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HOW THINGS LOOK FROM HERE

Daniel C. Peterson

Abstract: *Do defenders of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ see themselves as fighting a desperate rearguard battle against the evidence, hoping to save at least a faint shred of credibility for its claims? Hardly. But, at the same time, we don't pretend to be able to prove those claims beyond any possibility of doubt. Such a prospect, we think, was never God's intent. "For now we see through a glass, darkly," as the prophet and apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:12. "Now [we] know in part." That is an important part of the plan. There is abundant evidence to justify discipleship, but there can also be plausible-seeming grounds, if one prefers, for rejecting it.*

Every once in a while, I read hostile statements online about the mindset of Latter-day Saint apologists. Some critics claim, for instance, that we're in it for the money, perhaps even drawing highly lucrative personal incomes for our apologetics from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That allegation is scarcely worthy of response, since it's offered without so much as a nod in the direction of genuine supporting data and since it is, in fact, flatly contradicted by the evidence. My wife and I, for example, are (admittedly rather insignificant) donors to The Interpreter Foundation, and the leaders and authors for *Interpreter*, along with almost everybody else who makes the organization function, are unpaid volunteers.

What I'll discuss here, though, is the assertion that the self-conceived task of Latter-day Saint apologists is to persuade members of the Church to hold on and, most importantly, to continue paying tithing, in the face of overwhelming proof that Joseph Smith's prophetic ministry was transparently fraudulent. Our mission, as we ourselves supposedly view it when we're being candid, is to convince gullible followers a slight chance may still exist that, despite all the evidence, the claims of the Restoration might nevertheless possibly, perhaps, maybe not be false.

Whenever I come across this supposed bit of mindreading, I find myself thinking of a brief but famous scene from the 1994 movie *Dumb and Dumber*. In it, Jim Carrey plays “Lloyd Christmas” and “Mary Swanson” is portrayed by Lauren Holly:

Lloyd Christmas: “I want to ask you a question, straight out, flat out, and I want you to give me the honest answer. What do you think the chances are of a guy like you and a girl like me ending up together?”

Mary Swanson: “Well, Lloyd, that’s difficult to say. We really don’t...”

Lloyd Christmas: “Hit me with it! Just give it to me straight! I came a long way just to see you, Mary, just ... The least you can do is level with me. What are my chances?”

Mary Swanson: “Not good.”

[*The background soundtrack music suddenly stops.*]

Lloyd Christmas: [*He gulps, his mouth twitching.*] “You mean, not good like one out of a hundred?”

Mary Swanson: “I’d say more like one out of a million.”

Lloyd Christmas: [*Long pause while he processes what he’s heard.*] “So you’re telling me there’s a chance. *Yeah!*”

Lloyd Christmas is a laughable dimwit who is only loosely connected to reality, and I suspect that the critics to whom I’ve referred above think of Latter-day Saint apologists in rather the same way — at least when they’re feeling charitable. (Unlike us, though, Lloyd is well-meaning and likeable, and not flatly mendacious.) And his enthusiasm for odds of 0.0001% that his wooing of Mary Swanson will succeed is obviously offered up as ridiculous. Which it absolutely *is*.

But I can say with certainty when speaking for myself, and with considerable confidence when speaking for my friends and associates, that we don’t view the likelihood of the Gospel’s being true as merely one in a hundred, let alone as one in a million. This isn’t even remotely the way we see the “state of the question.”

From here on, I’ll speak in the first-person singular, representing my own opinion. But I will regard myself as speaking for most if not all of us, as a group. Of course, we *aren’t* actually a group- or hive-mind, and there are, as I personally know, many different viewpoints and approaches among us. On this specific issue, though, on the insinuation

that we're desperate, beleaguered, and backed up against a wall, and that we regard the truth-claims of the Restoration as hanging dubiously and precariously by a thread, I don't think that I'm taking much of a risk in presuming to speak for other members of my apologetic tribe.

As I see it, there are no decisive proofs for the claims of the Restoration and, pending at least the Savior's Second Coming, there *will* be none. This is, I think, as it was intended and as it was planned to be. "For we walk by faith" in this life, "not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). That is the nature of this mortal probation and the intended result of the veil. If decisive, intellectually coercive proof were available to us in this life — if the existence, nature, acts, and expectations of God were demonstrable with the same certainty as, say, propositions in geometry — no intellectual autonomy would remain, and the divine purpose of this life would be obviated.

For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so ... righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility.

Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God ...

And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, it must needs be that there was an opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter.

Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other. (2 Nephi 2:11–12, 15–16)

I like the notion of "epistemic distance" as it was articulated by the late Anglo-American philosopher John Hick (1922–2012) in such

books as *Evil and the God of Love* (first edition, 1966) and *Philosophy of Religion* (first edition, 1970). Hick argued that the universe was created as a kind of “neutral sphere” in which we mortal humans are granted a degree of autonomy that is sufficient for us to be able to enter into a freely chosen relationship with God, rather than a relationship that is essentially coerced. God maintains a “certain distance from us, a certain margin of creaturely independence which is adequate for our existence as responsible persons.”¹ Commenting upon Hick’s view, Victorino Raymundo T. Lualhati observes that

This distance is epistemic rather than spatial, hence, the term, epistemic distance. Simply put, epistemic distance can be taken to mean as a distance in knowledge or awareness. In this religious hypothesis, the world would remain “religiously ambiguous,” that is, there is no conclusive evidence for or against the existence of God. People are left with a choice. It is possible for us to see and explain the world in purely naturalistic terms or to see the world as created and sustained by God. We have the freedom to decide for ourselves which position to take.²

If God were to reveal himself fully and with unmistakable, irresistible clarity, that revelation would overwhelm and destroy our freedom to choose. In his *Philosophical Fragments*, the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard used a parable about a king and a peasant maiden to make this point: How could the king reveal his love to a woman of humble parentage — given the huge disparity of rank, status and wealth between them — without coercing and crushing her?³

“Not to reveal oneself,” he wrote, “is the death of love, to reveal oneself is the death of the beloved.”⁴ The only real choice open to the king in the parable was to court his beloved indirectly, by descending

1. John H. Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Pearson, 1989), 37.

2. Victorino Raymundo T. Lualhati, “On Epistemic Distance and Faith” (paper presented at the DLSU Research Congress 2018, De La Salle University, Manila, PHL, 20–22 June 2018), <https://www.dlsu.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/pdf/conferences/research-congress-proceedings/2018/tph-16.pdf>.

3. Søren Kierkegaard, “Chapter 2: The God as Teacher and Saviour: An Essay of the Imagination,” in *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), <https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-2-the-god-as-teacher-and-saviour-an-essay-of-the-imagination/>.

4. Ibid.

to her station, by taking on the character of a servant. So he disguised himself.

God, Kierkegaard said, wants us to love him freely because we come to know him as lovable, not because he's powerful, terrifying, overwhelming, or simply unavoidable. In a similar way, although he wants us to develop faith or trust in him, he doesn't seek a compelled belief. He doesn't desire an assent that has been forced upon us because we had no rational alternative or escape. Such coerced assent would have little or no value for him. It would not help to create the persons that he wants us to be.

But to say that there is no intellectually coercive *proof* for God and the things of God is not at *all* to say that there is no *evidence* for them. As the remarkable Singaporean physician, philosopher, and Christian theologian Andrew Loke puts it,

It may be the case that God exists but He does not provide a necessary proof because He wants to give humans the space to make free choice with regards to faith, but this does not imply that He did not leave behind any evidence to let people know about His revelation in history.⁵

And the American Evangelical philosopher J. P. Moreland agrees:

God maintains a delicate balance between keeping his existence sufficiently evident so people will know he's there and yet hiding his presence enough so that people who want to choose to ignore him can do it. This way, their choice of destiny is really free.⁶

In his famous *Pensées* the great French mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) had some wise words to say on this subject:

All the principles of sceptics, stoics, atheists, etc., are true. But their conclusions are false, because the opposite principles are also true. ... We have an incapacity of proof, insurmountable by all dogmatism. We have an idea of truth, invincible to all scepticism.⁷

5. Andrew Loke, *Investigating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ: A New Transdisciplinary Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 5.

6. J. P. Moreland, "The Circumstantial Evidence," in Lee Strobel, ed., *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 263.

7. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Anthony Uyl, trans. W.F. Trotter (Woodstock, ON: Devoted Publishing, 2018), 394–95, <https://books.google.com/>

The Australian priest and theologian Gerald O'Collins, for decades a member of the faculty and a leader at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, put it this way:

The factor of relative concealment allows cognitive freedom to persist . . . we have enough light to make us responsible but not enough to take away our freedom.⁸

My own position is simply this: There is enough secular evidence for the claims of the Restoration to justify commitment to its principles and to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which teaches them and which offers the requisite ordinances. (*More* than enough, in my honest judgment.) But there is also enough secular evidence, if one prefers, to justify doubts and reservations. There is sufficient light, but the light is not overwhelming. We must choose; the choice is unavoidable. Happily, this is where the Holy Ghost can help us. I think here of the word of the Lord to Oliver Cowdery, where both divine guidance *and* studious reflection are recommended:

Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me.

But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.

But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong. (D&C 9:7–9)

If the authors, reviewers, designers, source checkers, copy editors, donors, and other volunteers who make the work of the Interpreter Foundation possible weren't actually committed to the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Restoration, I expect that few if any of them would devote their time, effort, and money to the Foundation. (I certainly wouldn't.) For virtually all of them, there's no monetary reward in doing so and precious little prestige. But they continue to give of their time, talents, energy, and resources to The Interpreter Foundation *because they believe*. In connection with this particular volume, I thank the uncompensated

books?id=z5ViDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA68.

8. Gerald O'Collins, *Revelation: Towards a Christian Interpretation of God's Self-Revelation in Jesus Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 44.

authors who have contributed their work, along with its uncompensated managing or production editors, Allen Wyatt and Jeff Lindsay, both of whom also serve, yet again without compensation, on The Interpreter Foundation's Board of Trustees. I'm deeply grateful.

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ASSYRIA AND THE “GREAT CHURCH” OF NEPHI’S VISION

Todd Uriona

Abstract: *The Book of Mormon begins at a pivotal point in Israelite history and in the history of the ancient Near East more broadly. With the fall of Assyria and the power vacuum that grew out of Assyria’s demise, questions of sovereignty were of paramount concern. It was at that time that Lehi led his family into the wilderness after witnessing the impending destruction of Jerusalem in vision. Nephi, “desir[ing] to know the things that his father had seen” (1 Nephi 11:1), describes his own vision, where he saw the coming of the “Son of God” (1 Nephi 11:7), the destruction of his own people, and the “formation of a great church” (1 Nephi 13:4) that would “destroy the saints of God” (1 Nephi 13:9). These elements, along with others in Nephi’s vision, seem to reflect the underlying insecurity of the time concerning divinely appointed sovereignty and the right to rule. Because of the deeply personal nature of Nephi’s vision and its pressing relevance, we might expect it to contain elements that represent the cultural and social realities of his time. When we approach Nephi’s vision in this way, surprising parallels can be found between the “great church” of his vision and the Assyrian Empire. These parallels help provide a new context for viewing Nephi’s vision that can heighten our awareness of the loving kindness the “Son of God” displays as the universal sovereign.*

For centuries, the recording and transmission of Assyria’s ideology played an important part in maintaining Assyria’s dominance in the ancient Near East. This has led many scholars such as Lawson Younger to assert that the history of Israel and Judah¹ “is inextricably bound to the history of Assyria ... and is profitably analysed in this light.”² Prior to the Babylonian exile, Biblical writers often used the Assyrian Empire as the dominant foil when crafting their records.³ Shawn Aster points out that Isaiah uses a “sort of ‘replacement theology’ in which

the universal sovereignty of YHWH is imagined and described based on Assyrian claims of universal dominion.” Aster further claims that there is a “consistent use of Neo-Assyrian⁴ royal motifs throughout [Isaiah,] ... motifs which are borrowed, subverted, and adapted to fit the prophet’s message.”⁵ If Isaiah was using and subverting Assyrian rhetoric when he crafted his rhetorical arguments, this implies that the intended audience of those writings were familiar with Assyrian ideology.⁶

These suggestions have implications related to how we are to interpret Nephi’s record given Nephi’s apparent training as a scribe⁷ and his extensive use of Isaiah’s writings.⁸ Furthermore, if, as Noel Reynolds proposes, Nephi and his father, Lehi, are also “participants in a Manassite scribal circle,”⁹ we might expect to find parallels¹⁰ within Nephi’s record to Assyrian rhetoric given their connection to Mesopotamian scribal culture.¹¹ These parallels might be most apparent if we are to look at Nephi’s apocalyptic vision.¹² The account of Nephi’s vision is unique within the record of the Book of Mormon, as it is a first-person, unabridged account of a deeply personal experience. Nephi received that vision because of a desire to know the things his father had seen (1 Nephi 11:1). Unlike the other parts of Nephi’s record, which he presumably crafted for an audience that would read his record at some future point in time, Nephi’s vision was first and foremost intended to teach him. It, therefore, has the greatest potential to reflect the cultural milieu familiar to Nephi.¹³

In that vision, Nephi’s “Spirit” guide first praised Nephi for believing in the words of his father concerning the coming of the “Son of the most high God” (1 Nephi 11:6). Next, an angel showed Nephi the Son of God, whom he called the “Lamb of God,” condescending to come to Earth. However, the radiance of those scenes soon faded as Nephi saw his descendants slip into unbelief and civil war. Presumably anticipating Nephi’s anxiety at witnessing such a scene, the angelic guide “spake unto [Nephi], saying: Look! And [he] looked and beheld many nations and kingdoms. And the angel said unto [Nephi]: What beholdest thou? And [he] said: I behold many nations and kingdoms. And [the angel] said unto [Nephi]: These are the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles. And it came to pass that [Nephi] saw among the nations of the Gentiles the formation of a great church” (1 Nephi 13:1–4).

