>.

66. While most sentences require a verb to make sense, many exclamatory phrases do not. For example, when Thomas saw the resurrected Christ he is recorded as simply responding: "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Moses' prayer for Miriam's healing in Numbers 12:13 can be separated into an interjection and a verb clause: "God!" is the interjection and "Heal her!" is the verb clause. The interjection "God!" lacks a verb, but so do most interjections (*Behold! No! Wow! Oy!*). Together, the interjection and the verb clause form an exclamatory phrase. So the interjection stands apart from the verb clause, which is why in Hebrew the particle נָא (*na*) is used twice, once after אֵל *el* (a theophoric name) and again after רַפָּא *refa* (the verb clause). I propose that the interjection אֵל נָא (*el na*, God!) anticipates a subsequent verb clause, but does not rely on one.

told us that “by *small and simple things* are *great things* brought to pass” (Alma 37:6). Two small spindles uniting to point a single direction is a simple thing, but this simplicity resulted in a great thing: Lehi and his family were successfully led to the promised land. The same holds true for us: if we are willing to exercise our faith and diligence by uniting our will with God’s, we will be led to, and will prosper in, our promised land.

Loren Spendlove (MA, Jewish Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; PhD, Education, University of Wyoming; MBA, California State University, Fullerton; and BS, Finance, Brigham Young University) has worked in many fields, including academics and corporate financial management. A student of languages, he centers his research interests on linguistics and etymology.

Appendix — Possibilities for Additional Wordplay Related to the Liahona⁶⁷

His Paths are Straight, and His Course is One Eternal Round

While preaching in Gideon, Alma affirmed that the members of the church were walking in the correct path. He also taught that God could not walk in crooked paths, and that his course was one eternal round:

For I perceive that ye are in the paths of righteousness. I perceive that ye are in the path which leads to the kingdom of God. Yea, I perceive that ye are making his paths straight. I perceive that it has been made known⁶⁸ unto you by the testimony of his word that he cannot walk in crooked paths, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, neither hath he a shadow of turning from the right to the left, or from that which is right to that which is wrong. Therefore his course is one eternal round (Alma 7:19–20).

67. Potential wordplay presented in this appendix is admittedly speculative and is offered here to show some possibilities for consideration.

68. Wordplay is apparent in Alma’s discourse to the church in Gideon. Four times Alma repeated the phrase “I perceive” — ידעתי (*yadati*, or *I know*, cf. 2 Samuel 19:6). This repetition of ידעתי (*yadati*), or *I know* in Hebrew is followed by the phrase “it has been made known unto you” (הודיע *hodiya*, cf. Psalm 98:2). הודיע (*hodiya*, the infinitive is להודיע *lehodiya*) derives from the same root — י-ד-ע — as ידעתי (*yadati*, the infinitive is לדעת *ladaat*).

Later, in his counsel to Helaman — in the same chapter where he described the functionality of the Liahona — Alma succinctly taught that God’s “*paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round*” (Alma 37:12, cf. DC 3:2). Alma is the only speaker in the Book of Mormon who links these two concepts: that God’s paths are straight and that his course is one eternal round. I propose that these teachings involve literary wordplay and symbolic allusions to the operation of the Liahona.

The Hebrew word פֶּלֶךְ (*pelekh*) means “spindle” or “stick.” Another biblical Hebrew word meaning “spindle” is כִּישׁוֹר (*kishor*). Both of these words are used in Proverbs 31:19, and different translations of the Hebrew text render the words as either *distaff* or *spindle*:⁶⁹

She layeth her hands to the *spindle* (פֶּלֶךְ *pelekh*), and her hands hold the *distaff* (כִּישׁוֹר *kishor*). (KJV)

She stretches out her hands to the *distaff* (פֶּלֶךְ *pelekh*), and her hand holds the *spindle* (כִּישׁוֹר *kishor*) (NKJV).

Additionally, Koehler and Baumgartner (hereafter HALOT) identify both of these words with the whorl of the spindle.⁷⁰ These three elements — distaff, spindle and whorl — were the essential tools of ancient hand spinning techniques. Perhaps the least important of the three, the distaff was a stick that held the raw material (wool or cotton). Sometimes spinners merely held the raw material in their hands rather than on a distaff. The spindle was a straight, narrow stick where the spun yarn was gathered. Its purpose, along with providing a place for the yarn to be collected, was to keep the yarn traveling in a straight and continuous path. The whorl was a heavy object, typically a round stone with a hole in the center, that was placed over the spindle, typically at the bottom, to keep the spindle turning during the spinning process. Essentially, the whorl functioned as a flywheel to store and release kinetic energy.

As spinners rotated the spindle, they would slowly release the raw material between their fingers, which action would cause the material to stretch and become yarn. A skilled spinner knew how to release the raw material at the correct rate to produce a yarn of consistent and proper thickness. Once enough yarn had been made, the spinner would wind the finished yarn onto the spindle and then continue the process.⁷¹

69. In Proverbs 31:19 Koehler and Baumgartner identify the use of כִּישׁוֹר (*kishor*) as parallel with פֶּלֶךְ (*pelekh*). Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. “כִּישׁוֹר.”

70. Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. “כִּישׁוֹר” and “פֶּלֶךְ.”

71. An excellent video of this process can be found on YouTube. Lori Swales, “Spinning Techniques for Hand Spindles and Whorls,” June 10, 2014, video, <https://>

Alma's teaching that God's "paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round" is a perfect metaphor for this spinning process. Hand spinning, as with soul-making, is a creative process that requires skill, a keen knowledge of the raw materials, and patient diligence. The etymology of the words פֶּלֶךְ (*pelekh*) and כִּישׁוֹר (*kishor*) reinforce this connection with spinning. HALOT identifies פֶּלֶךְ (*pelekh*) with the Arabic word *falaka*, meaning "to be round."⁷² BDB agree with the connection to *falaka*, and state that the word means to "be round (esp. hemispherical)."⁷³ BDB associate the word כִּישׁוֹר (*kishor*) with the root כ-ש-ר (*k-sh-r*), meaning to "be straight."⁷⁴ כ-ש-ר (*k-sh-r*) is also the root for the word כָּשֶׁר (*kasher*, or *kosher* in English), meaning to "be advantageous, proper, suitable, succeed."⁷⁵ Two other words closely related to כָּשֶׁר (*kasher*), and derived from the same root, are כּוֹשֶׁרָה (*koshrah*) meaning "prosperity,"⁷⁶ and כִּשְׁרוֹן (*kishron*) meaning "skill, success, profit," or "advantage."⁷⁷

In my opinion, these potential etymological connections are significant.⁷⁸ Not only do the biblical words translated as *spindle* and *whorl* connect with the concepts of *straight* and *round* — tying us into the idea of God's paths being straight and his course one eternal round, but the connection to prosperity and skill — are also intriguing. Alma told Helaman that the people would "prosper in the land" if they would keep God's commandments (Alma 37:13). He also explained that Lehi's family "were slothful and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence. And then those marvelous works ceased, and they did not progress in their journey" (Alma 37:41). Alma then reframed this idea by saying: "for as our fathers were slothful to give heed to this compass — now these things were temporal — they did not prosper" (Alma 37:43). I propose

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUsDVFPYtGQ

72. Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 1941, s.v. "פֶּלֶךְ."

73. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, s.v. "פֶּלֶךְ." Also included are the terms *circle* and *circuit*.

74. Ibid., "כִּישׁוֹר."

75. Ibid., "כָּשֶׁר."

76. Ibid., "כּוֹשֶׁרָה."

77. Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. "כִּשְׁרוֹן."

78. The words כִּישׁוֹר (*kishor*) and פֶּלֶךְ (*pelekh*) are rarely attested in the Hebrew Bible (*kishor* is used only once and *pelekh* is used nine times). פֶּלֶךְ (*pelekh*) can be translated as *spindle* or *stick*, while כִּישׁוֹר (*kishor*) is limited to its function as a spindle/distaff. Only two passages in the Hebrew Bible can be understood as referencing a spindle: 2 Samuel 3:29 and Proverb 31:19. Likewise, the Book of Mormon is thrifty in its use of the word *spindle*, with only two attestations, in 1 Nephi 16:10 and Alma 37:40. Additionally, the word *pointer* is used only once by Nephi (see 1 Nephi 16:28).

that Alma's use of *prosper* and *progress* represent wordplay on the words כושרה (*koshrah*, *prosperity*)⁷⁹ and כישור (*kishor*, *spindle*), both derived from the Hebrew root כ-ש-ר (*k-sh-r*).

Curious Workmanship

Regarding the construction of the Liahona, Alma told us that “there cannot any man work after the manner of so *curious a workmanship*” (Alma 37:39, cf. 1 Nephi 16:10). Many modern English speakers would probably interpret the phrase *curious workmanship* to mean that the Liahona was of strange or unusual construction. While those definitions fit the modern meaning of *curious*, they are not a good match for the word during the time of the translation of the Book of Mormon. The definition in Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* which fits the usage of *curious* in the Book of Mormon is “wrought with care and art; elegant; neat; finished; as a curious girdle; curious work.”⁸⁰ This definition correlates well with the word כשרון (*kishron*), meaning “skill.” As with כישור (*kishor*, *spindle*), it also derives from the root כ-ש-ר (*k-sh-r*). Various foreign language translations of the Book of Mormon properly translate the word *curious* from English: Portuguese, *esmeradamente trabalhada* (painstakingly crafted); Spanish, *esmeradamente labrada* (carefully worked); Italian, *accurata fattura* (careful workmanship); and French, *exécution habile* (skillful execution). Additionally, a Hebrew root word used to express this same idea in the Bible⁸¹ is ח-ש-ב (*ch-sh-v*),⁸² which in this application can be defined as “to devise, invent”; “artistic designs;” or “elaborately devised machines,”⁸³ meanings very closely aligned with Webster's 1828 definition.⁸⁴

79. A more common root connoting prosperity in the Hebrew Bible is צ-ל-ח (*ts-l-ch*) from which the verbal infinitive לצלוח (*litsloach*) derives.

80. Noah Webster's *First Edition of An American Dictionary of the English Language* (San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 2010), s.v. “curious.”

81. See KJV: Exodus 28:8; and WEB: Exodus 31:4, Exodus 35:32-33, and 2 Chronicles 26:15. Note: The WEB (World English Bible) is a revision of the ASV (American Standard Version), and was first published in 2000.

82. From which the infinitive לחשוב, meaning “to think,” is derived.

83. Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. “חשב.”

84. 2 Chronicles 26:15 offers a well-crafted wordplay based on the root ח-ש-ב (*ch-sh-v*): “In Jerusalem he made machines [חשבנות], invented [מחשבת] by skillful men [חושב], to be on the towers and the corners, to shoot arrows and great stones” (KJV). In Hebrew, the phrase “machines invented by skillful men” is a three-word phrase: חשבנות מחשבת חושב (*chishvonot machashevet choshev*), each derived from the root ח-ש-ב (*ch-sh-v*), and each implying skill and intelligent design.

Spinning and Prosperity

Spinning is rarely mentioned in the Book of Mormon, but it is strongly implied in several passages.⁸⁵ The first reference to spinning is in Mosiah 10, in the Book of Zeniff, where we are told that King Zeniff “did cause that the women should *spin* and toil and *work all manner of fine linen*, yea, and *cloth of every kind*, that we might clothe our nakedness. And thus *we did prosper in the land*” (Mosiah 10:5). The practice of spinning and cloth-making in this verse is directly connected to prospering in the land. Similarly, following the conversion of the majority of the Lamanites to the gospel, the Nephites and the Lamanites became rich as they engaged in economic trade with each other:

And behold, there was all manner of gold in both these lands, and of silver and of precious ore of every kind. And there was also *curious [skilled] workmen* which did work all kinds of ore and did refine it. And thus they *did become rich*. They did raise grain in *abundance*, both in the north and in the south. And they *did flourish exceedingly*, both in the north and in the south. And they *did multiply and wax exceedingly strong* in the land; and they *did raise many flocks and herds*, yea, many fatlings. Behold, their women did toil and *spin* and did make *all manner of cloth*, of *fine-twined linen and cloth of every kind*, to clothe their nakedness. And thus the sixty and fourth year did pass away in peace. (Helaman 6:11–13)

As with the people of Zeniff, the prosperity enjoyed by the Nephites and Lamanites during this time is accompanied by *spinning* and the manufacture of cloth. In addition, we are told of the presence of *curious*, or “skilled,” workmen during this time of prosperity. In a similar fashion, during a period of righteousness among the Jaredites we are given the following account:

And they were *exceeding industrious*, and they did buy and sell and traffic one with another that they might get gain. And they did *work in all manner of ore*, and they did make gold and silver and iron and brass and *all manner of metals*. . . . And they did work *all manner of fine work*. And they did have *silks* and

85. In Alma 1:29 we read: “And now, because of the *steadiness of the church* they began to be *exceedingly rich*, having *abundance of all things* whatsoever they stood in need — an abundance of flocks and herds, and fatlings of every kind, and also abundance of grain, and of gold, and of silver, and of precious things, and *abundance of silk and fine-twined linen, and all manner of good homely cloth.*”

*fine-twined linen;*⁸⁶ and they did work all manner of cloth that they might clothe themselves from their nakedness. And they did make all manner of tools to till the earth, both to plow and to sow, to reap and to hoe, and also to thrash. And they did make all manner of tools, in the which they did work their beasts. And they did make all manner of weapons of war. And they did work all manner of work of exceeding curious workmanship. And never could be a people more blessed than were they and more prospered by the hand of the Lord. (Ether 10:22–28)

The Jaredite nation, like the Nephites and Lamanites after them, were prospered by the Lord during their time of righteousness. Evidence of this prosperity included the production of silks, fine-twined linen, cloth of all types, and works of curious workmanship. While spinning is not specifically mentioned in these verses, it is necessarily implied because the process of making fine-twined linen and “all manner of cloth” requires the spinning process.

Spindles and Pointers

Nephi and Alma both referred to the directional devices inside the Liahona as *spindles* (see 1 Nephi 16:10 and Alma 37:40). Additionally, Nephi also called them *pointers* (see 1 Ne 16:28). I propose that these two words, *spindles* and *pointers*, are derived from the biblical Hebrew words פֶּלֶךְ (*pelekh*) and כִּישׁוֹר (*kishor*), respectively. The English word *spindle* has its roots in the verb *spin*, evincing a circular motion. This is closely associated with the sense of the Hebrew word פֶּלֶךְ (*pelekh*), meaning to be “round, circular,” or “hemispherical.” *Pointer* derives from the verb *point*, which means “to direct towards an object or place, to show its position, or excite attention to it.”⁸⁷ The act of pointing strongly implies a straight directional path toward a point of reference.⁸⁸ This idea is closely related to the Hebrew word כִּישׁוֹר (*kishor*) and its connotation of being *straight*.

86. Although the biblical Hebrew word for *spin* — טָוָה (*tavah*) — is etymologically unrelated to either פֶּלֶךְ (*pelekh*) or כִּישׁוֹר (*kishor*), it is closely related to the concept of *fine-twined linen*. טָוָה (*tavah*) carries the idea of being *folded*, *wound*, or *twisted*. Webster defined the verb *twine* as: “To twist; to wind, as one thread or cord around another, or as any flexible substance around another, or as any flexible substance around another body; as fine twined linen.” *Noah Webster’s First Edition*, s.v. “twine.” Thus, *fine-twined linen* could be also understood as *fine-spun linen*. So any reference to fine-twined linen must also imply spinning.

87. *Webster’s First American Dictionary*, s.v. “point.”

88. Matthew Bowen discovered likely Book of Mormon wordplay involving the Hebrew root י-ר-ה (*y-r-h*), meaning to “teach, instruct,” or “direct,” and by

Cunning Arts

Shortly after the appearance of the Liahona, Laman accused Nephi of trying to deceive the group “by his cunning arts”:

Now he saith that the Lord hath talked with him, and also that angels hath ministered unto him. But behold, we know that he lieth unto us. And he telleth us these things, and *he worketh many things by his cunning arts* that he may *deceive our eyes*, thinking perhaps that he may lead us away into some strange wilderness. (1 Nephi 16:38)

Laman’s accusation implies trickery by Nephi, with the possibility of some sort of magic. I propose that Laman used wordplay on the word *brass* in this passage. Nephi tells us that the Liahona was made “of fine brass” (1 Nephi 16:10). In Numbers 21:9 the serpent of brass that Moses raised up was called נחש נחשת (*nechash nechoshet*). The word for *serpent* נחש (*nachash*) and the word for *brass* נחשת (*nechoshet*)⁸⁹ in this verse both derive from a common root: נ-ח-ש (*n-ch-sh*). Another word derived from the same root is נחש (*nachash*, same spelling as *serpent*), meaning “to murmur an obscure incantation,” or “divination by using metal.”⁹⁰ The word can also mean to “practise divination, ... with implied power to learn secret things.”⁹¹ It is very possible that Laman relied on this

inference to “point.” י-ר-ה (*y-r-h*) is also the root of the word תורה (*torah*), most often translated as *law* in the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon. Bowen astutely identified Jacob 4:5 and Alma 34:14 as examples of polyptotonic wordplay, with the mention of the law of Moses pointing to Christ. He then extended this observation as “relevant for Book of Mormon passages that describe how the Liahona ‘pointed’ the ‘way’ for the Lehites in the wilderness.” Matthew L. Bowen, “Scripture Note: ‘Pointing Our Souls to Him,’” *Religious Educator* 20, no. 1 (2019), 166. While this is a possibility, 1 Nephi 16 and Alma 37 lack any mention of the law of Moses, which omission may limit any relationship to passages related to the Liahona. While Jacob preached that the law of Moses served to point us to Christ, Alma likened the Liahona to something better or higher than the law of Moses; Alma compared the Liahona to “the word of Christ which will point to you a straight course to eternal bliss” (Alma 37:44). Although this does not negate the possibility that Alma used the root י-ר-ה (*y-r-h*) for *will point* in this passage, it does not support it either.

89. נחשת (*nechoshet*) in Numbers 21:9 is translated as both *brass* (see KJV) and *bronze* (see NKJV). More properly, it denotes bronze. While brass is an alloy of copper and zinc and bronze is an alloy of copper and tin, copper is the principal component in both metals.

90. Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, s.v. “נחש.”

91. Brown, Law, and Briggs, “נחש.”

meaning of נחש (*nachash*) to accuse Nephi of trickery involving the brass ball דור נחשת (*dur nechoshet*), or Liahona.

THE DIVINE HANDCLASP IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND IN NEAR EASTERN ICONOGRAPHY

David Calabro

Abstract: *David Calabro explores what he describes as the “divine handclasp” in the Hebrew Bible. The term refers to a handclasp between God and his human servant that had a place in ancient Israelite temple worship. Calabro indicates it was a ritual gesture that was part of temple rite performance with a priest acting as proxy for God in close interaction with mankind. While other scholars have suggested the gesture was indicative of deity transporting mankind to “glory,” Calabro’s research proposes the clasping of right hands while facing one another was ritually indicative of God granting access to His chosen rather than transporting him.*

[**Editor’s Note:** Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.]

See David Calabro, “The Divine Handclasp in the Hebrew Bible and in Near Eastern Iconography,” in *Temple Insights: Proceedings of the Interpreter Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference, “The Temple on Mount Zion,” 22 September 2012*, ed. William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 25–66. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/temple-insights/>.]

The topic of this paper is the form and meaning of a gesture mentioned in the Hebrew Bible: a handclasp exchanged between God and his human servant, a gesture I refer to as the “divine handclasp.”¹ Taken

together with comparative evidence, the contexts in which this gesture occurs suggest that it had a place in ancient Israelite temple worship, perhaps as a ritual gesture performed with the help of a priest who stood as proxy for God.² Whether or not a concrete gesture is described, biblical references to the divine handclasp are profound expressions of close interaction with Deity, a concept that was rooted in the rites of the temple.

The divine handclasp has been interpreted in various ways. Mitchell Dahood considers it a means of reception into the divine council and ultimately of assumption into eternal life.³ John Eaton posits that it refers figuratively to God's favor and aid rendered to the king during his reign.⁴ Both of these ideas are picked up by Othmar Keel, who further suggests that the divine handclasp was part of an ancient Israelite coronation ceremony like those of Egypt and Mesopotamia.⁵ Implicit in many of the suggestions on the meaning of this gesture are assumptions about the gesture's form, such as the direction in which the participants face and whether the right or left hands are used. For example, in their discussions of the divine handclasp, both Eaton and Keel refer to a Hittite relief showing a god leading a king by the hand.⁶ In this relief, the god's left hand grasps the king's right, and the king faces the same direction as the god (see illustration and discussion below). Accordingly, the interpretations of Eaton and Keel presuppose that biblical references to God grasping the king's hand refer to leading by the hand.

My purpose in this paper is to investigate what we can responsibly say about this gesture's form and meaning based on the biblical texts in which it is mentioned and on a comparison of these texts with Near Eastern iconography. I will begin by reviewing the eleven occurrences of this gesture in the Hebrew Bible and pointing out clues to the form of the gesture in these passages; I will then review the evidence from iconography. After we have established the form of the gesture to the extent possible, I will conclude with some observations about what this implies for the meaning of the gesture.

Clues to the Gesture's Form from Textual Sources

The divine handclasp is mentioned twice in the Psalms using the Hebrew verb *'hz*, meaning "grasp."⁷

Psalm 73:23-24 I am with you always; **you have grasped my right hand**
 [*'hzt byd-ymyny*]. You guide me with your counsel and
 will afterwards receive me to glory.⁸

Psalm 139:9-10 I will ascend with the wings of dawn, I will dwell at the distant horizon of the sea. / Even there your hand will guide me, **your right hand will grasp me** [wt'hzny ymynk].

The fact that the gesture in both of these passages is parallel to a verb of motion (*hnhh* — “lead, guide, conduct”) has led most interpreters to assume that the gesture is one of leading by the hand. This is especially clear in Dahood’s translation of Psalm 73:24: “Into your council lead me, and with glory take me to yourself.”⁹ However, as will be shown below, comparison with other passages argues against this interpretation and causes us to reevaluate the meaning in these Psalms passages. Both Psalm 73 and Psalm 139 happen to have thematic and linguistic connections to wisdom literature,¹⁰ and from this perspective, one might suggest that rather than referring to physical motion, *hnhh* has the sense of “instruct,” as it sometimes does in Proverbs.¹¹ The parallelism would then call attention not to the gesture’s function of transporting the Psalmist, but to its function as a means of imparting knowledge. The symbolism of God’s hand as an agent of instruction can be found elsewhere in the Psalms and in other parts of the Hebrew Bible (see Psalm 45:5; Job 27:11; Isaiah 8:11; see also Psalms 18:34; 144:1).

As Matt Brown has noticed, if we conflate the gestures in Psalm 73 and Psalm 139 (as the contextual similarity between the two verses encourages us to do), we see that both God and the Psalmist use their right hands.¹² This would suggest that the participants in the gesture are facing each other, as we do when we shake hands. In contrast, leading by the hand, both in ancient iconography and in usual practice today, is similar to walking side-by-side, with one participant grasping the adjacent hand of the other.

We turn now to four passages in the latter part of Isaiah that describe the divine handclasp using the verb *hḥzyq*, meaning “grasp.”

Isaiah 41:9 I **who have grasped you** [*hḥzqtyk*] from the ends of the earth and have called you from its corners, and have said to you, “You are my servant. I have chosen you and have not forsaken you.”

Isaiah 41:13 For I am Yahweh your God, **he who grasps your right hand** [*mḥzyq ymynk*], who says to you, “Do not fear, I will help you.”

Isaiah 42:6 I am Yahweh. I have called you in righteousness, **and I will grasp your hand** [*w’hzyq bydk*], watch over you, and make you a covenant of the people, a light to the nations.

Isaiah 45:1 Thus says Yahweh to his anointed one, to Cyrus, whose **right hand I have grasped** [*hhzqty bymynw*] to subdue nations before him, ungirding kings, and to open the doors before him, the gates not being closed.

The context in these passages has to do with entering into a covenant, which includes an oath made by Deity. In Isaiah 45:1, the content of the oath is mentioned in connection with the gesture. The text might more clearly be translated, “whose right hand I have grasped (in oath, swearing) to subdue nations before him.” Again, this tends to invoke a handclasp between parties facing each other, such as when we clasp hands to strike a bargain.

A fifth example belonging to the prophetic genre is found in Jeremiah 31:31–32.

Jeremiah 31:31–32 Behold, days are coming, says Yahweh, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, / not like the covenant that I made with their ancestors in the day that **I grasped their hand** [*hhzyqy bydm*] to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant of mine they broke, though I had become their husband, says Yahweh.

This passage, like those from Psalms 73 and 139 above, has often been misinterpreted as referring to leading by the hand. However, the context here in Jeremiah 31:31–32 refers to a covenant, and the clause in question may be rendered as “I grasped their hand (in oath, swearing) to bring them out of the land of Egypt,” like the clause “whose right hand I have grasped (in oath, swearing) to subdue nations before him” in Isaiah 45:1:

Jeremiah 31:32:

I grasped their hand

(in oath, swearing)

to bring them out of the land of Egypt

Isaiah 45:1:

whose right hand I have grasped

(in oath, swearing)

to subdue nations before him

Further, the language here in Jeremiah 31:32 is very similar to passages that describe raising the hand to make an oath, such as Ezekiel 20:6: “in that day I lifted up my hand to them to bring them out of the land of Egypt.” The two passages can be compared almost phrase for phrase, as follows:

Jeremiah 31:32:	Ezekiel 20:6:
in the day that	in that day
I grasped their hand	I lifted up my hand to them
to bring them	to bring them
out of the land of Egypt	out of the land of Egypt

As this comparison suggests, the handclasp in Jeremiah 31:31–32, like the lifting of the hand in Ezekiel 20:6, is most likely an oath-taking gesture exchanged between two parties who face each other rather than a form of leading by the hand.

Finally, the verb *tmk*, meaning “hold,” is used both in the Psalms and in Isaiah to describe the divine handclasp:

- Psalm 41:13 As for me in my integrity, **you have held me** [*tmkt by*]; you have set me before you forever!
- Psalm 63:9 My soul clung to you, **your right hand held me** [*by tmkh ymynk*].
- Isaiah 41:10 Do not fear, for I am with you; do not gaze about fearfully, for I am your God; I have strengthened you, I have helped you, **I have held you with my saving right hand** [*tmktyk bymyn šdqy*].
- Isaiah 42:1 Behold, as for my servant **whom I hold** [*’tmk-bw*], my chosen (in whom) my soul delights, I have put my spirit upon him, he will bring judgment to the nations.

Another example of the verb *tmk* being used to describe a handclasp may be found in an Aramaic text written in Demotic script, Papyrus Amherst 63. However, this example is doubtful due to the fragmentary state of this portion of the text. A few extant words in this portion seem to have to do with blessing (such as the words *peace* and *cup*). As for the phrase describing the gesture itself, the only really legible word is *ymynk*, meaning “your right hand”; some (but not all) scholars who have studied this text restore the verb *’tmk*, meaning “I will hold,” before it.¹³

Other verbs and phrases have also been linked with the three listed above as means of expressing the divine handclasp. These include *’sp*, meaning “gather” or “take up” (see Psalm 27:10);¹⁴ *lqh*, meaning “take” or “receive” (see Psalms 49:15; 73:24);¹⁵ *nkwn yd ’m*, meaning “of the hand, be firm or fixed with” (see Psalm 89:20–21);¹⁶ *hzqt yd*, meaning “strength of hand” or perhaps “grasping the hand” (Isaiah 8:11);¹⁷ and *ntn ... yd*, meaning “give ... a ‘hand’” (Isaiah 56:5).¹⁸ Compared to the three types listed above—which use the verbs *’hz*, *hḥzyq*, and *tmk*—the connection

to a handclasp gesture for these other phrases is less certain, and the number of proposed examples in each case is small. For these reasons, I exclude them from the present study.

In my judgment, the eleven passages quoted above—in which the verbs *ʾhz*, *hḥzyq*, and *tmk* are used—all describe one gesture. By examining these passages, one sees a web of contextual similarities that would make it difficult to separate them into different gestures. For example, both Psalm 139:9–10 and Isaiah 41:9 emphasize the remoteness of the location in which God grasps his mortal servant’s hand. Both Psalm 73:23–24 and Psalm 41:13 mention being with God always. Further, many of these passages convey the general sense of the gesture’s mortal recipient being chosen and having a special relationship with the Deity. Aside from these general contextual similarities, one notes that the verb *ʾhz* is used to describe a handclasp only in the Psalms, the verb *hḥzyq* is used in this way only in Isaiah and Jeremiah, and *tmk* is used in both the Psalms and the Prophets. Given this distribution, one is tempted to consider *ʾhz* and *hḥzyq* to be equivalent verbs for the same gesture, each verb being limited to a particular genre.

Once again, as Matt Brown noted, when we combine the examples with *hḥzyq* and *tmk* in Isaiah 41, we can see that both the right hand of God and the right hand of His chosen are mentioned.¹⁹ This, together with the oath-taking function that is present in some of the examples, suggests that both parties are facing each other and not walking side-by-side or one after the other.

Divine Handclasps in Near Eastern Iconography

Many kinds of handclasps are found in Near Eastern iconography. In the Mesopotamian world, many cylinder seals feature what is known as a “presentation scene,” in which a deity is shown leading a worshipper or supplicant by the hand into the presence of another deity (see Figure 1).²⁰



Figure 1. Akkadian cylinder seal showing a presentation scene, ca. 2300 BC. An interceding deity leads a supplicant by the hand into the presence of the sun god Shamash; the supplicant holds a caprid to present as an offering. Redrawn by the author from Henri Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals: A Documentary Essay on the Art and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (London: Macmillan, 1939), pl. 18e.

A similar kind of scene is found in Egyptian art of the New Kingdom, featured on the walls of royal tombs, in temple reliefs, and in vignettes from Spells 117 and 125 of the Book of the Dead. In these Egyptian examples, the king or deceased person is inducted by one or more deities into the presence of another deity (see Figures 2–3). Together with these induction scenes in Egyptian art, we find scenes in which the god who stands in front of the king and holds his hand faces him instead of leading him by the hand. Variations of these Egyptian scenes are very commonly found on scarab seals from the Levant during the same time period. Othmar Keel compares the presentation scene in Mesopotamian art and the induction scene in Egyptian art to biblical passages that mention the divine handclasp, but ultimately he rejects this connection because it is hard to reconcile with the Bible's monotheistic viewpoint.²¹ In addition, the kind of handclasp shown in the presentation and induction scenes does not seem to fit with the biblical descriptions, in which the right hands of both parties are used.

We have already mentioned the Hittite relief of Tudkhaliya IV from Yazilikaya (see Figure 4). This seems to be the preferred comparandum to the biblical divine handclasp for those who have studied this gesture most closely, namely Eaton and Keel. However, once again, note that the god uses his left hand, not his right, to grasp the king's right hand. This does not match the biblical descriptions, in which it is clearly the god's right hand that is used. Further, we have shown that the idea of leading by the hand does not seem to be a major aspect of the biblical divine handclasp.



Figure 2. Scene from the tomb of Nefertari, Thebes, ca. 1200 BC. The god Horus, son of Isis, leads the queen Nefertari by the hand into the presence of the deities Re-Horakhty and Hathor. Redrawn by the author from Zahi Hawass, *The Royal Tombs of Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), 256.

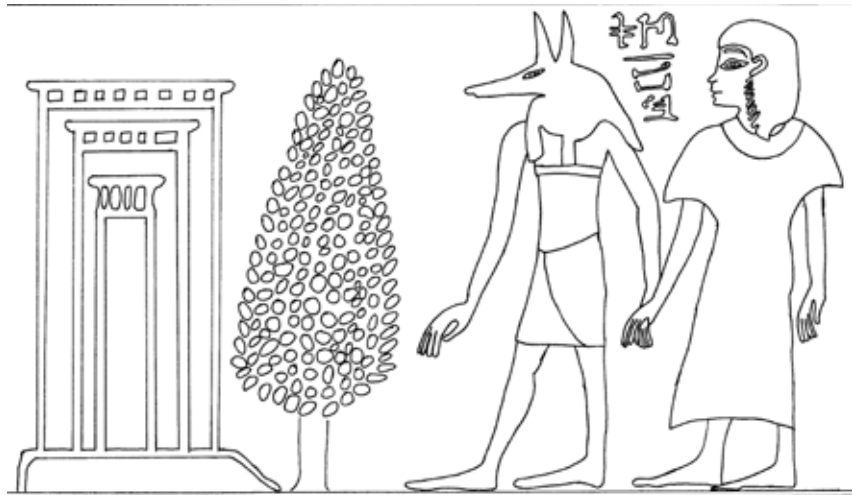


Figure 3. Vignette from the Book of the Dead, Spell 117. The god Anubis leads the deceased person by the hand toward a false door that leads to the presence of Osiris. From the papyrus of Nakht (BM 10471). Redrawn by the author from Raymond O. Faulkner and Carol Andrews, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 112.



Figure 4. Relief of Tudkhaliya IV from Yazilikaya, ca. 1250 BC. Redrawn by the author from James B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954), 182.

Those who have sought iconographic parallels for the biblical divine handclasp have generally turned to the art of Israel's neighbors in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Anatolia. This is certainly better than, say, a comparison with Chinese or Greek art, yet it is not fully satisfactory either, since there are significant cultural and religious differences between Israel and her Near Eastern neighbors. Therefore, we have good reason to ask if there are any depictions of handclasps that are closer to the Israelite context. In fact, there are. A couple of cylinder seals from the Middle Bronze Age Levant²² and assorted scarab seals from the same period²³ show a handclasp exchanged between a divine personage and a mortal (see Figure 5). In addition, a Phoenician ivory fan handle from the Iron Age²⁴ shows a handclasp exchanged between a divine personage and a mortal (see Figure 6).

Interestingly enough, the parties of the gesture in all these instances are facing each other. I am not aware of any Levantine art showing the motif of leading by the hand other than the New Kingdom scarabs mentioned earlier, which are more closely tied to Egyptian artistic conventions.



Figure 5. Hyksos scarab seal showing a figure seated on an animal-legged throne, clasp hands with a standing figure. Redrawn by the author from Fiona V. Richards, *Scarab Seals from a Middle to Late Bronze Age Tomb at Pella in Jordan* (Fribourg: University Press, 1992), pl. 3.

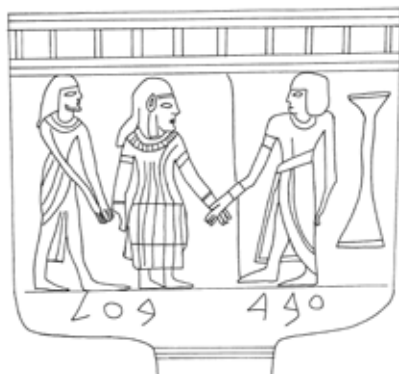


Figure 6. Phoenician ivory fan handle. A figure on the right (possibly a deity or a priest) clasps hands with a man (possibly Abdibaal, the owner of the fan, whose name is given in the inscription at the bottom) across what appears to be a curtain or veil. On the left is an attendant. The incense altar at the far right indicates that the scene takes place at the temple. Redrawn by the author from Karl P. Katz, P. P. Kahane, and Magen Broshi, *From the Beginning: Archaeology and Art in the Israel Museum*, Jerusalem (New York: Reynal and Company, Inc., 1968), 76.

One may, of course, object that the confronted figures in these Levantine examples are clasping adjacent hands, the left hand of the figure on the left and the right hand of the figure on the right. Thus, on the surface, this does not seem to fit precisely with the biblical descriptions.

However, it is quite likely that Levantine iconography depicts the figures in this way for compositional reasons, so that each figure is presented to maximum advantage.²⁵ Similar rearrangement of figures frequently occurs in Egyptian art as well, so it is often difficult to tell which hand would have been used in a given ritual.²⁶ In this case, we can guess that this kind of rearrangement is at work, since there is a discrepancy between the artistic motif and how people actually clasp hands when they face each other in ritual contexts.²⁷ Therefore, we may posit that what is shown for compositional reasons as a clasping of adjacent hands would have transpired in real life as a clasping of right hands. This small assortment of Levantine pieces thus provides a suitable parallel for the biblical descriptions of the divine handclasp.

Implications for the Meaning of the Gesture

In conclusion, let us see what our findings imply about the meaning of the divine handclasp in the biblical world. In the beginning, I mentioned that Eaton and Keel assume that this gesture was a form of leading by the hand. However, our study shows that what we have here is quite different. Since the parties of the gesture would likely face each other, transport could not have been an integral aspect of the gesture, except in the limited sense of one party pulling the other inward. The Psalmist's statement that God will "receive [him] to glory" in Psalm 73:23–24 can be understood in this latter sense. As we have seen, the idea of "guiding" in connection with this gesture in the Psalms may be interpreted in the sense of giving instruction. In Isaiah 45:1, it is likely a matter of God granting access to His chosen rather than transporting him.

The form of the gesture, with both parties facing each other and clasping right hands, is compatible with the idea that the divine handclasp was performative in nature; in other words, doing the gesture was like saying, "I hereby ..." or "I now officially...." It was therefore similar to raising the hand with the palm forward, another gesture that is performed by deities in the Hebrew Bible and in Levantine art. Both the divine handclasp and the raising of the hand sometimes accompany oaths, as in Isaiah 45:1 and Jeremiah 31:31–32. However, the handclasp was different from raising the hand in that the former apparently imparted a special status to the recipient, a status like that of a privileged servant or close family member, as seen almost universally in the passages I have cited.

As mentioned above, Eaton and Keel have maintained that the divine handclasp was part of a temple coronation ritual. The Phoenician ivory

fan handle, which shows a god or priest reaching across what appears to be a curtain or veil, may suggest this kind of temple context. However, the precise ritual here is quite different from what Eaton and Keel envisioned; it is more in harmony with the concept of Matt Brown, who drew on late antique and medieval depictions of assumption in which God grasps the hand of a mortal as if to pull him in.²⁸ What I have been able to glean from the Hebrew texts and from Levantine iconography thus confirms what Matt Brown, with his characteristic insight, had already put forward.

Notes

1. Matt Brown, the honoree of this volume, had an interest in the divine handclasp and wrote an unpublished paper entitled “The Handclasp, the Temple, and the King” (August 2008), which he graciously shared with me shortly before his untimely passing and which is at last published in this volume. I am indebted to Matt for his insights, as will be clear in my discussion. I offer my treatment of this topic as a tribute to Matt, in gratitude for his generosity, the enlightening conversations we shared, and his work in advancing our understanding of the ancient temple and its significance for Latter-day Saints.
2. Shalom M. Paul, “Deutero-Isaiah and Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1968): 180-86; Brown, “Handclasp,” 2, 3. In general on the handclasp as a ritual gesture, with examples mostly from classical Greek and Roman contexts, see Todd M. Compton, “The Handclasp and Embrace as Tokens of Recognition,” in *By Study and also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1990), 1:611-42; Stephen D. Ricks, “Dexiosis and Dextrarum Iunctio: The Sacred Handclasp in the Classical and Early Christian World,” *The FARMS Review* 18/1 (2006): 431-36.
3. Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms I (1-50)* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), xxxvi, 33, 146, 252-53, 301-2; Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms II (51-100)*, 3rd edition (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 85, 100, 194.
4. John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 2nd edition (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 143-44; John H. Eaton, *The Psalms: A Historical and*

Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 177, 236, 267.

5. Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 198-201, 258-59. Joseph Blenkinsopp likewise asserts that references to the gesture are taken from “the protocol and ceremonial of the Babylonian court,” but he considers this a purely literary phenomenon. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Anchor Bible: Isaiah 40-55* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 211, 249.
6. Eaton, *Kingship*, 144; Keel, *Symbolism*, 258-59; cf. James B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 182, 315 (no. 541).
7. Also relevant here are the Hebrew royal names Ahaziah, Jehoahaz, and the shortened form Ahaz, all of which express the idea that “Yahweh has grasped” the bearer of the name. See Eaton, *Kingship*, 77.
8. All translations from Hebrew herein are my own unless otherwise noted.
9. Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible: Psalms II (51-100)*, 3rd edition (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 187.
10. John S. Kselman, in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*.
11. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 634-35. It should also be noted that *b’štk* should be translated “with your counsel, advice” and not “into your council” as Dahood translates. The word *šh* is used often in wisdom literature in the sense of “counsel, advice” but does not, as far as I am aware, refer to a body of personages in the sense of “council.”
12. Matt Brown, personal communication, May 2011. By the time Matt communicated with me, we had both reached the same conclusion independently.
13. See Richard C. Steiner and Charles F. Nims, “You Can’t Offer Your Sacrifice and Eat It Too: A Polemical Poem from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 43/2 (1984): 94, 96; contrast Sven P. Vleeming and Jan W. Wesselius, “Betel the Saviour: Papyrus Amherst 63, col. 7:1-18,” *Ex Oriente Lux* 28 (1983-1984): 116-17.

14. Brown, "Handclasp," 4.
15. Dahood, *Anchor Bible: Psalms I*, xxxvi, 33, 146, 252-53, 301-2; Dahood, *Anchor Bible: Psalms II*, 85, 100, 194.
16. Brown, "Handclasp," 1; cf. the translation "My hand shall hold him fast" in Eaton, *Kingship*, 317.
17. Although most translations render the phrase in question as "with a strong hand" or similarly, the New Jerusalem Bible and the *Tanakh* translation of the Jewish Publication Society translate as "when his hand seized hold of me" or similarly. The latter translation is based on a supposed connection with the idiom *hḥzyq yd* "grasp the hand," discussed above.
18. For the interpretation of Isaiah 56:5 as referring to a handclasp, see Abraham Gileadi, *The Apocalyptic Book of Isaiah* (Provo: Hebraeus Press, 1982), 142; Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1982), 473; Donald Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1998), 496-97. Most others understand this passage as describing the setting up of a stela or memorial. See, for example, D. W. Van Winkle, "The Meaning of YĀD WĀŠĒM in Isaiah LVI 5," *Vetus Testamentum* 47 (1997): 378-85.
19. Matt Brown, personal communication, May 2011.
20. Henriette A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement: An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Hacker Art Books, Inc., 1978), 165-66, 169; cf. Irene J. Winter, "The King and the Cup: Iconography of the Royal Presentation Scene on Ur III Seals," in *Insight through Images: Studies in Honor of Edith Porada* (Malibu: Undena, 1986), 253-68.
21. Keel, *Symbolism*, 198-201.
22. Dominique Collon, *The Alalakh Cylinder Seals* (Oxford: B.A.R., 1982), 82; Beatrice Teissier, *Egyptian Iconography on Syro-Palestinian Cylinder Seals of the Middle Bronze Age* (Fribourg: University Press, 1996), 50-51 (no. 9).
23. Fiona V. Richards, *Scarab Seals from a Middle to Late Bronze Age Tomb at Pella in Jordan* (Fribourg: University Press, 1992), 90-91, pl. 3 (no. 11); Raphael Giveon, *Egyptian Scarabs from Western Asia from the Collections of the British Museum* (Fribourg: University Press, 1985), 152-53 (no. 49); Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette*

- aus Palästina-Israel*, Katalog Band I (Fribourg: University Press, 1997), 334-35 (no. 679), 460-61 (no. 1045); Othmar Keel, *Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette aus Palästina-Israel*, Katalog Band III (Fribourg: University Press, 2010), 388-89 (no. 855).
24. Karl P. Katz, P. P. Kahane, and Magen Broshi, *From the Beginning: Archaeology and Art in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem* (New York: Reynal and Company, Inc., 1968), 76-77, 277; Oscar White Muscarella, ed., *Ladders to Heaven: Art Treasures from Lands of the Bible* (Toronto, Canada: McClelland and Stewart, 1981), 286, 326-27. Muscarella, in *Ladders to Heaven*, 286, suggests that the design may be a modern forgery, but his only evidence for this is the “crude” nature of the design elements, which may just as well be an argument for the design not being a forgery. He also cites a personal communication from Irene Winter to the effect that “the decoration could fit into a first millennium Phoenician or Punic background” on the basis of parallels from various sites in the Mediterranean.
 25. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement*, 7-8.
 26. Cf. Emily Teeter, *The Presentation of Maat: Ritual and Legitimacy in Ancient Egypt* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1997), 22.
 27. See Betty J. Bäuml and Franz H. Bäuml, *Dictionary of Worldwide Gestures*, second edition (Lanham, MD, and London: Scarecrow Press, 1997), 251-52 (examples of handclasps under “Agreement”), 305-7 (examples under “Oath”). An ancient Assyrian relief from Nimrud, which shows a king and his vassal clasping right hands, perhaps illustrates more accurately what the gesture would have looked like. See Max Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains* (London: Collins, 1966), 446-49.
 28. Brown, “Handclasp,” 4; Matt Brown, personal communications.

David Calabro received a PhD in ancient Near Eastern studies from the University of Chicago in 2014. His research focuses on the ritual use of hand gestures in the ancient Levant and Egypt. He lives in Provo, Utah, with his wife, Ruth, and their six children.

GIVING THE BOOK OF ETHER ITS PROPER DUE

Brant Gardner

Review of Daniel L. Belnap, ed., *Illuminating the Jaredite Records* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University / Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2020). 320 pages. Hardback, \$27.95.

Abstract: *Illuminating the Jaredite Record collects ten papers by different Book of Mormon scholars. This is the second publication from the Book of Mormon Academy at Brigham Young University, a collection of scholars interested in the Book of Mormon. As with the first volume, the authors approach the text from different perspectives and thereby illuminate different aspects of the text.*

In his introduction to this collection of essays, Daniel Belnap notes that the Book of Mormon Academy, “established in 2013 at Brigham Young University, [was a] consortium of Religious Education faculty ... created to foster critical thinking about the Book of Mormon and to make their academic, theological, and pedagogical research available to the wider public” (v). The current volume, the second from the Book of Mormon Academy,¹ follows the general conceptual structure of the first, where essays are grouped according to the perspectives the various authors used while approaching this text.

This is an important formula because it reminds the reader of the breadth and depth with which the Book of Mormon deserves to be studied and understood. In particular, however, I must point out that the subject matter of this volume is just as important as the scope of the essays. Although

1. The first was Shon D. Hopkin, ed., *Abinadi: He Came Among Them in Disguise* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University / Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018).

Ether forms a critical subtheme to Mormon's apologetic explanation of the Nephite demise, it is less often the subject of study. Frank F. Judd Jr. notes at the beginning of his chapter, "Resources for the study of the book of Ether are relatively few in number, especially when compared with resources for the study of the rest of the Book of Mormon" (157). This volume's multifaceted approach is extremely welcomed and needed.

In the interests of full disclosure, I was a prepublication reviewer for the volume. I liked it then and I like it now. Now, however, I can give appropriate credit to the authors in ways in which they were previously concealed from me. This means I can finally begin to incorporate these various insights into my own understanding of the Book of Mormon and make sure that appropriate credit is given to these excellent scholars.

Illuminating the Jaredite Records is broken into four topical sections: 1) Cultural-Historical Lenses: Identity and Praxis in the Jaredite Record; 2) Narratological Lenses: Moroni and the Jaredite Record; 3) Reception-Historical Lenses: Women and the Jaredite Record in Antiquity and Modernity; and 4) Pedagogical Lenses: Teaching the Jaredite Record. I comment on each chapter in each part of the volume.

Cultural-Historical Lenses: Identity and Praxis in the Jaredite Record

"They are of Ancient Date': Jaredite Traditions and the Politics of Gadianton's Dissent" (Daniel L. Belnap). I asserted earlier that the Jaredite record played an important role in Mormon's apologetic for the Nephite demise. Belnap's article is an important explanation of one of the locations of that influence. It might seem unusual that the lead article in a volume about the Book of Ether concentrates on the Gadianton robbers, who are exclusively part of Mormon's text. Belnap understands that the Jaredite secret combinations are simply the earlier embodiment of the same secret combinations from his day. Thus one of the tasks of the article is to establish how the Gadianton presence is connected to those more ancient secret combinations.

"Divination as Translation: The Function of Sacred Stones in Ancient Mesopotamia and the Book of Ether" (Kerry Hull). The earliest mention of the interpreters (in time, though not in the Book of Mormon narrative) is with the Jaredites:

And behold, these two stones will I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also with the things which ye shall write. For behold, the language which ye shall write I have confounded; wherefore I will cause in my own due time that these stones

shall magnify to the eyes of men these things which ye shall write. (Ether 3:23–24)

Thus the earliest mention of the two stones, later known as the *interpreters*, was in the context of allowing a later generation to understand writing in a language that future generations did not understand. Hull is interested in that connection between stones and translation, a connection we see clearly when Mosiah (son of Benjamin) translates the Jaredite record using those very two stones (Mosiah 28:13). Of course this has implications for Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon using stones as an interpretive tool.

Hull traces the Jaredites to a general Mesopotamian origin and examines a history of shining stones and stones as divination tools. All of this is a prelude to the important discussion of the relationship between divination and translation, a discussion I urge students of the Book of Mormon to read closely.

“Upon Mount Shelem: The Liminal Experience of the Brother of Jared” (Charles Swift). A liminal experience is one in which the person stands in a process of change and transformation. It might be described as standing before a door, then entering into something quite different from what was on the first side. Swift says of the brother of Jared:

Though we often speak of “the vision of the brother of Jared,” what occurred was much more than a single vision. His experience atop Mount Shelem comprised multiple visions, a dialogue with the Lord, a personal ministration by the Lord, and a personal transformation in which he grew from a man of faith in the Lord into a man of great faith and, eventually, into a man with great knowledge of the Lord. (85)

From this beginning, Swift details the process and stages of the great experience the brother of Jared had with the Lord on Mount Shelem.

Narratological Lenses: Moroni and the Jaredite Record

“Seeing Moroni and the Book of Ether through a Study of Narrative Time” (Amy Easton-Flake). Easton-Flake's chapter begins the shift from looking at the text of the book of Ether in its historical context to a concentration on the nature of the text itself. Easton-Flake appropriately begins with a definition of narrative time, contrasting it with *objective time*, which is the way we experience time in a continuous flow; and *story time*, which refers to the passage of time within the story. Moroni's rendition of the Book of Ether contains stories, and therefore

story time, but it also contains Moroni's editorial insertions, insertions that are outside of the story time. Since Moroni's insertions account "for 25 percent of the text," it makes Moroni "arguably the most prominent person in the book of Ether" (133).

She concludes: "What a close study of narrative time in the book of Ether makes clear is how Moroni (and possibly Ether and Mosiah as well) constantly guides readers' interpretation of the text" (152). Because my personal studies have led me to a greater investigation of Mormon and Moroni as writers, I found this an exceptionally interesting and important essay.

"Moroni's Six Commentaries in the Book of Ether" (Frank F. Judd Jr.) Easton-Flake, in her discussion of the book of Ether, notes that Moroni's insertion accounts "for 25 percent of the text" (133). Judd picks up the task of examining those insertions themselves. He examines each of the lengthy insertions and notes how they relate to the text of the Book of Mormon as Moroni's father, Mormon, wrote it.

He finds that "Moroni's six commentaries in the book of Ether give readers key insights into the heart of the author. This great man was concerned about many things, such as his personal mission, his own people, and future readers of the Book of Mormon" (172). The inserted commentaries allow modern readers to get a better picture of how an ancient prophet used written events about the past to inform his present and demonstrate his hopes for the future.

"Power in the Book of Ether" (Jared Ludlow). Our modern perceptions of power tend to be defined in political terms, and Ludlow understands that political power is but one type. Ludlow sees a contrast between the power represented in the brother of Jared's experience with the Lord and the ultimate political conflicts (and ultimate demise) of the Jaredite nation. Linking those two are the times when the political survival of the Jaredites was enhanced by their obedience to the prophets who came among them. Thus Ludlow juxtaposes a righteous power manifested through prophets of the Lord with the unrighteous power of the secret combinations instigated and encouraged by Satan. He concludes, "A primary message found throughout the Book of Mormon is the need for every person to choose between two ways: God or Satan" (196).

Reception-Historical Lenses: Women and the Jaredite Record in Antiquity and Modernity

"Jared's Two Daughters" (Joseph M. Spencer). A very modern problem underlies Spencer's selection of topic and approach: "Readers often

lament the paucity of female characters in the Book of Mormon. The volume is largely about men, with women appearing only in the margins of the story, often in unseemly ways” (203). Spencer proposes a careful reading to flesh out the textual skeleton of women in the Book of Ether. After an examination of where women appear according to the original chapters of Ether, Spencer takes a very close look at the daughter of Jared in Ether 8. He posits a textual tension in what may be seen as two parts of the story — the secret combinations story associated with the daughter of Jared and the dancing woman section. He suggests that this might be evidence of a very early combination of stories of two different daughters conflated into one in the current redaction (and probably the original as it existed on the plates of Ether).

This is a complex argument, and a type of analysis of potential sources that we seldom see in discussions of any book in the Book of Mormon. It is a chapter that requires close reading itself.

“Whence the Daughter of Jared? Text and Context” (Nicholas J. Frederick). Frederick has done a lot of work on the intertextuality between the Bible and the Book of Mormon; and it is therefore unsurprising that he would look at the story of the daughter of Jared in the Book of Ether against what many have assumed to be the clear biblical model found in the story of Salome — myself included, as he points out. I heard Frederick present an early version of this paper at a conference and have been eagerly awaiting its appearance in print.

Through a very careful analysis of the two stories, Frederick notes that the superficial and obvious similarities can obscure important, indeed critical, differences between the two stories. This is an important chapter that, in Frederick’s words, can remove “the shortsighted move of viewing Ether 8 as merely a recapitulation of the Salome story” (248).

Pedagogical Lenses: Teaching the Jaredite Record

“Of Captivity and Kingdoms: Helping Students Find a Place in the Book of Ether” (Ryan Sharp). The final section of this collection of essays moves from historical and textual to the pedagogical. The two essays in this section read the Book of Ether with an eye to the way the book can speak to its modern readers.

Sharp notes, “Teachers of the Book of Mormon delight in outlining the Jaredites’ journey and then using the text to guide students on their own metaphorical journey from spiritual Babel to the promised land” (253). Sharp suggests that while the early part of the Book of Ether is easy to apply, the second half, which relentlessly describes political

intrigue, dysfunction, and war, is much more difficult to use as a positive metaphor for a student's life.

What Sharp suggests is that teachers use Moroni as their guide. Where Moroni left his sources as a terse iteration of events, he followed with an inserted homily that summarizes "this troubling history and, by so doing, underscores the overarching narrative of seeking, obtaining, losing, and then regaining a kingdom" (254–55). Sharp points out the ways in which one might see Moroni's life paralleled in the Jaredite story.

Sharp concludes, "One of the responsibilities of teachers to help students remember that individuals in the scriptures are real people who battled real issues. Part of training students to read the Book of Mormon exegetically is helping them understand that the scriptural author, in this case Moroni, is writing in the context of his own struggles and anxieties" (270). If students can learn to see the writers in their most human moments, those moments can have a greater meaning and application to the very human trials of the modern world.

"The Jaredite Journey: A Symbolic Reflection of Our Own Journey along the Covenant Path" (Tyler J. Griffin). Where Sharp concentrated on the more neglected second half of the book of Jared, Griffin proposes to use the first part, the journey, to establish a model for modern personal journeys. He notes many parallels between the Jaredite and Lehite journeys from the land of their origin to a new land of promise, parallels which suggest that "the Lord seems to be invoking the law of witnesses by having Moroni include this abridgment in the record" (274). That is a legitimate suggestion, and perhaps one too easily overlooked. As is evident throughout Belnap's discussion in the first essay in this collection, Mormon's use of the plates of Jared focused heavily on the latter half. While Belnap doesn't say so explicitly, there is a remarkable absence in Mormon's writings that emphasize either the Jaredite journey or, particularly, the brother of Jared's experience.

Griffin elaborates the elements of the Jaredite journey with an eye to seeing in them a guide for modern journeys toward our ultimate spiritual goals. He concludes, "Thanks to Moroni acting as our chronological intercessor, we can learn from the relevance of these people's lives and legacies as we take our turn journeying over the land, building our symbolic barges, and launching into the deep opportunities that await us today" (291).

Conclusion

Illuminating the Jaredite Records begins to expand our understanding of a book in the Book of Mormon to which too little attention has been

paid. The breadth of the essays strongly suggests rich veins to mine, even in this relatively small and terse book. Those veins include not only the Jaredites themselves, but also Moroni and, even by extension, modern readers. I enjoyed the essays when I reviewed the book before its publication, but the multiple issues surrounding publication have meant that a long time has passed between my early view and the anticipated arrival of the publication. As I read it again for this review, I found even more depth than I had missed on my earlier reading. I highly recommend this volume and recommend that a reader return to it more than once to truly gain its full impact.

Brant A. Gardner (*M.A. State University of New York Albany*) is the author of *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon* and *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon*, both published through Greg Kofford Books. He has contributed articles to *Estudios de Cultura Nahuatl* and *Symbol and Meaning Beyond the Closed Community*. He has presented papers at the *FairMormon* conference as well as at *Sunstone*.

HONORING HUGH NIBLEY — AGAIN

Louis Midgley

Review of *Hugh Nibley Observed*, edited by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Shirley Ricks, and Stephen Whitlock (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation, 2021). 820 pages. \$45.00 (hardback), \$35.00 (paperback).

Abstract: *Hugh Nibley Observed is the third assembly of essays honoring Nibley by his friends and admirers. It differs from the other two in many ways. It is packed with photographs, observations by his children about their father, and many other similar and related items that are often deeply personal reflections on Nibley as well as the influence he has had on Latter-day Saint intellectual life and also the faith of the Saints. Its contents are far more accessible than the strictly scholarly works written by the academic friends and colleagues of Nibley. There is some of that in this book, but it contains information and reflections on a host of different aspects of the first Latter-day Saint scholar who could and did provide a competent defense of the faith and the Saints. This book is very much about Nibley and not merely for him, as were the two previous efforts to honor him.*

I have an essay that I penned for *Hugh Nibley Observed* (pp. 609–30). Authors are *not* often invited to review their own books or those in which they have an essay. How, then, can I be reviewing this book?

The truth is that I requested to be allowed to write a review of this truly outstanding anthology about Hugh Nibley's life and academic ventures. Why? Like many others I have, for my entire adult life (I am now 90), been profoundly influenced by Hugh Nibley.¹ Hence I am also

1. Some evidence for my own fondness for Hugh Nibley's scholarship can be found in the following list of my own attempts to comment on his publications. In chronological order: (1) "Hugh Nibley: A Short Bibliographical Note," *Dialogue* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1967): 118–21; (2) "The Secular Relevance of the Gospel," *Dialogue* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1969): 76–85; (3) "Hugh Nibley: A Portrait of a Leader," *Improvement Era*

now readied and even eager to opine about him. In addition, I believe that only someone who knew and admired Nibley — and who is also familiar with his scholarship — should venture opinions about the truly wonderful array of items assembled in *Hugh Nibley Observed*.

That being said, I will not comment on my own essay in the book, other than to indicate that “A Mighty Kauri Has Fallen: Hugh Winder Nibley (1910–2005)” is included in this truly remarkable anthology with only a few of what I see as necessary revisions. The essay was my response to the passing of a genuinely wise mentor whose influence has been lasting and who eventually became a colleague and, as far as it was possible, a dear friend.

And Now, Fifteen Years Later

Hugh Nibley Observed is an array of essays and various other items on the life and times of one who was a friend, father, and devout fellow Saint seeking sanctification. It has 211 often stunning illustrations, not counting the cover of the book. It is a way of knowing Nibley for the first time, and also for everyone to know him in various ways. Even those who knew him (or thought they did) will discover much they did not know about Nibley, including his quirks and obsessions. They will also discover something about the source and contents of his faith in God. This book adds much to our understanding of his own deepest longings and ardent faith.

Hugh Nibley Observed begins with some necessary introductory material, including comments on the “Conception and Organization of the Book” (pp. xv–xviii). Then, in his “Introduction,” Jeffrey Bradshaw calls attention to Nibley’s very strong aversion to being honored (pp. 5–9).

73, no. 5 (May 1970): 78–81; (4) (with Robert F. Smith) “Hugh Nibley Bibliography,” in *Tinkling Cymbals: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley*, ed. John W. Welch (privately printed, 1978), 225–47; (5) “Hugh Winder Nibley: Bibliography and Register,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley*, vol. 1, eds. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), xv–lxxxii; (6) “Hugh Nibley: The Faithful Scholar,” in *Eloquent Witness: Hugh Nibley: Nibley on Himself, Others, and the Temple*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008), 23–45. This is an edited version of my effort to interview Nibley at a BYU forum assembly held in the Marriott Center on 21 May 1974; (7) “Review of *One Eternal Round*, by Hugh Nibley and Michael D. Rhodes,” *FARMS Review* 22, no.1 (2010): 282–85; (8) (with Shirley Ricks) “Hugh Winder Nibley Bibliography and Register,” in *By Study and Also By Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, vol. 1, eds. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1990); revised and extended, 1 March 2010, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/resources/hugh-w-nibley-resources/>.

However, all those who have contributed to this book in any way have simply ignored Nibley's aversion and honor him anyway.

Nibley brought light and life to those who genuinely desired further light and knowledge. He also helped strengthen the faith of many Saints, which is what he seems to have believed was what he was *destined to do* during his own mortal probation. Some of the Latter-day Saints who knew him or who have been influenced by him are still eager to express appreciation and even their deep affection for his dedicated scholarship and for him personally. I must stress again that even though many Latter-day Saints have found in his addresses, teachings, lectures, essays, and books striking new insights, information, and understanding, Nibley resisted as well as he could efforts honor him.

I once asked Hugh in a large gathering in the Marriott Center² who he was trying to please. His answer was "my Father in Heaven."³ That has shown in his life and his work.

This current effort at honoring Nibley — this time posthumously — is the third effort to do this. Jeff Bradshaw describes this book as a *Festschrift*, which is a German word that combines *fest*, meaning "celebration," with *schrift*, meaning "writing." Thus a *Festschrift* is a collection of essays honoring a scholar (p. 5). *Hugh Nibley Observed* is evidence that many Latter-day Saints owe a huge debt to Hugh Nibley. Bradshaw begins by describing the preparation of essays in 1975 honoring Nibley entitled *Tinkling Symbols*, which was circulated privately (p. 7), and also a truly "powerful video" (p. xv) about Nibley's own faith entitled "The Faith of an Observer: Conversations with Hugh Nibley." Again, the problem was that Nibley did not want to be honored (p. 7).

The second and most ambitious collection of essays honoring Nibley is the 1400-page two-volume *By Study and Also By Faith*. This was begun in 1985 and was ready to be published the next year. But those at the Religious Studies Center would not send it to the printer. Jacob Neusner, the most widely published Jewish scholar at that time, had submitted two essays honoring Nibley and was demanding that it be published. Jack Welch eventually stepped in, and these two volumes were published by Deseret Book (and FARMS) in 1990.

2. For a transcript of this interview, see "Hugh Nibley: The Faithful Scholar," in *Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others, and the Temple, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, vol. 17 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 23–50. (This is an edited transcript of an interview with Nibley that I conducted at a BYU Forum Assembly in the Marriott Center on 21 May 1974.)

3. *Ibid.*, 25.

Nibley was entirely unaware that the two-volume *Festschrift* in his honor was in the works. It was my privilege to go with Shirley and Stephen Ricks to present him with a copy of the first volume. He really liked the title. He was also delighted with the essays by Aziz S. Atiya, James H. Charlesworth, Cyrus H. Gordon, Jacob Milgrom, Jacob Neusner, and Raphael Patai. Then, suddenly Nibley realized these essays were in his honor. He said, “this is for me,” and for a moment was without words. He then noticed an essay by Bill Hamblin on “Aspects of Early Christian Initiation Ritual” and explained that he had been thinking about the temple. He proceeded to lecture the three of us about what we probably had not yet grasped about the endowment and other elements of the temple. He said he was initially but only momentarily annoyed when something had recently been changed in the endowment, but he also realized that he was aware of earlier changes, and hence he was confident it would need to be modified to better fit our own needs and also especially those of other cultures, even if such changes are shocking to the Saints and even to him.

Soon there was a public event at which Nibley was presented with the second volume of *By Study and Faith*. He had to listen to letters read and remarks from his friends. In his own brief response, he complained about having to endure honors he had not sought; his ironic wit was on full display, as was his own passion for mocking stuffed shirts. He commented on his regret in not bringing with him a handbook of clichés and indicated that he would have to improvise as well as he could.

The Variety of Contents

Hugh Nibley Observed is divided into four parts. Part 1, “Portraits,” consists of three items (pp. 25–54). Part 2, entitled “Nibley, the Scholar,” includes the “Nibley Centennial Lecture Series,” which consisted of essays on Nibley by thirteen distinguished scholars or by those who knew him intimately (pp. 57–386). These are followed by eight essays assessing “The Scholarship of Hugh Nibley” (pp. 387–544).

Part 3, “Nibley, The Man,” consists of eleven “Selected Tributes at the Passing of Hugh Nibley” (pp. 549–630), which include the remarks of his children (pp. 549–84). These are followed by five “Personal Stories, Perspectives, and Reminiscences” (pp. 631–772), the most important of which is Jane D. Brady’s striking “The BYU Folklore of Hugh W. Nibley” (631–96).

The “Index of Passages” (pp. 773–78) makes it easy to discover where the scriptures and other sources are cited. I am pleased that the

vast number of notes are at the end of each essay. It would have been impossible to have them at the end of the large book. The “Index” (779–99) is truly remarkable and especially on Nibley’s publications and every name found in this volume.

Where to Begin?

With the variety of contents just recounted, I have felt obligated to actually read the entire book I am now strongly promoting. I must admit that I struggled to find language fit to describe the excellence of *Hugh Nibley Observed*. I began with confidence that I really knew my friend. I must admit that in my reading of the book, I have learned much that was new to me. I also want to suggest how one might approach this book.

After one has given due attention to the “Introduction” (pp. 1–14) and then read, or read again, Nibley’s own “An Intellectual Autobiography: Some High and Low Points” (pp. 37–54), I suggest reading Daniel C. Peterson’s “Nibley as an Apologist” (141–74), where one will learn, or learn again, that building — and also *defending* — the Kingdom of God is a solemn covenant the faithful make. This was a covenant that dominated Nibley’s entire life. In Dan’s essay he recounts the story of a young Hugh Nibley in turmoil about divine things and then what led to his experiencing a stunning *life-after-life event*, or what is now most often referred to as a *near-death experience* (pp. 164–66). This experience settled for Hugh certain questions and equipped him with a desire to defend the faith and the Saints.⁴

I also urge special attention to what Jack Welch has written about Nibley (25–30; 585–94), then the remarks about him by Richard Bushman, who focuses his attention at how Nibley sees Joseph Smith and those who have followed him (pp. 99–116). I also recommend Robert Millet’s essay (pp. 117–40).

If you cannot tell, it is difficult not to reproduce the entire Table of Contents of this remarkable book when recommending what one should read.

4. Hugh and his wife, Phyllis, once came to visit the Midgleys. Just a few moments after they arrived, Phyllis said something to my wife, and Hugh told her that “we don’t talk about that!” Both my wife and I said, “Oh yes we do!” Phyllis then strongly urged Hugh to tell the entire story, which he did. What we heard that afternoon in my living room explained in detail why Hugh Nibley was as dedicated as he obviously was to the Saints, his faith, and his academic ventures.

A Conversation with Neusner

Jacob Neusner (1932–2016) published essays in earlier *Festschrifts* to Nibley.⁵ He was by far the most widely published Jewish scholar, having written or published over 900 books. Neusner was interested in and knew much of the crucial facts about the Restored Gospel.⁶ Once, when he was at BYU giving lectures, a group of us met with him. I remember Neusner sitting directly opposite me, with Hugh Nibley on his right. Truman Madsen was on my right and Kent Brown on my left. There were also others sitting at that table in a comfortable room in the Wilkinson Center.

The conversation began with Neusner asking Nibley what he was currently working on, to which he replied that he was at work on the Enoch materials. The two checked to see that they were talking about the same Enoch literature. They were, and Neusner said that this literature was “junk.” Nibley then indicated that in June 1830 Joseph Smith gave us a new version of the Enoch materials that was embedded in a new version of the literature on Moses.⁷

Neusner demanded to know what was in this new Enoch text. He looked directly at me, and I must admit I was delighted when Madsen explained what was in this “new Enoch material” found in the Book of Moses. Nibley added one or two additional items to the conversation. In response, Neusner said he would now have to invent a mysterious rabbi from the East whom no one had ever heard about and who somehow turned up in Kirtland, Ohio, with information about Enoch that only he knew, and who then disappeared.

Neusner then said that we “seemed like bright learned fellows but that Nibley stood far above all of us.” The exchange between Nibley and Neusner led Neusner to say to Nibley that he just had to be Jewish. Someone — I think it was Madsen — explained that Nibley was a descendant of Alexander Neibaur, the first Jewish convert to The Church of Jesus Christ and also one who knew Joseph Smith. Neibaur

5. See Jacob Neusner, “The Case of Leviticus Rabbah,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley*, vol. 1, 332–88; Jacob Neusner, “Why No New Judaism in the Twentieth Century?” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley*, vol. 2, eds. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 552–84.

6. See Jacob Neusner, “Conversation in Nauvoo about the Corporeality of God,” *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996): 7–30.

7. It is found in chapters 6 and 7 of the Book of Moses. What Nibley wrote is most conveniently reproduced in *Enoch the Prophet, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, vol 2, ed. Stephen Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986).

was born in Koblenz and educated at the University of Berlin. He was fluent in seven languages. Madsen also said that some of us, which included me, had tried to discover a Jewish ancestry.

Some Other Encounters and Lessons

In the mid-to-late 1960s, Charles Malik spoke at BYU multiple times.⁸ The first time he visited and spoke was, if I recall correctly, in either 1962 or 1963. Hugh Nibley was in attendance at the address, as were several faculty from the Department of Political Science. Immediately after the address there was a luncheon for our distinguished guest. Ray Hillam, a colleague from the Department of Political Science, and I waited outside the room where the luncheon took place, since we were going to drive Malik to Salt Lake City, where he would have an audience with Henry D. Moyle, then a member of the First Presidency. Ray Hillam was eager to talk with Malik about international relations. Since I had written my PhD dissertation on Paul Tillich, then a very famous German/American theologian, and Malik knew him well, I was hoping to also talk about Tillich. It turned out that neither of us got to ask Malik a single thing about ether topic.

When Malik came out of the luncheon, Nibley darted out of his nearby office and handed a Book of Mormon to Malik. He said something to Malik in Arabic, the official language of Lebanon, and then went back into his office. As we walked a few yards to the vehicle in which we were going to take Malik to Salt Lake City to visit with President Moyle, he wanted to know why that fellow had said to him in perfect Arabic that “the best kept secret at Brigham Young University was the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.” Hillam and I did our best to explain to Malik the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith as well as the restoration of the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When we were met at Church Headquarters and were taken to President Moyle’s office, Malik refused to be given a tour of the Church’s welfare facilities that had been arranged for him. Instead, he insisted that President Moyle continue the conversation that had begun on our way from Provo. After he heard about the fellow speaking to Malik in Arabic, President Moyle asked me if it was Hugh Nibley, and I nodded.

President Moyle had to cancel appointments so he could struggle along with the two of us to introduce the Restored Gospel to Malik, who insisted that we focus on the Book of Mormon. This conversation went on for nearly

8. Charles Malik (1906–1987) was a very distinguished Lebanese philosopher and diplomat who had served as President of the United Nations General Assembly.

two hours, when Hillam and I were sent on our way. President Moyle, I believe, went with Malik to the airport to continue the “missionary” lesson.

That experience taught me, or forced me, or shamed me to henceforth be much, much better prepared to give the reasons for the faith that is in me to those with whom I come in contact, whatever their standing in this often disconsolate world.

The last time I was able to visit with Hugh Nibley, his wife Phyllis phoned me early one afternoon and asked that I come to their home. Hugh had heard that my wife and I had visited Normandy, and he wanted to talk to me about what we had experienced. I arrived to find him on a hospital bed in their living room. He was eager to talk but had a struggle to do so. He began with a question about someone he thought had lived in or was from New Zealand. I had never heard of this person. He also wanted to know why I had not told him about those *matakite* (seers) who prepared some Maori for our missionaries and their message.⁹ I tried to explain that I was never eager to lecture him on anything.

Then he wanted to know if I had visited Utah Beach, where he had landed, and whether I had visited the wonderful Airborne Museum at Sainte-Mère-Église and seen the gliders and hundreds of other items used in that huge undertaking. I had. He also wanted to know if I had visited Omaha Beach, where a thousand soldiers had been killed before two heroic events suddenly turned what looked like a sure defeat into a bloody victory. This led him to moan about the utter evil and necessity of war. Then he asked me if I had visited Bayeux and seen the famous tapestry that provides important information about the Norman invasion of England in 1066. Again, I had.

Suddenly Nibley complained that “we” at the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) were treating him, as he put it, as if he were already dead, since he had not received the latest issue of the *FARMS Review*. At that very moment the doorbell rang; it was the postman with the most recent issue. This pleased him greatly, though he would not be able to read it. Phyllis, though, would read every word to him, including the footnotes.

I mention this story because Nibley saw in FARMS an effort to keep alive his own passion for a deeper and better understanding of the contents

9. For the most recent treatment of this, see Robert Joseph, “The Lord Will Not Forget Them: Maori Seers and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand,” in *Remembrance and Return: Essays in Honor of Louis C. Midgley*, eds. Ted Vaggalis and Daniel C. Peterson (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation, 2019), 323–70.

of our scriptures, and also the defense of the Restoration from both sectarian and secular criticisms, as unsavory as doing this sometimes turns out to be.

Closing Thoughts

When Hugh Nibley began in 1948¹⁰ to argue that the Book of Mormon was an authentic ancient history,¹¹ there was no Mormon History Association; it came later, in 1965.¹² Long before there was such a thing, Nibley was busy setting out reasons why the Book of Mormon is and must be read as an authentic ancient history, not as merely a product of Joseph Smith's environment and imagination.

When Nibley began to publish, there were no Latter-day Saint historians prepared to respond when Fawn Brodie published her deeply flawed book on Joseph Smith.¹³ Nibley stepped up and did some counterpunching until others came along and were competent, capable, and willing to flesh out the details of the Restoration and subsequent history of the Church of Jesus Christ, which is an ongoing undertaking. Nibley was willing to let others work on that kind of history.

Speaking of history, there are those who are still wrongly enthralled by some version of the myth of objectivity — that is, that only those who are neutral, dispassionate, indifferent, balanced, disinterested, or detached can possibly manage to produce an “objective” account of Latter-day Saint history or of those important to the faith of Latter-day Saints like Hugh Nibley. He had no illusions about objective history or historians; neither should the Saints or those who write about the past.

In 1957 Hugh Nibley responded to those who “have noted with disapproval” that he defends the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon. His response was that “no fruitful work of science or scholarship was ever written that did not attempt to prove one thing and in so doing disprove another.”¹⁴ Then there were those who wrongly insisted that

10. See Hugh Nibley, “The Book of Mormon as a Mirror of the East,” *Improvement Era* 51, no. 4 (April 1948): 202–204, 349–51. This was soon followed by two long series of essays in 1950 and 1952, which were soon published as books, both on the ancient setting of the Book of Mormon.

11. One must keep in mind that Nibley's *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* was first published in 1957.

12. The official publication of the Mormon History Association, the *Journal of Mormon History*, began publication in 1974.

13. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945).

14. Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon: Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

to defend even their own faith was not what “objective historians” should ever do. This dogma came crashing down when Peter Novick exposed and demolished the myth of objective history and objective historians.¹⁵

In 1979 Jack Welch launched the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), whose name was changed in 2006 to the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. Among other things, one purpose for FARMS was to situate the Book of Mormon in the ancient world and not in Joseph Smith’s immediate environment. Hugh Nibley became an enthusiastic contributor and then later consumer of the literary products of this necessary, ongoing endeavor.¹⁶

Hugh Nibley was a mentor, a colleague, and a friend. His legacy is immense, and all those who seek to understand and defend the gospel owe him a debt of gratitude. I believe that *Hugh Nibley Observed* provides much-needed information about Nibley’s life and times. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in the man or his legacy.

Louis Midgley (PhD, Brown University) is an emeritus professor of political science at Brigham Young University, where he taught the history of political philosophy, which includes efforts of Christian churchmen and theologians to identify, explain, understand, and cope with the evils in this world. Dr. Midgley has therefore had an abiding interest in both dogmatic and systematic theology, and the alternatives to both. His doctoral dissertation was on the religious socialist political ideology of Paul Tillich, a once famous German American Protestant theologian, most famous for his systematic theology which is a radical elaboration of classical theism. Dr. Midgley’s encounter with the writings of Leo Strauss, an influential Jewish philosopher/intellectual historian drew his attention to the radical challenge posed by what is often called modernity to both the wisdom of Jerusalem, which is grounded on divine revelation, and also the contrasting, competing wisdom of Athens, which was fashioned by unaided human reason. Dr. Midgley has an interest in the ways in which communities of faith have responded to the challenges posed by modernity to faith in God grounded on divine special revelation.

(Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1957), 11.

15. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

16. As an example, see the recent publication of Grant Hardy, ed., *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, Maxwell Institute Study Edition* (Provo, UT: UT: Neal A Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University / Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018), as well as the publications of the Interpreter Foundation and Book of Mormon Central.

MATTHEW BLACK AND MIRCEA ELIADE MEET HUGH NIBLEY

Gordon C. Thomasson

Abstract: *As a graduate student, Gordon Thomasson had the opportunity to introduce two internationally renowned scholars to the publications and scholarship of Hugh Nibley: Matthew Black, an eminent scholar of ancient Enoch writings; and Mircea Eliade, famed chair of the History of Religions program at the University of Chicago. Upon hearing of Nibley's Enoch discoveries, Black made an immediate, impromptu visit to BYU to meet him. Upon reading one of Nibley's studies, Eliade proposed hiring him on the spot, exclaiming, "He knows my field better than I do, and his translations are elegant!"*

[Editor's Note: Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.

See Gordon C. Thomasson, "Matthew Black and Mircea Eliade Meet Hugh Nibley," in *Hugh Nibley Observed*, ed. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Shirley S. Ricks, and Stephen T. Whitlock" (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2021), 423–432. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/hugh-nibley-observed/>.]

Matthew Black¹

I left BYU in 1968 after suffering, as a passenger, in six months' time what normally would have been two fatal automobile accidents. Already having been admitted to University of California, Santa Barbara,



Figure 1. Matthew Black (1908–1994). “Waiting until the last of the lecture crowd had disappeared, I asked Professor Black if he was familiar with Joseph Smith’s Enoch text. He said he was not but was interested.”¹⁰

Professor Nibley told me that if I came back to complete advanced degrees in religion at BYU he would never speak to me again, because I “would have nothing to say” (Hugh then made an explicitly pointed critique of academic inbreeding in BYU religion at the time). During the rest of my graduate studies elsewhere, I stayed in contact with him through various means, primarily because I still sporadically worked on Brigham Young materials we had researched together. My other responsibilities to him



Figure 2. Gordon Thomasson participates in a panel discussion at the “Enoch and the Temple” conference, BYU, February 22, 2013.”¹¹

at BYU had included my subsequently continuing study and critiques of both Latter-day Saint apologetics for the Book of Mormon (a never-completed thesis) and of temple-related ritual texts across cultures and through world history. I also continued to follow his other research.

Among other projects, Hugh continued to publish serially on aspects of the Pearl of Great Price, first focusing on Abraham and then on Enoch. The Enoch research appeared in the *Ensign* magazine as “A Strange Thing in the Land: The Return of the Book of Enoch” (1976–1977). Some of these and others of his writings on Enoch later appeared with slightly altered content in *Enoch the Prophet*.² Latter-day Saint interest in the study of these texts continues.³

After I left BYU, Terrell M. Butler, a fellow graduate student at Cornell, invited me to join him in attending a guest lecture there that was to be given by Matthew Black. [Professor Black had collaborated with Józef Milik in the first translation of the Aramaic fragments of the *Book of Giants* into English in 1976.⁴ The *Book of Giants*, one of the oldest extant Enoch texts, had been found at Qumran among the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1948.]