The angel showed Nephi this “great church” presumably to teach him what led to the destruction of his envisioned descendants and how the devil works to destroy other “great” nations (1 Nephi 14:9). In evaluating the identity of this “great church,”¹⁴ the instruction of Hagedorn and

Tzoref seems apt: “As far as the foreign nations are concerned the beginning of the literary development is marked by the individual judgment against a concrete people, which threatens the existence of Israel.”¹⁵ The Assyrian Empire provides just such a “concrete” example of a nation that “threaten[ed] the existence of Israel” and was also capable of teaching Nephi about the future destruction of his own people. After all, it was the Assyrians who were initially responsible for the destruction of Israel and the exile of Nephi’s ancestors.¹⁶

Hagedorn and Tzoref further assert that in the book of Nahum we see that “after the fall of Assyria, the fate of Nineveh is transferred to Babylon, which is now seen as the aggressor that threatens Israel and no longer as the welcome destroyer of the Assyrian tyrant. Prerequisite for this addition has been the fact that Nineveh indeed fell . . . thus providing proof for the authenticity of the prophecy.”¹⁷ The contemporary relationship between Nahum’s record¹⁸ and Nephi’s vision suggests the possibility that, when Nephi saw the “great church,” it was actually the Assyrian Empire.¹⁹ Assyria’s fall is “proof of the authenticity of the prophecy” Nephi received as he witnessed their fate being transferred to the Nephites.

Many of the ideas presented in Nephi’s vision are without a parallel in the Bible. Yet through the recent availability of Assyrian records, we find helpful context that seems to ground Nephi’s vision in a particular time and place. The parallels I suggest in this paper between the “great church” in Nephi’s vision and the Assyrian Empire remain conjectural, yet they offer an insightful and historically relevant reinterpretation of the vision. Through the repetition of Assyrian imagery, which often undergoes a subversive reversal, Nephi’s vision seems to contrast the historical claims of the Assyrians against the Lamb’s future victory over the “Great and Abominable Church” (1 Nephi 13:6).

These Assyrian precursors provide added depth to elements of Nephi’s vision, such as the flood, mists, rod, lamb, and blood. For example, as I document shortly, the Assyrian kings in their hubris claimed to destroy those that opposed them as if they were “lambs.” Understanding this can provide new context for evaluating the repeated references to the “Lamb of God” as the universal sovereign of Nephi’s vision. Such a title is given greater meaning if it is also seen to be subverting the claims of the Assyrian kings. Using these new insights, we can see how the behavior of the Assyrian kings contrasts sharply with that of the “Lamb of God.” Furthermore, against this backdrop, the “Lamb of God” can be seen as a uniquely loving and merciful universal sovereign. As such, the

Assyrian Empire and its ideology can work as a foil capable of grounding the greater typology of Nephi's vision concerning the fall of the great and abominable church.²⁰

Parallels to Assyrian Traditions

Biblical scholars have proposed many parallels connecting the motifs and ideologies found in the Assyrian records to what is found in the Bible. It is important to recognize why the Assyrian records may have left this imprint. Shawn Aster suggests that

all ideologies of empire seek to perpetuate the empire while simultaneously according it legitimacy, and Assyria's was no exception. But Assyria's ideology was more clearly defined and effectively communicated than that of any previous empire. It was relentlessly broadcast using a deft combination of art, ritual performance, oral communication, and written text, all designed for the consumption of two audiences: the administrative personnel of the empire, and the states and regions it sought to dominate.²¹

Because the Assyrians put so much effort into the distribution of their state ideology, it is not surprising that we find parallels in the biblical record, and it is what we should expect to find in Nephi's writings.²²

Important to the record of the Book of Mormon is the idea that the use of Assyrian rhetoric didn't end after their demise.²³ According to Eckart Frahm, "The Assyrian Empire continued to serve as a cipher for imperial hubris in newly written Biblical texts."²⁴ As Shawn Aster points out, Isaiah's writings "contain unique linguistic features that cannot easily be explained without reference to the Assyrian material."²⁵ That is to say, it is hard to understand the rhetorical arguments behind Isaiah's narrative unless we first see that he is borrowing from Assyrian writings. If Nephi did understand Assyrian rhetoric and how it was being used by Isaiah, this provided an ideal way for the "spirit" messenger in his vision to teach him. However, this potentially creates a problem for modern readers unfamiliar with this rhetoric. Nephi potentially hints at this difficulty when describing the challenge that the Nephites faced when they were taught the words of Isaiah (see 2 Nephi 25:1–3).

In Aster's paper looking at an Assyrian influence on Isaiah 2, he shows that the set of motifs found in the Assyrian campaign reports "provides the most appropriate comparative context within which to

analyze the passage.”²⁶ For example, when looking at “imperial hubris” or the “opposition to the haughty and lofty,” Aster points out,²⁷

The declared objective of this divine campaign is to [bring] low the “haughty” and the “lofty,” as is emphasized by the repetition of this theme in vv. 11, 12, and 17 (using the words *ge’eh* and *ram*), and in vv. 13–16 (God attacks possessions that feed pride). This corresponds precisely to one of the standard elements in Assyrian characterizations of the enemy, which appear in royal inscriptions from the thirteenth century down to the Neo-Assyrian period. It is against these enemies that the Assyrian king’s campaigns are directed. The characterization of the enemy as “arrogant,” “obstinate,” or “proud” is part of a stylized “moral profile” found in Assyrian royal inscriptions. . . . The goal of the campaigns, according to this formula, is to subdue the “proud.”²⁸

This comparative context also matches the way “proud” is used in Nephi’s vision to describe those that oppose the divine campaign of the “Lamb of God.” Nephi writes “that the great and spacious building was the pride of the world; and it fell, and the fall thereof was exceedingly great. . . . Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (1 Nephi 11:36). Further establishing the relationship of the “great and spacious building” to the concept of pride and loftiness, Nephi records that this is the same building that his father saw which was standing “as it were in the air, high above the earth”²⁹ (1 Nephi 8:26). Nephi’s vision suggests that the fall of the “great and spacious building” was due to the things that feed pride, things described in Nephi’s record as “exceedingly fine” (1 Nephi 8:27). This understanding of pride matches the way Isaiah used the Assyrian writings to frame his rhetorical arguments.

However, when evaluating this particular parallel in Nephi’s vision, caution must be taken. Frahm points out that “Assyrian ‘motifs’ have also left — more indirect — traces in a number of Biblical narratives and poetic sections. Tracking down such traces is, unfortunately, charged with significant methodological problems. It is not enough to hunt for isolated parallels — if one wants to establish an Assyrian background for a Biblical story, the parallels have to be numerous and/or specific.”³⁰ The parallels between Nephi’s use of *pride* and the Assyrian records are not unique to Nephi’s record and they can best be explained by a relationship to Isaiah’s writings. Therefore, when evaluating whether the “great church” Nephi envisioned shares some relationship to Assyria

and their rhetoric, we need to find numerous specific and unique points of contact to Assyrian materials. It is in evaluating Nephi's account of the "great church" in his vision that we seem to find numerous specific and unique points of contact to Assyrian materials.

Nephi's "Great Church" and Assyrian Rhetoric

After Nephi sees the "great church" in his vision he goes on to say, "And the angel said unto me: Behold the formation of a church which is most abominable above all other churches, which slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down, and yoketh them with a yoke of iron, and bringeth them down into captivity" (1 Nephi 13:5). In this passage describing the "great church," we are presented with specific descriptive elements that can be used to evaluate potential parallels between the "great church" of Nephi's vision and the Assyrian Empire and ideology.

In Gordon Johnston's work looking at Nahum's use of rhetorical allusions to the Assyrian Empire, he points out that "one of the most common Assyrian metaphors is the 'yoke' as a symbol to depict Assyrian suzerainty. ... This metaphor is distinctly Assyrian; it occurs rarely in the literature of other ancient Near Eastern nations."³¹ Assyrian kings referred to this metaphor often in their records with such sayings as, "The heavy yoke of my rule I laid upon them, and I made them subject to Ashur my Lord."³² Both Israel and Judah came under the "heavy yoke" of Assyrian rule.³³ After the fall of the Assyrian Empire, Jeremiah warned Judah that if they did not trust in the Lord, another nation, such as the Babylonians, would "put a yoke of Iron upon" them (Jeremiah 28:13–14).³⁴ Yet, Nephi's use of the yoke metaphor is unique in that it contains the elements *slayeth*, *tortureth*, *bindeth them down* and *bringing them down into captivity* that are not easily explained by a relationship to the Biblical record. These elements potentially provide our first unique points of contact between Nephi's "great church" and the Assyrian Empire. The records of Ashurbanipal, the last dominant Assyrian king to live during Lehi's lifetime, display a striking resemblance to what the angel showed Nephi in vision. In the accounts of his campaigns, we read:

[I am] Ashurbanipal, the great king ... who has made all the other rulers bow to his feet and who has laid the yoke of his overlordship upon them and they pulled the straps of his yoke.³⁵

He further describes those who opposed Assyrian sovereignty by saying,

[I] pierced the lips [and] took them to Assyria as a spectacle for the people of my land.³⁶

Or on another occasion he said,

[T]he living men I impaled on stakes round about his city, of the others I put out the eyes. The rest of them I transported and brought to Assyria.³⁷

The documentation of what Ashurbanipal did was not just limited to the written record. His brutality was also recorded in reliefs carved to commemorate his victories.³⁸ Of the destruction of Judah’s neighbors, the Elamites, Ashurbanipal had images carved that depicted

naked men, tied to the ground by staked ropes, with two Assyrians flaying them with knives. To the right is an Assyrian carrying away a head on a string. At the bottom are two Assyrians removing the tongue of an Elamite prisoner, and just above them the next victim is being thrown down with his arms tied behind his back to wait his turn. In related scenes, Elamite heads are shown being collected as trophies.³⁹

As gruesome as the depictions above may sound, they are not isolated occurrences within the Assyrian records. They are in fact part of a long history of Assyrian kings recording, and then transmitting, what happens to those that failed to acknowledge Assyrian sovereignty and thus were compelled to carry the Assyrian yoke. Given that this was a fate which presumably many of Nephi’s ancestors would have experienced it is unlikely that these horrific accounts of Assyrian brutality were unknown to Nephi and his family.⁴⁰ The fact that we find so many of the same elements used to describe the Assyrian campaigns in Nephi’s description of the “great church” is compelling evidence that the two might be related.

In Isaiah 8:7–8, we see two parallels that appear to be borrowed from the Assyrian records of their campaigns. According to Peter Machinist, “The first is the image of the king advancing into battle like raging water. In Assyrian texts, the waters are called *abubu*, i.e., ‘flood,’ recalling the primeval Flood; and the *abubu* can either appear as the weapon of the king or be directly likened to him. ... The second parallel concerns the ‘glory’ of the king which overwhelms all his enemies.”⁴¹ It appears that in Nephi’s vision, the angel draws a connection between the wars that lead

to the destruction of Nephi's descendants in the promised land and the Assyrian *flood* and *glory* tropes. However, in what Nephi saw in vision, there seems to be a destabilizing adaptation, as the *flood* water became filthy, and the *glory* became darkness that covered the land. Further, in Nephi's record the darkness is not simply described as darkness but as a "mist of darkness." This unique qualifier helps to further identify what Nephi saw with the Assyrian records, which often describes the terrifying *glory* of the approaching Assyrian army using a cloud metaphor.⁴² For those who did not avoid the approaching cloud that was the Assyrian army, destruction and being carried away captive was most often their fate. In Nephi's vision the effect of the "mists of darkness" is the same; the people are led away, perish, and are lost.⁴³

Fear of the yearly campaigns also ensured that those under Assyria's yoke continued to pay tribute to the empire. That tribute fueled future campaigns. This relationship provides another unique element to the metaphor of the "yoke" found within Nephi's vision and which again cannot easily be explained without reference to the Assyrian records. When explaining why the "great church" slayed, tortured, bound down, yoked, and carried captive the "saints of God," Nephi wrote,

I also saw gold, and silver, and silks, and scarlets, and fine-twined linen, and all manner of precious clothing; and I saw many harlots. And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold the gold, and the silver, and the silks, and the scarlets, and the fine-twined linen, and the precious clothing, and the harlots, are the desires of this great and abominable church. And also for the praise of the world do they destroy the saints of God, and bring them down into captivity. (1 Nephi 13:7–9)

This combination of the yoking metaphor with the acquisition of "gold," "silver," "fine-twined linen," and "harlots" is unparalleled in the Bible.⁴⁴ However, the records of the Assyrian king's campaigns are full of such parallels. Assurnasirpal reported on his campaign against the city of Suru saying,

I built a pillar over against his city gate, and I flayed all the chief men who had revolted, and I covered the pillar with their skins; some I walled up within the pillar, some I impaled upon the pillar on stakes, and others I bound to stakes round about the pillar; many within the border of my own land I flayed, and I spread their skins upon the walls; and I cut off the limbs of the officers, of the royal officers who had rebelled.

Ahiababa I took to Nineveh, I flayed him, I spread his skin upon the wall of Nineveh. My power and might I established over the land of Lake. While I was staying in the city of Suru, (I received) tribute from all the kings of the land of Lake, — silver, gold, lead, copper, vessels of copper, cattle, sheep, garments of brightly colored wool, and garments of linen, and I increased the tribute and taxes and imposed them upon them.⁴⁵

In another account he said,

All the rebels they seized and delivered them up. My officers I caused to enter into his palace and his temples. His silver, his gold, his goods and his possessions, copper, iron, lead, vessels of copper, cups of copper, dishes of copper, a great hoard of copper, alabaster, tables with inlay, the women of his palaces, his daughters, the captive rebels together with their possessions, the gods together with their possessions, precious stone from the mountains, to the yoke, trappings of men and trappings of horses, garments of brightly colored wool and garments of linen.⁴⁶

The Assyrian kings also boast that even the approach of the king’s army was all that was needed to obtain tribute: “During my advance I received much tribute ... silver, gold, lead, vessels of copper, and garments of brightly colored wool, and garments of linen.”⁴⁷ Fear of the Assyrian campaigns was often enough to keep vassal states paying onerous tributes to the Assyrian Empire.⁴⁸ Chief among those things collected were what Nephi saw in vision; gold, silver, fine linen, and women.⁴⁹ This was the terrifying reality that hung over Judah, right up until Nephi’s lifetime, while they were under the Assyrian “yoke.” This was the same association Nephi’s messenger chose to make between the “yoke of iron” and the campaign of fear that defined the “great church” in Nephi’s vision.⁵⁰ The behavior of the Assyrian Empire and their eventual demise would be a fitting analog for a “great church” that was meant to help Nephi understand how a great nation of his own descendants would one day fall.

The drama that plays out in Nephi’s vision corresponds well with the way the Assyrian royal inscriptions describe their campaigns to maintain sovereignty over the known world. According to Eckart Frahm, typically these records begin with an introduction, “which focus[es] on the general qualities of the king,” and second, focuses on the “campaign reports,”

which “can be labeled ‘epic’” and records the triumph of the king over those opposing his sovereignty.⁵¹ In much the same way, we are first introduced in Nephi’s vision to the “Most High God” (1 Nephi 11:6) and the appointment of his earthly king, the “Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 11:21). The bulk of the vision then consists of the actions of the king or “Lamb of God” and those who oppose his sovereignty or “church of the devil” (1 Nephi 14:10). Much like the writings of the Assyrian kings’ campaigns, the “epic” nature of Nephi’s vision develops in such a way as to show the inevitable victory of God’s appointed King.⁵² During a time of great uncertainty for Nephi and his family, this assurance should have provided Nephi with some comfort and hope.

A New Look at Nephi’s Vision

Pride or failure to put one’s trust in the Lord led to the fall of Nephi’s people, and in his vision, the fall of the “great and spacious building” was used as a symbol for that fall. Destruction came because the Nephites sought for possessions that fed their “vain imaginations and [their] pride” (1 Nephi 12:18), i.e., the gold, silver, and fine apparel. If what Nephi saw in vision was to help him understand the fall of his own people, it is possible that by witnessing the fall of the palace of Nineveh, Nephi was given a powerfully relevant example that is critical of the claims made by the Assyrian kings.

The Assyrians had used their palaces as part of their efforts to ensure loyalty. According to John Postgate, those that came to the palace to deliver tribute “were fed at the state’s expense. They were also given presents of clothing and of shoes for their journeys. The practice of rewarding the loyal — or bribing the potentially loyal — by presenting them with rich garments and other gifts is not restricted to ambassadors.”⁵³ All this was done to persuade those who entered the palace to be loyal to Assyria and then work to influence others’ loyalty. This brings to mind how Lehi describes those he saw in the “great and spacious building,” where “their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who” (1 Nephi 8:27) had not entered the building.⁵⁴

The Assyrian palace also provides an important literary link between the “great and spacious building” and the “great church” of Nephi’s vision. To the Assyrians, the palaces and temples of Nineveh were repeatedly referred to as “great” and their production and maintenance depended on the terrifying campaigns waged by the Assyrian army.⁵⁵ As such the king’s palace was designed to psychologically overwhelm

those who came to court to pay tribute and acknowledge Assyrian sovereignty. The Assyrian word *ekallu* means palace, but according to Simo Parpola it also “had a more specific religious meaning. In Assyrian royal inscriptions, it often referred to the temple. ... The semantics of Assyrian *ekallu*, ‘palace’, thus were exactly the same as those of the biblical Hebrew, Jewish Aramaic, Syriac and Arabic words for ‘temple, church’... Although these words, all of them certainly loanwords from Akkadian, also mean ‘palace’ or ‘great building’ in general, their primary meaning is ‘temple, church.’”⁵⁶ Therefore the semantics of Nephi’s time equate a “great and spacious” palace, like those found in Nineveh, with a “great church.” It is fitting then that when Nephi needs to understand the destruction of his own people, the angel begins by showing him the formation of a “great church” which linguistically is related to the “great and spacious building.”⁵⁷ This relationship had its most salient parallel during Nephi’s lifetime to that of the fall of the “great and spacious” palaces of the Assyrian Empire.⁵⁸ This is something Nephi presumably known from first-hand accounts that the “fall thereof was exceedingly great” (1 Nephi 11:36).

With the rise and then apparently precipitous fall of the Assyrian Empire, we find in the scriptures a growing rhetoric around issues of sovereignty. This rhetoric is often subversive to the Assyrian claims to universal sovereignty.⁵⁹ In Nephi’s vision there seems to be a similar phenomenon at work where the “Lamb of God” is presented as the universal sovereign: the “one Shepherd over all the earth” (1 Nephi 13:41). On a later occasion, Nephi builds on the idea saying, “The Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory. And he gathereth his children from the four quarters of the earth;⁶⁰ and he numbereth his sheep, and they know him; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd; and he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture” (1 Nephi 22:24–25).⁶¹ The image of a king shepherding over the “four quarters of the earth” in power and glory⁶² is common in the Assyrian records and is often associated with the king holding a scepter.⁶³ The scepter symbolized the power of the Assyrian king’s word, which he used to spread destruction and terror via the yearly campaigns to maintain control of the “four quarters of the earth.” In what appears to be a subversive reversal to the actions of the Assyrian kings, we see in Nephi’s vision that the “Lamb of God” brought peace, healing, and order through his words or “rod of iron” (see 1 Nephi 11:24–31). Nephi said that he saw the “Lamb of God” going “forth among the children of men; and I saw many fall down at his feet and worship him. And it

came to pass that I beheld that rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God” (1 Nephi 11:24–25). Bowing down at the feet of the one who possesses the rod or scepter is a motif that is used by Assyrian kings to legitimize their right to rule.⁶⁴ Therefore, when the Assyrian ideologies are contrasted with what Nephi writes, our understanding of the “Lamb of God” as the universal sovereign is enhanced.⁶⁵

This association is further developed within Nephi’s vision with the use of another common motif found within the Assyrian records. Nephi records that the “angel said unto [him]: Look! And I looked, and beheld three generations pass away in righteousness; and their garments were white even like unto the Lamb of God. And the angel said unto me: These are made white in the blood of the Lamb, because of their faith in him” (1 Nephi 12:11). When this exchange is viewed in relation to what the Assyrian kings did to those that were the focus of their campaigns, Nephi’s record gains important context. The motif of objects being dyed by blood like a red garment was commonly used by the Assyrian kings in the records describing the king’s campaign. For example, Sargon II when describing the fate of a defeated Hittite king says he “D[yed] the skin of Ilu-bi’di, the wretched, red, like wool.” The use of this motif in Nephi’s vision contrasts the power of the “Lamb of God” to the claims of the Assyrian kings. Nephi saw in vision that those who put their trust in the “Lamb of God” need not fear the boasts made by the powerful Assyrian kings. The Assyrian kings might claim the power to shed the blood of those that oppose them, turning things red like dyed wool, but the “Lamb of God” has the power to heal our wounds and make our garments white again through his blood (1 Nephi 12:10–11). This again seems to be a reversal of the Assyrian king’s claims of sovereignty. Therefore, what Nephi saw in vision further reinforces the position of the “Lamb of God” as a uniquely compassionate sovereign.

The love and care the “Lamb of God” shows as shepherd contrasts sharply with the cruelty and depravity depicted in the records of Assyrian campaigns. Those records describe the Assyrian kings as shepherds of a different sort. Gordon Johnston points out that “[w]hile peoples in the ancient Near East were often compared to sheep, the Assyrians took the sheep metaphor to new heights, comparing their victims to sheep that had been slaughtered. Assyrian kings often used sheep imagery when boasting of the ease and brutality with which they defeated their enemies.”⁶⁶ For example, Ashurbanipal wrote, “I entered that city; its inhabitants I slaughtered like lambs.”⁶⁷ The repeated accounts of the Assyrian kings “slaughtering” people “like lambs” contrasts sharply

with the constant repetition of the title “Lamb of God” to describe the sovereign of Nephi’s vision.⁶⁸

The title “Lamb of God” is no doubt a reference to the role Jesus Christ would play in offering his life as an act of redemption.⁶⁹ However, there is something unique to the way this title is used in Nephi’s vision when viewed in the context of the struggle for sovereignty around 600 BCE. For those familiar with the claims of the Assyrian kings, this constant reference to the “Lamb of God” in Nephi’s vision begins to sound like a steady drum beat that mocks the claims of the kings who were once the most powerful sovereigns in the ancient Near East. The Assyrian kings claim to be able to destroy their enemies “like lambs,” yet when Nephi sees the coming of the universal sovereign and King,⁷⁰ he is introduced as the “Lamb of God.” The overemphasized reference to the “Lamb” throughout Nephi’s vision works in a profound way if it counters the Assyrian kings’ boast of easily slaughtering their enemies “like lambs.”⁷¹ This humble title highlights the ironic difference between the actions of God’s appointed sovereign, the “Lamb,” who truly cares for those he shepherds, and the hubris of those that oppose him in order to obtain the riches of this world through violent and oppressive means, like that of the Assyrian Empire.