Professor Black had come to the United States to take up residence at Princeton’s Institute for Advanced Study (1977–1978) and had been

invited to Cornell to discuss his research on Enoch, including especially the Qumran sources and later correlations. I had no particular expectations until Professor Black advanced his conclusion that those Enoch texts were part of a genuine tradition and predated Genesis, that Moses had drawn upon those Enoch sources in creating Genesis, and that certain carefully clandestine groups had, up through the Middle Ages, maintained, *sub rosa*, an esoteric religious tradition based in the writings of Enoch, at least into the time of and influencing Dante.

I should note that at that time I had more or less firmly in memory a series of clear differences Hugh had shown between *1 Enoch* (the 1821 Laurence text, at least available in theory to Joseph Smith),⁵ the clearly distinct “Extracts,” which the Prophet had published (1832), and later Enoch texts discovered after 1844.⁶

I had elsewhere explored the concept of text availability, beginning in the 1960s, using what I then defined as an “information environment” (consisting of what hard evidence shows could have been known from manuscripts, inscriptions, and so forth at a given time and place on a specific topic or text).

Waiting until the last of the lecture crowd had disappeared, I asked Professor Black if he was familiar with Joseph Smith’s Enoch text. He said he was not but was interested. He first asked if it was identical or similar to *1 Enoch*. I told him it was not and then proceeded to recite some of the correlations Dr. Nibley had shown with Milik and Black’s own and others’ Qumran and Ethiopic Enoch materials. He became quiet. When I got to Mahujah (Moses 7:2), he raised his hand in a “please pause” gesture and was silent.

Finally, he acknowledged that the place-name of Mahujah could not have come from *1 Enoch*. He then formulated a hypothesis, consistent with his lecture, that a member of one of the esoteric groups he had described previously must have survived into the nineteenth century, and hearing of Joseph Smith, must have brought the group’s Enoch texts to New York from Italy for the Prophet to translate and publish. I did not argue the point that the Book of Moses might not have been available in Europe in time for someone to sail to the United States and get to upstate New York to meet a late 1830 (or even 1832) “publication deadline.”

At the end of our conversation he expressed an interest in seeing more of Hugh’s work. I proposed that Black should meet with Hugh, gave him the contact information, and he contacted Hugh the same day, as Hugh later confirmed to me. Soon he made a previously unplanned

May 6, 1997

██████████
 ██████████
 ██████████

Dear Brother ██████████

The map to which you refer has been duly noted and discussed at some length in my forthcoming book. The Oxford Edition of the Book of Enoch was edited by Matthew Black and Malik. On the week it appeared in 1976, I spent several days with Dr. Black. He was greatly impressed by certain parallels between the Qumran Book of Enoch and Joseph Smith's. When I started asking for explanations he would switch to other topics, a ploy all too familiar with the Brotherhood. He is president of the St. Andrews Golf Club in Scotland; the oldest in the world, and greatly preferred talking golf with Billy Casper, who also happened to be visiting here at the time, than splitting heads about the Book of Enoch. He did say a number of times, shaking his head in a bemused fashion, "Someday we will find out where Joseph Smith got that...Someday a source will turn up." Which I doubt not for a moment, since we already have an impressive sampling. I am afraid it will not be what Brother Black is hoping for.

Yours truly,

H. Nibley

HN/pw

Figure 3. Here Nibley summarized his conversations with Professor Matthew Black on the Book of Moses Enoch account during Black's 1976 visit to BYU.¹²

trip to Provo where he met with Hugh for some time and also gave a public guest lecture but, as I was told, in that public forum would not entertain questions on Moses.

While Hugh subsequently told me the two of them enjoyed a long, private conversation (oh, to have been a fly on the wall!), Black, however, refused to entertain any questions about the Latter-day Saint scriptures in his public lecture.

[Editor's note: Hugh Nibley also recorded an account of his interactions with Matthew Black during the latter's 1976 visit to BYU. The account included a conversation with Black that apparently occurred near the end of the visit. Nibley asked Black if he had an explanation for the appearance of the name Mahujah in the Book of Moses and reported his answer as follows: "Well, someday we will find out the source that Joseph Smith used."⁷]

Mircea Eliade⁸

A plush offer to Mircea Eliade of a visiting position in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, during our winter quarters, combined with his lack of interest in spending those



Figure 4. Mircea Eliade (1907–1986). “He sat me down and asked, ‘Who is this Hugh Nibley and why haven’t I ever heard of him?’ and so forth. ‘He knows my field better than I do,’ Eliade continued, ‘and his translations are elegant.’”¹³

same winter months in Chicago, brought me into contact with him both as a student in a graduate seminar and as the graduate assistant for his advanced undergraduate seminar.

Eliade’s methodology in dealing with archetypes was, at its best, subjective (as all methodologies must be). But it had its publicly recognized downside as well. Some common criticisms of Eliade’s work included his being highly reliant on secondary sources and on translations for the countless texts he employed from outside the Indo-European tradition (in many Indo-European languages — including Sanskrit — he was quite able) and for presenting as parallels or archetypes images that could only be sustained when taken out of context or given in translation. Moreover, when pressed as to how archetypal resemblances were shared among peoples and cultures, Eliade verbally admitted that as far as he could tell the archetypes had to be based in a common genetics. This raises far more problems than it can ever answer, of course. As a result, I believe, he avoided questions of cultural diffusion about which other Europeans — unlike most North Americans, especially in the field of cultural anthropology — are quite open.

I witnessed something with Eliade when I worked in his undergraduate seminar that term. We did not have a clear thread visible

in the syllabus as to where he was headed, but I began to see the red line of Ariadne's clue running through his seminar in the direction of Nibley's article "The Expanding Gospel."⁹ The next week, at the end of the seminar, I gave Eliade a copy of that article and suggested that he might find it relevant. The following week he was nearly jumping out of his skin and could hardly wait to shoo the undergrads out after class. Then he sat me down and asked, "Who is this Hugh Nibley and why haven't I ever heard of him?" and so forth. "He knows my field better than I do," Eliade continued, "and his translations are elegant."

I explained, among other things, that he published in the journals of a number of different disciplines outside the history of religions, depending on his research and the texts he was working on at the moment. We then spent the better part of an hour going over the article, and I noted to him as the discussion progressed, without being too explicit, where or how Latter-day Saint apologetic and esoteric subtexts ran through the article. He replied (paraphrasing here), "Who cares? His evidence and logic are faultless."

He then went on to ask explicitly if he could hire Hugh to teach in his History of Religions program at Chicago. I said I didn't think so, that he had unlimited book-buying power (the Jackling Fund) and all the library he needed where he was and that Hugh had already been at Chicago. "Impossible! I would have known him!" replied Eliade.

I then dropped what I knew was an explosive depth charge, thinking it might well end the discussion: "But he was at the Oriental Institute." And Professor Anthon tore up the transcript . . . well, not quite. We continued the discussion, but not until after he had said, "You're right, he wouldn't fit in our program, I suspect." (There was no love or academic respect between the Oriental Institute, which advocated the use of primary sources only, and Eliade's History of Religions school, where a dissertation could be done using mainly secondary sources.)

Subsequently, however, at Eliade's request, I spent the rest of the semester giving him copies of what I thought were the most appropriate Nibley articles. He devoured them in turn and then quizzed me about them after class each week, in case he had missed something. Eliade knew that all scholars have a bias. (Once, in an unguarded moment, he allowed that his Romanian Orthodox Christianity really was *it*.) More important to him in our discussions was how well scholars read and quote (in context), translate, use logic, or, in other words, play by the rules. Only his return to Chicago ended our private "seminar."

In my direct, personal experience and at my invitation, other research university and world-class scholars have, like Black and Eliade, read and given very positive ratings to Nibley's work when it has overlapped their own and when I submitted it for their consideration with no preface other than "What do you think of this?"

Gordon C. Thomasson, a professor emeritus of anthropology and history, has taught at Marlboro College, the City University of New York, the School for International Training, Broome Community College, and Cuttington University College (Liberia). His PhD from Cornell University dealt with indigenous knowledge systems and self-directed socioeconomic development in Liberia. He has a master's in world religions from UC Santa Barbara and a bachelor's in psychology from UCLA. He spent two years serving as graduate research assistant to Hugh Nibley at BYU. He was principal author, editor, and publisher of War, Conscription, Conscience and Mormonism (1971) and has also written numerous articles for books, journals, and encyclopedias, most recently an article on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for the Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace.

Notes

- 1 This account is drawn from a written account in the possession of Jeffrey M. Bradshaw that was requested after a panel presentation that Thomasson made on February, 22, 2013 at the "Enoch and the Temple Conference," BYU, Provo, Utah. See Gordon C. Thomasson, "Items on Enoch—Some Notes of Personal History. Expansion of remarks given at the Conference on Enoch and the Temple, Academy for Temple Studies, Provo, Utah, February 22, 2013," (unpublished manuscript in the possession of Bradshaw, February 25, 2013). The account includes a few small corrections made by Thomasson in an email message to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw on April 7, 2014. The present chapter, including the additional material about Mircea Eliade, was reviewed and approved by Gordon and Liz Thomasson prior to publication. See also A. N. Madsen, "Hugh Nibley and the Bible," in *Hugh Nibley Observed*, ed. Ted Vaggalis and Daniel C. Peterson (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2021), 214–15.

For a detailed report of new findings that build on Nibley's pioneering research on resemblances between Mahijah/Mahujah in the Book of Moses and Mahaway/Mahawai in the Dead Sea Scrolls *Book of Giants*, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Matthew L. Bowen, and Ryan Dahle, "Where Did the Names 'Mahaway' and 'Mahujah' Come From?: A Response to Colby Townsend's 'Returning to the Sources,'" *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 40 (2020): 181–242. <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/where-did-the-names-mahaway-and-mahujah-come-from-a-response-to-colby-townsend-s-returning-to-the-sources-part-2-of-2/>.

For more on the Book of Moses story of Enoch, including up-to-date research on its relationship to ancient sources, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Enoch and the Gathering of Zion: The Witness of Ancient Texts for Modern Scripture* (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Srpingville, UT: Book of Mormon Central; Tooele, UT: Eborn Books, forthcoming 2021).

For an in-depth survey of current scholarship outlining evidence on sources for the Book of Moses in antiquity, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, David Rolph Seely, John W. Welch, and Scott Gordon, eds. *Tracing Ancient Threads in the Book of Moses* (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Springville, UT: Book of Mormon Central; Redding, CA: FAIR; Tooele, UT: Eborn Books, forthcoming 2021).

- 2 See Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1986).
- 3 For example, Terry L. Givens and Fiona Givens, *The God Who Weeps: How Mormonism Makes Sense of Life* (Salt Lake City: Ensign Peak, 2012).
- 4 See Józef Tadeusz Milik and Matthew Black, eds., *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments from Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976). <https://archive.org/details/MILIKEnochInAramaicQumranCave4>.
- 5 See Richard Laurence, ed., *The Book of Enoch the Prophet: Translated from an Ethiopic Manuscript in the Bodleian Library, the Text Now Corrected from His Latest Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1883). <http://archive.org/details/bookofenochproph00laur>.
- 6 For example, Philip S. Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James

- H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1:223–315; F. I. Andersen, “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:91–221. <https://eclass.uoa.gr/modules/document/file.php/THEOL264/James%20H.%20Charlesworth%20The%20Old%20Testament%20Pseudepigrapha%2C%20Vol.%201%20Apocalyptic%20Literature%20and%20Testaments%201983.pdf>; Milik and Black, *Books of Enoch*.
- 7 Hugh Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 269. For the complete account from Nibley, see 267–69. In addition, see a video excerpt of an interview of Hugh Nibley recorded in connection with a National Interfaith Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls, November 20, 1992, in the Kresge Auditorium of Stanford University. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tTuzRQ6bcI>. Nibley’s comments on his encounter with Professor Black appear at about 6:04–6:50.
 - 8 This account was drawn from an appendix by Thomasson published in William J. Hamblin and Gordon C. Thomasson, “Joseph or Jung? A Response to Douglas Salmon.” *FARMS Review of Books* 13, no. 2 (2001): 87–107. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1486&context=msr>.
 - 9 See Hugh Nibley, “The Expanding Gospel,” in *Temple and Cosmos* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), 171–211.
 - 10 Photograph by Walter Bird (1903–1969), 1965. National Portrait Gallery, London, <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp77746/matthew-black>. For a brief biography of Matthew Black, see William McKane, “Matthew Black,” in *Obituaries of Past Fellows, Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 1994. http://www.royalsoced.org.uk/cms/files/fellows/obits_alpha/black_matthew.pdf. Photo ID: Figure 06-Matthew Black-300 dpt-x165287.jpeg.
 - 11 From the Academy for Temple Studies YouTube channel, “Second Panel Discussion in Provo - Enoch and the Temple.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acL7ktQTZ2E>. Photo ID: Gordon Thomasson at Enoch Conference.jpg.
 - 12 Nibley, “Letter, May 6, 1997,” Petersen Collection, box 3, folder 3. Photo ID: 970506-Nibley letter on Matthew Black.png.
 - 13 Photograph from Facebook Mircea Eliade Fan Page. <https://www.facebook.com/MirceaEliadeFanPage/>. Photo ID: Unknown.jpeg.

THE BRASS PLATES: CAN MODERN SCHOLARSHIP HELP IDENTIFY THEIR CONTENTS?

A. Keith Thompson

Abstract: *The Book of Mormon contains little information about what the Brass Plates contain. Nephi said it was a larger record than the Hebrew Bible brought to America by the Gentiles. But it could not have contained the records of Old Testament prophets who wrote after Lehi's party left Jerusalem or the New Testament. We know it contained some writings from Zenos, Zenock, Neum, and Ezias, but what else could it have contained? Though the proposal from modern biblical source criticism that the Christian Bible is the product of redactors sometimes working with multiple sources is distasteful to many Christians, this article suggests this scholarship should not trouble Latter-day Saints, who celebrate Mormon's scriptural abridgement of ancient American scripture. This article also revisits the insights of some Latter-day Saint scholars who have suggested the Brass Plates are a record of the tribe of Joseph, and this may explain its scriptural content. The eight verses from Micah 5, which Christ quoted three times during His visit to the Nephites and which did not previously appear in Mormon's abridgment, receive close analysis.*

Shortly after Lehi and his family departed into the wilderness, Lehi was commanded in a dream to send his sons back to Jerusalem to obtain "the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers ... engraven upon plates of brass" held by Laban (1 Nephi 3:2–3). When the sons returned from that mission, Lehi examined the plates of brass, and Nephi recorded the following summary of what they contained:

They did contain the five books of Moses, which gave an account of the creation of the world, and also of Adam and Eve, who were our first parents.

And also a record of the Jews from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah;

And also the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah; and also many prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah ... [and] a genealogy of [Lehi's] father; wherefore he knew he was as descendant of Joseph; yea, even that Joseph who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt, and who was preserved by the hand of the Lord, that he might preserve his father, Jacob, and all his household from perishing with famine.

And they were also led out of captivity and out of the land of Egypt, by that same God who had preserved them.

And thus my father, Lehi, did discover the genealogy of his fathers. And Laban also was a descendant of Joseph, wherefore he and his fathers had kept the records. (1 Nephi 5:11–16)

The Book of Mormon does not directly reveal a great deal more about the contents of those plates save perhaps for Mormon's editorial comment immediately before he started his account of Christ's visit to the Americas in 3 Nephi 11. In the preceding chapter, Mormon commented on the destruction on the face of his land which accompanied the death of Christ at Jerusalem as follows:

And now, whoso readeth, let him understand; he that hath the scriptures, let him search them, and see and behold if all these deaths and destructions by fire, and by smoke, and by tempests, and by whirlwinds, and by the opening of the earth to receive them, and all these things are not unto the fulfilling of the prophecies of many of the holy prophets.

Behold, I say unto you, Yea, many have testified of these things at the coming of Christ, and were slain because they testified of these things.

Yea, the prophet Zenos did testify of all these things, and also Zenock spake concerning these things, because they testified particularly concerning us, who are the remnant of their seed.

Behold, our father Jacob also testified concerning a remnant of the seed of Joseph. And behold, are we not a remnant of the seed of Joseph? And these things which testify of us, are they

not written upon the plates of brass which our father Lehi brought out of Jerusalem? (3 Nephi 10:14–17)

This editorial statement seems to confirm that the Brass Plates contained records sacred to and preserved by the members of the tribe of Joseph who had escaped the Assyrian invasion of Samaria.¹ Several Latter-day Saint authors have suggested that Julius Wellhausen's 19th century "Documentary Hypothesis" regarding the Pentateuch and the proposal that there were distinct differences between Northern and Southern scripture after the Kingdom divided² corresponds with the Northern origin of the Brass Plates. Some Latter-day Saint authors even suggest that "the Brass Plates ... may have been the official scriptures of the Ten Tribes."³

While this article is written in that context, its focus is to work out if modern scholarship sheds any light on what we know about the contents of the Brass Plates from the text of the Book of Mormon and collateral comments by the Prophet Joseph Smith and his contemporaries. It

1. 1 Chronicles 9:3; 2 Chronicles 15:9. Note that many from Ephraim and Manasseh migrated to Judah during the reign of King Asa over the Southern Kingdom. Some estimates hold that Jerusalem tripled in size after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom (Allen Kendall, "The Deuteronomic Contribution to the Brass Plates" [Student Symposium, Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, February 19, 2016], 4). In a revisionist article in 2007, Nadav Na'aman has, however, doubted estimates that Jerusalem grew somewhere between four and fifteen times due to these refugees ("When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City? The Rise of Jerusalem as Judah's Premier City in Eighth-Seventh Centuries B.C.E.," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 347 [August 2007]: 21–56, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25067021>).

2. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena To The History Of Israel*, trans. J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies (Illinois: Project Gutenberg, 2003), an e-text based on the 1885 English translation, <https://archive.org/details/ProlegomenaToTheHistoryOfIsrael/mode/2up>. For examples of Latter-day Saint responses, see John L. Sorenson, "The 'Brass Plates' and Biblical Scholarship," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10, no. 4 (1977): 31–39; https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V10N04_33.pdf; and Richard G. Grant, "The Book of Mormon Brass Plates and Their Prophets," *Come to Zarahemla*, archived article available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20180903052356/https://www.cometozarahemla.org/brassplates/brass-plates.html>.

3. Andrew C. Skinner, "Nephi's Lessons to His People: The Messiah, the Land, Isaiah 48–49 in 1 Nephi 19–22" in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, eds. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 95; referring to Sidney B. Sperry, *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967), 43–44.

seems, for example, that some words of the Prophet Neum were on the Brass Plates (1 Nephi 19:10), but it is not certain that the prophets Neum and Nahum were the same person, as has been speculated,⁴ since the Old Testament record of Nahum's prophecies do not include a prophecy that the Messiah would be crucified, which is the principal reason Neum was referred to by the Book of Mormon prophets. This article discusses in four parts the educated speculation about the contents of the Brass Plates and suggests that more can be identified by identifying the source of other biblical allusions which already exist within the Book of Mormon text.

Because the Brass Plates may have Northern Kingdom ancestry and may assist in identifying their contents, Part I begins with a summary of the scholarship and evidence that grounds the theory of a Northern origin of the Brass Plates, including the role of modern biblical source criticism, particularly the so-called "Documentary Hypothesis" involving multiple proposed sources behind the Pentateuch.⁵ The idea that Northern Kingdom scripture emphasized the fatherhood of Elohim in preference to references to Jehovah in Southern Kingdom scripture is noted as part of the difference in focus of the theoretically different source material. But in Part II, I discuss how the Book of Mormon's focus on Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of all men influenced what earlier scripture the Book of Mormon referred to; and I explain why Isaiah received so much attention, even though he was a Southern Kingdom prophet.

In Part III, I review the scriptures which Jesus used in his ministry among the Nephites, recognizing that He specifically restored some passages they did not have — for example, two chapters of Malachi (3 Nephi 24:1). But I suggest that Christ may have restored parts of Micah even though he did not explicitly say that, since the Nephite prophets had not referred to or alluded to Micah before Christ's visit.

In Part IV, I list the Old Testament prophets and summarize the evidence as to whether their prophecies appeared on the Brass Plates or whether they were restored by Christ. In that discussion, I acknowledge other possible explanations for allusions to Old Testament prophets in the Book of Mormon. These include the possibility that the Brass Plates contained ancient source material not referred to by the Book of Mormon

4. Sorenson, *The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship* (Salt Lake City: New Sage Books, 1997), 33.

5. Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Summit Books, 1987) and Wellhausen, *Prolegomena To The History Of Israel*.

redactors or their sources and not provided by Christ during His personal ministry. Such material would not be recognized by modern scholars if they are not familiar with it. I also acknowledge the possibility that similarities between Book of Mormon scripture and Old Testament scripture may be attributed to parallel revelation, the fact that God does reveal the same ideas to prophets in different contexts.

I conclude that there are many more connections between Book of Mormon and biblical scriptures than casual readers may have perceived and that the questions that come to mind when possible connections are perceived can be the beginning of new and independent revelation for those who search diligently.

Part I: Biblical Source Criticism and the Book of Mormon

Modern biblical scholars employing “source criticism” have explored the various sources that may have been used in creating biblical texts. Of particular importance in this field is the rise of the Documentary Hypothesis proposing that the Pentateuch was patched together by redactors from multiple related sources, giving us, for example, two versions of the Creation story in Genesis 1 and 2. Such scholarship holds that Old Testament scripture has more sophisticated theological and political origins than is apparent to casual readers. The Documentary Hypothesis holds that the literary process behind the Pentateuch involved multiple sources with a variety of inconsistencies that were redacted to give us the first five books of the Bible. Many scholars believe that this occurred in a process that likely took place after the Jews returned from their Babylonian captivity. At least four major Hebrew narrative traditions have been identified, each of which had its own agenda.⁶ John Sorenson says this view is the result of the triumph of the evolutionary view of history at the end of the 19th century.⁷ That view contradicts the fundamentalist view that the books of the Bible were dictated perfectly by God, and holds instead that they were the result of human record keeping and like all writing, they manifested the foibles and biases of the different authors. Other ways of looking at the Documentary Hypothesis and the findings of biblical source criticism focus less on the agenda and foibles of the original traditions and

6. Grant, “The Book of Mormon Brass Plates and Their Prophets.”

7. Sorenson, *The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship*, 31.

redactors and consider that scripture is cumulative and that prophets interpret what they receive from God in familiar cultural terms.⁸

The findings and proposals of source criticism are generally unpopular among those Christians who hold that biblical scripture is the inerrant word of God “written by ... identified author[s] who wrote as if ‘God breathed’ the words onto the page.”⁹

Scholars typically describe four separate sources for the Pentateuch; they label them J, E, D, and P. The Yahwist/Jahwist author(s) from the Southern Kingdom (“J”) wrote a narrative epic story in the tradition of Homer’s *Iliad*. God was referred to as Jehovah or Yahweh or by some derivative of those names.

The “Elohists” rewrote the ancient history in the Northern Kingdom after the David/Solomon empire split under Rehoboam and Jereboam, and those writers referred to God as *Elohim*. The heroes of this “E” tradition include Jacob and Joseph in particular.

The “Deuteronomist” version of biblical scripture (“D”) probably originated in the book claimed to have been found in the temple early in the reign of Josiah, which led to his modernizing reforms. But those who advocate the Documentary Hypothesis hold that the book of Deuteronomy always had a reform agenda, and that agenda is said to have eventually colored the version of the old history behind the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings.

The “Priests” (the authors of “P”) are often said to have written during the Babylonian captivity to keep the captives on the strait and narrow path (P) and to preserve Jewish identity and culture through careful religious observation. As noted earlier, some argue for a pre-exilic origin of at least some of the material often said to be from P. There may be a complex combination of early and late material behind the P source.

Skeptics of the Documentary Hypothesis observe that none of these alleged source documents exist as distinct, ancient documents except in the minds of their hypothesizers.¹⁰ But others have been more guarded,

8. For more detail of the theory, see David Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament: Genesis- Deuteronomy* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014); and Kevin Barney, “Reflections on the Documentary Hypothesis,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 57–99; https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V33N01_79.pdf.

9. Grant, “The Book of Mormon Brass Plates and Their Prophets.”

10. For example, see Stephen Smoot, “J, E, D, P and Me: Some Thoughts on the Documentary Hypothesis,” *Ploni Almoni* (blog), Feb. 28, 2014, <https://www.plonialmonimormon.com/2014/02/jedp-and-me-some-thoughts-on.html>,

recognizing that the process of reducing revelation to writing is as individual as the personalities of the prophets involved. Brigham Young, for example, who lived most of his life before Wellhausen's version of the Documentary Hypothesis was settled in 1878, observed that Moses obtained his information from those who went before him and "picked out what he considered necessary" when he compiled his canon.¹¹ While some of those who advocate the Documentary Hypothesis would take issue with the assumption that Moses's name should appear in the Pentateuch at all, it is disingenuous to deny that Brigham Young was alert to the issues that faced ancient scriptural editors.

David Bokovoy has observed that some faith-based modern scholars have suggested that the Documentary Hypothesis is dead, while reasserting the inspired unity and inerrancy of the original biblical texts beginning with Moses.¹² While Bokovoy acknowledges that recent continental scholarship has "adopted a 'Fragmentary' or 'Supplementary' Hypothesis" to explain Pentateuchal sources, those scholars are simply striving to understand Pentateuchal composition "in the most appropriate terms," which include its documentary elements.¹³ In relation to the Book of Mormon, Bokovoy suggests that the references to the five books of Moses are "clearly anachronistic" since "the concept of five Mosaic books" did not eventuate until well after the exile.¹⁴ The reference to "five" books of Moses in 1 Nephi 5:11 may be anachronistic and a result of a gloss or translation choice by Joseph Smith, but could also include a handful of earlier versions of documents related to the Pentateuch, possibly including a text related to the Book of Moses in our Pearl of Great Price. Based on textual analysis — akin to the literary analysis behind much of source criticism — Noel Reynolds's view is that the Brass Plates may well have contained material related to the Book of Moses which Joseph Smith later translated and which now forms part

referring to Kenneth Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 492. Smoot also cites other scholars who object to the "conventional documentary hypothesis." These include Umberto Cassuto, R. Norman Whybray, and Latter-day Saint scholars Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Dana M. Pike, and David Rolph Seely.

11. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, eds. D.W. Evans, J.Q. Cannon, and Julia Young (Liverpool, UK: Albert Carrington, 1872), 14:116.

12. David Bokovoy, "The Death of the Documentary Hypothesis," *When Gods Were Men – Patheos* (blog), Jan. 29, 2014, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/davidbokovoy/2014/01/the-death-of-the-documentary-hypothesis/>.

13. Ibid.

14. Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament*, 203.

of the Pearl of Great Price in the Latter-day Saint scriptural canon.¹⁵ Bokovoy's view that the Book of Mormon concept of a personal devil and a redemptive Christ are also anachronistic before the 2nd century BC¹⁶ is also answered if a version of the Book of Moses which now forms part of the Pearl of Great Price were part of the Brass Plates.

John Sorenson has probably gone furthest in explaining the implications of the Documentary Hypothesis for Book of Mormon readers:

There appears good evidence that the Book of Mormon contains elements which are congruent with what scholars of the Old Testament distinguish as the E or Elohist source. To biblical scholars this congruence should invite serious attention to the Book of Mormon for what it may reveal to them about Old Testament sources. To Latter-day Saints, the presence of E materials in the Book of Mormon should serve as a challenge and stimulus to examine more carefully

15. Noel B. Reynolds, "The Brass Plates Version of Genesis," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday, 27 March 1990*, eds. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1990), 2:136–73; republished at *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 34 (2020): 63–96, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-brass-plates-version-of-genesis/>. Note also the recent revisitation of this scholarship in Noel Reynolds and Jeff Lindsay, "'Strong Like unto Moses': The Case for Ancient Roots in the Book of Moses Based on Book of Mormon Usage of Related Content Apparently from the Brass Plates" (Presentation, Tracing Ancient Threads in the Book of Moses Conference, Provo, UT, Sept. 18–19, 2020), <https://interpreterfoundation.org/conferences/2020-book-of-moses-conference/papers/reynolds/>. This presentation was published as Jeff Lindsay and Noel B. Reynolds, "'Strong Like unto Moses': The Case for Ancient Roots in the Book of Moses Based on Book of Mormon Usage of Related Content Apparently from the Brass Plates," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 44 (2021): 1–92, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/strong-like-unto-moses-the-case-for-ancient-roots-in-the-book-of-moses-based-on-book-of-mormon-usage-of-related-content-apparently-from-the-brass-plates/>.

16. Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament*, 207–11. Bokovoy points out that references to Cain and Abel are from J and not E, posing a problem if Book of Mormon writers only had access to E sources (*ibid.*, 206). However, there is no reason to assume that the assignment of the story of Cain and Abel to J means that Northern Kingdom traditions or various materials on the Brass Plates could not have also included the basic information found in the Book of Mormon. A specific solution to concerns about the mention of Cain and Abel in the Book of Mormon is provided if something like the Pearl of Great Price version of the Book of Moses formed part of the Brass Plates.

the scriptures entrusted to them, and to participate actively and cooperatively in elucidating both the texts and their interpretations.¹⁷

The Elements in the Book of Mormon that got Sorenson's attention included Josephite rather than Jewish genealogy; the prophecies and counsel of Northern prophets who did not refer to or focus on Jerusalem or the Davidic covenant, but who did reference God's special covenants with Joseph that are not mentioned in the Old Testament; an emphasis on Egyptian tradition and language that corresponds with the experience of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh in that country; the use of Jacob's personal name in preference to the more nationalistic "Israel"; and the preference for derivatives of El rather than Yahweh as the name for God.¹⁸

Relying on Richard Elliott Friedman, BYU Student Allen Kendall thought it possible that the Brass Plates contained elements of the D tradition, since that tradition stemmed from northern priests centered in the original tabernacle complex at Shiloh.¹⁹ But I believe the attribution of the D source to northern priests needs further research. While priests who relocated to Jerusalem from Shiloh may have become ardent supporters of the centralization programs of successive kings

17. Sorenson, *The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship*, 38–39. Bokovoy (*Authoring the Old Testament*, 214) comes to a similar conclusion: "Though some of the conclusions scholars reach through Higher Criticism certainly create some challenges for the Book of Mormon's ancient claims, Latter-day Saint students should not be afraid to give these matters careful consideration. Oftentimes issues such as the book's use of Satan and its reliance on named authors are resolved through a close, critical reading of the text. Other matters, however, including the text's references to the "five books of Moses" and its advanced Christology prove more difficult. ... However, as with all scripture, the Book of Mormon's spiritual validity is a matter that transcends questions of historicity."

And as mentioned earlier, some of Bokovoy's concerns are likely already resolved if Reynolds and Lindsay are correct in their surmise that at least something directly related to the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price formed part of the Brass Plates.

18. *Ibid.*, 33–36.

19. Kendall, *Deuteronomistic Contribution*, 4, referring to Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 123–24. Friedman's reason for giving the Deuteronomisers a Northern origin, was the fact that Josiah's reforms included the destruction of the worship places Solomon had created for those who wanted to worship the false gods Ashtoreth and Chemosh. But Northern priests were not the only Israelites who detested that accommodation. Descendants of Judah may also have deplored the accommodation of false gods and may have had greater cause for supporting centralization, since David was the first centralizer and was their ancestor.

out of political expediency, they must have been aware of the localized worship Moses and Joshua intended when they entered their promised land without a capital city.²⁰

When he was a University of Utah student, Colby Townsend hypothesized that the Pentateuch account upon which the Book of Mormon relies came straight from Joseph Smith's King James Bible.²¹ But from what follows it will be clear that his analysis, like that of this author, is incomplete.

John Welch's suggestion that the Brass Plates were likely prepared in Jerusalem at the direction of King Josiah between 620 and 610 BC, because metal plates would not "wear out or become illegible through extensive use"²² by itself does not account for their northern orientation.

Given that the Book of Mormon is the unashamed product of redactors with an agenda,²³ the abridgements underlying the

20. In an article on the origins of the synagogue, I suggest that King David usurped priestly authority when he centralized Israelite worship at Jerusalem as part of his campaign for unity and national control. See A. Keith Thompson, "Nephite Insights into Israelite Worship Practices before the Babylonian Captivity," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 3 (2013): 155, 168. Roland De Vaux has observed that David's installation of the Ark of the Covenant at Jerusalem changed forever the focus of common Israelite worship. Hezekiah and Josiah "tried to make Jerusalem's Temple not merely the central sanctuary of the nation, but the only sanctuary in which public cult could be performed." Local sanctuaries were suppressed, including those in the former Northern Kingdom, when the sanctuary at Bethel was dismantled. See Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (Grand Rapids, MI: MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 336–37. Such action was not likely supported by Northern priests.

21. Colby J. Townsend, "Appropriate Adaptation of J material in the Book of Mormon" (Bachelor's Thesis, Faculty of Arts, University of Utah, 2016); https://www.academia.edu/26840035/Appropriation_and_Adaptation_of_J_Material_in_the_Book_of_Mormon.

22. John W. Welch, "Authorship of the Book of Isaiah in Light of the Book of Mormon" in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, eds. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (FARMS, Provo, Utah, 1998), 431.

23. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf ("What is Truth?" *CEs Devotionals*, January 2013, <https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/article/ces-devotionals/2013/01/what-is-truth?lang=eng>) observed that some parts of the Nephite agenda were not constructive: "In the Book of Mormon, both the Nephites as well as the Lamanites created their own 'truths' about each other. The Nephites' 'truth' about the Lamanites was that they 'were a wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people' (Mosiah 10:12), never able to accept the gospel. The Lamanites' 'truth' about the Nephites was that Nephi had stolen his brother's birthright and that Nephi's descendants were liars who continued to rob the Lamanites of what was rightfully theirs" (Mosiah 10:12; Alma 20:13). These 'truths' fed their hatred for one

Documentary Hypothesis and other aspects of source criticism should not challenge the faith of Latter-day Saints or impede identification of the contents of the Brass Plates. Indeed, if modern scholars are able to identify scriptural material that originated in the Northern Kingdom, and if the Brass Plates and the Book of Mormon do have a Northern pedigree, then some aspects of the Documentary Hypothesis and source criticism may assist in identifying material in the Book of Mormon that came from the Brass Plates. On the other hand, one should recall that the dating often proposed for the various sources of the Old Testament are not established with certainty, and there may be reasons to question the tendency of some scholars to favor late, post-exilic dates for much of the Old Testament text and to deny the historicity of events such as the such as the Exodus, which plays a prominent role in the Book of Mormon.²⁴ Likewise, perhaps “P” includes pre-exilic material or was largely composed before the exile, as argued by Richard Elliot Friedman and others.²⁵

Part II: The Agenda of the Book of Mormon Prophets

Even though the not-so-subliminal prejudices of the Nephites in the Book of Mormon may be detected by latter-day readers,²⁶ there can be no doubt about the primary agenda of the Book of Mormon editors. When writing the specially prepared title page,²⁷ Moroni explained that the purpose of the abridgement was

another until it finally consumed them all. Needless to say, many examples in the Book of Mormon contradict both of these stereotypes. Nevertheless, the Nephites and Lamanites believed these “truths” that shaped the destiny of this once-mighty and beautiful people.”

24. On the Exodus, see James K. Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), Kindle edition; and Joshua Berman, “Was There an Exodus?,” *Mosaic Magazine* (March 2, 2015), <http://mosaicmagazine.com/essay/2015/03/was-there-an-exodus/>.

25. Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 2nd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 204–16. Also see Mehaheem Haran, “Behind the Scenes of History: Determining the Date of the Priestly Source,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100, no. 3 (Sept. 1981): 321–33, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3265957>.

26. Uchtdorf, “What is Truth?” President Uchtdorf pointed, as examples, to scriptures such as Mosiah 10:12 and Alma 20:13.

27. Joseph Smith (*History of the Church* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1948], 1:71) stated that

“the title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates, which

to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever —And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations

That summary affirmed Moroni's exhortation to all who would read the abridgement his father Mormon had prepared, and which Moroni had completed. Moroni prayed that latter-day readers

might come unto Christ ... and be perfected in him, [that by] deny[ing them]selves of all ungodliness, and lov[ing] God with all [their] might, mind and strength ... by his grace [they might] be perfect in Christ ... [and be] sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ ... that [they might] become holy, without spot. (Moroni 10:30, 32–33)

Mormon's focus was the same:

I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and prayers, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved. (Omni 1:26)

And more than 800 years earlier, when Nephi redacted his father Lehi's record and oral account into his own new "N" account, he said that "the fullness of [his] intent [was] that [he might] persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, and be saved" (1 Nephi 6:4).

Like Mormon and Moroni, Nephi did not consider that his record was just for the Lehiite remnant of Jacob. It was prepared for "as many of the Gentiles as w[ould] repent [and become] the covenant people of the Lord" (2 Nephi 30:2). For the Messiah was not only to be God's servant "to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel."

contained the record which has been translated, the language of the whole running the same as all Hebrew writing in general; and that said title page is not by any means a modern composition, either of mine or of any other man who has lived or does live in this generation."

The Messiah was also given “for a light to the Gentiles, [that he might be God’s] salvation unto the ends of the earth” (1 Nephi 21:6).

Hence Nephi’s final call and testimony, like those of Mormon and Moroni after him, “as the voice of one crying from the dust” (2 Nephi 33:13), was that all the world might “hearken unto these words and believe in Christ” (2 Nephi 33:10).

But before I review the scripture used among the Nephites by the resurrected Christ in an effort to identify what was new and what was already familiar from the Brass Plates, I review Nephi’s 1 Nephi 13 comparison of the Brass Plates and the book of Jewish scripture which he saw in vision among the Gentiles and which he saw brought to the American continent by the Gentiles of the last day.

In this contextual discussion of source criticism, one thing memorable about Nephi’s comparison is his continued use of the term *Jews* as the originators of the book of scripture he saw coming to the American continent with the Gentiles.²⁸ In 2 Nephi 33:8, which the current publishers of the Book of Mormon suggest was written as many as 40 years after his 1 Nephi 13 account, Nephi says that he uses the term *Jew* to describe “them from whence [he] came.” While it is possible that the intervening years had caused some separation in his mind, it seems more likely that he always differentiated between the descendants of Jacob/Israel who descended from the tribe of Judah, and his own ancestors who descended from Joseph. If that is so, then it may be that it is not just the Book of Mormon that Latter-day Saints should see as “the stick of Joseph” that would become one with “the stick of Judah,” as seen by Ezekiel in vision (Ezekiel 37:15–20). The Brass Plates should be recognized as providing the foundation of that “Josephite stick” and kingdom in the last days. If that is so, then a larger book of scripture encompassing the Brass Plates, the existing Book of Mormon, and the sealed and as yet untranslated portion of the gold plates will be compiled during the millennium and will comprise the whole of the stick of Joseph, which will re-establish the Josephite kingdom that will become one with the record and kingdom of the Jews in that day.

Regardless of when Ezekiel’s vision of scriptural and Israelite unity is completely fulfilled, Nephi’s vision in 1 Nephi 13 let him know that

28. For a perspective of the use of *Jew*, *Jews*, and *Judah* in Nephi’s writings, see Matthew L. Bowen, “What Thank They the Jews? (2 Nephi 29:4): A Note on the Name ‘Judah’ and Antisemitism,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 12 (2014): 111–25, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/what-thank-they-the-jews-2-nephi-294-a-note-on-the-name-judah-and-antisemitism/>.

there were two separate scriptural records or traditions, and they were compared for him by his instructor:

The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the house of Israel; and it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets; and it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord which he hath made unto the house of Israel. (1 Nephi 13:23)

The angel instructor then explained to Nephi how the Jewish record became corrupted, and he placed that corruption at the doorstep, not of ancient redactors of the Pentateuch suggested in the Documentary Hypothesis,²⁹ but of redactors within the Christian church after the departure of the “twelve apostles of the Lamb.”³⁰ That corruption would be cured by the things to be written by Nephi’s seed and by “other books” that would come forth from the Gentiles to “the remnant of the seed of [Nephi’s] brethren.”³¹ Together, the two separate scriptural traditions would “make known to all kindreds, tongues and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved.”³²

While verse 23 of 1 Nephi 13 is a little ambiguous as to whether the Brass Plates record or the Jewish record was larger, it seems that Nephi and his instructing angel intended us to understand that the Brass Plates contained more scripture. But it is not clear whether that was a comparison of the overall size of the Bible as carried to the New World by the Christian Gentiles (including the New Testament), or a comparison of the size of the record of the Jews as it existed, albeit uncompiled, at the time Nephi took the Brass Plates from Laban around 600 BC. Either way, the Brass Plates contained significantly more.

The comparison draws attention to how many of our current Bible’s books of scripture existed in 600 BC. Though that question will be discussed in more detail in Part IV, it is appropriate here to observe that

29. The Jewish scriptures are described as having gone “forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles according to the truth which is in God” (1 Nephi 13:25), which suggests that the work of the J, E, P, and D redactors had not sullied God’s purposes as later redactions by pre-Restoration Christians would do.

30. 1 Nephi 13:26–34.

31. 1 Nephi 13:35, 39.

32. 1 Nephi 13:40.

the relative size of the Old Testament (as it existed in 600 BC) depends on whether or not we attribute the records of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles (and the books of Joshua and Judges) to scribes working on earlier materials during the Babylonian captivity. The “Jewish Old Testament” canon in 600 BC certainly excluded parts of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy,³³ as well as the entire books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. But there are other uncertainties, since the authorship of Isaiah is such a vexed question for non-Latter-day Saint biblical scholars who do not accept that prophets can be inspired with noncontextual information.³⁴

33. Jeremiah had not been exiled or killed before Lehi’s departure, though he was imprisoned (1 Nephi 7:14), and he continued to write. Deuteronomy was likely edited a number of times for different purposes, even after the exile. It is therefore likely that the version of Deuteronomy we have in the King James Bible is different from the version of Deuteronomy featured on the Brass Plates.

34. Although there are no quotations in the Book of Mormon from so-called Third Isaiah (chapters 56–66), the quotations to Second Isaiah are controversial for some, since the Book of Mormon’s attribution of those chapters to the original Isaiah would be anachronistic if non-Latter-day Saint scholars are correct that the original Isaiah wrote only chapters 1–39. But since the Book of Mormon features many prophets seeing events well beyond their immediate context (for example, Jacob and Nephi knew the name of Christ more than 500 years before He was born), scholarly criticism of Isaiah because he could not have known the personal name of Cyrus, King of Persia, 250 years ahead of time, is simply another example of failing to exercise faith in transcendence of any kind. See, for example, John W. Welch, “Authorship of the Book of Isaiah in Light of the Book of Mormon,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 433. Other non-Latter-day Saint scholars have suggested that the appearance of Cyrus’s name in the Isaiah text may be the simple result of interpolation by a later scribe. But that explanation for the appearance of Cyrus’s name in Isaiah has not been universally accepted and does not explain the many other places in Old Testament scripture where prophets are said to have foreseen events or people well beyond their context, including the birthplace of Christ (Micah 5:2), the name of Josiah (1 Kings 13:1ff, though some critics also argue that this is a scribal interpolation after the fact), and the subjugation of Tyre by the Babylonians (Ezekiel 26:2ff and Zechariah 9:1ff. Yet note here that the less than complete fulfilment of Ezekiel’s prophecy of Tyre’s destruction, an example of a prophecy seemingly thwarted due to the free-will actions of those involved, does not mean he was not a “true prophet.” See Daniel C. Peterson, “P.T. Barnum *Redivivus*,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7, no. 2 [1995]: 49–50, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1246&context=msr>). For more detail on the consequences for the authorship and interpretation of the Book of Isaiah, see, for example, Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 301–20.

Though the Book of Mormon editor redactors acknowledged they had faults which they did not recognize,³⁵ they still wrote to persuade the latter-day world that Jesus Christ was the Son of God sent by the Father as the Promised Messiah to redeem all men from the consequences of sin and physical death. To the extent that the Book of Mormon editor redactors and their source prophets shared this vision, they likely used only material from their existing scriptural canon (the Brass Plates) when it contributed to that goal.

In the parts of this article which follow, we cannot often detect allusions to an unknown text when the Book of Mormon authors and editors have not identified that text. But some allusions to known biblical texts can be identified, and they may confirm the existence of the relevant texts on the Brass Plates.

However, even strong allusions to earlier texts after Christ's visit do not confirm the existence of those texts on the Brass Plates, since Christ gave the Nephites new scriptures,³⁶ and it is not clear if the Nephite recorders acknowledged all He gave them.³⁷ Though I will identify the texts Jesus used or alluded to in the Nephite record of His resurrected ministry in Part III, the purpose of the following parts will be to identify Old Testament scripture held by the Nephites before Christ's coming. If Mormon (writing in the 4th century AD) referred to scriptures to which his earlier source writers did not have access, those references could undermine my analysis, but his editorializing is generally easy to identify and does not appear to interfere with the task of identifying the contents of the Brass Plates.

Part III: The Scripture that Jesus Used During His Nephite Ministry

Christ's primary texts during His Nephite ministry were His own Sermon on the Mount, chapters 52 and 54 of Isaiah, and Micah 5:8–15. The post-1830 editors of the Book of Mormon have added many helpful

35. Moroni recognized that he did not write as well as the brother of Jared, but recorded that he was instructed that his work would nonetheless achieve the Lord's purposes (Ether 12:23–29). At other places, he recognized that there might be faults in his work, but he did not know of any (Mormon 8:16–17), which idea he repeated when he wrote his title page abstract of the work as a whole. Compare also the concern with a possible mistake in 3 Nephi 8:1–2.

36. 3 Nephi 23:6; 24, 25, where the provision of new scripture is very clear.

37. For example, he gently reproveth them for their failure to record Samuel's prophecy that many would rise from the dead at the time Christ was resurrected (3 Nephi 23:6–13).

footnotes that highlight allusions to other scriptures, but those references do not present as Christ's primary reference material, since He did not refer to them directly.³⁸

The Nephite restatement of Christ's Sermon on the Mount has occasioned analysis for other reasons, including criticism because it is so similar to the King James Bible version. While that discussion does not contribute to this analysis of the known contents of the Brass Plates, it is significant to note that Stanford Carmack's recent work on Book of Mormon grammar raises other possible reasons for the similarity.³⁹

Christ's quotations from Isaiah likewise do not greatly assist identification of the contents of the Brass Plates, since they came from sections of that prophet's work which had already been quoted by others.⁴⁰ Earlier reference to Isaiah chapters in the Book of Mormon text is also a strong argument for the presence of all the so-called First (chapters 1–39) and Second Isaiah (40–55) chapters on the Brass Plates. The current Book of Mormon footnote references to the so-called Third Isaiah chapters (56–66) are unhelpful in identifying neither their

38. *En passant*, since Christ is the source of all scripture, it is theoretically impossible to identify earlier sources from his word. That observation raises the question of how prophets interpret and translate the revelations they receive, which is beyond the scope of this article, in part because Christ quoted several earlier prophets he had inspired when he ministered among the Nephites.

39. See the articles Stanford has published with *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* about Book of Mormon grammar and syntax since 2014 (a listing is at <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/author/stanfordc/>). Some commentators on the site have observed that Carmack's insights, coupled with a better understanding of what Joseph Smith did when he translated the Book of Mormon (including particularly statements that the words he recited to his scribes appeared on his seer stone in his hat until they had been recorded) suggest that the words that God gave Joseph Smith in the translation fit an earlier time period more than it did Joseph's native language. Such involvement may account for the prominent use of King James Bible language, particularly if one or more of those transcendental participants in the translation process had previously been involved in translation of the Holy Bible into English.

40. Though Isaiah 54, which he quoted in full in 3 Nephi 22, had not been referenced by earlier Book of Mormon prophets, earlier prophets had quoted extensively from chapter 52 (which he quoted in full in 3 Nephi 20) and chapter 55. Isaiah 52:1–2 is quoted in 2 Nephi 8:24–25; Isaiah 52:7 in 1 Nephi 13:37 and in Mosiah 15:14–18; Isaiah 52:10 in 1 Nephi 22:10–11. Isaiah 55:1–2 is quoted in 2 Nephi 9:50–51 and Isaiah 55:1 is quoted again in 2 Nephi 26:25; there are also various references to Isaiah 53 (for example, Mosiah 14 and Mosiah 15:10). And Moroni quoted Isaiah 54:2 in the second to last verse of the Book of Mormon.

authorship nor their presence on the Brass Plates, since Christ may have provided them to the Nephites, even though Mormon's text does not say so in our current translation.⁴¹

But the eight repeated verses from Micah raise different questions. Not only are they in part repeated and expanded twice on the second day of Christ's Nephite ministry,⁴² but Christ does not identify the words of Micah as material the Nephites did not already have.⁴³ While this may suggest that Micah's words did appear on the Plates of Brass, it is odd that they are not quoted, referred to, and, arguably, not even alluded to in the earlier part of our current Book of Mormon.⁴⁴

The absence of references to Micah before Christ's ministry is striking for two reasons. First, it is reasonable to think the emphasis of Nephite writers on so-called E materials from the Pentateuch and their proposed Northern Kingdom affinities would have made Micah's prophecies about the latter-day ascendancy of the remnant of Jacob a natural focus of their prophesying, even though Micah lacked any obvious Northern Kingdom connections.⁴⁵ And second, if Micah's fifth chapter appeared

41. That is, if they were remiss once in including reference to scripture or prophecy provided to them (3 Nephi 23:9–13, esp. 12), then it is possible that they overlooked such records on other occasions, however improbable that may be after correction from Jesus Christ himself.

42. 3 Nephi 20:15–21; 21:11–21.

43. Contrast 3 Nephi 24:1, where Christ expressly said He was giving them scriptures which the Nephites did not have.

44. The author has surveyed the footnote references to Micah in the current Book of Mormon before Christ's visit. There are three in 1 Nephi, ten in 2 Nephi, one in Jacob, three in Mosiah, two in Alma, and two in Helaman. None of them are explicit references to words uttered by Micah, and in each case the thought cross-referenced by the footnotes can be (and several times has been) linked to additional prophets. For example, Micah is not the only source of the idea that the possessions of others may be consecrated for the gain of the house of Israel (2 Nephi 2:2 and 2 Nephi 32:9, both footnoted to Micah 4:13), or that prophets can be filled with the Holy Spirit (1 Nephi 17:47 and Alma 24:9, both footnoted to Micah 3:8). But there is a certain unique resonance between Micah's idea that some wicked people plan evil deeds while pondering in their beds (Micah 2:1), and the idea in Mosiah 13:1 that some people spend all their time devising iniquity. Perhaps Micah or redacted parts of Micah did appear on the Brass Plates, but it remains surprising that Micah's words in chapter 5:7–15 were not referenced or even alluded to before Christ's visit in 3 Nephi 16, 20, and 21, even though Mormon referred to them afterwards in Mormon 5:24.

45. Micah was a Judahite prophet who lived between about 740 and 696 BC. He thus prophesied before Lehi's party left Jerusalem; would have been aware of the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians; and was a contemporary

on the Brass Plates, one would have expected Alma₂ to have made reference to Bethlehem as the place of Jesus's birth in Alma 7 rather than the more generic "land of Jerusalem," which he chose in Alma 7:10. Of course it is possible that the Northern Kingdom roots and influences on the Book of Mormon writers or their lack of Davidic ancestry may have occasioned the omission of a reference to the Messiah's Davidic lineage and the specific Davidic place of birth; but again, that seems unlikely, given the Nephite prophets' near obsession with all the details they could obtain about the coming Messiah's life, death, and resurrection. I include below two tables (Table 1 and Table 2) to help readers identify where Christ quoted or alluded to Micah in His teaching at Bountiful. In Table 1 I identify the passages where the quotes were given. In Table 2 I show the extended quotation from 3 Nephi 21 and Micah 5 side-by-side.

Christ's quotations from Malachi are less remarkable, since unlike Micah, Malachi prophesied great things about the future of Israel but only after the departure of the Lehite colony around 600 BC. Thus no one suggests that Malachi could have had a place on the Brass Plates, and Christ expressly confirmed the contrary.⁴⁶

Table 1. Related passages in the Book of Mormon and Micah.

Book of Mormon Passage	Related Passage in Micah	Notes on the Relationship to Micah
3 Nephi 16:15	Micah 5:8	An allusion, referring to members of the House of Israel being among the Gentiles and treading them down.
3 Nephi 20:16–17	Micah 5:8–9	Fairly close quotation of the KJV.
3 Nephi 20:18–19	Micah 4:12–13	Fairly close quotation of most of the KJV passage.
3 Nephi 21:12–18	Micah 5:8–14	Fairly close quotation of the KJV, with some changes.
3 Nephi 21:21	Micah 5:15	Fairly direct use but with some changes.
Mormon 5:24	Micah 5:8	An allusion to remnants of the House of Israel being among the Gentiles as a lion, tearing in pieces, and none can deliver.

of Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea. But though his prophecies were directed toward Jerusalem and the Northern Kingdom, he was born southwest in Moresheth-Gath. He prophesied not only of the destruction of both the Israelite kingdoms and their capitals; more memorably he was quoted from the mouth of the resurrected Savior to the Nephites, and he prophesied of the restoration of remnants of both in triumph over the Gentiles in the latter days.

46. 3 Nephi 24:1.

If the words of Micah, or at least chapter 5, were not a part of the Brass Plates record, why not? And does the answer to that question suggest reasons for the presence or absence from the Brass Plates of other scriptural material that did exist by 600 BC?

Micah lived southeast of Jerusalem in the 8th century BC and may have been politically unpopular in Jerusalem. He was a contemporary of Isaiah, and these two prophets either had access to the same source material, or they quoted from one another.⁴⁷ They both prophesied of the last days and they both prophesied about the remnant of Jacob in those days; and both anticipated the Messiah's Davidic lineage. While there is no obvious reason why Micah's writings should not have appeared on the Brass Plates, perhaps Micah's references to the Messiah's Davidic ancestry and birthplace were omitted to conform to Northern Kingdom traditions related to the E source for the Pentateuch. But that does not explain the absence of references to the remnant prophecies later in Micah chapter 5, which would surely have appealed to all the Nephite prophets, including Nephi and Jacob. The reference to the "mountain of the Lord's house" prophecy from Isaiah 2, which Jacob quoted in 2 Nephi 12, would surely also have benefitted from reemphasis if Micah's adjustments⁴⁸ were added.

Table 2. Related verses in 3 Nephi 21 and Micah.

3 Nephi 21	Micah 5
12 And my people who are a remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.	8 And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.

47. The most striking example of their use of the same material comes by comparison of Isaiah 2 and Micah 4. Though the Isaiah passage about the "mountain of the Lord's house" in the last days is more familiar, Micah used almost exactly the same words in four of his verses with variations that respond to reflection.

48. Micah 4:2–4. The Micah reference adds that the God of Israel who will judge among the nations at that day will "rebuke strong nations afar off," which rebuke would have confirmed to the Nephites the idea that his rulership would extend back across the oceans to the old world from which their fathers had come. And verse four amplifies the pastoral peace in which all people would live, since "every man under his fig tree" would live unafraid.

3 Nephi 21	Micah 5
13 Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off.	9 Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.
14 Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent; for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots;	10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots:
15 And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strongholds;	11 And I will cut off thy cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds:
16 And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy land, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers;	12 And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shall have no more soothsayers:
17 Thy graven images I will also cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee, and thou shalt no more worship the works of thy hands;	13 Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands.
18 And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities.	14 And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities.
19 And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away.	
20 For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day whosoever will not repent and come unto my Beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel;	
21 And I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.	15 And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.
22 But if they repent and hearken upon my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance;	
23 And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem.	

The best reason for Micah's possible omission from the Brass Plates record that presents itself to me is that the custodians and recorders on the Brass Plates included only material they considered Josephite in its focus and teaching. Isaiah and Jeremiah did not exclude the descendants of Joseph from their exposition of Israel's destiny, but other Judahite prophets, including Micah, may have had that reputation.

What case can be made for the presence of the writings of other Old World prophets on the Brass Plates?

Part IV: What Scriptures Did the Brass Plates Contain?

I have already explained why Micah chapter 5 may have been missing from the Brass Plates, and I have said the likely reason is that Micah was too Jewish in emphasis for the tastes of those charged with maintaining the Brass Plates record in Laban's custody.

Some other Old Testament books certainly did not appear on the Brass Plates. Malachi was not there, because Christ said so in 3 Nephi 24:1 and because we know historically that he lived nearly two hundred years after Lehi and his party left Jerusalem and the Old World.

The words of many other Old Testament prophets could not have been included in the Brass Plates record for the same reason — that is, because those books were not composed until after Lehi's party departed around 600 BC. As mentioned above, those include some parts of Jeremiah and Lamentations, as well as all of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ezekiel, Daniel, Obadiah, Haggai, and Zechariah. But did the Brass Plates contain Joshua, Judges, and both books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, and if so, how close was the Brass Plates version of those books to that familiar to modern Latter-day Saints from the King James Bible?

Kevin Barney suggests that the books of Moses on the Brass Plates may have been there in a different configuration than we are familiar with today.⁴⁹ He makes that suggestion for two reasons. First, in several places in the Book of Mormon the reference is to “the books of Moses” rather than to “the five books of Moses,” and even where there is now reference to “the five” books of Moses, he suggests that Joseph Smith may have added the number “five” because he felt he independently knew there were five books of Moses, and he was justified in being more specific.⁵⁰ Second, he notes that the version of the Ten Commandments

49. Barney, “Reflections on the Documentary Hypothesis,” 74.

50. Ibid. Barney even suggests that Joseph's original dictation may have only stated “books of Moses” or “words of Moses” without the number “five” each time

which Abinadi quoted to the priests of King Noah varies a little from our King James version in Exodus 20.⁵¹ We ought not be surprised, since there is variation between the version of the Ten Commandments familiar to modern-day Protestants and Catholics. Barney's point is that there may have been separate E (Brass Plates?), P (Exodus 20), and D (Deuteronomy 5) versions of the Ten Commandments, and we do not know which version Abinadi memorized, presumably with the Brass Plates as his source.

It also seems to me that the Brass Plates contained some version of Joshua and Judges, since the Nephites were familiar with the history canvassed by those books, and because King Mosiah₂ appears to have reflected on the difference between kingdoms and judicial republics in the light of the Brass Plates record, before he recommended a form of judicial republic to his composite Nephite/Mulekite people in Mosiah 29.

We know that the Brass Plates also contained at least four other books of (Northern-sourced?) scripture which were unknown to the Jews, or which they chose not to include in their scriptural canon: Zenos, Zenock, Neum, and Ezias. The Nephite prophets quoted them to highlight aspects of the Messiah's life and redemptive mission.⁵² The Nephite prophets did not focus on Messiah's Davidic ancestry in those references, but it is possible that Jewish nationalism (perhaps related to the traditions behind the J source) may explain why those scriptures did not appeal to those who compiled the Jewish scriptural canon. Specifically, it is unlikely that the Jews would have appreciated hearing northern E prophets declare that the Israelite Messiah would be raised on a cross and crucified by adherents who relied on the J source and associated traditions.⁵³

when Moses' records were referred to (1 Nephi 5:11; 19:23; 22:20 and Helaman 8:13). Barney's reasoning acknowledges that the earliest edition of the Book of Mormon refers to "five books of Moses" in 1 Nephi 5:11 but observes that the reference in 1 Nephi 19:23 is only to the "books of Moses"; and the first edition referred only to the "book [singular] of Moses." Barney thus speculates that Joseph may have added the number "five" as a "translator's gloss," since he "knew" that there were five books of Moses.

51. Ibid., 75.

52. Zenos: 1 Nephi 19:10, 12, 16; Jacob 5 and 6; Alma 33:13, 15; 34:7; Helaman 8:19, 15:11; 3 Nephi 10:16. Zenock: 1 Nephi 19:10; Alma 33:15; 34:7; Helaman 8:20. Neum: 1 Nephi 19:10. Ezias: Helaman 8:20.

53. Note, however, that Isaiah's references to Messiah's Davidic genealogy were not edited out of Nephi's quotations of Isaiah 11 in 2 Nephi 21. Further, even though Isaiah certainly prophesied about the suffering Messiah in chapters 50 (2 Nephi 7)

Table 3 summarizes the contents of the Brass Plates using our existing King James version of the Old Testament as the comparator.

Table 3. Summary of the contents of the Brass Plates.

Book of Scripture	Included in the Brass Plates	Comment
Genesis	Yes	Likely an “E” version, which included more material about Joseph than KJV.
Exodus	Yes	Likely an “E” version, in which the Ten Commandments were expressed differently than in Deuteronomy; ⁵⁴ Moses at Meribah incident treated more favorably. ⁵⁵
Leviticus	Yes	An “E” version?
Numbers	Yes	An “E” version? Note the difference between the “P” tradition of the Meribah incident. ⁵⁶
Deuteronomy	Yes	Again, the account of the Ten Commandments is different from the accounts in Exodus 20 and 34. ⁵⁷
Joshua	Yes	A Northern Kingdom version?
Judges	Yes	A Northern Kingdom version?
Ruth	Probably not	Likely from a Southern Kingdom document that establishes Christ’s Davidic ancestry.
1 Samuel	Perhaps	A Northern Kingdom version? ⁵⁸

and 53 (Mosiah 14), unlike Zenock and Neum (1 Nephi 19:10), he did not prophesy that his offering for our sins would include death by crucifixion.

54. Barney, “Reflections on the Documentary Hypothesis,” 75. The theory is that the Brass Plates version of the Ten Commandments derived from an original E source elaborated by the P tradition in Exodus 20 and by the D tradition in Deuteronomy 5.

55. Ibid. Barney notes that the Book of Mormon account of “the incident at the waters of Meribah” follows the favorable account of “the E text of Exodus 17:6” rather than the “anti-Moses” account in Numbers 20:1–13, where Moses is said to have been denied entry to the promised land because he struck the rock instead of speaking to it in more precise accordance with the Lord’s instruction.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., 90.

58. In his study of Nephi’s allusion to and use of the story of David and Goliath to legitimate his leadership of the Nephite colony, Ben McGuire notes that scholars have identified two major sources for the story in 1 Samuel 17: a shorter and earlier source version in some early Septuagint manuscripts, and the lengthier version in the Masoretic Hebrew text. Nephi alluded only to 1 Samuel 17:4–7, 11, 32, 34–37, 45–46, 51, and 54, and thus did not use any of the longer and likely later text for the David and Goliath narrative. See Ben McGuire, “Nephi and Goliath: A Case Study of Literary Allusion in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and*

Book of Scripture	Included in the Brass Plates	Comment
2 Samuel	Perhaps	A Northern Kingdom version?
1 Kings	Perhaps	A Northern Kingdom version?
2 Kings	Perhaps	A Northern Kingdom version?
1 Chronicles	Probably not	This is history told from a Southern Kingdom perspective.
2 Chronicles	Probably not	This is history told from a Southern Kingdom perspective.
Ezra	No	Composed after Lehi's departure.
Nehemiah	No	Composed after Lehi's departure.
Esther	No	Composed after Lehi's departure.
Job	Probably not	Job's assurance of a glorious resurrection was not shared by the wicked priests of King Noah. ⁵⁹
Psalms	Probably	Dating the Psalms is difficult; some clearly post-date the exile and were not included. ⁶⁰
Proverbs	Probably	Some may have been included; for example, Lehi appears to have quoted from Proverbs 22:6 in 2 Nephi 4:5. ⁶¹
Song of Solomon	Probably not	Joseph Smith noted in the JST that this book is not inspired, ⁶² and there do not appear to be any obvious quotes from or direct allusions to this work in the Book of Mormon.

other Restoration Scripture 18, no. 1 (2009): 28, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1535&context=jbms>.

59. Mosiah 18:2. For further detail on what the Book of Mormon peoples understood about the doctrine of resurrection and when they knew it, see A. Keith Thompson, "The Doctrine of Resurrection in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter, A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 16 (2015): 101–29, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-doctrine-of-resurrection-in-the-book-of-mormon/>.

60. 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, 2013), 307n6, <https://rsc.byu.edu/ascending-mountain-lord/old-testament-psalms-book-mormon>. Note that there are no explicit references to the Psalms in the Book of Mormon, but John Hilton III identifies "43 phrases that have strong connections between the Book of Mormon and Old Testament Psalms."

61. Note that some of the proverbs were added during the reign of Hezekiah, King of Judah. These may not have appeared on the Brass Plates, particularly if they favored J traditions and sources.

62. Note that Dana M. Pike discussed Joseph Smith's statement that The Song of Solomon is not inspired in detail; in Dana M. Pike, "Reading the Song of Solomon as a Latter-day Saint," *Religious Educator* 15, no. 2 (2014): 91–113, <https://rsc-legacy>.

Book of Scripture	Included in the Brass Plates	Comment
Isaiah	Yes	Note that the Book of Mormon contains no direct quotes from so-called Third Isaiah, chapters 56–66.
Jeremiah	Yes, part	Jeremiah continued to live and write after Lehi's departure from Jerusalem. His words after that date could not be on the Brass Plates.
Lamentations	Perhaps	Ditto.
Ezekiel	No	Composed after Lehi's departure.
Daniel	No	Composed after Lehi's departure.
Hosea	Perhaps	Though Hosea was a Northern Kingdom prophet before the Assyrian invasion, there are no direct quotes from his writings in the Book of Mormon. ⁶³
Joel	Probably not	Though Moroni quoted one of his prophecies to Joseph Smith in September 1823, Joel was a Southern Kingdom prophet, and there are no direct quotes from his writings in the Book of Mormon. ⁶⁴
Amos	Probably not	Though Amos was a Southern prophet, he ministered to the Northern Kingdom before its destruction, so the absence of direct quotes from him in the Book of Mormon is surprising. ⁶⁵

byu.edu/es/node/7588. He also discusses why the words of Song 6:10 appear three times in the Doctrine & Covenants (D&C 5:14; 105:31; and 109:73).

63. Critics observe that the phrases “as the chaff that is driven before the whirlwind” (Hosea 13:3, cf Mosiah 7:30) and “I will hedge up thy way” (Hosea 2:6, cf 2 Nephi 4:33) are evidence of Book of Mormon plagiarism, though they are explicable on other idiomatic grounds (e.g., “Finding the Bible in the Book of Mormon,” *MormonThink*, <http://www.mormonthink.com/mormonstudiesbible.htm>). For similar reasons, the existence of these phrases in the Book of Mormon, does not provide an adequate foundation for a confident assertion that the Brass Plates contained Hosea's writings.

64. Again, *MormonThink*'s “Finding the Bible in the Book of Mormon” can identify phrases from Joel about earthquakes and darkened sun, moon and stars. But references to calamitous natural phenomena are not unique to Joel even in the Bible. For example, there are references to the quaking of the earth in Exodus 19:18; 1 Samuel 14:15 and Nahum 1:5; and there are references to darkened skies in Exodus 10:15; Ecclesiastes 12:2, in multiple places in Isaiah, and in Ezekiel 30:18 and Amos 8:9.

65. But there is another sense in which the lack of any references to Amos in the Book of Mormon is not surprising. And that is because the Northern chroniclers may not have appreciated a negative message from a Southern prophet. On the other hand, Nephi₄ in the Book of Mormon chose the name Amos for his son; and

Book of Scripture	Included in the Brass Plates	Comment
Obadiah	No	Probably composed after Lehi's departure, and he prophesied to the Edomites rather than to Israel.
Jonah	Probably not	Though Jonah was a northern prophet, he did not prophecy to Israel.
Micah	Perhaps in part	For reasons explained above in the text, it is doubtful that Micah 5 was present on the Brass Plates. ⁶⁶
Nahum	No	A southern kingdom prophet, Nahum prophesied the destruction of Nineveh and the Assyrian civilization, which had destroyed the Northern Kingdom. ⁶⁷
Habakkuk	Probably not	He was a Jewish prophet around the time of Lehi's departure.
Zephaniah	Probably not	He was a Jewish prophet around the time of Lehi's departure.
Haggai	No	He prophesied in Jerusalem after Judah returned from the Babylonian captivity.
Zechariah	No	He prophesied in Jerusalem after Judah returned from the Babylonian captivity.
Malachi	No	Christ restored two chapters from His writing during his Nephite ministry.
Zenos	Yes	1 Nephi 19:10, 12, 16; Jacob 5, 6, Alma 33:33; 34:7
Zenock	Yes	1 Nephi 19:10; Alma 33:15; 34:7
Neum	Yes	1 Nephi 19:10
Ezias	Yes	Helaman 8:20

While some of this analysis shares the same speculative methodology as biblical source criticism, the related scholarship, which has recognized different narrative traditions behind the Hebrew Bible, is relevant to understanding what the Brass Plates contained, and why some of it was

his grandson, who was the primary historian during the golden age of 4 Nephi, also bore that name.

66. See notes 50 to 56 and supporting text.

67. John Sorenson wonders if Nahum and Neum (from 1 Nephi 19:10) are the same (Sorenson, *The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship*, 33). But he does not press the suggestion perhaps because Neum's prophecy that Christ would be crucified does not fit the Ninevite context of Nahum's known prophecies. However, note that some historians consider that crucifixion as a form of capital punishment probably derived from the Assyrian impalement punishment (F.P. Retief and L. Cilliers, "The History and Pathology of Crucifixion," *National Library of Medicine* 93, no. 12 [2003]: 938–41, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/14750495>.)

different from the Old Testament scripture that has come to us through the Jews. But source criticism is not the only explanation of why the scripture provided in the Book of Mormon has a “familiar spirit.” There are at least four other possible reasons for that similarity, some highly speculative.

Other Possible Reasons Why the Book of Mormon Contains Scripture from the Old World

First, even though the Book of Mormon record says that the Mulekite party did not bring scripture with them,⁶⁸ there may have been other Israelite emigrations to the New World which did bring records. While John Sorenson has shown that there were hundreds and possibly thousands of undocumented ocean voyages between the Old and New Worlds before Columbus, voyages that transported flora and fauna between the two worlds,⁶⁹ the absence of anything equivalent to the genetic evidence left by transplanted flora and fauna means that we cannot advance this hypothesis.

A second hypothesis that explains the similarity between Old and New World scripture that we can do nothing to advance is the idea that undocumented Old World prophets could have given other Old World scriptural material to New World prophets, material that is not recorded in the existing Nephite abridgement. Nicholas Frederick identifies additional possibilities when he suggests the term “biblical interaction” rather than mere “allusion” to explain intertextuality in the Book of Mormon. His “other possibilities” include deliberate interactions with angelic messengers at various stages in the translation process, including at the time when the Book of Mormon authors were engraving their records.⁷⁰

A third hypothesis explaining similarity is that since God’s fixed ordinances, covenants, and commandments are intended for all of his children, it ought not surprise us if we find other separated groups who had those same ordinances, covenants, and commandments revealed through their own prophets.⁷¹

68. Omni 1:14–18 (17).

69. John L. Sorenson and Martin H. Raish, *Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: Research Press, 1996).

70. Nicholas J. Frederick, “Evaluating the Interaction between the New Testament and the Book of Mormon: A Proposed Methodology,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 24 (2015): 22.

71. Alma 29:8.

But a fourth possible reason for similarity between portions of the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon leads us back to the contents of the Brass Plates. And that is the insight that the Brass Plates may contain some material related to early sources of the Pentateuch and other writings, perhaps with particular influence from Northern Kingdom traditions. The Book of Mormon's emphasis on "remnant prophecies" seems to underscore this possibility. For not only did Jesus quote and explain Micah's remnant prophecy to the Nephites three times during his ministry among them,⁷² but Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob used remnant prophecies to reassure their people that they were not forgotten by the Lord.⁷³ In a similar spirit but much more dramatically, Captain Moroni used a lost remnant prophecy of Jacob to motivate the Nephites to defend their homes, family, and native lands from Lamanite aggression⁷⁴ when the future seemed as lost as Joseph's when he was sold as a Midianite slave⁷⁵ and languished as a prisoner in an Egyptian prison.⁷⁶ While there are other references to a remnant of Jacob in the current Old Testament,⁷⁷ there is no trace of Captain Moroni's quote from Jacob.⁷⁸

But Jacob's prophecy about the remnant of Joseph's coat is not the only Book of Mormon reference to source material older or more complete

72. 3 Nephi 16:11–5; 20: 15–19; 21:12–13. Note that Christ also referred in 3 Nephi 15:12 to the legacy of the Lehiite peoples as a remnant of Joseph. Mormon similarly used remnant prophecies in 3 Nephi 5:23–24; 10:16–17.

73. 1 Nephi 10:14; 13:38–39; 15:13–14; 19:24; 2 Nephi 20:20–22; 21:11; 28:2; 30:3–4.

74. Alma 46:23–27.

75. Genesis 37:18–28, 36.

76. Genesis 39:20–41:37.

77. See my summary of Old Testament remnant prophecies in "What of the Remnant of Jacob/Israel," *Interpreter, A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* (forthcoming).

78. Alma 46:23–27. The prophecy attributed by Captain Moroni to Jacob before his death reads: "Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved by the hand of God, and he taken unto himself, while the remained of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment. Now behold, this giveth my soul sorrow; nevertheless, my soul hath joy in my son, because of that part of his seed which shall be taken unto God." John Tvedtnes has shown that aspects of this Book of Mormon addition to the story of Joseph's coat are confirmed in nonbiblical sources that have been uncovered since the Book of Mormon was translated. See John Tvedtnes, "Ancient Texts in Support of the Book of Mormon," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, eds. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002), <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/ancient-texts-support-book-mormon>.

than the Hebrew Bible. The allegory of Zenos is another detailed passage re-recorded in Jacob 5, but Nephi and Alma also quoted that prophet directly,⁷⁹ and Zenock was variously paraphrased by Nephi₁,⁸⁰ Alma₂,⁸¹ Nephi₂,⁸² and Mormon,⁸³ and the content of prophecies by Neum and Ezias were referred to by Nephi₁⁸⁴ and Nephi₂.⁸⁵ Robert Millet also suggests that additional material was available to the Book of Mormon peoples from the Brass Plates that is not found in the Bible.⁸⁶ That material includes more detail about the fall of Lucifer, the creation, the Fall, and the Atonement, and Abraham's knowledge of the Messiah.⁸⁷ While this material may have been referred to by Zenos, Zenock, Neum, and Ezias, it seems more likely, in light of what Joseph Smith learned during his translation of the Bible, along with the revelation of the books of Moses and Abraham, that the additional material which Millet suggests was part of a more complete original version of the first of the five books of Moses (Genesis) which the Brass Plates contained.

Conclusion

In this article, I have explained how concepts and findings from modern source criticism, including the Documentary Hypothesis, may help explain why the Book of Mormon focuses on the Josephite ancestry of Lehite colony rather than the Jewish ancestry of the Mulekites. That is because biblical source criticism suggests that variant versions of ancient records were kept and redacted by Israelite groups with different interests. For example, the Northern and Southern Kingdoms appear to have kept their own records (E and J respectively, for the Pentateuch), but so apparently did the priests who may have kept scriptural records during the Babylonian captivity (P), and the temple priests who discovered the

79. 1 Nephi 19:11–17; 22:15–20 and Alma 33:3–11.

80. 1 Nephi 19:10.

81. Alma 33:15–17. Alma₂ also quoted Zenock directly in Alma 33:11: “Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son.”

82. Helaman 8:18–20.

83. 3 Nephi 10:14–16.

84. 1 Nephi 19:10.

85. Helaman 8:18–20.

86. Robert Millet, “The Brass Plates: A Witness of Christ,” *Ensign* (Jan. 1988), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/ensign/1988/01/the-plates-of-brass-a-witness-of-christ>.

87. *Ibid.*

“book of the law” that was used to justify King Josiah’s reforms late in the 7th century BC (D).

I then suggested that while we understand the reason why the Book of Mormon prophets used scripture that focused on the coming and mission of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, when He ministered to the combined descendants of Lehi at Bountiful, He emphasized their identity as a remnant part of the House of Israel, confirming that the Father’s covenants with the ancient patriarchs were extended to them and that they were not forgotten. But He went much further. He referred to their latter-day destiny in the Father’s plans, and He explained that destiny by quoting the words of the Israelite Prophet Micah on three separate occasions: on the second and third occasions, implying that Father had asked Him to tell them again on the second day of His ministry but with even more emphasis. I suggest that even though He did not say those words were missing from their canon, since there are no references or obvious allusions to Micah’s prophecies before Christ quoted them, it seems likely the Nephites did not have Micah’s words before Christ ministered to them in person.

That insight provided context for a book-by-book discussion of what parts of the Old Testament may have been present on the Brass Plates the descendants of Lehi brought with them. But I concluded that analysis with the observation that there were other reasons why the Book of Mormon may have included scriptural material that has a “familiar spirit.” Those reasons included that there may have been other physical contact between the Old and New Worlds which transmitted scripture between them and which is not documented in the Book of Mormon; that unknown scriptural material may have been provided to the new world prophets miraculously, as, for example, by angelic ministers; and that God reveals His ordinances and truths to all men, sometimes in parallel and sometimes as a onetime dispensation.

In his abridgement of the Book of Ether, Moroni explained that the Lord withholds spiritual truth from unbelievers, but that belief manifest by repentant and sanctified individuals and nations unlocks spiritual truth and entitles them to further revelation.⁸⁸ Even if access to the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon and the Brass Plates themselves is denied until the Millennium,⁸⁹ Moroni teaches that those who search

88. Ether 4:1–12 (7).

89. Bruce R. McConkie, “The Bible, a Sealed Book,” (presentation, *A Symposium on the New Testament*, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 17 August 1984), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/>

and ponder with sincere hearts will receive personal revelation that unfolds meaning and can answer their questions ahead of those who do not exert that effort.⁹⁰

That principle applies to our study of the Book of Mormon. When we feast upon these words as prophets have admonished,⁹¹ inspired questions come to our minds.⁹² My concluding suggestion is therefore that a deeper awareness of the likely content of the Brass Plates will improve the insight of diligent Book of Mormon readers because they better understand the scriptures that inspired those prophets.⁹³

[Editor's Note: Comments made shortly after the original electronic publication of this paper identified several errors in need of revision. These should have been caught pre-publication. We apologize for the unfortunate gap in our editorial process and are grateful to those who assisted us in recognizing the errors so that needed corrections could be made in this revised version of the paper. We strive for high-quality peer review and editorial processes that will continue to make such errors a rare exception. —J. Lindsay]

[Author's Note: It is apparent that some readers have misunderstood the point of my paper, so I've made a few minor changes to hopefully clear up any ambiguity on the part of readers. I apologize for any confusion that my word choices may have caused. That being said, let me state that I am fully aware of the history and purpose of the Documentary Hypothesis approach to the Pentateuch. The focus of this article, though, is *not* the Documentary Hypothesis, but the ideas *behind* the Documentary Hypothesis. The point is that the concepts underlying the Documentary Hypothesis — that ancient authors selected from existing materials to compile later works and that they made selections to suit their agendas — are not unfamiliar and should not be unfamiliar to Book of Mormon readers. All authors, all redactors, and all editors are human and, as humans, make human choices and can make human mistakes. To assert

teaching-seminary-preservice-readings-religion-370-471-and-475/the-bible-a-sealed-book?lang=eng.

90. Moroni 10:3–5.

91. 2 Nephi 31:20; 32:3.

92. “Ask Inspired Questions,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teaching-in-the-saviors-way/part-4-invite-diligent-learning/ask-inspired-questions?lang=eng>.

93. 2 Nephi 25:5.

that any theory of textual development — whether the hypothesis be documentary, supplementary, fragmentary, neo-documentary, or any other human conception thousands of years after the fact — is somehow neutral or natural or self-evident is less academic than apologetic and, most of all, very human.]

A. Keith Thompson, LLB (Hons); M Jur; PhD is a professor 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 fifteen grandchildren.

AN INGENIOUS AND INSPIRING LITERARY ANALYSIS OF ALMA 30–42

Blake T. Ostler

Review of Mark A. Wrathall, *Alma 30–63: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo, UT: The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2020). 176 pages. \$9.95 (paperback).

Abstract: *Mark A. Wrathall's analytic treatment of Alma 30–42 is a sheer gift that inspires insight into the theological depth of Alma's thought. His reading of Alma teases out insights not previously recognized and not easily discovered regarding belief and knowledge and their relation to faith and committed action. This extremely rewarding introduction provides a glimpse at the best any writer in the Latter-day Saint tradition has written on Alma's thoughts and goals.*

It would be difficult to overstate just how impressive I found Mark Wrathall's small and brief "theological introduction" of Alma 30–63. Wrathall brings to this introduction his considerable genius and insight. His impressive credentials in both philosophy and law are evident in this work. His immersive knowledge of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger is especially on display — though a full exploration of that issue would take a much longer introduction to Heidegger than this review allows.

The Nature of these Brief Introductions

Let me get a few things out of the way right up front. First, this is not a work addressing Alma 30–63, because Wrathall never gets beyond Alma 42. There is literally no discussion of Alma 45–63 or why the earlier chapters are set in a work that is dominated by war between two peoples who fight over the meaning of their origin traditions. This book is not a work of theology. There is no attempt to place the text in the context

of any theology other than the a-theological (and even anti-theological) approach that Wrathall sees in the text itself. There is not even a hint of expertise or discussion of ancient context — or any context beyond the text for that matter. All of the reviews of the books in this series should be called: “A Review of Texts Without Context.” Or perhaps we should call them *solus textus*. There is no attempt to situate the text in space and time beyond what the text says self-referentially.

The failure to provide any context beyond text is both a weakness and a strength of this entire series. The authors of this series are brilliant textual analysts who provide ingenious insights into the text and how it operates. None of the authors has the education or training to comment on any ancient context or even the context of Joseph Smith’s *Weltanschauung* (roughly the contextual worldviews that dominate the thought of the time). A text that is an island in a contextual vacuum exists in a void of meaning.

To be fair, Wrathall does provide some context of how particular English words were used in Joseph Smith’s time. He quotes the Oxford English Dictionary on the meaning of the word *type* and the American English Dictionary for the meanings of *proper* and *whit*. Wrathall also comments on how Alma’s discussion of death, the intermediate state, and the resurrection fills in a gaping hole in what the biblical documents tell us about those issues (without any citations to scholarly works about what the Bible does say about such issues — e.g., the status of the *rephaim* in *Sheol*). That is about as far as the discussion of context goes. One looking to understand the Book of Mormon in the ancient context of sixth-century BC Jews coming to a new world or how the text could fit into that new world in the context of the world as we know it will have to look elsewhere.

It seems to me that the Maxwell Institute has purposely steered away from any “apologetics” regarding the ancient origins of Joseph Smith’s *oeuvre* (body of work) and his claims to textual antiquity. This is a considerable loss in my opinion. The very faith that Wrathall discusses in this work shows that the issues of faith can be affected not only by misunderstanding faith but also by failing to understand the assumptions that control issues of faith. Alma’s battle with Korihor that Wrathall so ably discusses demonstrates that the evidence-based approach is the standard or default position (and especially so in our culture steeped in the fallacy of scientism regarding faith). Alma does not reject Korihor’s evidence-based approach — he merely points out that there are more kinds of evidence than Korihor has considered.

Let me be blunt: claims made about and by Mormon scripture are often empirical claims that must be addressed by assessment of evidence. There is a vacuum of this kind of approach or response to issues of faith by the Maxwell Institute. In this respect, the Maxwell Institute is a pale reflection of its predecessor. The predecessor demonstrated that the Book of Mormon and Pearl of Great Price would be able to withstand and even foster faith in the face of such empirical challenges. The Maxwell Institute either currently lacks that faith or just wants to avoid it.

However, that recognition should not prevent us from appreciating the value and gift that this series of commentaries on the Book of Mormon represents. The text of the Book of Mormon is robustly fulfilling, complex, intellectually impressive, and inspiring even on its own terms — and these introductions drive that point home abundantly. There are several real contributions from Wrathall's commentary. His gift of analyzing the text and how it works and what the terms used mean in that context is both impressive and enlightening. I will give just a few examples from this rich work.

Belief and Knowledge in Alma

First, Wrathall explains the distinction between belief and knowledge (where “A” stands for any person and “p” stands for any proposition):

- Belief is an attitude in which some *A* holds it to be true that *p*.
- Knowledge is an attitude in which (a) some *A* holds it to be true that *p*, (b) it is true that *p*, and (c) *A*'s holding it to be true that *p* is secured in some appropriate way. (23)

This distinction is important. These definitions are standard in the philosophical topic known as epistemology, or the study of how we know and whether we can know. Wrathall adopts the standard philosophical definition of knowledge as justified true belief (the JTB theory). Wrathall focuses on this particular definition of knowledge procured through an appropriate means of securing a belief. Almost everyone (currently) accepts that we cannot know to be true what is false and that beliefs, to constitute knowledge, must be justified in some way. However, exactly what that way of coming to “know” is has been a matter of intense disagreement.

However, it is essential to note that this definition addresses solely propositional knowledge and does not apply to an important kind of knowledge — experiential knowledge that is non-propositional in nature. I mention this distinction because it is precisely experiential knowledge that Alma (as Wrathall recognizes) actually sees as the basis

of knowledge derived by faith.¹ What is the definition of knowledge as Alma uses the term? Wrathall denies that knowledge derived by faith is a type of belief. That is the key to his entire approach. He argues that Alma believes that “faith and knowledge are fundamentally different types of attitudes and belong in different categories” (62).

This approach just leaves me baffled as to what knowledge is *per se* or what it is in relation to faith. Wrathall tells us that knowledge is not on a continuum with faith so that faith someday turns into knowledge. But that is what knowledge *is not*, not what it *is*. Why can’t Wrathall just define knowledge in relation to faith as follows?

- (a) A holds it to be true that p, (b) it is true that p, and (c) A holds it to be true that p based on experiences that are produced by properly functioning faculties.²

The knowledge could be produced by experiences such as seeing God (that Alma himself claims as the basis for his knowledge³), or tasting exceeding joy in living the word (Alma 36:26), or in being born again of God (Alma 36: 26). This issue is important because Wrathall claims that Alma believes that ultimately reliable knowledge is impossible in this life except for those who have the exceptional experience of seeing God (147n8). In so reading Alma, Wrathall takes Alma to be telling us that virtually everyone who bears a testimony and who claims to know that the gospel is true are really just mistaken about what knowledge is. What they really have are mere beliefs that are not properly justified. Alma himself accepted that he knew based on his spiritual experiences and that his testimony was acceptable evidence for others such as Korihor. Indeed, Wrathall’s acceptance of the requirement to “see” God as the basis of real or ultimate knowledge adopts the very definition of knowledge that Alma rejects and Korihor promotes, as discussed below.

Moreover, there are numerous ways of looking at the kind of justification needed. For example, William Alston argues that the means of justification is provided by beliefs derived from properly functioning faculties that are likely to generate a high proportion of true beliefs to

1. Experiential knowledge is sometimes referred to by philosophers as *qualia* — the knowledge that we have of, for example, what it is like to experience tasting ice cream, or seeing blue, or knowing how to ride a bike.

2. Note that this definition does not limit “faculties” solely to cognitive faculties but to every possible means by which humans discern truth and/or come to knowledge.

3. “I have seen, therefore I do know of these things” (Alma 36:26).

false ones.⁴ Thus, Alston adopts a form of *reliabilism* and would change (c) to this: A's belief that p was produced by a reliable cognitive process. In contrast, Alvin Plantinga argues that knowledge is produced by sufficient warrant that is grounded in "basic" beliefs.⁵ Plantinga would change (c) to this: A's belief that p is warranted because it is a properly basic belief where a properly basic belief is grounded in reliable support that is reasonable (not subject to defeaters) and consistent with a sensible worldview. Plantinga's view is a form of *foundationalism* because it bases knowledge on having a reliable justification as its foundation. On either of their views, spiritual experiences can be knowledge-producing.

Is Wrathall's definition an adequate definition of knowledge? Is it what Alma really intended, if he intended any consistent view of knowledge at all? Is an experience of confirmation by the spirit, or a life-changing spiritual transformation, or a vision of God an adequate basis to claim faith? Is a vision of God really the only way to know for sure?

I point out these issues because Wrathall's discussion leaves numerous important questions unaddressed and unanswered. That is more than understandable in such a brief work — but it is important to signal to the reader that there remains a lot of work to be done and further discussion regarding what Alma is addressing.

These issues are also essential to understand the exchange between Alma and Koriher. Wrathall breaks down the argument made by Koriher into its premise form:

- (1) If you cannot see X, then you cannot know of X.
- (2) No one can see things in the future.
- (3) Conclude: If X is in the future, then you cannot know of X.
- (4) Christ will come only in the future.
- (5) Conclude: You cannot know of Christ.
- (6) When Christ comes in the future he will atone for and remit our sins.
- (7) Conclude: that you cannot know that there will be an atonement and a remission of sins.
- (8) Conclude: that there will not be any atonement.

4. William Alston, *Perceiving God. The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

5. See Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1993).

(9) God has never been seen.

(10) Conclude: that God never was nor ever will be.

Why does Korihor adopt the view of knowledge based on things seen found in premise (1)? It seems to be the very opposite of faith as defined in Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith is unseen evidence according to this definition. The emphasis is on what is not seen — so Korihor adopts the exact opposite reliance on evidence as the basis of knowledge: one can only know what is, in fact, seen. So knowledge based on sight seems to be the opposite of faith. The word *substance* here means its technical meaning: whatever stands under something as its foundation. The foundation of faith is what we hope for that we cannot see — at least as expressed in these texts.

Essentially the same emphasis on not seeing is found in Alma 32:21: “[F]aith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.” It seems likely that Moroni is reflecting on the clash between Alma and Korihor when he discusses faith and its relation to being tested: “[F]aith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.” (Ether 12:6) It appears that in this text there is a relation between faith and a witness of the truth. But that witness comes only after faith is tested by trial — or perhaps faith is tested by a life of repentance and mercy as Alma suggests in Alma 32.

Based on the (false) assumption that one can know only what one sees, Korihor logically derives that nothing in the future can be known and therefore one cannot know that Christ will come. Korihor asserts that the sole valid basis of securing belief is seeing with one’s own eyes. That means that if one accepts Korihor’s premise, the fact that no one can know of things to come logically follows. However, it does not logically follow that God does not exist or that there will be no atonement — (7) and (10) do not logically follow from the premises. Korihor has clearly overstepped what he can validly conclude.

Wrathall observes that premise (1) is false because there are other ways of securing belief, and that is exactly how Alma attacks the argument: “Alma argues ... that knowledge can be secured not just by direct perceptual experience but also by the testimony of a witness of some other thing” (32). To demonstrate that premise (1) is false, Alma gives counter-examples of other ways to produce knowledge. These things include the orderly motion of all things and the testimony of the prophets that Christ will come (Alma 30:39, 41). Surprisingly, Wrathall asserts that

“for Alma’s immediate purposes, it doesn’t matter whether the testimony of such things is sufficient to persuade anyone to believe in God” (32). That is because all that Alma needs to do is to show that premise (1) is false to defeat the argument. Wrathall notes a long history of argument over whether the order of the world is a sufficient basis to believe in God (called the teleological argument). There is also a large body of literature on whether testimony derived from spiritual experiences is reliable.

But is Wrathall correct? It seems to me that Wrathall sets up Alma with a straw man argument. If the testimony is false or the fact asserted to support a belief is false, then there is no knowledge given the definition of knowledge. Remember, *p* has to be true for there to be justified true knowledge. It seems to me that it does matter whether the testimony is true and the facts adduced to support a belief are true. That is because Korihor could easily respond that Alma’s argument relies on false counter-examples to premise (1) and, because they are false, they do not invalidate it. That would be a logically valid response — and it takes a great deal more to show whether Alma’s observations are sound if we take him to be making the argument that Wrathall imputes to him.

Nonetheless, it is obvious on its face that premise (1) is too narrow. Seeing something is not the only way to know that something is true. All one has to do to falsify that assertion is to point to something that is known on a basis that does not include seeing, like knowing that someone is speaking because one can hear them.

However, I think that Wrathall misses Korihor’s stronger argument and Alma’s more definitive response. Wrathall does not discuss Korihor’s strongest argument — and it is a shame because it is a variant of an argument used often by critics of the Church and those who lose faith: Korihor actually argues that the faculties that produced the testimony on which Alma relies are not reliable and/or properly functioning faculties. All of these beliefs are the result of a “frenzied mind.”

Ye look forward and say that ye see a remission of your sins. But behold, it is the effect of a frenzied mind; and this derangement of your minds comes because of the traditions of your fathers, which lead you away into belief of things which are not so. (Alma 30:16)

So Korihor is adopting the particular view that the justification of knowledge is derived from properly functioning faculties and Alma’s and the believers’ minds are not properly functioning because they are frenzied. To be in a frenzy means “a state of great activity and strong

emotion that is often violent and frightening and not under control.”⁶ As it is used in Alma, the term means to be in an irrational state due to overexcited emotion. It could also mean simply that the emotional state is derived from non-cognitive faculties that do not function properly and are highly unlikely to produce true beliefs. There are two arguments here: “you believe it only because that is what your parents taught you” and “your supposed emotions are not a reliable basis of knowledge.” This is a very contemporary and, frankly, stronger argument.

Korihor follows up that argument with another argument that enjoys contemporary currency: there is no atonement because there is no sin; there is only prospering according to one’s genius and conquering by one’s own strength “and that whatever a man did was no crime” (Alma 30:17). So we have the Nietzschean argument that the herd mentality of the weak is a false morality and the *ubermensch* will conquer. There is no sin and thus there is no need for an atonement. Moreover, the priests who teach about the atonement are those relying on their strength and genius by getting the believing suckers to make them rich. They use these false traditions to exploit the believers — they are just wicked and greedy (Alma 30:27–28). Wrathall sums up this argument this way: “It is in virtue of our rationality and intellectual rigor that we prosper.” But Wrathall does not discuss the point of Korihor’s attack on spiritual experiences as the basis of belief because they are produced by emotions and not by reliable, cognitive faculties. He also does not discuss the point that Korihor’s arguments set up the armed and deadly conflict in the later chapters of Alma 37–63 based on the claim that the Nephites have robbed the Lamanites because of a false tradition that they received from their ancestors.

How does Alma respond to these arguments? Wrathall argues that ultimately Korihor is convinced because Alma shows him a sign by striking him dumb through the power of God (33–34). But, of course, faith cannot be based on signs, and anyone who demands a sign as a basis of belief is asking inappropriately (Matthew 16:4). The reason for that fact is that anyone who asks for a sign is wicked and adulterous. The reason that asking for a sign is automatically adulterous is that it demonstrates a lack of fidelity, a rejection of the principle of faith itself as a basis of knowledge.

The priests who are accused used the law to arrest Korihor and bring him before Alma as chief judge, even though there was no law against beliefs, but apparently there was a law against reviling (verbally arguing against) God (Alma 30:29). Alma responds to Korihor’s argument that

6. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “frenzy.”

the priests are exploiting believers by pointing out that he has never been paid a senine (a dime) for his services to the church (Alma 33:34–35). Alma then gives Korihor the very sign he demands in order to save the faith of the church's members (Alma 30:47). Alma recognizes the real problem: Korihor "resists" the truth because of the hardness of his heart (Alma 30:46). Then we get the surprise that is the focus of Korihor's admission: "I know that nothing save it were the power of God could bring this (muteness) upon me; yea, *and I always knew that there was a God*" (Alma 30:52).

So, it turns out that Korihor was not arguing in good faith, but he was not just lying. Korihor explains that he was self-deceived because he both knew that there was a God and also believed there was no God. How could that be? It turns out that human belief is a lot more complicated than just having an attitude toward propositions. It turns out that we have biases and things that screw with our minds. But how could he accurately report his belief that there was no God when in fact he knew that God exists? He was deceived by an angel of darkness, and "I taught these (falsehoods) because they were pleasing to the carnal mind, even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true; and for this cause I withstood the truth" (Alma 30:53). So the real problem is not whether Korihor's arguments are valid. That is really a distraction — and the text presents it as a distraction to the real problem. The problem is a hard heart and the self-deception that arises from a hard heart.

The recognition that there is a cognitive failure caused by the hard heart is of imperative importance. It turns out that the one operating with faulty cognitive faculties is Korihor, not Alma. Korihor's argument is correct; his diagnosis is wrong. The problem of spiritual knowledge is caused by a hard heart, a symptom of which is the deranged and frenzied attitude of superiority that comes from believing one's own lies. Korihor believed his lies because he "prospered according to his genius" as he claims — he believed his lies because he deceived himself into believing a lie that, at some level, he knew was false but resisted because it didn't serve his purposes. This is the real conclusion of Alma's argument. It is Korihor who suffers from impaired cognitive faculties because he refused to know what he already knows.

Contra Wrathall's assessment of Alma's argument, Alma rejects the simplistic view that beliefs are merely attitudes holding it to be that some proposition is true — beliefs are, in fact, complicated by emotions, biases, self-deception, and competing personal interests. Human belief is a messy and complicated matter.

Faith and Knowledge in Alma

Now for the denouement. Wrathall maintains that faith, as Alma sees it, is not a species of cognitive attitude that is a form of knowledge or something that matures into knowledge at all. Wrathall defines Alma's approach to faith as follows: "Faith is a practical stance of active loyalty to and trust in God" (22). The "practical stance" needs to be unpacked. Wrathall gives us the grace of unpacking a practical stance as:

- (i) an evaluative attitude (as opposed to a cognitive attitude that evaluates propositions for their truth value) that evaluates matters for the appropriate way to respond to them;
- (ii) affective responses (feelings and moods) that guide actions; and
- (iii) purposive action directed at accomplishing the appropriate response. (21)

This definition dovetails nicely with the definition of faith as a principle of action given in the *Lecture on Faith*: "And as faith is the moving cause of all action in temporal concerns, so it is in spiritual; for the Savior has said, and that truly, that he that *believeth* and is baptized, shall be saved. Mark 16:16."⁷ "Is not faith the principle of action in spiritual things as well as in temporal? It is."⁸ This approach only makes sense if I do not have a hope of being able to accomplish a task I will never attempt, but if I believe that I have the capacity and real possibility of accomplishing a task, and if the task is worthwhile, then the hope that I can accomplish the task is empowered by this belief to take action to achieve a desired result. The motivation to take action with the hope and belief that I can accomplish it thus amounts to faith to act. But I have no motivation to act at all in the absence of the belief and hope that I can accomplish what I set out to do. Faith thus seems to be synonymous with motivation to act based upon my beliefs about what I can do and my hope to do it. It is a practical stance in relation to action. In this sense, faith is also empowerment to act. The *Lectures on Faith* recognize that faith is not merely a principle of action but also that "faith is a principle of power."⁹

7. *Lectures on Faith* 1:12. See "Theology. Lecture First on the Doctrine of the Church of the Latter Day Saints," *Doctrine and Covenants, 1835*, 7, Joseph Smith Papers Project (website), <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/15>.

8. *Ibid.*, 10, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/18>.

9. *Ibid.*

However, what permits faith in God in the *Lectures on Faith* is a correct *understanding* of the character and attributes of God so that we know He is trustworthy and always able to fulfill his word.¹⁰ The reason that *understanding* God's attributes and character is a basis for faith is that faith is an interpersonal trust; God can be known to be trustworthy just by knowing he is always truthful and committed to our best interest and has the power and knowledge to always prevail and assure the realization of his promises. Interpersonal trust requires an understanding of the facts regarding a person's character and capacities. In this sense, there is a cognitive aspect to faith as well as an evaluative attitude. Indeed, my evaluation is just based on the cognitive assessment that I make of the character and attributes of God. Thus, it seems that this kind of interpersonal faith requires a significant evaluative cognitive assessment.

In this interpersonal sense of faith as trust, Wrathall's definition and approach to faith in Alma slights the cognitive aspects of faith in favor of a merely non-cognitive evaluative attitude. "Faith in" requires a cognitive grasp of what we repose our faith in as opposed to "faith that," which only requires an evaluative assessment of capacities and hopes (or abilities and desires). Thus, faith in God includes a cognitive assessment, while faith that I can do something requires a pragmatic or practical evaluative assessment.

Wrathall is correct to focus on the non-cognitive evaluative attitude as the basis of faith in Alma 32 because one of the issues Alma addresses is the practical issue of what to do as opposed to the question of in what to believe. Alma is responding to an inquiry by the Zoramites who have been excluded from their places of worship because they are too poor (Alma 31:1). At least in part, Alma is responding to this inquiry: "And now, my beloved brethren, as ye have desired to know of me what ye shall do because ye are afflicted and cast out" (Alma 32:24). His answer is thus a pragmatic response outlining the practical stance that is called for by faith. What are they to do? The answer is to (1) repent and (2) take an action to test whether their faith actually works to achieve the results that they seek. But this is *not* an answer to a question such as, "In what or whom shall we believe?" That inquiry requires a different answer that discusses the cognitive matters of fact that must be believed in order to repose trust in a person or proposition (and even these are two different kinds of trust).

The question remains: how do I determine that my faculties (cognitive or otherwise) are properly functioning in a truth-conducive manner? How do I know that I am not self-deceived or believe as I do because

10. *Lectures on Faith* 3 on the character of God and *Lectures on Faith* 4 on the attributes of God are dedicated to proving this point.

of a deranged and frenzied mind? And what are these faculties so that we can assess them? Alma demonstrated that Korihor's cognitive and affective faculties were not properly functioning because of his admitted self-deception. But that shows us how to know when faculties do not function, not how to know when they do function. They do not function when we have a hard heart. So the answer to the question follows from understanding Korihor's problem: soften your heart enough to give faith a chance. Alma's answer is that faith must be put to the test:

If ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can do no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words. (Alma 32:27)

What are "faculties" in Alma's terms? Faculties are means of discovering or coming to the truth. In this context, Alma mentions four faculties: (1) a humble and soft heart (Alma 32:8); (2) soul; (3) *understanding*; (4) *mind* (32:34). Wrathall notes that the soft or humble heart leads to "receptive openness" (63). A properly functioning faculty of a soft heart responds to the "word" that teaches that Christ will come and atone by causing the soul to swell, the understanding to be enlightened and the mind to expand (Alma 32:34). I point this out because Wrathall interprets Alma to say that we gain "knowledge of very specific *propositions*" (64, my emphasis), i.e., I know that the seed is good because it grows in the sense that "it contains the potential to change me" (64). I know that the seed can "change my heart in good ways." I also know that my "understanding doth *begin* to be enlightened and [my] mind doth *begin* to expand" (64). However, this is not "absolute certainty" according to Wrathall because Alma points out that we still do not have a "complete" or "perfect" knowledge (64, see Alma 32:35–36). So what we gain through faith is in fact propositional knowledge that includes the mind after all and is not limited merely to a practical stance. Wrathall's approach is therefore incomplete and fails to account for this propositional knowledge.

What is being tested is specific: the truth of Alma's words. The truth will be determined by the experiment. The experiment is possible only if there is a mere particle of faith in the form of a desire to know of their truth. The experiment requires openness to the possibility that what Alma says is true. If that openness is not present, there is not sufficient faith even to conduct the experiment.

But it is not merely the practical stance that Alma addresses: it is also the truth of what he taught:

Now as I said concerning faith — that it was not a perfect knowledge — *even so with my words*. Ye cannot *know of their surety* at first, unto perfection, any more than faith is a perfect knowledge. (Alma 32:26)

Alma is not addressing merely the practical question of “what shall we do?” He is also addressing the propositional truth of what he preached: that Christ would come and atone for sins. Wrathall overlooks this double problem addressed by Alma and thus Wrathall limits faith addressed by Alma to a practical stance. But it is more than that; it is also a means of testing the truth of the propositions that Alma affirmed: that Christ would come and atone for sins. So Alma does have propositional knowledge in mind when speaking of faith in addition to the practical stance that is called for by faith.

Is knowledge — cognitive knowledge — produced through this test of faith? Wrathall says no. Faith and knowledge are incommensurate and not on the same continuum or category of meaning. But Alma says that there is a sense in which faith is related to knowledge. We do not have a “perfect knowledge” of all things, but we do have “perfect knowledge in that thing.” What thing? The truth of Alma’s words about Christ (Alma 32:28).

But is what is produced real knowledge or merely a practical stance that just happens to work? By implication Alma says what is known through faith is not merely a practical stance, but also knowledge of the truth of what he preaches about Christ:

And now, behold, is your knowledge perfect? Yea, your knowledge is perfect in that thing, and your faith is dormant; and this because you know, for ye know that the word hath swelled your souls, and ye also know that it hath sprouted up, that your understanding doth begin to be enlightened, and your mind doth begin to expand. (Alma 32:34)

The first thing to note is that Alma affirms that one does in fact have knowledge. The second thing to note is that when we have knowledge, “faith is dormant” because the action motivated by faith has been accomplished. The third thing to note is that the action has resulted in a limited but perfect knowledge that the faith tested bore fruit such that (1) it swelled our souls, (2) our understanding begins to be enlightened, and (3) our minds begin to expand.

It turns out that faith and knowledge are on sort of continuum after all, so that when knowledge is achieved, faith no longer has a purpose to fulfill

because it has fully fulfilled its purpose. So faith stands as a motivating power that leads to the action of experimenting or testing the truth of the belief that Christ will come and atone. The experiment is completed when it results in knowing because the outcome of the experiment was confirmed.

So what is Alma saying? That we know the truth of particular matters when our desire to know is satisfied by experiential knowledge that expands us as persons and enlightens our understanding of matters. The open heart is a properly functioning faculty. The knowledge gained is not only propositional but also experiential. It is not effective at showing merely whether propositions are true or false, but also whether our lives are in accord with the nature of happiness and joy. What is known includes the truth of certain propositions about Christ's coming and atonement and also knowledge about a practical stance in life. The means of knowing is both experiential and cognitive. However, it must be noted that the mind is caused to expand and understand, according to Alma, by the status of one's humble heart. It is the experiential knowledge sensed in the open or soft heart that is the foundation and source of knowledge.

I can give an analogy that teases out more exactly the relation between belief, faith, knowledge, and continued faith after having knowledge only in specific matters. Let's call it the analogy of the hungry man looking for a kitchen. I am hungry. I believe that there may be food in the kitchen to eat, so I am motivated to go to the kitchen to look. When I get to the kitchen, I find bread and eat it until I am filled.

Here is how the analogy enlightens regarding Alma's use of these terms in the parable of the seed. In this analogy, my hunger to know where to find food is analogous to faith; it is what motivates me to act. We can say that faith is a hunger to know. My belief is simply my attitude toward the possibility that there is food in the kitchen. If I don't believe that there is food in the kitchen then I will not look there. When I do look in the kitchen and find bread, I know that my belief is true because I found what I was looking for. Now my faith is dormant after I eat and I am satisfied because I am no longer motivated to seek food; I am full. So faith and knowledge are not in the same category, just as Wrathall says. Food is not in the same category or same type of thing as the hunger that motivates me to find food. It is not the case that hunger can mature to become food. However, they can be intimately related because it is the hunger that motivates my action to find food and eat it.

Now let's extend the metaphor to make it more exact. There is another dimension to faith that is not yet captured — the dimension of trust. Faith is a kind of trust in things. I have to have trust that the bread will satisfy

my hunger and not kill me if I find it and eat it. After all, I am going to put it in my mouth. So I have to trust that the bread is good for nourishment in order to eat it. Further, once I am full I am no longer motivated to find food but only for a while. I will be hungry again, so I must continue to seek and find food until the day that I die. The mere fact that I have eaten bread does not mean that I will forever be filled or satisfied.

What I need is a continuing source that continues to give me bread. I seek the Bread of Life. I need to know the bread maker and develop a relationship so that I continue to receive bread and be filled. Moreover, I want a really good bread maker whom I can trust to make bread that tastes good to me. I am no longer satisfied to merely address my basic hunger; I want to find food that is delicious to the taste. When we find the Bread of Life, we find the source that can continue to nourish us. Moreover, the bread is so delicious and so abundant that I want to share it with everyone.

So it is with faith. Once I have eaten, it is not a final solution to my need for food, even though I have proven that my belief that there is food in the kitchen was true. I have knowledge in that specific thing only. However, I need to continue to press forward to find more food to satisfy my hunger that will surely return.

We can say that belief is a basis for seeking to verify the truth about facts. Faith is the hunger that motivates us to find knowledge and the trust to accept it when we find it. Knowledge is the result of our search that is verified when we find what we were seeking. Continuing in faith and enduring to the end is applying our knowledge to make our lives better day by day.

Is the Justified True Belief Approach the Best Way to Assess What Alma Says?

The problem with knowledge as justified true belief is that it is circular. In order to know that I know, I must first know that what I believe is true. But the entire point of knowing is that what is true is known to be true on the basis of my justification for coming to know what is true. This circularity leads to what are known as Gettier problems: what I believe could be true even if my means of justifying my belief have nothing to do with producing that knowledge. But my knowledge would still count as knowledge, based on the definition of knowledge as justified true belief. I have beliefs. I have justification for my beliefs. My beliefs just happen to be true. It is simply that what I believe has nothing to do with my justification. The problem is that I am simply lucky that my beliefs match the truth because they have nothing to do with the reasons for believing.

Is Alma's view of faith's relation to knowledge a form of this luck that I just happen to have true beliefs and yet my reasons for believing have nothing to do with causing or producing that belief? No, Alma actually solves the Gettier problems by showing that we know that the soft heart is a properly functioning faculty because it is fecund in generating expanded understanding of matters, leading to a working and functioning life that is joyful and expanding our minds so that we can understand a greater range of matters. It is the pragmatic criteria of a functioning life and faculty that works matched with the virtue of a fecund belief that leads to greater understanding that shows that the beliefs generated were produced by truth conducive and functioning faculties.

Wrathall does not address the issue of properly functioning faculties that are truth conducive, because he does not discuss the thrust of Korihor's argument about a deranged mind and Alma's focus on showing how to know the truth of the words (i.e., propositions) that he preaches. Yes, faith is a practical stance, but it is also a means of leading to knowledge about the propositions inherently affirmed by faith in Christ.

However, Alma's approach calls into question the entire justified true belief approach to knowledge that Wrathall uses to analyze Alma. Alma adopts a different approach that focuses not merely on properly functioning faculties, but also on the pragmatic effects of a life lived in faith through repentance. The focus on a soft heart as opposed to a mind that can be self-deceived shows that Alma has already adopted what philosophers call a reliabilist theory of knowledge. Such approaches require that knowledge be produced through reliable cognitive processes.¹¹ Alma views knowledge as the outcome of a process of exercising faith that results in a particularly successful and valuable form of knowledge. This approach is very much like a virtue theory of knowledge supported by Ernest Sosa that sees knowledge as requiring a non-logical relation between belief and truth. Knowledge is experientially derived by an assessment of its results:

1. An *accurate* belief is true.
2. A belief is *adroit* if it is produced by a means that tends to produce truth in a skillful manner.

11. See, e.g., Fred I. Dretske, *Knowledge and the Flow of Information* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).

3. A belief is *apt* (or known to be true) in virtue of the believer's skill.¹²

The knowledge derived from a skillful application of tests designed to derive the truth results in both propositional and also experiential knowledge. Alma's approach also relies on the skill of the gardener to cultivate the seed, and the outcomes (growth of the seed) are the result of that skill and lead to knowledge because of the results derived from an appropriate test.

There is also a pragmatic epistemology inherent in Alma's approach — what is known to be true is what works. Pragmatic theorists adopt a pragmatic criterion to knowledge: *A knows that p if and only if A can use such knowledge as a reason for action.*¹³ The fact is that if we are told that x will occur if we do y, and we do y and x then occurs, then we have reason to know that what we were told is true because it worked as predicted. It is precisely the approach Alma adopts. However, one must have properly functioning faculties (a soft heart motivated by faith) to conduct the test. One knows from the results of the test that the promised results are good.

Given space constraints, it is more than understandable that Wrathall does not explore these alternative approaches to knowledge. However, they seem more apt to Alma's discussion of faith leading to knowledge of the truth of his words and the practical stance that leads to a better life than the justified true belief approach that he adopts.

Infinite Atonement

Wrathall also ingeniously discusses Alma's view that only an infinite atonement will be sufficient to accomplish the atonement. He interprets Alma as essentially rejecting the Penal Substitution Theory by the expression that the atonement must be infinite.¹⁴ The Penal Substitution Theory views the atonement as an economic transaction in which Christ's infinite merit pays off our debts. Alma and Amulek reject this view, according to Wrathall, because no amount of money or capital could ever suffice to pay an infinite obligation (80–81). Wrathall insightfully observes:

The pop theological interpretation [of infinite atonement] understands Amulek as invoking a kind of supernatural

12. Ernest Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

13. See, e.g., Jason Stanley, *Knowledge and Practical Interests* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

14. Wrathall describes this theory without naming it as such.

power on the part of the Christ: no man can atone for another, but somehow a God can. I take Amulek's point to be different: because no one can atone for the sins of another, we need to stop thinking in terms of the payment of debts. We need to focus on how to heal relationships between us. (81–82)

This interpretation is just flat out dead on, insightful, and ingenious. I will not say more, but I urge the reader to pay careful attention to Wrathall's argument.

Justice and Mercy

Wrathall also has a very engaging and clarifying discussion of justice and mercy in Alma. What is most interesting to me in this discussion is that Wrathall interprets Alma to say that mercy overcomes justice when *we* are merciful; and not merely when God is merciful. That is, we get exactly what we deserve when we are merciful — mercy instead of justice. This approach is interesting to me because Alma is most often read as positing the conflict in justice and mercy as a conflict in God's attributes. "God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also" (Alma 42:15). How could God's status as both a just and merciful God depend on whether *we* are merciful? It seems to follow from this position that God is not just and merciful if we fail to be merciful.

Wrathall does a marvelous job of clarifying what is at issue so that we can see the genius of Alma's position. He begins by defining terms and making key distinctions. *A state of justice is a situation in which each receives what he or she deserves* (96). In contrast to the state of justice that is the goal of the law, Wrathall defines a just act: *A just act is an action where person A gives to person B what B deserves and in which A is motivated by a desire to produce a state of justice* (97). In contrast to both a just state and a just act is a merciful act: *A merciful act is an action whereby A relieves person B's suffering without regard to what B deserves, and A is motivated by compassion to relieve B's suffering* (97). Thus, merciful acts are in direct contravention of just acts and destroy a state of justice.

Wrathall ingeniously shows that Alma resolves the tension by insisting on maintaining the tension but distinguishing between God's purposes and the purposes of the function of the law. The purpose of the law is to produce a just state by executing the law and giving each what he or she deserves. In contrast, God's purpose is a state of mercy. God accomplishes both states of mercy and justice by delaying the execution

of the law — in our modern parlance, we are placed on “probation” rather than being given an immediate penalty. God gives us time before judging us to allow us to change through repentance so that we are motivated by mercy to relieve the suffering of others by showing mercy. If we change to become merciful, then by the law of restoration (taught by Alma in Alma 41) we no longer deserve punishment through execution of the law. We still receive exactly what we deserve, but we deserve mercy instead of justice because we have become merciful ourselves. Those who do not repent, however, are still subjected to the full execution of the law and receive what they deserve. Justice is not cheated because it still executes the law and returns justice for those who demanded that others receive justice. Thus, everyone receives exactly what they deserve. In this way, both mercy and justice are accomplished (105–108).

All of this is very insightful, but a few questions remain. Why is an atonement needed that requires Christ to suffer and take the pain of our sin upon him to satisfy the demands of both justice and mercy? The reconciliation of justice and mercy is accomplished by what *we* do, not by what Christ does in the view expounded by Wrathall. This approach (which I believe is essentially correct) works simply as a matter of the law of restoration based solely on what we do. We do not need anything from God except to refrain from executing justice immediately so that we have time to repent and change. We do all of the work, but what has this to do with what Christ will do? It shows how God is both just and merciful, but all of that can be done without Christ’s suffering.

This is not a question that Wrathall addresses directly. Indeed, he never addresses what the atonement is, how it is accomplished, or in what it consists according to Alma. But that is the very center focus of what Alma is explaining in Alma 34 and 41–42. Wrathall does note that Abinadi says that Christ stands “betwixt [the children of men] and justice” and can do so because he “has the bowels of mercy, being filled with compassion towards the children of men” (93, see Mosiah 15:9). Wrathall earlier merely touches in passing (upon the topic of the distinction between believing in, believing on, and knowing how) that becoming mortal enables Christ to have “the bowels of mercy,” because he became mortal and gained experiential knowledge of what he could not learn in any other way. The atonement is thus identified with Christ’s entire mortal experience. In fact, Alma expressly says exactly that Christ “will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:12).

Christ's full suffering enabled him to do what could be done in no other way — to learn experientially of the fullness of human suffering so that his bowels are filled with mercy. Christ is moved with compassion for us to thereby motivate us to repent and also show mercy. Wrathall quotes this passage to demonstrate that it does not involve “a propositional form of ‘knowing that’” (23). He asserts that it is “intriguing” for Alma to suggest that “God gains, through his incarnation, a kind of know-how” (23). But this know-how is apparently essential for Christ to be able to be moved with compassion sufficiently to accomplish his atonement — and in fact it is the very means by which the atonement is accomplished. Further, it is not “God” as a generic “one God,” but specifically Christ who has this experience that makes the atonement possible.

Conclusion

Now notice what has happened here. Wrathall's ingenious analysis has caused me to return to the text in light of his careful and adroit analysis. His analysis has clarified the issues to the point that we can discuss it and tease out insights that are otherwise not visible, not assessable until they are called out by insight and care in reading. To me, that is the value of his contribution — and it is invaluable to me. I don't think that Wrathall quite captures the meaning of what Alma is up to in his response to Korihor because there is more to be said about the argument, but this is not a defect in Wrathall's work. There is, after all, always more to be said about any text.

What Wrathall's careful treatment of Alma 30–42 accomplishes is to demonstrate the incredible genius and insight that Alma brings to the issues of belief and knowledge, faith and knowledge, atonement, and justice and mercy. There is much more that is very worth considering in this brief work, but I will leave that for further exploration. I could not recommend this book more highly.

Blake T. Ostler is head partner in the law firm of *The Ostler Legal Advocates*. In 1981 he graduated from Brigham Young University with a BA in Philosophy (*summa cum laude*) and a BS in Psychobiology (*magna cum laude*). He then graduated in 1985 as a William Leary Scholar from the University of Utah Law School with a JD (*cum laude*). He did graduate work in neurophilosophy and also the philosophy of law. Blake has published widely on Mormon philosophy in professional academic journals such as *Religious Studies* (Oxford, England), *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* (Netherlands), and *Element: The*

Journal of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology, *as well as* Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Sunstone, BYU Studies, *and* FARMS Review of Books. *He is the author of the multi-volume and award-winning series* Exploring Mormon Thought.

JOB: AN LDS READING

Mack C. Stirling

Abstract: *Mack C. Stirling examines the well-known story of Job, one of the literary books of the Bible and part of the Wisdom literature (which is heavy in temple mysticism and symbols), and proposes the story follows the temple endowment to the T. Following Hugh Nibley's lead in The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, the temple endowment is not discussed. Stirling focuses only on Job's story, drawing on analysis of literary genres and literary tools, like chiasms, focusing on the existential questions asked by the ancient author. Doing this, he concludes that Job's is a story about a spiritual journey, in which two main questions are answered: "(1) Is it worthwhile to worship God for His own sake apart from material gain? (2) Can man, by coming to earth and worshipping God, enter into a process of becoming that allows him to participate in God's life and being?" What follows is an easy to read exegesis of the Book of Job with these questions in mind, culminating with Job at the veil, speaking with God. Stirling then discusses Job's journey in terms of Adam's journey — beginning in a situation of security, going through tribulations, finding the way to God and being admitted into His presence — and shows how this journey is paralleled in Lehi's dream in the Book of Mormon (which journey ends at a tree of life). This journey also is what each of us faces, from out premortal home with God, to the tribulations of this telestial world, and back to the eternal bliss of Celestial Kingdom, the presence of God, through Christ. In this way, the stories of Adam and Eve, of Job, and of Lehi's dream provide a framework for every human's existence.*

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The book of Job has challenged and puzzled interpreters for centuries. All agree that the beauty and eloquence of its Hebrew poetry are unsurpassed and that Job raises important, penetrating questions not addressed elsewhere in the Bible. Yet the meaning of many phrases and words in the book is simply unknown, which is partly responsible for multiple divergent interpretations. There is no scholarly consensus on the date, author, structure, stages of composition (if any), nature (history, narrative, story, or dramatic fiction), or meaning of the book. Not unexpectedly, no one translation of Job is adequate; meaning and translation are invariably influenced by one’s life experiences and theological presuppositions.¹

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

Table 1. Literary Outline of Job

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

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

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

A. First Cycle (Job 3-14)

B. Second Cycle (Job 15-21)

C. Third Cycle (Job 22-27)

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

III. Job Prepares to Meet God (Job 28-37)A. Job's Final Soliloquy (Job 28-31), *poetry*

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

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

Job withstands a final challenge from Elihu.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Most of the disputes in the book of Job are related to the idea of *retribution*. The friends (and Job initially) conceive of a rigid order in the cosmos, created and maintained by an all-powerful and perfectly just God, where the righteous prosper and the wicked are brought to ruin, after perhaps being given a time to repent. Therefore, they reason, if a person suffers, he or she must have sinned.³ Having previously thought the same, Job comes to know by his bitter suffering that rigid retribution is false. He realizes that he is suffering innocently (suffering out of proportion to any sin), along with many others, whereas the wicked frequently thrive. Job holds ferociously to this truth, destroying the previous unity with his friends. Job is forced to entertain probing questions about the nature of God, man, and the moral order, questions

that lead to his transformation. He comes to understand that salvation cannot be adequately encompassed by categories of sin and retribution and that truth is more important than confessional unity based on false premises.

Irony abounds in the book of Job. By *irony*, I mean a text that is intended to mean something different from what it seems to say. Thus, the important meaning is different from, even contrary to, the superficial or obvious meaning. For example, Job asks, “Who will say to [God], ‘What doest thou?’” (Job 9:12, RSV). Here Job seems to say that no man would venture to question God’s actions. Yet, questioning God is precisely what Job does. As another example, God asks Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (Job 38:4, RSV). This appears to portray an overbearing God intimidating Job with His awesome majesty. Ironically, however, God may actually be inviting Job to a deeper understanding of and participation in creation. Superficially, this text seems to suggest that Job could not have been present at creation, whereas ironically he may well have been (Abraham 3:22–25). Irony functions to invite the reader into a creative and profound engagement with the text and to subvert conventional understanding.

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

The book of Job can be understood as Job’s spiritual journey in response to questions posed by God. Existential questions arising within God in the Prologue are shared with Job, eventually stripping him of everything dear to him. Job internalizes these questions in his darkened and bitter state during the Dialogues. He holds on, evolving toward a

transformed understanding of God and man, and finally reaches God's presence and experiences redemption. We will now consider Job's journey in detail.

Prologue (Job 1–2)

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

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

God intrudes on Job's idyllic life by bringing Job to Satan's attention, clearly in response to existential questions within God Himself about Job's character and motivation and about the significance of human worship of God.⁷ Satan insists that Job fears God only for secondary gain and that he would not worship God “for naught,” introducing the metaphor of the “hedge” to summarize all that God has done to prosper and protect Job (see Job 1:9–10). This *hedge* around Job is best conceived as a many-layered veil, consisting of the nourishing and cradling conditions of Job's life: health, family, wealth, societal fabric of shared language and religion, and perceived stable order and justice in the cosmos.⁸ Satan wagers that if God will tear down the hedge, Job will curse God (see Job 1:11). God gives Satan permission to proceed with dismantling the hedge, stating: “All that he has is in your power” (Job 1:12, RSV).

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

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

After these experiences, Job proclaims that he is “naked” (Job 1:21), like Adam and Eve in the garden after eating the forbidden fruit (see Genesis 3:7–11). Job continues to bless God, so Satan receives permission to afflict Job's skin with loathsome sores, removing a more interior part of the hedge (Job 1:21–2:7). All that remains of Job's hedge are the societal bonds of caring friends, shared religion, and common language. These, too, will be stripped away in the ensuing Dialogues, leaving Job alone to struggle with the great moral question of whether he should serve God “for nothing.”

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

Job removes himself in solitude to an ash dump, resigning himself to a dreary waste (compare with 1 Nephi 8:4–7), while describing his state in terms of bitterness (see Job 7:11, 9:18, 10:1, 13:26, 23:2, 27:2) and darkness (see Job 16:16, 19:8, 23:17, 30:26). Job has thus gone through a kind of fall, brought about, in some sense, by the machinations of Satan but nonetheless occurring at the initiative of God. The book of

Job thereby expresses in a literary, dramatic way the idea that “it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet” (D&C 29:36). Just like Adam and Eve, Job has partaken of the bitter tree, which will make it possible for him to comprehend the sweet tree or tree of life (compare with 2 Nephi 2:15–16) and thus partake of the life and being of God. Participating in God’s life is much different than simply being taken care of by God.

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

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

The book of Job is not primarily about suffering. It is about a journey from blissful ignorance through darkness and bitterness to a transformed relationship with God. It is about seeking an ever stronger connection to God, based on truth, no matter what the circumstances. Job’s journey is initiated by God in response to existential questions within God. The

existential questions are then taken up by Job as a result of his suffering as he is driven to wonder what it means to be created in the image of God, why innocent suffering occurs, and what God's relationship is to justice. In this process, Job is proved and tried at God's initiative, much like all humanity: "We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them" (Abraham 3:24–25).

The tearing down of Job's hedge can be understood as passing through a veil — passing from a protected and secure environment to a wild and unpredictable natural world. Job is blocked from returning to his previous life. He corresponds to Adam and Eve after leaving the Garden of Eden, who are barred from re-entry and direct access to the tree of life (God)¹¹ by cherubim and a flaming sword (see Genesis 3:24; Alma 42:2–3). Thus, cherubim and the flaming sword can also be conceived as a veil, an idea supported by the presence of embroidered cherubim in the veil of ancient Israel's temple (see Exodus 26:31, 2 Chronicles 3:14). The tearing down of the hedge will move Job into realms of experience beyond guaranteed structure, something that will open up possibilities for new levels of understanding and becoming while entailing significant risk.

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

Dialogues (Job 3–27)

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

Eliphaz, the first of the friends to speak (see Job 4–5), remonstrates gently with Job, reminding him that Job himself had previously counseled and strengthened those in similar circumstances (see Job 4:1–6). Job

should not be impatient now that trouble has come to him. It is critical to remember that Job and his friends (community) begin with a common religious language and understanding. In his journey toward a transformed understanding of and relationship with God, Job will step out of and become differentiated from his community. The friends will continue to represent conventional religion and the wisdom of tradition, relying on their own experience (see Job 5:27) and the words of the elders (see Job 15:9–12), as Job once had.

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

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

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

Eliphaz is forced to assume that Job is a sinner because of his concept of retribution and the justice of God. He urges Job to understand the frailty and ignorance of man, admit his own sin, and lay his case before God, hoping for mercy and restoration (see Job 5:7–27). This is sage advice for any sinner. However, the reader knows from the Prologue that it does not apply to Job, and that for Job to follow Eliphaz’s advice would breach his integrity. Job’s challenge will be to “test and reject all the answers attempted by men.”¹²

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

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

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

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

Chapters 9 and 10 put Job’s dilemma in sharp perspective. Like the friends, Job had always believed that the world was an orderly place, created and controlled by a perfectly just God who rewarded the righteous with good and the wicked with calamity. Now, as a result of his own experience, Job knows that this assumption is flawed. Disoriented, but firmly holding to the truth of his own innocence (see Job 9:15, 20, 21; 10:1), Job considers the possibility that God is simply an all-powerful bully who capriciously does whatever He pleases and calls it “right.” Having been marked by such a God for calamity, Job can never be clean

or innocent in God's grand scheme: "If I wash myself with snow ... yet thou wilt plunge me into a pit" (Job 9:30–31, rsv); "though I am innocent, my own mouth would condemn me; though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse" (Job 9:20, rsv). Job laments the utter impossibility of contending against or even communicating meaningfully with such a being, who cannot be answered like a man (see Job 9:3, 11–12, 32–33).

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

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

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

Chapters 12–14 conclude the first cycle of the Dialogues. In my view, these critically important chapters constitute a turning point for the entire book. Here, Job reaches the greatest depths but then turns and begins his ascent toward a transformed relationship with God and a new level of understanding.

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

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

Job's persistent, though not perfectly straight course to this goal will occupy the rest of the book. Job's transformation has begun. He returns to some confidence in God's justice, stating that God “will surely rebuke” the friends for their lies (Job 13:10) and inviting God to make him understand his current sins, if any, while admitting to iniquities in his youth (see Job 13:23–26).¹⁶

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

If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your
anger has passed!

If only you would set me a time and then remember me!

If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my hard service
I will wait for my renewal to come.

You will call and I will answer you. You will long for the
creature your hands have made.

Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin.

My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin. (Job 14:13–17, NIV)

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

As Janzen notes, this "brief but incandescent vision of a positive outcome to his sufferings arises in the very context of his darkest suspicions."¹⁷ However, it occurs only after Job has firmly committed to seeking God's face. Janzen further suggests that this vision occurs "in response to a hidden call and hidden divine presence."¹⁸ God, who has been reaching out to Job since the Prologue, now has a real, though tenuous, grip on Job. This ever-strengthening grip will aid Job in his journey out of bitterness and darkness and into the presence of God.

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

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

Job responds (see Job 16–17) by dismissing his accusing friends as miserable comforters (see Job 16:1–5), realizing that the breach between them is irrevocable: "Come on again, all of you, and I shall not find a wise man among you" (Job 17:10, RSV). Job had previously hoped that his friends would serve as his advocates, attempting to vindicate him. Now, surrounded by hostile mockers and fearing a violent death (see Job 16:10–15, 17:2), Job realizes that there is no advocate for him

anywhere on earth, and he appeals to the earth itself to serve as a witness by not covering his blood nor blotting out his cry (see Job 16:18).

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

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

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

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

Despite his revelatory insights and evolving understanding of God, Job often continues to use the language and paradigms he formerly shared with the friends, speaking of God as the source of his problems (see Job 16:7–14, 17:6). Yet, in the very same context he attributes his suffering to the mocking crowd of men: “Men have gaped at me with their mouth, they have struck me insolently upon the cheek, they mass themselves together against me” (Job 16:10, rsv). I suggest that Job’s inconsistency in first referring to God as his adversary (see Job 16:9, rsv) and then appealing to God to lay down a pledge for him (serve as his advocate) results from Job’s position between the old understanding once shared with the friends and a new understanding (paradigm) that will not culminate until Job speaks with God at the veil.

Bildad (see Job 18), resentfully perceiving that Job considers the friends as stupid cattle,¹⁹ insists that what Job is suggesting is tantamount to moving the entire earth for one man (see Job 18:1–4). Instead, the fixed moral order in the universe expels the wicked and remains stable (see Job 18:5–21). The wicked are caught in traps, are afflicted with consumption of the skin (Job!), are brought to the king of terrors, and leave no memory or descendants behind. Andersen notes

that these are “the things most dreaded by an Israelite in life and in death as the tokens of rejection by God.”²⁰ Bildad’s contention that the wicked leave no trace in the world rebuts Job’s hope that the earth will not cover his blood (see Job 18:17, cf. 16:18). In Bildad’s view, Job will have no witness in heaven nor on earth.

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

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

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

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

Zophar, like Bildad, insulted by Job’s words and attitude, now makes a lengthy statement about certain retribution against the wicked (see Job 20). He also attacks Job’s confidence in an advocate in heaven, saying that “the heavens will reveal [the wicked one’s] iniquity and the earth will rise up against him” (see Job 20:27, RSV). Implicit in this thought is the assumed correspondence between the voice of the crowd or community on earth and God’s voice in heaven. While Zophar’s words (see Job 20:12–22) have value in understanding the nature of sin and its consequences, they do not apply to Job. The friends never consider the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Eliphaz admonishes Job to "agree with God and be at peace" (Job 22:21). However, for Eliphaz this means to agree with him and the community he represents. Clearly in rivalry with Job, Eliphaz also claims that "the counsel of the wicked is far from [him]" (Job 22:18, rsv; see also Job 21:16). Eliphaz asks Job to return to God, laying his own gold (insistence on his own righteousness and understanding — his integrity) in the dust in order to make God his "gold" (see Job 23:23–25). Continuing to speak for God, Eliphaz promises Job restoration, even to the point (in NIV and Pope translations²²) of his making intercession for the guilty and facilitating their deliverance (see Job 22:27–30). Eliphaz now, however, clearly sees himself in this role with respect to Job. Ironically, it will be Job in the Epilogue, after coming to confessional agreement/unity with God at the veil, who will make intercession for the friends (see Job 42:7–9).

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

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

Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No;
he would give heed to me. There an upright man could reason

with him, and I should be acquitted forever by my judge. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand I seek him, but I cannot behold him; I turn to the right hand, but I cannot see him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. (Job 23:6–10, RSV)

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

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

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

Bildad interjects with praise of God's greatness and man's inability to be just or righteous before God, agreeing with Eliphaz (see Job 25:1–3; see also Job 4:17–19, 15:14–16). Bildad answers the question of Psalm 8 (*What is man?*) by saying that man is a maggot or worm (see Job 25:6)! Thus, Bildad distorts Psalm 8 to strip humans of any royal potential before God.²⁴ Having none of this, Job sarcastically criticizes

both Bildad's ability to counsel and the source of his inspiration (see Job 26:1–4). Job then seems to “finish” Bildad's speech for him by creating a parody of his position on the greatness of God (see Job 26:5–14).²⁵ Meaningful dialogue has aborted.

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

As mentioned, speech and language are critical in the Joban drama, where truth is presented by means of dialogue. Job and the friends had shared a common language and confessional unanimity and, thereby, a common life, a common being. The Dialogues have been a war of words where Job attacks the friends' words (see Job 9:2, 12:2, 16:25, 19:2–3, 21:34, 26:1–4) and vice versa (see Job 8:2, 11:2–3, 15:2–3, 20:2–3). Job asks, “How long will you torment me, and break me in pieces with words?” (Job 19:2 rsv), illustrating the importance of speech and its relationship to being. Similarly, Job's words, which threaten the established social order, “greatly disturb” and trouble Zophar (see Job 20:2, NIV). In Job, speech and language are emblematic of and partly constitutive of being. Responding to God's call, Job no longer meaningfully participates in the language and being of the friends. Dialogue between them is no longer possible. Job is grasping forward toward a new level of being and understanding suggested by the four great revelatory insights, which betoken a transformed understanding of God and man.

Job Prepares to Meet God (Job 28–37)

At this point in Job, we reach a new level or stage in the drama. Having tasted the wisdom of man (mixed with scripture) and found it wanting, Job has moved beyond dialogue with the friends and waits, instead, on God. In chapter 28, Job will meditate on the nature of wisdom, concluding that it ultimately must come from God. Job will review his past and present life in chapters 29 and 30. In chapter 31, Job will

affirm his innocence and recommit himself in covenant fidelity, using self-imprecatory oaths and crying out that God will hear his words. In chapters 32–37, Job will face his last and possibly greatest test by Elihu. Elihu will try, without success, to engage Job in dialogue in order to bring him back to unity with the friends and derail his quest for God's face.

Job 28-31 (Job Steadfast in Covenant Fidelity). Although the text does not make it explicit, I consider chapter 28 to be Job's hymn to wisdom. Job praises human ingenuity, demonstrated by mining technology (see Job 28:1–14), but states of true wisdom that “man does not know the way to it” (Job 28:13, RSV). Yet, on another level, human mining is analogous to Job's recent experience, occurring in loneliness away from people, taking place in darkness on hidden paths, bringing hidden things to light, and producing gold and sapphires that have been transformed by fire. These descriptions of mining apply equally well to Job's spiritual journey. Job then moves on to consider human commerce in precious stones and metals, noting that none of these can purchase wisdom (see Job 28:15–22). Yet, the Dialogues can be understood as an analogue to human commerce. The question is whether Job's experiences have produced true wisdom. Job's previous statement about coming forth as gold, after being tried by God (see Job 23:10–11), suggests that he has indeed gained wisdom.

Job concludes his hymn to wisdom by noting that God knows the way to it and that God established wisdom at creation, saying: “The fear of the Lord — that is wisdom” (see Job 28:23–28, RSV). On the surface, Job seems to say that God alone knows where wisdom is and the best that man can do, since he cannot find wisdom, is to fear God. However, this seems a bit banal and echoes the words of Zophar (see Job 11:7–9), who will be judged as speaking falsely of God (see Job 42:7–9). I propose an alternative reading. God alone understands the way to wisdom — for man. The way is to create earth for man, whereupon God can then share His existential questions and, thereby, potentially His wisdom and being. Man, by responding well to these existential questions *participates with God in the creative process* and learns wisdom.

True wisdom is found by free entry into risky acts of creation while maintaining fidelity to God. To come forth as gold, men must participate with God in the creative process of bringing forth that gold. Seen this way, the key existential question is whether man will participate with God in creation or go his own way. Job has sought God with fidelity, and his response has been creative, departing entirely from the conventional religious thinking of the crowd. Job is coming forth as gold; he and God

will have a new common ground on which to meet, a shared higher level of being.

Job, now cut off from dialogue with the community, reflects on his life. Chapter 29 gives the fullest description of Job's life before his "fall." He then perceived God's companionship and friendship (see Job 29:2–5), even stating that "the rock poured out for me streams of oil" (see Job 29:6, RSV), reminiscent of Adam's easy access to food in the Garden of Eden. Beyond this, Job served as champion for the poor, sick, and powerless, with men waiting for Job's counsel "as for the rain" (Job 29:23). Job's voice was almost like the voice of God: "I chose their way, and sat as chief, and I dwelt like a king among his troops" (Job 29:25, RSV). Thus Job served as a royal, mimetic model, expecting a fulfilling life as a friend of God and man.

Now, all of this has been inverted (see Job 30). Even the lowest stratum of society, which Job now admits to having once disdained, mocks and spits at Job (see Job 30:1–10). Having been ostensibly marked as a sinner by his calamitous suffering, Job is now clearly a scapegoat for the crowd. The difference between royal model and despised scapegoat is all in the eyes of the multitude. As before, Job attributes his troubles at one moment to God (see Job 30:11, 19–23) and, at the next, to the crowd (see Job 30:9–10, 12–15). While Job has already rejected the friends' explanation of his suffering and the voice of the crowd (the friends) as the voice of God, perhaps he does not yet fully discern the difference between favor in the eyes of God and favor in the eyes of men. He still sees his previous material prosperity and high societal rank as evidence of the presence of God in his life (see Job 29:1–6).

Although Job assumes an impending death at "God's hand," Job continues to cry out to God for help (see Job 30:20), supplementing this by cries for help in the assembly (see Job 30:28). Job perceives himself as being "reduced to dust and ashes" (see Job 30:19, NIV). This highly significant phrase will be critical in understanding Job's response to God at the veil.²⁶ In the only use of this phrase outside Job, Abraham used "dust and ashes" to refer to mortal man in general (see Genesis 18:25–27). Man arises from dust and, in death, is reduced to ashes.

Job next takes an oath of innocence (see Job 31) before God (see Job 31:2, 6, 14, 23), affirming that he has not been guilty of fourteen sins²⁷ or seven categories of sin,²⁸ with the number seven signifying completeness.²⁹ Job has been faithful in all things. The oath has the effect of binding or consecrating Job in solidarity to God and his fellow man. This solidarity is perhaps brought to fullest expression in the following statement: "If I

have rejected the cause of my manservant or my maidservant ... what then shall I do when God rises up? When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him? Did not he who made me in the womb make him? (Job 31:13–15, RSV). Job is thus committed to treating his neighbor as himself before God.

On five occasions, Job invokes self-imprecations — curses against himself — if he has not been or will not be true to his oath of innocence.³⁰ The most explicit of these is Job's statement: "If I have raised my hand against the fatherless ... then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket" (Job 31:21–22, RSV). These self-maledictions are a further expression of Job's self-sacrifice or self-consecration in absolute fidelity to God and his fellow man.

Job's self-consciousness of his innocence and commitment to righteousness give him confidence to approach God (see Job 31:23; see also Hebrews 10:19–23; 1 John 3:16–20, 4:16–19, 5:14; D&C 121:45–46). For a final time, Job cries out that God will hear his words, being willing to wear any indictment against himself as a crown and to approach God like a prince (see Job 31:35–37). In the last self-imprecation, Job invokes a curse of the Fall that "thorns grow instead of wheat" (Job 31:40, RSV; see also Genesis 3:17–18). Job only invokes these curses because he is confident he will not have to suffer them. This suggests that Job is ready to have the Fall reversed, much like the brother of Jared: "And when [the brother of Jared] had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence" (Ether 3:13).

A narrative voice now informs the reader: "The words of Job are ended" (Job 31:40, RSV). Job has passed through the calamities of the Prologue and the dark bitterness of the Dialogues, holding on to his integrity partly by virtue of four great revelatory insights. He is prepared to meet God — except for one final test.

Job 34–37 (Job Tried by Elihu). No part of the book of Job has aroused more controversy than the speeches of Elihu, with some praising their literary style and intrinsic value and others denigrating them as banal.³¹ I will look in detail at what Elihu says and does before reaching conclusions.

Elihu, found nowhere else in Job, suddenly appears, introduced in *prose* and given a human pedigree (see Job 32:1–5). The name *Elihu* means "He is my God."³² The question is whether *he* refers to the Lord or to Elihu himself, raising the possibility of an idolatrous connotation.

Elihu's anger at Job for maintaining that he is righteous and at the friends for not winning the argument is here mentioned four times. Why should Elihu be so angry?

Ironically, Elihu offers no truly new ideas. Elihu affects a sense of modesty, claiming he waited for those older and presumably wiser than him to speak first (see Job 32:6–7), but then denigrating the friends' "wisdom" and refusing to use their speeches (see Job 32:11–17). He seems to be full of pride as well as anger. Elihu also claims to be a revelator — full of the Spirit, the breath of the Almighty, which constrains him to speak (see Job 32:8–10, 18–20; 33–34). Finally, Elihu guarantees that he will speak honestly without flattery; otherwise, he says, God would soon remove him (see Job 32:21–22, 33:3).³³ This last statement rings false because God permits hypocrites and flatterers significant latitude in mortality (see D&C 50:2–8; Mosiah 27:8). One cannot trust another's honesty simply because God has not yet "removed" him.

Unlike the friends, Elihu frequently calls Job by name, both to Job himself (see Job 33:1, 31; 37:14) and to the crowd (see Job 34:5–7, 35, 36; 35:16), and repeatedly tries to draw Job into conversation (see Job 33:5, 32; 34:33; 35:2), as God will subsequently do (see Job 38:3, 40:7). Job continually resists interchange with Elihu. Elihu, more confrontational than the friends, accuses Job of contending with God and categorically dismisses Job's claims of innocence and purity (see Job 33:9–13). He mentions to Job the possibility of an angel mediator (presumably Elihu himself!) who will intercede for him *if only Job will admit guilt*, even claiming that he desires to *justify* or vindicate Job (see Job 33:19–32). This "justification" is precisely the opposite of the kind Job is seeking, but it illustrates that Elihu will do or say anything to entice Job to let go of his integrity.

Elihu's perspective on divine revelation is instructive: "In a dream ... while they slumber ... he opens the ears of men and terrifies them with warnings" (see Job 33:15–18). This terrified response to "revelation" is reminiscent of Eliphaz's dread and trembling during his night vision, a vision that communicated Satan's position from the Prologue that a man (Job) could not be truly just before God (see Job 4:12–18, 1:8–11). Elihu also reiterates Eliphaz's idea that God uses suffering to chasten men and bring them to repentance (see Job 33:19–27, 5:17–18). This idea is true in a sense (as Elihu mixes truth with lies), but it does not apply to Job.

Elihu directs his second speech (see Job 34) to the crowd, publicly denouncing Job for sin at both the beginning and end of his speech (see Job 34:1–9, 31–37). He accuses Job of scoffing at God, walking with

the wicked, speaking without knowledge, and adding rebellion to his original sin. He attacks Job for supposedly demanding that God “make requital” (Job 34:33, rsv) or dispense justice to suit Job. This is strange behavior for one who claims to desire Job’s justification.

In the center of this speech, Elihu portrays his vision of God (see Job 34:10–30). According to Elihu, God is in complete control of the earth, sustaining life by His breath, ruling with indisputable righteousness and justice, and bringing the wicked to their deserved and timely end without bothering to bring any man before Him in judgment (see Job 34:23–24). This “God” seems far removed from the One who sent Jesus Christ to be lifted up on the cross that men might be lifted up to God to be judged for their works (see 3 Nephi 27:14–15).³⁴

Furthermore, Elihu’s picture of God dogging every man’s steps in order to bring punishment on him as soon as he sins (see Job 34:21–25) reeks a bit of compulsion. This suspicion is strengthened by considering Elihu’s rhetorical question: “Who gave him charge over the earth?” (Job 34:13, rsv). Elihu’s assumed “no one” suggests a God who unilaterally imposes His will on mankind. This idea is subverted by D&C 121:46, which speaks of everlasting (divine) dominion as proceeding without compulsory means, in contrast to Satan’s plan of compulsion (see Moses 4:1–4).

Elihu, amplifying a previous point of Eliphaz (see Job 22:2–3), now confronts Job with God’s supposed indifference to human wickedness or righteousness: “If your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to him? If you are righteous, what do you give to him?” (Job 35:6–7). Elihu wants Job to believe that neither he nor his righteousness matter to God. The reader, of course, knows from the Prologue that this is false. God’s fervent desire is a “golden” Job. Elihu continues to berate Job, claiming that he “multiplies words without knowledge” (Job 35:16, rsv) in demanding to speak with God about his case, and assures Job that God will not respond to his empty cry nor come to him (see Job 35:9–16). These assertions will shortly be proved false.

Elihu begins his fourth speech (see Job 36–37) with an astounding claim: “I have yet something to say on God’s behalf. I will fetch my knowledge from afar ... for truly my words are not false: *one who is perfect in knowledge* is with you” (Job 36:2–4, rsv; emphasis added). Shortly after, Elihu extols God as one “who is perfect in knowledge” (Job 37:16). Thus, he puts himself alongside and equal to God in a sense. The implication is that since Elihu shares common knowledge with God, his words are the words of God. Job must therefore decide whether to

accept Elihu as a true prophet or continue to wait on the Lord. Hoping that Job will indeed give up his quest for God and accept him instead, Elihu reminds Job once more of his sin and urges him to repent (see Job 36:17–21).

Most of Elihu's fourth speech consists of now-tiresome perorations about God's majesty, the certainty of retribution against the wicked, the use of suffering as temporary divine discipline, God's inscrutable and indisputable ways, and the presence of God's voice and power in nature. However, in three places, Elihu's mask slips completely:

1. "Behold, God is great, and *we know him not*" (Job 36:26, rsv; emphasis added).
2. "Teach us what we shall say to him; we cannot draw up our case because of darkness. *Shall it be told him that I would speak?* Did a man ever wish that he would be swallowed up?" (Job 37:19–20, rsv; emphasis added).
3. "God is clothed with terrible majesty. *The Almighty — we cannot find him*; he is great in power and justice" (Job 37:22–23, rsv; emphasis added).

In other words, Elihu says that man cannot find, speak to, or know God. Unlike a true prophet who facilitates his listeners' journeys toward God, Elihu is a false prophet, doing anything he can to stop Job from meeting God.

As the reader has likely surmised, I see Elihu as a figure for Satan, much like the serpent in the Garden of Eden. This idea was first proposed by David Noel Freedman:

I believe that Elihu — who comes from nowhere and disappears from the scene as soon as he is done with his speeches — is not a real person at all. Like the other participants, he has a name and a profession, but it is a disguise ... He is the person assumed or adopted by Satan to press his case for the last time.³⁵

In my view, Elihu's otherworldly nature is also indicated by the *prose* introduction at his arrival. Seeing Elihu as Satan explains Elihu's extreme anger (at losing the battle for Job's soul to God), his pride, his absence from the Epilogue (on the other side of the veil where Job has overcome all evil), his pervasive lies, the potential idolatrous connotations of his name, his aggressive and repeated accusations of Job (Satan = adversary), and his prolonged attempts to turn Job from his course to God.

Understood in this light, Elihu's speeches take on new significance, constituting Job's final and greatest test. Rather than viewing Elihu as derivative and secondary to the friends, he should be viewed as the source of their well-intended but distorted advice. Elihu is the final barrier Job must pass before speaking with God at the veil. He thus occupies the place of Satan before Joseph Smith's first vision (see JS-H 1:16–17) and before Moses's greatest visions (see Moses 1:9–27). In the latter, Satan demands that Moses worship him and responds angrily when Moses refuses, frightening Moses and shaking the earth. Elihu's angry purpose with Job is similarly to frighten him back to the disoriented state of chapters 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 12 before Job firmly resolved to seek an audience with God.

Job at the Veil (Job 38:1–42:6)

Like the Elihu speeches, this part of the book of Job has resulted in a great deal of controversy. A superficial reading sees God as a verbose, omnipotent bully (as Job had feared; see chapter 9) who paraphrases words of Elihu (compare Job 38:2 with Job 35:16) and frightens Job back into humble, unquestioning subservience. Job is seen as accepting the advice of the friends to repent and agree with God (see Job 11:13–18, 22:21–30) and as thus receiving restoration of health, wealth, and family. This reading is seemingly supported by translations of Job 42:6, which have Job repenting *in* “dust and ashes” and self-abasingly confessing ignorance and sin. I argue, following Janzen³⁶ and Andersen,³⁷ that such interpretations make nonsense of the entire book. The Lord's words in the Epilogue — that the friends “have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has” (Job 42:7–8) — require that we interpret the book differently.

God's coming to Job at Job 38:1 brings to culmination what both God and Job have been seeking since God first reached out to know Job in the Prologue. The Lord speaks with Job, conferring dignity on him, and challenges him to stand up and answer. God does not demand that Job give up his claim of innocence nor explain the reason for Job's suffering but gently defends Himself against Job's accusations of malign intent (see Job 38:2, 40:8, see also Job 12:22). There is no hint given that it is not for man to question God. Indeed, God answers Job's questions with counter-questions, inviting him to deeper understanding.

Janzen insightfully summarizes these issues as follows:

God finally answers Job. But the answer, unlike those of the friends, gives no reason for Job's sufferings. It is as though

those sufferings are simply left enshrouded in the mystery of their givenness, their having happened. All God does is to deny Job's charges of dark purpose and indifference to justice and to ask Job three sorts of questions: Who are you, Where were you? Are you able? On the face of it these questions are rhetorical and have the specific force of impossible questions to which the proper answers are, I am nothing, I was not there, and I am not able. Yet again and again throughout the divine speeches, images and motifs and themes from earlier in the book are taken up and re-presented in such a way as to engender the suspicion that these apparently rhetorical questions are to be taken ironically, as veiling genuine existential questions posed to Job. The questions, as from another burning bush, have to do with the issue of Job's willingness to enter upon human vocation to royal rule in the image of God, when the implications of that image are intimated in terms of innocent suffering.³⁸

Thus, the "questions of creation" addressed to Job in chapters 38–41 should be seen as a creative divine call asking for a response from Job, much like the existential questions of the Prologue. Will Job participate in and take responsibility for creation, despite unavoidable innocent suffering and the presence of evil?

God's First Speech (Job 38–39). God steps into the tumult of opinion, which is mirrored by a literal whirlwind, finally stating His fundamental question about Job to Job himself: "Who is this?" (Job 38:2). I suggest that Job is now essentially "gold," still blameless and upright despite loss of his hedge. God chides Job for darkening His "counsel by words without knowledge" (Job 38:2; see also Job 12:13–22). Ironically, Job has been in the dark (see Job 23:17) but was gaining knowledge (see Job's four great revelatory insights) as a result of absorbing God's existential questions, and now God has come to endow him with more knowledge (see Job 42:3). God challenges Job to respond to His questions "like a man," making God to know (see Job 38:3), thus fulfilling Job's hope (see Job 23:7) against his earlier despair (see Job 9:32). Two chapters of uninterrupted questions related to the created order then follow.

God asks who shut in the sea and set bounds for it (see Job 38:8–11). "Sea" functions as a metaphor for primal chaos or evil — which, like Satan in the Prologue, are permitted in creation but are bounded in some way. God then alludes to a coming day when the wicked will

be shaken out of the earth, cut off from light, and rendered powerless (see Job 38:12–15; see also Heb. 12:26). Like the sea and Satan, evil men are also permitted in the created world but are ultimately bounded (see D&C 76:98–108).

God queries Job if he has walked in the recesses of the deep, if he has seen the gates of death, and if he knows the way to the dwelling of light (see Job 38:16–21). Job has indeed walked through the deepest darkness, by the gates of death, and to the place where light dwells (in God Himself)! God asks Job to consider His creative use of water (see Job 38:22–30). God makes rain fall in the desert, even in the absence of man, to bring forth grass and satisfy the desolate land (see Job 38:26–27). Analogously, Job has been in the desert, cut off from meaningful contact with his fellow man but receiving revelatory insights from God in a creative process. God questions Job about having knowledge of the “ordinances of the heavens” and the ability to establish their rule on earth and whether he grasps the wisdom in the clouds (see Job 38:31–38). Ironically, God is, and has been, endowing Job with wisdom by His existential questions.

God implicitly affirms His responsibility for creation and its consequences (see Job 38:39–41), and asks Job to consider wild animals in the wilderness — whose natures are analogues of fallen natural man — which God permits in the world (see Job 38:39–39:30). Rule over wild, mysterious animals is analogous to divine rule over the world of fallen men, free to follow their own desires. Just as the ostrich stupidly permits her own eggs to be trampled, so does innocent suffering occur in the world (see Job 39:13–18). The poetic images of the wild ass/wild ox are particularly instructive with respect to Job (see Job 39:5–12; see also Job 6:5, 11:12). These animals roam the wasteland (like Job), having been set free (like Job without the hedge). The question is whether they will willingly return to a human master or, in Job’s case, whether Job will freely worship God without the benefit of the hedge.

Job’s First (Non) Response (Job 40:1–5). Characterizing Job as one who contends with deity, God asks him if he still wishes to correct His justice (see Job 40:1–2). God thus challenges Job to deeper understanding and loyalty, and God clearly desires an answer. Job, however, is not yet ready to respond to the Lord (see Job 40:3–5). He mentions a sense of unworthiness (NIV) or insignificance (RSV) as justification for his reticence and retreats into silence. Job’s feelings of inadequacy before the Lord correspond to those of the brother of Jared in his question-and-answer session at the veil before entering into the Lord’s presence

(see Ether 3:2–14). M. Catherine Thomas’s commentary on this text applies also to Job: “As the unredeemed soul, even a guiltless one, closes the gap between himself and his Maker, he perceives the contrast as so overwhelmingly great that he is sorely tempted to shrink back, to give up the quest.”³⁹

The image of Job “contending” with the Lord at the veil resonates with several others. The patriarch Jacob wrestled all night with a man (God) before seeing him face-to-face and receiving a blessing instead of the requested name of God (see Genesis 32:22–30). Enos wrestled all day before God, hoping to experience a remission of sins, before hearing the Lord’s voice and probably seeing His face (see Enos 1:2–8, 19). Habakkuk, like Job, struggled with the presence of violence and injustice in the world (see Habakkuk 1:2–4) before hearing God’s voice (see Habakkuk 2:1–4) and seeing God’s glory (see Habakkuk 3:3–6). Job’s experience at the veil is profitably compared with these.

God’s Second Speech (Job 40:6–41:34). God again challenges Job to answer Him (see Job 40:), asking if Job would condemn God in order to justify himself (see Job 40:8). In the rigid theology of retribution that Job once shared with the friends, they concluded he was sinful because he suffered. Job, initially locked into the same theology but knowing he was innocent, was forced to question God’s justice (see Job 9:15–33, 12:13–25). By the standards of this theology, either God or Job was unjust/unrighteous. As we have seen, that understanding of God and man collapsed for Job in the Dialogues, being replaced by fragments of new religious understanding (the four great revelatory insights) that will lead to transformation in Job, including the understanding that he does not have to condemn God to justify himself.

In order to elicit or amplify a transformed understanding of true justice (ruling in love without compulsion — see D&C 121:34–45), God ironically invites Job to use raw power and coercively solve all of the inequities in the world, punishing the proud and wicked while clothing himself in glory (see Job 40:9–14)! Job apparently demurs, probably realizing that compulsive force cannot bring good out of evil and that use of such power is corrupting. As a final tutorial, God gives Job the examples of Behemoth (see Job 40:19–24) and Leviathan (see Job 41:1–34). *Behemoth* is the Hebrew plural for “beast” and is probably a poetic description of a hippopotamus. *Leviathan*, the seven-headed sea dragon of Canaanite myth, is here likely a poetic description of a crocodile. Though part of God’s creation, these beasts are wild, ferocious, and unable to be tamed. As such, they typify the proud (see Job 41:34)

and hard-hearted (see Job 41:24) who are unable to be led or made party to a covenant with God (see Job 40:24–41:4). Assuming responsibility for creation implies, in some sense, taking responsibility for such, yet creatively providing for redemption without using compulsory means.

Job's Second Speech (Job 42:1–6) — Job Penetrates the Veil. Initially not prepared to speak to the Lord (see Job 40:3–5), Job now responds, bringing the book to its climax. The meaning of this text is somewhat unclear, particularly in verse 6, and I here provide two different translations:

1. Janzen translation⁴⁰

- 2 a. You know that you can do all things,
 b. and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
- 3 a. “Who is this that obscures design
 b. by words without knowledge?”
 c. Therefore, I have uttered what I have not understood,
 d. things too wonderful for me which I did not know.
- 4 a. “Hear, and I will speak;
 b. I will question you, and you will make me to know.”
- 5 a. I have heard you with my own ears,
 b. and now my eye sees you!
- 6 a. Therefore, I recant and change my mind
 b. concerning dust and ashes.

2. RSV translation

- 2 I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted.
- 3 “Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?”
 Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
- 4 Hear and I will speak:
 “I will question you, and you declare to me.”
- 5 I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee:
- 6 Therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Janzen follows the Hebrew consonantal text to get “you” instead of “I” (from the Masoretic vowels) at the beginning of verse 2, seeing this as a stronger affirmation of Job’s confidence in God’s power: “To say ‘you know’ is to confess one’s agreement with that which is grounded

outside the self [It] is to bring one's own views ... and structures of understanding under the judgment of another knowing which far transcends one's own."⁴¹ Job is now able to confess ultimate confidence and trust in the Lord.

The quotation marks in verses 3 and 4 are critically important because they indicate where Job is quoting or closely paraphrasing actual words of God from God's first and second speeches (42:3a = 38:2; 42:4b = 38:3b & 40:7b). Job thus repeats or takes up words of the Lord, making them his own and coming to confessional unity with the Lord.⁴² After forty-one chapters of nothing but disagreement, ending in complete failure of communication between Job and the friends, Job now makes God's language his own. This is emblematic of entering into a higher-level covenant relationship with the Lord and participating more fully in His life and being. Job's participation in the divine nature brings to fulfillment God's covenant desire to share His life/being with man (see Moses 1:39; 2 Peter 1:3–4).

In verse 3, Job admits to having gained a transformed understanding of *wonderful* things not previously understood. What these things might be is not specified, and one would probably have to join Job, Jacob, Enos, Habakkuk, and the brother of Jared at the veil to achieve the same understanding. I suggest that Job's transformation includes a spiritually deepened comprehension of several things: first, God's power to rule in love without force; second, God's infinite concern and love for "dust and ashes" (man); and third, man's calling and capacity to share common ground with God — language and being.

Having spoken to the Lord through the veil, Job now acknowledges that he has come into God's presence (see Job 42:5), bringing to fruition the quest for God's face initiated soon after his calamities began (see Job 3:3, 13–22). Job stands in marked contrast to the friends. They never cry out to God nor seek His presence, trapped by complacent acceptance of a limited, conventional understanding of God. The friends confuse uncritical reception of traditional wisdom with reverence and the dispensing of platitudes about God with a true search for God's face. Their fear of uncertainty and risk makes them incapable of joining Job and approaching God. Job's much-praised "patience" consists of his incessant, though far from quiet or uncomplaining, push through darkness toward the face of God.