Using this new conceptual framework, a new picture emerges from Nephi’s vision. The Assyrians accumulated “fine” things and built their “great” palaces by spreading fear and death through their relentless wars. Their ideology of bringing order to the world through compulsion and terror is therefore contrasted in Nephi’s vision by a symbol of Assyrian derision, the “Lamb.” In Nephi’s vision we see that the actions of the “Lamb of God” brought order and peace through his care and covenant.⁷² Seen in this light, Nephi’s vision recapitulates the great War in Heaven as it now plays out in mortality. Lucifer’s premortal fall now has an analog in Nephi’s vision with mortal struggles tied to the fall of the great and abominable church.⁷³ Furthermore, we learn from Nephi’s vision that we must once again put our trust in the “Lamb of God” if we are to avoid another fall.⁷⁴ Nephi’s vision teaches us that those who trust in the “Lamb of God” as their sovereign will avoid such a fall by being armed with his “righteousness” and “power” (1 Nephi 14:14).⁷⁵ This is the same power the “Lamb of God” used when “ministering unto the people” (1 Nephi 11:28) and healing “multitudes of people who were sick, and who were afflicted” (1 Nephi 11:31). This suggests that only in covenanting to do the same will we be “delivered by the power of God” (1 Nephi 13:19) and avoid the fate of Assyrians, the Nephites, and ultimately that of the *great and abominable church*.⁷⁶

Conclusion

Understanding how the transmission of Nephi's vision might have been influenced by Assyria's interactions with Israel and Judah can help strengthen the relationship of his record with other contemporary accounts found within the Bible. Matthijs de Jong has proposed that an "identifiable layer of the Isaiah tradition consists of passages dealing with the destruction of Assyria and the restoration of Judah. In these passages, it is emphasized that it is Yahweh who carries out Assyria's destruction as part of his dealings with the entire world. Closely related to the theme of Assyria's destruction is that of Judah's restoration: the reign of a new, ideal, Judean king. The themes of Assyria's downfall and the reign of the ideal king are two sides of the same coin, as both result from Yahweh's intervention."⁷⁷ The parallels contained in Nephi's vision to Assyrian tradition suggest a similar theme. Using this conceptual framework, we see that, like Isaiah's prophecies, we have in Nephi's vision two sides of the same coin. Nephi's vision describes the fall of the *great and abominable church* and the reign of the ideal king or "Lamb of God," who works to restore Israel. Nephi further sees in his vision that essential to this restoration effort was the coming forth of his record in the Book of Mormon, which "shall 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" (1 Nephi 13:40).

The rise and fall of the Assyrian Empire played a dominant role in shaping the history of Israel leading up to Nephi's lifetime. The power vacuum that grew out of Assyria's fall was certainly being felt by Nephi and his family. Assyrian domination had created a general anxiety in the ancient Near East related to questions of sovereignty and this anxiety would last long after their fall. These questions were central for those living in Jerusalem around 600 BCE, and the message of Nephi's vision seems to reflect this uncertainty.⁷⁸ Isaiah suggests that the Lord had used Assyria as a tool in his hand to correct "hypocritical nations" (Isaiah 10:6). It is not surprising then that within Nephi's vision there seems to be found parallels to motifs used by the Assyrian Empire to assert their control over other nations, such as Israel. Recognizing these parallels can help connect us to the milieu of that time and broadens our understanding of the message of his vision.

During that vision, Nephi saw the rise and then fall of his descendants, the Nephites, in a land the Lord prepared for them. After witnessing the devastating destruction of the Nephite nation, Nephi next saw many more nations. From these nations, Nephi saw — much like he witnessed

earlier with the Nephite nation — the formation and fall of a “great church.” The “great church” that Nephi describes as part of his vision contains an extensive number of specific and seemingly unique parallels to the records and iconography of the Assyrian Empire. The nature of these parallels suggests that such a connection is not by chance but rather reflects a real link that ties Nephi’s record to that particular time and place. It is therefore possible that the historic demise of the Assyrian Empire and the fall of the great palace of Nineveh provided Nephi with a compelling and relevant real-world example capable of explaining the dramatic fall of the Nephite nation. Looking at Nephi’s vision through this interpretive lens does not limit other possible interpretations for the “great church” but instead highlights the polyvalent nature of Nephi’s vision and the tension between the past, present, and future found within the vision.

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Endnotes

- 1 Eckart Frahm helps explain the importance of this history. “In 701 BCE, Judah, after suffering heavy losses of life and property, became an Assyrian vassal state. These central events, as well as several others, explain why Assyria’s imperial domination and eventual downfall, as well as the history of the period from roughly 744 to 612 BCE in general, are so prominently reflected in the Hebrew Bible.” Eckart Frahm, “Assyria in the Hebrew Bible,” in *A Companion to Assyria*, Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World, ed. Eckart Frahm (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 556–69. This is around the same time the Book of Mormon narrative begins.

- 2 K. Lawson Younger, Jr., "Neo-Assyrian and Israelite History in the Ninth Century: The Role of Shalmaneser III," in *Understanding the History of Israel*, ed H. G. M. Williamson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 246.
- 3 Again, Eckart Frahm's comments prove insightful. "One might be inclined to argue that the Biblical authors' fascination with Assyria is of no more than 'historicist' interest. But such a view would overlook something rather crucial: the fact that Assyria's penetration into the Levant helped initiate and catalyze the 'axial' revolution of religious and political thought that is codified in the Bible. To phrase it differently: the emergence of a new religious and 'national' identity in Israel and Judah in the wake of Tiglath-pileser's campaigns to the West can be seen as a direct response to the political and intellectual challenges posed by Assyrian imperialism" (Frahm, "Assyria in the Hebrew Bible," 556). Frahm indicates that Assyria may have also impacted the "legal, theological, and ideological positions" of the Bible. This impact could be related to the "plain and precious things taken away from the book [or Bible]" (1 Nephi 13:28) that Nephi saw in vision and which would lead many to stumble because of what they read.
- 4 The Neo-Assyrian period was the fourth and final stage of the Assyrian Empire. During this final stage, Assyria dominated the ancient Near East during the eighth and seventh centuries.
- 5 Shawn Zelig Aster, "Isaiah 19: The 'Burden of Egypt' and Neo-Assyrian Imperial Policy," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 135, no. 3 (2015): 454. Michal Chan also suggests that "this rhetorical reversal has been crafted in order to construct a counter-theology to the intimidating royal rhetoric" of the Assyrians (Chan, "Rhetorical Reversal," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128, no. 4 (2009): 717–33).
- 6 Weinfeld contends that "a similar kind of ideological resistance to imperial tyranny developed in the wake of Assyrian imperialism and is clearly reflected in Israelite prophetic literature of the eight century B.C.E. Isaiah the prophet, who saw the apogee of Assyrian imperialistic policy, starting with Tiglath-Pileser III and ending with Sennacherib, was the first to raise his voice against Assyrian imperialism and to predict the coming of a new divine rule which would replace Assyrian tyrannic dominion. Like his followers in

the Persian and Hellenistic period he decried bitterly the heavy tribute and corvee imposed on the nations by Assyria and foresaw its collapse.” Moshe Weinfeld, “The Protest Against Imperialism in Ancient Israelite Prophecy,” in *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), 170.

- 7 Noel B. Reynolds, “Lehi and Nephi as Trained Manassite Scribes,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 50 (2022): 161–216. Taylor Halverson, “Reading 1 Nephi with Wisdom,” *Interpreter A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016): 279–93. Brant A. Gardner, “Nephi as Scribe,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 23, no. 1 (2011): 45–55.
- 8 Nephi wrote that his “soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah, for I came out from Jerusalem, and mine eyes hath beheld the things of the Jews, and I know that the Jews do understand the things of the prophets, and there is none other people that understand the things which were spoken unto the Jews like unto them, save it be that they are taught after the manner of the things of the Jews” (2 Nephi 25:5). Significant to the thesis of this paper, Nephi would copy in his record Isaiah 2–14, chapters that deal directly with the Assyrian threat to Israel and Judah. This supports the suggestion that Nephi was aware of the actions of the Assyrian Empire in relation to Israelite history.
- 9 Noel B. Reynolds, “Lehi and Nephi as Trained Manassite Scribes,” 169.
- 10 The Book of Mormon was published before Assyrian records were made accessible to the general public. All parallels must therefore be due to chance, its reliance on the Bible, or the book’s authenticity as an ancient record.
- 11 The nature and complexity of Nephi’s records suggest that he had received scribal training prior to writing what is found in the Book of Mormon. This may have furthered his exposure to Assyrian rhetoric. See Taylor Halverson, “Reading 1 Nephi with Wisdom,” 279–93 and Gardner, “Nephi as Scribe,” 45–55.
- 12 Nephi’s vision is often considered to be apocalyptic and, in this way, matches Assyrian texts from his time. See Book of Mormon Central, “Why can Nephi’s Vision be Called an Apocalypse?,” Book of Mormon KnowWhy #471, September 27,

- 2018, <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/knowhy/why-can-nephis-vision-be-called-an-apocalypse>.
- 13 Nephi created the small plate record that we have today because he was commanded by the Lord to do so. See 2 Nephi 5:29–33. Presumably this record was crafted with a future audience in mind. However, it needs to be remembered that Nephi was the intended audience of his vision, which sets it apart from other narratives within his record.
- 14 There have been numerous suggestions over the years as to the identity of the “great church,” and the interpretation I present in this paper is not intended to challenge those ideas. Often ideas presented in vision can have relevance for multiple historical moments. Historically, most of the explanations that have been offered for interpreting the “great church” are forward looking from Nephi’s lifetime. That is, they envision a “great church” that would come at some future point in time from when Nephi received his vision. What I present in this paper is unique in that it looks back in time for a culturally relevant example Nephi could potentially relate to in attempting to identify the “great church.” This is exactly what we see in Revelation where John sees the fall of Babylon as the symbol for all nations that oppose the “Lamb.”
- 15 C. Hagedorn and S. Tzoref, “Attitudes to Gentiles in the Minor Prophets and in Corresponding Pesharim,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 20, no. 3 (2013): 483.
- 16 Israel became a vassal state under the rule of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BCE). He is also the first Assyrian king to be mentioned in the Bible (See 2 Kings 15:29–31 and 2 Kings 15:32–16:20, 2 Chronicles 27:1–28:27, Isaiah 7:1–25 for events related to his reign. Following a rebellion of Israel’s king, Hoshea, Shalmaneser V (726–722 BCE) began a three-year siege of Israel from 724 to 722 BCE, which led to the capture of Israel and their deportation (descriptions of these events can be found in 2 Kings 17). It is during this time period that Lehi’s descendants were probably displaced by the Assyrians and Judah began paying tribute to Assyria. Sargon II (721–705 BCE) also claims to have conquered Israel and dispersed the inhabitants of that region; however, it is possible that this was already accomplished by Shalmaneser V. Sennacherib (704–681 BCE) campaigned from 689 to 691 BCE to put down the revolts of the vassal states, which included Judah, following the

death of Sargon. In 701 BCE, he besieged Jerusalem and carried away most of the population living outside of Jerusalem. During the rule of Esarhaddon (680–668 BCE) and Assurbanipal (668–627 BCE), Judah remained a vassal state of Assyria and presumably paid tribute yearly. Following the death of Assurbanipal, Assyrian control over Judah waned. By 612 BCE, the Assyrian Empire collapsed, and Nineveh was destroyed by a coalition led by the Babylonians. Judah would become a short-lived vassal of Egypt in 608 BCE, and in 605 BCE they became a vassal to Babylon with certain leaders and artisans deported to Babylon. In 597 BCE, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon sacked Jerusalem and deported the remaining population of Jerusalem.

- 17 Hagedorn and Tzoref, “Attitudes to Gentiles,” 480.
- 18 We have no evidence that Nephi would have had access to Nahum’s record as part of the Brass Plates. However, it is possible the book of Nahum was available to Nephi given that most scholars believe the book was produced between 660 and 606 BCE. Regardless of whether Nephi had access to the book of Nahum, the timing of its proposed production suggests that the ideas presented in the book were part of the world view at the time Nephi received his vision.
- 19 Some of the language found in Nahum that describes Nineveh is also used by John in Revelation. However, in the book Revelation, it is Babylon that is used as an image of divine disfavor indicating that the fate of Nineveh is being transferred to another nation that threatens Israel. Nephi indicates that during his vision he was shown the Revelations of John. See 1 Nephi 14:20–25.
- 20 This is a point that Stephen Robinson makes: “How can the devil’s church or churches be one and many at the same time? The apparent contradiction actually gives us the solution to the larger puzzle and ultimately our identification of the great and abominable church. The answer is that the term is used in two different ways in 1 Nephi 13–14. In chapter 13 it is used historically, and in chapter 14 it is used typologically. ... [W]e understand that the term *great and abominable church* has two uses, the one open (inclusive and archetypal), the other closed (exclusive and historical).” Stephen E. Robinson, “Nephi’s ‘Great and Abominable Church,’” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, no. 1 (1998): 36–37.
- 21 Shawn Zelig Aster, *Reflection of Empire in Isaiah 1–39: Responses to Assyrian Ideology*, Ancient Near East Monographs 19 (Atlanta:

- SBL Press, 2017), 4. A counterpoint to Shawn Aster can be found in Ariel M. Bagg, "Palestine under Assyrian Rule: A New Look at the Assyrian Imperial Policy in the West," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 133, no. 1, (2013): 119–44. He suggests that the Assyrian influence was primarily military and not cultural.
- 22 "[E]very religious movement that arises in a particular historic era, which has real texts, will produce parallels 'in such great number, distribution, and uncanny resemblance to the literary, doctrinal and social structures with its environment.' If we were to find a movement that had none of these features, which did not have such great numbers of seeming 'parallels,' we would have to start from the position that it wasn't real religion but was fictional, and that it must have come from some other time and place. Without these points of contact, such a religion would be completely inaccessible to its potential adherents." Benjamin L. McGuire, "Finding Parallels: Some Cautions and Criticisms, Part One," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 5 (2013): 42–43.
- 23 "[T]he presence in Judah of Assyrian 'religious and ideological motifs ... on locally manufactured seals and cult objects' in the seventh century suggests that Assyrian influence there only grew with time." Daniel C. Timmer, "Nahum's Representation of and Response to Neo-Assyria: Imperialism as a Multifaceted Point of Contact in Nahum," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 24, no. 3 (2014): 351.
- 24 Frahm, "Assyria in the Hebrew Bible," 560.
- 25 Aster, *Reflection of Empire*, 7.
- 26 Shawn Aster, "The Image of Assyria in Isaiah 2:5–22: The Campaign Motif Reversed," *The Journal of the American Oriental Society* 127, no.3 (2007): 259.
- 27 Aster also points out that there is another term that "more directly expresses the arrogance inherent in the enemy's refusal to submit. This is the accusation that the enemy 'trusted (*takalu*) in his own strength,' frequently found in royal inscriptions." Aster, "The Image of Assyria," 266. Nephi's ill-fated descendants in the promised land would be destroyed because they trusted in "their own strength," or as it is recorded by one of those descendants, they "boast[ed] in their own strength" (Mormon 3:9, 4:8), and Nephi would say, "O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust

- in thee forever” (2 Nephi 4:34). In contrast to what Nephi writes, Isaiah portrays the Assyrian kings’ achievements entirely to their hubris. For example, “By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I have understanding” (Isaiah 10:13).
- 28 Aster, “Image of Assyria,” 265. “One of the terms used to express this characterization is the adjective *mustarhu* (or in later Assyrian, *multarhu*) ‘proud,’ which is a precise parallel to Heb. *ge’eh*” (ibid.).
 - 29 Aster, “Image of Assyria,” 262. See ibid., 262n51 dealing with the connection between pride/haughtiness and high buildings in the Old Testament.
 - 30 Frahm, “Assyria in the Hebrew Bible,” 561. Shawn Aster also writes that “to demonstrate literary dependence, the motifs that appear in both works must have unusual elements that are unlikely to have been independently generated in both works.” and the question should be asked “is it probable that the second work was independently generated, without reference to the first?” (Aster, *Reflection of Empire*, 23–25.)
 - 31 Gordon H. Johnston, “Nahum’s Rhetorical Allusions to Neo-Assyrian Conquest Metaphors,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 159 (January–March 2002): 27. Daniel Timmer adds that “the Assyrian invasion that ended Hezekiah’s rebellion severely affected Judah’s economic and military capacities, and she reverted to her role of faithful vassal through at least some of the reign of Manasseh, who paid tribute to Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal” (Timmer, “Nahum’s Representation,” 351).
 - 32 Or “I declared them Assyrian vassals and they bore my yoke,” Johnston, “Nahum’s Rhetorical Allusions,” 28. In an adaptation of this metaphor, Israel was warned that if they did not serve the Lord “with joyfulness and with gladness of heart” (Deuteronomy 28:48) the Lord would send against them enemies which would “put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee” (Deuteronomy 28:48).
 - 33 Tiglath-Pileser III would first bring northern Israel under the “heavy yoke” of Assyrian sovereignty and require them to pay tribute to Assyria yearly. From that point on, northern Israel would experience the burden inherent in the “heavy yoke” of Assyrian sovereignty. Trying to free themselves from this burden would eventually lead to their destruction and the scattering of Israel

- by the Assyrian king Sargon II. In the case of Judah, Sargon II states “I laid waste the large district of Judah and put the straps of my yoke upon Hezekiah its king.” Johnston, “Nahum’s Rhetorical Allusions,” 28.
- 34 Isaiah also makes use of the yoke metaphor. Peter Machinist comments that “if Isaiah’s use of the yoke owes something to Assyrian idiom, then while the Assyrian rulers talk constantly about putting their ‘yoke’ upon their subject peoples or about a rebel sinfully throwing off the yoke, the prophet turns this sin inside out, when he has Yahweh predict, in a defiant pun: ‘And his yoke shall depart from them,’” Machinist, “Assyria and its Image,” 734.
- 35 Johnston, “Nahum’s Rhetorical Allusions,” 28.
- 36 Ben McGuire, “Did Lehi Use Egyptian? Examining Jewish-Egyptian Relations in the Seventh Century B.C.” (paper, Foundation for Apologetic Information & Research, 2002), 4.
- 37 Daniel David Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, vol. 1, *Historical Records of Assyria from the Earliest Times to Sargon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926), 1:168–69. In Nephi’s vision, the “mists of darkness” resulted in men being blinded and led “away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost.” See 1 Nephi 12:17. In Nahum 2:4 Nahum prophesies of the Assyrian chariots raging within Nineveh’s “broad ways” prior to Nineveh’s destruction. The Hebrew word *rechob* is most often translated as broad open place but it can also mean broad roads. It is related to the Akkadian word *ribitu* meaning main street or thoroughfare within the city walls. Therefore, Nephi’s reference to “broad roads” in this passage is an example of a “blind motif.” Without reference to Assyrian records the idea of being led “into” broad roads lacks context.
- 38 This is not to suggest that Nephi or Lehi would have seen these reliefs. However, a report of these reliefs would have presumably been related by those who did bring tribute to the Assyrian kings. Furthermore, these reliefs presumably represent what the Assyrians did while on campaign and what they hoped those that witnessed the devastation would pass along via word of mouth.
- 39 McGuire, “Did Lehi Use Egyptian?,” 4.

- 40 It was the Assyrian Empire that was responsible for the initial scattering of Israel, and Nephi seemingly makes reference to his knowledge of these events when he writes that the “most part of all the tribes have been led away” (1 Nephi 22:4).
- 41 Peter Machinist, “Assyria and its Image in First Isaiah,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103, no. 4 (1983): 727.
- 42 For example, Sargon II says; “That city I ‘covered like a cloud.’ They feared the (terrible) brilliance of my weapons and ... Tarhunazi, their ruler, together with his warriors, I threw into fetters of iron. His wife, his sons, his daughters, with 500 of his captive fighters, I carried away to my city of Assur.” Daniel David Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, vol. 2, *Historical Records of Assyria from Sargon to the End* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 2:12.
- 43 See 1 Nephi 12:15–17. Nahum also subverts the “flood” trope in Nahum 1:8.
- 44 In the Assyrian records, these things are repeatedly mentioned together. There are other places in the Bible that connect gold, silver, and fine linens, but none of these are in relation to being “yoked.” Further, as far as I can tell, only one place in the that connects gold, silver, and fine linens with harlots and — Ezekiel 16 — but again, it is not in the context of being yoked.
- 45 Luckenbill, *Ancient Records*, 1:145.
- 46 Ibid., 1:144–45.
- 47 Ibid., 1:144.
- 48 Using imagery similar to the claims of the Assyrian kings, which describe their enemies hiding underground in response to the campaign, Nephi would record seeing a “great pit which hath been digged for the destruction of men shall be filled by those who digged it, to their utter destruction, saith the Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 14:3). “The reaction of the humans to the advent of the campaign has few parallels in Biblical literature. They hide in the rock and dirt ... in caves in the rock and dugouts in the dirt ... and in clefts in the rock and crevices in the stone. ... The common denominator of all these places is their inaccessibility, which makes them suitable refuges. The goal aimed at in hiding is not entirely clear: It would seem that the humans hope in this way to escape the onslaught of the campaign, but there is no mention of their

escaping punishment, nor is punishment explicitly mentioned as an activity of the campaigner in the passage.” Aster, *Reflections of the Empire*, 303–304.

- 49 These “fine things” were also associated with the “large and spacious building” in Nephi’s vision and Lehi’s dream and like the Assyrian palaces and empire ultimately contributed to their fall. See 1 Nephi 8:26–7, 11:35–36, 12:18.
- 50 It was the Assyrian campaigns that provided the people and wealth needed to accomplish the building of “broad roads” and “great and spacious buildings” within the walls of Nineveh. Nephi’s reference to the “mist of darkness” resulting in being led away “into broad roads” fits this description.
- 51 See Eckart Frahm, “The Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions as Text: History, Ideology, and Intertextuality,” in *State Archives of Assyria Studies*, vol. 29, *Writing Neo-Assyrian History: Sources, Problems, and Approaches*, ed. G. B. Lanfranchi, R. Mattila, and R. Rollinger (Helsinki, FIN: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project and the Foundation for Finnish Assyriological Research, 2019), 149.
- 52 On a microscopic level, the Assyrian campaign reports “are marked by a frequent use of tropes and figures of elocution. These include parallelism, chiasmic patterns, direct speech, alliteration, word play and especially comparison and metaphorical expressions” (ibid., 149). Nephi’s record also makes use of all these literary tools.
- 53 John Nicholas Postgate, *Taxation and Conscription in the Assyrian Empire* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1974), 3:127–28.
- 54 There is another intriguing potential parallel in Lehi’s dream, where he describes seeing a “strait and narrow path” that leads to a tree with fruit that is by water, found in a letter by Sargon II. In it he describes details of his eighth campaign: “I crossed, among Sheiak, Ardikshi, Ulaiau and Alluriu, high mountains, lofty ridges, steep mountain peaks (?) which defy description, through which there is no trail for the passage of foot soldiers, among which mighty waterfalls tear their way, the noise of whose fall resounds for a *beru*, like Adad (the thunder-god), which are covered, (thick) as reeds, with all kinds of trees — the choicest fruit trees, and vines, and are full of terrors for (the one) attacking their passes; where no king had ever passed, whose trail no prince

- who went before me had ever seen; their great wild tree trunks I tore down and cut through their steep peaks(?) with bronze axes. A narrow road, a strait passage, where the foot soldiers passed sideways, I prepared (‘made good’) for the passage of my army between them.” Luckenbill, “Ancient Records,” 2:93–94.
- 55 Jonah repeatedly refers to Nineveh as “that great city.” See Jonah 1:2, 3:2–3, 4:11.
- 56 Simo Parpola, “Mount Nisir and the Foundations of the Assyrian Church,” in *From Source to History Studies on Ancient Near Eastern Worlds and Beyond*, ed. Salvatore Gaspa et al. (Münster, DEU: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014): 475.
- 57 Amy Easton-Flake points out that “a new symbol, ‘this great and abominable church’ (v.6), displays striking similarities to the great and spacious building — so much so that this church should be seen as a historical analogue of the building. In both function and characteristics, the great and abominable church mirrors the great and spacious building.” Amy Easton-Flake, “Lehi’s Dream as a Template for Understanding Each Act of Nephi’s Vision” in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathern, and Stanley A. Johnson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011): 188.
- 58 “[E]ven those who hated the city had to concede one thing: that in her heydays, Nineveh’s size and power were almost unparalleled. It is an apt description when the Biblical book of Jonah calls Nineveh ‘the great city’ ... for during the period of her greatest fame, in the 7th century BCE, when most of Western Asia was subjected to the iron-fisted rule of Assyria’s Nineveh-based rulers, the city covered no less than 750 hectares.” Echart Frahm, “The Great City: Nineveh in the Age of Sennacherib,” *Journal of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies* (2008), 13.
- 59 “The literary interactions...with the Assyrian royal inscriptions operate on several levels. One is the level of the individual motif, which cannot reasonably have been formulated absent reference to the Assyrian material. A second is the subversion of these motifs and their reformulation so as to impugn the ideas of Assyrian ideology” (Aster, *Reflections of Empire*, 7).
- 60 The records of the Assyrian kings are replete with examples of the kings claiming to be rulers of the “four quarters of the earth.” It is

likewise used multiple times in the Book of Mormon after Nephi first uses it in 2 Nephi 22:25. This phrase can only be found two other times in the scriptures; one time each in Revelation 20:8 and Moses 7:62. Jeff Lindsay and Noel B. Reynolds connect the use of this phrase in the Book of Mormon to the Book of Moses via the Brass Plates. (See 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.) The related phrase “four corners of the earth” is found in Revelation 7:1 and Isaiah 11:12 which Nephi quotes in 2 Nephi 21:12.