Most translations of verse 6 have Job repenting, self-abasingly, *in* dust and ashes, illustrated by the RSV translation above. By doing this, these translators align themselves with the friends in suspecting Job

of some sin (pride?). However, in my view, such translations distort the meaning of the book of Job. Far preferable is Janzen's translation, which has Job changing his mind *concerning* dust and ashes (concerning mankind).⁴³ As Janzen says about Job: "Now all his questions and charges are dissolved. His structures of understanding are melted down in the presence of Yahweh."⁴⁴ As Job's transformation to gold is completed, he understands that man's vocation is to "take up the divine image through engagement with the partly determinate, partly indeterminate character of the world" and the potential for innocent suffering that this implies.⁴⁵ Thus, God spoke (in the Prologue), extending His arm toward Job, and has now taken a man (Job) out of the crowd for His name (compare to Deut. 4:34; Exodus 6:6–12). God's covenant grip on Job is eternal.

Epilogue (Job 42:7–17)

On the other side of the veil we encounter the prose (suggesting an other-worldly state) Epilogue. Job is surrounded by a new hedge (veil) consisting of transformed language (God's language) and a transformed covenant relationship with God. As we will presently see, Job's new hedge is also "thickened" by free, loving relationships with friends and family, all in harmony with each other. God is present, communicating freely with humans, and Satan/Elihu is absent (compare to Revelation 20:7–10, 21:22–22:5). With mild exceptions, much seems the same as in the Prologue — except that everything is different: Job is transformed, having tasted the bitter and learned to prize the good, as are his relationships with man and God.⁴⁶

As Janzen notes of the Epilogue, it is a "vision in which ... the most extraordinary disclosures and insights into the nature of things are embodied in life's ordinaries, thereby transforming them."⁴⁷ Andersen is even more explicit, saying of the Epilogue: "It was already a kind of resurrection in flesh, as much as the Old Testament could know."⁴⁸ I suggest, despite the report of Job's death (see Job 42:17), that the Epilogue is best viewed as a this-worldly analogue of eternal life.

With words that are determinative for interpreting the book, God condemns the friends for not speaking "of me what is right, as my servant Job has" (Job 42:7–8, rsv). God thus rejects the friends' interpretations of events in the world and cosmos in terms of strict retribution. God's approval of Job's words cannot be applied to Job's initial dispersions of God's justice; the approval seems to apply most specifically to Job's four great revelatory insights, wherein his ongoing transformed understanding of God and man is brought to fullest expression. God's

ratification of Job's words may also extend to Job's determination to seek God's face at all costs and to Job's binding oaths in covenant fidelity to God and man.

God speaks to the friends in the language they understand — that of retribution — warning them that because of their folly, folly will be done to them unless they publicly admit wrong by offering burnt offerings and asking Job to intercede (see Job 42:7–10). God's effort is best understood as an attempt to lead the friends from retribution to grace.⁴⁹ Job functions in a priestly intercessory role⁵⁰ to help rectify the friends' relationship with God, ironically inverting Eliphaz's probable previous expectation of serving as Job's intercessor (see Job 22:27–30). Job graciously retains no bitterness toward the friends, having bound Satan in his own life, accounting for the absence of Satan/Elihu in the Epilogue (see also 1 Nephi 22:26). Whereas Job may have once invoked God's justice on his enemies — the friends, see Job 27:7–10) — Job now desires that the friends partake of the new life inside the new hedge.

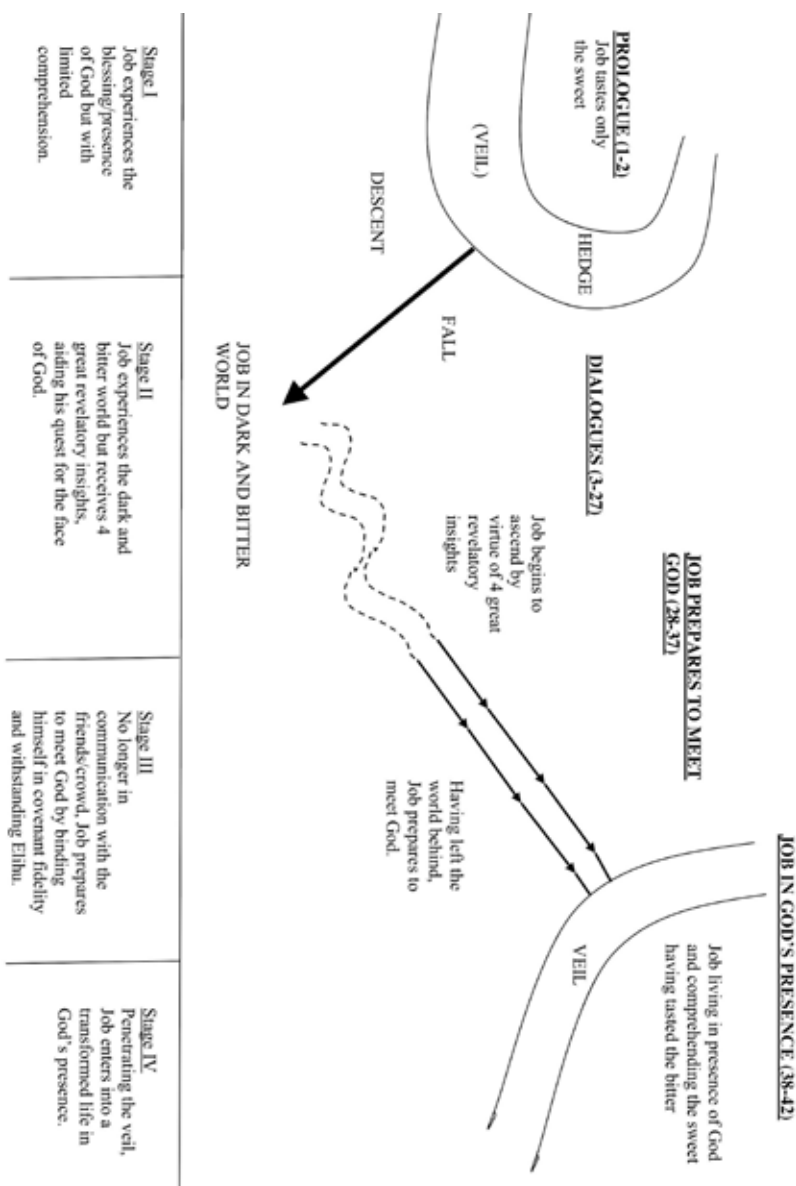
Job also shares his new life with previously unmentioned brothers and sisters with whom he breaks bread and who graciously participate in the restoration of Job's fortune (see Job 42:11). God doubly restores all of Job's material losses, following the demands on a thief in the law (see Exodus 22:4) and apparently accepting overall responsibility for Job's suffering (see Job 42:10–12). Job receives the same number of children as before; surprisingly, only the daughters are named and inherit alongside the sons in a gentle subversion of the law (see Numbers 27:8). Job's new life would be much less meaningful without his family. Job experiences restored health, living among his posterity for several generations (140 years).

Reading the Epilogue as a literary analogue of eternal life is much the same as sitting in the celestial room after an endowment, where ordinary things are used to signify eternal realities. Located on the other side of the veil,⁵¹ the celestial room “symbolizes the exalted and peaceful state that all may achieve through living the gospel of Jesus Christ ... [and] represents the contentment, inner harmony, and peace available to eternal families in the presence of Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.”⁵² For example, the opposing mirrors located in many celestial rooms allow one to view a “corridor of diminishing images” that give one the “feeling of looking into ... the eternities ... for the images in that corridor never end.”⁵³

Conclusions and Discussion

The book of Job describes Job's journey from a protected state (inside the hedge) of relative innocence and ignorance through bitter experiences to a meeting with God (see Figure 1). This meeting results in a reconstituted relationship on a higher level, indicated by Job's making God's speech his own, paradigmatic of participating in God's language, life, and being. Job's initial "fall" through the hedge resulted from God's own questions about Job and resolve to test him — in other words, from God reaching out toward Job. Initially bewildered and disoriented, Job descended further into darkness, cursing the day of his birth, wishing to die, and questioning God's motives and justice. Nonetheless, in a major change of direction, Job firmly resolved to seek the face of God, in effect reaching back toward God and assuming God's existential questions. Job experienced further bitterness in conversation with three friends, rejecting their temptations to lay aside his integrity by accepting a conventional understanding of God that ultimately resulted in failure of verbal communication with his fellow man. Derided by those who once honored him, Job received four great revelatory insights that moved him progressively toward a transformed understanding of God and man. Job eventually bound himself in covenant fidelity to God and man, affirming his own righteousness with self-imprecatory oaths. Holding to the four insights and neither overcome by bitterness nor yielding to the crowd's conceptions of God, Job passed a final test from Elihu/Satan. God then came to speak with Job, bringing to an end their mutual search for a new relationship. Job received additional knowledge and penetrated the veil, entering into a transformed life and being bound to God in a new and powerful way.

In my view, the parallels and connections between Job and the endowment are powerful and sustained. The reading I have proposed takes into account the entire book, its structure, and its use of poetry and prose, while providing a coherent and meaningful interpretation. I am unaware of any evidence that Joseph Smith used the book of Job in developing the temple endowment.⁵⁴ I conclude that both result from revelation from the same divine mind. For me, finding such a close analogue of the endowment in the canon of scripture confirms the divine inspiration behind the endowment. I suggest that the book of Job can complement and amplify our understanding of the endowment — and vice versa. In some aspects, the book of Job is a mirror image of the endowment, giving a fuller description of the darkness and bitterness of the world. Furthermore, Job receives no messengers from God; instead,



three friends serve as ministers for Satan's perspective. The book of Job presents Job as standing alone before God, thus placing more emphasis on the direct, unmediated relationship between an individual and God.

Although Job was not without sin, admitting to youthful iniquities (see Job 13:26), many have rightly considered Job to be a type of Christ. Job's blamelessness and uprightness are never questioned. Job's description of his life before the calamities is reminiscent of Christ in the premortal life. Job was clothed with righteousness, gave light and counsel to others, dwelt among his fellows as a king, and served as a role model (see Job 29:14–25; compare to John 17:5, Abraham 3:22–28, Moses 7:53). Job's bitter experiences correspond significantly to Christ drinking the bitter cup (see Matthew 26:36–39, D&C 19:16–18) after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Job speaks of being seized by violence, suddenly losing his prosperity, having a heart in turmoil, being abhorred and spit at by the crowd, being forsaken by God, and being brought to death (see Job 30:9–23). Job's reconstituted relationship with God in the Epilogue corresponds to Christ being raised in glory to the right hand of the Father (see Acts 5:31, D&C 93:16–17). Finally, Job's role as mediator for the friends parallels Christ's as mediator for mankind.

Job's journey also has many points of contact with Joseph Smith's early life up to the time of the First Vision. After a relatively comfortable early childhood, the seven-year-old Joseph required an open osteotomy for a typhoid abscess. Following this, his family fell on hard financial times, moving from Vermont to Palmyra, New York. There, the teenage Joseph was exposed to religious turmoil, with many churches and ministers claiming to have the way to salvation. Resisting the entreaties of men, Joseph received a revelatory insight that he should approach God directly. Doing this, he first had to withstand an assault by Satan before the veil was opened and he saw the Father and the Son. Joseph was subsequently the means of bringing the fullness of salvation in Christ to millions.

Job's journey, however, like the endowment, has significance not only for Christ and prophets but for all. A similar conceptual framework to that of Job's journey can be obtained by juxtaposing the Garden of Eden story and Lehi's dream, both of which have universal application (see Figure 2). Adam, leaving the Garden and blocked by the cherubim (veil) from direct access to the tree of life (God), enters the dark world, which corresponds to Lehi wandering in the dark and dreary waste. Lehi, after praying for help and receiving a messenger from God, sees a straight and narrow path/iron rod that can conduct one through mists of darkness

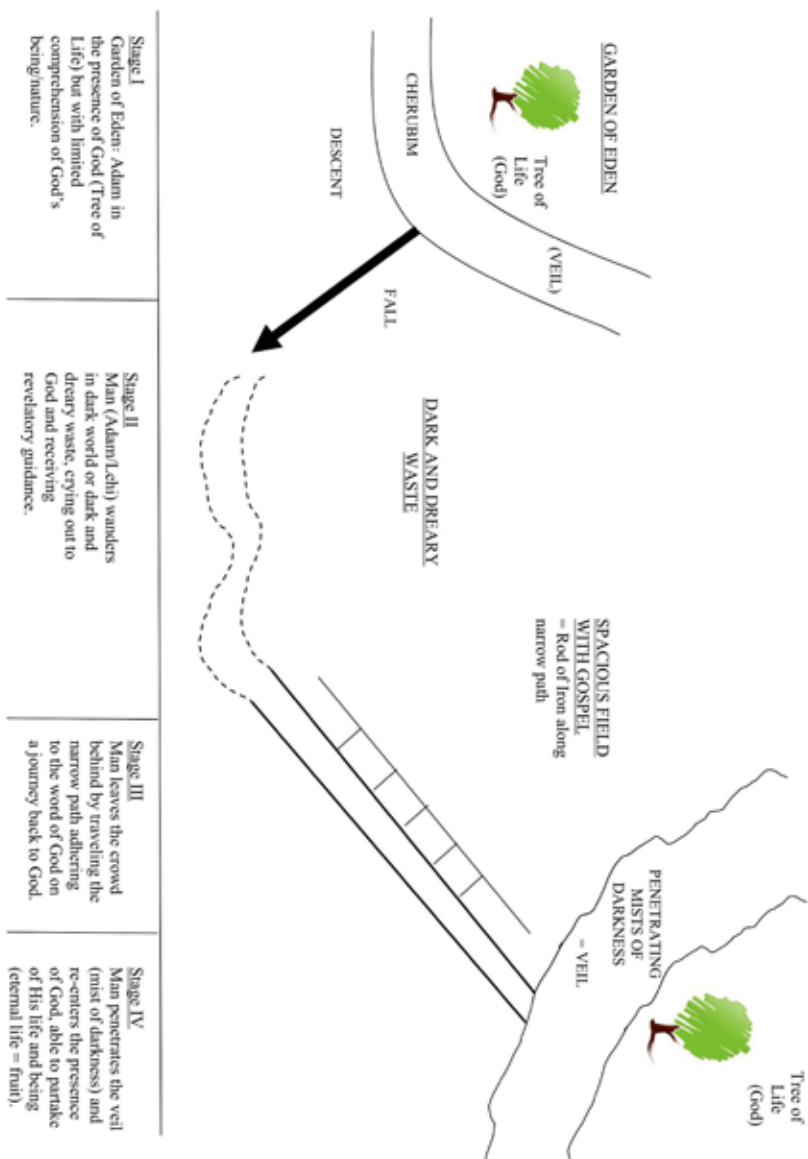


Table 2. Garden of Eden as a Type of Premortality

<u>GARDEN</u>	<u>CELESTIAL HOME (KINGDOM)</u>
TREE OF LIFE	GOD / CHRIST
TREE OF DEATH	SATAN
TEMPTATION	WAR IN HEAVEN
DECISION TO EAT FRUIT	DECISION TO COME TO EARTH
CURSE ON SERPENT	ABSOLUTE SPIRITUAL DEATH OF SATAN
CHERUBIM AND FLAMING SWORD	VEIL
EXPULSION FROM GARDEN	BIRTH/FIRST SPIRITUAL DEATH (SPIRITUAL DEATH OF PROBATION)

(veil) back to the tree of life (God). Thus, the Garden of Eden and Lehi’s dream together recap Job’s journey. The Garden of Eden, in turn, can also be understood as a typological portrayal of the premortal life (see Table 2), occurring before the mortal state portrayed in Lehi’s dream.

There are several additional lessons that can be gleaned from the book of Job. Salvation seems to be about more than simply being forgiven of sin, not that this is unessential. Job was already blameless in the eyes of God — yet it was only after passing through severe trials that Job gained the self-knowledge and knowledge of God that made it possible for him to participate in the life and being of God.⁵⁵ In Job’s case, the journey toward God’s face would have stalled had he simply accepted the religious certitudes of friends and community. God seems to desire, even require, creative engagement with Him and His creation as the questioning soul presses forward in search of understanding. Honest wrestling with questions about God and His work may, at times, be a more faithful response than unthinking acquiescence.

Finally, the book of Job may have something to contribute to the debate between free will and internal determinism.⁵⁶ In my opinion, the most straightforward reading of Job has God *not* knowing with absolute certainty how Job will respond to his trials. This makes the book a true drama rather than a simple playing out of something God already knew in advance. Job does not fully make himself known to God nor does he fully know God until after he passes through his trials. Job’s actions seem to be completely un-coerced and creative, reflective of underlying free will.

Job’s solitary journey away from the crowd with its conventional, distorted paradigms to true understanding in the presence of God

required courage, freedom, and creativity. Job freely participated in the creation of his redeemed soul and gained wisdom thereby. The book of Job serves as a welcome antidote to suggestions that blind, unthinking obedience is God's most earnest desire of mankind.⁵⁷ Although obedience to God in the absence of understanding is better than no obedience, I believe that God is hoping to develop creative wisdom in us so that we can serve as understanding partners in God's work of creation and redemption. On the other hand, Job's quest should not be confused with that of the modern self for totally autonomous self-creation and self-determination.⁵⁸ Everything Job did was consciously done *before God* in search of a soul-constituting relationship with God. Those who wish to follow in Job's steps must do as he did: hold to righteousness (see Job 27:6), stay in God's paths (see Job 23:11), be receptive to revelation, and continually seek God's face (see Job 13:3–22).

Notes

1. I have no special expertise in Hebrew and will be guilty of simply using the translation that best suits my purposes — principally the Revised Standard Version (hereafter rsv) and the New International Version (hereafter niv).
2. Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1975), xii – xiii.
3. This oversimplified conception of reality is dominant in Deuteronomy and Proverbs.
4. J. Gerald Janzen, *Job* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 19–20. My indebtedness to this commentary is immense and goes well beyond specific attributions in subsequent notes. I developed the idea for this chapter as a result of pondering Janzen's work. In my opinion, his commentary on Job is unmatched in insight and inspiration.
5. David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 11. The first meaning signifies Job's persistent search for God's presence; the second, the community's ultimate treatment of Job.
6. Idea derived generally from Janzen, *Job*, 31–60, 189–191.
7. Janzen, *Job*, 20–21.
8. Janzen, *Job*, 39–46.
9. Janzen, *Job*, 49–51.
10. I personally believe that neither God nor Satan directly controls human beings nor directly precipitates natural disasters. See Mack

- C. Stirling, "Violence in the Scriptures," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43 (1) (2010):80-81, 89-91.
11. There are many reasons for equating Jesus/God with the Tree of Life: (1) Nephi sees the infant Jesus as the culmination of a revelation answering his question about the meaning of the tree of life (1 Nephi 11:9-21). (2) The response to the tree of life by people in Lehi's dream (1 Nephi 8:30) is the same response people have on entering God's presence (Revelation 1:13-17). (3) The tree of life represents the love of God (1 Nephi 11:22), but Jesus is the love of God personified (John 3:16). (4) The tree of life is essentially equivalent to the fountain of living waters (1 Nephi 11:25), but Jesus is the fountain of living waters (Jeremiah 2:13). (5) The fruit of the tree is eternal life (1 Nephi 15:36, D&C 14:7), which is the fruit of Jesus' atonement. (6) To be grafted into the olive tree (tree of life, cf. D&C 88 preface) is to come to the knowledge of Christ (1 Nephi 10: 14).
12. Francis I. Andersen, *Job* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 135.
13. Janzen, *Job*, 82-83.
14. This is virtually the only reference in the Dialogues to the calamities of the Prologue. My preference for the NIV over the RSV is supported by Marvin Pope, Marvin H. Pope, *Job in the Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 64.
15. Pope, *Job*, 97.
16. Job never claims to be innocent of all sin, just of sin that would, according to his understanding, justify the calamities that have befallen him.
17. Janzen, *Job*, 110.
18. Janzen, *Job*, 112.
19. Ironically, in a sense, both Job and the friends in the Prologue before the calamities were like ignorant cattle in a well-watered meadow.
20. Andersen, *Job*, 205. These calamities are curiously similar to the fate decreed for the enemies of Joseph Smith (D&C 121:10-21).
21. Debates about the meaning/translation of Job 19:25-27 have raged for centuries. See Clines, *Job 1-20*, 427-470 and Janzen, *Job*, 138-150 for helpful overviews of these issues. I have simply chosen those translations/interpretations which most closely fit my own, which is informed by the entire LDS canon. My interpretation of these verses

- is supported by Janzen, *Job*, 138-150; Andersen, *Job*, 208-210; John E. Hartley *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 292-297; Gerald H. Wilson *Job in New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2007), 207-210.
22. Pope, *Job*, 164.
 23. Andersen, *Job*, 224-225.
 24. Janzen, *Job*, 174-176.
 25. Janzen, *Job*, 177-178.
 26. Janzen, *Job*, 207-208, 251-259.
 27. Janzen, *Job*, 212-213; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 408-409.
 28. Wilson, *Job*, 334-356.
 29. Many have noted the similarities between Job 31 and “Spell 125 of The Book of The Dead;” see R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (New York: The Limited Edition, 1972). Pope, *Job*, 227; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 407; Clines, *Job 21-37*, 1013-1014 contain overviews of this issue. Hugh Nibley, in turn, sees such Egyptian texts as presenting “an Egyptian endowment”, a good imitation of the Mormon endowment. See *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, xi-xiii; Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2009), 98-114; Hugh Nibley, *Eloquent Witness: Nibley On Himself, Others, and the Temple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2008), 496.
 30. Such self-imprecatory oaths seem to have been quite common in ancient times. They were often connected to animal sacrifice with the person saying in effect, “May it be done to me as to these animals if I do not keep my covenant.” Accordingly, Jeremiah tells the leaders of Judea that the Lord will treat them like the calf they cut in two and walked between because they failed to keep their covenant to help the poor made at the time of the sacrifice (Jeremiah 34:17-20). Similarly, the Lord Himself passed between the pieces of cut, sacrificed animals as a token of His faithfulness in keeping the covenant made with Abraham (Genesis 15:8-18).
 31. Janzen, *Job*, 217-218; Andersen, *Job*, 52-54; Clines, *Job 21-37*, 708-710.
 32. Pope, *Job*, 241-242.
 33. Elihu’s statement would be true if there were direct and immediate retribution on the sinner in this world, but such retribution denies

- the atonement of Christ and one of its gifts – the probationary period (2 Nephi 2:21-26, Alma 12:21-24, Alma 41:3-10).
34. Thus, judgment itself is a gift of the atonement. See also Helaman 14:15-17.
35. David Noel Freedman, “Is it possible to understand the Book of Job?” in *Bible Review* (April 1988), 29. Freedman’s view is supported by Elihu’s virtual equivalence with Satan in the *Testament of Job*, a probable Greek-Jewish work written in the first century BC or AD. See James H. Charlesworth ed., “Testament of Job” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 860-863.
36. Janzen, *Job*, 225-259.
37. Andersen, *Job*, 288-315.
38. Janzen, *Job*, 225.
39. M. Catherine Thomas, “The Brother of Jared at the Veil” in Donald W. Parry (ed.) *Temples of the Ancient World* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1994), 392.
40. Janzen, *Job*, 251.
41. Janzen, *Job*, 252.
42. Janzen, *Job*, 247-252, was essential in developing my thoughts in this section of the chapter.
43. Janzen, *Job*, 254-258. Janzen compellingly supports his translation of 42:6.
44. Janzen, *Job*, 255.
45. Janzen, *Job*, 257-258.
46. The Epilogue of Job has the same relationship to the Prologue as the vision of the Celestial Jerusalem (Revelation 20-22) has to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3).
47. Janzen, *Job*, 261.
48. Andersen, *Job*, 318.
49. In a similar way, the sacrificial law of Moses was felt to lead the Nephites to Christ and strengthen their faith in Him (Alma 25:15-16).
50. Abraham (Genesis 18:16-33) and Moses (Exodus 32:9-14) played similar roles.
51. James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1969), 159.
52. “Things Pertaining to This House” in *Ensign* (October 2010), 65.
53. Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 4.

54. Since I am arguing from lack of evidence my conclusion is, of course, tentative.
55. Job was initially blameless or justified, possessing a remission of sins and being held guiltless by God (cf. 3 Nephi 27:16). The book of Job may be understood as giving us a view of the completion of Job's sanctification or "transformation into gold." Sanctification consists of overcoming (with God's help, cf. D&C 20:31) the weaknesses of character which lead to sin and of becoming filled with light (D&C 50:23-24, D&C 88:66-68) and love (Moroni 8:25-26), the essential characteristics of God's nature (1 John 1:5, 1 John 4:8).
56. L. Rex Sears, "Determinist Mansions in the Mormon House?" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 31 (4) (1998):115-141; Blake T. Ostler, "Mormonism and Determinism" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 32 (4) (1999):43-75.
57. In my experience, such blind obedience is frequently extolled by Church members as the peak of human accomplishment before God. Adam, sacrificing without knowing why (Moses 5:5-9), is often used as a prime example. Usually overlooked is the fact that Adam is given new revelation about the meaning of animal sacrifice, his obedience leading to new understanding. Another example used is Abraham's (near) sacrifice of Isaac. I argue that we are insufficiently informed about that event to claim that Abraham was acting in blind obedience.
58. Epitomized by René Descartes' statement, "I think; therefore, I am."

Mack C. Stirling, a native of Leeds, Utah, a 1975 graduate of BYU in chemistry, and a 1979 graduate of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine is currently Director of Cardiothoracic Surgery at Munson Medical Center in Traverse City, Michigan. His service in the Norway Mission (1971-1973) kindled a passion for theology and scriptural studies. He and his wife, Dixie, have four married daughters and ten grandchildren.

“BELOVED BY ALL THE PEOPLE”: A FRESH LOOK AT CAPTAIN MORONI

Duane Boyce

Abstract: *In his well-known volume about the Book of Mormon, Grant Hardy focuses primarily on the book's main narrators. However, he also makes a number of observations about other figures in the book that are of particular interest, including some about Captain Moroni. In addition to those I address elsewhere, these observations range from the assertion that Captain Moroni slaughtered his political opponents in one instance, to his claim that Moroni is not depicted as “particularly religious,” to his claim that Moroni had a “quick temper.” The question is: Are such observations supported in the text? Carefully examining this question both shows the answer to be “no” and allows a deeper look into Captain Moroni.*

Although Grant Hardy's *Understanding the Book of Mormon*¹ appeared a decade ago, it continues to be a seminal volume in ongoing study of the Book of Mormon, and its influence is widely felt. Hardy naturally focuses on the book's main narrators in his analysis,² but other figures in the book receive attention along the way, including Captain Moroni.

Among Hardy's remarks regarding Captain Moroni are these seven: (1) Moroni's divine communication (reported in Alma 60:33) was an “off-the-mark revelation”;³ (2) Moroni “slaughters” his political opponents;⁴ (3) he is not portrayed in the text as “a particularly religious

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

2. The narrators are Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni.

3. Hardy refers to this revelation at various points and calls it — and/or Moroni's report of it — “mistaken,” and, as mentioned, an “off-the-mark revelation.” Indeed, Hardy reports that the revelation was a “claim” made by Moroni. See Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 176, 177, 309n32.

4. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 176.

man”;⁵ (4) he was not comparable to the sons of Mosiah in spiritual matters — despite Mormon’s claim to the contrary;⁶ (5) he can be described as being “hot-blooded” and as having an “aggressive posture,” a “quick temper,” a “blunt manner,” and “hasty suspicions;”⁷ (6) he did not possess the “typical religious virtues;”⁸ and (7) he serves as a contrast to Helaman, who, unlike Moroni, put his trust more in God than in his own expertise.⁹

These are important claims about an important Book of Mormon figure. It is striking to find a heroic character in a religious text who is not particularly religious, for example, and if true, that alone makes Captain Moroni compelling. He is clearly a man who merits examination.

I have already addressed claim (1) regarding Moroni’s revelation elsewhere.¹⁰ Though widespread, it is an error both to question that revelation and to think Moroni’s subsequent epistle to Pahoran was fundamentally mistaken. In reality, his revelation was completely accurate, and his famous epistle was substantially accurate as well.

In a forthcoming article I will address the last two claims, (6) and (7): namely, that Moroni lacked “the typical religious virtues” and also that he serves as a contrast to Helaman.¹¹ Again, we will examine the text closely regarding these claims and see what fresh insight we might gain into Captain Moroni’s character.

In this article I will focus on the four middle claims, (2) — (5), listed above. These include Moroni’s treatment of the king-men, the text’s portrayal of his religious character, Moroni’s similarity/dissimilarity to the sons of Mosiah, and Moroni’s personality (specifically the description of his possessing a “blunt manner” and a “quick temper”). By asking to what degree each of these claims is supported by the text, we can examine the record more closely and see if we gain anything fresh in our perspective on Captain Moroni.

1. Captain Moroni’s Treatment of the “King-Men”

Alma 51 reports the actions of so-called “king-men” in the Book of Mormon — a group of Nephite dissidents seeking to replace the Nephite government

5. Ibid, 175.

6. Ibid, 176.

7. Ibid., 31 (regarding being “hot-blooded”) and 177.

8. Ibid., 177.

9. Ibid., 177–78.

10. See Duane Boyce, “Captain Moroni’s Revelation,” *BYU Studies Quarterly*, 58, no. 4 (2019): 155–59.

11. See Duane Boyce, “Did Captain Moroni Lack the Typical Religious Virtues?” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*, forthcoming.

during a time of ongoing defense against Lamanite aggression. Eventually Captain Moroni goes to battle against these king-men. Hardy says little about this episode, noting in regard to it only that Moroni “slaughters some four thousand of his political opponents.”¹²

Hardy’s brief comment is accurate in describing the number of deaths caused by Moroni’s army. It invites our interest because of what else it seems to reveal about Moroni — namely, that the king-men were “political” opponents, that they were specifically *Moroni’s* political opponents, and that Moroni “slaughtered” them. On a general reading, these might seem like reasonable interpretations of the episode, since it includes such violence and since Moroni is such a central figure in it. Moroni might even come across as aggressive. Hardy’s use of the word “slaughter” certainly suggests that he sees a significant level of aggressiveness in Moroni’s conduct.

When we read the text to learn more about these elements of the episode, however, three features of the record invite a very different interpretation.

The King-Men Were Not Mere “Political Opponents”

First, it turns out that the expression “political opponents” is not actually an apt description of the king-men. We typically apply this term to various aspirants for political office, all of whom accept the existing political order and are simply competing for offices within it. But the king-men are depicted as actually trying to “overthrow the free government” and to establish themselves as kings with “power and authority over the people” (Alma 51:5, 8). Their aims were not what we customarily call mere “political opposition.” Indeed, theirs seems a movement intent on eliminating the very idea of political opposition.

Additionally, the perilous circumstances existing at the time would also seem to render the king-men more than mere political opponents. The Nephites had significant experience with power-seeking dissenters in their history, and they knew the threat such dissidents posed. Indeed, the war engulfing them at the time had begun through the treacherous actions of the Nephite dissident Amalickiah (Alma 46:4–7; 47; 48:4).¹³

12. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 176.

13. His aims in seeking power were not benign. The text tells us (1) that Amalickiah sought to “destroy the Church of God” (Alma 46:10), (2) that he also sought to “destroy the foundation of liberty which God had granted” the Nephites (Alma 46:10), (3) that the Nephites feared being “trodden down and destroyed” by Amalickiah’s contingent (Alma 46:10, 18), and (4) that the Nephites had to rise up specifically in order to preserve their “liberty” (Alma 46:24, 28).

Moreover, the Book of Alma opens with the account of Amlici, a Nephite dissenter who also aspired to become king of the Nephites and who caused much disruption, war, and loss of life when he was denied (Alma 2, 3:1). Additional examples are found elsewhere, of course: in the accounts of the Amalekites and Amulonites in Alma 24, the Amalekites in Alma 27, and the role played by the Zoramites and Amalekites in Alma 43–44.¹⁴

The king-men in Alma 51, then, were a re-emergence of what the Nephites had seen before. They were not a new phenomenon, and the Nephites knew the devastation that followed in the wake of such power-seeking dissidents. Moreover, the king-men's disruption occurred at the very time Amalickiah was stirring the Lamanites to wage an attack on the Nephites during their ongoing aggression (Alma 51:2–12). And yet these king-men were “glad in their hearts” that the Lamanites were “coming down to battle” against the Nephites, even while the Lamanites' invasion had penetrated Nephite borders (Alma 51:13–14).

The Nephites thus had a history that informed them of the hazards associated with dissenters like the king-men. Readers of today have the benefit of future events as well. After all, when the Nephites later faced a similar danger (in Alma 61) — and *failed* to repel it — they paid a serious price: the dissidents actually took over a major Nephite city and entered an alliance to help the Lamanites overthrow Nephite society (Alma 61:3–8).

Given the circumstances surrounding the king-men in Alma 51, then — their desire to overthrow the Nephite order, their quest to amass power for themselves, the invading Lamanite army, and the gladness with which the king-men welcomed the invasion — it does not seem apt to consider them mere “political opponents.”

The King-Men Were Not Specifically Moroni's Opponents

Second, Hardy's expression makes it sound as if the king-men were Moroni's personal political opponents. He calls them “his” political opponents. But on closer reading, the text actually gives us no basis for seeing them as Moroni's personal adversaries. As we've just seen, the king-men were opponents of the Nephite order itself. The text actually depicts Moroni as moving against the king-men as the official representative of the people: he does not act until he obtains a petition from the populace and presents it to the governor (Alma 51:15). Given his representative status, it would seem to be completely inaccurate to

14. This phenomenon appears later in Book of Mormon history as well. See Alma 63:14–15, Helaman 1:14–17, Helaman 4:1–8, and Helaman 11:24 for some additional instances.

use the expression "*his* political opponents" to describe the relationship between the king-men and Moroni's opposition to them.

The King-Men Were Not "Slaughtered"

The third feature of the text that calls for a different interpretation revolves around use of the term "slaughter." Among English speakers that word connotes carnage — the wanton, indiscriminate killing of others. But that kind of imagery does not capture what happened with the king-men in Alma 51. Knowing the danger posed by dissidents who aligned their sympathies with the Lamanites, Moroni — as we've just seen — sought approval of the population through a petition and then of the governor to move against these dissenters and to compel them to cease their insurrection and to assist in defending against the invading Lamanites. He received this approval and then marched toward the king-men. When these insurrectionists "did lift their weapons of war to fight against the men of Moroni," Moroni's army engaged them, and it is in this context that four thousand men were slain (Alma 51:15–20). Nothing in the account suggests wanton destruction or indiscriminate killing — and this makes it hard to see how the term "slaughter" is an appropriate description of the event. It is not the term we would employ in normal English usage.¹⁵

These three features of the text, then, indicate a different interpretation than that Captain Moroni "slaughter[ed] his political opponents." The record does not depict the king-men as mere political opponents, as Moroni's personal opponents, or even as being slaughtered.

What the text seems to portray, instead, is Captain Moroni's performing the normal duties of one who was charged with defending the Nephites militarily (Alma 43:16–17; 46:34). And he actually did so in ways we might not expect: although he had complete control of all the Nephite armies, and although the circumstances were highly dangerous, he obtained a petition from the Nephite populace and approval from the governor before moving against the king-men. When we appreciate these details of the record, Captain Moroni comes across as determined but certainly not as aggressive or ruthless.

15. The Book of Mormon text typically employs the term "slaughter" simply to indicate a large number of fatalities, with no indication that the killing involved was necessarily wanton or indiscriminate (e.g., Alma 2:18–19; 49:21; 62:38). English usage typically connotes such elements, however, and, to my ear at any rate, this seems the implication of Hardy's assertion. Since it is easy to write about a large number of deaths without using a word like "slaughter," it is hard to see why Hardy would choose that particular word if he didn't wish to create the impression that the word connotes.

2. Captain Moroni's Spiritual Character

Hardy notes that Moroni's "patriotism and love of liberty include religion, and he is a believer, to be sure." However, he also tells us that Moroni "is not portrayed as a particularly religious man."¹⁶ He "uses the cause of religion to justify his actions (Alma 44:2–5)," but "we never actually see him engage in personal acts of faith. For instance, he never prays for aid or guidance," although his men certainly do.¹⁷ This feature of Mormon's account contributes to Hardy's later remark (which, as mentioned, I have considered elsewhere) that Moroni actually "lacks" the typical religious virtues, which include "relying upon the Lord."¹⁸

Now, this might seem like a reasonable description of Captain Moroni on a general reading of the text, but when we engage the record more carefully, specifically looking for how it presents him as "not particularly religious," what we find is surprising. Though perhaps obscured somewhat by the large military themes in the record, there is actually considerable evidence of Moroni's deep spiritual character. Some of this will be considered here; additional evidence will emerge in Section 3.

Primary Evidence of Moroni's Spiritual Character

To begin, when Hardy reports that we never see Moroni pray, he is overlooking an explicit element of the text. We are told that at the time he created the title of liberty, Moroni "bowed himself to the earth," "prayed mightily unto his God," and "poured out his soul to God" (Alma 46:13, 16, 17). We are told this over the course of three verses. Moroni not only prays but prays "mightily."¹⁹

But the text reveals far more evidence of Moroni's spiritual character than just this incident. One of them is his receipt of a detailed revelation from the Lord (Alma 60:33). The Book of Mormon is replete with examples of prophets receiving revelation in complete sentences

16. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 175.

17. *Ibid.*, 174.

18. *Ibid.*, 177. Again, see Boyce, "Did Captain Moroni Lack the Typical Religious Virtues?"

19. Hardy makes brief reference in a footnote to this report about Moroni's praying (*ibid.*, 309n32), observing that "we only observe him praying once." In the first place, though, this tepid description ignores the way Moroni's prayer is actually described in the text, and, in the second place, this acknowledgment, though completely understated, still contradicts Hardy's claim in the body of his book that we "never" see Moroni pray for aid or guidance. Hardy allows the report in his text to stand, even though his footnote straightforwardly contradicts it.

— and here Moroni does the same. And it is reported in a text that closely associates such divine communication with personal spiritual devotion.²⁰ Hardy overlooks this aspect of Captain Moroni's experience, no doubt because, as mentioned earlier, he considers it an "off-the-mark revelation" and "mistaken."²¹ Contrary to Hardy's view, however, this revelation — also as mentioned earlier — was actually accurate;²² it is therefore a significant indicator of the very spiritual character that Hardy questions in Moroni.

It is also significant that Moroni completely frames the title of liberty itself in sacred terms. The first words Moroni writes on the title are "in memory of our God" (Alma 46:12), and he identifies those he is defending specifically as those "who have taken upon us the name of Christ" (Alma 46:18). He adds that God will not allow them to be destroyed if they do not fall into transgression (Alma 46:18), and he specifically invites the people to rally around the symbolism of the title of liberty "in the strength of the Lord" (Alma 46:20). In what appears to be an abbreviation of a lengthy sermon, he simultaneously implores the people to "keep the commandments of God," quotes the prophet Jacob from the brass plates in order to provide the context for the title of liberty, and ends by framing it all in terms of "the faith of Christ" (Alma 46:23–27). As a rallying cry for the people to defend themselves from their aggressors, it does not seem too much to call it a spiritual tour de force.

Moreover, when Moroni exults in the Nephites' success in military defense, he specifically attributes the victory to "our faith in Christ" (Alma 44:3). He also speaks of the "all-powerful God" and considers the duty of the Nephites to defend their families as something "sacred" (Alma 44:5). He also declares that the Nephites "owe all our happiness" to "the sacred word of God" (Alma 44:5) and explains the purpose of the Nephites' defense against Lamanite invasion in terms of "our religion and the cause of our God" (Alma 54:10). He expresses fear of a Being he describes as "my God" (Alma 60:28) and further explains that he is engaged in defense specifically to honor "the covenant which I have made to keep the commandments of my God" (Alma 60:34). Repeatedly,

20. Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, Alma₁, Alma₂, Nephi (son of Nephi), and multiple other prophetic figures illustrate this connection. Of course, from time to time the record shares divine commands for rebellious figures to repent (see, for example, 1 Nephi 3:29; 16:39; Mosiah 27:11–19; Helaman 5:21–49), but in all other instances, those who receive divine manifestations are spiritually refined and earnest.

21. See again, Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 176, 177, and 309n32.

22. See again Boyce, "Captain Moroni's Revelation," 155–59.

he not only refers to God but speaks of him personally: “*my* God or *our* God.” Moroni also appeals to the corrupt governors who were neglecting the defensive effort specifically in terms of their duty to “the word of God” (Alma 60:34, 35) and sorrows because of their rebellion against God (Alma 62:2). He also says at this time that if he must leave part of his army in order to contend with dissenters, he will leave “the strength and the blessings of God” upon the soldiers who remain, knowing that “because of their exceeding faith,” no other power “can operate against them” (Alma 60:25). He ends by declaring he is not seeking for power or the “honor of the world” but instead for “the glory of my God” (Alma 60:36). Again: *my* God.

Note, too, that when Captain Moroni gives Zerahemnah’s army a chance to end their aggression and enter a covenant of peace, he not only attributes the Nephites’ success against them specifically to God (as seen above: see Alma 44:3) but also tells Zerahemnah that the Nephites’ faith in Christ “is the true faith” and that God will continue to support and preserve the Nephites as long as they “are faithful unto him, and unto our faith, and our religion.” He then commands Zerahemnah to deliver up his army’s weapons and cease their aggression, and he does so “in the name of” (a) “that all-powerful God, who has strengthened our arms that we have gained power over you;” (b) “our faith;” (c) “our religion;” (d) “our rites of worship;” (e) “our church;” (f) the “sacred” support that the Nephites owe their wives and children; and (g) “the sacred word of God” (Alma 44:3–6). He then says he cannot go back on his word “as the Lord liveth” (Alma 44:11). Moroni frames the entire discussion with Zerahemnah in terms of the Lord and of faithfulness to him. Thus, not only does Moroni speak at length about God to the Nephites when rallying them to defend themselves, but he also does the same even to an enemy.

These and all other statements we have seen by Moroni clearly indicate spiritual devotion. They also make it hard to think that Moroni’s patriotism and love of liberty merely “include” religion, as Hardy says of him. It actually seems to be the reverse. Moroni specifically tells us he is engaged in defense because of his covenant to keep the commandments of God (Alma 60:34) and that the purpose of resisting Lamanite invasion was “the cause of our God” (Alma 54:10). He also tells us he is preserving the Nephites’ “rights,” “privileges,” and “liberty,” specifically “that they might worship God” (Alma 43:9). Moroni’s commitment to God would seem to be primary — and that includes and even requires his commitment to liberty (indeed, Mormon tells us the Nephites’ liberty was granted to them in the first place by God; see Alma 46:10). Hardy’s formulation thus

actually has Moroni's categories backward; according to the text, it is not that Moroni's love of liberty is primary and includes his religion but that his religion is primary and includes his love of liberty.

To fully appreciate Moroni's motivation, it is important to remember that the Book of Mormon depicts the Lord as commanding the Nephites to defend themselves. As long as they are not aggressors themselves and bear offense, the Lord tells them that "ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies" and "ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed" (Alma 43:46–47 also 48:14–16). And we also see that Moroni goes to battle against traitors in the government precisely because the Lord instructs him to do so (Alma 60:33). It is no surprise, then, that more than once Moroni explains his defense of the Nephites in terms of "sacredness" and of God's commandments (Alma 44:5, 60:28, 34).

In appreciating what the text tells us about Captain Moroni, we also see that he is concerned with more than just "patriotism and love of liberty," as Hardy puts it. It turns out that at least equally significant is Moroni's need to protect Nephites' *lives*. Mormon tells us that Moroni's interest was the "welfare and safety of his people" and that the Nephites defended themselves against their enemies "to preserve their lives" (Alma 48:12–14). They knew the Lamanites would destroy any Nephites who followed God (Alma 43:10). Indeed, we learn that Moroni and the Nephites generally fought to prevent their wives and their children from being "massacred by the barbarous cruelty" of those who would destroy them (Alma 48:24). This was one of the Lamanites' explicit aims: to "slay and massacre" the Nephites (Alma 49:7), a report consistent with the earlier description of the Lamanites as "a hardened and ferocious people" who "delighted in murdering the Nephites" (Alma 17:14). It is also consistent with the report that the Nephites "were not fighting for monarchy nor power" but for preservation of their lives and their families' lives (Alma 43:9–10, 45, 47).

Secondary Evidence of Moroni's Spiritual Character

Additional insights into Moroni's spiritual character appear when we attend to what others say about (or to) him. Mormon is central in this regard because he is the narrator of the account. Since the text depicts him as working from primary documents, Mormon's reports would seem to be credible. It is significant, therefore, that Mormon tells us Moroni's very first effort in preparing the Nephites to defend themselves from Lamanite assault was to prepare them spiritually — to be faithful

to the Lord (Alma 48:7). Indeed, Moroni's purpose was to allow the Nephites to "live unto the Lord their God" and to maintain "the cause of Christians" (Alma 48:10). He also reports that Moroni's heart "swelled" in thanksgiving to God, that he was a man "firm in the faith of Christ," and that he "gloried" in keeping the commandments of God (Alma 48:12, 13, 16). Similarly, he informs us that Moroni gloried in "doing good" and tells us that "if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men" (Alma 48:16, 17). He also informs readers that Moroni was a man "like unto Ammon," that he was like "the other sons of Mosiah," and that he was even like Alma (Alma 48:18) — high priest at the time and someone who had seen angels and beheld the Lord (Alma 36:5–22).²³

Given Mormon's access to primary documents, such reports are significant. It does not seem likely that people not truly devoted "swell with thanksgiving to God," "glory" in keeping his commandments, "glory" in doing good, or invite comparison to prophets of God. Moreover, such references by Mormon are consistent with what we have already seen the record to show directly, namely, that Moroni regularly frames matters in terms of God and of devotion to his will. Helaman (son of Alma and keeper of the Nephite records) apparently saw the same spiritual quality in Moroni. He prays that God will keep Moroni "continually in his presence" (Alma 58:41) and refers to Moroni as "my dearly beloved brother" not only in war but "in the Lord" (Alma 56:2). And Pahoran, even though he felt wrongly censured, nevertheless called Moroni "my beloved brother" (Alma 61:21) and told him that he rejoiced in "the greatness of your heart" (Alma 61:9).

Examining Hardy's claim thus gives us a perspective on Moroni we might not have fully realized before. Though engulfed in military conflict, both primary and secondary evidence depict Captain Moroni as a man of genuine spiritual devotion. He seems no different from Nephite generals throughout the Book of Mormon (several of whom are specifically designated as prophets) who were motivated by their commitment to God. And as mentioned earlier, more textual evidence of this will emerge in the following section.

All this works against the interpretation that Moroni uses references to God not out of genuine spirituality but to "justify his actions." It

23. Hardy questions Mormon's comparison of Moroni to Ammon and the other sons of Mosiah, but his basis for doing so is completely inadequate. See the upcoming section, "3. Captain Moroni's Similarity to the Sons of Mosiah."

might seem that way on a surface reading, but when we look closely, the evidence of Moroni's genuine spirituality seems too overwhelming to explain some of his words as mere attempts to validate his conduct.

3. Captain Moroni's Similarity to the Sons of Mosiah

Another level of insight emerges as we consider Hardy's treatment of Mormon's well-known praise of Captain Moroni. It is praise, quoted above, that includes his comparison of Moroni to Alma, Ammon, and the other sons of Mosiah (Alma 48:11–18). Hardy doubts the accuracy of this praise, however, saying that "a little reflection suggests that Moroni is not, in the end, very much like Ammon and the sons of Mosiah, who were missionaries rather than warriors, renounced power, humbled themselves, suffered willingly, and reached out to the Lamanites."²⁴ This apparent discrepancy is an example of what Hardy means when he says that "some space opens up between what Mormon says and what he actually shows us."²⁵

It turns out, however, that there is actually no discrepancy between Moroni and the sons of Mosiah. I demonstrate elsewhere that Moroni's life repeatedly displays both humility and his suffering willingly.²⁶ That leaves "renunciation of power" and being "missionaries rather than warriors" as bases for asserting a spiritual contrast between Captain Moroni and the sons of Mosiah. These might seem like obvious differences, and it might seem to make sense, therefore, to indicate them in painting a picture of Captain Moroni. Closer examination, however, suggests a different picture entirely. Three important features of the text help us see this.

Comparable Renunciations of Power

First, evident in the record is that Moroni could have claimed complete power for himself if he had wanted to. We are told that he had "all command" of the Nephite armies and "the government of their wars" (Alma 43:16–17). The text also reports that he "had power *according to his will* with the armies of the Nephites" (Alma 46:34). Possessing such power, and in the context of his pressing military situation and its exigencies, Moroni could easily have managed a military coup and assumed authority over Nephite society if he had wanted to — just as Amalickiah and other ambitious Nephite dissidents had attempted in the past. This was particularly the case when Pahoran became chief judge with seven years left in the war (Alma 50:39–40; 62:39–43).

24. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 175.

25. *Ibid.*, 174.

26. See again Boyce, "Did Captain Moroni Lack the Typical Religious Virtues?"

Pahoran was indecisive when treason erupted in his government, and he took the necessary action to counteract it only when he received clarity of direction and purpose from Moroni (Alma 61:19–20). Apparently Moroni could have secured power with ease during such tumultuous times, but he didn't. Nor did he at any other time.

Power was within Moroni's grasp, then, just as surely as it was within the grasp of the sons of Mosiah. But he renounced it, just as they did, expressly declaring: "I seek not for power, but to pull it down" (Alma 60:36).

Contrasting Circumstances

Second, it is a fundamental logical mistake to draw a conclusion about their relative spiritual character by contrasting the wartime behavior of Moroni with the missionary activities of the sons of Mosiah. The comparison is fallacious because it overlooks the radical difference in their circumstances.

Note, for example, that all the activities of Ammon and the other sons of Mosiah occurred on Lamanite lands. They were interlopers in that hostile territory, and they behaved accordingly. As they met Lamanites (for Aaron and the others this was primarily in their synagogues), all they sought was to teach the gospel. The Lamanites they encountered were not unjustly invading the land of the sons of Mosiah and attacking them and their families; indeed, these missionaries had no families. They were alone in the Lamanites' own territory, visiting their synagogues, facing no risks other than to themselves.

Captain Moroni's situation was completely different. The record tells us that when he encountered Lamanites, they were invading Nephite lands and doing so specifically to attack and kill Nephites. They were not giving sermons in Nephite synagogues. And the threat was not to Moroni as a lone individual. As we have seen, the threat was to all of Nephite society — to wives, children, the elderly, and an entire way of life. Time and time again his people were under military attack.

The circumstances faced by Moroni and the sons of Mosiah, then, could hardly have been more different, and this makes it unjustified to indicate a contrast between them without accounting for this radical difference. This becomes more obvious when we consider that one of the sons of Mosiah — Ammon — behaved exactly like Captain Moroni when he faced circumstances similar to Moroni's. He killed a number of Lamanite marauders and maimed others at the beginning of his missionary labors (Alma 17:26–39; 18:16). Later, when Lamoni's father threatened him, Ammon's response was to engage him in battle, defeat

him, and then threaten (twice) to kill the king if he did not fulfill Ammon's righteous desires (Alma 20:1–24).

When we account for the difference in their circumstances, then, the appearance of any important distinction between Captain Moroni and the sons of Mosiah evaporates. This is particularly apparent when we see them in similar settings: when situated in violent circumstances, Ammon behaved exactly the way we see Captain Moroni behave when he was situated in violent circumstances.

Comparable Spiritual Character and Contribution

Third, in pointing out that in contrast to Moroni, the sons of Mosiah "were missionaries rather than warriors," Hardy seems to be indicating that Moroni would have been a better, more spiritual person if, like the sons of Mosiah, he had chosen missionary service rather than military service. While such a view might seem plausible on the surface, the text does not actually sustain it.

Moroni's Appointment

One thing to notice at the outset is that Moroni was appointed to be general of the Nephite armies (Alma 43:16). Whether by advancing through the ranks in the normal manner or (more likely, given his age) by receiving this specific appointment due to his lineage, Moroni became the highest ranking general by assignment. There is no evidence that he was free to simply abandon this military obligation and do something else — such as missionary work — instead. For all we know, he wasn't even allowed to go on a mission because of his prior military obligation.

The Lord's Command that the Nephites Defend Themselves

Also important to note is that while the text depicts the sons of Mosiah as directed to go to the Lamanites to teach the gospel (Alma 17:11), it also depicts the Nephites as directed to defend themselves from Lamanite attack. The Lord told the Nephites (of whom Moroni was one) that "inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense, neither the second, ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies" and also that "ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed" (Alma 43:46–47). The record is clear that the Lord both expected his people to defend themselves and that he helped them do so.²⁷ Thus, while it is true that, based on their own earnest

27. The Book of Mormon frequently depicts the Lord as helping the Nephites defend themselves and of Nephites being "strengthened," "delivered," or "preserved" by the Lord. See Alma 2:16–19, 27–31, 16:5–8, 43:22–24, 44:3–5, 57:25–26, 35, 36, 58:33, 61:13, 21; W of M 1:14; Helaman 4:24–25, 7:22, 12:2; 3 Nephi 4:10, 31, 33.

desires (Mosiah 28:1–5), he directed the sons of Mosiah to preach to the Lamanites, it is also true that he directed the Nephites to defend themselves *from* the Lamanites.

The Need for Nephite Defense

The Lord’s instruction that the Nephites defend themselves was not an idle command. The Nephites *needed* to defend themselves — which means they did not remotely face a simple choice between doing missionary work on one hand and defending themselves on the other. They had to defend themselves regardless of any missionary efforts. This is demonstrated in the account of the sons of Mosiah themselves. Keep in mind that the Lamanites launched wars against the Nephites during the entire time the sons of Mosiah were laboring among them²⁸ — and in at least some of these wars, these assailants included those who had actually been taught by the sons of Mosiah.²⁹ Thus, while it is true that these sons’ missionary labors certainly paid off in the long run for the Lamanites, it is also true that in the short and medium run, their loved ones back home were suffering attack and death from those very same Lamanites. The Nephites had to defend their lives and their society *despite* these sons’ missionary labors.

Note also that the missionary success of the sons of Mosiah — while significant and even miraculous — was still only partial. While they converted thousands, there were also thousands they did not convert — and such belligerents continued their aggression against the Nephites and the new converts unabated (see Alma 24, 25, 27, 28). The record thus belies

I treat this topic at length in *Even unto Bloodshed: An LDS Perspective on War* (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2015), 89–108.

28. The sons of Mosiah embarked on their mission in the first year of the reign of the judges and continued for fourteen years (Alma 17:4, 6). The first war during that fourteen-year period occurred in the fifth year (Alma 2) and the second, “not many days after” (Alma 3:20). The third war occurred six years later (Alma 16:1), and we are told of another attack “in the fourteenth year of the reign of the judges” (Alma 16:12). The text thus reports four wars launched by the Lamanites during the missionary labors of the sons of Mosiah.

29. That those who became converted were involved in at least some of these attacks is certain. The text tells us that many Lamanites, after having suffered the losses and tribulations of war, began to remember what they had been taught by Aaron and other missionaries, and this led to their conversion (Alma 25:6). In addition, King Lamoni’s father — who became converted — held a position of preeminence among the Lamanites during at least part of the time the Lamanites were launching these wars (Alma 20:8; 22:1). His position would obviously have guaranteed involvement in the aggression.

any notion that if only the Nephites had done missionary work rather than defending themselves, they could have converted their enemies and eliminated the need for self-defense altogether. Missionary success is rarely as total as that, and the sons of Mosiah themselves demonstrate this.

There is no reason, then, to treat the Nephites' self-defense as mutually exclusive with missionary work. The record demonstrates that there was actually an important place for both.³⁰ Moroni himself, then, can hardly be faulted for being engaged in one of these causes and not the other.

Moroni's Efforts as a Blessing to the Nephites and to the Lamanites

While it is easy to see the missionary efforts of the sons of Mosiah as certainly blessing the Lamanites, it is equally apparent that Moroni's later military efforts just as certainly blessed the Nephites. As part of the Lord's command that the Nephites defend themselves, he was key in preventing them from being overrun and killed by their Lamanite aggressors.

This later proved a major benefit to many of the Lamanites as well. After all, the Lamanites converted by the sons of Mosiah — who came to be called the people of Ammon — eventually emigrated to Nephite lands for their safety (Alma 27:5–26) since the Lord knew that if they stayed, they would “perish” (Alma 27:11–12; see also 43:11). Even this move didn't make them safe enough, however, and they had to move yet again — at which time they were protected from attack by Moroni and his formidable army (Alma 43:4–22).

Regarding the Ammonites, then, the efforts of the sons of Mosiah and of Moroni completely converged. These people were converted by the sons of Mosiah and their lives were subsequently saved by the army of Moroni.³¹

30. The ongoing need for both seems to be the case generally. The text depicts the Lamanites as prone to attack and to wage war against the Nephites from the beginning (see, for example: 2 Ne. 5:14; Jacob 1:10; 7:24; Enos 1:20; Jarom 1:6; Omni 1:10, 24; Mosiah 9, 10, 19–21; and W of M 1:13–14). A complete discussion of the Nephites' defensive actions against this aggression appears in Boyce, “Did Captain Moroni Lack the Typical Religious Virtues?” But the text indicates that the Nephites also tried to do missionary work. It speaks of efforts to “restore the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth” and reports that they did so “diligently” (see Jacob 7:24; Enos 1:11–14, 20). The desire to bless the Lamanites is certainly evident in the Nephite record-keepers: they maintained the plates precisely to benefit “our brethren the Lamanites” (Jarom 1:2; Mormon 5:12–21, 7:1–10; Moroni 1:4, 10:1–4).

31. The same was true, of course, of Nephites' self-defense even prior to Captain Moroni. After all, if the Nephites had not defended themselves at the time the sons of Mosiah were performing their missionary labors, (a) they would have

Mormon's Standard of Comparison

It is also important to notice what Mormon says immediately after he reports that Moroni was like the sons of Mosiah. He instantly compares Captain Moroni to Helaman and others who were preaching and baptizing among the Nephites at the time and says that those so engaged “were *no less serviceable*” to the people than Moroni (Alma 48:19). Helaman was high priest over the Church at the time and had been given the sacred records by his father Alma (Alma 37:1–12, 46:6). And yet here, in Mormon’s mind, *Moroni* is the standard; he says that Helaman was no less serviceable than *he* was. And this comes from a Book of Mormon figure who knew well both the spiritual and defensive sides of the coin; the text reports that Mormon saw the Lord at age fifteen, that he received numerous revelations from the Lord (including producing content — aside from his editorial contribution — bearing the authority of scripture), and that he also spent his life embroiled in war to defend the Nephites — and even died with a sword in his hand.³²

Mormon’s praise of Moroni is specifically spiritual — including, as we saw in Section 2, the report that Moroni’s first effort in preparing the people against Lamanite assault was to implore them to be faithful to God. But in addition Mormon actually sets Moroni as the standard when he speaks of Helaman, high priest over the Church.

Captain Moroni and the Sons of Mosiah: Summary

Thus, while “reaching out to the Lamanites” was of course a highly sacred and beneficial effort, it is hard to see how it was more sacred and beneficial than the Nephites’ protecting themselves from murder and overthrow. The sacredness of the Nephites’ defending themselves is evident in the Lord’s explicit command that they do so as well as in the help he provided them in defending themselves. Since the text shows that both missionary and military efforts proved to be necessary, and since it also shows both to have been manifestations of God’s will, it does not seem justified to suggest a spiritual distinction between Captain Moroni

been overrun by the Lamanites, (b) their society would have been destroyed, and (c) there would have been no safe territory to which the converted Lamanites could then have emigrated for their safety. As the Lord foresaw, they would have been victims of ongoing attacks and ultimately destroyed (Alma 27:11–12). In terms of benefits, then, even earlier self-defense by the Nephites converged with the missionary efforts of the sons of Mosiah.

32. See, for instance: Mormon 1:15; 3 Nephi 30; Moroni 8; Helaman 12; Mormon 7; 8:10–11; Moroni. 7–9; Mormon 2:2; 8:3.

and the sons of Mosiah on the basis that the latter were missionaries whereas the former defended the Nephites from murder.

Completely aside from Mormon's personal comments, then, the text (as we saw in Section 2) provides persuasive evidence that Moroni's spiritual character was similar to these missionaries' own spiritual character. When we consider their contrasting circumstances, combined with their equal obedience to God's commands in those contrasting circumstances, their similarities — not their differences — stand out. When we look closely, it seems easy to see why Mormon would compare them.³³

4. Captain Moroni's Personality

As a final matter, we also gain insight into Captain Moroni when we examine Hardy's various descriptions of his personality. He approvingly refers to Richard Bushman's description of Moroni as "hot-blooded," for example,³⁴ and also describes Moroni in terms of a "blunt manner, quick temper, aggressive posture, and hasty suspicions."³⁵ Since we see Moroni engulfed in war, and since the realities of war include times of desperation and dread, such views of his character seem to make sense. The moral judgment inherent in them seems to make sense as well. After all, no one would consider this a list of positive characteristics — and neither does Hardy. Given what he has already asserted about Moroni's lack of religiosity, his false revelation, his lack of kindness and humility, his dissimilarity to the sons of Mosiah — and the like — Hardy evidently sees these characteristics both as possessed by Moroni and as deficiencies, all of which, again, might seem to make sense on a general reading.

A closer look at the text paints a different picture, however. I have shown elsewhere, for example, that Moroni was not at all "hasty" in his suspicions about treasonous activity in the government at the time he wrote his famous epistle in Alma 60 (to which Pahoran responded in Alma 61). The text displays him as having more than suspicion — he

33. It might also be relevant to consider the sons of Mosiah's backstory of fighting against the Lord's church for years. It is not implausible that they might have been motivated in part by a debt they felt they owed to the Lord's church and that their efforts therefore took the form of specifically *building* the church. This is certainly how they felt toward the Nephites: we are told that they strived "zealously" "to repair all the injuries which they had done to the church" (Mosiah 27:35). This might account for part of the reason for the particular path they took.

34. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 31.

35. *Ibid.*, 177.

had received revelation — and it turned out to be completely accurate.³⁶ Similarly, I have shown elsewhere that Moroni cannot remotely be described as “aggressive.” The record displays him as fighting only in defense and as showing surprising generosity toward his attackers — despite the future threat they might pose once spared.³⁷ Moreover, Moroni also exhibited kindness and humility in the way he conducted himself³⁸ and also fought in the first place only because it was God’s explicit command to do so.³⁹ Such patterns would seem to belie any blanket description that Moroni had “hasty suspicions,” an “aggressive posture,” or that he was “hot-blooded.” When we look closely, the text does not show any of these to be apt descriptions.

“Blunt Manner” and “Quick Temper”

All of this suggests that we also ought to look carefully at the claims that Captain Moroni had a “blunt manner” and a “quick temper.” As we do so, a significant textual feature stands out almost immediately: namely, the overall context of threat that frames Captain Moroni’s entire presence in the record. Danger surrounds him from beginning to end. Most modern readers have never faced anything like the prospect of their loved ones being maimed, dismembered, or murdered by sword-wielding assailants. Most have never been responsible to protect even one life against violent attack, much less the lives of a whole society. Yet that’s exactly what

36. See Boyce, “Captain Moroni’s Revelation,” 155–59.

37. I cover these dimensions of Captain Moroni’s conduct at length in an upcoming paper, “Captain Moroni and the Sermon on the Mount: Resolving a Scriptural Tension,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 60 no. 2 (2021), forthcoming. Although a thorough discussion is required, a sample of relevant passages includes: Alma 43:9–10, 45, 47; 44:1, 19–20, 50:25–36, 48:10, 12–14, 24, 49:7, 52:32–39, 54:6–11, 55:18–24, 56:46, 60:17, 61:10, 62:14–28.

38. See Duane Boyce, “Did Captain Moroni Possess the Typical Religious Virtues?” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*, forthcoming.

39. As seen earlier: (1) the Lord told the Nephites that “inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense, neither the second, ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies” and also that “ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed” (Alma 43:46–47); (2) Captain Moroni explained that it was explicitly because of God’s commandments that he took up the sword to defend the cause of his country (Alma 60:28, 34); (3) he explained that resisting Lamanite invasion was “the cause of our God” (Alma 54:10); and (4) he went to battle against traitors in the government precisely because the Lord instructed him to do so (Alma 60:33).

the text shows Moroni facing — repeatedly over nearly fifteen years.⁴⁰ It is easy, therefore, for modern readers to be uncomprehending about the circumstances of war and particularly about the extremity of the danger faced by Moroni. Since such threatening circumstances are foreign to most of us, it can be hard to fully appreciate their effects. Nevertheless, to appreciate them is important, since this context is an important feature of Moroni’s entire presence in the record.

“Blunt Manner”

With such context in mind, consider first the claim that Moroni had a “blunt manner.” This is a broad generalization, so as we read it is natural to ask: “Who exactly received blunt treatment from Moroni and under what circumstances?” As we study the record, we discover it was neither Teancum nor Helaman. Nor was it Lehi, Nephihah, Gid, or Antipus. Captain Moroni interacted with all these Nephite leaders, so if he had a generally blunt manner, we might reasonably expect it to show toward these men. But it doesn’t.

It turns out that the two most dramatic incidents of Moroni’s bluntness were his denunciations of the Nephite enemy Ammoron in Alma 54 and of the treasonous Nephite governors in Alma 60.

In the first case, it is useful to remember that Ammoron was a violent aggressor continuing a long war and seeking the death and destruction of Nephite society. In speaking bluntly of justice, God’s anger, hell, and the like, Moroni told Ammoron (1) that he was in danger of the “wrath of God” and (2) that he was “a child of hell” (Alma 54:11).

There is no doubt this was a blunt manner of speaking, so the real question is if — as Hardy seems to presuppose — it was *objectionable* for Moroni to speak in this way.

On reflection, it is hard to see how it would be. The text presents Ammoron as evil, after all, so it is not as if Moroni is speaking falsely. Additionally, Ammoron was certainly a far more threatening and wicked figure than Zeezrom — and Amulek called *him* “a child of hell” (Alma 11:23). It is also noteworthy that, in his excoriation of the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus found occasion to call each of them a “child of hell” (Matt. 23:15) — and of course that is only one example of the

40. In the beginning of the eighteenth year of the judges, the long conflict in the Book of Alma begins, and Captain Moroni has charge over all the Nephite armies (Alma 35:13, 43:4, 16–17). The long series of conflicts finally ceases at the end of the thirty-first year of the judges (Alma 62:39), making fourteen years in all.

Lord's bluntness: additional instances are not difficult to find.⁴¹ Nor is bluntness difficult to find in the Lord's prophets. Among others, we see it in Elijah, Lehi, Nephi, Abinadi, John the Baptist, Jacob, Alma, and Joseph Smith.⁴² Moroni's bluntness toward Ammoron does not seem at all unique in the spiritual record.

In the second case, Moroni was writing to the Nephite governors, many of whom were not only refusing to support the armies' defense of Nephite society but also actually forming an alliance with the invading Lamanites to help them conquer and subjugate the Nephites (Alma 61:3–8). Moroni didn't know all the details at the time, but he did know, based on his revelation, that the governors were sufficiently wicked that the Lord had commanded him to go to battle against them if they did not repent (Alma 60:33). In this context he reported that many Nephite soldiers had "bled out their lives" in defense of the people and that they had to do so while simultaneously perishing "with hunger" because of the governors' neglect (Alma 60:9). He also reported that the Lamanites were "murdering our people with the sword," including "our women and our children" (Alma 60:17) and added that "thousands" were "falling by the sword, yea, wounded and bleeding" (Alma 60:22). Meanwhile, the governors were refusing to provide support, and in fact were fully complicit with the Lamanites in this devastation (Alma 61:3–8).

Moroni spoke bluntly to the governors in these circumstances, but again, it is difficult to see any reason it was objectionable for him to do so. Instead it would seem to be an appropriate moral response to the governors' completely immoral conduct. As mentioned, such blunt denunciation of wickedness does not appear to be uncommon in scripture. It actually seems to abound. Thus, while Hardy is right about Moroni's blunt manner (in these cases at any rate), it hardly follows that such bluntness was *wrong*, as he appears to assume. From Elijah to Joseph Smith to the Savior, Captain Moroni's bluntness toward evil men actually finds itself in good company.

"Quick Temper"

The episode with the Nephite governors in Alma 60 is also relevant to the claim that Moroni had a "quick temper." Moroni was certainly angry in

41. See, for example Matthew 11:20–24, 12:34; Mark 11:17; Luke 11:39–52; John 3:36; Jeremiah 7:20, 32:30; Ezekiel 21:31; D&C 1:1–16, 5:8, 19:15, 29:18–21; 45:49–50, 133:50–51.

42. See 1 Kings 18:27; 1 Nephi 1:19, 2:14, 17:44–46; Mosiah 11:20–25, 12:1–8; Matthew 3:7–10; Jacob 7:13–14; Alma 9:8, 12, 15, 30:42–55; Parley P. Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 210–11.

this situation with the Nephite governors. As we have seen, however, the text presents him as: (1) responding to traitorous conduct, (2) acting on the basis of a direct revelation from the Lord, and (3) condemning them against the backdrop of huge travails among the Nephites — travails due in no small part to these governors themselves. Moroni's response in these circumstances is not what would normally qualify as a "quick" temper.

Nor does the episode with the king-men in Alma 51 appear to be an example of quick temper. Even though he had complete authority over all the armies, as we saw in Section 1, Moroni moved against these insurrectionists only after obtaining a petition from the people and authority from the governor. It does not seem quick-tempered for the commanding general of all Nephite armies to go to the trouble of circulating a *petition* in order to obtain approval to defend the citizenry.

Moroni's anger toward Ammoron (Alma 54–55), which we discussed above in regard to Moroni's bluntness, is also relevant to the claim of a quick temper. It is true, of course, that Moroni was angry at Ammoron. In his epistle he even threatened to wage battle on Lamanite land and to fight until the Lamanites were completely destroyed. However, Moroni did not carry through on these threats, even when he had a chance to do so. His rhetoric promised more than he was actually willing to carry out.⁴³

More important for our purposes here, though, is that Moroni's epistle to Ammoron hardly seems to qualify as "quick." At the time of this epistle, Moroni had been defending against Lamanite assault for ten years,⁴⁴ and he had seen many thousands die as a result of the Lamanites' violence. It does not seem quick-tempered to write an angry epistle after suffering death and destruction from one's assailants for a full *decade*.

It is true that Moroni threatened more in this epistle than he proved willing to carry out, but reaching a point of "boiling over" in one's rhetoric — after a full ten years — does not appear hard to understand. It would certainly be a stretch to think of it as expressing an "aggressive" nature or as being "quick-tempered." There was nothing quick about it.

It also might be thought that Moroni exhibited a quick temper when he first raised the title of liberty in Alma 46. However, although the record informs

43. See the report of Moroni's actions in Alma 55:20–24 — actions nothing like what he had threatened. Indeed, his conduct in this episode is identical to how he had behaved prior to issuing his threats against Ammoron (see Moroni's actions in Alma 52:32–39). This matter is treated more fully in Boyce, "Captain Moroni and the Sermon on the Mount."

44. Moroni became general of the Nephite armies in the beginning of the eighteenth year of the judges (Alma 43:4, 16–17), and he wrote this epistle in the beginning of the twenty-ninth year (Alma 54:1).

us that Moroni was angry at Amalickiah at the time, it seems implausible to think there was anything quick about it. Amalickiah had been rejected in his attempt to become king, and in his rebellion had gathered supporters whose explicit intent was to kill their fellow Nephites (Alma 46:1–7). The text describes the circumstances as “exceedingly precarious and dangerous” (Alma 46:7), and as we saw in Section 2, it was in response to this danger that Moroni rallied the populace to defend themselves. He did so explicitly in terms of the commandments of God and “the faith of Christ.” As in the other incidents, it is difficult to find anything in this episode that exhibits anything “quick” or unthoughtful about Moroni’s anger.

Captain Moroni’s Personality: Summary

In the end, the text appears to paint a different picture than Hardy’s general characterization of Captain Moroni — namely, that he had “hasty suspicions,” an “aggressive posture,” a “quick temper,” a “blunt manner,” and that he was “hot-blooded.” When we look at the record more closely, we gain new perspective and actually see his character to be impressive. Rather than hot-blooded and quick-tempered, his conduct toward his assailants appears well-founded, mature, and even patient (ten years would seem to be a long time by anyone’s standards). And when he was blunt, it was toward murderers and would-be murderers: exactly, so it would seem, where everyone would actually want him to be blunt.

Conclusion

Captain Moroni is vulnerable to misunderstanding largely, I think, because few of us have experienced anything like what we see in his life. Charged with the responsibility to protect Nephite lives, as well as to defend Nephite society itself from attack and overthrow, violence is the background of all we see in him.

Though ever-present as background, violence is not *all* we see. Indeed, some views of Captain Moroni are traceable to nothing more than oversight and misreading. For example, while Moroni fought at length those who sought to destroy the Nephites, he did not “slaughter” his “political opponents.” In addition, far from not portraying him “as a particularly religious man,” the text actually displays Moroni to be completely devout and spiritually earnest — indeed very much like the sons of Mosiah. Moreover, while Moroni was completely determined in his defense of Nephite lives, he was actually not “aggressive,” “quick-tempered,” or “hot-blooded” in his conduct. Finally, as has been

demonstrated in other treatments of Moroni,⁴⁵ he was also a man (1) who was spiritually refined enough to receive revelation from the Lord in finished sentences and (2) who possessed to an impressive degree the typical religious virtues — including self-sacrifice, kindness, humility, and reliance on the Lord.

In the end, the text displays a sincere man who, because of his covenants with God, was simply fighting against huge odds to defend Nephite lives and Nephite society — a man who understood the stakes and who was both devout and humble, but not timid.

For some readers, this might amount to a fresh perspective on Captain Moroni, but there is still more. A careful reading permits us to see something else as well, a little gem Mormon tucks in about halfway through his account (Alma 53:2). In it we learn that Moroni’s devotion and sacrifice went neither unnoticed nor unappreciated. We are told that Captain Moroni was “beloved by all the people of Nephi.” A careful reading of his conduct makes it easy to see why.

Duane Boyce *earned a PhD at BYU and conducted his postdoctoral study in developmental psychology at Harvard University. He is a founding partner of the Arbing Institute, a worldwide management consulting and educational firm, and is the author or co-author of five books (a sixth to appear in 2021). He has also published academic articles on gospel topics in BYU Studies Quarterly, Interpreter, Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture, The Religious Educator, and The FARMS Review. Among other callings, he has served as a bishop and a stake president and, with his wife, in the Russia Moscow Mission.*

45. Again, see Boyce, “Captain Moroni’s Revelation,” 155–59 and Boyce, “Did Captain Moroni Lack the Typical Religious Virtues?”

“PUT OFF THY SHOES FROM OFF THY FEET”: SANDALS AND SACRED SPACE

John Gee

Abstract: *While many have written on ancient temples looking at the big picture, John Gee discusses one small detail on a single Egyptian temple from the New Kingdom. He focuses on depictions of Ramses III in and out of the temple of Medinet Habu. Outside the temple and when entering and leaving there are depictions of him wearing sandals. Inside the temple proper the king is always shown barefoot. Ramses III built Medinet Habu only slightly after the time of Moses and as Gee further notes, while not wearing footwear was a clear practice among the Egyptians it is far more explicit in Moses’ encounter with Deity when he is told to remove his “shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” Gee observes that contemporary Egyptian temple practice “reflects the commands of God recorded in the Pentateuch,” as well as reflects Moses’ Egyptian background.*

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See John Gee, “Put Off Thy Shoes from Off Thy Feet’: Sandals and Sacred Space,” in *The Temple: Symbols, Sermons, and Settings, Proceedings of the Fourth Interpreter Foundation Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference, 10 November 2018*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2021), in preparation. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/the-temple-symbols-sermons-and-settings/>.]

Problem

Many studies of ancient temples look at the big picture, but it can also be worthwhile to look at small details. In this study, I want to look at one small detail from a single temple.

In looking at an Egyptian temple, particularly one from the New Kingdom, we notice a dazzling variety of clothing. The clothing depicted demonstrates a complicated dress code that signified status to the people of the day, just as modern fashions signal the same thing to modern individuals. As an example, consider the wrapping of the kilt. In Old Kingdom Egypt, wrapping the kilt left over right (clockwise) was an indication of royalty, while wrapping it right over left (counterclockwise) was an indication of non-royal status.¹ Beginning in the First Intermediate Period, however, private individuals were able to adopt royal status.

Footwear could also mark status. Most ancient Egyptians went barefoot, especially in the presence of a superior.² Just as giving clothing to the naked was an act of charity, so was giving sandals to the barefoot.³ In New Kingdom temples, however, some individuals are shown wearing sandals and some are not.

Categories

Our concern is determining when sandals were worn and when they were not. We face a number of problems. Many of the reliefs are so damaged that we cannot see either the king's feet⁴ or what exactly he is doing. Sometimes these details are in accompanying inscriptions,⁵ but the further back in the temple the relief goes, the more likely the upper portion of the relief including the inscription will be missing. Sometimes the sandals were included by mistake and were erased.⁶ Because there are so many examples and numerous counterexamples, we are looking at general trends. We are interested in humans, and we will concentrate primarily on the king, who is the most visible human in the temple.

The pharaoh's sandals would have been gilded.⁷ This raises a question: is there a reason why the king might wear sandals in one scene and not another? At first glance, there seems to be no rhyme or reason to the choice.

Let us first consider location. We might think that perhaps the king is shown wearing sandals outside the temple and not inside, but there are numerous examples of him shown wearing sandals inside the temple proper.⁸ So location does not seem to be a good explanation. Instead, we will concentrate on activity.

After analyzing 734 scenes in the temple of Ramses III at Medinet Habu, we can classify them into five categories by the percentage of the scenes in which the pharaoh is shown wearing sandals:

- Scenes where the king always wears sandals
- Scenes where the king usually wears sandals (> 60%)
- Scenes where the king may or may not wear sandals (60% > x > 40%)
- Scenes where the king usually has bare feet (< 40%)
- Scenes where the king never wears sandals

Each of these categories deserves a closer look.

Scenes where the king always wears sandals

A number of scenes show the king always wearing sandals. These scenes, for the most part, show the king doing non-sacral activities. These activities include tending horses,⁹ walking around under sunshades,¹⁰ and receiving offerings.¹¹ They also include potentially unexpected activities. For example, when riding around in a sedan chair where he does not need to use his feet, Ramses is still shown wearing sandals.¹² He is also shown wearing sandals during his coronation¹³ and when he is entering¹⁴ and leaving the temple.¹⁵

Most of the activities where the king does not wear sandals have to do with the conduct of war and military operations. Thus, Ramses III is shown wearing sandals when riding a chariot,¹⁶ shooting a bow and arrow,¹⁷ taking prisoners,¹⁸ binding captives,¹⁹ viewing booty,²⁰ and rewarding his army.²¹

The activities depicted where the king is always shown wearing sandals are activities that take place outside of sacred space. They also tend to be depicted in the public areas of the temple, in places where the general populace could go.

Scenes where the king usually wears sandals

The scenes where the king is shown wearing sandals appear infrequently. In more frequent scenes, the king is usually, but not always, shown wearing sandals. These cases appear more than 60 percent of the time but less than 100 percent of the time.

The scenes where the king usually wears sandals depict him sitting on the throne (87%)²² and presenting captives to the god (72%).²³

These scenes share characteristics of scenes where the king is shown wearing sandals all the time. They tend to be more associated with the non-sacral duties of the king or dealing with warfare and its consequences.

Scenes where the king may or may not wear sandals

Scenes where the king may or may not wear sandals are those that fall within ten percentage points of the halfway mark—that is, within the 40 to 60 percent range. These include processions (60%)²⁴ and smiting captives (40%).²⁵ Processions usually started in the temple and went outside the temple.²⁶ Smiting captives seems to have taken place inside the temple,²⁷ but in the outer courts.²⁸

Scenes where the king is usually barefoot

For scenes where the king is shown wearing sandals less than 40 percent of the time, we look at them according to the progressively smaller percentage of the time when the king is shown wearing sandals. These scenes all appear to depict actions occurring inside the temple proper, including the following occasions:

- presenting the full altar to a god or the gods (35%)²⁹
- offering silver, gold, or precious stones (27%)³⁰
- receiving salvation (*di ḥnḥ*)³¹ from the gods (25%)³²
- initiation into the temple (24%)³³
- offering four oxen (20%)³⁴
- offering both incense and libations (17%)³⁵
- admonishing that everything that enters the temple must be pure (12%)³⁶
- offering flowers (10%)³⁷
- offering Maat (10%)³⁸
- offering incense (7%)³⁹
- giving adoration to the gods (7%)⁴⁰
- offering offerings (6%)⁴¹
- offering ointment (3%)⁴²
- offering wine (1%)⁴³

The king is more likely to be depicted as wearing sandals when offering both incense and libations than when he is shown offering either separately.

Scenes where the king is always barefoot

In a number of scenes, the king is always shown barefoot. These actions always take place inside the temple proper and include purification,⁴⁴ performing the daily temple ritual,⁴⁵ the reversion of offerings afterwards,⁴⁶ and entering into a ritual embrace with the gods.⁴⁷ They also include the majority of the offerings of the temple, including offering bags,⁴⁸ bread,⁴⁹ clepsydra,⁵⁰ four chests,⁵¹ cult standards,⁵² eyepaint,⁵³ grain,⁵⁴ lettuce,⁵⁵ libations,⁵⁶ linen,⁵⁷ milk,⁵⁸ oryxes,⁵⁹ pectorals,⁶⁰ and utensils.⁶¹ They also include when the king oversees the construction of the temple⁶² and when he dedicates it and offers it to its lord upon completion.⁶³ They include when the king is shown uniting the two lands (Egypt)⁶⁴ and driving the four calves.⁶⁵ When the king is given long life—when his name is written on the leaves of the tree of life⁶⁶—he is also barefoot. The king is also shown barefoot when entering the underworld⁶⁷ and in spell 110 of the Book of the Dead, in a depiction of the afterlife.⁶⁸ He is shown barefoot when offering invocations to the gods⁶⁹ and invocation offerings to the dead.⁷⁰

In scenes that take place inside the temple proper, the king is usually or always shown barefoot. Thus, being barefoot is normal for sacred space, and wearing sandals is normal for being outside sacred space.

This gives us a snapshot from a specific time: the late New Kingdom, the early Twentieth Dynasty, the reign of Ramses III. It may not be generalizable. For example, a passage from a Middle Kingdom autobiography says that this unnamed official was “one who entered before the god alone wearing sandals in the holy place.”⁷¹

Comparison with Moses

Ramses III began building his temple at Medinet Habu less than twenty years after Merneptah, the son of Ramses II, mentioned Israel for the first time.⁷² This timeline puts Medinet Habu only slightly after Moses. If not wearing footwear in the sacred space of the temple is clear among the Egyptians, it is not nearly as explicit as in the account of Moses, where he hears the following from the burning bush:

And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.⁷³

When Ramses III is depicted encountering god face to face, he, like Moses, is depicted without sandals.⁷⁴ In fact, there are many parallels between Moses and his near contemporary Ramses III in their wearing of sandals. Ramses III wears sandals while tending horses, but he removes them to enter holy ground. Thus, his sandals are off in the presence of the god and when the god talks to Pharaoh. Moses wears sandals tending sheep, but he is told to remove them to enter holy ground and keep his sandals off in the presence of God when God talks to Moses.

Thus, contemporary Egyptian temple practice reflects the commands of God recorded in the Pentateuch. It might be worth noticing that later temples, like the temples at Edfu, and Tod,⁷⁵ tend to show the king only barefoot, providing less of an indication of the usage of sandals. The account of Moses thus reflects his Egyptian background.

John Gee is the William (Bill) Gay Research Professor in the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at Brigham Young University. He is also the chair of the Egyptology and Ancient Israel section of the Society for Biblical Literature. He has published articles on a variety of subjects, including the Egyptian temple.

Notes

- 1 William Kelly Simpson, "A Protocol of Dress: The Royal and Private Fold of the Kilt," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 74 (1988): 203–4.
- 2 Lyn Green, "Clothing and Personal Adornment," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1:278.
- 3 CCG 20537 lines 4–5, in H. O. Lange and H. Schäfer, *Grab- und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1902–8), 2:144.
- 4 E.g., the offering of wine in Medinet Habu VII 542, or Medinet Habu VIII 634.
- 5 E.g., the offering of Maat in Medinet Habu VII 555.

- 6 Medinet Habu II 205; IV 218; V 331; VII 513.
- 7 See Nicholas Reeves, *The Complete Tutankhamun* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1990), 155.
- 8 Medinet Habu V 309, 313, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 328, 339[outside], 340[outside]; VI 409, 433, 438, 443, 454, 456, 465; VII 501, 504, 512, 513, 515, 516, 529, 530.
- 9 Medinet Habu II 109.
- 10 Medinet Habu IV 237 (2x), 238 (2x), 239 (2x).
- 11 Medinet Habu IV 240.
- 12 Medinet Habu IV 197.
- 13 Medinet Habu VIII 612.
- 14 Medinet Habu II 123 (2x), 124 (2x); IV 247 (2x); VIII 656.
- 15 Medinet Habu I 14, 23; IV 240.
- 16 Medinet Habu I 16; II 117.
- 17 Medinet Habu I 38; II 90, 94.
- 18 Medinet Habu II 68, 73.
- 19 Medinet Habu VIII 628, 629.
- 20 Medinet Habu II 74, 96.
- 21 Medinet Habu I 29, 42, II 75.
- 22 With: Medinet Habu V 339, 340; VIII 636, 637, 639, 640, 646, 648, 650, 651, 654 (2x), 658. Without: Medinet Habu VI 447; VIII 655.
- 23 With: Medinet Habu I 11, 78; II 99; V 317; VIII 604, 606, 621, 625 (2x), 626 (2x), 627 (2x). Without: Medinet Habu I 26, 43, 44; II 93; III 174.
- 24 With: Medinet Habu IV 201, 224, 231. Without: Medinet Habu IV 223, 226.
- 25 With: Medinet Habu II 111 (4x), 113, 114 (2x); VIII 598, 599, 622. Without: Medinet Habu II 85, 101, 102, 105, 120 (3x), 121 (4x), 122 (4x).
- 26 Agnès Cabrol, *Les voies processionnelles de Thèbes* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001).
- 27 Alan R. Schulman, *Ceremonial Execution and Public Rewards: Some Historical Scenes on New Kingdom Private Stelae* (Freiburg,

- Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 8–115.
- 28 Edfou VII 18; cf. Dieter Kurth, *Treffpunkt der Götter: Inschriften aus dem Tempel des Horus von Edfu* (Zürich: Artemis & Winkler, 1998), 78; Dieter Kurth, *Edfou VII* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), 27.
- 29 With: Medinet Habu III 136, 144, 179; IV 200, 207, 229. Without: Medinet Habu III 172; IV 227, 242 (4x); V 279, 297, 315; VI 446; VIII 592.
- 30 With: Medinet Habu V 319, 320, 328. Without: Medinet Habu V 266, 273, 321, 322, 325, 327, 331 (erased), 333.
- 31 See John Gee, “A New Look at the *di ʿnh* Formula,” in *Acts of the Tenth International Congress of Demotic Studies* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 76–82; John Gee, “Some Neglected Aspects of Egypt’s Conversion to Christianity,” *Coptic Culture: Past, Present and Future* (Stevenage: The Coptic Orthodox Church Centre, 2012); 49–54.
- 32 With: Medinet Habu V 309, 316. Without: Medinet Habu V 291, 295, 310, 329, 332; VII 498.
- 33 With: Medinet Habu IV 235; V 313; VI 409; VIII 614. Without: Medinet Habu I 13; IV 244 (2x), 246; V 251 (2x), 257 (2x), 283, 290; VI 413, 457; VII 489.
- 34 With: Medinet Habu VI 438. Without: Medinet Habu III 172, 174, 175, 176.
- 35 With: Medinet Habu VI 454, 456, 465; VII 512, 515, 516, 529, 530; VIII 605, 607, 618, 619. Without: Medinet Habu III 175, 180, 245 (2x); IV 247; V 265, 266, 268, 270, 271, 277, 278, 282, 288, 289, 298, 335, 337; VI 369, 371, 387, 427, 429, 432, 434, 435, 436, 480, 481; VII 513 (erased), 521, 537, 538, 539, 541, 544, 549, 553, 554, 556, 558, 559, 563, 565, 568, 571 (2x), 572, 575, 577, 579, 580, 581 (3x), 582 (2x), 583, 585, 586; VIII 619.
- 36 With: Medinet Habu V 310 (2x). Without: Medinet Habu V 272, 303 (2x); VI 383 (2x), 450 (2x), 471 (2x); VII 485 (2x), 490, 496, 588 (2x).
- 37 With: Medinet Habu III 178; V 309; VIII 595, 610, 618. Without: Medinet Habu III 172, 176; IV 246, 247 (2x); V 260, 261, 262, 264 (3x), 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 272, 275, 281, 286; VI 376, 416,

- 443, 458, 461, 481; VII 485, 504, 533, 539, 543, 548, 550, 553, 557, 561, 563, 568, 570, 572, 581; VIII 594, 597, 619, 623.
- 38 With: Medinet Habu VIII 603, 608; 617 (2x), 618 (2x). Without: Medinet Habu II 107; IV 227 (2x), 244 (2x), 246; V 258, 260, 261 (2x), 262, 263, 264, 266, 269, 270, 271, 272, 276, 279, 281, 283, 290, 306, 308, 315, 336, 341, 344; VI 364, 370, 374, 375, 376, 387, 397, 428, 434, 460, 464, 480; VII 499, 522, 524, 534, 547, 551, 555, 569, 574, 576 (2x), 584; VIII 596, 623.
- 39 With: Medinet Habu VII 512; VIII 619. Without: Medinet Habu IV 218 (sandals erased), 221, 244, 247; V 263, 265, 267, 268, 272, 273, 276 (2x), 279, 280, 281, 288; VI 365, 373, 376, 434, 439; VII 492, 496, 504, 583.
- 40 With: Medinet Habu VI 433; Without: Medinet Habu V 272; VI 422, 430 (4x), 431 (2x), 462, 470, 473, 482 (2x); VII 491.
- 41 With: Medinet Habu IV 218; VII 513. Without: Medinet Habu V 261, 262, 268, 274, 275, 285, 293, 304, 315, 347; VI 418 (2x), 420 (2x); 423 (2x); 424 (2x), 434 (2x), 454, 481; VII 523, 541, 542, 552, 569, 571 (2x), 573, 579, 585, 586.
- 42 With: Medinet Habu V 318. Without: Medinet Habu IV 227, 244 (2x); V 258, 260, 265, 268, 269 (2x), 270, 271, 273, 274 (2x), 276, 281 (2x), 308, 312, 324, 326; VI 367, 434, 435, 463; VII 535, 560, 572, 574, 582, 583, 585 (2x); VIII 623.
- 43 With: Medinet Habu VIII 609. Without: Medinet Habu IV 207, 227, 244 (2x), 245 (2x); V 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265 (2x), 267 (3x), 269, 270, 271, 274 (2x), 275 (2x), 279, 280 (2x), 282, 283, 292, 294, 305, 311, 312; VI 368, 373 (2x), 375, 376, 426, 428, 435, 439, 442 (2x), 450 (2x), 468 (2x), 472 (2x); VII 520, 534, 536, 540, 544, 547, 549, 555, 571 (2x), 572 (3x), 573, 575 (3x), 576 (3x), 577, 578, 579, 580 (2x), 581 (2x), 582 (3x), 583, 584 (2x), 585 (2x), 586; VIII 619.
- 44 Medinet Habu IV 234; V 296, 309; VI 414, 449; VII 527.
- 45 Medinet Habu IV 241 (5x).
- 46 Medinet Habu VI 467.
- 47 Medinet Habu III 177 (4x); V 282, 338 (2x), 347; VI 425 (4x), 455; VII 495.
- 48 Medinet Habu VII 536.

- 49 Medinet Habu V 266, 274, 278, 281, 283; VI 434; VII 546, 583; VIII 623.
- 50 Medinet Habu V 287.
- 51 Medinet Habu V 287.
- 52 Medinet Habu V 330 (3x); VII 487 (2x).
- 53 Medinet Habu V 272.
- 54 Medinet Habu II 205 (sandals erased).
- 55 Medinet Habu V 275, 279, 284, 310, 311; VI 366, 444.
- 56 Medinet Habu IV 242, 244, 245; V 258 (2x), 264, 267, 269, 273 (2x), 280, 282 (2x), 292, 293, 308, 310, 313, 338 (2x); VI 373, 375, 435; VII 492, 526, 561, 573 (2x), 588.
- 57 Medinet Habu V 261; VI 443, 444; VII 564, 577.
- 58 Medinet Habu V 268, 270, 273, 280 (2x), 294; VI 375; VII 579, 583.
- 59 Medinet Habu VI 437, 480.
- 60 Medinet Habu VI 444.
- 61 Medinet Habu VII 537, 578.
- 62 Medinet Habu VI 451.
- 63 Medinet Habu V 271.
- 64 Medinet Habu V 284.
- 65 Medinet Habu V 286.
- 66 Medinet Habu II 119 (2x); VI 448.
- 67 Medinet Habu VI 467.
- 68 Medinet Habu VI 469, 470, 473.
- 69 Medinet Habu V 277.
- 70 Medinet Habu V 266, 275.
- 71 CG 20318 (JdE 29233) line 7, in Lange and Schäfer, *Grab- und Denksteine des Mittleren Reichs*, 1:331.
- 72 Merneptah Stele 27, in W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Six Temples at Thebes 1896* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1897), pl. XIV.
- 73 Exod. 3:5–6
- 74 Medinet Habu III 177 (4x); V 282, 338 (2x), 347; VI 425 (4x), 455; VII 495.

- 75 É. Drioton, G. Posener and J. Vandier, *Tôd: Les inscriptions du temple ptolémaïque et romain* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1980).

DID CAPTAIN MORONI LACK THE TYPICAL RELIGIOUS VIRTUES?

Duane Boyce

Abstract: *In his well-known volume about the Book of Mormon, Grant Hardy focuses primarily on the book's main narrators. However, he also makes a number of observations about other figures in the book that are of particular interest, including some about Captain Moroni. In addition to those I address elsewhere, these observations include the claim that Moroni lacked the typical religious virtues — which Hardy identifies as “humility, self-sacrifice, kindness, and relying upon the Lord.” They also include the assertion that Helaman, in his manifest reliance upon God, serves as a counterexample to Moroni’s military leadership. A close look at the text, however, indicates that both these claims are mistaken.*

Grant Hardy’s influential volume, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*,¹ focuses on the text’s main narrators. Other figures in the book naturally receive attention along the way, however. One of these is Captain Moroni. Among Hardy’s remarks regarding Captain Moroni are these seven: (1) Moroni’s divine communication (reported in Alma 60:33) was an “off-the-mark revelation”;² (2) Moroni “slaughters” his political opponents;³ (3) he is not portrayed in the text as “a particularly religious man”;⁴ (4) he was not comparable to the sons of Mosiah in spiritual matters

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

2. Hardy refers to this revelation at various points and calls it — and/or Moroni’s report of it — “mistaken” and, as mentioned, an “off-the-mark revelation.” Indeed, Hardy reports that the revelation was a “claim” made by Moroni. See Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 176, 177, and 309n32.

3. Ibid., 176.

4. Ibid., 174.

— despite Mormon’s claim to the contrary;⁵ (5) he can be described as being “hot-blooded” and as having an “aggressive posture,” a “quick temper,” a “blunt manner,” and “hasty suspicions;”⁶ (6) he did not possess the “typical religious virtues;”⁷ and (7) he serves as a contrast to Helaman, who, unlike Moroni, put his trust in God more than in his own expertise.⁸

I have addressed the first five of these claims elsewhere in two separate papers.⁹ In this article I will consider the final two assertions, namely, that Captain Moroni lacked “the typical religious virtues” — by which Hardy specifically means “humility, self-sacrifice, kindness, and relying upon the Lord”¹⁰ — and the claim that Helaman serves as a counterexample to Moroni.¹¹

Now, the idea that Moroni lacked the usual religious virtues might well be a common view, since what stands out in the record are his wartime leadership and his immersion in circumstances of violence. When we think of Moroni, we tend to think of his military engagements rather than his religious virtues. Surprisingly, however, when we read closely — and when we think carefully about these religious virtues themselves — we find that the text provides far more information about Moroni’s character than we might suppose. To examine Hardy’s conclusions about Moroni’s character, I will consider the several virtues in sequence. All this will be relevant to the subsequent major topic — i.e., the comparison of Captain Moroni to Helaman.

“Self-Sacrifice”

Consider, first, the matter of self-sacrifice. Hardy does not provide any evidence for his remark that Moroni lacks this virtue, but the claim seems implausible on its face. If self-sacrifice includes a willingness to sacrifice one’s own interests in the service of a larger cause, then we have no problem identifying that trait in Moroni’s life of service. It is clear in the record that his efforts to defend the Nephites from destruction

5. Ibid., 175.

6. Ibid., 31 (regarding being “hot-blooded”) and 177.

7. Ibid., 177.

8. Ibid., 177–78.

9. See Duane Boyce, “Captain Moroni’s Revelation,” *BYU Studies Quarterly*, 58, no. 4 (2019), 155–59 regarding claim 1 and Boyce, “Beloved by All the People: A Fresh Look at Captain Moroni,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 45 (2021), 179–201, regarding claims 2–5.

10. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 177.

11. Ibid., 177–78.

over nearly one-and-a-half decades¹² came at no small cost to himself. We see him not only risk his life in waging defense against repeated aggressive attacks, but we see him do so against an enemy that appears to have outnumbered the Nephites nearly four to one¹³ — increasing the personal danger and effort such defense entailed.

In addition to leading under these already overwhelming circumstances, we also see Moroni dealing with Nephites who required reminding of the commandments¹⁴ as well as with influential traitors within Nephite ranks who only added to the continual threats from without (see, e.g., Alma 51:1–22, 53:8–9, 60, 61). We are also told that Moroni “did labor exceedingly” for the welfare of the Nephites and that he swore with an oath to defend the Nephites “even to the loss of his blood” (Alma 48:12–13) — which we know he suffered in battle (e.g., Alma 52:35). Moreover, Moroni personally reports experiencing “exceedingly great sufferings” with his men, including “hunger, thirst, fatigue, and all manner

12. It is in the beginning of the eighteenth year of the judges that the long conflict in the Book of Alma begins and that Captain Moroni has charge over all the Nephite armies (Alma 35:13, 43:4, 16–17). The long series of conflicts finally ceases at the end of the thirty-first year of the judges (Alma 62:39), making fourteen years in all.

13. We are told that the Nephite population was less than half the size of the Lamanite population in about 120 BC (Mosiah 25:2–3). Roughly thirty years later, the text begins reporting major dissensions from the Nephites to the Lamanites (Alma 2), and by the time of Captain Moroni (more than ten years after that), the text tells us that dissenters who had joined the Lamanites were nearly as numerous as the entire remaining Nephite population (Alma 43:13–14). By the time the war begins in Alma 43, therefore, the Nephite population — which, apparently, had long been less than half the size of the Lamanites — had been reduced by nearly half again. Under these extraordinary circumstances we first meet Moroni, and he takes command of the Nephite armies. Although it is not possible to be certain of this four-to-one ratio — since we do not know all of the population fluctuations that might have occurred during the stretch from 120 BC to Moroni’s time (about 74 BC) — it is nevertheless clear that the Nephites were vastly outnumbered, whatever the exact ratio might have been. (I am indebted to Royal Skousen for pointing out to me in personal correspondence the textual correction — changing “descendants” to read “dissenters” in verse 14 — that brings this passage into conformity with the earliest texts. See also Royal Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009], 428–29.)

14. The Nephites’ inconsistency in keeping the commandments is a virtual truism of the Book of Mormon record. The need for reminding is prefigured by the Lord in an early revelation to Nephi₁ (1 Nephi 2:19–24), and evidence of the need exists throughout. See, for example (just from the Book of Alma): Alma 4:19, 45:20–24, 46:1–10, 48:7, and 48:19–20.

of afflictions of every kind” (Alma 60:3). For close to fifteen years, the text shows Moroni’s life to be a continuous series of sacrifices.¹⁵

“Reliance on the Lord”

Although we tend to think of Moroni primarily in terms of his wartime engagements, his reliance on the Lord is also evident in the text. We are told, for instance, that at the time he created the title of liberty, Moroni “bowed himself to the earth,” “prayed mightily unto his God,” and “poured out his soul to God” (Alma 46:13, 16, 17). We see Moroni not only pray, but we see him pray “mightily.”

Moreover, as he speaks to the people at this time, Moroni tells them explicitly that God will not allow them to be destroyed if they do not fall into transgression (Alma 46:18), and he specifically invites the people to rally around the symbolism of the title of liberty “in the strength of the Lord” (Alma 46:20). In the same discourse, he invites the people to enter a covenant so “the Lord God may bless them” and similarly ties the prospects of success to the Nephites’ remembering to “keep the commandments of God” and to their standing “fast in the faith of Christ” (Alma 46:20, 23, 27).

Later, when Amalickiah was positioned as the head of the Lamanites and was preparing to assault the Nephites, Moroni himself was “preparing the minds of the people to be faithful unto the Lord their God”

15. It might be thought that Moroni could have actually enjoyed war or that he might have held onto his post as the preeminent general of the Nephite armies even though it would have been more fitting to renounce the post at some point. In either case, according to this view Moroni wouldn’t really have been displaying self-sacrifice in his wartime efforts despite how it might appear on the surface. Hardy doesn’t propose these possibilities (indeed, he doesn’t propose any reason for denying Moroni’s self-sacrifice), but they are at least explanations one might try to float to justify the claim. Unfortunately, there is no suggestion in the record that either of these was true. If Moroni had actually enjoyed war, for example, then, as we will see in upcoming sections (“Moroni’s Generosity of Spirit” and “Moroni’s Restriction to Defensive War”), it is hard to imagine (1) why he would spare so many enemy lives that he could have taken, (2) why he never sought to conquer a single Lamanite city, much less any of its territory in general — indeed, why he never even *left* Nephite territory, and (3) why Mormon goes out of his way to describe Moroni as someone who “did not delight in bloodshed” but who merely sought “liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery” (Alma 48:11). And as for renouncing his position, this would have been an act of self-sacrifice only in certain circumstances — for instance, if someone else were legally and morally entitled to the position instead. But nothing in the record suggests this. Captain Moroni was “appointed” to be general of all the Nephite armies (Alma 43:16), and the record simply depicts him as seeing his appointment through to the end.

(Alma 48:7). As general of the armies, he was busily creating defensive fortifications to protect the Nephites from attack, but the first defensive initiative mentioned in the text is his effort to fortify the Nephites' faithfulness to God. In these same circumstances, Mormon tells us Moroni's faith specifically was that *the Lord* would deliver the Nephites from destruction if they were "faithful in keeping the commandments of God" (Alma 48:15–16). In each of these cases, Moroni explicitly acknowledges the Lord and expresses an earnest reliance on him.

Earlier, when Moroni exulted in the Nephites' success in their defense against Zerahemnah, he also attributed the victory to "our faith in Christ" and reported that "the Lord is with us" (Alma 44:3). He told Zerahemnah that the Nephites' faith in Christ was "the true faith" and that God would continue to support and preserve the Nephites as long as they were "faithful unto him, and unto our faith, and our religion" (Alma 44:4). He further reported that "we owe all our happiness" to "the sacred word of God" (Alma 44:5).

Much later in the war, when Moroni left his army to attend to an insurrection in the capital, he left "the strength and the blessings of God" upon the soldiers who remained (Alma 60:25).

All these features of the text show Captain Moroni to be a man who relied explicitly and heavily on the Lord and who attributed the Nephites' success in defending themselves specifically *to him*.¹⁶

"Kindness"

The idea that Captain Moroni lacked "kindness" is a particularly important claim, since it requires us to think more deeply about this virtue than we otherwise might. The assertion invites several observations, all of which are important in reaching a cogent view of this matter.

The first thing we notice in looking at the text is that Moroni was kind to the *Nephites* — a citizenry under assault and fighting for their lives. In reflecting on kindness, we think of acts of support and help and solicitousness toward others. Certainly, Moroni's valiant service over the years in waging defense demonstrates that he acted in this way toward the Nephites.

The claim that Moroni "lacks kindness" may refer to his criticism of Pahoran or to his treatment of the Lamanites as well as to his treatment of the Lamanites' confederates in the Nephite population.¹⁷ Regarding

16. This becomes more obvious when we appreciate just how spiritually earnest Moroni was in general. I cover this feature of his character in "Beloved by All the People," 184–89.

17. Confederates include Amalickiah (beginning in Alma 46), the king-men (Alma 51), and the treasonous Nephite governors (Alma 60, 61).

Pahoran and the governors of the Nephites who were putting the nation at risk, we see that Moroni's words and threatened actions were justified, as shown elsewhere.¹⁸ Once Pahoran's faithfulness to the Nephite nation was established, Moroni worked to aid Pahoran. Strong words and swift action are needed in such times of emergency, and no genuine charge of unkindness can be levied against Captain Moroni in this episode.

As for defending the Nephites against their enemies, God had commanded Moroni to do this, and his duty to his people was to defend them. Such actions, though necessarily military in nature, cannot be painted as indicators of a lack of kindness or compassion in Moroni's heart. Indeed, as we will see in upcoming sections, Moroni consistently sought to minimize bloodshed, fully recognizing the humanity of the soldiers opposing him.

It must be remembered that the Lord gives us many examples of using strong words or taking strong measures against opponents, such as publicly chastising the Pharisees (Matthew 23:13–33), casting out the moneychangers and others in the temple (John 2:14–17; see also Matthew 21:12–16; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46), the destruction of the wicked at the time of Noah (Genesis 7:13; Moses 7:34), his slaying of Pharaoh and “the host of the Egyptians” as they pursued the children of Israel at the Red Sea (Exodus 14), his command that the Nephites take up the sword against the Lamanites to defend themselves (Alma 43:46–47, 48:14–16, 60:28), his destruction of numerous Nephite cities and their inhabitants in the aftermath of his crucifixion (3 Nephi 9:1–12), and his assignment of the wicked to suffering and anguish in the spirit world, prior to their resurrection.¹⁹

None of these episodes tempt us to conclude that the Lord lacks “kindness.” Indeed, since all of them concern the Savior's own actions — and since “everlasting kindness” is explicitly identified as one of his attributes²⁰ — the moral we should draw is that the way we normally

18. See Boyce, “Beloved by All the People,” 198–99 and Boyce, “Captain Moroni's Revelation,” 155–59.

19. References in scripture to such suffering following mortality are numerous. For just three examples, see 2 Nephi 28:23; Doctrine and Covenants 76:84, 106, and 19:15–18. The fate of sons of perdition is even more harrowing (Doctrine and Covenants 76:44–48). That the Savior is the one who judges and commits the wicked to their fate is made clear in numerous passages. See, for example, John 5:22, Moroni 8:21, and Doctrine and Covenants 135:5. As for other examples of the Lord's strong measures (including future acts), see Exodus 9–12; Isaiah 11:4, 66:15–16; Malachi 4:1; Jacob 7:15–20; Alma 19:21–23; Doctrine and Covenants 29:17–21; 45:50, 133:50–51.

20. Numerous passages speak of the Lord's love, compassion, and mercy, of course, and he describes his mercy as flowing from his “everlasting kindness” (Isaiah 54:8 and 3 Nephi 22:8).

think about kindness is probably inadequate. Our understanding of what constitutes this attribute might stand some examination — and the result might lead to a more refined view of Captain Moroni. Here are some matters to consider in rounding out our view of kindness.

Aggressors Impose Their Own Restrictions on Kindness

One reality to appreciate about kindness is this: individuals often impose limits on what acts of kindness are *possible* to show them. The people at the time of Noah had created an environment of violence and debauchery, and the Egyptians refused multiple times to free the enslaved Israelites. In each case, prophetic calls to repentance were ignored, and wickedness persisted. While the Lord's arm and his "voice of mercy" are lengthened out "all the day long" toward his children,²¹ when they persist in depravity and rebellion, there might be no option but to end the evil. This, it would seem, is why the Lord can speak in one verse about his fury and vengeance in destroying the wicked at his Second Coming and in the very next verse report that his redeemed shall speak of his "loving kindness" and his "goodness" (D&C 133:51–52). It would seem that the Lord does for everyone the best they will permit him to do. However, he can't do for them what they *won't* permit him to do. The kindness he can show them faces limits they themselves impose.

This is not unlike the circumstance Captain Moroni faced with the Lamanites. They were assailants seeking to destroy Nephite lives and Nephite society.²² Such circumstances make it difficult to see what "kind" options were available to Moroni in how to treat them. Morality does not require individuals to help assailants commit their wrongs. (Should a bystander provide transportation and food to a tired and hungry aggressor who is hunting a person he intends to harm?) Morality requires individuals, in the best way they can, to *prevent* assailants' wrongs. This was precisely the case with Moroni. By their aggression, the Lamanites themselves precluded Moroni's ability to display conventional forms of kindness toward them. That was their doing, not his.

Kindness Does Not Entail Capitulation

Some might believe that capitulating to one's assailants would be a way to show kindness toward them and that this, therefore, is actually the proper course to follow when faced with conflict. Hugh Nibley, for

21. See, for example: 2 Nephi 28:32; Jacob 5:47; Alma 5:37; 3 Nephi 10:4–6; D&C 43:24–26; Matthew 23:37.

22. See the upcoming section "Moroni's Restriction to Defensive War."

example, believed that the Ammonites' refusal to take up arms was "the perfect example of what to do when faced with a conflict."²³ This view overlooks significant features of the scriptural record, however. Standing firmly against evil goes back to the pre-earth life when the Son led many of us in a "war" against the rebel Satan.²⁴ Moreover, the Lord not only commanded the Nephites to defend themselves against their aggressors but routinely helped them execute their defense.²⁵ It is true, of course, that Christ voluntarily assented to his crucifixion, but this does not establish a precedent for capitulating to aggression. The Savior was *ordained* to die at that time and in that way, and his behavior in his ultimate sacrifice simply does not generalize to other circumstances. The case of the Ammonites in Alma 24 is *sui generis* as well and also does not generalize to others. In fact, it did not even generalize to later situations with the Ammonites themselves. Although the Ammonites' assailants repented and were converted the first time they attacked their brethren (Alma 24:23–27), this did not happen the second time they did so (Alma 27:2–4). Indeed, following this second attack, the Lord directed the Ammonites to emigrate because he knew that future aggressors would *not* repent — and in fact that they would destroy the Ammonites (Alma 27:12). In addition, the Ammonites later faced circumstances in which they could have prostrated themselves before their enemies, just as they had in Alma 24 and 27, but they did not do so. In one case, they were protected by a large Nephite army that had moved into the land of Jershon after the Ammonites moved out for safety reasons (Alma 35:13, 43:4–22), and in another, they first desired to take up weapons of their own and then, when dissuaded, allowed their sons to go to war in their place (Alma 53:10–18). In neither case did the Ammonites prostrate

23. Boyd Jay Petersen, *Hugh Nibley: A Consecrated Life* (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2002), 221.

24. Relevant passages on the war in heaven include Revelation 12:7–9; D&C 29:36–37, 76:25–28; Moses 4:1–3.

25. The Lord told the Nephites, for instance, that "inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense, neither the second, ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies" and also that "ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed" (Alma 43:46–47). He also explicitly commanded Captain Moroni to go to battle against the Nephite governors if they did not repent (Alma 60:33). The Book of Mormon also frequently depicts the Lord as helping the Nephites defend themselves and of Nephites being "strengthened," "delivered," or "preserved" by the Lord. See Alma 2:16–19, 27–31, 16:5–8, 43:22–24, 44:3–5, 57:25–26, 35, 36, 58:33, 61:13, 21; Words of Mormon 1:14; Helaman 4:24–25, 7:22, 12:2; 3 Nephi 4:10, 31, 33. I cover this topic at length in *Even unto Bloodshed: An LDS Perspective on War* (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2015), chapter 7.

themselves as an alternative to battle. It is evident, then, that *they* did not believe their experience in Alma 24 and 27 set the precedent for what people should do generally, *including themselves*. Since they did not believe this, it is unclear on what principle others should believe it.²⁶

Finally, even if by some logic it *were* kind to let attackers freely commit murder, it is hard to see how doing so would be kind to those they murder — say, women, children, and other innocents we are defending. If (1) we are to be as kind as possible, and (2) if we can't simultaneously be kind to two groups — to aggressors by giving them free rein to commit murder and to victims by *not* giving their aggressors free rein to murder them — then (3) it would seem that we are morally obligated to be kind to the group that is not murdering others rather than to the group that is.

These considerations render the idea of capitulation unpersuasive. It is not a genuine option for showing kindness when a nation is facing unjust attack and murder.²⁷

26. A detailed treatment of the Ammonites appears in Boyce, *Even unto Bloodshed: An LDS Perspective on War*, Chapters 4 and 5. One can, of course, point to instances in which the Lord does not command self-defense — e.g., the story of Abinadi in Mosiah 12–17. (The account of the women and children suffering death in Alma 14 may also come to mind, though this is more accurately described as a case in which a prophet was not commanded to call upon the powers of heaven to miraculously spare victims of violence, victims whose families may have, unknown to us, resisted as much as possible.) This indicates that the Lord doesn't always want us to defend ourselves with violence. However, he does indicate what he considers the correct *default* position — namely, that victims of aggression are justified in defending themselves. We've seen some of the evidence for this in the Book of Mormon, and it is corroborated in D&C 134:11, as well as in D&C 98:33–36 where the Lord speaks of appropriate defense as “the law” he has given over the earth's history.

27. It is also useful to note that aggressors typically *entail* harm to themselves. The only way to defend against their violence is to take up arms against them. This results in their harm, of course, but it is a harm of their own making. Captain Moroni's purpose was not to harm the Lamanites, for example; that was simply the natural consequence of defending against their invasions of Nephite territory in an effort to destroy Nephite lives and society. We see one case, of course, in which the Lord caused a “deep sleep” to come upon the captors of Alma and his people and thus made it possible for them to escape without any military engagement (Mosiah 24). This is similar to Limhi's experience in which the drunkenness of Lamanite guards permitted the Nephites to escape captivity without having to take up arms (Mosiah 22). In neither of these cases, however, were the Nephites defending themselves from being invaded, overthrown, and killed. They were simply captives of the Lamanites, looking for a way to escape their captivity. In other Book of Mormon incidents, the situation is far different, and

Moroni's Generosity of Spirit

Now, it is not that the Lord shows *no* kindness to the wicked, of course — to the people at the time of the flood, to the Nephites he destroyed, and so forth. As we have seen, his arm is stretched out “all the day long” to reach God’s children and save them. His efforts to reach people, to help them repent, and to embrace them when they do repent is repeatedly manifest in scripture. His patience and long-suffering in extending such mercy for so long is unfathomable. This generosity of spirit is the form kindness takes toward those who by their actions preclude any other form of kindness.

As mortals go, Captain Moroni himself is impressive in possessing such generosity of spirit. In his rebuke of the Nephite governors in Alma 60, for example — despite their huge and costly betrayal of the Nephite people — Moroni still managed to call them “my beloved brethren” (Alma 60:10) and reported a revelation that held out the possibility of their repentance (Alma 60:33). In a more famous example, Moroni gave Zerahemnah and his army every chance to repent and cease their aggression, and he allowed them to leave in peace when they did so (Alma 44:1, 19–20). He behaved similarly when a group of Nephites later become rebellious and sought to kill other Nephites in order to obtain lands for themselves. Under Moroni, Teancum eventually thwarted their plans, and — despite the intrigue, threat, and loss of life these dissidents had caused — when they entered a covenant to keep the peace, they were permitted to return to their original lands and settle there once again. All, apparently, was forgiven (Alma 50: 25–36).

On a later occasion, the record shows Moroni refusing to attack defenseless Lamanite soldiers when he could have easily assaulted them because “he did not delight in murder or bloodshed” and thus “would not fall upon the Lamanites and destroy them” (Alma 55:18–19). In this same episode, he managed to surround a whole army of Lamanites whom he could have slain easily. Yet he spared their lives and permitted them to surrender (Alma 55:20–24). This followed Captain Moroni’s famous epistle to Ammoron in which he declared, “I will give you battle even until you are destroyed from off the face of the earth” (Alma 54:12). Moroni said this in the heat of his exchange with Ammoron, but when he actually had the chance to destroy an army “from off the face of the earth,” he didn’t.

Moroni behaved the same way when he and Lehi₂ were able to surround an army of Lamanites and overpower them in battle, and

those incidents do call for active defense against invasion, overthrow, and murder — active defenses which obviously entail harm to the aggressors.

yet, rather than continue to fight and substantially reduce the army's numbers through injury or death, he immediately gave them a chance to surrender and save their lives by throwing down their weapons of war. Many did so, and those who refused were only taken as prisoners; they were not attacked further (Alma 52:32–39). This was in stark contrast to the Lamanites who, in one theater of the war, spared only the chief captains of the Nephites whom they took prisoner and killed all their other prisoners of war (Alma 56:10–15).

Perhaps most significantly, in the epistle in which Moroni tells Ammoron that “hell” and the “wrath of God” await him and that he is “a child of hell,” Moroni still holds out the possibility of repentance for Ammoron — that there will be no more war if Ammoron withdraws his aggression and returns to his own lands (Alma 54:6–11).

Moroni did not tire in his generosity as the war dragged on. In its final year, at the end of one battle, rather than punish the Lamanite invaders who survived, Moroni extracted a covenant from them that they would no longer aggress against the Nephites and then simply sent them in peace to live with the people of Ammon₂ (Alma 62:14–17). Later that same year, after winning another battle with a Lamanite army, he did the same. Those who survived were not punished for their aggression and cause of death. Instead, when they expressed a desire to join the Ammonites, Moroni granted them their desire and allowed them to do so in peace (Alma 62:19–28).

In these examples, Moroni ran the risk that the soldiers he freed or left alive would one day return to the battlefield against the Nephites. This was the case even when he extracted a promise from them. The Lamanites had shown a warlike nature for centuries,²⁸ and Moroni could not guarantee that those he spared would not once again pose danger. Indeed, in one battle, the Lamanite leader declared that he and his men would not enter a covenant never to aggress against the Nephites again because they *knew* they and their children would break it (Alma 44:8). Yet despite such risks, Moroni still spared as many lives as he could. Indeed, it was Moroni's generosity in this very incident that seriously endangered his own life (Alma 44:12).

28. Jacob tells us that Nephi himself had to fight to defend his people from Lamanite assault (Jacob 1:10, also 2 Nephi 5:14), and aggressive wars are also reported by Jacob (Jacob 7:24), Enos (Enos 1:20), Jarom (Jarom 1:6), Abinadom (Omni 1:10), Amaleki (Omni 1:24), Zeniff (Mosiah 9, 10, 19–21), and Mormon (Words of Mormon 1:13–14) — a record of Lamanite aggression, beginning long before Captain Moroni, spanning the first four hundred and sixty years or so of Book of Mormon history.

Moroni's attitude toward war seems reflective of what Mormon tells us about the Nephites who were being led by Moroni — namely, that the Nephites contended with the Lamanites “reluctantly,” indeed with “much reluctance,” and that they “were sorry to take up arms against the Lamanites, because they did not delight in the shedding of blood ... [and that] they were sorry to be the means of sending so many of their brethren out of this world into an eternal world, unprepared to meet their God” (Alma 48:21–23). Their aim in fighting was not punishment or revenge. It was self-preservation undertaken reluctantly but out of necessity.

Such characteristics appear to be impressive in war. More common, it would seem, is the tendency to objectify enemies and to lust for revenge against them. We've seen that the Lamanites killed many of their prisoners of war, for example, and Gidgiddoni and Mormon encountered vengeful and aggressive attitudes among their own soldiers (3 Nephi 3:20; Mormon 3:14, 4:1–4), despite a Nephite history that explicitly eschewed such attitudes.²⁹ No Nephite leader — including Captain Moroni — succumbed to such temptations, however.³⁰ It seems fair to say that the text shows Moroni behaving toward his aggressors much as the Lord behaves toward the wicked generally: he does not delight in harming them and instead hopes they will cease their attacks — and when they do so, he treats them with a benevolence that is surprising. In the treacherous situations Moroni faced, this generosity of spirit is an impressive manifestation of kindness toward those who were attacking him and his people.

Moroni's Restriction to Defensive War

An additional matter to appreciate about “kindness,” specifically in the kind of circumstances Moroni faced, is this conspicuous feature of the record: *all Moroni's wartime efforts took place on Nephite lands*. He never invaded traditional Lamanite lands, he never sought to overthrow Lamanite society, and he never attempted to conquer a single Lamanite city. He went to battle against the Lamanites only when they were

29. This matter is covered at length in Duane Boyce, “Captain Moroni and the Sermon on the Mount: Resolving a Scriptural Tension,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 60 no. 2 (2021), forthcoming.

30. Mormon 4:1–4 is the one time the text suggests that the Nephites aggressed against the Lamanites. After defeating Lamanite aggression in years 361 and 362 (Mormon 3:7–8) — following which the Nephites desired to instigate hostilities of their own to gain vengeance (Mormon 3:9–15) — this passage suggests that they did so. This was a rogue action, however. They pursued this aggression on their own, as Mormon had already refused to lead them (Mormon 3:16).

invading *Nephite* lands, seeking to kill Nephites and to overthrow their society. In every case, Moroni was forced to wage battle in his own homeland, not because of any aggression of his own but because of repeated invasions by others.³¹

We also learn the *necessity* of the Nephites' defending "their wives, and children" (Alma 35:14): the Nephites were defending themselves to prevent their wives and their children from being "massacred" (Alma 48:24). This was consistent with the earlier report that the Nephites were "not fighting for monarchy nor power" but for preservation of their lives, their families' lives, and their religion (Alma 43:9–10, 45, 47). Indeed, Moroni reports at one point that the Lamanites were "murdering our people with the sword," including "our women and our children" (Alma 60:17). We learn in addition that the Lamanites assaulted the Nephites, supposing that they could "slay and massacre" the Nephites "according to their pleasure" (Alma 49:7). Indeed, Ammoron declared that the Lamanites' aggression against the Nephites would be "eternal" — it would continue either to the complete subjugation of the Nephites or to their "eternal extinction" (Alma 54:20).

Such were the hostilities and dangers faced by Moroni and his people. Whereas others might be tempted to seek revenge or to expand one's territory in time of war, the text only shows Moroni fighting against this very aggression from others. Indeed, Moroni's defensive posture is the reason Moroni had only men as prisoners of war, whereas the Lamanites had among their prisoners both women and children (Alma 54:3).³² The Lamanites' military action, after all, consisted in invading the Nephites' homeland — where the Nephites obviously lived as families — and both killing and capturing many women and children. Captain Moroni's military action, on the other hand, consisted in nothing other than waging defense *against* such invasions and doing so in the Nephites' own territory. He never set foot on the Lamanites' homeland and thus never encountered Lamanite women and children settled there, much

31. I think Hugh Nibley was the first to put this feature of the record into print: namely, that all Book of Mormon wars occurred on Nephite lands. See Nibley, "Warfare and the Book of Mormon," in *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints*, eds. Don E. Norton and Shirley S. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 294; see also Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 2nd ed., ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 298 and Nibley, "Freemen and King-men in the Book of Mormon," in *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 354.

32. Thus, Moroni was able to propose to Ammoron the exchange of one Lamanite prisoner for a full family of Nephite prisoners ("a man and his wife and his children" — Alma 54:11).

less harm or hold them as prisoners of war. In every respect, the text shows Moroni to be engaged in defensive action only.

Offensive Tactics in a Defensive War

In one place, Hardy raises a matter that might seem to undermine the view that Moroni's actions were purely defensive in character. It is the account, in Alma 50, of Captain Moroni's driving Lamanites out of lands that were part of Nephite territory and back into Lamanite lands (Alma 50:6–12).³³ In this episode, so it seems, Moroni resorted to aggressive measures.

However, thinking about the episode in this way confuses offensive *war* with offensive *tactics*. The Allied landing at Normandy in 1944 (along with a thousand other examples in World War II) was certainly an offensive tactic, but it was just as certainly not a matter of offensive war; it was not an act of aggression. It was no more than an offensive maneuver undertaken as part of a larger defense — a requirement that was thrust upon the Allies in the first place by the military aggression of the Axis powers attacking them. Indeed, this part of Europe had been invaded by Nazi Germany in the first place, and the landing was a crucial step in taking it back and reversing the spread of Nazi hegemony.

Examples of similar offensive maneuvers certainly appear in the Nephite record, and they have the same character as the Normandy invasion: they are not acts of aggression but are acts conducted strictly in the service of self-defense. Think of Teancum's slaying of Amalickiah (Alma 51:33–34) along with multiple additional examples.³⁴ All are different from the actions condemned by Gidgiddoni and Mormon when they insisted that their armies act strictly in defense (3 Ne. 3:20–21; Mormon 3:14–6). In these examples, the Nephites' desire to engage their enemies were forbidden by Gidgiddoni and Mormon, apparently because they felt those acts would have been offensive rather than defensive in nature. In an important sense, in their desire for revenge, these warriors were seeking to *instigate* hostilities.

In practice, righteous Nephite leaders seem to have defined legitimate defense in a way that prohibited both seeking revenge and, for the most part, leaving their own territory. In his case, Mormon refused to lead the Nephites when they became motivated by revenge and sought to enter Lamanite land to gain their vengeance (Mormon 3:4–11; 4:1–4). And Gidgiddoni, described as “a great prophet” (3 Nephi 3:19), led his armies

33. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 176.

34. See, for example: Alma 2:35–37, 43:30–42, 44:18, 50:6–12, 62:15, 25, 31, 38; 3 Nephi 4:11–13, 20–21, 25–27.

in vigorously attacking the Gadianton robbers who were laying siege to them at the time and even prevented their retreat to the “furthermost parts of the land northward” when they abandoned their siege (3 Nephi 4:16–27). However, when military action would have required crossing territorial boundaries and engaging the enemy on their own lands, the same Gidgiddoni prohibited it (see 3 Nephi 3:20–21). Indeed, even when they were earlier pursuing the Gadianton robbers at the time of the siege, he was specific in allowing pursuit only to a specific territorial line, or “the borders of the wilderness” (3 Nephi 4:13).³⁵

The general attitudes we see in such Nephite leaders are the reason that all wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites occurred on Nephite lands; as mentioned earlier, they were all the result of Lamanite invasions.³⁶ Even though, militarily speaking, Nephite leaders could have pursued their aggressors past Nephite boundaries, and even though they were *not* motivated by vengeance, these leaders still did not do so. It appears that a de facto rule governed the Nephites regarding the Lamanites such that they could act to defend themselves, but were they to pass their boundaries, it would no longer be considered defense, and therefore was forbidden. Certainly, that was the rule Captain Moroni followed.

All this helps us see why, although Hardy questions the decision, it was not an act of aggression for Moroni to drive Lamanites who had settled on Nephite land back into Lamanite territory. He did this, after all, while urgently engaged in defense against ongoing Lamanite assault. The event occurred during a lull in the actual fighting, but the lull was not a cessation of hostilities or of danger. Indeed, Mormon reports of the circumstances during this period of Nephite history that the wars did not cease “for the space of many years” (Alma 48:22). Thus, although Hardy questions Moroni for this action, it actually seems to have been

35. This pattern was not followed in every instance. Earlier, for example, the Nephites and Lamanites effectively constituted a single population and were united against those who had broken off from both and re-formed the Gadianton society (Helaman 11:21–33). These robbers located themselves in “the wilderness and upon the mountains” (v. 28), from which locations they “visited great destruction” upon the Nephites and Lamanites (v. 27). In these circumstances armies of the Lamanites and Nephites went into the wilderness and the mountains more than once to try to destroy the robbers. However, although the Nephites and Lamanites as a combined people did not recognize boundaries that would in any sense protect the robbers from pursuit, in this instance their efforts were still not acts of aggression. They were simply offensive maneuvers undertaken as part of an overall need to defend themselves from ongoing onslaught and murder from the Gadianton robbers.

36. The lone exception is the one apparent rogue action discussed in note 30.

a highly prudent course for Moroni to pursue at the time. The Nephites were suffering from continued violence and threat of further attack, and Moroni was responsible to secure the lives of the Nephite citizenry. At the same time, Lamanites possessed lands that, according to the record, belonged to the Nephites (Alma 50:7–9, 11). Moreover, Lamanite presence on these lands actually established “strongholds of the Lamanites” and were seen as sources of “strength and power” for Lamanite invasion within Nephite territory (Alma 50:11–12). Clearing Nephite lands of such “strongholds” and sources of “strength and power” would be the obvious course for any leader. Indeed, later Nephite dissenters appreciably increased the threat to Nephite lives when, living on Nephite lands, they actually overthrew and possessed the city of Zarahemla and then entered an alliance with the Lamanites specifically to assist them in achieving victory over the Nephites (Alma 61:1–8).

This episode indicates the danger posed by Lamanites positioned in Nephite territory. Captain Moroni’s removal of this threat thus seems not only justified but obligatory. It was not an instigation of hostilities; it was an offensive tactic against enemy outposts located on Nephite land, and thus was a legitimate act of defense against an aggressive and determined enemy who had started the war in the first place.³⁷

In all respects, the record shows that Moroni’s behavior is consistent with Mormon’s description of him. He describes Moroni as a man “of a perfect understanding ... [who] did not delight in bloodshed, ... [but who joyed] in the liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery” (Alma 48:11). The record shows Moroni to be

37. On one occasion, during his heated exchange of epistles with Ammoron, Captain Moroni demanded that Ammoron withdraw his armies and also demanded a certain ratio for prisoner exchange. He threatened that if the Lamanites refused, he would follow them into their own land and wage war against them there (Alma 54:11–13). Indeed, he threatened to wage battle until the Lamanite invaders were “destroyed from off the face of the earth” (Alma 54:12–13). Moroni never pursued these threats, however. When Ammoron refused to withdraw from the war, as Moroni had demanded, Moroni refused the prisoner exchange himself (Alma 54:20; 55:1–2). He was now angrier than ever at Ammoron (Alma 55:1), and we might expect, therefore, that he would carry out his threats — but he didn’t. Indeed, it was *following* these threats, and *following* his increased anger, that, as mentioned earlier, Moroni still refused to “fall upon” vulnerable Lamanite soldiers (Alma 55:18–19) and also spared a Lamanite army he had completely surrounded and could have destroyed at will — just as he had threatened he would do (Alma 55:20–24). Despite his words, in the end Moroni never invaded Lamanite land, and he never spilled blood he could avoid spilling. He spoke more threateningly to Ammoron than he ever actually behaved.

a defender, nothing more, and, under the threatening circumstances he faced, this commitment to strictly defensive fighting is impressive.

Kindness: Summary

What we see in the record, then, is that there is more to the issue of “kindness” than we might often think. The topic cannot be approached simplistically; if it is, we can find the Lord’s own behavior subject to complaint, which would be absurd. In the end, for those who are defending themselves against attack, the question is what acts of kindness are available to them in that position. Conducting oneself as generously as the dangerous circumstances allow and fighting only defensively would seem to be about all that can be done: aggressors themselves preclude any other conceivable acts of kindness. It is significant, therefore, that acting generously and only in defense is exactly what Moroni did, impressively and repeatedly.³⁸

“Humility”

Consider next the opinion that Captain Moroni lacked humility. Hardy does not provide any evidence for this claim, but it does seem to follow from other remarks he makes about Moroni (which are listed in the opening paragraph herein). However, as shown in this paper and elsewhere, these negative descriptions of Moroni’s character are inaccurate. Moroni did not slaughter his political opponents; the text actually presents him as a devoutly religious man; and he was certainly, just as Mormon claimed, comparable to the sons of Mosiah in spiritual matters.³⁹ In addition, he was not at all “hasty” in his suspicions about treasonous activity in the government at the time he wrote his famous epistle recorded in Alma 60 (to which Pahoran responded in Alma 61) and, in fact, had explicit revelation that turned out to be accurate.⁴⁰ Moreover, rather than being “hot-blooded” or “aggressive,” he fought strictly in defense of Nephite lives and Nephite society and was also surprisingly generous toward his

38. Someone could argue that the harm received by the wicked is a *form* of kindness to them — i.e., an act of generosity toward the wicked when the Lord destroys them in their wickedness. To the degree such an argument might succeed, however, it would seem to include Captain Moroni’s actions as well. In whatever sense the Lord’s actions toward the wicked in general are kind, Moroni’s actions toward aggressors specifically would appear to be kind as well. At least — given all that we have seen about Moroni — it would take a strong argument to show that this was not the case.

39. See Boyce, “Beloved by All the People,” 181–95.

40. See Boyce, “Captain Moroni’s Revelation,” 155–59.

attackers.⁴¹ He also fought only because the Lord explicitly commanded him to do so,⁴² spoke bluntly only to those who should have been spoken to bluntly,⁴³ and cannot in fact be described as having a quick temper.⁴⁴

When we look closely, then, the text does not show any of Hardy's negative descriptions of Moroni to be accurate. To the degree we deny Moroni's humility based on these types of claims, therefore, we are simply mistaken.

Another reason some may fail to see humility in Moroni could be due to the common misunderstanding that humility requires being timid, passive, and "soft," in contrast to the dynamic, confident, and bold traits seen in many great leaders. Christ, however, gives us the ultimate example of dynamic, confident, and bold leadership adorned with ultimate humility — the humility to subject himself to the will of the Father in all things, to seek others' pleasure and welfare rather than his own, and to give all that he had in the faithful service of others. Moroni, like all mortals, must pale in comparison to the Savior. Despite his mortal flaws, however, we should still be able to recognize the appropriate humility that accompanied his confidence, his passion, and his successful leadership.

Powerful military leaders without humility have a tendency to amass greater power, often seeking to rule as a king. In contrast, Moroni above all sought to serve God in protecting his people rather than compelling them to serve him.⁴⁵

Humility vs. "Softness"

As generally conceived in the scriptures, humility seems to be a state of meek submissiveness toward the Lord and of unpretentiousness

41. See the earlier sections, "Moroni's Generosity of Spirit" and "Moroni's Restriction to Defensive War." I cover these dimensions of Captain Moroni's conduct further in "Captain Moroni and the Sermon on the Mount."

42. See Boyce, "Beloved by All the People," 191–93. Note, for example, that: (1) the Lord told the Nephites that "inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense, neither the second, ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies" and also that "ye shall defend your families even unto bloodshed" (Alma 43:46–47); (2) Captain Moroni explained that because of God's commandments he took up the sword to defend the cause of his country (Alma 60:28, 34); (3) he explained that resisting Lamanite invasion was "the cause of our God" (Alma 54:10); and (4) he went to battle against traitors in the government because the Lord instructed him to do so (Alma 60:33).

43. Boyce, "Beloved by All the People," 196–98.

44. Ibid., 198–200.

45. This feature of Captain Moroni's leadership is covered fully in "Beloved by All the People," particularly in the section "Captain Moroni's Similarity to the Sons of Mosiah."

toward others. The concept indicates an absence of rebellion or willfulness toward God and an absence of self-importance or conceit regarding other people. Once we think of humility this way, it is easy to see that Moroni did not lack this virtue. He certainly called out the wickedness of Amalickiah and Ammoron (Alma 54–55), but not out of conceit or self-importance. He contrasted their conduct with God’s commandments and with Nephite motives generally, but not with himself personally. The same was true regarding the king-men and later, the treasonous Nephite governors (Alma 51, 60). He excoriated them but not with condescension. Rather, he recognized the dire threat they posed to Nephite lives. Though certainly not gentle or “soft” conduct, none of this suggests pride or self-importance on the part of Moroni.

If humility, then, is an inner condition, it also seems clear that Moroni did not lack humility toward the Lord. The reality after all is that the Lord does not always *will* soft behavior, which means that following him will not always *result* in soft behavior. The Lord instructed Moroni to go to battle against the treasonous Nephite governors, for example (Alma 60:33), an instruction that simply instantiated the general command he gave the Nephites to defend themselves (Alma 43:46–47). Such defense was a pattern followed by a long line of Nephite prophets and leaders over centuries.⁴⁶

To the degree we think that Moroni’s lack of “softness” indicated a lack of humility, then, we are in error. The determined actions he took to defend Nephite lives were both required by the circumstances and commanded by the Lord. He did not behave “softly” because what the Lord instructed was not “soft.” Indeed, in these circumstances, soft action would actually have been an act of rebellion against the Lord, not an act of humble submissiveness toward him. Moroni’s lack of softness, like his abundance of faith and confidence and his dynamic leadership skills, do not conflict with humility, but are adorned with it.

Comparison with King Benjamin

It might help to think about the difference between humility and mere “softness” by remembering what the record tells us about King Benjamin. He famously taught about humility and serving others in the Book of Mosiah. However, less-discussed is the extent to which he waged war prior to this time. The record tells us that “armies of the Lamanites”

46. The list includes Nephi, King Benjamin, Alma, Helaman, Lachoneus, Gidgiddoni, Mormon, and Moroni — all of whom fought in defense and all of whom are depicted in the text as significant spiritual figures.

came against King Benjamin's people and that King Benjamin therefore "gathered together his armies," fought "with the strength of his own arm," contended "in the strength of the Lord," slew with his army "many thousands of the Lamanites," and contended against the invading armies until they had "driven them out of all the lands of their inheritance" (Words of Mormon 1:13–14). Around the time of these wars, Mormon describes King Benjamin as reigning over his people "in righteousness," indeed, as a "holy man" (Words of Mormon 1:17).

King Benjamin was clearly a man of holiness when he taught his people, a circumstance in which he was manifestly gentle in manner. But King Benjamin was also a man of holiness when he led his people in war to defend themselves, a time in which he was manifestly *not* gentle in manner. Each situation required a meek surrender of himself to the Lord and to the needs of the moment, but this submissiveness manifested itself in radically different ways: gentle speech in one case, and killing Lamanite aggressors in the other.

Appreciating the full scope of King Benjamin's life reinforces the view of humility as an inner condition. If we think that humility equates to mere gentleness in outward behavior, then we would not assign that descriptor to the King who fought against the Lamanites, even though the text describes him this way. Reconciling this about King Benjamin reinforces our understanding of Captain Moroni.

With this in mind, it should be remembered that Moroni was as gentle as circumstances allowed. We have seen that he showed a surprising generosity toward those who were attacking him and his people and that he also fought only in defense. For a man routinely forced into war, this is impressive; it is hard to see how anyone could ask for anything more.

Captain Moroni and Helaman

After observing that Moroni lacks the typical religious virtues (specifically, those I have addressed above), Hardy remarks that Mormon gives his readers "a counterexample of a very different kind of military leader" — namely, Helaman, who was high priest over the Church and who also served in combat.⁴⁷ In drawing a distinction between Moroni and Helaman, Hardy observes that in the early years of the conflict, Helaman did his part to help the Nephite cause by preaching, and he describes Helaman as someone who, unlike Moroni, "boasts no particular martial skills or background" and apparently knew "next to nothing about warfare" at the

47. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 177.

time he began leading the Ammonites' sons.⁴⁸ Hardy says that we thus see "a contrast between ordinary success — the result of diligent effort and personal skills [i.e., in the case of Moroni] — and the sort of miraculous accomplishments that can occur when humble people put their trust in God [i.e., in the case of Helaman]."⁴⁹ Indeed, Hardy reports that Mormon writes of Moroni in "secular" terms, crediting whatever success he had to Moroni's "skills as a general."⁵⁰ Hardy thus states that Moroni and Helaman represent "a contrast between these two modes of existence,"⁵¹ emphasizing that in Helaman's case, unlike Moroni's, we see that "success comes from God's intervention rather than his own expertise."⁵²

According to Hardy, then, Helaman is a counterexample to Captain Moroni because we see in him the religious virtues we do not see in Moroni. Helaman, in Hardy's view, was a novice in battle, one who initially helped by preaching, and whose success came despite his inexperience and because of his humility and trust in God. Contrasted with Moroni, Helaman's success was due to God's intervention whereas Moroni succeeded due to his own expertise.

It is not hard to see why this kind of contrast might appear reasonable on the surface. Once we read more carefully, however, the distinction evaporates. It is a false contrast.

Why the Contrast is a Mistake

We have already seen, for example, that Moroni's reliance on the Lord was equal in every way to Helaman's. It is true that Helaman, who had a specific responsibility to teach the gospel, preached to the Nephites as they were preparing for defense. But this was also true of Moroni. As we saw in an earlier section,⁵³ Moroni's very first act of defense was to prepare the people to be faithful to the Lord. And he did this even though *his* specific responsibility, as general of all the armies, was the military defense of his people. Yet his devotion to God came first.

It is also true that Helaman ascribed the success of his efforts to the Lord. He speaks in one place of "the goodness of God in preserving us" (Alma 57:36) and repeatedly expresses the central role of the Lord's help in the Nephites' defense (Alma 58:10–11, 33, 37). But Moroni, too,

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., 178.

50. Ibid., 177.

51. Ibid., 179.

52. Ibid., 177.

53. See the section, "Reliance on the Lord."

repeatedly ascribes NepHITE success to the Lord and expresses exactly the same kind of reliance on him.⁵⁴

Hardy also proposes that Mormon is drawn to Moroni's achievements — "lavishing" fourteen chapters on his career — because he wants to ensure that his readers do not quickly dismiss "Moroni's very human strivings," and he refers to Mormon's plaintive wish, "*if only everyone could be like Moroni*" (emphasis in original).⁵⁵ But Mormon's wish actually has nothing to do with Moroni's "very human" strivings; they specifically refer to his *spiritual* strivings — strivings catalogued by Mormon (Alma 48:11–19) throughout his report of Moroni's wartime efforts.⁵⁶ It is simply a mistake to say that Mormon writes of Moroni in secular terms; Moroni's spiritual devotion and reliance on the Lord show clearly throughout Mormon's text.

It is also hard to justify the assertion that Helaman's success came "from God's intervention rather than his own expertise."⁵⁷ Over the course of three chapters, one hundred and two verses are devoted to the numerous preparations and counter-preparations, moves and countermoves of Helaman's battles against the Lamanites.⁵⁸ The account is rich in intrigue and military strategy and demonstrates in detail that God did not simply hand victory to Helaman. He and his military cohorts appear to have relied every bit as much on "personal skills" and "expertise" as did Moroni. In the end, of course, Helaman knew success was due to the Lord's help, and this is what Hardy emphasizes. What he does not emphasize is that Moroni knew this of the Nephites' success as well.⁵⁹

In trying to contrast Moroni's expertise with what he (mistakenly) thinks is Helaman's more direct reliance on God, Hardy also appears to overstate Helaman's amateur status. It is true that we do not see Helaman involved in war before he takes leadership of the Ammonites' sons, but Hardy is too quick to conclude that this means he "knew next to nothing about warfare." We have just seen, for example, that the text records in detail various strategic moves and countermoves that involved Helaman; he does not seem like a novice in these exploits. Additionally, Helaman's father had been high priest over the Church before him and was active

54. Ibid.

55. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 178.

56. See again the section, "Reliance on the Lord." For additional information, see the section "Captain Moroni's Spiritual Character" in Boyce, "Beloved by All the People," 184–89.

57. See Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 177.

58. Alma 56:21–57; 57:1–36; and 58:1–29.

59. See the earlier section, "Reliance on the Lord."

in military leadership and war with the Lamanites (e.g., Alma 2); such involvement was far from unprecedented. More importantly, however, following the very first battle with his stripling soldiers, Helaman tells Moroni that “never had I seen so great courage, nay, amongst all the Nephites” (Alma 56:45), a report that suggests prior experience with military action that would allow him to make such a comparison. The record also shows Helaman giving battle instructions to other military leaders (Alma 58:16) and exchanging personal epistles with Ammoron, the highest authority in the Lamanite army (Alma 57:1–21). Neither action seems likely if Helaman were as new to military matters as Hardy assumes.

It is also noteworthy that the great majority of Helaman’s references to trust in God, devotion, and God’s deliverance occur when he is talking specifically about the Ammonites’ sons — his “stripling” soldiers. Hardy refers to such instances to show that Helaman, unlike Moroni, put more trust in God than in his own skill.⁶⁰ But this is an inapt comparison. While Helaman’s soldiers may have had greater faith than other soldiers, it does not follow that the same held true for Helaman and Moroni. If these young warriors had been part of Moroni’s army, their faith and devotion would have been exactly the same. Yet, if we used Hardy’s logic, we would then find ourselves appealing to Moroni’s reports of their trust in God to show that Moroni was more spiritually reliant than Helaman.

The reality is that the devotion and faith of the Ammonites’ sons was unrelated to either Helaman or Moroni’s faith and devotion, and thus offers no basis for comparison between them.

Captain Moroni and Helaman: Summary

What we see in the end is that the supposed distinction between Helaman and Moroni does not exist. Moroni possessed and displayed the very virtues that Hardy claims he lacked. Additionally, while Hardy claims that Helaman was more reliant on God than Moroni, we have seen that to be false as well. In terms of spiritual devotion, trust in God, and the need for military strategy and skill, Helaman was not a “counterexample” to Moroni; he appears instead to be what he himself said — Moroni’s “brother,” both in “warfare” and in “the Lord” (Alma 56:2).

60. Hardy refers to the Ammonite sons’ faith (Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 177, 178), their fighting with miraculous strength (177), their preservation from death (177–78), and their prayers and trust in the Lord (178).

Conclusion

A general reading of the text might seem to suggest that Captain Moroni lacked self-sacrifice, reliance on the Lord, kindness, humility, and that he served as a contrast to Helaman. When we read with a higher degree of resolution, however, the record paints a very different picture. Not only are self-sacrifice and reliance on the Lord evident in Moroni's life, but so are kindness and humility once we think about these qualities with some care. While it might seem at first glance that Moroni lacked the typical religious virtues, closer consideration suggests he was impressive in his possession of them.

The same point can be made regarding Moroni and Helaman. While it might be thought they were dissimilar — that Helaman serves as a counterexample to Moroni's military leadership — closer reading demonstrates them to have been very much alike. Indeed, it turns out that comparing these two figures on spiritual grounds does not diminish Moroni. Rather, the comparison serves only to reveal Moroni to us more clearly — and, seeing him more clearly, the light we discern in the life and devotion of this man of God does not dim but brightens.

Duane Boyce earned a PhD at BYU and conducted his postdoctoral study in developmental psychology at Harvard University. He is a founding partner of the Arbing Institute, a worldwide management consulting and educational firm, and is the author or co-author of five books (a sixth to appear in 2021). He has also published academic articles on gospel topics in *BYU Studies Quarterly*, *Interpreter*, *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture*, *The Religious Educator*, and *The FARMS Review*. Among other callings, he has served as a bishop and a stake president and, with his wife, in the Russia Moscow Mission.

REMEMBERING HUGH NIBLEY AS A SCHOLAR AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, AS A MAN: *OBSERVING THE FAITH OF THE OBSERVER*

David Rolph Seely

Review of *Hugh Nibley Observed*, edited by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Shirley Ricks, and Stephen Whitlock (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation, 2021). 820 pages. \$45.00 (hardback), \$35.00 (paperback).

Abstract: *Those who knew Brother Nibley best knew he was a remarkable man of both depth and breadth. This new volume plumbs both that depth and breadth in the recounting of personal stories and colorful history. This volume is a welcome addition to any library.*

I knew Hugh Nibley from 1976, when I took my first class with him, until his death in 2005. As my teacher and as a scholar, he had a great impact on my intellectual and spiritual life as a student at BYU. Through the years, the example of Hugh Nibley as a man has continued to inform my life. For this reason, this book is important to me.

As a tribute to Hugh Nibley, the editors of this volume have collected forty essays written by Nibley's family, his peers and colleagues, and his students and friends. The title of the book is a play on the title of Nibley's autobiographical film entitled *The Faith of an Observer: Conversations with Hugh Nibley*. The stated purpose of this volume is to explore and celebrate the extraordinary life and career through "a kaleidoscope of portraits, perspectives, and memories from family, friends, and colleagues — observers, as it were, of a preeminent observer" (xv). This volume is a valuable and welcome complement to two biographies previously written: *Hugh Nibley: A Consecrated Life*, by Boyd Peterson and *Sergeant Nibley, PhD: Memories of an Unlikely Screaming Eagle*, by Alex Nibley. A few of these pieces have been published elsewhere, but the great majority are new. There are more than two hundred photos

throughout the volume, many from the Nibley family, that help to illuminate the life and work of Hugh Nibley.

Having perused the whole of the book and read many of the essays, let me give an initial personal impression. Many years ago, while I was a BYU student, a couple of my friends and I, like many others, would try to attend every Nibley class offered on campus. We were smart enough not to take these classes for credit until we had sat through them several times because Nibley's tests and grading could be brutal. I remember an exam of about 150 points, and the highest score in the class was somewhere around 30 points. Nibley's religion classes weren't made to build your self-esteem. But we simply could not get enough of Hugh Nibley.

One day we heard that Brother Nibley taught Gospel Doctrine in his home ward, so we determined that we would start attending his Sunday classes as well. I clearly remember attending the first Sunday School class. One of the things that we had noticed in his classes was that he often would teach about whatever topic he happened to be publishing on at the time — especially the Book of Mormon, the Book of Moses, or the Book of Abraham. It didn't matter what the Sunday School class was supposed to be about; he would simply begin by presenting and discussing his current topic of interest. One of the odd things about his BYU classes was that the final class at the end of the week never quite dovetailed with what he would start talking about on Monday morning. When we started attending his Sunday classes, we made a startling discovery that explained the situation. In his Sunday School class, he would just continue the discussion he had been conducting at the end of the school week on Friday. Then, sure enough, on Monday in his BYU class he would pick up where he left off in his Sunday lesson. So, from that time on we realized that to get the full value of the Nibley experience, we would need to attend his Sunday lectures as well.

As I read through the essays in *Hugh Nibley Observed* I had a similar feeling. I am familiar with a lot of aspects of Nibley's life and work, but many of the pieces in this volume fill in the gaps outside the *public* Nibley that could be followed on Monday through Friday. But of course, he also had a life during the weekend. And often, to understand what Brother Nibley was talking about, it is important to know what happened on the weekend! In this volume we discover the things that can help us connect the disparate things we know about Hugh Nibley into a more complete whole. For example, after I wrote this paragraph as the introduction to this review, imagine my surprise to find an account of this same phenomenon by Richard Holzapfel, one of my friends who

also attended Nibley's classes six days a week (669)! So this volume is a gift not only for those who never experienced Nibley personally but also for people like me, having known him well, who will delight in having some never-before-explained aspects of the mystery and mystique about him revealed to view.

The introductory essays by Jeffrey Bradshaw (1–14) and Stephen Whitlock (15–22), two of the editors of the volume, describe the impact Hugh Nibley and his scholarship has had on their lives. Their sentiments and experiences resonate with many of the other personal tributes in the volume. The collection is organized in four parts.

Part One: Portraits presents a broad biographical overview of Nibley and includes an essay by John W. Welch and an essay by artist Rebecca Fehser Everett about her painted portrait of Nibley. John Welch's essay, "Doorkeeper in the House of the Lord" — a verse from Psalm 84:10 and the epitaph on Nibley's gravestone — presents Nibley as a scholar who never aspired to publicity but sought to be a faithful servant. It is the tribute prepared for Nibley's 75th birthday celebration and reprinted from a festschrift prepared in his honor. It presents a nice overview and summary of Nibley's life and scholarship.

Also included in the *Portraits* section of the book is Nibley's own intellectual autobiography, which was originally published in the volume of Nibley essays *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless* (1978). For the first time, this essay is accompanied with photos that illustrate aspects of Nibley's life that are vividly described in the text. His unique, intelligent, witty, and very personal writing voice is marvelously featured in this gem of an essay.

For us as Nibley's students, this essay — along with his extended videotaped interview *Faith of An Observer* — provided the first real personal glimpse we ever got of Nibley the man. We were delighted to know there was a real human being behind the fast-talking, elusive professor we faced in our classes.

Often Brother Nibley was so preoccupied with his research that he could seem dismissive of students. The first time I went to his office to meet him, he purposely ignored me and sent me to the secretary to get a mimeographed copy of his essay "Zeal Without Knowledge," and she promptly sent me on my way. I respected his desire for privacy and respite from interruptions to his overwhelming workload, but I always wondered what he was really like. My roommate saw Nibley in the library one day in the stacks; a young woman, one of Nibley's students, shyly and apprehensively approached him and meekly said, "Hi, Professor Nibley. I am in your class and I am working on a paper on the *Pistis Sophia*. I am

wondering if you could give me some advice on my research and my paper.” “Oh, yes,” Nibley said, “I do have some advice. Do a good job.” And with that he was gone. With Nibley’s autobiographical essay and interview, we at last got some insight into the background of Nibley’s origins, his personal and academic life, and some hint of the great events of his life, including his mission and his experiences in the war. Throughout his classes he would tell of incidents and anecdotes from his life, and at last we had a framework to fit it all in. Remember, there was no Internet — we depended on the printed and videotaped words!

Part Two: Nibley, the Scholar provides revised and enlarged versions of thirteen presentations given as part of a Maxwell Institute Lecture Series organized for the centennial of Nibley’s birth. These previously unpublished essays give an assessment of Nibley’s scholarly work as it relates to various aspects of Latter-day Saint and secular scholarship. These include biographical topics such as Nibley’s early education, Nibley in graduate school, and evaluations of Nibley’s scholarship in terms of Joseph Smith, the Church, the environment, the Bible, classical scholarship, the Book of Mormon, as a mentor to the Saints, and Egyptology. Each essay broadly assesses Nibley’s scholarly work and his contributions in these various areas.

The essay by Nibley’s daughter Zina, “Nibley’s Early Education” (57–76) and the essay by his son Alex, “Graduate School through BYU” (77–98) are two of the best. In general, the contributions from Nibley’s family — those who knew him the best — are often the most honest and informative. They are full of stories and anecdotes, some of which are not found in earlier published biographies. Zina describes, for example, young Hugh being delivered to his kindergarten on a horse-drawn milk cart and running home from the principal on the first day. She tells of how, after his IQ test, one of his teachers said to him if he were to go to sleep in school and not wake up for nine years he would still be ahead of his class (60–61). She also describes in some detail the challenges in the family dynamics dealing with the prodigious and favored Hugh. She recounts Nibley’s mission preparation and experiences in Germany just before World War II. Zina concludes her essay assessing Hugh’s brilliant mind and intellectual accomplishments in his early education as follows: “Ultimately, though, his mind was uniquely keen, sharp, jam-packed, elegantly equipped, and indisputably well-trained. It was Hugh Nibley’s heart that made the difference. And it was a very good heart” (74).

In his essay “Graduate School Through BYU” (77–98), Alex recounts much of the story of Hugh Nibley’s involvement in World War II, which

Alex covered in fascinating detail within his book *Sergeant Nibley, PhD: Memories of an Unlikely Screaming Eagle*. In addition to his interviews featured in part within *Faith of an Observer*, Alex spent countless hours conversing with his father about the war. In this essay he gives us stories that did not appear in his longer book. In short, Alex seeks to understand the role Nibley's participation in the war played in shaping the life of his father and how in the end Hugh Nibley became a pacifist. The narrative he presents and the stories he tells are remarkable.

Eight additional essays discuss further aspects of Hugh Nibley's scholarship, including Truman Madsen, "A Prodigy, an Enigma, and a Symbol" (387–400); Robert K. Thomas, "The Influence of Hugh Nibley: His Presence in the University" (401–406); Gary Gillum, "Hugh Nibley: Scholar of the Spirit, Missionary of the Mind" (407–22); Gordon Thomasson, "Matthew Black and Mircea Eliade Meet Hugh Nibley" (423–32); John Welch, "Hugh Nibley and the Book of Mormon" (433–50); Shirley Ricks, "Editing Hugh Nibley: The Man and His Legacy" (451–96); John Gee, "'A Stranger in a Strange Land': Hugh Nibley as an Egyptologist" (497–522); and William Hamblin, "Joseph or Jung?" (523–44).

Of these essays one of particular interest is by Shirley Ricks, "Editing Hugh Nibley." As an editor intimately familiar with his writing practices, Ricks gives a comprehensive assessment of Nibley's publications, including the reliability of his footnotes. Ricks reviews the importance of footnotes and the responsibilities of scholars and editors to be accurate. She reviews both her own experiences and the experiences of several of the source checkers of Nibley's footnotes through the decades. She concludes that while there is some truth to the accusation that Nibley's footnotes were sometimes sloppy, botched, or incomplete, there is plenty of data demonstrating that he did not misrepresent or fabricate them. Further, she addresses many of the specific critiques leveled at Nibley's footnotes and responds to each of these critiques with a persuasive defense of the integrity of Nibley's scholarship. She then reviews the many Nibley quotes through the years illustrating that he realized his scholarship, like all scholarship, was tentative and part of a developing conversation in search of the truth. This valuable article is a must-read for anyone who has experience dealing with Nibley's footnotes and for those who have heard the criticisms. She concludes her article with a review of the story of her involvement in each of the volumes of the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, which she edited and produced, often in direct collaboration with Hugh Nibley.

Part Three: Nibley, the Man is a collection of pieces that provide personal insights into Hugh's life and character. Here we are treated to never-before-published tributes presented at his funeral by his children as well as the funeral addresses of John W. Welch and President Dallin H. Oaks. Tributes and reminiscences round out the collection in this section. For me, this was the most enjoyable portion of the book. As I get older, I find I enjoy learning more from Nibley the man than Nibley the scholar.

The tributes given at his funeral by his children, accompanied by family photos, were a particular highlight. I was present at his funeral service. I was amazed at the distinct and diverse gifts and personalities of the Nibley children and how accomplished and brilliant they were in their individual spheres. They were, in many ways, both like their father and unlike him. My grandmother, Blanche Ellsworth Payne, was the wife of a bishop and a stake president in Seattle (Wilford Payne) and often had the chance to host visiting church authorities and speakers. She loved Brother Nibley, and she recorded in her memoirs a visit he made to her home when he came to present, as part of the Church-sponsored "Know Your Religion" series, classes that traveled to different parts of North America for many years. Here is what she recorded in her journal:

I was amazed at his teaching of his children. Never a minute without a teaching experience. On the drive from Utah, he taught them Spanish. Every day he gave them an assignment. At night, he told them stories from the Masters. They could quote Shakespeare, Chaucer, Tennyson and knew all the classics, operas, etc. Several times when we drove out, he never lost an opportunity to teach basic word spelling and meaning.¹

These words rang in my ears as I heard Nibley's children speak at his funeral. I was thrilled when Rebecca quoted from Shakespeare (555) and Christina from Rossetti (554). Michael quoted from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (561), and Zina quoted from Dylan Thomas (551–52). I particularly loved it when Alex said about his father:

We often disagreed, and he encouraged that. I disagreed with him because he raised me to. He loved to quote Isaiah: "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 1:18). We came much closer through our disagreements, and all

1. Blanche Ellsworth Payne, "Rocking Chair Memories: 1976–1986" (unpublished manuscript), 45–46. Copy in possession of author.

the really close friends of his life were people with whom he heartily and often disagreed. (557)

It is fun and instructive to read through the reminiscences of those who knew him. As time passes, the number of those who knew Brother Nibley personally grows smaller, and these written recollections are welcome. Many of these recollections resonate with the memories of we who also knew him. I empathized when John Welch quoted Robert K. Thomas, “Few students can talk coherently about their first class from Brother Nibley” (585), which perfectly captures our first experiences in his classroom.

As I read through the essays, I realized that some of them provide a larger perspective on Nibley than I experienced in my own sphere at BYU. For example, Louis Midgley describes his long relationship with Nibley through the years beginning in 1948. Midgley is especially interested in how Nibley interacted with the growing number of scholars and intellectuals both within and out of the Church who were challenging the traditional claims of the Restoration — including people like Sterling McMurrin and Fawn Brodie. Midgley also recollects Nibley’s interaction with prominent non-LDS scholars who came to speak at BYU — people like David Riesman (*The Lonely Crowd*), William Barrett (*Irrational Man: A Study in Existentialist Philosophy*), and Jacob Neusner (perhaps the most widely published Jewish scholar in history). These were the people writing the textbooks we were studying in our college classes. Nibley meaningfully interacted with scholars from a surprising variety of disciplines.