- 61 One chapter earlier, Nephi quotes a prophet named Zenos using a similar expression. See 1 Nephi 19:16.
- 62 The Akkadian word *melammu* can mean both power and glory. A. L. Oppenheim, “Akkadian Pul(u)h(t)u and Melammu,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 63, no. 1 (1943): 31–34. “*Melammu* frequently refers to the overwhelming power of the king in the Neo-Assyrian annals. One clear example is the common phrase ... ‘I unleashed upon them the *melammu* of my lord ship.’ The *melammu* of lordship clearly refers to the devastating power of the king’s armies” (Aster, “Image of Assyria,” 253n21).
- 63 One example by Adad-nirari II says, “After the great gods had decreed (my destiny, after) they had entrusted to me the scepter for the shepherding of the people, (after) they had raised me above crowned kings (and) crowned me with the royal *melammu*.” *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114–859 B.C.)*, ed. A. Kirk Grayson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), A.0.99.2, 147,11. 7–9. See also Ali. Y. Aljuboori, “The Relationship Between The Assyrian Kings and Their Gods,” *Athar Alrafedain* 1, no.1 (2012): 3–19. The “rod of iron” that Lehi and Nephi describe can be seen as an equivalent symbol.
- 64 Gordon Johnston points out that the “propaganda pictured the Assyrian kings as such mighty warriors that mountains and seas, not just mortals, trembled and fled in fear before them.” Johnston, “Nahum’s Rhetorical Allusions,” 37. Nephi’s record uses many of the same metaphors that describe the approach of the Assyrian king when describing the arrival of the “Lamb of God” or universal sovereign. Without this context we are left to question what the

- point is of the destruction Nephi saw prior to the coming of the “Lamb of God.” See 1 Nephi 12:2–6.
- 65 This provides a new way of viewing the “rod of iron,” not as a railing or banister but as the shepherd’s rod or staff in the hand of Jehovah. (See T. J. Uriona, “Rethinking the Iron Rod,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 3 [2022] 141–63.) Isaiah subverted this relationship when he declared “O Assyrian, the *rod of my anger*, and the staff in their hands is their indignation” (Isaiah 10:5 and 2 Nephi 20:5, emphasis added). The king of Assyria’s staff was no longer the weapon of Assur but was now doing the work of Jehovah in reminding Israel to trust in the Lord. See for example one of Esarhaddon’s records that reads, “The great god Ashur ... put in my hand a *rod of anger* to destroy the enemies” (Weinfeld, “Protest Against,” 176, emphasis added.)
 - 66 Johnston, “Nahum’s Rhetorical Allusions,” 39.
 - 67 Ibid., 40. Other examples include “Tiglath-Pileser I: ‘I cut off their heads like lambs,’ Sargon II: ‘I besieged and slaughtered them like lambs.’ ‘The Sutu . . . together with the Marshanians I slaughtered like lambs.’ ‘I cast down the lands of Andia and Zikirtu, slaughtering all of their warriors like lambs.’ ‘His warriors I slaughtered before his feet like lambs, I cut off their heads.’ ‘Its warriors I slaughtered in front of its gates like lambs,’ Sennacherib: ‘ . . . I cut their throats like lambs.’ . . . ‘In the anger of my heart I made an assault upon Kutha; its troops about its walls I slaughtered like lambs and took the city.’ ‘The people of Hilakku I slaughtered like lambs” (Johnston, “Nahum’s Rhetorical Allusions,” 39–40).
 - 68 The use of the title “Lamb of God” in Nephi’s vision stands out within the scriptural record for the frequency in which it is used. In Nephi’s vision, the “Lamb of God” or the “Lamb” is used 52 times to refer to Christ yet these terms are only used 14 more times in the rest of the Book of Mormon. It is only used two times in the Bible (1 John 1:29,36) and the related term, “The Lamb” is used nine times in the book of Revelation. There is a reference to the “Lamb” in Ether 13:10 that contains other elements that are similar to Nephi’s record. The Jaredite record was not available to Nephi so it is possible that these similarities reflect the editorial influence of Moroni and his familiarity with Nephi’s record.
 - 69 Nephi would see in his vision the “Lamb of God” perform that very act. See 1 Nephi 10:10 and 1 Nephi 11:27.

- 70 Simo Parpola points out that in Assyrian art, “it was observed some time ago that in some reliefs the king takes the place of the Tree. ... Thus if the Tree symbolized the divine world order, then the king himself represented the realization of that order in man, in other words, a true image of God, the Perfect Man.” Simo Parpola, “The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52, no. 3 (July 1993): 167–68. What we see in Nephi’s vision is a subversive adaptation of the relationship between the Assyrian god and his king where the tree is replaced and finds meaning in the coming of the “Lamb of God” and not the Assyrian king. Parpola indicates that “according to the Assyrian royal ideology, the king was not only Assur’s representative upon earth; he was his very image radiating heavenly light to the darkness of the world. ... [H]e also was the son of god, the good shepherd leading his flock to the right path” (Parpola, “Mount Nisir,” 474). In Nephi’s vision, the radiance implied in the descriptions of the tree and the mother of the “Lamb of God” fit this imagery. Assyrian kings often claimed to have received their commission while still in the womb of their mothers, something we also find in Nephi’s vision. See 1 Nephi 11:6–24.
- 71 In Nephi’s record the arrival of the sovereign or “Lamb of God” led to garments turning white through the blood of the Lamb. In contrast, the Assyrian kings dyed things red with the blood of those who opposed their sovereignty. Sargon II: “Dyeing the skin of Ilu-bi’di, the wretched, red, like wool” (Luckenbill, *Ancient Records*, 2:61). Ashurbanipal: “I stormed the mountain peaks and took them. In the midst of the mighty mountain I slaughtered them, with their blood I dyed the mountain red like wool” (ibid., 1:148). Shalmaneser III: “With their blood I dyed the mountains like red wool” (ibid., 2:219). The motif of objects being dyed by blood like a red garment was commonly used, especially leading up to Nephi’s life, in the records describing the Assyrian king’s campaign. Its use in Nephi’s vision contrasts the power of the “Lamb of God” to that of the claims of the Assyrian kings. The Assyrian kings might have had the power to shed blood turning things red like dyed wool, but the “Lamb of God” had the power to make them white again through his blood. Therefore, what Nephi saw constitutes a subversive reversal of the Assyrian king’s

- claims and its use in his vision helps to reinforce the position of the “Lamb of God” as the most powerful sovereign.
- 72 “Crouch, with others, follows Weissert in linking this chaos-order opposition in Neo-Assyrian sources to the creation myths, especially *Enuma Elish*. In *Enuma Elish*, order is established through violent combat, and Marduk becomes king of the gods only after dispatching his enemies, Tiamat in particular. The text thus emphasizes the sequence ‘warfare, kingship, order.’ These facets of divine activity have a bearing on the Assyrian king due to a royal ideology that established a definitive analogy between divine and human behavior. As war is inseparable from kingship as exercised by Anshar/Assur (Marduk having been replaced by the primordial Babylonian god in the Assyrianized version of *Enuma Elish*), so too for the human king, who thereby establishes order.” Timmer, “Nahum’s Representation,” 355.
 - 73 Isaiah 14 depicts the devil’s fall by likening it to the downfall of an oppressive anonymous king that was “cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet” (Isaiah 14:19). Some biblical scholars believe this is a veiled reference to the death of the Assyrian King Sargon II, whose body was never recovered after dying on the battlefield. What Nephi saw in his vision seems to be related to what Isaiah describes because the outcome for the anonymous king and those that belonged to the “church of the devil” is the same. They both end up within a “pit” (1 Nephi 14:3). This might further support the idea that the “great church” that Nephi saw, which is part of the “church of the devil,” can be understood as the Assyrian Empire. See also 1 Nephi 14:9.
 - 74 See 2 Nephi 2:17–18, Moses 4:1–4, Abraham 3:25–28, D&C 29:36.
 - 75 This was an ancient Near East motif that connects covenantal trust with the protection of the gods. “The writers of the Hebrew Bible used the repertoire of ancient Near Eastern cosmic battle motifs and patterns to articulate certain aspects of faith and commitment to God/Yahweh in ancient Israel. They used them precisely because these stories were powerful in the conceptual world of the ancient Israelites and, therefore, provided a set of motifs that could be used to speak powerfully about Yahweh.” R. E. Averbeck, “Ancient Near Eastern Mythography as It Relates to Historiography in the

Hebrew Bible: Genesis 3 and the Cosmic Battle,” in *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions*, ed. J. K. Hoffmeier and A. R. Millard (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 345.

- 76 See Mosiah 18:8–10 for the obligations associated with the covenant of baptism and how they relate to what Nephi saw.
- 77 Matthijs de Jong, *Isaiah Among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets: A Comparative Study of the Earliest Stages of the Isaiah Tradition and the Neo-Assyrian Prophecies* (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2007), 161–62.
- 78 At the time Lehi led his family out of Jerusalem, Judah was a vassal to Babylon, and it had been hundreds of years since they existed as an independent nation.

TWENTY YEARS AFTER “PARADIGMS REGAINED,” PART 2: RESPONDING TO MARGARET BARKER’S CRITICS AND WHY HER WORK SHOULD MATTER TO LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Kevin Christensen

Abstract: *Here I address specific criticisms of Margaret Barker’s work. First, I set the stage by discussing Thomas Kuhn’s The Structure of Scientific Revolutions as a map and compass for navigating this kind of controversy. I show how his observations cast light on debates about Jesus in the Gospel of John, which in turn resemble present debates. In this context, I then consider some notable criticisms of Barker’s work as “not mainstream” and consider an instructive appreciation of Barker by Father John McDade in his “Life of Jesus Research.” I then respond in detail to a recent BYU Studies essay that was critical of Barker’s work.*

But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both
are preserved. No man also having drunk old wine
straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.
(Luke 5:38–39)

By p[r]oving contrarieties, truth is made manifest.
— Joseph Smith¹

A 2012 interviewer asked Margaret Barker, “What do [you] say to independent scholars?” In reply, she wrote:

First, read Thomas S. Kuhn’s book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, first published 50 years ago, and see how changes come about. Although written about a world very different

from biblical studies, it shows how establishments resist changes until in the end the next generation [us!] forces a paradigm shift. The current paradigm is going towards a non-faith-based study, which has no future. By this I do not mean simply that the study is not faith-based; it is based on non-faith, and so criticism does not mean close study; it so often means destructive study. New paradigms emerge from those aware of the crisis, who recognize that the situation is not likely to be remedied by the methods that caused it.²

Thomas Kuhn's 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is a careful study of how and why the background frameworks in which science is done changes, for example when going from the earth-centered Ptolemaic astronomy to the sun-centered Copernican astronomy. Kuhn has observed that in science "novelty ordinarily emerges only for the man who, knowing *with precision* what he should expect, is able to recognize that something has gone wrong. Anomaly appears only against the background provided by the paradigm."³

While some readers may wish to ignore Kuhn and simply jump into a discussion of Barker and her critics, I have found Kuhn as an essential way to follow the advice of Jesus to first "cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5). We ought not start out by supposing we have no beams in our eye to remove, that we could never see more clearly than we do now. A person who is not conscious of the existence and implications of their own paradigm cannot be self-critical of that paradigm but will be unconsciously subject to it for good or ill. A good example of that is the father of the scientific method, Bacon himself:

Bacon, the philosopher of science, was, quite consistently, an enemy of the Copernican hypothesis. Don't theorize, he said, but open your eyes and observe without prejudice, and you cannot doubt that the Sun moves and that the earth is at rest.⁴

A paradigm is defined both *as* and *by* "scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners."⁵ Kuhn explains that "paradigms provide scientists not only with a map but also with some of the directions essential for map-making."⁶ For example, when Joseph Smith reports that "the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible" and that "I came to the conclusion

that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God” (Joseph Smith — History 1:12, 13), that account becomes paradigmatic within Latter-day Saint culture. Joseph Smith provides both a map and directions for map-making.