Within the pages of *Hugh Nibley Observed* are recorded many of the impressions of these scholars. For example, while not agreeing with Nibley on some things, Neusner acknowledges that “he struck me as a first-rate intellect” (450n35). After hearing Nibley lecture without notes and spontaneously quote thirty lines of a Greek poet from memory in a Biblical Society meeting, Jesuit George MacRae put his hands over his face and said, “It is obscene for a man to know that much” (389). On the other hand, Nibley himself was wont to say when he took part in such discussions, “None of us has any business being here. We don’t know enough” (391).

The essay “The BYU Folklore of Hugh W. Nibley,” by Jane Brady (631–96), is an invaluable collection of the many stories we passed around as students at BYU. Many of the stories told about Nibley, such as the story of his courtship and marriage, seem like folklore but in fact were very close to the truth. Many of us had personally experienced Nibley stories that would have seemed almost like folklore had we not witnessed

them ourselves. I think almost anyone will find a story in Brady's rich chapter that they haven't heard before.

The essays of reminiscences from his peers and students do remind me of the Nibley I knew.

This is a massive and delightful volume with many insights about Hugh Nibley the scholar and the man. It contains many valuable assessments of Nibley's contributions and looks in retrospect at the value and lasting significance of his scholarship. Even for someone who closely followed Nibley's life and scholarly writings, this book includes many precious observations, anecdotes, and evaluations that will give added insight into this remarkable person.

I should also mention that as a substantive supplement to the volume, the editors and their associates at the Interpreter Foundation, Book of Mormon Central, FAIR, and *Meridian Magazine* have been ambitiously posting weekly blog posts, video interviews, short videos, podcasts, and essays on different aspects of Nibley's life and work for nearly two months so far. The editors promise to make the most complete bibliography ever of Nibley's published and unpublished works available online in the near future as a joint project between the Interpreter Foundation and Book of Mormon Central. The Nibley Online Bibliography will be complete with downloadable documents, video, and audio versions. A higher-quality video version of *Faith of an Observer*, posted with subtitles that make some of Nibley's onscreen mumbles intelligible for the first time, is embedded within the first one of the blog post series.²

My final and lasting memory of Hugh Nibley was a chance to visit him in 2004 with a group of friends. We sang Happy Birthday to him on his 94th birthday. In fact, because Gary Gillum kept a journal, this event is recorded in the book on page 748. We had a grand time meeting briefly with him, while singing and sharing treats. Brother Nibley was confined to his bed — a sad thing for me to see since I was used to seeing him constantly in motion. He noted his lost ability to move as he would like. Then he said something like the following with a smile, "I can't wait to get to the other side! There we will be made whole, and we can continue to learn and grow and everything will become clear to us. I can hardly wait." More and more each day, I take comfort in his cheerful countenance in the face of the debilitating effects of old age. I'm

2. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, "Who Was Hugh Nibley?: Announcing a New, Landmark Book, 'Hugh Nibley Observed,'" *The Interpreter Foundation Blog* (April 1, 2021), <https://interpreterfoundation.org/blog-hugh-nibley-observed-1/>.

inspired by his faith in the reality of the afterlife and the renewal and joy he expected to find there. In their funeral tributes, several of his children talked about Hugh Nibley's last couple of years and his eagerness to continue his life on the other side. His daughter Zina recounted, "As he told my niece more than two years ago, 'Every night I go to bed thinking, 'This could be it! This could be the night. Tonight could be the night.' And every morning I wake up and think, 'Damn.' I think last Thursday [the day he passed away,] he woke up and said, 'Yeehaw!'" (549).

As I read through this book, I concur with John Welch when he said, "I feel like shouting hallelujah all the time when I think that I was so fortunate to ever know Hugh Nibley" (585).

David R. Seely is a professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University. He received his undergraduate and Masters degree at BYU in ancient Greek and Classics and his PhD from the University of Michigan in Near Eastern studies. Together with Professor Moshe Weinfeld, he published the *Barkhi Nafshi* hymns from Qumran in the Oxford series *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* and he co-authored with William Hamblin the book *Solomon's Temple in Myth and History*, and with Richard Holzapfel and Dana Pike *Jehovah and the World of the Old Testament*. In addition, he co-edited with John W. Welch and Jo Ann H. Seely the volume *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*.

FROM DUST TO EXALTED CROWN: ROYAL AND TEMPLE THEMES COMMON TO THE PSALMS AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

David J. Larsen

Abstract: *David J. Larsen, after showing how many of the Qumran texts rely on the “Royal Psalms” in the Bible—which have a vital connection to the temple drama—then goes on to exaltation in the views of the Qumran community. He indicates how Adam and Eve are archetypal for Israelite temple ritual, which makes humans kings and priests, bringing the participant into the presence of God by a journey accompanied with covenants, making him part of the Divine Council. Bestowed with knowledge of the divine mysteries, one then becomes a teacher helping others on the way through divine mysteries, who then, as a group are raised to the same end. It is, Larsen shows, a journey where one is dressed in royal and priestly robes and receives a crown of righteousness, in a ritual setting.*

[Editor’s Note: Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.

See David J. Larsen, “From Dust to Exalted Crown: Royal and Temple Themes Common to the Psalms and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Temple Insights: Proceedings of the Interpreter Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference, “The Temple on Mount Zion,” 22 September 2012*, ed. William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 145–156. Further information at [https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/temple-insights/.](https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/temple-insights/)]

For those who are looking, discussion of the temple and temple-related imagery can be found abundantly among the scrolls discovered in the caves of Qumran. In the scrolls, we find a strong focus on the priesthood; there is talk of a purified temple, including the glorious eschatological temple that the community expected would come in the end times; and there is talk of temple worship. There are texts that draw on the ark of the covenant narratives, that mention the Holy of Holies, and that tell of measuring lines and plummets. If we consider the Garden of Eden story to be a temple text, there are a number of scrolls that make references to the Garden setting and to Adam and Eve. In fact, it has become well known that the community at Qumran sought to regain “all the glory of Adam” — that is, they desired to be clothed in God’s glory, as Adam was in the Garden of Eden. The Qumran community believed that they had access to the true temple, which was equated with Eden.¹

While a broad discussion of temple imagery in the Dead Sea Scrolls would be fascinating, space does not permit that. I will focus on a small selection of temple-related themes found in some of the Qumran documents and how the authors of these documents drew on Royal Psalms known from the biblical Psalter to express these themes.

The “Royal Psalms” — including Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144, and possibly others — are thus designated due to their content, which includes mentions of the Israelite monarchy and/or expressions and settings that would have involved the Israelite king. Many of these are psalms that Christians would consider “messianic.” In my research, I have found that many of the poetic writings found at Qumran — including the *Hodayot*, or “Thanksgiving Psalms,” and the many non-canonical psalms — rely heavily on the Royal Psalms for inspiration; that especially applies to Psalms 18 and 89. The content in the Qumran writings that is based on these Royal Psalms relates to, among other things, the exaltation of the speaker of the psalm and/or his community; their participation in the divine council, including communion with angelic beings and visions of Deity; God instructing the leader of the community in the heavenly mysteries, which include God’s primeval victories and the creation of the world; and appointing the leader as a teacher of those mysteries. The revelation of the mysteries, or wonders, of God evokes, in some texts, a reaction of praise — singing or shouting — and is sometimes also connected to the imagery of being clothed in glorious or priestly robes.

Exaltation of Mortal Beings

I'll begin with the idea of the exaltation of mortal beings in the scrolls, which is often expressed in terms of the "lifting up" of the leader and/or group "from dust to the eternal heights." As British scholar Crispin Fletcher-Louis has pointed out, commenting on the corpus of poetic writings known as the "Thanksgiving Psalms" (or in Hebrew, the "*Hodayot*"), "Much of the *Hodayot* is a sustained and extended meditation on the anthropology of Genesis 2:7, where Adam is formed from the dust of the ground."²

He explains that after Adam and Eve are created from the lowly dust of the earth, according to some texts, they are subsequently placed in Eden — elevated to a new, glorious state. Fletcher-Louis asserts that:

... the movement of Adam and (Eve) into Eden becomes a paradigm for entry and full inclusion of the Israelite in the Temple and in the holiness that it gives God's people.³

The way we find this motif expressed in the *Hodayot* is often in the speaker of the hymn, who is depicted as a suffering servant of God, crying out to the Lord from the depths of the underworld, or from the grasp of death, and asking for deliverance. The speaker then praises God for having saved him and raised him up to "the eternal heights" — to the heavenly realm — where he may now mingle with the gods. For example, in *4QHodayot^a* (4QH^a) fragment 7ii, lines 8–9, we read:

(God) lifts up the poor from the dust to [the eternal height], and to the clouds he magnifies him in stature, and (he is) with the heavenly beings in the assembly of the community...

Similarly, in column XI of *1QHodayot^a* (1QH^a) lines 20–24, we read:

I give thanks to You, O Lord, for You have redeemed my soul from the pit. From Sheol and Abaddon *You have raised me up to an eternal height* (לְרוֹם), so that I might walk about on a limitless plain. I know that there is hope for him whom You formed from the dust for the eternal council... that he might take his place with the host of the holy ones and enter into community with the congregation of the children of heaven.

In the Royal Psalms, similar imagery is applied to the figure of the king. In Psalm 2, the king has been placed by God on Mount Zion, God's holy hill; in Psalm 110 the royal figure is given a seat at God's right hand. The language that we see in some of these psalms from the *Hodayot*, however, is alluding directly to Psalm 18. In Psalm 18, the psalmist cries

out to the Lord for deliverance from the “cords of Sheol” and the “snares of death.” The Lord hears his servant’s voice and comes flying out of His temple in fiery indignation to free the suffering servant from his enemies. He reaches down from on high and draws his servant up out of the mighty waters and lifts him to a safe place, exalting him above his adversaries.

The idea of being raised from death or from the dust to an exalted state is not uncommon in biblical texts. In 1 Samuel 2:8, which some scholars recognize as a Royal Psalm, we read, “[God] raises up the poor from the dust ... to make them sit with princes and inherit a throne of glory.”

The election of a ruler from among the common people is repeatedly referred to as raising one “from the dust,” a formula clearly stated in the words of the Lord to King Baasha of Israel in 1 Kings 16:2: “I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel.” Walter Brüeggemann, in his study “From Dust to Kingship,” argues:

To be taken “from the dust” means to be elevated from obscurity to royal office.... Since the royal office depends upon covenant with the appropriate god, to be taken from the dust means to be accepted as a covenant-partner....⁴

In the Qumran texts, therefore, we see the speaker of the hymns, who is likely the leader of the congregation, placing himself in the position of the king from the Royal Psalms. In support of Brüeggemann’s theory, we find in a text called 1QSb, or “Rule of the Blessing,” a figure known as the Prince of the Congregation who is to take part in a great renewal of the covenant and who is blessed to be “lifted to an eternal height.”

The *Hodayot* equates “the eternal heights” with the Divine Council, the Congregation of the Holy Ones. As cited above, lines 21–24 of 1QH^a column XI indicate that when the speaker is exalted, he is permitted to enter the “eternal council” and join “the congregation of the children of heaven.” In a number of texts, the exaltation of the “servant” to the divine council is followed by God teaching him “the covenant” in conjunction with “the divine mysteries.” In 1QH^a column XV, the servant proclaims:

[You] ... have exalted my horn on high, and I shine forth with sevenfold light (lines 26–27).

I thank yo[u, O Lor]d, that you have instructed me in your truth, and made known to me your wondrous mysteries (lines 29–30).

In column XII, we see a similar sequence:

You have made my face to shine by Your covenant (line 5).

I seek You, and as an enduring dawning, as [perfe]ct light, You have revealed Yourself to me” (line 6). “For You have given me understanding of the mysteries of Your wonder (lines 27–28).

In a number of the texts, it is apparent that the knowledge that the servant learns from God in the divine council — the so-called “mysteries of wonder” — is related to God’s great primeval victories, including the crushing of the dragon Rahab, the calming of the waters of Chaos, and the establishment of the earth upon the seas. In essence, the servant is taught, in the congregation of heaven, about God’s work in the Creation of the universe.

I have found this sequence to be a pattern that can be found throughout the corpus of the *Hodayot* and in other non-canonical psalms found at Qumran, including 4Q381, which has been labeled by scholars as a collection of previously unknown Royal Psalms. My research has led me to believe that this pattern is either directly or indirectly based on the traditions found in Psalm 89.

In Psalm 89, verses 3 and 4, God makes His covenant with His chosen servant, David. We are then transported in verse 5 to the “congregation of the holy ones,” where the psalmist witnesses the heavens praising God for His wonders.

In the next verses, God is praised for His greatness and superiority, and then we get a description of those wonders: God stilled the raging sea, broke Rahab in pieces, and scattered all enemies; in verses 11 and 12, we are told about God’s creation of the world.

In the biblical psalm, the segments regarding the election of the king and God’s covenant with him, the praising of God in the divine council, and then the events that follow seem to be disjointed — it is difficult to see how they are related. However, in the Qumran compositions that draw on this psalm, these elements are used more seamlessly to present us with a fuller image of what the author envisions for this heavenly ascent, if we may call it that. But the basic elements are all there in Psalm 89.

In examples such as columns XII and XV of 1QH^a, the text indicates that the individual who is lifted up to heaven and taught the mysteries of creation by God is then appointed to teach others:

You, my God, have appointed me as a holy counsel to the weary... You have [strengthened m]e in your covenant, and

my tongue has become like (the tongues of) those taught by you (XV:13).

Through me you have illumined the faces of many... (XII:28).

The exalted individual learns in a covenant-making setting and then apparently transmits the knowledge in a covenant-making setting as well. In 1QH^a Column XII, the speaker declares that the Lord has illumined His face “for your covenant” (line 6) — strikingly, this illumination apparently occurs in a situation in which the Lord has “appeared” (line 7) to the speaker. Later in the text, the speaker alludes to a group of people who follow him — he proclaims to the Lord that they have “gathered together for your covenant,” and that he has “examined” them (line 25). He then relates:

Those who walk in the way of your heart listen to me; they are drawing themselves up before You in the council of the holy ones.

The outcome of the teacher passing on the mysteries that he has learned in heaven to his followers is that they, as a group, are then able to “draw themselves up” into the presence of God in the divine council. As Samuel Thomas explains, in his monograph on *The “Mysteries” of Qumran*, the members of the mortal community, through their worship service, take part in a “kind of (imagined) temple setting in which the human participants meet the angelic retinue in a mutually transformational worship experience.”⁵

As I indicated previously, there are elements in these texts that indicate that a vision of Deity is the centerpiece of this celestial learning experience. Elliot Wolfson argues that in a number of these texts, “knowledge of divine truth is equated with visually gazing at the glory, which occasions the recitation of God’s mysteries.”⁶ In other words, the revelation of the mysteries occurs in conjunction with a vision of God’s glory.

Similar imagery can be found in Psalm 63:2, where the psalmist says: “Thus I have gazed on you in the sanctuary, seeing your power and your glory.” This leads us back to Psalm 89, where, after the description or revelation of God’s wonders, we now see a group of people in verse 15 who we should understand to be the mortal congregation that are participating, perhaps reacting, here. This verse should probably be translated — as it is in the RSV, NSRV, ESV, and others — as, “Happy are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance.”

I suggest that an appropriate interpretation of this line, in light of the Qumran texts, is that these people are the followers of the individual

who has been exalted, as we can see in verse 17. Because they as followers have now been exalted to the heavenly courts as well, that festal shout that they know to give is the appropriate reaction to the revelation of God's mysteries presented in the preceding verses. This is evidently how the authors of our Qumran texts understood this sequence.

An "apocryphal" psalm known as the "Hymn to the Creator," found on the great Psalms Scroll, 11QPs^a, draws on Psalm 89. The hymn praises Yahweh for His wondrous deeds during the Creation, in much the same way as we find in Psalm 89. After making a clear allusion to the qualities of God's face and His throne as described in Psalm 89:14, the hymn goes on to describe how the angels reacted when they were shown God's wonders in His Creation of the world. The text says, "When all His angels saw, they sang for joy — for He had shown them what they knew not" (XXVI:12). The imagery of the heavenly beings witnessing the Creation and rejoicing in song is found in Job 38:7, where "the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy." I believe that the author of the "Hymn to the Creator," after clearly alluding to Psalm 89:14, meant to equate the motif of the angels singing for joy with verse 15, where the human congregation, who are walking in the light of God's face, know the festal shout and, in verse 16, rejoice in God's name all day long. This juxtapositioning of angels and mortals is common in the texts of the Judean Desert. The hymnist's impetus for making this connection may have been his familiarity with the temple ritual and the tradition of equating the priesthood with the angelic host in his community.

A temple ritual that appears to be related to these motifs is recorded in Sirach 50. This account tells of the high priest, Simon ben Onias, repairing the temple, laying the foundations for the temple walls, and building the walls up. As part of the ritual, Simon emerges from the temple as the embodiment of God's glory and completes the sacrifices. After he pours the wine offering on the altar, the account relates that "Then the sons of Aaron shouted; they blew their trumpets of hammered metal; they sounded a mighty fanfare as a reminder before the Most High." This part of the ritual recalls the feast of the *yom teruah* ("day of shouting/trumpet blasts") mandated in Leviticus 23:24 and Numbers 29:1.⁷

A fragmentary text from 4Q381 15 depicts an image very similar to the overall setting we have been describing. In this text, the Lord's servant praises the Lord for the wonders of creation, following the pattern of Psalm 89, and then relates that he understands this knowledge because God has instructed him. There are some gaps in the scroll in the

next lines, but we then see the voice becoming plural, just as it does in Psalm 89. The group sings: “For we will call on your name, my God, and for your salvation” — paralleling the festal shout and rejoicing — and then in the next line, after a few missing words, the text says: “and like a robe, they will put it on, and a covering...” We don’t get any more of the text after that, so it’s hard to tell exactly what it is that the people are putting on. The reference in line 9 to “salvation” in proximity to the clothing language is reminiscent of Isaiah 61:10:

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Jubilees 16:30 indicates that the Israelites, as part of the ritual of the pilgrim feast of Tabernacles, set a wreath or crown on their heads (see Prov. 4:9; Ps. 118:27). This festal investiture imagery can be found in later Jewish and Christian writings concerning the last days; for example, in 4 Esdras 2:38–46, Ezra describes those participating in the eschatological feast:

Those who have departed from the shadow of this age have received glorious garments from the Lord. Take again your full number, O Zion, and close the list of your people who are clothed in white, who have fulfilled the law of the Lord (4 Esdras 2:39–40).

Ezra then sees that the “Son of God” places crowns on these individuals, and he asks his angel-guide about them:

Then I asked an angel, “Who are these, my lord?” He answered and said to me, “These are they who have put off mortal clothing and have put on the immortal, and have confessed the name of God. Now they are being crowned, and receive palms” (4 Esdras 2:44.45; cf. Revelation 4:4, 10; 7:9).

The traditions of the saved being dressed in glorious robes and receiving crowns as well as those regarding the priestly investiture perhaps derive from the priestly role of the Davidic kings. Deborah Rooke notes the parallels between the use of the breast piece, turban, and diadem by both the high priest and the king.⁸ King David, as he led a priestly procession of the ark of the covenant, was dressed in “fine linen robes” and “a linen ephod” (1 Chr. 15:27; see also 2 Sam. 6:14). There is

likely also a parallel between the marriage imagery in Isaiah 61:10 and the royal marriage in Psalm 45, where the king and his bride are dressed in glorious and elaborate vestments.

Returning to the Dead Sea Scrolls, there is a series of texts that arguably place the elements of this scenario into a liturgical performance. These are the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, otherwise known as the Angelic Liturgy. Although the texts are highly fragmentary and their nature and use have been the source of endless debate, some scholars have described the series of hymns as a “conductor’s score” for a ritualized ascent to heaven, where the human participants, the community’s priesthood, engage in a weekly ritual, a “cultic drama” “which led its participants into and through the [heavenly] temple.”⁹

The songs, led by an instructor known as the *maskil*, guide the participants through the various levels of heaven, where they witness and learn the songs of angelic praise to the Almighty. Samuel Thomas argues that as they progress through the heavenly realms, the human “priests themselves are gradually initiated into the divine presence” and gain divine knowledge “through ritual transformation.”¹⁰ Judith Newman describes the eighth Sabbath Song as presenting a setting “in which the divine King and Creator is made manifest in the throne room of the Temple.”¹¹ The thirteenth song, which some contend is the climax of the liturgy, is concerned with a discussion of heavenly robes and regalia, which clearly resemble the priestly garments created for Aaron in Exodus 28. Regarding this segment, Newman comments that at this point, “the angel-like priests with the *maskil* at their head [are] fully vested and equipped for their oracular performance.”¹² What appears to have occurred in this heavenly liturgy is that the human priests, led by their *maskil*, have received the revelation of the mysteries of God, have been transformed into angelic messengers, are clothed with glory and authority, and are now prepared to share the revelation with others.

To restate this scenario that we have pieced together from these texts:

1. An individual, likely the leader of the community or congregation, is delivered by God and lifted up to stand in the divine council.
2. In this heavenly setting, the exalted man is taught the mysteries of wonder, which include the story of God’s primeval victories and his creation of the world — this instruction is apparently given by God Himself and some texts state that the individual has gazed upon God, or God’s glory, or that God has appeared to him.

3. The individual is appointed to teach the mysteries to his community or congregation.
4. Those who receive his teachings are likewise elevated to heaven and participate in the heavenly vision and praise God with the angelic beings.
5. When the group (probably both mortals and angels) witnesses the revelation of the wonderful deeds of God in the creation, they shout or sing for joy and engage in praising God.
6. They are clothed in heavenly robes of righteousness.

Notes

1. Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 107-08.
2. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory*, 108.
3. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory*, 108.
4. Walter Bruggemann, "From Dust to Kingship," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84, no. 1 (1972), 2-3.
5. Samuel I. Thomas, *The "Mysteries" of Qumran: Mystery, Secrecy, and Esotericism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Early Judaism and Its Literature (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 149.
6. Elliot Wolfson, "The Seven Mysteries of Knowledge: Qumran E/Sotericism Recovered," in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman, *Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism* (Leiden; Boston: 2004), 208. As cited in Thomas, *The "Mysteries" of Qumran*, 166.
7. These arguments were inspired by Crispin Fletcher-Louis, "Temple Trumpets and the Angelic Shout," paper presented at "Temple Studies Group Symposium II: Temple Music: Meaning and Influence," held at Temple Church, London, 2009.
8. Deborah W. Rooke, "Kingship as Priesthood: The Relationship between the High Priesthood and the Monarchy," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 204ff.
9. J. Davila, "Exploring the Mystical Background of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 433-454.
10. Thomas, *The "Mysteries" of Qumran*, 168.
11. Judith H. Newman, "Priestly Prophets at Qumran: Summoning Sinai

through the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice,” in *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions About Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. George J. Brooke, Hindy Najman, and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *Themes in Biblical Narrative* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008).

12. Newman, “Priestly Prophets at Qumran,” 38.

David J. Larsen finished his Ph.D. at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. His dissertation was entitled “The Royal Psalms in the Dead Sea Scrolls.” He holds a master’s degree in biblical theology from Marquette University and a bachelor’s degree in Near East studies from Brigham Young University. His research interests include Jewish and Christian apocalyptic and mysticism, pseudepigrapha and apocryphal literature, royal/Messianic themes in the Bible and in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and “ascent to heaven” traditions. He is the author of the blog heavenlyascents.com, where he explores topics in early Jewish and Christian mysticism, LDS theology, and other topics in religious studies. He currently lives in Springville, Utah, with his wife, Marluce, and their five children.

TYPES OF REPETITION AND SHADOWS OF HISTORY IN HEBRAIC NARRATIVE

Alan Goff

Abstract: *Modern readers too often misunderstand ancient narrative. Typical of this incomprehension has been the inclination of modern biblical critics to view repetitions as narrative failures. Whether you call such repetitions types, narrative analogies, type scenes, midrashic recurrences, or numerous other names, this view of repeated elements has dominated modern readings of Hebraic narratives for at least 200 years. Robert Alter, who introduced a new yet antique understanding of repetitions in the Hebrew Bible in the 1980s, began to reverse this trend. Such repeated elements aren't failures or shortcomings but are themselves artistic clues to narrative meaning that call readers to appreciate the depth of the story understood against the background of allusion and tradition. Richard Hays has brought similar insights to Christian scripture. The Book of Mormon incorporates the same narrative features as are present in other Hebraic narrative. The ancient rabbis highlighted the repeating elements in biblical narrative, noting that "what happens to the fathers, happens to the sons." The story of Moroni's raising the standard of liberty in Alma 46 illustrates the repetitive expectation by seeing the events of the biblical Joseph's life repeated in the lives of these Nephite descendants of Joseph. Such recurrence in narratives can, considering the insights of Alter and Hays, reveal richness and depth in the narrative without detracting from the historical qualities of the text.*

Hagar is twice expelled from Abraham's household (Genesis 16:4–14; 21:9–19), thrice a patriarch endangers his wife in a foreign country by passing her off as his sister (Genesis 12:10–19; 20:1–16; 26:6–11), and multiple times a patriarch or prophet travels to a foreign country to meet a nubile girl at a well to secure a wife (Genesis 24:10–60; 29:1–16; Exodus 2:15–21). Pharaoh slaughters the infants as does Herod the Great (Exodus 1:15–22; Matthew 2:16–18), and a prophetic figure — whether Moses or Jesus

— miraculously provides food in the wilderness (Exodus 16:4–16; Matthew 15:32–38). I could cite many more examples of repeated biblical stories: conflicts as the younger brother supersedes the older (Joseph and his brothers, Genesis 37, 42–45; Esau and Jacob, Genesis 27; Laman and Lemuel against Nephi, 1 Nephi 3:28–31 and elsewhere), threats against out-of-towners appealing for hospitality (Genesis 19; Judges 19); twice Nephites send their attractive young women out to charm marauding Lamanites so the vulnerable group isn't killed (Mosiah 19:12–15; Mosiah 23:33–34). Such doublets, as they are frequently called, are fundamental to the working of Hebraic narrative: two creation stories, two instances of animals boarding the ark (seven of each kind once and two of each animal the second time), two narratives of water provided in the wilderness during the exodus. To the modern mind these examples are historical problems in the text — duplications, narrative inconsistencies, failures, plagiarisms; biblical critics have in the past few decades rehabilitated these recurrences, noting their sophistication, revealing modern incapacities in scorning them. Sternberg notes of biblical repetitions that “the dismissal of its redundancies in terms of ‘noise’ is the reader’s last resort rather than first resort”¹ and more likely the result of readerly failure than writerly shortcoming. Since the advent of modern historical criticism of the Bible (starting with, say, Spinoza in the seventeenth century) the presence of such recurrent stories was used to denigrate the Bible as a historical source and narrative exemplar. “One of the unfortunate features of many source-oriented analyses [of the Hebrew Bible] is the typical and premature consideration of repetition, on whatever level of the text, as dysfunctional.”² Only recently has the biblical narrative rebounded from these criticisms. Indeed, only recently have these repeated stories (whether within the Hebrew Bible, between the New and the Old Testaments, between the Book of Mormon and the Bible, or internal to any of those sources) been elevated as instances of narrative art and a particular historical approach we had forgotten how to read and valorize.

Types of Repetition

I take repetition to be the larger category under which the subdivisions listed below fall. Repetitions are not just one element in the biblical writing style, but an essential, foundational building block that makes biblical plot and characterization possible. “Repetition is not an absence

1. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 369.

2. Robert Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History, Part 2: 1 Samuel* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 233n23.

of style but a style in itself. The Bible frequently appoints and repeats a particular 'guiding word,' or *leitwort*, to use Martin Buber's term, by means of which it conveys its perspectives in subtle ways, 'making a meaning available without articulating it explicitly.'"³ What readers make of such repetitions depends as much on the reader's historical context as on the indications in the text. I haven't quite stated the claim in the previous sentence with sufficient clarity: the reader, the text, and the community of interpreters make various contributions to the resulting interpretation — sometimes with greater weight provided by one of the triad, sometimes another. I want to emphasize the reader's part in producing the end result because that element is too commonly neglected by critics who think textual interpretations are immaculately derived and then handed over to passive readers.

Various communities of readers have classified inner-biblical allusions differently. Eslinger notes three such communities: (1) Jews view such repetitions as evidence of the richness of the scripture that reflects the fullness of God's creation, (2) Christians read the recurrences as reflecting the God of history guiding events in patterns pointing toward the ultimate redemptive event in Christ's life and death, and (3) historical-critical readers view the reverberations as clues to the origins and development of the text over time.⁴ As we have become less open to readings that assert divine activity in history, the assumptions of historicism and historical development have become more dominant.⁵ While historical-critical readings were at their highest tide, such readers viewed rabbinic, typological, and allegorical readings "as violent eisegesis violating the plain authorial meaning of any given text at issue. Modern interpreters ... could not accept the polyvalence of language" because they acceded to the Reformation notion about the plain and singular meaning of the text.⁶ Neither the Reformers nor their historicist descendants realized "that the New Testament writers were engaging in spiritual interpretations like their Jewish forebears and contemporaries and their Christian descendants."⁷ No sharp break occurred between Jewish and early Christian readings of biblical repetitions with gradual

3. Judy Klitsner, *Subversive Sequels in the Bible: How Biblical Stories Mine and Undermine Each Other* (New Milford, CT: Maggid Books, 2011), 34.

4. Lyle Eslinger, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Question of Category," *Vetus Testamentum* 42, no. 1 (1992): 47.

5. Eslinger, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis," 48.

6. Leroy A. Huizenga, "The Old Testament in the New, Intertextuality and Allegory," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38, no. 1 (2015): 18.

7. Huizenga, "Old Testament in New," 19.

ramifying divergence after the New Testament period: “Israelite thinkers, like those of Judaism and Christianity, looked back to existing texts and constructed new works in relation to those earlier ones. This exegetical and revisionary activity among biblical authors illuminates the parallel activity that was to become central in classical Judaism and Christianity — an activity, indeed, that produced classical Judaism and Christianity.”⁸ Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity shared not only the same Bible and approaches to interpreting it, but also “both groups received, along with the written texts that make up the Hebrew Bible, the same set of attitudes about how the Bible ought to be read and explained, what it was meant for and how it was to be used.”⁹ An even broader distance has emerged between modern source-critical readings and those of the faith communities just mentioned, but understanding the common patterns of repetition in the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and Book of Mormon is essential to understanding the texts.

In contrast to the modern notion taken up by historicist biblical scholars that repetitions are narrative failures, defects, or even malfunctions, is the stance of Robert Alter. Coming from the world of modern fiction literary criticism — decidedly apart from the guild of biblical critics — Alter has contributed his rediscovery of biblical type scenes and other patterns of repetition which has altered approaches to biblical repetition, revived respect and appreciation of biblical narrative. “There are many kinds of ambiguity and contradiction, and abundant varieties of repetition, that are entirely purposeful,” notes Alter, “and that are essential features of the distinctive vehicle of literary experience.”¹⁰ One of the great transformations in biblical criticism over the past four decades is the appreciation of biblical repetitions as sophisticated narrative devices, rather than problems biblical historians need to correct by uncovering the Bible’s original form. In other words, these repetitions are part of the message rather than a failure of message. The biblical authors (with varying degrees of talent and success) compose their narratives using various techniques that look like fiction to the modern reader only because we moderns mistakenly believe in a broad and sharp distinction between historical and fictional narrative.

8. Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 2.

9. James L. Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), 47.

10. Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), xliii.

The biblical composers and editors used duplicate narrative devices to shape their narratives and provide meaning. Those approaches were built into the text from the beginnings and became a dominant feature of the collection of documents that became the Bible. The textual history is firmly marked by the feature. Two answers are commonly given when tracing reading methodologies from the beginning of the Christian era: (1) the Pharisaic assertion is that the tradition is inherited in a direct line from Moses at Sinai, and (2) the Hellenistic cataloging and exegesis of Homeric texts at Alexandria triggered a similar collection and elucidation of biblical texts. Fishbane suggests a third possibility with the acknowledgement that insufficient evidence exists to decide among the alternatives: "Is it possible that the origins of the Jewish exegetical tradition are native and ancient, that they developed diversely in ancient Israel, in many centres and, at many times, and that these many tributaries met in the exile and its aftermath to set a new stage for biblical culture which was redirected, rationalized, and systematized in the lively environment of the Graeco-Roman world?"¹¹ To extend Fishbane's metaphor of a river, we must be able to read divergent pre-exilic tributaries converging in the exilic period and diverging again into various ramifying rivers again at various historical junctures, including the downriver effects on the way we read in the twenty-first century. We ought also to remind ourselves that the Nephites writers, as the restoration tradition maintains, were also exiles from Judah and Israel, and therefore heirs to that pre-exilic tradition while suffering some of the same traumas as post-exilic Jews experienced.

These streams of historical and textual thought have broad and often surprising similarities and dissimilarities yet to be productively explored. Terminology used to describe biblical repetitions developed out of the heritage of the Hebrew Bible differently in various religious and sectarian traditions, but the origins of such vocabulary shouldn't be gainsaid: "The beginnings of scriptural interpretation are to be looked for within the Scriptures themselves."¹² From the possible interpretive approaches embodied in the Hebrew Bible, Jews in the Hellenistic period developed several strands: (1) Philo used allegorical readings similar to those developed in Greek philosophical schools to demonstrate that Moses and the Pentateuch had anticipated those Greek developments,

11. Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 19.

12. Gerald L. Bruns, "Midrash and Allegory: The Beginnings of Scriptural Interpretation," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 626.

(2) the pharisaic/rabbinic readers used exegetical features to update the tradition and maintain its contemporary relevance, and (3) the Qumran community used typological and other readings to show that the Hebrew Bible predicted events that were being fulfilled by their leader and community.¹³ The Dead Sea community's typology is called *peshar* exegesis, which assumes a secret meaning in scripture is finally revealed in the lifetime and events of the contemporary interpreter;¹⁴ many New Testament fulfillment formulas look broadly similar to such *peshar* readings.¹⁵ Of course, Christian figural readings of the Old Testament were another of the ramifying possibilities enabled by the Hebrew Bible. The rabbinic/pharisaic developments emerged out of Hebraic exegetical potential in what would eventually be canonized as the Hebrew Bible: "It is now a commonplace that the early Christian exegetes inherited and adapted forms of Jewish Scripture study. Early rabbinic scholarship attempted to 'contemporize' the Scriptures to make them relevant to the concerns of the first century."¹⁶ Midrashic commentary was one such approach that focused on hidden elements that hadn't been accounted for. Christian authors developed typological readings similar to these midrashic techniques; Jesus's citation of Psalms 78:24 in "John 6 has been read as an extended midrash" about bread from heaven.¹⁷ Modern readers are tempted to premature conclusions that such resort to midrashic or typecast narrative constructions results in a fictional text rather than a historical one. But the writer appeals to such literary conventions "not to fabricate history but in order to understand it."¹⁸ Our modern inclination to consider wrought narrative fictional leads us astray, but ancient writers and readers would have considered (much like postmodern interpreters today) all writing — historical writing included — as highly constructed and manipulated.

The contemporary reader should see the various forms of repetition resorted to in various religious, hermeneutical, and ideological traditions

13. Dennis L. Stamps, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament as a Rhetorical Device: A Methodological Proposal," in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 27.

14. Paul Miller, "'They Saw His Glory and Spoke of Him': The Gospel of John and the Old Testament," in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 130.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 129.

17. Ibid.

18. Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), xviii.

as belonging to a family of close textual relations. Boyarin doesn't see much difference between poetic allusion and midrashic quotation, even eliding intertextuality with the other two. "While midrash is exegesis of an authoritative text, a specific type of interpretation, poetic allusion is allusion which is not exegesis. At least the text being read is always explicitly marked in midrash by being quoted at its outset, even though the cotexts being cited are not always so. This is ultimately the difference between the intertextuality encoded in Scripture itself and the intertextuality of the rabbis as well."¹⁹ New Testament typological reading is often seen as a Christian innovation,²⁰ but repetitive interpretation found in the New Testament was "clearly derived from Jewish habits of thought and reflects Jewish rhetorical modes, some of great antiquity."²¹ Paul reads the scriptures as a Christian much the same way he did as a Pharisee, but his conversion from one to the other imposes a new hinge point in history — the life and resurrection of Jesus. "Paul finds numerous prefigurations of this revelatory event — which nevertheless came as a total surprise to Israel and continues to function as a stumbling block for those who do not believe. Once the Scriptures are grasped in light of this hermeneutical key, their pervasively eschatological character comes into focus."²²

19. Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 26.

20. Susan Handelman collapses Christian typology into allegory and posits both as borrowings from the Greek tradition, making rabbinic interpretation Jerusalemian and typological interpretation Athenian in the struggle between the two cities. Susan A. Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press), 86–89. Daniel Boyarin also posits a strong Hellenistic influence over Paul (and therefore over the Christian tradition) with that Greek yearning for the One, making Paul's typological/allegorical readings univocal, unlike the rabbinic toleration for plurality, multiple acceptable readings. Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 7–9. Boyarin too collapses typology into allegory (Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 34–35, 86). Some forms of biblical typology (but certainly not all) result in fulfillment or supersession of the type by the antitype: Jesus is indeed claimed to be greater than Moses, Abraham, and other characters in the Hebrew Bible. But not all typological configurations result in fulfillment or supersession. Boyarin sees such a relationship as Hellenistic to the core, not Judaic (141). For Boyarin, Paul — and therefore Christianity — was more GreekJew while the rabbis were more JewGreek.

21. Frank Kermode, "Matthew," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 388.

22. Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), xvi.

Typological readings of the biblical text stand in a long line of developments that extends to the beginning of the Old Testament tradition. Medieval readers, the church fathers, the apostles, and the gospels' Jesus stand firmly within this interpretive convention. "Allegory (which in the West looks like what is nowadays often called typology) bridged the Testaments: under divine inspiration of both text and interpreter."²³ Christian theologians often talk about "the rule of faith" which developed in the early church. "Some believe it was a sort of credal deposit or précis of the apostolic faith ... that guided Christian interpreters toward ascertaining when scripture's word was being heard and applied in a proportional way."²⁴ Seitz notes that this rule of faith is taken to extract from proto-rabbinic and inner-biblical reading approaches elements which helped the earliest Christians read scripture aright. Continuity between Jewish and Christian readings is taken to be the norm. The way Christians made sense of biblical repetitions is broadly similar to *peshet* and midrashic approaches. In other words, when the rabbis say that what happens to the fathers happens to the sons (Zakovitch calls this rabbinic truism the "like father like son" principle),²⁵ and when Christians see typological reverberations both in the Old Testament and between the testaments, I take that to be the consequence of a genealogical identity between the two traditions; in other words, such repetitive narrative was a feature of both the Jewish and the Christian traditions before they split into separate trajectories, so it is characteristic of both. Both heritages attempt both to make sense of repetitions recurring over generations and update the tradition to ensure relevance in the present and future.

Quite different vocabulary is used to categorize stories with similar features: "allusion, homology, parallelism, narrative analogy, or allegory" are some of the terms used by literary and biblical critics to make distinctions. "The difference in terminology by which this is expressed says more about the critic's preference in literary theory than about biblical narrative," asserts Adele Berlin.²⁶ Biblical critics tend to part

23. Huizenga, "Old Testament in New," 18.

24. Christopher R. Seitz, *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 6.

25. Yair Zakovitch, "And You Shall Tell Your Son ...": *The Concept of the Exodus in the Bible* (Jerusalem, ISR: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1991), 20.

26. Adele Berlin, "Literary Exegesis of Biblical Narrative: Between Poetics and Hermeneutics," in "Not in Heaven": *Coherence and Complexity in Biblical Narrative*, ed. Jason P. Rosenblatt and Joseph C. Sitterson, Jr. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 123.

from literary critics, preferring to use the terminology of *allusion*, which carries a connotation that the text alluding is chronologically later than the text being alluded to, and it can be demonstrated that the belated writer who alludes had access to the source being alluded to. Literary critics are more likely to use the term *intertextuality*, which commonly doesn't entail such historical concerns, and literary critics are much more comfortable suggesting that the chronologically earlier text might allude to the later passage (note that biblical and Book of Mormon texts are also content to assert prophetic projections at minimum putatively uttered before, say, Cyrus is born or the extinction of the Nephite people). Here, Berlin isn't asserting a form of reader-response criticism by pointing out that the choice of descriptive terminology depends more on the reader who comes historically later than the composer of the text and therefore might be seen to impose a meaning on the first text whose author couldn't have foreseen. Rather, she compares the difference between the reader and composer to the rabbinic interpretive tool of *gezerah šawah*, a reasoning by analogy. Here, though, the connection isn't provided by the writer but rather by the reader;²⁷ the biblical writer — especially of the motif the first time it is used — would be unaware of the connection, but the reader is still authorized to see the elements as connected by the celestial author, if not by the terrestrial authors, as some form of allusion. Some readers may insist on creating rigid distinctions between these various types of repetitions, but the recurrences have broad family resemblances and often few differences. During the Patristic and Medieval periods, Christian exegetes built typological reading into a more structured and watertight system, but that inelasticity (the four senses of scripture: literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical meanings) wasn't part of the early phases of interpretive development. “The forms of exegesis that will eventually be articulated as regulative modes of Scripture reading — typology, allegory, tropology, and anagogy — are less technical tools, at least among most readers in the early church, as they are attitudes of perception and reading that assume the ontology/historical relationships noted above and engage

27. Berlin, “Literary Exegesis,” 124. One of the foundational rabbinic rules of interpretation, *gezerah šawah* is a proof by analogy. If two legal cases or biblical passages are analogous, the resulting ruling or interpretation should also correspond, especially if the same keyword or Hebrew root is used in both passages. 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://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/onomastic-wordplay-on-joseph-and-benjamin-and-gezera-shawa-in-the-book-of-mormon/>.

them practically.”²⁸ Medieval exegetes couldn’t help but shape New Testament and Patristic typological interpretation into a system, but one ought not to mistake the muddled experimentation and practice out of which the system eventually emerges for an Athena-birthed origin.

Of course, composing analogous narratives is also a hermeneutical act, something Berlin doesn’t state in this passage, and her emphasis on the reader’s hermeneutical intervention is indeed similar to reader-response literary theory. Sternberg emphasizes the point that all such figures of speech to describe repetitions depend on analogy: “Biblical narrative certainly abounds in patterns of similarity, all based on the principle of analogy.”²⁹ Typology (and the various other ways of describing repetitions) in a Christian context asserts an ontological connection between a God whose course is one eternal round, who repeats foundational events in such a way that recurrences are built into creation and history. But typological connections are also built into human consciousness and are affected by worldviews, domain assumptions, and mental paradigms (however one wants to frame the issue). Repetitions are also expressed, argued, and passed on through language. As such they are rhetorical and metaphorical. “Typology is before all else a trope, an act of imaginative correlation,”³⁰ whether that imagination is divine or human. We contemporary readers must

28. Ephraim Radner, *Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 57–58. Tropology is the study or use of tropes (metaphors or figures of speech). For medieval biblical exegetes, the tropological interpretation is often the moral that is to be learned by the medieval reader (the fourfold senses of scripture in Patristic and medieval exegesis were literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical; the first two are terms we still commonly use). When Jesus meets with Moses (and others) at the transfiguration, Luke writes: “And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease [this Greek word is literally *exodus*] which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:30–31). The literal or historical meaning is that Moses and Elias predict that Christ will die in Jerusalem, the allegorical is that Christ’s death and redemptive work will be in some way like the Israelites’ exodus toward a land of promise, the tropological meaning is the moral the reader should learn: we should bear our burdens and do the will of God just as Jesus did in the atonement and the children of Israel did, and the anagogical is the meaning connected to our ultimate fate when God wraps up the plan of the universe: as the exodus led the Israelites to the promised land, so too can the atonement lead believers to a far better land of promise.

29. Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 365.

30. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 100.

not insist that typological figuration bend to the categories we impose on the figures in order to make sense of them. “The texts of Scripture must ‘all’ be given to our apprehension in their challenging multiplicity, something grasped via juxtaposition, one text laid beside another and another. This fact constitutes the Scripture’s own initiating character, which finally supervenes our own human usage of its texts, and imposes its own divine creative and comprehensive order on our world.”³¹ Specific to Book of Mormon studies, when Michael Austin takes up repetitive elements in the Bible and Book of Mormon, he conflates type scenes and typology;³² the vocabulary and conceptual structure of “type scenes” comes from Robert Alter and his Jewish background, while “typology” is clearly a Christian inheritance. The scripture is much fuller and more abundant than our comprehension of it. We should never assert that we have boxed it, wrapped it, ribboned it, and contained it. “Figural reading is the temporal explication, through juxtaposition of her multiple texts, of Scripture’s divine ‘allness.’”³³ The categories we use to understand biblical repetitions will always be limited and explain the text only partially, leaving room for vocabularies and readings different from those a particular reader or group promotes.

We express understanding of historical relations in language, and if, as the linguistic turn has asserted, all understanding is fundamentally metaphorical, then we must deal with the figurative elements of such recurrence. Hays elsewhere designates typology as metalepsis, which “is a rhetorical and poetic device in which one text alludes to an earlier text in a way that evokes resonances of the earlier text *beyond those explicitly cited*.”³⁴ Keep in mind that the ordinary connotations of the word *rhetoric* must be jettisoned here. Rhetoric isn’t, as commonly conceived, overblown language used to deceive and appeal to emotion, sophistry. Rhetoric is persuasion. Scripture presents God as a rhetorician: the gospels, Isaiah, Nephi, and others all do their prophetic work rhetorically. “If the gospel is hidden in Scripture, Scripture must be understood as richly allusive in character, hinting the kerygma, prefiguring it metaphorically. The biblical text must be read as a vast texture of latent promise, and the promise must be recovered through interpretive strategies that allow the

31. Radner, *Time and the Word*, 209.

32. Michael Austin, “How the Book of Mormon Reads the Bible: A Theory of Types,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 26 (2017): 51–53.

33. Radner, *Time and the Word*, 210.

34. Richard Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 2.

hidden word to become manifest.”³⁵ But one should never see rhetoric as “mere rhetoric” and thus fall into Platonic fallacies that themselves maintain their power in modern society through an anti-rhetorical rhetoric. Likewise, to call repetitions “merely” metaphorical is to misunderstand both scripture and metaphor.

Metaphors also shape the world, taking the meaning of the word *shape* quite literally (as well as metaphorically). The Greek etymology of *typos* (“type”) emerges from the indentation left, say, by a hammer in wood. The hammer is a type and the impression in wood an antitype. The type makes the impression, and the mark in the wood matches the hammer head; a seal and the imprint left by the seal are another metaphor for the type and antitype³⁶ as is the object and the shadow made by the object in direct light. The Greek word *skia* is translated “shadow” in Colossians 2:17 (and sometimes used as a synonym of *typos*), and in Hebrews 8:5 the synonyms *typon* and *upodeigmati* are used in conjunction with *skia* to convey this fit between type and antitype: Old Testament priests “who serve unto the example [*upodeigmati*] and shadow [*skia*] of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern [*typon*] shewed to thee in the mount.” The Latin *figura* is the word most commonly used to translate the Greek *typos*. The secondary pattern matches the original. For the believer in the scripture and its ontology “a scriptural figure, in Christian theology, is not a literary metaphor that brings to the intellect some deeper meaning when attached to another image. A figure is a form that God actually makes historical experience fit, like some providential mold.”³⁷ This scriptural view of time and history should never be condescended to by the modern reader who sees time in a fundamentally different, linear way. The type establishes a model that later events are going to repeat, which gives us recurrence in time and history; the analogous relationship may or may not be perceived by the reader of any given epoch, but the pattern is nevertheless manifest in the divine creative act. The modern reader needs to grasp and concede the sophistication of this view even if modern temporal notions obstruct adhering to it. “What modern historicists unthinkingly assume, early Christians understood from the start as inherently problematic; that is, the ‘time’ that we experience as human beings and the ‘time’ the Bible

35. Richard Hays, *Letters of Paul*, 155.

36. Erich Auerbach, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984), 14–15

37. Ephraim Radner, *Hope among the Fragments: The Broken Church and Its Engagement of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 126.

presents in story and exhortation are mysterious categories. It is simply wrong to assert that early Christian exegetes approached the Bible naively, and hence drew out their ‘fanciful’ figural readings from a kind of primitive ignorance about how the world functioned.”³⁸ Modern condescension toward ancient worldviews is too often framed after only a cursory (if that) examination of antiquity. If that modern condescension of the Bible’s textual assumptions slips over to the Book of Mormon, one can hardly be surprised if either book is read in a superficial way.

Paul’s typological interpretations, the gospel writers’, Abinadi’s, and Nephi’s aren’t merely rhetorical; rather, they reflect the language and the world we have inherited from tradition and from the created order. Readings based on the ideological predilections of modernity, and therefore that abhor repetition, need to account for the epistemological and ontological views of ancients at the minimum when reading ancient texts. “Reading is always anachronistic. The reading of any text, even the most ancient ones, is always a contemporary reading”³⁹ because the contemporary reader reads from within a contemporary historical context. The text from the past and the reader from the present jointly create meaning through a reading. “The reader always reads from one socio-historical intertextual position or another, and every reading affects the reader’s thinking and behavior.”⁴⁰ Typology isn’t merely an interpretation of history (although it is that) but also an interpretation of history that mirrors the unfolding of God’s historical pattern; that is what the ancient writer believed. Typology “is, rather, a framework

38. Radner, *Time and the Word*, 46.

39. George Aichele, “Canon as Intertext: Restraint or Liberation?” in *Reading the Bible Intertextually*, ed. Richard B. Hays, Stefan Alkier, Leroy A. Huizenga (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 142.

40. Aichele, “Canon as Intertext,” 143. Our contemporary vocabulary of typology, type scenes, recurrences, repetitions, and the like are another way of discussing the textual phenomena Nephi called “likening” the scriptures (1 Nephi 19:23–24). They are ways of seeing the divine intervention in mundane history in order to demonstrate the saving acts of God across generations, epochs, and cultures. All these reading approaches are ways of updating the tradition, making the past relevant to the contemporary reader’s circumstances. Nephi reads the “books of Moses” and the writings of Isaiah to his people that they might “likened them unto yourselves, ... for after this manner has the prophet written.” Likening, typology, narrative analogy, etc. are ways of modernizing the ancient and antiquing the modern, for — Nephi insists — not only should the scriptures be read to highlight such recurrences, but also in addition “after this manner has the prophet written.” They were written as typological narrative and should be read with the same hermeneutic, Nephi asserts.

of literary-historical sensibility that creates the hermeneutical conditions necessary for the metaphorical linkage of scriptural text and contemporary situation.”⁴¹ The modern (or postmodern) reader must be sufficiently open to let the ancient text assert its own view of the world. At the same time, the contemporary reader must also be aware that he or she brings epistemological and ontological assumptions (ideological assumptions ought also to be emphasized) about how we know and how the world works. The hermeneutical circle rolls the ancient text, modern predilections, and the views of the world by both into a mangle of meaning. “If we maintain, as I do, that the meaning of a text must be continually negotiated and renegotiated by its reader, between that text and other texts, then that meaning is not an invisible substance inside the text. Meaning does not lie ‘in’ the text at all.”⁴²

Analogous Writings, Analogous Readings

The analogous element can be embedded in plot, character, word sound, word meaning, or theme.⁴³ The repetitive component just needs to remind the reader of the earlier type. The literature on biblical repetitions uses various vocabulary to articulate the feature:

- Mirror-image stories: Adele Berlin cites Yair Zakovitch’s description of one type of biblical repetition. In mirror-image stories the story lines are similar with an analogous reversal. The narratives of David/Bathsheba and Judah/Tamar are the examples provided. Berlin notes that the stories of Michal and Rachel would also fit the pattern of a powerful man who appropriates women and then sometimes discards them.⁴⁴
- Rabbinic midrash: Robert Alter notes that midrashic approaches to biblical exegesis were continuous with the typological readings provided by Christians when the latter developed in antiquity.⁴⁵
- The catalog of vocabulary to describe biblical repetitions, primary of which is repetition: mirror-image stories, narrative analogies, type-scenes, types and antitypes, allusions, parallelism, allegories, paradigms, citations,

41. Richard Hays, *Letters of Paul*, 161.

42. Aichele, “Canon as Intertext,” 153.

43. Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 367.

44. Berlin, “Literary Exegesis,” 123.

45. Robert Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 142–43.

quotations, echoes, formulaic narrative, redundancy, intertextuality, figurations, motif, *leitwort*, borrowings, plagiarism, influence, and narrative tracking. Alter notes two kinds of repetitions: “What we find, then, in biblical narrative is an elaborately integrated system of repetitions, some dependent on the actual recurrence of individual phonemes, words, or short phrases, other linked instead to actions, images, and ideas that are part of the world of the narrative we ‘reconstruct’ as readers but that are not necessarily woven into the verbal texture of the narrative.” The verbal and action-oriented kinds of repetition are often interwoven in biblical narrative to enhance the impact of the recurrent elements.⁴⁶

- Allusion: The Bible uses several techniques to connect repetitions to each other. Allusions are most prominent, but similar phrasing, persistent motifs, or narrative developments also do such work.⁴⁷ The infant Moses tucked away in an *ark* requires just one word (the Hebrew *tevah*) to remind the reader of Noah’s ark as a water-borne vessel laden with salvation and liberation.
 - A three-decade surge in interest in intertextuality has given us quite a few catalogues of quotations, allusions, and echoes of OT passages in the NT. I take the following list from G. K. Beale: (1) quotations are easy to recognize because of the verbal similarity and are often introduced with a formula such as “it is written.” Beale cites 295 OT quotations in the NT or about one quotation every 22.5 verses. Allusions are much more difficult to define and count and surely amount to many more allusions than there are quotations. (2) “An ‘allusion’ may simply be defined as a brief expression consciously intended by an author to be dependent on an OT passage” but is more indirect than quotations. Beale notes that counts range from as few as 600 such allusions to 4,100. Echoes are subtler than allusions with criteria for finding them much more difficult to define. Beale refers to Richard Hays’s seven criteria but notes that echoes can be so elusive that they must

46. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 95.

47. Alter, *World of Biblical Literature*, 110–11.

be taken up on a case-by-case basis rather than using generalizable rules.⁴⁸

- Echoes: Discerning echoes can be difficult, as can making sharp distinctions along the continuum from quotations to echoes. “As we near the vanishing point of the echo, it inevitably becomes difficult to decide whether we are really hearing an echo at all, or whether we are only conjuring things out of the murmurings of our own imaginations.”⁴⁹ Hays notes that the echo might occur in Paul’s (the writer of the letters to the Corinthians) mind, in the minds of the Christian congregants in Corinth, in the space between texts because we don’t have access to Paul or the readers at Corinth, in my act of reading the letter in 2021, or the echo might exist in the community of interpreters.⁵⁰ We might feel uncomfortable with these options as mutually exclusive possibilities. Hays wants to keep each option in tension with the others in his interpretive work.⁵¹ Such friction can be seen more clearly if we realize that *intertextuality* is a cluster of similar features that encompass “literary phenomena, including genre, motif, formulae, type-scenes and parallel accounts, allusion, quotation and hypertextual commentary.”⁵² The literary elements that generate intertextual connections include the following: (1) shared motifs such as the Old Testament theme of the success of the younger brother over the older, (2) formulaic language where a conventional string of words used in a consistent narrative situation such as “he looked up and saw,” (3) type scenes, a “combination of motifs within a set sequence” such as a hospitality scene with the reception of visitors, (4) genres defined by conventional narratives that can be used over and over as a template, (5) parallel accounts presenting a common storyline with parallel sequences of events, such as stories about an ancestress endangered in a foreign country, (6) inner-biblical interpretation happening when one passage comments on or

48. G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 29–36.

49. Richard Hays, *Letters of Paul*, 23.

50. *Ibid.*, 26.

51. *Ibid.*, 27.

52. Cynthia Edenburg, “Intertextuality, Literary Competence and the Question of Readership: Some Preliminary Observations,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 35, no. 2 (December 2010): 137.

expands on another event or passage, (7) allusion when one text covertly refers to another, such as when the violation of visitors in Judges 19 plays upon a similar violation of visitors at Sodom (Genesis 19), (8) quotation, similar to allusion, involving verbatim citation of a previous text, and (9) implicit citation occurring when one text repeats the wording of the previous text without formal signs of the connection such as when Jonah (4:2) cites Exodus 34:6–7.⁵³

If biblical readers are to do justice to allusive Hebraic narrative, two elements must be present according to Leonard: (1) we must be sure that the allusion is built into the text and not a result of the contemporary reader's imagination connecting the texts, and (2) we must be confident about the direction of influence. "In the case of a quotation or explicit citation these elements are often easily determined," but not so easy with examples of allusion and echo.⁵⁴ Shared, distinctive terminology is the most certain way to determine influence directionality. The more uncommon the shared terminology, the more likely the connection.⁵⁵ When shared vocabulary isn't definitive, Leonard proposes "narrative tracking" as a secondary way to ascertain the presence of allusion and direction of influence. "By narrative tracking, I refer to the process by which one text alludes to another by mimicking its narrative structure."⁵⁶ Leonard's example is the similarity in storyline between Jesus's life and Moses's.

Hays's list is the standard (sometimes modified by other writers) for measuring the presence of allusions in the NT and distinguishing allusions from echoes. And, of course, for Hays the Old Testament is the citation source and the letters of Paul the terminal location with the allusion or echo: (1) *availability*: was the source available to the NT writer and audience (this criterion requires a known diachronic/chronological ordering)? (2) *volume*: how much overlapping verbal repetition is present between the putative source and the echo? (3) *recurrence*: does the author of the echo or allusion refer to that same source passage elsewhere? (4) *thematic occurrence*: how well does the reference fit into the context of the echo or allusion (and does the material from the source clarify or illuminate the echo's argument?)? (5) *historical plausibility*: could the

53. Ibid., 138–46.

54. Jeffrey M. Leonard, "Identifying Subtle Allusions: The Promise of Narrative Tracking," *Subtle Citation, Allusion, and Translation in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Ziony Zevit (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2017), 94.

55. Ibid., 95.

56. Ibid., 97.

echo or allusion author have intended the connection and the audience understood it (Hays mentions that anachronisms such as Lutheran understanding or a deconstructionist reading were not possibilities for Paul and his readers)? (6) *history of interpretation*: have other readers throughout the history of reading the successor text discerned the same echo or allusion in the passage? And (7) *satisfaction*: does the allusion to or echo of the source illuminate the metaleptic passage and bring an “aha!” moment with the satisfaction that a puzzling passage has finally been elucidated?⁵⁷ Benjamin Sommer adds an eighth criterion for the procedure determining allusions: the contemporary reader must ensure that the two passages in an allusive relationship not belong to an ancient genre such as lament or national oracle, or the assertion of an allusion is undermined by the common nature of the topos.⁵⁸ Some biblical specialists criticize Hays for using the terminology loosely, deploying *allusion* and *intertextuality* interchangeably to “encompass *quotation*, *allusion*, and *echo* as in a spectrum of reference, from the obvious to the elusive, respectively.”⁵⁹ For many biblical critics, use of the word *intertextuality* is to be avoided because it carries too much weight from postmodernism⁶⁰ and sometimes lacks the diachronic element that historical critics insist be present when discussing allusion.

Historical Questions versus Literary Questions

The question about availability is much less problematical for New Testament writers citing the Old Testament than for the Book of Mormon. The gospel authors, Paul, and the writers of the catholic letters and the Revelation had access to the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, and some may have known Hebrew and had access to some version of the Masoretic Text. Much more problematical is the question about the direction of influence within the New Testament: did Paul allude to the gospels, or does the influence

57. Richard Hays, *Letters of Paul*, 29–32. Hays repeats the criteria in *Conversion of the Imagination*, 34–45. Richard Hays’s son, Christopher Hays — given to the like-father-like son principle — repeats the criteria also with some elaboration. Christopher B. Hays, “Echoes of the Ancient Near East? Intertextuality and the Comparative Study of the Old Testament,” in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*, ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 36–41.

58. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 220–21n12.

59. David I. Yoon, “The Ideological Inception of Intertextuality and Its Dissonance in Current Biblical Studies,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 12, no. 1 (2012): 70.

60. Ibid., 71.

run the other direction?⁶¹ But the Book of Mormon brings out all sorts of historical questions: could Nephi have had both First and Second Isaiah? How could New Testament wording such as from the Sermon on the Mount have been available to the writer of Third Nephi? Were the Psalms incorporated into the plates of brass, providing a correlation between Nephi's psalm and some psalms in the Old Testament? While New Testament allusion to the Old Testament is relatively unproblematic, determining the accessibility and direction of influence among Old Testament texts is more difficult to determine.⁶²

An example of a historical question bearing on allusion and quotation emerges from Book of Mormon composition. Brent Metcalfe asserts that the Book of Mormon was written by Joseph Smith in antebellum America instead of by ancient Nephite recordkeepers. Since he believes no ancient metal plates existed but that Smith merely invented the story as one would a novel (but based on Smith's own life experience and antebellum American culture and history), Metcalfe asserts that when Smith had to abort the writing process after Martin Harris lost the first portion of manuscript, Smith could overcome his writer's block only by starting where he left off, at the book of Mosiah instead of at First Nephi. Metcalfe asserts that order of composition points to the "real" author: Joseph Smith. "Intrinsically woven into the Book of Mormon's fabric are not only remnants of the peculiar dictation sequence but threads of authorship. The composite of those elements explored in this essay point to Smith as the narrative's chief designer."⁶³ The line of argumentation goes like this: with the loss of the Book of Lehi portion, Smith composed from Mosiah to Moroni starting from where he previously left off but had no idea how the first part of the book would be replaced. So even though we read from front cover to back and take First and Second Nephi to have chronological and compositional priority, Mosiah and Alma are in reality first. Therefore, Metcalfe and those who share this thesis assert that characters in Mosiah and Alma don't know what Nephi and Lehi knew because the latter were written after the former. Smith didn't know

61. We do get one clue when Paul refers in First Timothy 5:18 to a Jesus saying that we read in Luke 10:7. That would mean Luke's gospel has chronological priority over Paul's letter. Craig L. Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible? An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014), 64.

62. Christopher Hays, "Echoes of the Ancient," 36.

63. Brent Lee Metcalfe, "The Priority of Mosiah: A Prelude to Book of Mormon Exegesis," in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 433.

where his narrative would eventually lead when he was writing Mosiah and Alma. Vogel, also a skeptic that the book has any ancient origins, asserts Smith's dictation was spontaneous,⁶⁴ with the author having no time to revise or review the result⁶⁵ with little-to-no clue as to what would come next in the story.⁶⁶ Consequently, according to this theory of composition, Smith didn't have any idea what would come in First and Second Nephi when he composed the material from Mosiah to Moroni.⁶⁷ If one believes Joseph Smith translated from real ancient plates, order of translation doesn't matter. He could have started from Mosiah, or he could have started from First Nephi. The important chronological order is the one regarding composition of the gold plates instead by Nephites from Nephi to Moroni.

When a passage from First Nephi appears almost verbatim in Alma, we commonly take Alma's quotation to be referring to Lehi's statement because according to Book of Mormon chronology, Alma lived a few hundred years after Lehi. But Metcalfe's argument questions that direction of influence. "Alma's declaration, '*methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God*' (Alma 36:22; emphasis added), parallels almost verbatim the account of Lehi's vision in the small plates, '[Lehi] saw the heavens open, and *he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God*' (1 Nephi 1:8 emphasis added). A case can be made from a traditionalist perspective that Alma is quoting the small plates. From a critical viewpoint it can be maintained that 1 Nephi 1:8 quotes Alma 36:22."⁶⁸ When the Book of Mormon emerged in 1830, *concourse* meant among other things a gathering or a council.⁶⁹

64. Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 120–21.

65. *Ibid.*, 384.

66. *Ibid.*, 121, 323.

67. Edwin Firmage, Jr. "Historical Criticism and the Book of Mormon: A Personal Encounter," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 6–7.

68. Metcalfe, "The Priority of Mosiah," 417n26.

69. Since *concourse* is one of the key *leitwörter* connecting these two passages and an uncommon word, I ought to note that when the Book of Mormon was introduced to the modern world, a synonym for the word was "a council," "a meeting; an assembly of men; an assemblage of things." *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), s.v. "Concourse." One of the main themes of Michael Heiser's book *The Unseen Realm* traces

Metcalfé doesn't fully take responsibility for this argument and for good reason — he doesn't believe there were small plates, large plates and Nephite writers but only a village scribe in western New York fabricating a fanciful story. Hypothetically, though, let's take up his argument that the direction of influence might have the Lehi narrative citing the Alma story, the latter chronologically precedent. The question Metcalfé raises is this: Can allusions and citations serve as historical evidence of chronological priority? To be more specific, Metcalfé is not really arguing for the chronological priority of the account in Alma 36 over that in First Nephi; he is instead merely trying to raise doubt in the contemporary reader's mind about priority in order to question the historical standing of particular readings of the evidence. So here I merely take up Metcalfé's question: If allusion and citation can provide historical evidence of textual priority, how might it do so? The secondary follow-up question would then need examination: How does an exploration of textual priority using allusion and citation illuminate Metcalfé's ideological presupposition that there were no ancient writings for Smith to work from but merely his fertile imagination? Metcalfé's questioning of historical priority should be viewed less as a historical question (because he has built into his presuppositions that no Nephite recordkeepers existed outside Joseph Smith's head to allude to or cite Lehi, earlier Nephite writers, or biblical writers) and more of a thought experiment. I consider it a thought experiment worth addressing more fully because, as Metcalfé and his ideological compatriots assert, it has historical implications about authorship and answers to the question reveal ideological commitments (not just Metcalfé's but also mine and every other readers').

For one thing, the Alma text refers to Lehi by name. Lehi never uses Alma's name. One would think that when a text refers by name to a previous author, that is a clue to priority and influence that ought to be taken seriously. In addition, the specificity in the text would point

the persistence of the theme of God presiding over the divine council — both Old and New Testaments. For example, referring to Jeremiah 23:16–22, Heiser notes that “the implications are clear: true prophets have stood and listened in Yahweh's divine council; false prophets have not.” And like Richard Hays, Heiser asserts that the Bible clearly identifies the Yahweh of the Old Testament with the Jesus of the New. “The litmus test of direct divine encounter for validating one who claimed to speak for God never went away in Israel. It was alive and well in New Testament times.” Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 239. Lehi needed that vision of God and the heavenly council to validate his calling as a Jewish prophet. Alma draws upon Lehi's authority to bolster his own. A reverse direction of influences makes considerably less sense.

to evidence that Alma was later than Lehi and the direction of textual influence must have Alma citing Lehi's passage, not the other way around. That is, when Alma cites Lehi (through Nephi's mediation in the small plates and/or the large-plates content never published in the Book of Mormon, Alma — and Mormon — would potentially have access to a more complete account than modern readers have), Alma evokes an entire narrative about Lehi's calling as a prophet and the divine council he witnesses (and not only Lehi's but a rich vein of references to biblical prophetic commissions and divine councils). If Lehi were quoting Alma, all of the reverberations from one small element of the story that evoke the larger narrative would be lost. Again, Alma gains some authoritative status by citing Lehi's experience and portraying his as a repeat of the first Book of Mormon prophet. Lehi, in his vision of the divine council and pronouncement of his prophetic calling places himself in the mainstream of prophetic tradition; Alma by citing Lehi's commission makes the claim for similar authority. Lehi would gain no such stature by citing his descendant to bolster his prophetic role. Alma's brief citation of Lehi's council vision rubs off some of the divine investiture on Alma; that is why Alma refers to Lehi by name. Lehi's vision of God and the angels singing and praising doesn't overflow into the larger Alma story the way the Alma reference does into the Lehi prophetic-calling narrative.

Those who also assert Joseph Smith is the book's author believe Smith engaged in stream-of-consciousness dictation that didn't permit revision and didn't know what would be in the last part composed (the Nephi books through Words of Mormon).⁷⁰ Richard Hays notes the standard definition of metalepsis: a mere reference to another text that reverberates with much stronger connection to the earlier text's context by referring to only one small part but obliquely invoking the entire previous story.⁷¹ Notice that the Alma passage not only refers specifically to Lehi's name that he wouldn't yet know because that part of the book hadn't yet been created or even conceived (that is, the small plates of Nephi), but Alma's verse is nonspecific about the vision in which Lehi saw God on his throne in a heavenly council.

70. Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 121–22, 323, 384. Keep in mind that almost all scholarly examinations of the process by which the Book of Mormon was translated conclude that Mosiah was translated first, whether or not the interpreter believes there were historical Nephites or whether or not the Book of Mormon is a genuine ancient text. See, for example, Matthew Roper, "A More Perfect Priority?," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6, no. 1 (1994): 362.

71. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 84.

Lehi's vision has all the specificity on its side. Not only does Alma gain clout by comparing his prophetic calling to Lehi's narrative, but he also conveys the larger context of the divine council weighing in his side in any future controversy over divine backing; Lehi's appeal to Alma's theophany would immediately be viewed as a historical anachronism or prophetic foretelling by either ancients or moderns. Such a position unnecessarily complicates the explanation. One would think the cotext with the specific content is more likely to be the prior text and the one with a minimal reference is the one alluding or quoting. After all, that is how metaleptic allusion (or, in this case, citation) commonly works: just by using a key word or citing a phrase, the later writer can evoke the larger context and storyline of the earlier text.

For example, take Helaman 6. The narrator refers obliquely to earlier Book of Mormon and biblical events and people: Alma and the record of Jaredite secret oaths (Helaman 6:25), the conflict between Cain and Abel (Helaman 6:27), the Tower of Babel story and the Jaredite exodus from Babylon (Helaman 6:28). In Helaman 7:7 the narrator cites first Nephi's day, alluding to a specific verse in 2 Nephi 5:27, when times were happier. All the specificity is on the side of earlier in the story: Nephi has separated his group from Laman and Lemuel's camp, established laws and a government, and lived after the manner of happiness. We don't take the Cain and Abel story to refer to Helaman 6. We don't take the story in Genesis about the Tower of Babel to be influenced by Helaman 6. We don't take the Nephi in Second Nephi to be citing the Nephi in Helaman 7. These narrative connections involve allusions by the later story to the earlier Nephi. Mormon refers to Adam and Eve in the garden rather than the opposite; in all these cases, the biblical events came first and Mormon's citations later, and it would take a good deal of logic twisting to assert the opposite direction of impact. That Metcalfe asserts the actual chronological direction of influence is from Joseph Smith to the Old Testament or potentially is from Alma back to Lehi undergirded by the assumption that Smith is merely referring from the book of Alma to First Nephi begs a host of questions that Metcalfe ought to defend. All the specificity is on the side of the text we normally take to be earlier and the narrative asserts is chronologically prior; the narrator Mormon can merely refer to one detail or name to conjure up the earlier events in their fulness: Lehi's prophetic calling, the danger from Jerusalem residents, the departure of the Lehi group from Jerusalem. The same is true of Alma's citation of Lehi's divine council vision (since Alma is doing first person narration in Alma 36–37

which is incorporated wholesale into Mormon's account). Alma can refer to one detail to invoke the entire event of Lehi's dream and his own journey through repentance and calling as a prophet. It would be an odd assertion to claim that the reference to one detail was written first, and the larger narrative was later developed out of that citation when all the evidence stands against the possibility of consulting earlier portions of the Book of Mormon text but instead supports straight line, staccato dictation to scribes.

Biblical critics tend to be obsessively concerned about using the terms *intertextuality* and *allusion* interchangeably. Since biblical critics are so concerned to establish historical origins, they focus on allusion, which must establish which text came first and which alludes later. "Students of inner-biblical exegesis not only maintain that various passages are related to each other; they must assert — or assume — that one is older than the other."⁷² Analysis referring to intertextuality, contrary to asserting allusion, is unconcerned with problems of history and precedence. "What matters for intertextual theories is the 'network of traces,' not their origin or direction of influence."⁷³

The connection (whether quotation or allusion) will be stronger the more specific the parallels.⁷⁴ What happens when one of the cotexts is more specific than the other? An example of biblical metalepsis is the use of the single word *exodus* at the Mount of Transfiguration which evokes a much larger context of liberation from slavery and departure from Egypt,⁷⁵ the receipt of the law of Moses, the wilderness wandering, and entry into the promised land. *Metalepsis* is Richard Hays's common term for what often refers to as recurrence. As a term examining historical

72. Benjamin D. Sommer, "Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to Lyle Eslinger," *Vetus Testamentum* 46, no. 4 (1996): 481.

73. Russell L. Meek, "Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology," *Biblica* 95, no. 1 (2014): 283.

74. Edward L. Greenstein, "The Book of Job and Mesopotamian Literature: How Many Degrees of Separation?" in *Subtle Citation, Allusion, and Translation in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Ziony Zevit (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2017), 145.

75. In Luke 9:31 at the Mount of Transfiguration Moses and Elias appear and speak "and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." The English translation obscures the reference, for the word "decease" is in the Greek the word "exodus." The NIV translates the passage this way: "They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem." Of course, translating the Greek word *exodus* with the English word *exodus* would have helped to make the allusion more obvious, as the New Living Translation and the Aramaic Bible in Plain English do.

precedence, metaleptic reading would posit the slight invocation as historically later and the detail-rich narrative as historically prior.

Does such a relationship contribute to determining priority? Take for example a biblical instance: does Jonah 4:2 cite Exodus 34:16–17, or is it the other way around? When Jonah angrily denounces God for not being a nationalist, extending mercy to the people of Nineveh (Israel's enemy, and therefore Jonah's), Jonah cites scripture: "O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a *gracious* God, and *merciful*, *slow to anger*, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." This passage seems so similar to Exodus 34:6–7 with both selections emphasizing the graciousness, mercy, and forgiving nature of God (with the Jonah's citation asserting these characteristics as divine faults with regard to the Assyrians rather than praising them) that one is likely dependent on the other: "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, *merciful* and *gracious*, *longsuffering*, and abundant in goodness and truth, *keeping mercy for thousands* forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." This passage has all the specificity on the side of Exodus being the predecessor text. By citing just one detail from God's previous mercy, grace, and longsuffering in the foundational event of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and receipt of the law of Moses, the Jonah passage evokes God's previous works of salvation for Israel, extending mercy for thousands and forgiving Israel's sins. God granted Israel mercy, grace, and longsuffering by sending Moses down the mountain with the tablets of the law after 40 days to find the children of Israel engaging in idolatry at the base of the mountain. The irony is that God is willing to extend the same mercy, grace, and longsuffering to the people of Nineveh that Jonah wants reserved only for Israel with the Israelite ancestors knowingly idolatrous while the Ninevites don't know their moral right hands from their left (Jonah 4:11). The reader needs to know the larger story of granting the law of Moses to see what the book of Jonah is doing in the allusion, whereas one doesn't have to know the book of Jonah to get the message from Exodus 34.

The Jonah narrative fits into the larger context of Moses receiving the tablets of the law. The law of Moses is viewed as an example of God's grace and mercy toward the children of Israel; the author of Jonah cites the passage to assert that God doesn't jealously ration that grace and mercy only to Israel but also abundantly doles out such compassion to the enemies of Israel. The Mosaic covenant embodied by the tablets of the law (the tablets containing

the 10 commandments, a synecdoche of the law), the book of Jonah asserts (but not Jonah himself), isn't reserved only for the children of Israel, and Christians further maintain that when a greater than Jonah comes, that mercy will be expanded to Jews and Gentiles alike when the men of Nineveh will stand in judgment of the generation in Jesus's day, for the Ninevites repented when extended that mercy and grace while the audience Jesus addresses doesn't (Matthew 12:41). If one extends Metcalfe's hypothetical argument to its *reductio ad absurdum*, perhaps he wants to suggest Moses is citing Jonah.⁷⁶ If Exodus were citing Jonah, the reader wouldn't get the extra tone and the full background of the text being alluded to; if Jonah were citing Exodus, the reader would be able to detect that extra resonance of grace originally conceived to be confined within the law of Moses but now being reconceived as expanding universally to all of God's children. The Jonah passage depends on the reader's realizing the allusive connection and the direction of influence; one can read the Exodus passage without any clue regarding the connection to Jonah. In this case, the nearly unanimous biblical critical consensus is that Moses is chronologically and canonically earlier, thus making Jonah dependent on the Pentateuch.

One reason Hebrew prophets allude to earlier prophets is to bolster their own credentials (granted, Metcalfe's ideological position would assert that for a young man on the American frontier the same would be true). Repeating the oracles and words of a canonical and established prophet sustains the claims of the belated prophet yet with or without honor in his own country, among his own kin, and in his own house. Sommer notes that Deutero-Isaiah alludes to Jeremiah (again, the predecessor version of Jeremiah rather than the one we read) in order to "situate himself in a broad stream of prophetic tradition."⁷⁷ If there were Nephites, Lehi would gain little by citing Alma: Alma would profit considerably in his later controversies with Nehor, the leaders of Ammonihah, Korihor, the Zoramites, etc. by appropriating the prophetic tradition that preceded him and would likely already be taken as authoritative by Alma's interlocutors. "Writers often bolster the authority of a new work by demonstrating their dependence on texts that are already respected; an attempt to reinforce one's legitimacy within a tradition constitutes one of the most commonly cited reasons

76. Quite a few Old Testament passages allude to Exodus 34:6–7 (from all parts of the Hebrew Bible: the Pentateuch, the Writings, and the Prophets): Numbers 14:18, Psalm 86:15, Psalm 103:8, Psalm 145:8, Nehemiah 9:17, Joel 2:13, in addition to Jonah 4:2.

77. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 73.

for allusion.”⁷⁸ With some of Lehi’s sons doubting his prophetic status and dismissing him as a mere dreamer, Lehi would need some rhetorical support from the prophetic tradition. Lehi would naturally allude to extant texts, rather than texts yet to be written. This is the prophetic commissioning type scene common in the Hebrew Bible. Of course, since Metcalfe and Vogel build into their presuppositions that the Book of Mormon has no connection to the Hebraic prophetic tradition and the inducements to cite within that tradition, their Lehi has no incentive to cite Alma but are both figments of Smith’s imagination; no broad stream of Hebraic prophetic tradition connects a nonexistent Lehi or Alma to any tradition except to the antebellum Christian context of frontier America prior to and during the Jacksonian period. By excluding the possibility that the Book of Mormon exudes Hebraic textuality and builds Hebraic narrative conventions into the scripture, these revisionists deny or ignore the richness and depth of Book of Mormon narrative. They read the scripture down to their own level of potentiality and impose modern notions such as plagiarism on texts that are ancient or make claims to antiquity.⁷⁹

It is much easier to show that a relationship exists between two texts than to prove which one came first. Granted, Metcalfe acknowledges that “direction of literary dependence is always difficult to establish,”⁸⁰ but some cases are easier than others, and the Lehi/Alma direction seems in the simpler range on the continuum of difficulty. David Wright cites William Morrow to lay out a methodology in determining direction of literary dependence. The later text drawing on an earlier one should possess the following elements: (1) parallels in terminology between the later and earlier text should be evident, (2) similarity in textual or narrative order makes for a stronger case of reliance, (3) density of correspondence with multiple features converging makes for a stronger argument for dependence, and (4) unique and distinctive elements of similarity make for a stronger case of

78. Ibid., 124.

79. “The modern regime of authorship, far from being timeless and universal, is a relatively recent formation — the result of a quite radical reconceptualization of the creative process that culminated less than 200 years ago in the heroic self-presentation of Romantic poets. As they saw it, *genuine* authorship is *originary* in the sense that it results not in a variation, an imitation, or an adaptation, and certainly not a re-production.” Peter Jaszi and Martha Woodmansee, “Introduction,” *The Construction of Authorship: Textual Appropriation in Law and Literature*, ed. Martha Woodmansee and Peter Jaszi (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 2–3.

80. Metcalfe, “The Priority of Mosiah,” 399.

reliance.⁸¹ Quite frankly, I don't see how these four criteria help determine the direction of reliance, just that dependence exists.

Preparing the Way, A Prolegomenon to Exegesis

If only we could read the Book of Mormon in the original text! This would allow us not only to see the direction of influence but also to examine the unique but antique way the Nephite scripture updates the words of Isaiah and other ancient prophets. Unfortunately, we don't have access to any original manuscript before the one produced through Joseph Smith. We must be satisfied with comparing the English of the Book of Mormon and that of the King James Version (or other modern translations) instead of resorting to Hebrew or Greek versions of texts like Isaiah. Take this passage: “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain” (Isaiah 40:3–4). Since nobody would question the direction of influence when the Book of Mormon uses this wording of preparing the way (again, Nephi and Jacob state the text they are using, just as Alma cited Lehi's passage), what is left is to look at how the Mormon scripture makes use of the Isaiah passage. The passage relates a prophetic commissioning and may allude to the earlier commissioning scene in Isaiah 6. The earlier portions of Isaiah emphasize God's judgment on Israel for forsaking the covenant, mingled with some promises of renewal and return. This middle portion of Isaiah reverses the emphasis, highlighting return from exile for the remnant. God will bring the Jews back to Jerusalem as a highway by preparing a way for the return of the chosen people: “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.” Deutero-Isaiah often discusses preparing that highway for the return of the Jews to the promised land, and the messianic figure Cyrus the Persian will free the Jews from bondage to return to Canaan (Isaiah 45:1): “I will go before thee [Cyrus], and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron” (Isaiah 45:2). The God of Israel will be the forerunner in

81. David P. Wright, “Method in the Study of Textual Source Dependence: The Covenant Code,” in *Subtle Citation, Allusion, and Translation in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Ziony Zevit (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2017), 161.

this passage preparing the way before Cyrus the Great to subdue nations (particularly Babylon) and break down gates so the God of Israel can be known to all the world and Cyrus can be the shepherd of the Jews (Isaiah 44:28) and the Lord's anointed (Isaiah 45:1, to be "the anointed one" is to be a messiah): "I have raised him [Cyrus] up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 45:13). In this verse the KJV translation does a disservice to what should be continuity from verse 2. Most translations make the connection to the verse earlier in the chapter by using similar English words. Here is the NIV: "I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight." New and Old Testament writers believed the God of Israel was in charge of history and creation, and even a heathen such as Cyrus can be a messianic figure, one who, acting under divine direction, assists in "redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

In summarizing Lehi's dream in First Nephi 10, Nephi interrupts his recording of the two visions of the tree of life to explicate the meaning of his own version of the dream. The tree represents Christ. Note the context of Lehi's allusion to the discussion of preparing a way in Isaiah. Lehi refers to the exact context Isaiah is addressing, the Babylonian captivity of the Jews and their return to their homeland: "after they should be destroyed, even that great city Jerusalem, and many be carried away captive into Babylon, according to the own due time of the Lord, they should return again, yea, even be brought back out of captivity; and after they should be brought back out of captivity they should possess again the land of their inheritance" (1 Nephi 10:3). Here, neither Lehi nor Nephi explicitly marks the allusion to Isaiah 40. However, the author here does refer to the exact same historical context Deutero-Isaiah is addressing when using the trope of preparing the way. Stripping away symbolism, Lehi provides a straightforward prophecy of the coming of the Messiah: "even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews — even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world ... And *he spake also concerning a prophet who should come before the Messiah, to prepare the way of the Lord — Yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight*; for there standeth one among you whom ye know not; and he is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. And much spake my father concerning this thing" (1 Nephi 10:5, 7–8). Joseph Spencer

notes that Lehi's wording seems mediated by similar New Testament references to the Baptist preparing the way before Christ.⁸²

The very notion of repetitions (regardless if one calls them types, type scenes, narrative analogies, midrashic expansions, inner-biblical exegesis, etc.) runs against the historicist assertion that a text means only what the original author intended. Repetitions by nature imply the existence of multiple meanings and symphonic reverberations within a single text, even when read in different historical contexts. Take, for example, Matthew's citation of that passage from Isaiah 40, applying it to Jesus and John the Baptist: "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matthew 3:3). Not John but Jesus is the messianic figure here: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:11–12). The significance isn't limited to just the historical context of the original but reverberates with larger meaning, with both harmony and polyphony in later contexts — and this precisely because it is the word of God, because the divine isn't limited by our small modern notions of time, history, and meaning. The God of the Old Testament can be the preparer before Cyrus the anointed one, or John can be the one who prepares the highway before Jesus the messiah.

From Spencer's reading, we understand the extremely close connection between the visions of the tree of life and Lehi's prophecy of Christ: "The visions of Lehi and Nephi and Jacob serve as interpretive keys to reading Isaiah. And, in turn, Isaiah's writings serve as interpretive keys to understanding the stakes of the visions of Lehi and his sons."⁸³ Lehi, much as the gospel writers, uses the Isaiah passage about preparing the road for the messiah because his vision of the tree of life is also about the coming of the messiah.

We would expect Nephi (and subsequent Nephite record keepers) to follow Nephi's injunction: three times in three verses in a chapter about writing records Nephi refers to "prophets of old" (1 Nephi 19:20–22) while directing his word "unto my people" (that is, Nephites) and "all the house of Israel" (1 Nephi 19:18–19), specifically mentioning "the books

82. Joseph M. Spencer, *The Vision of All: Twenty-five Lectures on Isaiah in Nephi's Record* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2016), 63–64.

83. *Ibid.*, 56–57.

of Moses” and “the prophet Isaiah” (1 Nephi 19:23) when Nephi “did *liken all scriptures unto us*, that it might be for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23). We wouldn’t be surprised to read Nephi adapting Isaiah or any scripture to the contemporary needs of his readers. Adaptation and repetition are what Hebraic prophecy and narrative are about. This likening principle is in a passage just preceding Nephi’s quotation of two chapters from Isaiah (48 and 49).

Nephi himself likens in this very passage where he states his likening principle. Let me quote the entire verse: “Wherefore I spake unto them, saying: Hear ye the words of the prophet, ye who are a remnant of the house of Israel, a branch who have been broken off; hear ye the words of the prophet, which were written unto all the house of Israel, and *liken them unto yourselves*, that ye may have hope as well as your brethren from whom ye have been broken off; for after this manner has the prophet written” (1 Nephi 19:24). Nephi asserts not only his imperative to liken the scriptures to contemporary circumstances, but he also maintains that Isaiah wrote them to be likened (if we want to take Nephi’s statement about authorial intention seriously). This passage about a branch broken off, separated from the main body of Israelites who bear the burden of the Abrahamic covenant, shows Nephi alluding to Isaiah and therefore likening the scriptures. Here is the passage from Nephi’s appropriation of Isaiah just two chapters later: “And again: Harken, O ye house of Israel, all ye that are broken off and are driven out because of the wickedness of the pastors of my people; yea, all ye that are broken off, that are scattered abroad, who are of my people, O house of Israel. Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken ye people from far; the Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name” (1 Nephi 21:1). Notice that Nephi has likened by adding the prefatory material. In the KJV Isaiah, this verse looks like this: “Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name” (Isaiah 49:1). Nephi is contemporizing the prophets of old, making them relevant to his own audience by adapting them to the Lehiters’ situation, for those Israelites are not only now on an isle of the sea but have been driven there — scattered abroad — by the wicked pastors in Jerusalem.

Nephi in summing up his brother Jacob’s discussion and quotation of Isaiah makes several important points about repetitions and the two brothers’ relationship (through quotation, allusion, and echo) to Isaiah. After Jacob, at Nephi’s request, speaks about Isaiah’s message while

citing the Judean prophet, Nephi states that he “delights in [Isaiah’s] words” (2 Nephi 11:2); that delight doesn’t prevent him from altering and recontextualizing Isaiah. Nephi bolsters both his and Jacob’s prophetic credentials by stating that both had seen the Redeemer (2 Nephi 11:1–2), much as Lehi established his credibility by witnessing the Lord in a vision of the divine council, as Isaiah did in Isaiah 6. The law of Moses testifies of Christ, “for all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him” (2 Nephi 11:4). Using typological language to show patterns of repetition that point forward to the crux of human history, Nephi employs vocabulary indicating his own way of using repetitions to make the tradition relevant to his own people, since Nephi is about to launch into 13 chapters where he quotes Isaiah (making adaptations of his inherited material much as Isaiah feels free to adapt the content he is heir to).⁸⁴

84. Benjamin Sommer notes that Deutero-Isaiah feels free to expand on the writings of previous prophets and writers, disagree with them, update them in light of what seems like their failed predictions, and recontextualize them for contemporary purposes; he is likening whatever scriptures he had. Stating that the punishment pronounced in First Isaiah is now completed and ready to end, he promises a return to the lands of Judah: “Here again, Deutero-Isaiah not only borrows from but also alters an older oracle. But the revision does not amount to rejection. On the contrary, Deutero-Isaiah updates the older prophecy in order to give it ongoing validity” (Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 53–54). Isaiah isn’t contradicting Jeremiah or engaging in polemic against him but redirecting a promise of return from exile from the Northern Tribes in Assyria to the Jews in Babylon. He recontextualizes the promise that the Davidic dynasty would be eternal to widen out that Davidic covenant to all the Jews, so the promises made in the Davidic covenant apply to all the children of Israel now that a descendant of David is no longer king of Judah (*ibid.*, 118). Deutero-Isaiah even engages in polemic against writings considered authoritative in the tradition; for example, the Priestly account of creation in Genesis 1 posits God’s creation out of pre-existent matter rather than *ex nihilo*, which Deutero-Isaiah is at pains to rebut (*ibid.*, 142–43). Similarly, the prophet finds the creation account too anthropomorphic for his theology, so he stresses that God has no physical shape or content (*ibid.*, 143). This creation story also implies that other creatures from the divine council helped in the creation of the world by discussing the plan and carrying it out, and Deutero-Isaiah takes exception to that account, asserting that God alone participated in the creation. This same prophet objects to the notion that God needs to rest after the creation is complete, “but Deutero-Isaiah insists that YHWH, unlike a human being, never rests” (*ibid.*, 144). So here is a Hebraic writer-prophet not only willing to revise the traditional material but even contradict it. “For Deutero-Isaiah, YHWH was completely unlike human beings; stronger, incorporeal, solitary, unmistakably older than the world. In order to stress these characteristics of the divinity, Deutero-Isaiah weaves into his preaching statements

What happens when we run through Richard Hays's matrix the passage about preparing "the way of the Lord" from 1 Nephi 10 to what seems to be the text it alludes to in Isaiah 40? Whether you assert the existence of Nephite writers or that Smith wrote the Book of Mormon, either writer had access to Isaiah 40 and could refer to it. This answers Hays's first criteria about *availability*; Nephi asserts that the plates of brass contain "the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah" (1 Nephi 5:13) and even singles Isaiah out when he talks about likening the scriptures (1 Nephi 19:23). If you believe Joseph Smith is the author of these words, then demonstrating that he had access to Isaiah is fairly easy.

Hays's second criterion is *volume*: how much of the vocabulary in both texts overlaps? Lehi says "Yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for there standeth one among you whom ye know not; and he is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose" (1 Nephi 10:7–8) while the Isaiah passage has so many of the same words in similar order: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain" (Isaiah 40:3–4). Regarding word order, Sommer asserts that "identical order almost certainly results from borrowing. Indeed, the later author's decision to mimic the order of the marked items may constitute an attempt to signal the borrowing in a particularly clear fashion."⁸⁵ Of course, with the additional clauses at the end of Lehi's version about the preparer not being worthy to be compared to the messiah, one might be tempted to identify the Matthew passage as the original or the mediator text between Lehi and Isaiah.

Hays's third criterion is *recurrence*: does the author refer to the predecessor passage elsewhere? Lehi doesn't, but as I will demonstrate, other Book of Mormon authors do: Alma at Gideon (Alma 7:9, 10) and Ammonihah (Alma 9:28). The Isaiah passage seems a favorite for the Book of Mormon authors, and Nephi goes out of his way to recommend Isaiah more generally (2 Nephi 25:1–6).

that react subtly to Genesis 1, thus promoting a new understanding of God. In so doing, he does not merely reread or interpret the older text, but argues against it" (ibid., 145).

85. Ibid., 71.

Hays's fourth criterion is *thematic occurrence*: how well does the original text fit into the context of the later allusive text? This is a measurement by which the Book of Mormon shines, for the Nephite recordkeepers were constantly likening ancient scripture to their own circumstances, making ancient scripture relevant for the contemporary audience. When Alma preaches to the people of Gideon, he takes the messianic context of Isaiah 40 and applies it to his audience: "But behold, the Spirit hath said this much unto me, saying: Cry unto this people, saying — Repent ye, and prepare the way of the Lord, and walk in his paths, which are straight; for behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth" (Alma 7:9). Of course, he had just two verses previously referred to that messianic context in which a redeemer would "come among his people," and this event "is of more importance than they all" (Alma 7:7). These Nephites in Gideon must be those preparing the way for the coming of that redeemer. Alma expresses gratitude that the Gideonites, unlike Nephites in other cities, are following the path of righteousness: "For I perceive that ye are in the paths of righteousness; I perceive that ye are in the path which leads to the kingdom of God; yea, I perceive that ye are making his paths straight" (Alma 7:19). This reference qualifies as allusion because no explicit marker notifies the reader of the connection to Isaiah (or perhaps to Lehi's comments in First Nephi 10). In this passage the Nephites at Gideon are those preparing the way for the Lord: Alma was commanded in verse 9 to declare that the people must "prepare the way of the Lord, and walk in his paths, which are straight," and in verse 19 Alma notes that that his audience is doing just that by clearing the road of obstacles. To those at Gideon the audience members are the forerunners preparing the way before the Lord who soon "cometh among his people" (Alma 7:7) and not only are they preparing the way but are themselves traveling the path.

In the original Isaiah passage, the God of Israel is the one preparing the road; in Nephi and in Matthew the authors see and foresee John the Baptist as the great road preparer, and for Alma, the people at Gideon are those preparing the way for the Lord. The allusion to the familiar verbiage in Isaiah is adapted to each audience and updates to contemporary circumstances while making ongoing conditions pertinent to the tradition.

Alma also uses the same Isaiah allusion just two chapters later when he preaches at Ammonihah. Unlike the Gideonites, those at Ammonihah are wicked and the majority will reject Alma's message. Alma's declaration is similar to his use of the Isaiah passage at Gideon: God has sent an angel to declare — similar to the Baptist's preaching

— that the people must “repent ... for the kingdom of heaven is nigh at hand” (Alma 9:25). Also, as the herald and preparer, the messenger delivers the message that “not many days hence the Son of God shall come in his glory” (Alma 9:26). Those who repent and are baptized will be redeemed. Alma inserts an *inclusio*, referring to the words of the angel in verse 25 and again in verse 30. This repetition allows emphasis on the words of the angel described in verse 28: “Therefore, prepare ye the way of the Lord, for the time is at hand that all men shall reap a reward of their works” (Alma 9:28). The angel, through Alma, commands the people to be those who prepare the road for the Lord by repenting, although “seeing that your hearts have been grossly hardened against the word of God, and seeing that ye are a lost and a fallen people” (Alma 9:30), the prospect of repentance seems remote.

Alma isn’t restricting his allusions to Isaiah when he preaches at Ammonihah. Sandwiched between the angel’s reporting the need to cry repentance unto the people (Alma 9:25) and reporting that such crying had been done (Alma 9:29), the passage introduces wording we are familiar with by now: “go forth and cry mightily unto this people, saying: Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is nigh at hand” (Alma 9:25). The following is the angel speaking, and Alma conveying that angelic message: note that the Lord is declared to be coming in glory. The angel is alluding to Exodus 34 (much as we have seen Jonah also do) where the context is the Lord descending in a cloud to give the 10 commandments representing the law.

Jonah’s isn’t the only oracle in the minor biblical prophets against Nineveh. Nahum also pronounces judgment against the wicked city (as Alma does against Ammonihah) but to quite different effect than Jonah. Jonah, Nahum, and Alma also call upon the creedal formula from Exodus 34 in predicting the destruction of the two cities. Here is Nahum’s use of the Exodus passage:

The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. (Nahum 1:3)

Exodus 34:5–7	Alma 9:26	Jonah 4:1–2
And <i>the Lord descended in the cloud</i> , and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, the Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.	And not many days hence <i>the Son of God shall come in his glory</i> ; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity, and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long-suffering, quick to hear the cries of his people and to answer their prayers.	But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

Both the Alma passage and the Jonah passage emphasize the possibility that the cities' residents could repent and indulge the grace and mercy of God. The Nahum passage strikes a different tone emphasizing the judgment and justice of God. "Nahum, like Jonah, is tasked with proclaiming an oracle against Nineveh. He too makes use of Exodus 34:6–7. Yet, he seems unaware of the first part of God's statement. He writes, '*The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty*' (Nahum 1:3)."⁸⁶ Alma takes the middle path in his preaching to the people of Ammonihah, proclaiming the justice and destruction but holding out the possibility of forgiveness for those who repent. Nahum cites Exodus 34 to emphasize God's judgment; Jonah cites the same passage in order to pass judgment on God for being too forgiving, too merciful. The allusive markers are more abundant in the Alma passage than in the Jonah verses. As commentators often comment, the Jonah citation of Exodus 34 ends before the crucial part of the creedal formula that is Nahum's main emphasis: "Jonah's quotation of Exodus stops in a peculiar place. He only mentions the compassionate part of God's statement."⁸⁷ When quoting Exodus 34 Jonah omits the wickedness and depravity of Nineveh. Nahum focuses attention on those characteristics in citing the traditional formula God speaks to Moses: "A more subtle connection that readers make between the two books is their use of Exodus 34:6–7. In this passage, God reveals himself as merciful, compassionate, loving, willing to forgive,

86. Jacob Cerone, "Nahum, Jonah, and Exodus," *ἐνθύμησις* (website), January 11, 2014, <https://jacobcerone.com/2014/01/11/nahum-and-jonah/>.

87. Ibid.

but will also punish the guilty.”⁸⁸ Mera Flaumenhaft also notes the oddity that Jonah throws back into the face of God from the citation of Exodus 34, but referring only to the part about mercy, not the later element about justice and judgment.

But Jonah says he *knew* all along that God was “gracious, compassionate, long-suffering and abundant in mercy [*chesed*],” the very quality he said was lacking in idol worshippers. Jonah here cites with contempt the so-called attributes of God enumerated to Moses in Exodus 34. These explain, Jonah says, why he “fled beforehand to Tarshish.” But, once again, he fails to tell the whole truth. He remembers four of the first twelve “attributes” about God’s compassion, patience, and mercy. But he omits the last and longest of the thirteen. It speaks emphatically of God’s justice: “He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and on the children’s unto the third and unto the fourth generation.” Prayers for forgiveness often omit this last “attribute,” and commentators sometimes even interpret the limitation on the number of generations as yet another affirmation of mercy. But the Exodus passage suggests that God’s care/mercy “by no means” precludes justice. They are not simply distinguishable and opposed alternatives, as Jonah the divider seems to think, but complementary parts of a whole. Even in tension, might they not imply each other?⁸⁹

Nahum and Jonah cite the same passage from Exodus 34:6, but the effect of the quotation is dramatically different, with the Jonah passage ironically criticizing God for outreach (and successful outreach) to Israel’s enemies.

The prophets quite commonly cite this creedal passage from Exodus 34, whether proclaiming that the Ninevites, the Israelites, or the Ammonihites must repent; here is Joel: “And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil” (Joel 2:13). Ackerman notes that Jonah’s citation of Exodus 34 that the Pentateuch and its successor texts never record a prophet/preacher/missionary who has such success as Jonah; Ackerman analyzes the Hebrew syntax of the passage alluding to Exodus 34.

88. Ibid.

89. Mera J. Flaumenhaft, “The Story of Jonah,” *The Review of Politics* 76 (2014): 15–16.

He speaks five words in Nineveh, and whole city instantly turns away from its “evil.” But as God repents of the “evil” that has been planned for the city, this “evils” Jonah “a great evil” (4:1) [AT]. In the context of a petition prayer (the same word used for his activity in the belly of the fish in 2:1) we finally learn why Jonah has fled his divine commission. For the third time he proclaims a statement of faith from Israel’s religious traditions (4:2; see Exod. 34:6, Joel 2:13). The first two, taken out of context, may initially be understood as positive affirmations. The narrative does not permit such a reading this time: I attempted to flee your realm because I knew that, ultimately, you are a merciful God.⁹⁰

The divine attributes listed in Alma 9 aren’t in the same order as the Exodus passage, but it is clear that the Book of Mormon verse is alluding not only to the tradition about crying repentance and making roads straight but also interweaving an allusion to Moses hewing the tablets in order to receive the 10 commandments.

As far as thematic recurrence goes, the original passage in Isaiah is messianic, with the Lord preparing for the Jews’ return from exile through a pagan, kingly, messianic figure such as Cyrus.⁹¹ The Matthew and Lehi passages project a preparing prophet who straightens the road for the messiah to use. Alma also forecasts a messiah to come, but the people themselves are the preparing agents who clear the road and smooth out its crookedness. Each of the belated Hebraic writers adapts the Isaianic passage (Isaiah 40:3–4), beginning from the same elements: a messiah, a preparer of the road, a return.

Hays’s fifth criterion is *historical plausibility*. Could the alluder have intended the connection and the targeted audience have linked the Isaiah text with the allusion? Matthew’s gospel is so steeped in fulfillment formulas that doubtless his audience and he himself as a writer were constantly resorting to such allusions, quotations, and echoes,⁹² indicating a powerful expectation that both the writer and

90. James S. Ackerman, “Jonah,” *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 239–40.

91. Isaiah 45:1 calls Cyrus by name and refers to him as the Lord’s “anointed,” which word is a messianic title and 45:2 reaffirms the wording of one who prepares the way for Israel’s return with God acting through Cyrus: “I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight.”

92. “The Hebrew Scriptures — or Christian Old Testament — permeate Matthew’s Gospel. Approximately fifty-five references prove close enough to label

the audience would understand the allusions as such. Similarly, the Book of Mormon authors (here Alma — mediated through Mormon — and Nephi) constantly allude to the Old Testament, although we are just now beginning to plumb those Book of Mormon depths. Could Joseph Smith and his antebellum audience have made these allusive connections? Doubtless, Americans in that Early Republic period were steeped in the Bible, but we are asking more of Joseph Smith here than just having read the Bible; we are requiring him to have intuited the contours and characteristics of Hebraic narrative 150 years before they were articulated in contemporary biblical criticism. And the historical record brings into question whether Joseph Smith possessed any appreciable biblical knowledge. “Although Joseph’s own reading of the scriptures had been sporadic at best, Emma knew the Bible well and read it often. Once, as he translated, the narrative mentioned the walls of Jerusalem. Joseph stopped. ‘Emma,’ he asked, ‘did Jerusalem have walls surrounding it?’ Emma told him it did. ‘O, I thought I was deceived,’ was his reply.”⁹³ A close Smith associate, David Whitmer (the bulk of Book of Mormon translation occurred in the Whitmer home), asserted that “‘in translating the characters Smith, who was *illiterate* and but little versed in Biblical lore” didn’t know the Bible well enough to write such a work.”⁹⁴ Smith’s own mother claimed that Joseph was little aware of the contents of the Bible at 18 when he was first contacted by Moroni; Joseph Smith “had never read the Bible through in his life.”⁹⁵ Attributing sophisticated citations and allusions to Smith is a problem that those who assert his authorship have never adequately addressed because their ideological commitments don’t permit them to acknowledge the text’s

them ‘quotations,’ compared to about sixty-five for the other three canonical Gospels put together.” Craig L. Blomberg, “Matthew,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 1. That number of fifty-five doesn’t include Matthew’s allusions or echoes to Old Testament passages.

93. Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith; Prophets’ Wife, “Elect Lady,” Polygamy’s Foe, 1804–1879* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 26.

94. Daniel C. Peterson, “A Response: ‘What the Manuscripts and the Eyewitnesses Tell Us about the Translation of the Book of Mormon,’” in *Uncovering the Original Text of the Book of Mormon: History and Findings of the Critical Text Project*, ed. M. Gerald Bradford and Alison V. P. Coutts (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 70.

95. Daniel C. Peterson, “Not Joseph’s, and Not Modern,” in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 197.

complexity, requiring more than simplistic analysis. Perhaps it is more plausible to posit ancient Hebraic writers using such ancient Hebraic compositional conventions. In any case, the Book of Mormon writers note that the records the Lehi group brought from Jerusalem contained “the prophecies of the holy prophets, from the beginning, even down to the commencement of the reign of Zedekiah” (1 Nephi 5:13) and Nephi asserts often his love for the writings of Isaiah (see 2 Nephi 25).

The sixth of Hays’s criteria for judging the presence of allusion is *history of interpretation*: have previous readers found the allusive connection? Joseph Spencer notes the similarities between Lehi’s use of “preparing the way” terminology and holds out a few possibilities: (1) the borrowing is unintentional on Lehi’s part but just part of the furniture of his mind, (2) the wording might be based more on vocabulary and syntax from the gospels rather than a direct allusion, (3) the connection might be what Lehi intended as a direct fulfillment by John and Jesus of what he thought Isaiah intended, or (4) that Lehi saw the baptism of Jesus in vision and found in Isaiah’s terminology the best way to express the status of John.⁹⁶ Spencer also takes up the connection between 1 Nephi 10:7–8 and Isaiah 40:3⁹⁷ noting not just that Lehi weaves a reference to Isaiah but other sources into these verses. Frank Judd makes the connection between Lehi’s use of Isaiah 40 and his own prophecy of Christ.⁹⁸

Allusion studies in the Book of Mormon are nowhere near advanced as those regarding the Bible, so we shouldn’t expect to find as many precursor readings making the connections as we would in the tradition of biblical interpretation. We will need centuries more work to get to the point where we can aggregate the work done by thousands of forerunner Book of Mormon readers as we have with New Testament writers, Patristic readers, medieval exegetes, and the excavation of modern readers working under historical critical paradigms. My searches have not found readers connecting Alma 7 and Alma 9 to Isaiah 40.

Seven is *satisfaction*. Does knowing that the trailing passage echoes or alludes to the leading passage illuminate the meaning of the secondary text? In the case of First Nephi 10, Alma 7, and Alma 9 when one combines

96. Spencer, *The Vision of All*, 64–65.

97. Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Salem, OR: Salt Press, LLC, 2012), 71–72.

98. Frank F. Judd, “What Nephi’s Vision Teaches about the Bible and the Book of Mormon,” in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, Stanley A. Johnson (Provo and Salt Lake City: BYU and Deseret Book, 2011), 284–85.

the allusions with Nephi's principle of likening the scriptures, one gains abundant insight into Nephite exegetical practice. Jacob articulates the principle specifically in the context of citing Isaiah (2 Nephi 6:4): the words of Isaiah are intended for all the house of Israel, and "they may be likened unto you, for ye are of the house of Israel" (2 Nephi 6:5). We begin to understand that Lehi and Alma (just to cite the examples I have worked with so far in this essay) take a messianic passage that poses Cyrus as a pagan messiah with the Lord preparing the way so the Persian ruler can release the Jews from Babylonian bondage to return to Canaan, and Matthew transforms the agents so that John is the preparer for Jesus, the Nephites of Gideon are cast as the preparers for the Christ-Messiah, and the Ammonihahites (Alma 9:28) are commanded to be the ones to prepare the road for Christ to come just as John the Baptist appropriates Isaiah to command the Jews to prepare the way of the Lord (Matthew 3:3).

An Adequate Framework for Understanding Hebraic Repetitions

I have censured in this essay a few critics who assert the Book of Mormon is best understood as a novel written by Joseph Smith: Brent Metcalfe, Edwin Firmage, and Dan Vogel. I could have singled out more. The spadework for such claims was performed by Fawn Brodie. When Brodie read repetitions in the Book of Mormon, she argued the typical but superficial modern claim that such recurrences are plagiarisms stolen from the Bible: "Many stories [Joseph Smith] borrowed from the Bible. The daughter of Jared, like Salome, danced before a king and a decapitation followed. Aminadi, like Daniel, deciphered handwriting on a wall, and Alma was converted after the exact fashion of St. Paul. The daughters of the Lamanites were abducted like the dancing daughters of Shiloh; and Ammon, the American counterpart of David, for want of a Goliath slew six sheep-rustlers with his sling."⁹⁹ Brodie is one who prepares the way for quite a few Book of Mormon critics who still have no better grasp of Hebraic narrative conventions (after all, she first published her biography of Joseph Smith in 1945, and we have experienced a conceptual revolution in approaches to Hebraic narrative starting forty years later, but an upheaval she could have anticipated — even triggered — by providing adequate readings of repetitions herself) than she did. Unfortunately, she prepared the way by making the road more crooked and debris strewn. Historical criticism of the New Testament itself has

99. Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith The Mormon Prophet*, Second ed. (New York: Knopf, 1982), 62–63.

gone to rehab since retooling its view of repetitions. Such narratives in Mark as duplicate stories of feeding large crowds were crucial to historical-critical theories about the gospels. The conventional view was that the stories were evidence of variant traditions of the same event; the explanation later evolved into the position that multiple oral and written sources (such as the Q source) predated Mark and eventually theories of the evolution from such early sources to a primitive gospel of Mark to the synoptic gospels as we know them.¹⁰⁰ This theory of gospel development that viewed doublets as stupidities in the text began to change in 1972 with the publication of Frans Neirynck's *Duality in Mark*. With Neirynck's cataloging of extensive repetition in the second gospel, instead of problems the repetitions began to be viewed as a feature of Mark's writing style. Not only were the doublets considered intentional and artful, but Neirynck showed that they weren't duplicates at all, but often featured intensification: "the second half of these dual constructions typically takes the reader a step beyond the first half."¹⁰¹ Consequently, the disciplinary conventional wisdom started changing attitudes about repetitions: what used to be viewed as a difficulty in the text is more likely now acknowledged to be the reader's shortcoming if a fault is posited. Predicaments "such as the problem of the two feeding stories in Mark, are not problems in the text per se, but problems in our own experience of reading the text"¹⁰² because the modern reader doesn't understand what the text is up to.

The typical modern readers are willing to sweep away such ancient narrative approaches as we read in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Book of Mormon, dismissing them as failures of the texts, crude thefts, unoriginal repeats. Fishbane conflates rabbinic and Christian exegetical terminology, demonstrating how similar the reading tactics are to each other. Joshua's crossing of the Jordan, for example, is a recurrence of the crossing of the Red Sea: it "was a remanifestation of divine redemptive power. The typological description of the 'events' is thus, at once, a reordering of the facts at hand and an aggadic reinterpretation of them."¹⁰³ These are typological interpretations of history embodied

100. George Aichele et al., *The Postmodern Bible* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 20.

101. Ibid., 21.

102. Ibid., 22.

103. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 360. The rabbinic tradition divides the legal passages of the Torah from the aggadic (sometimes spelled *haggadic*) parts. Aggadah is narrative content while halakhah is legal material.

early in the biblical text itself, not imposed by post-biblical readers on the text. Our modern readers can share with the Pentateuchal writer the idea that both water crossings are connected to each other: “Typologies serve, therefore, as the means whereby the deeper dimensions perceived to be latent in historical events are rendered manifest and explicit to the cultural imagination.” These repetitions aren’t evidence of the text’s poverty, but rather its opulence: “by means of retrojective typologies, events are removed from the neutral cascade of historical occurrences and embellished as modalities of foundational moments in Israelite history.”¹⁰⁴ So many exoduses occur in the biblical tradition, each repeating paradigmatic elements of the first, the very fact of repetition brings with the secondary event some heightening or fulfilling element that redefines the primary episode.

Readers of Hebraic scriptural productions such as the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, Qumranic texts, and even the Book of Mormon must acknowledge the intertextual nature of the text even to just begin the exegetical process.¹⁰⁵ This feature goes under many names such as allusion, echo, quotation, and influence — all of which Carroll notes are broadly similar — but we often today use the term “intertextuality” because it covers a broader range of repeated phenomena than the other terms.¹⁰⁶ The term “allusion” is useful as a general term for a relationship less explicit than quotation, but not helpful when trying to be more specific about the affiliation between the two texts.¹⁰⁷ “Because *allusion* lacks the concise, diamond sparkle of clarity, *echo* has been introduced into discussions of these phenomena[.] ... [*E*]*cho* is used to refer to any close phonological parallel and, by semantic extension, to any repetition of imitation or evocation of a stylistic feature or motif or theme of one text in a later text, be they connected or not.”¹⁰⁸ What Borgman says about repetitions in Genesis should also be applied to the Hebrew and Christian Bibles and the Book of Mormon for that matter. Borgman’s exegetical context is the seven visits divinity makes to Abraham. “Overlooking such patterns of repetition that run through Genesis contributes to its being a story we haven’t heard, a story whose God

104. Ibid.

105. Robert P. Carroll, “Intertextuality and the Book of Jeremiah: Animadversions on Text and Theory,” in *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. J. Cheryl Exum and David J. A. Clines (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), 60–61.

106. Carroll, “Intertextuality and Jeremiah,” 76.

107. Ziony Zevit, “Echoes of Texts Past,” in *Subtle Citation, Allusion, and Translation in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Ziony Zevit (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2017), 3.

108. Ibid., 4.

gets shaped by our own projections and biases rather than by the text.”¹⁰⁹ Seven similar visits from God or God’s messenger is a pretty obvious form of repetition, but Borgman also notes persistent word plays and repeated episodes, such as Abraham risking his wife in a foreign land.¹¹⁰ An adequate understanding of repetitions is necessary for understanding Genesis. “Miss the repetition, miss the story — and any chance of objectivity. From echoing word sounds to parallelisms and doubled episodes, Genesis plays very seriously with the possibilities of repetition.”¹¹¹

By ignoring the worldview ancient Hebraic writers wrote into the texts and imposing a modern notion instead, the contemporary reader can dismiss the scriptural stories without having to grapple with them from within their own conceptual understandings, without even attempting to apprehend that way of narrating. “In the Bible, however, the matrix for allusion is often a sense of absolute historical continuity and recurrence, or an assumption that earlier events and figures are timeless ideological models by which all that follows can be measured. Since many of the biblical writers saw history as a pattern of cyclical repetition of events, there are abundant instances of this first category of allusion.”¹¹² The writers’ conceptual schemes and textual habits can’t but be accounted for and not merely be dismissed by anyone who aspires to understanding Hebraic narrative.

Biblical repetitions should be read as intentional and meaningful aspects of the text, not storyline errors or primitive narration. The reader must also acknowledge the premises built into the narrative pattern, which include that God is omnipotent and teaches humans through repetition.¹¹³ This ontology and epistemology is matched by a view of history asserting that when God sends forth his word to prophets who repeat it, the divine is manifesting in history.¹¹⁴ Through words and narratives both the divine and human advance, for “the impression of repetition or even periodicity in history is created to teach that the world is not governed by chance but by a well defined plan, discernable in patterns set by divine providence.”¹¹⁵ Rowe emphasizes a point made by Karl Barth. God is the foundation of all creation, and when reading the New Testament, the ontological assumption must be granted that

109. Paul Borgman, *Genesis: The Story We Haven’t Heard* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 13.

110. *Ibid.*, 14.

111. *Ibid.*, 18–19.

112. Alter, *World of Biblical Literature*, 117.

113. Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 419.

114. Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 91.

115. Zakovitch, “*And You Shall Tell*,” 20.

the writers are committed to even if the modern reader doesn't share the belief. "The hermeneutical corollary of Barth's insight is of momentous consequence and can be stated simply: what we think about God will determine what we think about everything else. To speak of 'God' is to invoke the context for all understanding."¹¹⁶

Matthew, like the other gospel writers, viewed God as not only the author of history, but he also believed God to intervene in history. God's prophets are the mouthpieces by which God plots "the script of history."¹¹⁷ God hammers the type to fashion the antitype, intertextual fixed points, initial iterations, and their repetitions. For Matthew, fulfillment of Old Testament types operated under the notion "that nearly everything in the story of Jesus will turn out to be the fulfillment of something pre-scripted by God through the prophets. Israel's sacred history is presented by Matthew as an elaborate figurative tapestry designed to point forward to Jesus and his activity."¹¹⁸ While the modern attitude toward repetitions is disdainful, viewing repetitions in the Bible and Book of Mormon as defects, all one has to do is shift to different foundational presuppositions, and the view of repetitions radically transforms. Typology, midrash, allusion: all these approaches to Hebraic textuality respond differently but within a tight family resemblance to such recurrences: "If God is the implied author of the Bible, then the gaps, repetitions, contradictions, and heterogeneity of the biblical text must be *read*, as a central part of the system of meaning production of that text. In midrash the rabbis respond to this invitation and challenge."¹¹⁹ The scorn too many moderns have for repetition needs to give way to an understanding that ancient narrative is far more advanced than most modern readers are. "We should give Paul and his readers credit for being at least as sophisticated and nuanced in their reading of Scripture as we are. Everything about Paul's use of OT texts suggests

116. C. Kavin Rowe, "The Book of Acts and the Cultural Explication of the Identity of God," in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays*, ed. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe, and A. Katherine Grieb (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 244.

117. Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 37. The contents of *Reading Backwards*, by the way, are repeated, often verbatim in Hays's more recent book *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*. The reader might find reading the two books about repetition to have much redundancy, as Hays acknowledges about his rush to publish the latter book before his pancreatic cancer might have ended the book project before it was ready for publication.

118. *Ibid.*, 37.

119. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and Reading Midrash*, 40.

that his ‘implied reader’ not only knows Scripture but also appreciates its allusive subtlety.”¹²⁰ But the contemporary reader must recognize that to keep up with Paul, with Isaiah, with Luke, with Nephi, with Mormon, one must be a reader to match their texts — no easy task and one requiring hard work, in-depth knowledge of the Bible and Book of Mormon, and an intelligent theory of reading. Not only has Robert Alter prepared the path for us to understand narrative in the Hebrew Bible adequately, but Richard Hays has done similar clearing of the road’s debris for us to understand the allusive connections between the gospels and Paul’s letters with the Old Testament. And by understanding repetition in the Bible better, we smooth out the road for better comprehension of the Book of Mormon.

Mark’s gospel is more indirect and therefore more allusive than the other gospels. “These Christological implications can be discerned only when we attend to the poetics of allusion imbedded in Mark’s distinctive narrative strategy.”¹²¹ Like the parables in Mark, the gospel’s Christocentric implications are often hidden, a mystery, concealed in the connection between Christ and the history of Israel.¹²² Keep in mind that covert allusion is often more effective than explicit allusion, for “allusions are often most powerful when least explicit.”¹²³ The story of Jesus and the story of Israel are overlaid, and the allusions between one and the other reveal the mystery in that gospel. “As Mark superimposes the two stories on one another, remarkable new patterns emerge, patterns that lead us into a truth too overwhelming to be approached in any other way.”¹²⁴ The reader of Mark who doesn’t see the allusions to the Hebrew Bible in the gospel are readers without eyes to see and without ears to hear; they are listeners to the parables who don’t understand the Jesus narrative until they begin assembling the hints and allusions from one to the other.¹²⁵

Like Mark, the gospel of John attempts to bring the reader to the understanding that Jesus is also Yahweh of the Old Testament (a point also insistently made by Heiser in his reading of the Christian Bible). “John summons the reader to recognize the way in which *Israel’s Scripture has always been mysteriously suffused with the presence of Jesus*, the figure who steps clearly into the light in the Gospel narrative.”¹²⁶ By constantly

120. Richard Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 49.

121. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 98.

122. Richard Hays, *Scripture in the Gospels*, 101.

123. Richard Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 17.

124. Richard Hays, *Scripture in the Gospels*, 103.

125. *Ibid.*

126. *Ibid.*, 289.

alluding to the First Testament, connecting word and action from the life of Christ to that antecedent scripture, John suggests that all of the Hebrew Bible illuminates the Christian salvation story.¹²⁷ Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and David are all superseded by Jesus but yet still point toward that model, witnessing of the soteriological significance of the one greater to come.¹²⁸ At the same time, Jesus can only begin to be understood when read backwards, in light of the end-point of the atonement and resurrection, to see how the Hebrew scriptures illuminate the Christian redemption in advance only to be understood in retrospect:

John tells us the disciples' understanding came only later, only as they read backwards to interpret his actions and words in light of the paradigm-shattering event of his resurrection. That is the point made emphatically in John 2:22: "his disciples remembered ... and they believed *the Scripture* and *the word that Jesus had spoken*."¹²⁹

The typological configuration, the allusive connection, can be understood only after the antitype is revealed and read backward with the antitype becoming the type and vice versa. The gospels must be read retrospectively and figurally to grasp their meaning. Jesus in the gospel of John (and John in regard to his readers) is teaching the disciples how to read the Hebrew scriptures, to read them backwards to see how Christ's story unveils the scriptures being alluded to.¹³⁰ The Old Testament prefigures the New and the story of Jesus completes the allusion figurally. "John is once again teaching his readers how to reread Israel's Scripture; by reading backwards, Jesus reinterprets the manna story as prefiguring *himself*."¹³¹ The theology of the gospels is a narrative theology that only through allusive connection to the Old Testament is completed. For a Christian audience who knew the Hebrew Bible intricately and specifically, the "[s]cripture provided the 'encyclopedia of production' for the Evangelists' narration of the story of Jesus. Their way of pursuing what we call 'doing theology' was to produce richly intertextual narrative accounts of the significance of Jesus."¹³²

127. Ibid., 290.

128. Ibid., 290–93.

129. Ibid., 311.

130. Ibid., 322.

131. Ibid.

132. Ibid., 357.

John's gospel has relatively few direct Old Testament citations: 27, compared with 124 in Matthew, 70 in Mark, and 109 in Luke.¹³³ John, unlike the other evangelists, tends not to quote or use the direct wording of OT passages. Instead, he invokes images and metaphors from the Hebrew scriptures. Moses's raising of the serpent in the wilderness, for example, to heal the people uses only the words *Moses* and *serpent* as allusive markers. The intertextual connection is carried by the image of the serpent being raised up and the people looking to it.¹³⁴ John is even more insistent than the other evangelists that the scriptures must be read backwards from the atonement and resurrection. In John 2 "when John tells us that Jesus 'was speaking of the Temple of his body,' a light goes on: the Evangelist, here in the opening chapters of his story, is teaching his readers how to read. He is training us to read *figurally*, teaching us to read Scripture *retrospectively*, in light of the resurrection. Only on such a reading does it make sense to see the Jerusalem Temple as *prefiguring* the truth now definitively embodied in the crucified and risen Jesus."¹³⁵ Things like the manna from heaven and the waters of life take on new significance once the reader learns that "John understands the Old Testament as a vast matrix of symbols pointing to Jesus[.]"¹³⁶ To understand this, however, the reader needs to learn how to read with the proper orientation, backwards or reverse chronologically.

Hays notes that Luke's resurrected Jesus tells the travelers on the road to Emmaus how to read that gospel. "And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he thoroughly interpreted for them *the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures*" (Luke 24:27); let me emphasize that Luke asserts Jesus is to be found in *all* the scriptures. The gospel sends the reader back to reread the evangelist's entire gospel at the same time a rereading of the Old Testament is in order to see how the two fit so tightly together with connections between the two illuminated by the resurrection. "We will be *reading backwards*, seeking to find previously hidden figural correspondences between 'Moses and the prophets' and the mysterious stranger who chastises us as 'slow of heart' for failing to discover such correspondences on our first reading."¹³⁷ Old Testament echoes in Luke are more nuanced than in the other gospels. They often don't represent direct typological correspondences, nor do they function

133. Richard Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 78.

134. Ibid.

135. Ibid., 86.

136. Ibid., 92.

137. Ibid., 56.

as prooftexts. “Rather, they create a broader and subtler effect: they create a narrative world thick with scriptural memory.” The kinds of events that happen in Genesis (old folks getting pregnant, angelic annunciations to maidens) are repeated in the gospels so that the reader expects the patriarchal events to be repeated in the Christian period.¹³⁸

All four gospels attempt to teach the reader not only how to read the evangelists but also how to read the Old Testament. Again, a reminder: *figuration* (and its inflections) is the Latin translation for the Greek word that gives us in English *type* and *typology* (*typical*, *archetype*, *typify*, *prototype*, *typography*, *typist*, *typecast*, *typeface*, *typesetter*, *typewriter*): *typos*. “The hermeneutical key to this intertextual dialectic is the practice of *figural reading*: the discernment of unexpected patterns of correspondence between earlier and later events or persons within a continuous temporal stream. In figural interpretation, the intertextual semantic effects can flow both directions: an earlier text can illuminate a later one, and vice versa.”¹³⁹ Hays insists that understanding the intertextual connection must come retrospectively. Our language of printing is littered with the language of typology because biblical typological thought assumes a copy. A type with, say, Adam as the first man or Joshua leading the children of Israel into the promised land and a comparable figure — an antitype — Jesus as a second Adam or a repeat Joshua (the Hebrew *Joshua* could be translated into the Greek as *Jesus*) leading the children of Israel to a far better land of promise.¹⁴⁰ A printing press has the original type put in place by the printer and that type impresses a copy on the paper: a type and an antitype. For the writer of the book of Hebrews the Old Testament high priests are a shadow of the more substantial high priest Christ: “Who serve unto the example [*upodeigmati*, a synonym for *typos* in which the reader might see the root of our English word *paradigm*] and shadow [*skia*] of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern [*typon*] shewed to thee in the mount” (Hebrews 8:5).

I have deliberately over the past few pages of this article shifted from using terminology about “allusion” to deploying variations of the word “intertextuality.” Intertextuality often thumbs its nose at historical

138. Ibid., 59.

139. Ibid., 93.

140. Andrzej Kowalczyk, “Typological Cycles of Episodes in the Gospel of Matthew and Matthew as the New Hexateuch,” *Angelicum* 77, no. 1–2 (2000): 223–74.

concerns wanting to read the texts synchronically, and in a way so does biblical prophecy. Book of Mormon prophets often cite events and phrasing before the historical occurrence to convince of their writings' prophetic power; they give us pre-tellings and prefigurations of the life of Christ or the destruction of Nephite civilization, often using repetitions of Christian writers' wording such as Matthew or Paul. In other words, if pre-Christian Nephite writers use New Testament wording, they are doing so not as postmodern critics who might refer to Chaucer alluding to Shakespeare but as writers and prophets who claim to foretell events.¹⁴¹ Richard Hays notes that the New Testament must be read backwards; we sometimes get forward readings from the Book of Mormon more explicit than we get in the Bible — figural foretellings that work the way Hays's backwards readings should. Hays asserts we have to read the end of the story, the culmination of atonement and resurrection to understand what went before; the notion that a later text can influence our reading of an earlier text stands in confrontation to our modern notions of time and history, but such modern ideas need to be challenged by older and perhaps better concepts of time that permit such time to "flow both directions."¹⁴² The law and the prophets, according to Hays, don't predict events in the life of Jesus but do foretell by foreshadowing the life of Jesus;¹⁴³ Nephi tells us that one key to reading and understanding Isaiah is for the reader to have the spirit of prophecy also (2 Nephi 25:4), not just the writer. We need to think of time having more than just forward gears and more than just one reverse gear. The Book of Mormon as much as the Bible wants to turn the readers' world upside down, to effect a conversion of the imagination as much as of the heart, to be transformed by a renewal in heart and mind to make us better readers. The result is a way of reading that turns time backward and makes of linear modern history a strand tied into knots, tangles, reversals, shortcuts, longcuts, and kinks that may appear a confused skein to humans but follows a divine plan.

Recognizing the importance of biblical intertextuality has meant this current generation of Christians has a much better understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Previously, Christians thought the New clarifies and explains the Old. Lacking was the understanding we now have that typology is another version of

141. Other possibilities would be worth exploring, in other publications, such as that some references might have the New Testament and Book of Mormon writers citing a third source from antiquity that hasn't survived to the present.

142. Richard Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 93.

143. *Ibid.*, 94.

intertextuality and doesn't seem so alien once the reader acknowledges that authors live in time also, as do readers. Historians may deride the practice as anachronistic, but all readers read prior texts "in the light of later texts and events."¹⁴⁴ Typology is just an appreciation of this reverse temporality. Intertextuality sometimes feels odd because the intertextual reader might be reluctant to read the influence of a later text on an earlier Nephi, but such texts ask that we read with a different temporality in mind, to read the influence of the death of Christ at Calvary on the Akedah of Isaac on Mount Moriah which posits that "the New Testament itself can be understood only in light of a profound theological reading of the Old Testament."¹⁴⁵ The Book of Mormon makes no lesser claim and demands no less sophistication on the part of the reader.

Like Father, Like Son

I have yet performed little Book of Mormon exegesis in this article, and to so finish this reading would continue neglecting an underappreciated and rich text. I'll demonstrate the repetitive quality of the Mormon scripture stripped of modern assumptions (as much as I can) about recurrence that denigrate Hebraic narrative. I have noted that Hebraic narrative asserts recurrence of foundational events over generations. The Israelites witness multiple exoduses; the covenants granted to Abraham are fulfilled in multiple ways in various generations even down to Jesus and Paul. I referred to the rabbinic principle that what happens to the fathers happens to the sons. Jon Levenson translates the aphorism slightly differently: "The patriarchs are the archetype; their descendants, the antitype."¹⁴⁶ Events that happened to the biblical patriarchs were expected to echo like a reprise throughout history eventually to resolve into a crescendo at the end of the play. "It cannot be underscored enough that the man of whom this story is told is the eponymous ancestor of the nation, Jacob/Israel. At its deepest level the Jacob narrative is more than biography: it is the national story and speaks, therefore, of the self-conception of the people Israel and not merely of the pranks of the trickster from whom they are descended. In its

144. Peter J. Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 74.

145. Ellen F. Davis, "Teaching the Bible Confessionally in the Church," in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 20.

146. Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 53.

most important features, the pattern of Jacob's life will be reproduced in the story of his son Joseph — another younger son beloved of his parent, exalted above his brothers, and condemned to exile and slavery because of their fratricidal jealousy."¹⁴⁷ The characteristics noted in Genesis of Jacob/Israel are also manifest in his posterity.

Jacob is often described as a trickster, but we should be more blunt: he was a deceiver. Not only did Jacob grapple in the womb to have priority in birth, he also struggled with Esau through much of their lives for parental preference and priority in inheritance. He even wrestled with an angel for blessings. He conned his brother Esau out of the birthright (Genesis 25:29–34), and with his mother deceived his father (Genesis 27), causing his distraught brother to assert “Is not he rightly named Jacob [Supplanter]? For he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing” (Genesis 27:36). The writer of Genesis is doubtless aware of the irony that Isaac as father is deceived by his son into giving the blessing to the one he didn't intend, but Jacob receives his just desserts a generation later when his sons deceive him about the fate of his son Joseph, he who hoodwinks his father using clothing to deceive (“Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son: And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck” [Genesis 27:15–16]), gets hoodwinked by his sons who let deceptive and torn clothing speak for silent brothers (“they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no” [Genesis 37:32]). The prophet Hosea notes that Jacob's characteristics distinguish his offspring also, many generations later. “The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him. He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there he spake with us” (Hosea 12:2–3). Grappling with brother and angel is one thing, but fraternal and paternal deception is quite a higher level of duplicity. The Israelites of Hosea's day are given to deception much like their ancestor: “He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin” (Hosea 12:7–8). Just as Jacob fled

147. Ibid., 66.

for his life to Haran and served in bondage to his uncle, Israel served in slavery to the Egyptians. “And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep. And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved” (Hosea 12:12–13). Ephraim, the Northern Kingdom of Israel, like the Israelites in Egypt and Jacob in bondage to Laban, is already experiencing servitude: “He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return” (Hosea 11:5).

We read in the Book of Mormon a similar updating of the tradition, a recurrence of what happened to the patriarchs. The Nephites are descendants of Joseph, the biblical patriarch, son of Jacob, sold into Egypt. When the Nephites experience rebellion and treason, Moroni tears his coat, converts it into a flag on a pole, and writes a slogan on the title of liberty. But he sees in this action a repetition of events from his ancestor Joseph’s life. The loyal Nephites rally around and also engage in symbolic action by rending their coats and covenanting to be faithful, tying their actions to those from generations before, “Now this was the covenant which they made, and they cast their garments at the feet of Moroni, saying: We covenant with our God, that we shall be destroyed, even as our brethren in the land northward, if we shall fall into transgression; yea, he may cast us at the feet of our enemies, even as we have cast our garments at thy feet to be trodden under foot, if we shall fall into transgression” (Alma 46:22). Moroni takes the contemporary action and transforms it paradigmatically. The Nephites become the biblical Joseph and the Lamanites Joseph’s brothers: “Behold, we are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; yea, we are a remnant of the seed of Joseph, whose coat was rent by his brethren into many pieces; yea, and now behold, let us remember to keep the commandments of God, or our garments shall be rent by our brethren, and we be cast into prison, or be sold, or be slain” (Alma 46:23). Their ancestor Joseph also had his coat rent by his brothers, was thrust into prison, and was sold into slavery; Moroni proposes that what happened to Joseph might happen to the contemporary Nephites. Joseph’s coat was torn and bloodied by his brothers, who let Jacob come to his own conclusions about the fate of Joseph, which he does when he laments “surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since” (Genesis 44:28). Joseph’s rent coat is only one of many stories in Genesis and First and Second Samuel to take up this motif of rent garments signifying the loss of divine favor along with the slightly larger theme of clothes making and torn clothes unmaking the man. I won’t explore that theme here, but I’ll at least point to Saul’s

torn mantle symbolizing lost divine favor, David's tearing of Saul's skirt hem in the cave, Jeroboam's garment torn into twelve parts, along with Joseph's rent coat among others as the larger backdrop to Moroni's shredded raiment. The Book of Mormon is tapping into a persistent Old Testament refrain about people and leaders chosen and rejected by God symbolized by whole and tattered clothing.

Moroni then cites a version of the story available to him but not in the Bible, all the time likening what happened to the patriarch to what might happen to the sons. "Yea, let us preserve our liberty as a remnant of Joseph; yea, let us remember the words of Jacob, before his death, for behold, he saw that a part of the remnant of the coat of Joseph was preserved and had not decayed. And he said — Even as this remnant of garment of my son hath been preserved, so shall a remnant of the seed of my son be preserved by the hand of God, and be taken unto himself, while the remainder of the seed of Joseph shall perish, even as the remnant of his garment" (Alma 46:24). Part of Moroni's coat converted into a rallying standard, Moroni hypothesizes, will be preserved just as patriotic and faithful Nephites will be preserved from being killed by their brothers, the Lamanites, just as both Joseph and part of Joseph's distinctive coat were preserved. But just as a remnant of Joseph's coat was lost in the rending and bloodying, Moroni likens that event also to those Nephites who have rebelled: "And now who knoweth but what the remnant of the seed of Joseph, which shall perish as his garment, are those who have dissented from us? Yea, and even it shall be ourselves if we do not stand fast in the faith of Christ" (Alma 46:27).

The Nephites — just as the biblical Israelites, the biblical Jews, and the New Testament Christians — perceived God as working in patterns, repetitions. The rabbinic principle that what happens to the fathers happens to the sons was not only repeated in the multiple descents of the patriarchs into Egypt. Of Abraham's descent into Egypt one rabbi noted that "everything written in connection with Abraham is written in connection with his children."¹⁴⁸ In the Hellenistic period as Pharisaic Judaism evolved and later developed into rabbinic Judaism, the continuity of historical interpretation from the era during which the Hebrew Bible was composed and edited endured. This heritage was also bequeathed to early Christianity. "For the rabbis the Bible was not only a repository of past history, but a revealed pattern of the whole of history, and they had learned their scriptures well. They knew that history has a purpose, the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, and that

148. Zakovitch, "And You Shall Tell," 20.

the Jewish people has a central role to play in that process. ... Above all, they had learned from the Bible that the true pulse of history often beat beneath its manifest surfaces, an invisible history that was more real than what the world, deceived by the more strident outward rhythms of power, could recognize.”¹⁴⁹ What was repeated was more real than what happened in quotidian life, and the major events of history were only key as far as God was directing those events to divine ends. “It is important to realize that there is also no real desire to find novelty in passing events. Quite to the contrary, there is a pronounced tendency to subsume even major new events to familiar archetypes.”¹⁵⁰

The Book of Mormon with its repetitions, types and shadows, narrative analogies, type scenes, allusions, and echoes is treading the textual path prepared by other Hebraic narrative and prophetic texts: the Hebrew and Christian Bibles in particular. The book is insufficiently appreciated for its narrative strategies, and its narrative strategies are often the message itself; in fact, the scripture is too often denigrated for the very features that should make us value its depths and sophistication. The book deserves better reading approaches than we have granted it and better readers. The Book of Mormon is insistent that we read it alongside and intertwined with that other stick of scripture, the Bible (2 Nephi 3:12; 1 Nephi 13:40; 2 Nephi 29:8; Mormon 7:8–9) as branches and roots stretching out from neighboring and interrelated trunks, generated from the same seed pods while tangling boughs and rhizomes. By doing so we can redeem the times that not only call out for straightened ways and prepared paths but also cry out for us to straighten and prepare those roads as saviors traveling to Mount Zion where there will be deliverance and holiness.

Alan Goff is a legal proofreader and editor who has taught in various universities, including 21 years at DeVry University in Phoenix. He publishes about the literary and historical aspects of scripture in the restoration tradition, along with the historiography of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and historical theory. He received a baccalaureate degree with a double major in English and political science from Brigham Young University along with master's degrees in both those disciplines from BYU. He received his doctorate in humanities from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany.

149. Josef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), 21.

150. *Ibid.*, 36.

DISCIPLESHIP AS THE WORLD COLLAPSES AROUND YOU

Loren Spendlove

Review of Adam S. Miller, *Mormon: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo, UT: The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2020). 162 pages. \$9.95 (paperback).

Abstract: *Adam Miller has created a thoughtful and enlightening theological study of the book of Mormon. It is obvious from his textual commentary that Miller has given a significant amount of thought and effort into teasing out practical insights from the book's original authors. Except for some clumsy distractions that occasionally appear in his text, I would highly recommend Miller's analysis of Mormon's and Moroni's apocalyptic narratives.*

Adam Miller is a “big picture” thinker, which is evident from this and other books that he has authored. In this latest work, Miller fashioned a creative, refreshing, and insightful treatise in Christian theology.¹ His interpretation of scripture and theological concepts was truly captivating, and his use of words was, mostly, pleasingly poetic. What holds this book back from being truly inspiring, at least for me, was Miller's lack of attention to details. On multiple occasions I found myself intrigued with one of his ideas, only to come to the conclusion, after further reflection and analysis, that the idea was either unlikely or untenable. In general, I would say that I enjoyed visiting the destinations where the book took me as a reader even though I was not always fond of the path that led to those destinations.

1. Adam S. Miller, *Mormon: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo, UT: The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2020).

The Smooth Path

As I read and pondered Miller's theological insights I found myself underlining everything that impressed me and scribbling some of my own thoughts in the margins. When I was finished, I determined to create a table of everything that I had underlined, and I was surprised to see the list had grown to dozens of citations. In this review I have chosen to include only the "top 10" from my list. Following that, I briefly outline where the path got rocky for me as a "detail-oriented person."

How, in Christ, are we Saved?

In his first chapter, Miller describes himself as a Christophysicist, a less-than-familiar term for me. From what I was able to glean from the Internet, Christophysics is a theo-scientific approach to theology. In this chapter, Miller wrote, "The urgent question at the heart of my work is always the same: exactly how, in Christ, are we saved?" (8). This, of course, is the primary question that all Christian texts should have at their core. This question does not regularly recur in Miller's book, nor does he come right out with a clear answer, but the entire book can be characterized as orbiting this central concern. As I read and pondered, I found it profitable to relate everything back to this same question: how, in Christ, are we saved?

Sacrificing All Things

"If Christian discipleship sits squarely at the crossroads of a world that imposes the loss of all things and a religion that requires the sacrifice of all things, what does it look like to willingly lose all things? What does it look like to practice that loss as discipleship?" (28). Central to Mormon's short book is the nagging knowledge that for him the world is rapidly coming to an end. A key to understanding the man Mormon, as Miller points out, is that Mormon, as a true follower of Christ, sacrificed all things for his God and for his people. The question for modern Christians is how we can reconcile these two ideas: the absolute certainty that this world will end for everyone — one way or another — resulting in the loss of all things, and the precept that true followers of Christ must willingly sacrifice all things.

For each of us, when the world ends, we are stripped of all our earthly possessions and honors. Given that fact, what holds me back from willingly and even cheerfully releasing my grasp on the things of this world as a witness of a sacrificial life centered in Christ? Why am I more inclined to be like the doomed Nephites who "[hid] up their treasures" (Mormon 1:18) than to be like Mormon, who sacrificed all for the cause of Christ and his

kingdom? These are some of the questions that have occupied my thoughts in profitable ways since reading Miller's short volume.

Re/creation

"If God's ongoing work of re/creation doesn't appear to us to be miraculous, the problem is ours, not God's" (39). Miller explains that the world is "perpetually passing away" while simultaneously "perpetually beginning" (36). This destruction and subsequent new creation — re/creation as he calls it — is a prevalent theme throughout his book. According to Miller, the damned reject this re/creation process while true disciples embrace it and willingly sacrifice to be part of it. Miller describes the passing and recreation of all things as marvelous, miraculous events that witness the hand of God. Only the "willfully blind" (39) fail to observe the divine miracle of re/creation.

Sorrowing

"When Christ's disciples sorrow, they sorrow 'unto repentance' and their sorrow is recast as a constructive form of sacrifice. For the latter, however, for those who sorrow as the damned, the world's inevitable passing is nothing but a curse and a loss" (52). Sorrow can be a productive force in our lives if our sorrowing is a Godly sorrow, one that brings or leads us to repentance (cf. Mormon 2:13, 2 Corinthians 7:10) and toward a willing sacrifice of all things. However, what Mormon witnessed among his people was the "sorrowing of the damned," a sorrowing for the loss of all things.

Again, I found myself looking within to try to understand the hue and texture of my sorrows when they occur. Do I sorrow like the damned or like a true disciple? Do my sorrows bring me down into depression, accompanied by a sense of profound loss, or do they motivate me to do more, to sacrifice all things for the sake of Christ and his kingdom? Do I sorrow like Mormon, or do I sorrow like his beloved, doomed Nephites?

Hopeless Love

"By loving without hope, Mormon is initiated into the 'pure love of Christ' that 'seeketh not her own'" (58). Selfless love is miraculous and marvelous, but hopeless love — love in the presence of absolute hopelessness — epitomizes true Christlike charity. Mormon loved in this way. Even though his people were hopelessly lost and fallen, he loved them "according to the love of God which was in [him], with all [his] heart" (Mormon 3:12). Do I love in this way? Or is my love more practical, reserved for those for whom I can feel real hope? Does my love

falter or weaken when hope evaporates? Miller describes Mormon as one who “will resolutely continue to love, regardless” (57). I need to more fully develop this type of love, one that will continue to love, regardless!

Forgiving All Things

“The work of sacrificing all things shows itself clearly for what it ultimately is: the work of forgiving all things. To sacrifice all things is to forgive all things” (62). The people around us, their imperfections, the world, and the effects of time itself all need to be forgiven. Miller astutely observes that unless we can forgive all things, we will be in no position to sacrifice all things. This world and its inhabitants are full of imperfections and blemishes. Acknowledging and accepting these imperfections is a prelude to forgiving them, and the forgiveness of all things, according to Miller, is a companion to the sacrifice of all things. If we are unable to forgive the “failures, disappointments, and imperfections” (62) of this world, we will most likely come to resent and/or despair at the thought of sacrificing all things.

What is Needed?

“What does it mean to abuse the law and judge unrighteously? It means to use the law to judge what is *deserved*. What, on the contrary, does it mean to use the law to judge righteously? It means to use the law to judge what, in the face of the world’s continual re/creation, is *needed*” (80, emphasis in original). In the margin next to this section I wrote “maybe, but I like it.” Miller, here, is referring the Joseph Smith translation’s rendering of Christ’s teaching on righteous versus unrighteous judgment (see Matthew 7:1–2).

While I may have interpreted these verses a little less dogmatically, still Miller’s point resonated with me. What I learned from this scriptural interpretation was that I need to be far less concerned with what others *deserve* and far more focused on what they *need*. This reformed way of thinking won’t make me less judgmental. Rather, it will reorient my judgment toward charity. King Benjamin would probably agree that unrighteous judgment involves judging what is *deserved*: “The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand” (Mosiah 4:17). But, as Benjamin clearly taught, if we follow this line of judgment we have “great cause to repent” (Mosiah 4:18). Being judgmental in itself is not a bad thing. In fact, it is necessary. What matters, according to Miller (and I would also include King Benjamin) is what criteria I use to judge. Do I judge what is *deserved*, or do I judge what is *needed*?

Justice

Miller's chapter on judgment and justice had the most profound effect on me.

Justice is poorly defined as the backward-looking business of making sure that people get what they “deserve.” Justice isn't a form of religiously sanctioned vengeance. It isn't a form of revenge dressed up as a divinely endorsed system of prizes and punishments that carves the world up into winners and losers This way of thinking about justice is a poor fit for a just God bent on creating a new world. It's a poor fit for a just God who loves his enemies. It's a poor fit for a just God who personally sacrifices all things in unforced and self-emptying acts of love that are anything but predetermined by the past (99–100)

As I read, I wondered in what practical ways I could shift my attitudes and behaviors away from this “backward-looking business” to be more closely aligned with this seemingly paradoxical, loving God of justice. Ultimately, the answer must come down to judging what is *needed* rather than what is *deserved*. The truth is that we all *deserve* damnation, and we all *need* grace!

Consequences

“If hard consequences are needed to express love and fulfill the law, then love enforces hard consequences — but as a form of grace, not as an act of revenge” (110). *Revenge* is not found in God's toolbox, but *grace* is. Revenge destroys — it is a sledgehammer — while grace — the figurative nail that sealed the atonement of Christ and binds us to God and each other — creates and edifies. Natural and logical consequences are inseparably connected with law and judgment, not as expressions of revenge or hate, but as evidence of grace and love.

The Law

“The law is of enormous value to those who stop trying to leverage their obedience as collateral against the loss of all things and, instead, enter through the strait gate of sacrifice” (115). God's grace cannot be purchased or earned through obedience to the law, no matter how strict one's observance. Rather, grace must be willingly received on its own terms. “Obedience cannot balance the book! And moreover, to the extent that we use obedience as a strategy for suppressing our dependence on God's grace, obedience itself becomes — ironically — a hallmark of our

sinfulness.”² There is no way to work ourselves out of needing God’s grace any more than we can hold our breath sufficiently long that we can claim to be self-sustaining. Grace, like air, is necessary for our very existence.

Once we understand that we cannot replace grace with obedience to the law, perhaps then we can experience a change of heart. Perhaps only then can our knee bend and our tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ. Perhaps then we will be willing to forgive all things and sacrifice all things for Christ and his kingdom. “To practice discipleship is to transfigure the loss of all things by sacrificing all things. And to willingly sacrifice all things is to willingly forgive all things (including ourselves) the necessity of their re/creation” (120).

The Rocky Path

As stated in the introduction of this review, while I agreed with most of Miller’s theological conclusions, noisome rocks along the path at times caused me to lose my balance. These rocks were distractions to an otherwise commendable read. In this section I briefly describe five of these rocky distractions.

Stature

In Chapter 3 — A Narrative Synopsis — Miller wrote the following:

Ammaron’s selection of a ten-year-old boy (however sober and quick to observe) may also be related to the fact that Mormon was “a descendant of Nephi” (Mormon 1:5) and, thus, plausibly enjoyed the kind of social, political, and economic advantages that would account for his literacy and, at least in part, his meteoric rise to command the Nephite armies at the age of fifteen. If so, then Mormon’s being “large in stature” may be as much socio-political as physical (Mormon 2:1). (18–19)

The idea that *stature* could have been a reference to both Mormon’s physical size and his socio-political status is appealing, but untenable. Miller’s suggestion that “large in stature” could have been a nod to Mormon’s socio-political status almost assuredly would have been an anachronism in 1829–1830. A quick search of the history of the term “stature” reveals that its use in relation to a sense of importance “dates from the mid 19th century”³ and that the “figurative sense” of *stature*

2. Adam S. Miller, *Future Mormon: Essays in Mormon Theology* (Greg Kofford Books: Salt Lake City, 2016), 6.

3. *Lexico*, s.v. “stature,” <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/stature>.

was “first recorded [in] 1834,”⁴ four years after the Book of Mormon was originally published. Additionally, neither the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED)⁵ nor Webster’s 1828 *American dictionary of the English Language*⁶ allow for this “socio-political” understanding of *stature* at the time of the writing and publication of the Book of Mormon. Finally, a quick search of the word *stature* in *Google Books* for the years 1800–1830 revealed only references to physical height and size among the first 30 results. In other words, Mormon was tall, or perhaps stout, or both; either way, he was physically large. And while he may have also enjoyed “social, political, and economic advantages” on account of being “a descendant of Nephi,” the word *stature* cannot be cited as evidence of those advantages.

Angolah

Also in Chapter 3, Miller referred to one of the cities where the Nephites took refuge as *Angolah* (20), a variant of *Angola* (see Mormon 2:4) as printed in the Book of Mormon published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Interestingly, Miller offers no explanation for this variant spelling to his readers. I assume that he derived it from *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* which advocates for *Angolah* based on the Printer’s Manuscript.⁷ If this was his source it would lead one to believe that his other Book of Mormon citations also came from the same text. However, that is not the case. On pages 23–24 Miller cited Mormon 4:21 as follows: “The Nephites were driven and slaughtered with an exceedingly great slaughter; their women and their children were again sacrificed unto idols.” This wording is verbatim from the current Latter-day Saint version of the Book of Mormon. *The Earliest Text*, however, renders the word *exceedingly* as *exceeding*, following the 1830 printing.

4. Online Etymology Dictionary, s.v. “stature,” <https://www.etymonline.com/word/stature>.

5. The following definitions are outlined in the OED: “1. The height of an animal body in its normal standing position. 2. Bodily form, build. 3. An effigy, statue. 4. State, condition. 5. The posture of standing.” *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 16, 2nd edition (Oxford University Press, 1991), s.v. “stature,” 573. With regard to definition 4, it is clear from the examples given in the OED that there is no implied connection to socio-political status.

6. “The natural height of an animal body. It is more generally used of the human body.” Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (S. Converse, New York, 1828), s.v. “stature,” <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/stature>.

7. *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, edited by Royal Skousen (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2009), 784.

This may seem like a minor detail, and perhaps it is, but as a detail-oriented reader I found Miller's inclusion of *Angolah* to be a distraction from his narrative synopsis. Why bother with this variant spelling without attribution to *The Earliest Text* or without consistently referencing the same source throughout the book, especially when the variant's inclusion does nothing to illuminate the text or inspire the reader?

Sober and Quick to Observe

Ammaron told Mormon that he was a "sober child, and ... quick to observe." Miller chose to travel down a lexically troublesome path with these words, in my opinion. He wrote that Mormon's "lived experience of discipleship hinges on pairing a certain mood (his sobriety) with a certain intensity of perception (his quickness to observe)" (29). Miller called Mormon's sobriety a type of "divine melancholy" (31) and added that "his melancholy bearing is paired with his intensity of perception" (33).

When I read that Mormon was *sober* and *quick to observe* I immediately envision a serious boy, not given to frivolous flights of fancy, but one who is also a fast learner. *Mood* is a poor substitute for *sober* since *mood* implies a temporary state of mind rather than the characteristic traits of being "regular; calm; not under the influence of passion" or "serious; solemn; grave."⁸ Webster adds that *sobriety* means "seriousness; gravity without sadness or melancholy"⁹ — a definition that directly counters Miller's assertion about Mormon's mood.

Finally, there is no sense of *intensity* in the word *quick*. *Intensity* is more akin to *strength*, *depth*, or *magnitude*, while *quick*, during the translation of the Book of Mormon as well as today, is aligned with *speed* or *swiftness*.¹⁰ Miller, in essence, transformed the young Mormon from a serious, steady, quick learner into a melancholic-but-deep thinker.

Cause and Effect

Mormon 8:31 reads in part: "Yea, it [the record] shall come in a day when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth; there shall be murders, and robbing, and lying, and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations." Two verses later Mormon lamented: "O ye wicked and perverse and stiffnecked people, why have ye built up

8. Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. "sober," <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/sober>.

9. Ibid., s.v. "sobriety," <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/sobriety>.

10. Ibid., s.v. "quick," <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/quick>.

churches unto yourselves to get gain?” (Mormon 8:31). Miller, however, restructured these verses to read: “They ‘built up’ lives unto themselves ‘to get gain’ and, as a result, they caused ‘great pollutions upon the face of the earth’ (cf. Mormon 8:33, 31)” (47).

Miller’s inclusion of “as a result” creates a causal link between *getting gain* and *pollutions*: the process of getting gain led to pollutions. A plain reading of Moroni’s words, however, does not arrive at any such conclusion. In my opinion, Miller’s reinterpretation of the text seems an overt attempt to recycle Moroni’s original, ancient paradigm and reweave it into a garment that is a better fit for our post-modern fashions. Miller reconceived Mormon’s or Moroni’s words on several occasions,¹¹ causing me to wonder about his motives for reinterpreting the text away from its plain meaning.

Striving

Regarding the Spirit, Miller wrote:

To live without God in the world is to live without the Spirit. It is to live without the constant re/creative push of that spirit “striving” with you. Spirit strives. It pushes and pulls and strains And, what’s more, this Spirit doesn’t simply strive in the abstract. It strives, Mormon says, “with” us. It invites and calls. It coordinates and cooperates and collaborates. (55)

In this passage, Miller stressed the Spirit’s active role of *striving with us*. This idea of the Spirit striving *with us* is first encountered in Genesis 6:3: “And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive [יָדֹן *yadon*] with man [בָּאָדָם *ba’adam*] (KJV).” The Hebrew root י-ד-ן (*d-y-n*) — expressed as the imperative יָדֹן (*yadon*) in Genesis 6:3 — when followed by כִּי (*with*), carries the principle meaning of “to execute judgment” or “to call someone to account.”¹² I believe that this execution of divine judgment, or being called to account by God, is a perfect example of Miller’s idea of a loving God

11. For example, Mormon wrote that the Nephites’ riches “became slippery, *because the Lord had cursed the land*, that they could not hold them, nor retain them again. And it came to pass that there were sorceries, and witchcrafts, and magics; and the power of the evil one was wrought upon all the face of the land” (Mormon 1:18–19). Mormon established a clear cause and effect relationship regarding the slipperiness of riches: “because the Lord had cursed the land.” However, perhaps due to the physical proximity of the following verse, Miller claimed that “the most obvious reading is that magic made these treasures slippery” (49). It may be an “obvious reading” to Miller, but not to me, nor to Mormon.

12. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2000), s.v. “יָדֹן.”

enforcing “hard consequences — but as a form of grace, not as an act of revenge” (110). God’s “striving with us” shows that he cares for us as a loving parent. When the Spirit of God stops striving with us, as Genesis 6:3 clearly asserts that it can, then our destruction is assured (cf. 2 Nephi 26:11).¹³ We see this in the biblical account of the flood (Genesis 7), in relation to the Jaredites (Ether 2:15), and with regard to the Nephite nation (Mormon 5:16).

However, with his next breath, Miller reversed the role of the striver; no longer does Miller refer to the Spirit as striving with us, but as us striving with the Spirit:

Striving *with* the Spirit, we no longer live *without* Christ and God in the world. Striving with the Spirit of the Creator, we actively participate in the world’s re/creation. Living without God in the world, the damned are left to themselves. No longer striving with the Spirit, they are left alone to be “driven about as chaff before the wind” (Mormon 5:16). (55)

There are seven passages in the Book of Mormon that mention the Spirit of God striving with us, but none that indicate that we can or should strive with the Spirit. It appears from context that the act of striving (judging/calling to account) in the Book of Mormon is unidirectional; it is the Spirit who strives with us. In fact, in the Bible we are cautioned against striving with or against God:¹⁴

I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware: thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the LORD. (Jeremiah 50:24)

Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! (Isaiah 45:9)

I believe that I understand Miller’s idea of “striving with the Spirit.” It seems that he intended to say that we should *engage* with the Spirit in positive ways and that when we cease this process of positive engagement we are “driven about as chaff before the wind.” However, by choosing to describe this process of *engaging* with the Spirit as *striving*, Miller may have sown seeds of confusion instead.

13. It is essential to note that Genesis 6 is a prelude to the earth’s inevitable destruction by the flood.

14. The Hebrew verbs in these two biblical passages [התגרית (*hitgarit*) and רב (*rav*)] are not the same verb that is used in Genesis 6:3. However, all three of these verbs can evince “to contend.”

Conclusion

Adam Miller has authored a commendable theological analysis of the small book of Mormon, and his reading and explication of the text is anything but superficial. Except for occasional rocks along the road, I found his interpretation of Mormon's and Moroni's accounts to be an enlightening and contemplative read.

Loren Spendlove (MA, *Jewish Studies*, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; PhD, *Education*, University of Wyoming; MBA, California State University, Fullerton; and, BS, *Finance*, Brigham Young University) has worked in many fields over the last 40 years, including academics and corporate financial management. A student of languages, his research interests center on linguistics and etymology

JESUS' FIRST VISIT TO THE TEMPLE

S. Kent Brown

Abstract: *In this rich and detailed description, S. Kent Brown paints an evocative, historically contextualized account of Jesus Christ's first visit to the Jerusalem Temple since his infancy, when at age twelve he traveled with his family to attend Passover.*

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See S. Kent Brown, "Jesus' First Visit to the Temple," in *The Temple: Symbols, Sermons, and Settings, Proceedings of the Fourth Interpreter Foundation Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference, 10 November 2018*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2021), 235–66. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/the-temple-symbols-sermons-and-settings/>.]

Inside Jerusalem and Its Temple

When they reached the fork in the road, Joseph and Mary trudged ahead up the ever steeper incline towards the top of the Mount of Olives.¹ Their breathing grew more labored as did that of their twelve-year-old son. But he was taking the climb easier than they were. Young, nimble legs. Their destination lay to the west, the city of Jerusalem with its spectacular temple. At the fork, the other road led southward toward the town of Bethany where Jesus would raise from the dead a family friend named

Lazarus more than twenty years later. On this occasion, Jesus was coming to the temple for the first time since being carried there as an infant (see Luke 2:22).²

He and his parents went with the companionship of others, of course, in “the company” noted in Luke 2:44. No one traveled singly or in small groups in those days.³ Too many bandits inhabited the travel route from Nazareth to Jerusalem, especially in the wilds of the Jordan Valley and Judean Desert, as is illustrated in Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan. We cannot discount the possibility that Jesus began to formulate this parable in his mind during the long hours walking between Jericho and Jerusalem either on this occasion or a later one. Further, it appears this story rested on a real occurrence that he had learned about, thus underscoring its authenticity.⁴ He surely would have learned from the adults that bandits beat up their victims only if they put up any kind of resistance: the “thieves ... wounded him, ... leaving him half dead,” as Jesus would later say (Luke 10:30).⁵

On a happier note, it is possible that some of Jesus’ siblings or childhood friends were in the traveling company. If not, he surely made friends readily with the boys and girls his same age, making the trip more pleasant and a whole lot shorter. This observation is made sure when Luke wrote that Jesus’ parents supposed “him to be in the company” as they began the return trip to Nazareth. Where would he have been if not with young friends?⁶ In my opinion, a person would



Figure 1. View of the Temple looking from the southeast toward the northwest. The Court of Women sits on the right, the Nicanor Gate rises in the center, and the Sanctuary itself towers on the left.

have a difficult time making a case that his parents thought he was with the forty- and fifty-year-old travelers. We can imagine these children playing games with each other and telling stories to one another about adventures while riding donkeys bareback and mishaps. What is more, the traveling group was large, most likely a couple hundred or more. Jesus' parents would not have lost track of him if their group consisted of two or three dozen people.

The traveling party probably left Jericho early in the morning, where they had been able to secure a place to eat and sleep the evening before. Preparing such places was an important dimension of the hospitality offered within cities and towns for hosting Passover pilgrims.⁷ Just out of Jericho, after passing Herod's winter palace, their journey turned upward and westward almost immediately. They began climbing the Roman road that generally followed the course of the stream running down the Wadi Qilt. About eight miles up, they came to a depression that allowed the company to walk and ride on somewhat level ground for a couple of miles before the road turned upward again. Their trek from Jericho took them about sixteen miles.⁸

At the top of the climb up the east side of the Mount of Olives, stunning scenes came into view, both behind and ahead. Behind, Jesus and his parents could take in the vast sweep of the Jordan Valley, where they had been at the beginning of the day, with a glimpse of the northern part of the Dead Sea overshadowed by a shimmering haze of water vapor visible in the sunlight. In front, Jesus beheld the city of Jerusalem surrounded by a wall. But his eye, like everyone else's, would have been drawn to the bright, glistening temple facade covered with gold leaf⁹ that perched high above the surrounding buildings. King Herod, called "the Great," had begun renovating the temple in 20–19 BC. Work on the temple and its grounds would continue for more than fifty years after Jesus' visit until they were completed in AD 62, representing more than eighty years of construction.