Different background paradigms account for the different responses to Joseph Smith’s visions. The minister who declared to Joseph that “there were no such things as visions in these days; that all such things ceased with the death of the apostles, and there would never be any more of them”⁷ represents one set of paradigmatic expectations, rooted in Enlightenment Rationalism and *sola scriptura*, just as Solomon Chamberlin, a visitor to the Smith home in 1829, demonstrated another set of expectations when he met Hyrum Smith at door and asked, “Is there anyone here that believes in visions or revelations?”⁸ What the minister demonstrated was trial by ideology, dismissing Joseph Smith’s claims for daring to exist in the face of his own contrary beliefs. What Solomon Chamberlin demonstrated was enough openness and sincere curiosity to leave the Smith home with some prepublication pages of the Book of Mormon, and a subsequent conversion and lifelong commitment to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Just as different expectations exist under different paradigms, so can different interpretations of open questions exist within a paradigm. Kuhn observes that “every problem that normal science sees as a puzzle can be seen, from another viewpoint, as a counterinstance and thus as a source of crisis.”⁹ Kuhn further explains that

if all members of a scientific community responded to each anomaly as a source of crisis or embraced each new theory advanced by a colleague, science would cease. If, on the other hand, no one reacted to anomalies or to brand new theories in high-risk ways, there would be few or no revolutions. In matters like these the resort to shared values rather than to shared rules governing individual choice may be the community’s way of distributing risk and assuring the long-term success of its enterprise.¹⁰

Kuhn reports that

to be accepted as a paradigm, a theory must seem better than its competitors, but it need not, and in fact never does, explain all the facts with which it can be confronted.¹¹

It makes a great deal of sense to ask which of two actual and competing theories fits the facts *better*.¹²

As I consider questions raised by various mainstream critics of Barker's work, and questions raised by critics of the Latter-day Saint appreciation and use of Barker's work, it is important to consider how a critic proposes to settle the question of "which paradigm is better?" Do they engage in a self-reflective and comparative "Why us?" inquiry, or just a self-referential "Not us!" dismissal based on their preexisting ideology? Kuhn observes that the most important values for paradigm choice are puzzle definition and testability, accuracy of key predictions, comprehensiveness and coherence, fruitfulness, simplicity and aesthetics, and future promise.¹³ I long ago noted that Alma 32 promotes equivalent values for resolving such questions.¹⁴ That is, Alma sets up a test, invites an experiment with discernable results, talks about how a person's understanding is enlightened and mind begins to expand, how the knowledge gained is delicious, fruitful, and soul enlarging; and he emphasizes the future promise, all despite one's knowledge *not* becoming perfect (Alma 32:36).

Paradigm Debate Demonstrated in the Gospel of John

For an example of the importance of differing background conceptions for religious questions, consider the familiar story of Nicodemus discussing with Jesus in John 3 what it means to be born again. When Jesus says, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), Nicodemus responds, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born" (John 3:4)? This, I notice, is a very good example of the kind of thing a young Joseph Smith noticed, that different teachers of religion can understand the same words differently. Knowing that they can and do differ is one issue. How we decide who has the better understanding and why is of greater importance. As Barker explains, "Jesus then taught him about birth 'from above' and seeing the kingdom of God, being born of water and the Spirit and entering the kingdom of God (John 3.3–8)." This was the mystery of the temple, and yet Jesus had to say to Nicodemus, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand this? (John 3.10, [Barker's] translation)."¹⁵ The point of John's gospel telling several such stories of such conceptual misunderstanding is to demonstrate that the "Jews had lost touch with their original temple teachings," the Jews in John's Gospel being those that Josephus had defined as the ones who had returned from Babylon,¹⁶ and as such, heirs and advocates of the Deuteronomist way of thinking. In her book *King of*

the Jews: Temple Theology in John's Gospel, Barker further demonstrates that

underlying Jesus's conversation with Nicodemus and the explanation of who he is are three royal texts: Psalm 110; Isaiah 52.13–53.12; and Deuteronomy 32.43, all of which would have been well known to those who studied the Hebrew Scriptures, *but all of which are different in the Masoretic Hebrew from which English Bibles are translated.*

- No text of Psalm 110 has been found at Qumran to show what the text was in the time of Jesus; this has to be reconstructed from the Greek.
- The Isaiah passage in the Qumran Isaiah scroll has a few more letters than the Masoretic Hebrew text, and so says that the Servant is “anointed” rather than disfigured (Isa. 52:14) and that he sees the light (that is, the glory) after his suffering (Isa. 53:11).¹⁷
- The Qumran text of Deuteronomy 32:43 has four more lines than the Masoretic Hebrew text, and these include the Christian proof text.

It would be possible to conclude from this evidence that texts which were important for Christian claims — and indeed for Jesus's own understanding of his role — were removed from the Hebrew text or significantly altered. They may have been removed after Jesus made his claims and in reaction to them, or they may have been royal and temple texts that had already been edited out of some copies of the Hebrew Scriptures during the second-temple period, the work of the “restoring scribes.” If the latter, then Nicodemus could not have recognized and understood what Jesus was saying.¹⁸

The contrasting interpretations of the same phrase by Nicodemus and Jesus concerning being “born again,” and just as significantly, what *we ourselves see in that same familiar story*, with or without considering the context of Barker's temple theology and the state of the Hebrew available to Nicodemus, should illustrate Ian Barbour's observations:

In N. R Hanson's oft quoted words, “*All data are theory-laden*,” the procedures of measurement and the interpretation of the resulting numerical values depend on implicit theoretical assumptions. Most of the time, of course, scientists work within a framework of thought which they have inherited. ...

But, says Feyerabend, when the background theory itself is at issue, when the fundamental assumptions and basic concepts are under attack, then the dependence of measurement on theoretical assumptions is crucial.¹⁹

As Kuhn explains,

In learning a paradigm the scientist acquires theory, methods, and standards together, usually in an inextricable mixture. Therefore, when paradigms change, there are usually significant shifts in the criteria determining the legitimacy both of problems and of proposed solutions.²⁰

The New Testament includes several examples of how some people, on facing the message of Jesus, weighed the message by personal experiment, and how others turned to their favored authorities and traditions to deal with a new and challenging complexity. Where some said, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46), others responded, “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed” (John 7:48, 49).

There is a discernable difference between those who are looking for further light and knowledge and who are willing to personally investigate “whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11), to judge by experiment whether new wine is better, and those who just want to know whether some notable wine connoisseur approves. The story of the healing of the blind man in John 9 shows how some seek to “make a man an offender” (Isaiah 29:21) relative to their existing beliefs, and in their investigation dismiss all witnesses and evidence that did not conform to their preconceptions:

Thou art his disciple: but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. (John 9:28–29)

The healed blind man responds, and demonstrates the difference in his own approach, by saying,

Why herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. (John 9:30)

What happens in John 9 as the Pharisees investigate a report of a healing illustrates the importance of knowing the difference between puzzle solving within a given paradigm, and paradigm testing. The Pharisees in John 9 are engaged in puzzle solving and *never* make the shift to paradigm testing. They carefully explore the reports of the healing of

the blind man but reject the implications of all evidence, witness, and opinion that do not conform to the rules of their game.

Assimilating a new sort of fact demands a more than additive adjustment of theory, and until that adjustment is completed — until the scientist has learned to see nature in a different way — the new fact is not quite a scientific fact at all.²¹

They defend the old wine and refuse the new, not because they have solved the puzzle of what had happened between the blind man and Jesus, but because their old wine bottles simply cannot contain what that evidence implies about Jesus. I can say the same thing about scholarship challenging the belief in the Book of Mormon. This is not because there is no evidence that supports such belief,²² nor because open questions or critical arguments regarding the Book of Mormon inevitably overwhelm any believer who looks at them,²³ but rather that

the transfer of allegiance from paradigm to paradigm is a conversion experience that cannot be forced. Lifelong resistance, particularly from those whose productive careers have committed them to an older tradition of normal science, is not a violation of scientific standards but an index to the nature of scientific research itself. The source of resistance is the assurance that the older paradigm will ultimately solve all its problems, that nature can be shoved into the box the paradigm provides.²⁴

In John 6 the account of the response to the Bread of Life sermon shows another side of the issue, a de-conversion experience, where many followers of Jesus depart on grounds that “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” (John 6:60). That is, what Jesus taught on that occasion seemed hard to believe, so much so that many left his community “and walked no more with him” (John 6:66). Kuhn observes that all paradigm choice involves deciding “which paradigm is better?” where the question of how a person measures “better” should not be completely paradigm-dependent. Another decision is “which problems is it more significant to have solved?”²⁵

In the account of the healing of the blind man, the problem and solution for the Pharisees is defined by their orthodox belief that Jesus cannot be the Messiah. For the blind man himself, the significant problem and solution was that now he could see, whereas before he was blind. In the account of the Bread of Life sermon, for those who followed no more, the problem was that the teaching of Jesus for them now involved “an

hard saying, who can hear it?” For Peter, the most important issue in that context became “To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

In these accounts, we also see the community aspect of paradigm choice. One is not just choosing a private opinion or an objective fact but choosing between communities defined by paradigms.²⁶ The blind man is rejected by and rejects the company of the Pharisees. He chooses Jesus and his community. Those who followed no more after Jesus after the Bread of Life Sermon were also choosing community, as was Peter in holding to Jesus.

Preference and Familiarity for Old Wine vs. New

Of the open-mindedness and devotion to truth from whatever source demonstrated in the history of science, Thomas Kuhn has noted that

no part of the aim of normal science is to call forth new sorts of phenomena; indeed those that will not fit the box are often not seen at all. Nor do scientists normally aim to invent new theories, and they are often intolerant of those invented by others. Instead, normal-scientific research is directed to the articulation of those phenomena and theories that the paradigm already supplies.²⁷

Joseph Smith commented on the problem of dealing with the preconceptions and traditions of the Latter-day Saints:

But there has been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation. It has been like splitting hemlock knots with a corn-dodger for a wedge, and a pumpkin for a beetle. Even the Saints are slow to understand.

I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see [that] some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions: they cannot stand the fire at all.²⁸

On the other hand, Nibley reports that “the book of Enoch was given to the Saints as a bonus for their willingness to accept the Book of Mormon and as a reward for their sustained and lively interest in all scriptures, including lost books: they were searchers, engaging in eager speculation and discretion, ever seeking like Adam and Abraham, for

“greater [light and] knowledge” (Abraham 1:2). And we have been told that if we stop seeking, we shall not only find no more, but lose the treasures we already have.”²⁹

It is important to consider trends and fruitfulness over time. What kinds of experiences do those who nurture the seed carefully, in good soil, over time, have in comparison to those who don’t bother to seriously try, or who insist on inhospitable soils when they do try? As Wendy Ulrich reminds us to consider what kind of ongoing payback do people who nurture the word carefully obtain?³⁰

“Is it a Good Seed?": Questions and Patterns of Nurture in Criticism of Barker’s Work

Now it is time to consider some objections to Barker’s work. The patterns that a critic displays always tell us something about the critic and their criticism, and in many cases, that pattern is at least as telling as what they observe about Barker’s work. For instance, Evangelical blogger Fred Anson offers a 2020 blog post called “Debunking Mormon Appeals to Margaret Barker”:

She is the darling of Mormon Apologists and Liberal Christian Theologians the world over as her work can be used to undermine confidence in and the authority of the Bible. What follows are the two finest debunkings of Margaret Barker that I have found to date.³¹

The first debunking Anson offers comes from a Latter-day Saint blogger from 2007, then a post-graduate student who posts anonymously as TT. TT complains about Barker’s methods and assumptions, based on his listening to a single 2003 talk on “What King Josiah Reformed.”³² TT argues in terms of his suspicion and doubts regarding her methods, against the modes and assumptions of Biblical criticism with which he has been trained. (I had earlier seen him comment regarding Barker that “no one I know takes her seriously,” which is another way of saying he does not know the Archbishop of Canterbury, Andrei Orlov, N. T. Wright, the members of the Society for Old Testament Study who elected her as president, or any of the many other academics whose interest and respect I have noted in my broad survey of her career.) Barker was also trained in that approach at Cambridge, and consciously and deliberately decided to offer an alternative paradigm. TT, quite naturally, prefers his own approach, his own teachers, his own society and their ingrained paradigm.