Before Jesus' visit, most of the visible parts of the renovation had been completed, including the massive foundations; the roomy southern extension of the temple platform that rested on high arches; the finely honed inner porticoes that ran along the western, southern, and eastern sides of the largest courtyard; the 150-foot high facade of the sanctuary, decorated by a gold overlay; and the great altar that stood in front of it.¹⁰ When the pilgrims arrived at the city, it was a week before Passover.

Jesus, his parents, and the traveling party had arrived early not only to pay the half-shekel temple tax levied each year on all Jews¹¹ but

especially to participate in the purification activities required of those who came from afar. As they descended the west side of the mount, they headed first for a *mikvah* ritual bath as the first step in their cleansing. Then they looked for one of the priests who, holding a hyssop branch and standing outside the Golden (or Shushan) Gate that led to the temple courtyard, flicked water on the suppliants so that they could enter the temple grounds. Suspended in this water were the ashes from the sacrificial burning of an unblemished red heifer on the Mount of Olives for a sin offering for all worshipers (see Numbers 19:1–10).¹² Although an ancient debate was ongoing whether children needed to undergo this purification rite,¹³ we safely assume that Jesus received the sprinkling. This was the first time he had undergone purification in this manner.

It is a matter of conjecture whether the traveling party approached the Golden Gate by crossing a causeway that ran across the Kidron Valley and had been built specifically for bringing the ashes of the red heifer to the temple. Why? Because of the lack of archaeological evidence. But the *Mishnah* affirms its existence, and many accept its claim.¹⁴

Following each party member's initial purification, he or she entered the city. Then, "on the seventh day after the sprinkling, the individual would then immerse himself [or herself] in the waters of the *mikvah*," completing the purification ceremonies.¹⁵ *Mikvah* baths ringed the city. Jesus and his parents probably went to one close to where they were staying, a bath linked either to the pools that sat north of the city walls or to those outside the Golden Gate on the east side of the holy mount. They may even have gone to the one on the Mount of Olives where the priest who sacrificed the red heifer bathed himself.¹⁶ There they cleansed themselves by walking down steps into the bath until the water reached their chins. At that point, they turned and ascended other steps to exit the purifying waters.¹⁷

The rule was that any Jew coming to Jerusalem from a distance farther than the town of Modiin—that is, "a like distance in any direction"—was considered unclean.¹⁸ Modiin lay about seventeen miles west and north of the capital city inside the territory of Judea. Why were people from farther than Modiin considered unclean? Because all territories beyond the land of Israel, defined here as the area of Judea at a radius of seventeen miles from Jerusalem, were thought of as unclean, as among the "fathers of impurity" that transmitted uncleanness to those who resided in them.¹⁹

In the Old Testament, expressions such as "a polluted land" in Amos 7:17 and land considered "unclean" according to Joshua 22:19 refer to

land outside ancient Israel. In contrast, but tied closely to these ideas, we meet the expression “the Lord’s land” in Hosea 9:3 that feeds the notion that purity was attached to a defined region closely identified with the temple, as the next verse in Hosea’s record shows by speaking of “wine offerings [and] ... sacrifices” (Hosea 9:4). By Jesus’ day, people from regions outside Judea were required to come to celebrations in Jerusalem well in advance, as we are reminded in John 11:55 about those who traveled to the city at Passover time: “many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.”²⁰

Where did they stay? They likely did not take up temporary residence in a hired room or on a rented rooftop in the city, though such places were available for lease at festival times, like the “loft” in the widow’s home where Elijah resided for a time (1 Kings 17:19, 23) and the “upper room” mentioned in the gospels as the place of the Last Supper (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12). It is possible that the family and others abode in the cave at the bottom of the Mount of Olives close to the Kidron brook and Gethsemane, introducing Jesus to the spot where it is likely that he stayed with his disciples during some nights of the last week of his life. For Luke recorded that Jesus “at night ... abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives” (Luke 21:37). Archaeology has disclosed that the place served as an olive press in the fall of the year.²¹ The family may also have camped in the open outside the city walls with a lot of other people as was customary.²² A third possibility is that, after a night’s rest outside the city walls from the long climb out of Jericho, the family sauntered to Bethlehem, a five-mile trip to the south, where they may have had property and certainly had relatives with whom they could stay.²³ After all, the families of Joseph and Mary originally hailed from Bethlehem.

That said, no hint exists that the family stayed in Bethlehem. And if Jesus was going to take in events in and around the temple, it made more sense that he and his parents camped out in the neighborhood of the city and its walls, passing inside in the mornings to experience events associated with the festival, retreating outside only at the going down of the sun, although the full moon at Passover gave ample light if departure from the city was delayed.

One of the curiosities about this trip was the presence of Mary, Jesus’ mother. For starters, throughout the account, she remains unnamed (see Luke 2:41–51). She, of course, is present in the term “his parents” that we find in Luke 2:41. More than that, she is three times called “his mother” (Luke 2:43, 48, 51). Still, her attendance on this long trip sparks curiosity. As a woman, especially one still in her child-bearing years,

she was under no obligation to go to Jerusalem for the Passover. The Mosaic law exempted women in general (for example, Exodus 34:23 says “all your men” and Deuteronomy 16:16 says “all thy males”), as did contemporary law.²⁴ Yet Luke wrote that “his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover,” employing the imperfect tense of the verb *poreuomai*, which bears the sense of repeated and customary action (Luke 2:41).²⁵

In this context, the notion that Mary remained a perpetual virgin and therefore was able to go to Jerusalem each year will not do. We know of at least six other children born to her, four sons and no fewer than two daughters. It was Matthew who added a brief notice in his account of Jesus’ birth that Joseph “knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son” (Matthew 1:25), opening the door to identifying her children later in his narrative, as Mark did. These two gospels name Jesus’ four brothers: “James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas” plus “his sisters” (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3). Importantly, the Greek nouns for “brother” and “sister” (*adelphos* and *adelphē*) occur in these passages, not the usual terms for relatives or cousins.

It seems that, in Luke’s presentation of the story of the Jerusalem trip, we gain a glimpse into Mary’s deep devotion, a devotion that impelled her to attend the temple on as regular a basis as possible, whether she was nurturing children or not. How she managed the care of her children during her absences is unclear. She evidently took them



Figure 2. The Great Altar, the entry into the Sanctuary, and the places of slaughter, skinning, and preparation of the animal parts to be sacrificed and consumed by the worshippers. The Bronze Sea stood between the Altar and the Sanctuary.

with her when they were old enough, as Jesus was on this occasion. Her time away from home for the Passover would have exceeded two weeks if we add her travel time to and from Jerusalem, her early arrival a week before the festival for purification, and her observance of at least the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread before returning home, a typical stay for pilgrims.²⁶ The feast of Unleavened Bread lasted another seven days beyond the Passover celebration (see Exodus 23:15; 34:18; Leviticus 23:5–8; etc.), though worshipers often did not stay in the city that long.²⁷ It also appears that she intended to be in the temple with her son when he experienced Passover events there for the first time.

On the morning after the ritual purification by sprinkling, before sunrise when the temple gates were opened,²⁸ Jesus' family likely joined others in their traveling company and entered the temple grounds that stretched a quarter of a mile from north to south. The throngs that had come long distances presented a cacophony of languages in addition to the familiar Aramaic of natives (compare Acts 2:4–11). What would have caught everyone's attention were the three trumpet blasts at the opening of the gates, particularly the Nicanor Gate that connected the Court of Women to the Court of the Israelites.²⁹ The two priests who blew the trumpets stood facing eastward between the great altar and the holy sanctuary with a view into the Court of Women through the Nicanor Gate. The trumpeters played three short notes, then a series of



Figure 3. The Court of Women and Nicanor Gate. All Jews were welcome inside the Court of Women whereas only men and boys were allowed to step through the gate into the narrow Court of the Israelites.

eight quickly tongued sounds, and lastly the three notes again.³⁰ These tones Jesus was hearing for the first time.

But those were not the only musical sounds that reached his ear that morning. About sunrise,³¹ after the offering of the incense and the blessing of the people by the five priests involved in the incense service,³² when the morning sacrificial service began with the sacrifice of a year-old ram and the pouring of wine at the base of the great altar for a drink offering (see Exodus 29:38–44; Numbers 28:3–7),³³ the all-male Levitical choir began to sing as they stood on the fifteen steps that led up through the Nicanor Gate. These men faced eastward, looking into the Court of Women and away from the great altar and the tall facade of the sanctuary.³⁴ By that moment, the early sun had begun to touch the facade's golden face. As the smoke of the whole burnt offering rose into the open sky, at a cue, this mens choir sang the set psalm for the day.³⁵ Their rich, deep voices made an impression on all who heard them sing these well-known lines. A third of the way through the psalm, the choir stopped singing, the two priests again blew three sounds from their trumpets, and the gathered worshipers prostrated themselves onto the temple flag stones "in adoration." The singing resumed, voicing the next third of the psalm, followed by three trumpet blasts from the priests and another prostrating of the people.³⁶ After that, the choir finished singing the psalm, ending the service.³⁷ All these rites Jesus was witnessing for the first time, taking in their spiritual beauty.

Surely, during the days preceding the Passover, Jesus came into the temple and witnessed this grand, sacred pageant of singing and trumpet playing and offering of sacrifice, whether in the morning or the afternoon during a repeat of the morning sacrifice (see Exodus 29:41; Numbers 28:8; 2 Chronicles 31:3).³⁸ For just beyond the Nicanor Gate, on its west side, was a space enclosed by a low barrier about twenty inches (or a cubit) high. There any Jewish male could stand and listen to and watch what was happening in the sacred area next to the altar and in front of the temple facade.³⁹ A person could see the place of slaughter of the sacrificial animals; the place of hanging the carcasses before preparing them for skinning and burning; the place of the drain that took the sacrificial blood and the wine of libations into the Kidron Valley far from the temple walls; the place of the huge bronze basin where priests washed their hands and feet; the place where the priests kept bowls for catching the blood of sacrificial animals to sprinkle at the base of the altar below its red line; and the place where three priests began to climb



Figure 4. The Nicanor Gate with its fifteen steps on which stood the Levitical Choir when it sang as the Temple was opened.

the stairs into the sanctuary, one of whom, chosen by lot, would light the incense.⁴⁰ All these holy actions were new to the youthful Jesus.

Indeed, it was with new friends made during the journey to Jerusalem that Jesus explored both the temple and the city. After all, they had almost ten days on site. The big prize for youthful visitors, of course, was the temple. To be sure, the majestic beauty of the place was impressive during their first visits with their parents. But what captured the most interest were the activities associated with sacred sacrifices. Entering one of the five gates into the extensive temple area,⁴¹ they made for the gate that led into the Court of Women, called the Beautiful Gate (see Acts 3:2, 10).⁴² In my mind's eye, I see them passing the stone signs that warned Gentiles from going farther⁴³ and the phalanx of beggars who were stationed next to the Beautiful Gate (see Acts 3:2–9). Then they almost raced as they strode toward the fifteen steps that took them up to the Nicanor Gate.⁴⁴ Here the girls in the group stopped, being allowed to observe what was happening only from the east side or outside of the gate. It was from here, presumably, that Mary had witnessed the sacrifice of the two birds for her cleansing a dozen years before (see Luke 2:22–24). Stepping through this gate, the boys found themselves in the small, rectangular enclosure framed by the low barrier where the curious could stand and watch what was happening at the great altar and beyond. This area was called the Court of the Israelites.⁴⁵

What they experienced was wondrous and fascinating. It was the smell that assaulted their noses first, a combination of blood and urine

and dung. The burning of a sacrificial animal's dung, of course, was a part of certain temple offerings (see Exodus 29:14; Leviticus 4:10–11; 8:17; etc.). But the number of sacrificial offerings that Passover worshipers from outside Judea had brought to the temple was enormous because it was the one time in the year that they would be able to offer a sacrifice.⁴⁶ And animals, when slain, immediately lost control and their bodies allowed the discharge of urine and dung, adding a distinctive tang to the pervasive smell of blood.

When the boys stepped inside the gate, almost directly in front of them (but slightly to the left) rose the great altar, the top of which was fifteen feet above their heads.⁴⁷ From where they stood, they could see the officiating priests, chosen that morning by lot, walk about both on the top of the altar and on the twenty-inch wide platform, called “the circuit,” that ran around the top of the square altar and that allowed them to tend to the fires and sacrifices — not only those required of them but also those required of the gathered throng.⁴⁸ Farther to their left and south they could see the ramp that led to the top of the altar.⁴⁹ Both the ramp and altar itself were undergirded by uncut stones (see Exodus 20:25) which had been cleansed of blood in anticipation of the Passover celebration.⁵⁰ Directly to their left was the large door that led into the Chamber of Hewn Stone.⁵¹ This large room was divided into two parts. In the part closest to the sanctuary, priests were physically examined for blemishes that would disqualify them from temple duties and lots were drawn daily to determine who would perform certain acts that day.⁵² In the other part sat the Sanhedrin from whose numbers would come “the doctors” who would listen to and interact with Jesus in coming days (see Luke 2:46).⁵³

Directly in front of them they could see the twelve-step staircase that led up to the golden doors of the sanctuary where the priests who had to do with the incense service, also chosen by lot that morning, ascended to enter the sacred enclosure that stood before the temple's veil.⁵⁴ Two groups of priests were chosen, one for the morning incense lighting and one for the afternoon service. It seems certain that the time of day when Zacharias lit the incense was afternoon because of the gathered crowd (see Luke 1:21). What Jesus and his friends could not see looking that direction was the large bronze basin filled with water. The altar blocked their view.⁵⁵ This basin was said to be lifted into place every morning by a giant pulley, the noise from which was said to be heard in Jericho and signaled that the service of the daily sacrifice would commence.⁵⁶ In the

basin the priests rinsed their hands and feet in acts of purification (see Exodus 30:17–21).

To their right the group could see the open area dotted with twenty-four metal rings anchored in the flag stones where sacrificial animals were tied up. Here a priest chosen by lot brought two yearling rams that were to be slain, one at the time of the morning sacrifice and one at the time of the evening (see Leviticus 1:11). The blood of the rams was caught in a special gold basin. Next to these rings stood eight upright pillars on top of which were affixed cedar wood blocks that held iron hooks. Onto these hooks the carcasses were hung when being skinned and flayed. While suspended from these hooks, the parts of the animal that would be burned on the altar were cut off by the first priest and handed to other priests to be carried to the top of the altar. The parts of the animal that would go respectively to the priests and to the worshipers, of course, were cut off here. Nearby sat marble tables for washing the inward parts of the carcass (see Leviticus 1:13).⁵⁷

Because these young people were all raised in a society that daily dealt with animals and because they had seen and participated in the slaughter of animals for food and leather products, they were not squeamish about what was occurring in front of them. The priest who was assigned to perform the ritual slaying of the sacrificial ram for one of the twice-daily offerings brought the yearling to the rings where, after tying it up, saw to the butchering of the animal and hanging it on one of the hooks where he expertly cut off parts of the body and gave them to other priests who were to carry them to the altar for burning.⁵⁸ The priest who had caught the blood carried the filled basin to the different corners of the altar where he sprinkled the sides with blood below the red line before pouring out the excess at the southwest corner of the altar where it drained down a long pipe into the Kidron Valley.⁵⁹ Because Jesus and his friends were standing on the east side of the great altar, they could not see the ritual pouring of the blood that drained away because it was hidden by the ramp where it connected to the south side of the altar. But they surely caught sight of the priest's head moving about as he sprinkled the southwest corner of the altar with the ram's blood.

Other explorations, naturally, would have taken them outside the temple walls to the Antonia Fortress perched outside the temple area at its northwest corner. This imposing building and the surrounding area were decidedly different from the rest of the city, for it was a place frequented by Gentiles, particularly the soldiers stationed in the fortress. Years later, in this area, a disabled Jewish man would come seeking relief from his



Figure 5. The Antonia Fortress looking from the north. Down the hill to the left (eastward) was the Pool of Bethesda and its accompanying baths where Jesus came upon the Jewish man who had been ill for thirty-eight years, and healed him (John 5).

decades-long illness at the pool of Bethesda and its accompanying baths. Here Jesus would find him, probably surrounded by a number of sick Gentiles, and grant him unexpected relief (see John 5:1–16).

Another attractive place to visit consisted of the Citadel, renovated into the late King Herod's three towers and palace that stood side by side in the northwest corner of the city.⁶⁰ (One of the towers still stands inside Jerusalem's Old City at Jaffa Gate, known as David's Tower.⁶¹) At that Passover season, none of the youths could get inside the series of buildings because they were used for official purposes. Just over two decades from this moment, Jesus would be dragged into "the hall of judgment," or *Praetorium* (John 18:28), within Herod's palace (where Pilate was in temporary residence) and be subjected to the cruelty of a farcical trial and a scourging before being led away to his crucifixion.⁶²

A third spot of high interest was the long stair case that ran from the stone platform at the south end of the temple grounds down to the Hulda Gates. From these gates the youths could explore the lower city as far down as the pool of Siloam. Almost two decades later, Jesus would exit these gates with his disciples and come upon a man born blind. In an act of generosity, Jesus would give this man his sight by asking him to wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam and thereby add an important witness to the power of his divine mission (see John 9:1–7).



Figure 6. The lit interior of the staircase that led down from the temple area to the Hulda Gates, pictured here, where Jesus came upon the man born blind and healed him (John 9).

Perhaps with his parents, Jesus wandered the main commercial road in the city that ran outside the temple's massive western wall. Sitting in the Tyropean Valley were shops and kiosks and animal pens that offered all sorts of wares for local citizens and visitors alike, including animals for sacrifice.⁶³ Fewer than twenty years later, Jesus would stand on the southwest corner of the temple wall and be tempted by the devil to jump onto that busy street in an act guaranteed to draw public attention to his divine powers (see Matthew 4:5–7; Luke 4:9–12).⁶⁴ As we know, he rejected this showy approach to his messiahship.

The Passover Preparations and Celebration

Finally the long-awaited day arrived, the eve of Passover. Although the holiday rested on an ancient family experience in Egypt, the celebration was not considered complete without a number of others sharing the ceremony.⁶⁵ Hence, we envision Jesus and his parents joining a group consisting of about ten persons from their traveling company for the ritual and meal. This was the round number of celebrants per group.⁶⁶ According to Jewish law, the meal was to begin after sundown, the only such food law of its kind.⁶⁷ Otherwise, people customarily ate their main meal about two o'clock in the afternoon. For eating the Passover, they reclined.⁶⁸

Although the shopping for the meal had taken place earlier in the week, acquiring and preparing the lamb for the Passover meal occurred

during the daylight hours before the evening feast. The date in the Jewish calendar was the fourteenth day of Nissan. Customarily, one or two persons from a celebrating group would go to the temple to purchase a lamb and then remain for the ritual slaughter.⁶⁹ We cannot be certain that Joseph and Jesus were the ones from their group who went to the temple that afternoon to purchase and sacrifice a lamb. But it is a reasonable possibility that they did. After all, Jesus may well have been the youngest in the group of pilgrims and the adults would have wanted him to experience the wonders of going to the temple on that occasion. Keeping this in mind, we see Joseph and Jesus walking toward the temple, seeing shop keepers closing their businesses which they were allowed to keep open until early afternoon, an unusual occurrence because in Galilee all shops remained closed on the day before Passover.⁷⁰ On the other hand, vendors inside the temple grounds were still doing a brisk business during the early afternoon before the celebration,⁷¹ an activity that Jesus would challenge two decades later (see Matthew 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46; John 2:13–17). Importantly, all Passover lambs consumed within the city and its environs had to be dealt with at the temple because they were considered sacrifices (see Exodus 12:27; 34:25; Numbers 9:7, 13).⁷²

In this light, after purchasing a lamb born just days or weeks before the Passover,⁷³ Joseph and Jesus carried it up through the Nicanor Gate where they joined approximately 6,000 other persons crammed into the narrow Court of the Israelites.⁷⁴ These people had also come to sacrifice lambs for the feast.⁷⁵ It was now about three o'clock, the usual time of the evening sacrifice which, because of the Passover, had been moved to a time one hour earlier.⁷⁶

When the court was full of men and boys, the Nicanor Gate was closed. In fact, three groups of 6,000 men and boys would be allowed into this space during the afternoon, one group after the other.⁷⁷ All brought lambs and they were allowed to slay their own animals.⁷⁸ People went briskly to the twenty-four rings where they slew the lambs.⁷⁹ When space allowed and it was their turn, Joseph and Jesus quickly took their lamb, cut its throat, and then were assisted by a priest who caught the blood in a gold or silver basin. A double line of priests passed these basins to other priests who, standing next to the altar, splashed the blood against the bottom course of stones where it would run into the drain on the southwest corner.⁸⁰ Along with the other worshipers, they hung the lamb's carcass on one of the available hooks nearby and, because they had done this before, deftly cut off the lamb's hide.⁸¹ Later they gave the

hide to the owner of the space where their group was setting up to eat the Passover meal. Those hides, sometimes demanded by the owner, were the payment for the rent, as were the vessels used for the supper itself.⁸² The body parts to be burned on the great altar were left behind with the priests (see Leviticus 3:3–4).⁸³

During all this frantic activity of slaughtering 6,000 lambs in less than an hour, the Levite choir, with instrumental accompaniment, began to sing the Hallel psalms, numbers 113 through 118 in the Bible. The gathered men and boys joined the singing by repeating the first line of each psalm and by responding to certain lines in the psalms by singing or saying Hallelujah.⁸⁴ During the stay of the first group inside the enclosure, the choir and gathered worshipers would try to sing all six psalms. Tradition has it that during the afternoon activities the choir would sing the psalms completely twice and partially a third time.⁸⁵

If Joseph and Jesus were in the first group, they would have left through the Nicanor Gate as soon as they finished so that the next group could enter. The second and third groups were waiting on the *hel* of the temple, a raised platform that surrounded the sanctuary building on the south, west, and north.⁸⁶ A similar scene ensued with the second group. 6,000 or so worshipers carrying lambs piled into the narrow Court of the Israelites, awaiting their opportunity to prepare their sacrificial animals. As each of the 6,000 took their turns, the Levitical choir began to sing again the six Hallel psalms, with the gathered men and boys adding their voices. The music was heard all over the city and outside the walls, adding a warm, sacred dimension to the Passover that was about to begin.

Ovens for roasting lambs had been set up all over the city.⁸⁷ We can imagine Joseph and Jesus hurrying to an oven close to the rented place where they were to enjoy the Passover service and meal with their group. Carefully threading the carcass onto a pomegranate-wood skewer—not a metal one—they suspended the lamb over the coals and fire of the oven.⁸⁸ Nothing was to touch the cooking lamb. It was to remain pure, undefiled by any external contact, even water. This concept of a pure sacrifice was to undergird the surrender of the Savior to his own sacrificial death after he shared the Passover lamb with his beloved disciples more than two decades later.⁸⁹ At this moment, we suspect, the women of the party, including Mary, became involved in seeing that the lamb was cooked properly. We can infer a similar scene more than twenty years later, after Jesus assigned Peter and John to make preparations for Jesus' last Passover meal (see Luke 22:8). In that case, the women disciples who

had followed Jesus from Galilee must have taken charge of the meal, certainly before the roasting of the lamb.⁹⁰

The Passover Service and Meal

In accord with Jewish law, the group of ten or so gathered after sundown (see Leviticus 23:5, “at even”). No one had eaten since the evening sacrifice, that is, since about two o’clock that afternoon.⁹¹ With Mary in the mix, the women had prepared the meal with its symbolic foods that would tie the minds and hearts of the participants back to their forebears’ Exodus from Egypt. The idea was that “a man [or woman] must so regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Egypt.”⁹² The members of the party were under obligation to end the service and meal by midnight. Beginning at that late hour, the remaining pieces of the Passover meal were thought to make a person’s hands ritually unclean.⁹³

Before the meal was cooked and served, the head of the house or, in this case, the main host for the group, with a lit candle, undertook a search of the place where the meal was to be prepared and eaten. He was looking for anything that might have leaven or yeast in it. The rule was that “whatsoever is made from any kind of grain must be removed at Passover.”⁹⁴ In homes, this search took place the evening before the feast. But it could also occur the next morning⁹⁵ which must have been the case in Jerusalem because the group was in a rented facility. Because the earliest Israelites baked unleavened bread so that they could leave quickly, all subsequent generations made bread without leaven so that it could not rise (see Exodus 12:8, 14–15).

Around a low table the guests reclined. Why? Because reclining was said to be the dining position of a free person.⁹⁶ During the original Passover, when the Hebrew slaves were still in Egypt, they prepared the meal to be eaten “in haste” because their departure into freedom was imminent (see Exodus 12:11; Deuteronomy 16:3). In later times, the meal was eaten at a more leisurely pace.

Onto the table the women placed platters with the food and the cups or mugs for each person for the four cups of wine, specifically red wine, that were to be served during the festivities. Even the poorest person was to receive four cups of wine. In a basket or on a platter sat three loaves of the unleavened bread, prepared and cooked fresh that day by three women, certainly including Mary.⁹⁷ The bread was wrapped in a piece of fabric. It was this bread that Jesus would transform into an emblem of his own sacrificial death during his last supper on earth (see 1 Corinthians 11:23–24).

The earliest instructions about the foods to be eaten during the Passover meal came from the Lord in Egypt and were simple: "They shall eat the flesh [of the lamb] in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs" (Exodus 12:8). To blunt the bitterness of the herbs, another dish called *haroseth* was added to the table. The *haroseth* was a concoction of "nuts and fruit pounded together and mixed with vinegar."⁹⁸ Celebrants also added uncooked food items like "lettuce, chicory, pepperwort, snakeroot, and dandelion" to the table.⁹⁹ We can easily imagine such dishes spread out on the table before the reclining participants. The only foods that had been cooked, that had received heat, were the lamb and the unleavened bread. All else was fresh or dried. In addition, no milk product was introduced into the meal.

Each participant was to receive four cups of wine, mixed with water.¹⁰⁰ The wine was poured throughout the evening at fixed times during the meal. The first cup came quickly, for with it the supper began. The host held his cup in his hand and offered words of thanks that had come to him and the others through tradition. We hear some of his words: "Blessed art thou, Jehovah our God, King of the Universe, who hast created the fruit of the vine. . . . Blessed art thou, Jehovah, King of the Universe, who has preserved us alive and sustained us and brought us to this season!" Then all at the table drank the first cup and rinsed their hands.¹⁰¹ Of course, Jesus had participated in the Passover service and its meal while growing up in Nazareth. Here, in the Holy City, he reclined with new acquaintances. There the head of the house was Joseph; here it was possibly someone else. Here the fresh, shared feeling of fellowship and comradeship with total strangers surely put a stamp on his perceptions of others as people who, with him, shared a long history of God's involvement in their lives. But that is not the whole story.

It was likely this first cup that, later, Jesus asked his disciples to share with one another during their Last Supper together, an act far in the future that presented to him and the disciples an evening of unity and common purpose. On that occasion, we read, he "took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves" (Luke 22:17). Each disciple, of course, had his own cup sitting on the table in front of him. So it was an unusual request that they all share a single cup, each drinking from it, an act that underscored their shared fellowship as members of the Twelve. It would be the third cup of wine, "the cup after supper," that Jesus would turn into the pointer to his own coming suffering (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25, "when he had supped").¹⁰²

All this lay two decades in the future. At this moment, the youthful Jesus saw Joseph in a new light. In Jerusalem, Joseph was working cooperatively with others to make the Passover celebration a happy occasion. Back home, it was mainly Joseph's responsibility to make foods ready for the Passover and, away from the temple, to take care of the lamb by the time-honored traditions inherited from his own family. By contrast, in Jerusalem sat a temple organization that kept all preparations running in a specific channel, making needed foods available in the markets, placing ovens throughout the city, and providing lambs for sale both inside and outside the temple area.

And his mother? She shown in a new light too. Back home she was the main person to see that the unwanted leaven was no longer in her home, beginning to expel it weeks before, and to bring in the needed condiments for the meal. In the city, she joined her efforts and skills with those of other women. Dignified, bright, nurturing, she added a shine to what was happening and lent a spirit of deepened devotion to the other women in the group. With her, they shopped in the markets of the city, looking for spices and other seasonings that she and they had rarely encountered in rural Galilee, let alone been able to purchase. From her, they took a sweet veneration for God that was both sure on its feet and unwavering in its intent.

Everyone having rinsed and dried their hands, the women now brought all the food and laid it out on the table in their containers. The host of the feast then took a sprig of the bitter herbs and dipped it in a dish of salt water. He took a bite, then offered the herbs and salt water to the other guests. As soon as they partook, all the foods on the table were whisked away, likely by the women and older children.¹⁰³ The second cup of wine was poured but remained untouched on the table.

Next came one of the more important events of the evening. Scripture enjoins the father to impress on everyone the importance of God's rescue of their ancestors from Egypt: "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way" (Deuteronomy 6:7). At Passover, this teaching was to be offered to the youngest child as a reminder to all. According to custom, the child was to ask: "Why is this night different from other nights?"¹⁰⁴ If no younger child was a part of the group, then surely Jesus was invited to ask the question of the meal's host, whether that host was Joseph or another man. Jesus had done this before, but not in the presence of strangers.

What the adult said in response to the question was taken directly from the book of Deuteronomy and originally formed the ceremonial words of bringing an offering of first fruits to the sanctuary (see Deuteronomy 26:1–4). The adult recited these lines: “A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous” (Deuteronomy 26:5, RSV). To this point, the host of the meal was speaking about a common ancestor to those in the room. Now the language switched and made everyone present into a person living in Egypt and witnessing the unspeakable experience of the Exodus: “And the Egyptians treated us harshly, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. Then we cried to the Lord the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice, and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (Deuteronomy 26:6–9, RSV). What no one in the room knew was the fact that the youthful Jesus reclining in their midst was the architect of that long-ago Exodus experience of their forebears. In this little group was sitting the God of Abraham, the God of Moses.

This interaction between an adult and a child preceded the return of the dishes to the table. Thereupon, the host took up the explanation of the meaning of three things — the Passover lamb, the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread — ending with the invitation, “let us say before [God] the *Hallelujah*,” therewith inviting all to sing together the first of the two Hallel psalms, numbers 113 and 114.¹⁰⁵ At the close of the singing, all drank the second cup of wine. Rinsing their hands a second time, all in the group watched the host break the first of the unleavened bread loaves and utter a prayer of thanksgiving.¹⁰⁶ Each person in the group now received a sandwich of sorts made up of two pieces of unleavened bread with bitter herbs stuffed between them and dipped in the *haroseth*, the mixture of nuts and fruit. It was this sandwich, or “sop,” that Jesus would give to Judas on that fateful night more than twenty years in the future before Judas “went immediately out” into the “night” (John 13:30). As a result, Judas did not partake of the Passover lamb, the principal emblem of God’s deliverance, with his fellow members of the Twelve that evening.¹⁰⁷

All in the youthful Jesus’ group had by now received a taste of everything except the lamb itself. The gathered guests turned their attention to consuming the meat of the lamb. It was the only meat of the

meal. By Jesus' day, Jews had come to allow the *Aphikomen*, a dessert-like sweet that included the unleavened bread as one of its parts. When an adult, Jesus took the unleavened bread from this part of the meal and turned it into the substance of his own sacrifice which lay only a few hours from that moment: "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; also 1 Corinthians 11:24).¹⁰⁸

The third cup of wine followed the eating of the *Aphikomen*, the dessert. In this case, too, Jesus would make the third cup into a symbol of remembrance, this time of his blood: "After the same manner also he took the cup, *when he had supped*, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:25, emphasis added; also Luke 22:20).¹⁰⁹ As if to underscore the messianic links to the third cup, worshipers then opened the door to allow the great forerunner, the prophet Elijah, into the room.¹¹⁰

The fourth cup was poured and the group members joined their voices in singing the remaining Hallel psalms, numbers 115 through 118. After the singing, they all drank the last cup of wine together, bringing the celebration to a close. As noted earlier, at midnight, the elements of the meal would render a person's hands ritually unclean and were to be burned the next day.¹¹¹ Everyone in the group made their way out of the city to the place of their respective camp sites.

The "Father's Business"

It is impossible to say where Jesus stayed when his parents left town with "the company" and he remained three days in and around the city and temple. Whether he accepted an invitation of a family friend or whether he slept not far from his parent's encampment we do not know. A young teenager can be very resourceful in how he or she solves such challenges. But remain behind he did, evidently with a source of food and drink and some sort of sleeping blanket. Nights at this time of year could be "cold," as John's gospel reminds us when recounting the story of Peter's denial, also at Passover time (John 18:18).

We learn from Luke's report that Joseph and Mary traveled "a day's journey" before they missed Jesus (Luke 2:44), probably as far as Jericho. From this notice we can surmise that the encampment area that Jesus' parents shared with others outside the walls of Jerusalem was rather extensive and that Jesus was not sleeping close to them during the last



Figure 7. The Chamber of Hewn Stone is the large building sitting on the right (east) atop the hel, the platform that ran around the south (shown here), west and north sides of the inner temple complex. Presumably, it was on the hel, just outside the Chamber of Hewn Stone, that Jesus was meeting with the Jewish savants when Mary and Joseph found him (Luke 2:43–51).

nights of their stay. It was at their first stop that “they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance,” expecting to find him with playmates. Luke recorded that “they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him” (Luke 2:45), doubtless retracing their steps through much of the night.

Where they looked and how they missed him for “three days” we are not told. Evidently, he was not spending his nights in or near the city at their former encampment, for they surely would have looked there. They may have spent part of the time in Bethlehem where they had relatives. But that is unlikely. Because the temporal expression “after three days” is ambiguous, it is possible to understand that Joseph and Mary searched for Jesus all that time. It is also possible, even preferable, that they traveled away from Jerusalem the first day, returned to the city the second day, and found him on the third.¹¹²

Christian art has regularly portrayed Jesus and his questioners sitting under a roof of sorts, as if he and they were under one of the porticos that ran along the west, south, or east sides of the large temple area. The artists may also have had in mind that the meeting which Joseph and Mary stumbled upon was in the Chamber of Hewn Stone, the regular meeting place of the Sanhedrin.¹¹³ For “the doctors” noted by Luke were likely Pharisaic members of the Sanhedrin noted for their learning. The Sadducee members rarely bore any such reputation.¹¹⁴ But it is unlikely

that Jesus was meeting with this impressive group of men inside the space dedicated to the official business of the Sanhedrin. Rather, a public space sits just outside the south door of this chamber. It was called the *hel*, and was a long, flat, stone terrace that ran along the outside of the south, west and north walls that surrounded the sanctuary.¹¹⁵ It was also open to the sky. Here, on the south *hel*, the second and third groups of worshipers gathered on the afternoon before the feast to await their turn to prepare their Passover lambs for roasting.

Because the south door of the Chamber of Hewn Stone opened onto this large surface, the *hel* appears to be the most natural place for Jesus to have met members of the Sanhedrin and to have engaged them in conversation.¹¹⁶ After all, it was customary for Sanhedrin members to teach Passover visitors from the scriptures on this terrace.¹¹⁷ Open and accessible, this space is the most likely place where Joseph and Mary spotted Jesus who was among Sanhedrin members “both hearing them, and asking them questions” (Luke 2:46). The Joseph Smith Translation of this passage indicates that the conversation was not one way, with Jesus as the only learner. Rather, “the doctors ... were hearing him, and asking him questions” (JST Luke 2:46). This change helps us to understand Luke’s note that “all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke 2:47).

Soon after the moment of discovery, after his parents’ astonishment had passed, apparently Jesus approached them so that they did not have to make their way through the gathered crowd. One hears a bit of pique in Mary’s voice when she whispered loudly, “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing” (Luke 2:48). With a firmness that goes beyond his youth, Jesus responded, “How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). The expression “about my Father’s business” poses problems and has led some interpreters to understand the meaning to be “in my Father’s house” or “among my Father’s people.”¹¹⁸ The two elements to appreciate in this scene are the frightful worry expressed by Mary at not knowing where her son was and the divinely directed need of Jesus to be in the temple whether engaged in his Father’s affairs or being among his Father’s people. In any event, Mary and Joseph drew blanks. For, as Luke recounted, “they understood not the saying which [Jesus] spake unto them” (Luke 2:50).

After the obviously tense moment wherein both Mary and Jesus expressed themselves, Jesus remained the obedient son, “and went down with them, and came to Nazareth.” The three of them must have joined

another traveling company that was leaving in the middle of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. From this point on, the young Jesus “was subject unto them” (Luke 2:51).

But he had made an impression on his parents, particularly his mother. For, as Luke summarized, “his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.” Yet Jesus’ words or “sayings” were not the only parts of their shared experience to savor. Jesus the youth had gone to the temple for the first time as an excited and impressionable twelve-year-old to witness the grand moments associated with the Passover as they were conducted in the city. By the time he departed, he had taken up residence as a teacher of sorts inside the temple grounds and next to the Chamber of Hewn Stone where significant decisions about religious life were made for all Jews. Moreover, and more importantly, he had taken up residence close to the sanctuary itself. Adding them together, it becomes clear that he had made the heart of the temple his base of operations. He had made it into his “house” — specifically, as he called it in a later scene, a “house of prayer” (Mark 11:17, quoting Isaiah 56:7).

Acknowledgments

Our deep appreciation to Daniel Smith for providing the images of the temple used in this chapter. Figure 2 is from the model of the late Alec Garrard, as published in William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely, *Solomon’s Temple: Myth and History* (London, England: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 46.

S. Kent Brown is an emeritus professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University and is the former director of the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies. Brother Brown taught at BYU from 1971 to 2008. In 1978–79, he and his family spent a year in Cairo where he was a fellow of the American Research Center in Egypt while he worked on the collection of ostraca at the Coptic Museum. In 2007 and 2008, Brother Brown served as the principal investigator for an archaeological excavation in southern Oman. In the world of documentary films, he has served as the executive producer for *Journey of Faith*, *Journey of Faith: The New World*, and *Messiah: Behold the Lamb of God*, all productions of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at BYU. His most recent book is *The Testimony of Luke* which deals historically, culturally, and doctrinally with each verse in Luke’s Gospel and is available in hard copy and electronic-book form from BYU Studies, Deseret Book and Amazon.

In Church service, he has served as president of the BYU Thirteenth Stake and president of the Jerusalem District. He is married to the former Gayle Oblad; they are the parents of five children and the grandparents of twenty-five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Notes

- 1 A person might think that recreating events of Jesus' two-week visit to Jerusalem as a youth would be full of likelihoods and possibilities rather than resting on real experiences and known procedures. And that person could point to grounds for such a view. After all, Luke's account is spare and with little detail. However, much is known about the city in that era as well as about the temple and its sacred rites. Much is known about how pilgrims behaved at the Passover and about how they celebrated that special occasion. Further, enough hints seep out of Luke's report to make sense of activities that drew the young Jesus' attention.

This study is not like Robert Graves' *King Jesus* which was openly a work of historical fiction, though he wrote that he took "more than ordinary pains to verify [Jesus'] historical background" (420). In my mind, the present study is much more and comes tantalizingly closer to the truth insofar as it can be grasped.

- 2 My assumption is that, after Jesus' infancy (see Luke 2:22), his first visit to the Jerusalem Temple took place "when he was twelve years old" (Luke 2:42). Mary and Joseph accompanied him, though Mary remains unnamed in the narrative (see Luke 2:43, 48, 51).
- 3 Chaim Richman, *The Holy Temple of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Carta, 1997), 71, 74.
- 4 Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 203.
- 5 Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "ληστής," *TDNT*, 4:261; Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 203.
- 6 Robert H. Stein, Luke, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 121.
- 7 Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 71.
- 8 Ehud Netzer, "Jericho," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:737.

- 9 Josephus, *Jewish War*, 5.5.4, 5.5.6 (§§208–10, 222–23).
- 10 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 15.9.1–7 (§§380–425); *Jewish War*, 15.5.5 (§221); Carol Meyers, “Temple, Jerusalem,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:364–65.
- 11 Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 71.
- 12 Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 30–31, 71; Leen Ritmeyer, *The Quest: Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006), 106–8.
- 13 *Mishnah Parah*, 1:4.
- 14 *Mishnah Parah*, 1:6; Richman, *The Holy Temple*, the illustrations on 67, 73; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 71; Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 108, the illustration on 112.
- 15 Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 31, emphasis in the original; see *Mishnah Pesahim*, 8:8.
- 16 *Mishnah Parah*, 1:7; Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 71; Dan Bahat with Chaim T. Rubinstein, *The Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*, transl. by Shlomo Ketko (Jerusalem: Carta, 1996), 55, 57; Leen and Kathleen Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple in the Time of Christ* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2002), 71.
- 17 Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, illustration on 347.
- 18 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 9.1–2.
- 19 Christine Hayes, “Purity and Impurity, Ritual,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2d ed., 22 vols. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA in association with the Keter Pub. House, 2007), 16:752–53.
- 20 Hayes, “Purity and Impurity,” 16:753, 754; Ronny Reich, “Ritual Baths,” in Eric M. Meyers, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, 5 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4:430–31.
- 21 John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It: Archaeology as Evidence* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 130–31; Joan E. Taylor, “The Garden of Gethsemane: Not the Place of Jesus’ Arrest,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 21 (July–August 1995): 26–35, 62.
- 22 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 17.9.3 (§217).

- 23 S. Kent Brown, *The Testimony of Luke* (Provo: BYU Studies, 2015), 136–37, 139–40.
- 24 *Mishnah Hagigah* 1:1 reads that “All are subject to the command to appear [at such festivals] excepting ... women.”
- 25 Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), §§325, 327. The idea the Mary would have been expected to go with her family is held by a few scholars: I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 126; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 155, footnote 6.
- 26 Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 127.
- 27 *Mishnah Pesahim* 9:5; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 50.
- 28 *Mishnah Yoma*, 3:1; *Mishnah Middoth*, 1:3.
- 29 *Mishnah Middoth*, 1:4.
- 30 *Mishnah Sukkah*, 5:5; Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*, reprint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 76–77; Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar and Matthew Black, rev. ed. 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1973–87), 2:307.
- 31 Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People*, 2:300.
- 32 *Mishnah Tamid*, 5:1; Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People*, 2:305–7; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 43, illustrations on 22, 23, 43.
- 33 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 3.10.1 (§237); *Mishnah Tamid*, 3:7; 4:1.
- 34 *Mishnah Middoth*, 2:5; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, the illustrations on 14–15, 44–45; Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, illustrations on 348, 349; Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 29, 68, points out that the Levite choir stood on the platform that held the great altar for some services.
- 35 *Mishnah Tamid*, 7:4; Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People*, 2:303; Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 45.

- 36 *Mishnah Tamid*, 7:3; Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People*, 2:303, 307.
- 37 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 77; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 45.
- 38 Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People*, 2:300.
- 39 Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2.8 (§104); Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People*, 2:296; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 19, and the illustration on 18.
- 40 *Mishnah Tamid*, 3:9–4:2; *Mishnah Middoth*, 3:1; Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People*, 2:299, 305–6; Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 44; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 35, 39.
- 41 *Mishnah Middoth*, 1:3.
- 42 Jerry A. Pattengale, “Beautiful Gate,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:631–32.
- 43 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 15.9.5 (§417); *Jewish War*, 5.5.2 (§194).
- 44 Josephus, *Jewish War*, 5.5.3 (§206); *Mishnah Middoth*, 2:5; *Mishnah Sukkah* 5:4.
- 45 Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 19, and the illustrations on 18 and 51.
- 46 Males were obliged to come to the sanctuary three times during the year (see Exodus 23:14–17; 34:22–23; Deuteronomy 16:16). But in practice most came to Jerusalem once, to the Passover celebration (Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 74).
- 47 Josephus, *Jewish War*, 5.5.6 (§225), reports that the base of the altar was 50 cubits by 50 cubits, with a height of fifteen cubits or approximately twenty-two feet from the temple floor. But the base measurements are too large (see Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 39). *Mishnah Middoth*, 3:1, does not give a height for the altar but records that its base dimensions were 32 cubits by 32 cubits, a better fit for the area available between the Nicanor Gate and the steps leading up into the sanctuary.
- 48 *Mishnah Middoth*, 3:1; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 39.

- 49 Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 16–17, offers an illustration of the altar and its ramp as do Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 18, 51.
- 50 Josephus, *Jewish War*, 5.5.6 (§225); *Mishnah Middoth*, 3:4; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 39.
- 51 *Mishnah Middoth*, 5:4; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 13, 20.
- 52 *Mishnah Middoth*, 5:4; *Mishnah Tamid*, 2:5–3:1; Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 20, 24; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 37.
- 53 *Mishnah Middoth*, 5:4; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 20, the sketch on 13.
- 54 Josephus, *Jewish War*, 5.5.4 (§207); *Mishnah Middoth*, 3:6.
- 55 *Mishnah Tamid*, 1:4–2:1; illustrations are found in Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 17–18.
- 56 *Mishnah Yoma*, 3:10; *Mishnah Tamid*, 1:4; 3:8; Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 23–24; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 37–38.
- 57 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 5:9; *Mishnah Shekalim*, 6:4; *Mishnah Tamid*, 3:5; *Mishnah Middoth*, 3:5; Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People*, 2:305; Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 24; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 37, 38.
- 58 *Mishnah Tamid*, 4:1–3; Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 24, 27.
- 59 *Mishnah Middoth*, 3:2; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 37, 39.
- 60 Josephus, *Jewish War*, 5.4.3 (§§161–82); Bahat, *The Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*, illustration on 38–39.
- 61 Bahat, *The Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*, 56.
- 62 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, vol. 29 of *The Anchor Bible*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1966, 1970), 1:845.
- 63 Leen Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 54–55.
- 64 Brown, *The Testimony of Luke*, 228–29.
- 65 Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 78; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 51.

- 66 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 9:10–11, gives the size of typical celebratory groups as five to ten persons with the possibility of expanding; so Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 83. Edersheim, *The Temple*, 222, wrote ten to twenty; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 51, hold the group size to be twenty to thirty, a rather high estimate.
- 67 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 10:1.
- 68 Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 79, illustration on 76–77; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 53.
- 69 Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 78–79.
- 70 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 4:5.
- 71 Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 51.
- 72 Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 78–79.
- 73 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 222.
- 74 Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 82.
- 75 Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, the temple plan on 13, the illustrations on 17, 18, 51,
- 76 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 222–23; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 51.
- 77 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 5:5, 7; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 78.
- 78 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 5:6; Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 75, 78–79.
- 79 Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, the illustrations on 18, 38.
- 80 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 5:6; Richman, *The Holy Temple*, the illustration on 78–79.
- 81 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 5:9.
- 82 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 215; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 101–2.
- 83 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 5:10.
- 84 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 223–24.
- 85 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 5:7; Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 79.

- 86 *Mishnah Middoth*, 2:3; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 50, the temple plan on 13, the illustrations on 11, 59.
- 87 Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 75.
- 88 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 7:1–2; Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 79.
- 89 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 232–33.
- 90 Brown, *The Testimony of Luke*, 982, 985, 987.
- 91 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 5:1; 10:1.
- 92 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 10:5.
- 93 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 10:9; Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 79.
- 94 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 3:1.
- 95 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 219–20.
- 96 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 234–35; Richman, *The Holy Temple*, 75, 79, the illustrations on 74, 76–77.
- 97 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 3:4; Edersheim, *The Temple*, 231, 237.
- 98 Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with an Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 150, footnote 6.
- 99 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 2:6.
- 100 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 10:1; Edersheim, *The Temple*, 235, 237.
- 101 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 238–39.
- 102 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 239, 243.
- 103 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 239–40.
- 104 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 10:4; Edersheim, *The Temple*, 240.
- 105 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 10:5–6; Danby, *The Mishnah*, 151, footnotes 2, 3 and 4.
- 106 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 241–42.
- 107 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 242, 246–47.
- 108 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 242–43.
- 109 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 243–44.
- 110 Edersheim, *The Temple*, 230.
- 111 *Mishnah Pesahim*, 10:7, 9.

- 112 Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 127; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I–IX: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, volume 28 of *The Anchor Bible*, 2 volumes (New York: Doubleday: 1981), 1:441–42.
- 113 *Mishnah Middoth*, 5:4; Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 20, the sketch on 13.
- 114 Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 79, 81; Anthony J. Scaldarini, “Pharisees,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:293–94, 301–3; Gary G. Porton, “Sadducees,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:892–95.
- 115 Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 20, the sketch on 13, the illustrations on 11, 20, 50, 58–59, 69; Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 348, the sketch on 345.
- 116 Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 20, the sketch on 13, the illustration on 50; Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 348.
- 117 Ritmeyer and Ritmeyer, *The Ritual of the Temple*, 50; Ritmeyer, *The Quest*, 348.
- 118 Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 128–29; Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I–IX*, 1:443–44.

SEEKING A GLOBAL CONTEXT FOR THE FIRST VISION

Brian C. Hales

Review of Richard E. Bennett, *1820: Dawning of the Restoration* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University / Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2020). 380 pages. Hardcover, \$31.99.

Abstract: *Richard E. Bennett's latest volume, 1820: Dawning of the Restoration, is not a book about the First Vision. Instead, it describes the world in 1820 through thirteen biographies that provide useful context to the seminal event. Included are Napoleon Bonaparte, Jean Francois Champollion, Alexander I, Ludwig van Beethoven, Theodore Gericault, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, George IV/Queen Caroline, John Wesley/William Wilberforce/Hannah More, Simon Bolivar, John Williams, Henry Clay, Alexander Von Humboldt, and Joseph Smith. Topics of military conquest, music, science, literature, art, linguistics, religion, politics, and the industrial revolution receive extensive coverage for 1820 and the surrounding decades. Even if readers are not seeking an expanded understanding of the world that launched the Restoration, this well-written and highly researched compilation would be an interesting and rewarding read.*

In his book, *1820: Dawning of the Restoration*,¹ author Richard E. Bennett provides Latter-day Saints with a unique gift, perhaps even an offering they did not know they even wanted. With the bicentennial of the First Vision still fresh in our memories, we might expect (as I did) that a book about 1820 would focus on that central event to the Restoration, but it does not.

It is not uncommon for Latter-day Saints to view the First Vision in a microcosm. Believing that God personally initiated the spiritual

1. Richard E. Bennett, *1820: Dawning of the Restoration* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2020).

recovery of the earth, members may overlook consideration of that period's simultaneous secular events. Bennett seeks to expand that perspective and notes, "One of the essential purposes of this book ... is to place Joseph Smith's First Vision story within a worldwide context, not the other way around."² He adds that "a worldwide history cannot be artificially bent to fit a narrow, preconceived, faith-promoting paradigm of interpretation and self-fulfilling prophecy."³

Short biographies of individuals with historical significance in 1820 (Napoleon Bonaparte, Jean-Francois Champollion, Alexander I, Ludwig van Beethoven, Theodore Gericault, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, George IV/Queen Caroline, John Wesley/William Wilberforce/Hannah More, Simon Bolivar, John Williams, Henry Clay, Alexander Von Humboldt, and Joseph Smith) comprise Bennett's book. Through these stories, *Dawning* also delivers a sampling of world events that geographically and chronologically flanked Palmyra, New York, in 1820. The book describes a world much larger than the space typically portrayed by most authors who relate the details surrounding the First Vision.

Geographically, the histories included in *Dawning* encompass most of the world, especially Europe (see Figure 1). Through these biographies, Bennett illustrates the expanding knowledge and technology that was already moving throughout the world by 1820. Several primary subjects receive extensive consideration:

- Military conquest (Bonaparte, Alexander I, Bolivar)
- Music (Beethoven)
- Science (Von Humboldt)
- Literature (Coleridge)
- Art (Gericault)
- Linguistics (Champollion)
- Religion (Wesley/Wilberforce/Moore, Williams)
- Industrial Revolution (George IV)
- Politics (Clay)

Undoubtedly, Joseph Smith and his family would have been aware of some of these international and national issues in the 1820s. Orsamus Turner, who knew the Smiths at that time, recalled, "Once a week he [Joseph Smith Jr.] would stroll into the office of the old *Palmyra*

2. Ibid., viii.

3. Ibid.

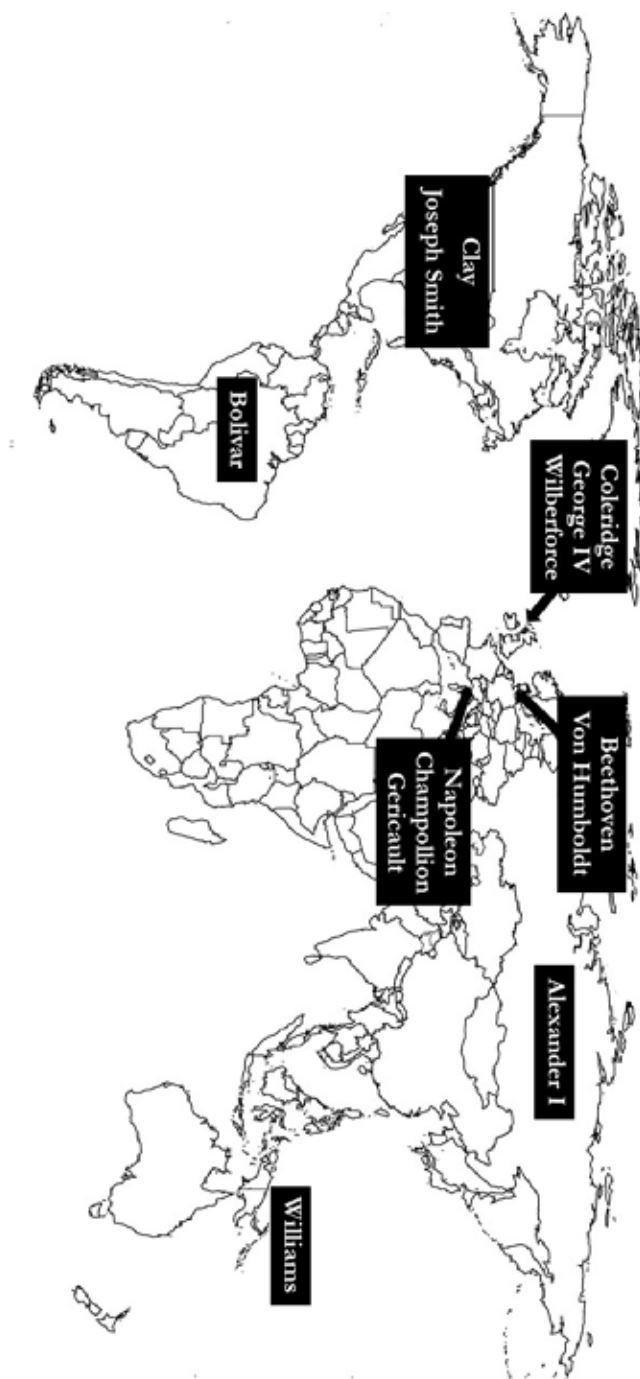


Figure 1. The geographic distribution of histories in *Dawning*.

Register, for his father's paper."⁴ Published between 1817 and 1821, the *Palmyra Register* would likely have included columns discussing some of the world and domestic matters covered in *Dawning*.

While never a primary focus, Bennett connects distant happenings to Joseph Smith and the expanding Church. For example, it highlights how Napoleon's conquests and scientific interests opened the way for explorer Antonio Lebolo to excavate papyri that eventually landed in Joseph Smith's hands, resulting in the Book of Abraham translation. From a historical standpoint, "Thus without Lebolo and, by extension, without Napoleon, so much of the core beliefs and practices of the Church would have gone missing."⁵

Bennett observes how the reign of England's King George IV and the industrial age created an atmosphere where the message of Church missionaries would be more easily embraced.⁶ Other English voices were also influential. Bennett reflects, "In retrospect, one has to wonder how The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints could ever have made the inroads it did in Great Britain in the late 1830s and early 1840s without John Wesley's religious preparation among the poorer classes of society."⁷ Simon Bolivar's South American efforts opened the way for freedom of religion with the eventual presence of Latter-day Saint missionaries.⁸ The chapter on Henry Clay emphasizes the political turmoil in Missouri surrounding slavery in the decade before the Saints staked a claim in Independence.⁹

My favorite chapter, "From Plymouth Rock to Palmyra,"¹⁰ rounds out the volume. It makes no attempt to bring the stories of distant places from previous chapters into the Latter-day Saint universe and context. Instead, it provides a brief overview of the religious tensions unfolding in the United States republic in the century prior to the First Vision. Concise and insightful, it most resembles the book I thought I was picking up when I first opened its covers.

Each chapter is rich in historical information that sometimes accompanies detailed explanations that expand and enlighten. As an

4. Orsamus Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham's Purchase, and Morris' Reserve* (Rochester, NY: Erastus Darrow, 1851), 214 (emphasis added), https://books.google.com/books?id=VLIWAAAAYA&pg=PA214&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false.

5. Bennett, *Dawning of the Restoration*, 44.

6. *Ibid.*, 178–79.

7. *Ibid.*, 205.

8. *Ibid.*, 228.

9. *Ibid.*, 259–85.

10. *Ibid.*, 316–42.

amateur historian, I cannot comment on accuracy. Still, having studied many of Bennett's previous works on Restoration subjects, I expect the narrative to be meticulous and fully representative.

For Latter-day Saints, another reason to consider reading *Dawning* stems from the Book of Mormon observation that God is "the God of the whole earth" (3 Nephi 22:5). Bennett points out how God's hand would not have been limited to influencing events in upstate New York. Divine inspiration would have been available to devout religionists throughout the earth, including some of the personalities investigated in this book.

Seeing the First Vision through a global lens prompts several questions. What if Joseph Smith had lived not in upstate New York, but instead grew up in the country a hundred miles outside of Paris, St. Petersburg, Venice, London, Rome, or Caracas in 1820? What if the Book of Mormon's original translated language were Russian, German, French, Italian, or Spanish? How would each respective cultural and governing system have responded to a young visionary and his book? Perhaps answers would require too much speculation, but the question of whether the religious environment in the United States in the early 1800s was unique and the only womb where the Restoration could have been born might be worthy of further investigation. Perhaps Richard Bennett has one more book in him.

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*

UNDERSTANDING THE YEAR 1820

Craig L. Foster

Book Note: Richard E. Bennett, *1820: Dawning of the Restoration* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University / Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2020). 380 pages. Hardcover, \$31.99.

Abstract: *Richard E. Bennett's 1820: Dawning of the Restoration takes a look at this significant year in a global historical context. He has produced a fascinating book for both members of the Church and non-members.*

Richard E. Bennett explained about his approach to the year 1820 and Joseph Smith's vision, "One major purpose of this work is to expand the stage of that visionary experience from merely a local Palmyra setting to a more global environment" (vii). What happened in that grove of trees in upstate New York "cannot be understood or explained in isolation from those nearby years before and after it" (viii).

Like his previous works, this book is well researched, sourced, and written. It offers interesting insights and page-turning narrative. Among the characters whose stories grace the pages of 1820 are Napoléon Bonaparte, Jean-François Champollion, Ludwig van Beethoven, William Wilberforce, Simón Bolívar, Henry Clay, and Alexander Von Humboldt. Bennett carefully selected these individuals because of their "stellar, unforgettable contributions to their fields of activity" (x). He further explained, "Some made discoveries and contributions so pertinent to the rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that they begged inclusion in this work" (x).

Bennett's approach of focusing on one year and what happened in and around that year not only at the place of particular interest but around the world is not new but nor is it common. In 2017, I reviewed a

book by noted Irish historian Turtle Bunbury.¹ I noted with fascination how diverse events and people's lives can be contemporaneous and sometimes even intersect.

Bennett's 1820 embraces this format of taking one year or event and discovering what was happening all around it. With this approach, the possibilities are fascinatingly endless in terms of works for future historians. But, in the meantime, readers can enjoy *1820: Dawning of the Restoration*, which is well worth their time and effort.

Craig L. Foster earned an MA and an MLIS at Brigham Young University. He is also an accredited genealogist and works as a research specialist at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. He has published articles about different aspects of Latter-day Saint history. He is the author of two books, co-author of two books, and co-editor 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.

1. Craig L. Foster, "An Important Year in History," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 27 (2017), 221–22, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/an-important-year-in-history/>.

PSALM 105: CHIASMUS, CREDO, COVENANT, AND TEMPLE

Stephen D. Ricks

Abstract: *In this essay Stephen Ricks takes a close look at the literary structure of a psalm, reintroducing us to chiasmus both in modern and ancient texts, including the Book of Mormon, then uses this literary structure to show how the psalm contains the basic historic credo of the Israelites, as seen in Deuteronomy and mirrored in 1 Nephi 17. Ricks then goes on to show how an essential part of the psalm is a covenant (“a binding agreement between man and God, with sanctions in the event of the violation of the agreement”), which ties it back to the temple. Ricks shows this by pointing out the points of covenant: (1) Preamble, (2) review of God’s relations with Israel, (3) terms of the covenant, (4) formal witnesses, (5) blessings and curses, and (6) reciting the covenant and depositing the text. This form is maintained in Exodus 19, 20, 23, and 24, and in the Book of Mormon in Mosiah 1–6. Psalm 105 follows this form, too. In the sacrament prayers, which in Mormon’s understanding are covenants, points 1 to 5 are also present.*

[Editor’s Note: Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.

See Stephen D. Ricks, “Psalm 105: Chiasmus, Credo, Covenant, and Temple,” in *Temple Insights: Proceedings of the Interpreter Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference, “The Temple on Mount Zion,” 22 September 2012*, ed. William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 157–170.

Further information at [https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/temple-insights/.](https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/temple-insights/)]

Psalm 105 provides an intriguing array of literary and theological themes: chiasmus, the historical credo, covenant, and — looming in the background, only occasionally mentioned but clearly understood and accepted — the temple. Each of these themes is eminently worthy of examination, and while I will discuss each, I will focus on the covenant in this psalm.

Chiasmus as a Poetic Form in Ancient Near Eastern Literature

Chiasmus is a poetic form based on reverse parallelism that is frequently found in the poetry of the ancient Near East as well as of the classical world — even, incidentally, in Sanskrit literature — as the studies edited by John W. Welch have shown.¹ Yelland, Jones, and Easton's *Handbook of Literary Terms* defines *chiasmus* as “a passage in which the second part is inverted and balanced against the first. Chiasmus is thus a type of antithesis:

A wit with dunces, and a dunce with wits (Pope).

Flowers are lovely, love is flowerlike (Coleridge).”²

We can see an example of chiastic structure in the nursery rhyme, “Hickory, Dickory, Dock”:

- (a) Hickory, dickory, dock
- (b) The mouse ran up the clock
- (c) The clock struck one
- (b') The mouse ran down
- (a') Hickory, dickory, dock

The parts of the chiastic structure are indicated with the letters in parentheses. The central element of the chiasmus, “The clock struck one,” is indicated with a (C).

A chiastic pattern also emerges from Psalm 124:7, where we read:

- We are like a bird
- (a) Escaped from the fowler's trap;
- (b) The trap broke
- (a') And we escaped

Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon. Among the numerous poetic patterns in the Book of Mormon³, chiasmus is perhaps the most intriguing. Alma 36 provides a striking example of an extremely sophisticated chiastic structure. We will look at only the central section of the entire chiasmus that has been studied in painstaking detail by Welch⁴:

- (k) Born of God (26)
 - (l) I sought to destroy the church of God (6–9)
 - (m) My limbs were paralyzed (10)
 - (n) Fear of being in the presence of God (14–15)
 - (o) Pains of a damned soul (16)
 - (p) Harrowed up by the
memory of sins no more (17)
 - (q) I remembered Jesus
Christ, son of God (17)
 - (q') I cried, Jesus,
son of God (18)
 - (p') Harrowed up by the
memory of sins no more (19)
 - (o') Joy as exceeding as was the pain (20)
 - (n') Long to be in the presence of God (22)
 - (m') My limbs received their strength again (23)
 - (l') I labored to bring souls to repentance (24)
 - (k') Born of God (26)

The center point of the chiasmus is remembering “Jesus Christ, son of God” (q = v. 18) and crying out to him (q' = v. 18), after which he was “harrowed up by the memory of (his) sins no more” (p' = v. 19).

Chiasmus in Psalm 105. Psalm 105:2–5, 7–10, particularly in the Hebrew text, provides instances of three series of intricately overlapping chiasms (following the pattern **a, b, c, c', b', a2, a', b2, a3, b2', a2', b3, c3, c3', b3', a3'**) — the chiastic elements are italicized below.⁵

2 Sing praises to him: speak of all (**a**) *his wonders (niphlaotaw)*.

3 Rejoice in his holy name: let the heart of those who (**b**) *seek (mevaqqeshe)* (**c**) *the Lord (YHWH)* be glad.

4 Search out (**c'**) *the Lord (YHWH)* and his might; (**b'**) *seek (baqqeshu)* his presence constantly.

5 (a2) *Remember (zikhru)* (**a'**) *the wonders (niphleotaw)* he has performed; his miracles, and (b2) *the judgments (mishpete)* of his mouth ...

7 He is the Lord our God: in all (a3) *the earth* (*ha-arets*) are (b2') *his judgments* (*mishpetaw*).

8 He (a2') *remembers* (*zakhar*) (b3) *forever* (*le-'olam*) (c3) *his covenant* (*berito*), the word he commanded for a thousand generations,

9 Which he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac;

10 And they established it for Jacob as a law, for Israel as (c3') *a covenant* (*berit*) (b3') *forever* (*'olam*):

11 Saying, to you I will give (a3') *the land* (*erets*) of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance.

The chiasms in Psalm 105:2-5, 7-10 display a pattern of overlapping phrases of richly subtle complexity. The central element in the first chiasm (Psalm 102:2-5) is “the Lord” (Psalm 102:3-4); the last phrase in the first chiasm, “the wonders,” follows “remember,” the first phrase of the second chiasm; the first phrase of the third and last chiasm, “the earth,” falls in the center of the second chiasm; the central element of the second chiasm is “judgments”; and the central element of the third chiasm is “covenant” (vv. 24-30).

Psalm 105 as Historical Credo

The “Historical Credo” in Deuteronomy in Ancient Israel. The historical credo⁶ is a literary recollection of the experience of the patriarchs in the land of Canaan, of the experience of the children of Israel in bondage in Egypt, of their deliverance from bondage, and of their journey to the land of Canaan. An outstanding instance of the historical credo is the following from Deuteronomy 26:

You shall then recite as follows before the Lord your God: “My father was a fugitive Aramaean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and populous nation. The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us. We cried to the Lord ... The Lord freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” (Deuteronomy 26:5-9 JPS).

The historical credo is outlined more briefly in Deuteronomy 6:

When, in times to come, your children ask you, “What mean the decrees, laws, and rules that the Lord your God has enjoined upon you?” you shall say to your children, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the Lord freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand.” (Deuteronomy 6:20-21 JPS).

Historical Credo in Psalm 105. The “historical credo” in Psalm 105 recounts Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob’s experience of wandering and the promise to Jacob of the land of Canaan as “an allotted heritage”:

He is the Lord our God; His judgments are throughout the earth. He is ever mindful of His covenant, the promise he gave for a thousand generations, that he made with Abraham, swore to Isaac, and confirmed in a decree for Jacob, for Israel, as an eternal covenant, saying, “To you I will give the Land of Canaan as your allotted heritage” ... They were then few in number, a mere handful, sojourning there, wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another (Psalm 105:7-13 JPS).

The Historical Credo in the Book of Mormon. Strikingly, Nephi recites a form of the historical credo to his brothers Laman and Lemuel while building a ship in Bountiful, relating to them the account of the liberation of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt and their passing through the waters of the Red Sea:

Now ye know that the children of Israel were in bondage; and ye know that they were laden with tasks, which were grievous to be borne; wherefore ye know that it must needs be a good thing for them, that they should be brought out of bondage. Now ye know that Moses was commanded of the Lord to do that great work; and ye know that by his word that the waters of the Red Sea were divided hither and thither, and they passed through on dry ground (1 Nephi 17:25-27).

Psalm 105 as a Covenant Text

Covenant — a binding agreement between man and God, with sanctions in the event of the violation of the agreement — is the central focus of this essay⁷. In what follows, I discuss the meaning of covenant (Heb. *berit*), the individual elements of the covenant-making ceremony, Israelite covenant-making ceremonies, and the covenant in Psalm 105.

Meaning of Heb. *berit*, “Covenant.” The Hebrew word *berit*, meaning “covenant” may be related to Akkadian *birit*, “between, among,” = Heb. *ben*, “between,” suggesting the mutuality of the covenant. Alternatively, Heb. *berit* may also be related to Akkadian *biritu*, “clasp, fetter” (with which one may compare the Talmudic Hebrew *byryt*, suggesting a “binding settlement.”⁸ Both of these etymological associations suggest a binding mutual agreement between man and God.

The Covenant Ceremony: Elements of the Covenant.⁹ The covenant-making and covenant-renewal ceremony contain a number of individual elements, each of which will be explained further:

1. “Preamble,” in which the participants in the covenant are introduced
2. “Review of God’s Relations with Israel,” in which God’s mighty acts on behalf of his people Israel are recounted
3. “Terms of the Covenant,” that is, the commandments that the people are called upon to observe
4. “Formal Witness,” in which the people themselves, or an object, such as a stone, are made a witness to the covenant
5. “Blessings and Curses,” in which the consequences for obedience or disobedience to the commandments are given
6. “Reciting the Covenant and Depositing the Text”: Scripture frequently mentions that the covenant was read aloud; other passages mention that the covenant was written down and put in a safe place.

Covenant-Making Ceremony in Exodus. Both Exodus 19 and 20 (as well as a brief passage in Exodus 23 and 24)¹⁰ provide outstanding examples of covenant-making ceremonies with their individual elements (the relevant passages will generally be cited separately without additional comment):

1. Preamble

And Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel (Exodus 19:3).

God spoke all these words, saying: (Exodus 20:1).

2. Review of God’s Relations with Israel

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself (Exodus 19:4).

I am the Lord thy God, who have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (Exodus 20:2).

3. Terms of the Covenant

Now therefore, if you will obey me faithfully and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is mine, but shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak unto the children of Israel (Exodus 19:5-6).

Strikingly, the “Ten Commandments” (Exodus 20:3-19) constitute the “terms of the covenant” of the events that occurred on Mount Sinai — they do not stand alone with no connection to other actions or events at that time. Thereafter, the text continues with more laws until Exodus 23:19, followed by the “blessings and curses” and “reciting the covenant and depositing the text.”

4. Formal Witness

And all the people answered together, and said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do!’ And Moses returned the words of the people to the Lord (Exodus 19:8).

And they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient (Exodus 24:7).

5. Blessings and Curses

Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in him (Exodus 23:20-21).

6. Reciting the Covenant and Depositing the Text

Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and put before them all that the Lord had commanded him (Exodus 19:7).

And Moses came and wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the

hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel (Exodus 24:4).

And [Moses] took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people (Exodus 24:7).

Covenant in the Book of Mormon. King Benjamin's address in Mosiah 1-6 is a striking instance of an Israelite covenant-renewal ceremony in a Nephite setting, containing all the elements of a traditional Israelite covenant-making or covenant-renewal ceremony. Each of the individual parts of the covenant-renewal ritual — "preamble," "review of God's relations with the people," "terms of the covenant," "formal witness," "blessings and curses," and "reciting the covenant and depositing the text" — are to be found in King Benjamin's sermon:

1. Preamble

These are the words which [Benjamin] spoke and caused to be written, saying ... (Mosiah 2:9).

Benjamin elaborates further by stating that the words he is delivering to the people were made known to him by an angel (and, thus, originate from God): "And the things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God" (Mosiah 3:2; cf. Mosiah 4:1).

2. Review of God's Relations with Israel

In this "review of God's relations with Israel," Mosiah describes his own actions toward the people as though they were God's relations with them:

Neither have I suffered that ye should be confined in dungeons, nor that ye should make slaves one of another, nor that ye should murder, or plunder, or steal, or commit adultery; nor even have I suffered that ye should commit any manner of wickedness; and have taught you that ye should keep the commandments of the Lord, in all things which he hath commanded you. And even I, myself, have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you, and that ye should not be laden with taxes, and that there should nothing come upon you which was grievous to be borne — and of all these

things which I have spoken, ye yourselves are witnesses
this day (Mosiah 2:13-14).

3. Terms of the Covenant

And behold, all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that if you would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land; and he never doth vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you (Mosiah 2:22).

4. Formal Witness

And they all cried with one voice, saying: ... we are willing to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he shall command us, all the remainder of our days” (Mosiah 5:2, 5). Further, “king Benjamin thought it was expedient, after having finished speaking to the people, that he should take the names of all those who had entered into the covenant and taken upon them the name of Christ,” and “there was not one soul, except it were little children, but who had entered into the covenant and had taken upon them the name of Christ (Mosiah 6:1, 2).

5. Blessings and Curses

And it shall come to pass that whoever 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.

And now it shall come to pass that whosoever shall not take upon him the name of Christ must be called by some other name; therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God (Mosiah 5:9-10).

6. Reciting the Covenant and Depositing the Text

[Benjamin] “appointed priests to teach the people, that thereby they might hear and know the commandments of God, and to stir them up in remembrance of the oath which they had made” (Mosiah 6:3).

Covenant in Psalm 105. Covenant is described in Psalm 105:7-11:

He is the Lord our God; His judgments are throughout the earth. He is ever mindful of His covenant, the promise he gave for a thousand generations, that he made with Abraham, swore to Isaac, and confirmed in a decree for Jacob, for Israel, as an eternal covenant, saying, ‘To you I will give the Land of Canaan as your allotted heritage’ (JPS translation).

Covenant is described here as an everlasting promise made by God to Abraham and Isaac and reconfirmed to Jacob of the inheritance of the land Canaan by their posterity forever. But we need to understand the covenant passage in Psalm 105 in light of the much richer covenant tradition: the covenant tradition and covenant pattern are intrinsic parts of the life and history of ancient Israel. And, like many of the psalms, covenant is closely linked to the temple.

Additional Note: The Covenant Pattern in the Sacrament Prayers. As a final note, we may see the sacrament prayers as a type of covenant-renewal ceremony (with baptism as the original covenant-making ceremony), represented with the great majority of elements of the covenant ceremony. The prayer itself (in D & C 20:77; cf. v. 78 and Moroni 4 and 5) represents the “reciting of the covenant,” with the text of the prayer recorded in the scriptures:

O God, the Eternal Father (*Preamble*)

we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ,

to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it (*Blessings and Curses*)

that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son (*Review of God’s Relations*)

and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father (*Formal Witness*)

that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son (*Terms of the Covenant*)

and always remember him (*Terms of the Covenant/Review of God’s Relations*)

and keep his commandments which he hath given them (*Terms of the Covenant*)

that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen (*Blessings and Curses*)

Conclusion

Psalm 105 displays many features that may be found in the rich ancient Israelite literary and historical tradition, among them chiasmus and the historical credo. But covenant (and, by implication, the temple), also a part of Psalm 105, has its own very rich tradition in ancient Israel, which resonates with Latter-day Saint tradition as well.

Notes

1. John W. Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Hildesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981). John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay, *Chiasmus Bibliography* (Provo, UT: Research Press, 1999) provides an exhaustive bibliography of chiasmus in ancient literature .
2. H. L., Yelland, S. O. Jones, and K. S. W. Easton, *A Handbook of Literary Terms* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 32.
3. For numerous representative studies of literary aspects of the Book of Mormon, see Daniel B. McKinlay and Scot Hanson, "A Selective Bibliography of Book of Mormon Literary Features," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16/2 (2007): 88-91; cf. also Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo: FARMS, 1998).
4. John W. Welch, "A Masterpiece: Alma 36," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 117.
5. A. R. Ceresco, "A Poetic Analysis of Ps. 105, with Attention to Its Use of Irony," *Biblica* 64 (1983): 21-44; Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-50*, rev., *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Nelson, 2002), 55-56; Ceresco, "The Function of Chiasmus in Hebrew Poetry," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40 (1978): 1-10.
6. On the "historical credo," see Gerhard von Rad, *Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuch* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1938), 11-12; Herbert B. Huffman, "The Exodus, Sinai, and the Credo," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 27 (1965): 101-13; Frederick Danker, *Creeds in the Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1966); J. Schreiner, "Die Entwicklung des Israelitischen 'Credo,'" *Concilium* 2(1966):757-62; J. Thompson, "The Cultic Credo and the Sinai Tradition," *Reformed Theological Review* 27 (1968): 53-64; Dennis J McCarthy, "What Was Israel's Historical Creed?" *Lutheran Quarterly* 4 (1969): 46-53; J. P. Hyatt, "Was There an Ancient Historical Credo in Israel and an Independent Sinai Tradition?" in Harry F. Thomas and William L. Reed eds.,

Translating and Understanding the Old Testament: Essays in Honor of Hebert Gordon May (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 152–70; J. I. Durham, “Credo, Ancient Israelite,” in *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Supplementary Volume, ed. Keith Crim (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 197–99; B. Lang, “Glaubensbekenntnisse im Alten und Neuen Testament,” *Concilium* 14 (1978): 499–503; ISTI, “Wie aus Erzählung ein Bekenntnis wird: Das Credo Israels — Eine Kurzformel des Glaubens,” *Entschluss* 38 (1983): 24–26; Bozo Lujic, “A Small Historical Credo or Anamnesis as Historical Remembering? Exegetical-Theological Analysis of Deut 2:5–10,” (Croatian) in *Bogoslovska Smotra (Ephemerides theologicae Zagrebienses)* 78/1 (2008): 106–7 (English abstract).

7. The first scholar to examine the elements of the ancient Near Eastern treaty (discovered among the Hittites) was Viktor Korosec in *Hethitische Staatsverträge* (Leipzig: Theodor Weicher, 1930), 12–14. The link between Hittite treaties and Old Testament covenant passages was first suggested by Elias Bickerman in “Couper une alliance,” *Archives d’histoire du droit oriental* 5 (1950–51):153; reprinted, with an additional note, in Elias Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, Part One (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 23, and were developed and expanded by George Mendenhall in “Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (1954):50–76. The literature on the treaty/covenant pattern in the ancient Near East and ancient Israel is very extensive. Dennis J. McCarthy, in *Treaty and Covenant* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978), provides a painstaking study of ancient Near Eastern treaties and their relationship to the covenant passages in the Old Testament as well as a thorough bibliography. Valuable overviews of covenant may be found in Delbert Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969); Id., *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1964); Klaus Baltzer, *Covenant in Old Testament, Jewish and Early Christian Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); George E. Mendenhall, “Covenant,” in Keith Crim, ed., *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, J. Arthur Thompson, “Covenant (OT),” in ed. Geoffrey Bromiley, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 1:790–93; Gary Herion and George Mendenhall, “Covenant,” in ed. David Noel Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:1179–1202.

8. Moshe Weinfeld, "Berith," in eds. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, tr. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), vol. 2:254-55; further, see Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, tr. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden/New York/Köln: Brill, 1994), 1:157, which provides the etymology "fetter" from the Akk. *birtu* and Eg. *bi-ra-ta* and "between" from the Akk. *birit*, although they also observe that the etymology is "uncertain."
9. The specific names for these categories are my own, but they are similar to those in other treatments of the treaty/covenant pattern, including my own in "The Treaty/Covenant Pattern in King Benjamin's Address (Mosiah 1-6)," *BYU Studies* 24/2(1984):155-59; J. A. Thompson, "The Near Eastern Suzerain-Vassal Concept in the Religion of Israel," *Journal of Religious History* 3(1964):1; G. Herion and G. Mendenhall, "Covenant," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1:1182. The individual elements of the covenant-making ceremony are from my essay, "King, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1-6," in ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne, *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book/Provo: F.A.R.M.S., 1991), 215-19.
10. The covenant ceremony encompasses Exodus 20:1-24:8.

Stephen D. Ricks is a professor of Hebrew and cognate learning at Brigham Young University, where he has been on the faculty of Brigham Young University for thirty-two years. He is the author or editor of twenty books and more than one hundred articles, volume chapters, and reviews focusing on the ancient temple, the religious and social institutions of ancient Israel, the Book of Mormon, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