Barker and Enoch

Remember Kuhn's observation that "consciously or not, the decision to employ a particular piece of apparatus and to use it in a particular way carries an assumption that only certain sorts of circumstances will arise."³³ For instance, TT writes:

She uses [Dead Sea Scrolls] and Enochic literature to reconstruct what was happening in the First Temple, even though these texts were written hundreds of years after the First Temple had been destroyed. She conflates Jubilees, *1 Enoch*, and the Damascus covenant as if they represented a shared view of the temple. But most egregiously, she fails to note that the critiques of the temple in these texts have to do with Second Temple politics, including disputes over priestly families in control of the temple, not with the First Temple at all.³⁴

We shall shortly encounter Professor John McDade's observation that "there is then a radical dependence between the reconstructed Jesus and the reconstructed context/model: how the context and social model are understood determines how Jesus is understood."³⁵ This implies that there is a radical dependence between the reconstructed *1 Enoch* and how it is dated and contextualized. As Barker comments,

If we could prove that the Enoch books were actually composed at Qumran, and that these surviving bits were from the author's actual manuscript, then the physical remains could date the texts to the second or third century BC. But we can do no such thing. Imagine what this method of dating would do for the Old Testament. Our earliest physical proofs for the existence of the Old Testament, pieces of ancient scroll we can see and handle, are also among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Does this mean that the Old Testament books were all composed in the second century BC in the Qumran monastery? It is unlikely! We must not have one set of rules for the biblical texts and another for the non-biblical.³⁶

In making his criticisms, TT admits that he had not read any of Barker's other works in which she prepared the ground for her use of Enoch in later works. In *The Older Testament*, she cites a range of Enoch interpreters and observes that

the setting in which we have seen the earliest apocalypses function, e.g., the troubles of the second century, or the Qumran community, has, until recently, been assumed to be that of their origin. But there is no organic link between the problems of this period and the major *themes or forms* of the literature. These were used only to interpret the problems of the period, they were the established framework within which the world had to be viewed. The ultimate origin of apocalyptic must therefore lie in a setting where ascents to the upper world, the hosts of heaven, astrology, astronomy, and superhuman wisdom were as much at home as those other elements — evil angels, supernatural conflicts mirrored on earth, the visions of history and judgement which were taken up and emphasized for their relevance to the second century.³⁷

For comparison, I notice that, if authentic history, our book of Mosiah is contemporary with the Second Temple politics that TT cites as the context in which he sets *1 Enoch* as contemporary critiques. The story of Amulon and the other wicked priests of Noah include telling and consistent allusions to the fallen angels of the Enoch stories.³⁸ Described from the start as “prideful” (Mosiah 11:5–13), they pervert sacred knowledge for gain (Mosiah 11:5–6; 12:28–29), and they take wives that they should not have (Mosiah 20:1–5). Amulon’s priests teach the Lamanites to be cunning and wise “as to the wisdom of the world” (Mosiah 23:31–35; 24:1–7). Finally, their descendants from the union with the stolen wives become “hardened” and meet with destruction (Alma 25:4, 7–9). Mormon did not invent the Fallen Angel mythology to make this critique of Amulon and his fellows but alluded to it for its relevance to their case.

In *The Older Testament* chapter on “The Book of Enoch,” Barker reports that “it has proved possible to trace the roots and antecedents of its mythology into the very earliest stratum of the Old Testament.”³⁹ She makes intensive comparisons with Isaiah, for instance, showing that Isaiah knew the Enoch tradition. And she notes in a paper published by the Maxwell Institute that

after seeing the tree of life, Enoch traveled to the centre of the earth — that is, to Jerusalem — and saw the holy mountain. From its eastern side, water issued and flowed to the south by way of the Gihon Spring and the brook Kidron (*1 Enoch* 26:1–3). This means that for Enoch the holy mountain was not the area we nowadays call the Temple Mount. It must have been the

hill to the southeast of it, the Ophel, from which the Gihon gushes. Before Hezekiah built the tunnel that brought its water into the city (2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:30), the water of the Gihon probably created a real stream in the Kidron Valley. It is interesting that Enoch's journey describes accurately the geography of Jerusalem before the time of Hezekiah, that is, in the early ministry of Isaiah.⁴⁰

She noted in the introduction to *The Older Testament* that

the link between the Old and New [Testaments] is far more complex than the use of proof texts and the fulfillment of prophecies. These are the tip of an iceberg whose greater part remains invisible. I have tried to reconstruct the invisible mass from its effects which are perceived. Thereby I have left myself open to the charge of going beyond the evidence. The outline offered results from projecting given positions and problems back to the point of their confluence and solution. Whether or not this is an acceptable method remains to be seen.⁴¹

TT does not accept her methods. I do. We use different paradigms. We contextualize differently, favor different authorities, and draw on different evidence as most significant. It is not just regarding Margaret Barker's scholarship, but the historicity of the Book of Mormon as well. TT obviously has formal training that I do not, though he graciously acknowledges that he has not read nearly as much of Barker's work as I have. And I note that there are many other scholars, Latter-day Saint and otherwise, who do have equivalent formal training that do appreciate Barker's work.

An Evangelical Apologist's View

Anson's second authority is Rob Bowman, an Evangelical Christian apologist with a PhD in Biblical Studies at the South African Theological Seminary. Bowman has been involved with the Institute for Religious Research since 2008. Anson cites some of Bowman's Facebook posts which offer this conclusion regarding Barker's case:

To sum up: (1) Margaret Barker's theory is a flimsy reconstruction of the history of ancient Judaism and early Christianity based on idiosyncratic speculations and dubious interpretations of isolated texts; (2) it makes mincemeat of the Old Testament; (3) it does not support the idea that the Jews ever held to a belief system comparable to Mormonism; (4) the Mormon use of

Barker's theory renders the Old Testament essentially valueless, viewing things quite backward (the good guys are really the bad guys, etc.); (5) the New Testament assumes the reliability of the Old Testament text and doctrine, and it affirms the monotheism of the so-called Deuteronomists; and (6) the Book of Mormon is also "Deuteronomic"!⁴²

One of the most telling passages from Bowman is this one:

There are roughly a thousand statements in the Old Testament equating Yahweh with Elohim in a variety of ways: using the compound name "Yahweh Elohim," affirming "Yahweh is Elohim," referring to Yahweh as "our/my/your/his/their Elohim" or "Yahweh the Elohim of Israel," and so on. Not only are there many such statements in the OT, but they are spread throughout the OT. Statements referring to or identifying Yahweh as Elohim occur in all but five of the books of the OT (Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, and Obadiah). Of these five short books, Esther uses neither name even once, Ecclesiastes uses only Elohim and never Yahweh, and the other three books use only Yahweh and never Elohim. These five books, then, never have the opportunity (lexically speaking) to identify Yahweh as Elohim or to distinguish Yahweh from Elohim.⁴³

Notice how completely this statement misses the direction and implications of Barker's case.⁴⁴ Remember this passage from Barker's *The Great Angel*:

*All the texts in the Hebrew Bible distinguish clearly between the divine sons of Elohim/Elyon and those human beings who are called sons of Yahweh. This must be significant. It must mean that the terms originated at a time when Yahweh was distinguished from whatever was meant by El/Elohim, Elyon.*⁴⁵

In the same place, Barker continues:

A large number of the texts continued to distinguish between El Elyon and Yahweh, Father and Son, and to express this distinction in similar ways with the symbolism of the temple and the royal cult. By tracing these patterns through a great variety of material and over several centuries, Israel's second God can be recovered.⁴⁶

The crucial title *El Elyon, God Most High*, does not appear anywhere in Bowman's case, which demonstrates that he has not addressed the extensive evidence Barker provides in *The Great Angel*. He mentions her name but does not name any of her books, let alone quote them. His response amounts to a "Not us!" dismissal, rather than a genuine "Why us?" inquiry. He mentions two of my essays ("Paradigms Regained" and "The Deuteronomistic De-Christianizing of the Old Testament") but never quotes me, nor does he mention any other scholar, Latter-day Saint or otherwise, who has cited her work. Later, I will return to the questions concerning Barker's view of the value of the Old Testament and the question of Deuteronomy and the Book of Mormon, since these issues recur in other critiques.

Professor McDade Defending Barker Relative to the "Mainstream"

I see a common dismissal of Barker's work as "not mainstream," which, if you pause to think about it, translates directly to "Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him?" or just as well, "Do you preach the orthodox religion?" This means that we first ought to take a closer look at what "mainstream" signifies. And, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we ought to recognize that we are not mainstream. We should reflect on why we should choose to be so.⁴⁷

Here I will quote from a broad survey of "Life of Jesus" research by Professor John McDade which I think provides a realistic assessment of what "mainstream of scholarship" really is and does. Along the way, he also situates Barker:

I point you to Telford's summary of how Jesus emerges as a social type if he is considered in the light of "foreground data" (the narrative tradition, especially the miracles, sayings and the traditions surrounding his death) and "background data" (the elements of general context posited as appropriate to understanding him in his first century setting). Here, weighting is all and what should strike us about this helpful taxonomy is the selective and constructed character of the images of Jesus offered by historians, depending on their choice of emphasis, what counts as primary data, which heuristic models are used, and so on. Telford speaks of a consensus today "that a combination of *teacher*, *prophet*, *healer* best captures historically his social identity or role." (Telford, p. 55)

Foreground data

- If weight is given to the miracle tradition, then Jesus emerges as an ancient magician (Morton Smith) or as a Jewish charismatic healer and exorcist (Vermes).
- If the weight is given to the sayings tradition, then a range of images of Jesus is adduced.
 - If the *wisdom sayings* (proverbs, parables, aphorisms etc.) are given prominence, then Jesus emerges as a *sage* (Vermes, Flusser) or even an *itinerant subversive sage* (Borg, Robinson, Funk).
 - If an emphasis on the authenticity of the *prophetic and apocalyptic sayings* is retained, then Jesus emerges as an *eschatological prophet* (Meyer, Sanders, Charlesworth).
 - If his Kingdom sayings are interpreted *apocalyptically* (following Schweitzer), and are linked with the Son of Man sayings, then Jesus is an other-worldly figure, expecting cosmic catastrophe and as being relatively indifferent to social concerns.
 - If the Kingdom sayings are not interpreted apocalyptically, and the Son of Man sayings are viewed as secondary, then Jesus emerges as a this-worldly figure, a *social prophet*, with a social programme (Borg, Horsley, Hollenbach).
- If the emphasis is placed on the opposition to him and his death at the hands of the Romans, then Jesus emerges as a para-Zealot *revolutionary* (Brandon) or the pacifist victim of oppression.

Background data

The choice of *context* in which to place Jesus affects the estimate given of him:

- When emphasis is placed on the Palestinian Jewish context and, within that, on the Rabbinic tradition (although that did not flourish till after AD 70), then Jesus can be seen as the inspired *Rabbi* (Flusser, Chilton) or the *Pharisee* (Falk).
- If the choice is made to place him in the context of *apocalyptic* Judaism, then he can be seen as the “*humane*

apocalypticist” (Charlesworth) or the “*reasonable visionary*” (Sanders).

- If his Galilean provenance is emphasised, then he becomes a charismatic holy man or *hasid* in the same tradition as Honi the Circle-Drawer or Hanina ben Dosa (Vermes).
- If Hellenistic influences in Galilee are emphasised, then he can be seen as a *Cynic teacher* (Mack, Crossan).
- If it is judged that he conforms to no particular social type, he cannot be placed in one of these categories (Hengel).

The Jesus who is envisaged in these accounts is the pre-canonical Jesus, arrived at through certain judgements about the nature of the Gospel traditions (both canonical and extra-canonical — the Gospel of Thomas is now a controversial card in the game), and set in the dynamics of the religious, social and economic life of Palestine. There is then a radical dependence between the reconstructed Jesus and the reconstructed context/model: how the context and social model are understood determines how Jesus is understood. *Determines* is not too strong a word, for one of the problems with this approach is that the grid of social and economic context is such a strong factor that it can inhibit responsible handling of the actual textual evidence we have for Jesus.⁴⁸

McDade here cites a range of well-known mainstream scholars who offer a range of contradictory pictures of Jesus, mostly secular and at home in a university setting, few of which conform well to the testimonies in the New Testament that most Christian churches offer in their Sunday preaching. It is worth comparing McDade’s conclusion here about the “radical dependence between the reconstructed Jesus and the reconstructed context/model” and the conclusions Richard Bushman reaches about histories of Joseph Smith.

I wish to explore, in broad general terms, the histories to which historians have attached Joseph Smith. As you can imagine, the context in which he is placed profoundly affects how people see the Prophet, since the history selected for a subject colors everything about it. Is he a money-digger like hundreds of other superstitious Yankees in his day, a religious fanatic like Muhammad was thought to be in Joseph’s time, a prophet like Moses, a religious revolutionary like Jesus?

To a large extent, Joseph Smith assumes the character of the history selected for him. The broader the historical context, the greater the appreciation of the man. If Joseph Smith is described as the product of strictly local circumstances — the culture of the Burned-over District, for example — he will be considered a lesser figure than if put in the context of Muhammad or Moses. Historians who have been impressed with Joseph Smith's potency, whether for good or ill, have located him in a longer, more universal history. Those who see him as merely a colorful character go no farther than his immediate environment for context. No historians eliminate the local from their explanations, but, on the whole, those who value his genius or his influence, whether critics or believers, give him a broader history as well. I want to talk first about the way historians have sought the Prophet's larger meaning by assigning him a history, and then examine the histories to which Joseph Smith attached himself.⁴⁹

McDade's observation that there is "a radical dependence between the reconstructed Jesus and the reconstructed context/model" directly compares to Bushman's observation that "to a large extent, Joseph Smith assumes the character of the history selected for him." Both observations compare to Jesus's parable of the Sower: the same words, planted in different soils, nurtured in different ways, produce vastly different harvests. "Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?" (Mark 4:13). Remember too, where Kuhn notes that "consciously or not, the decision to employ a particular piece of apparatus and to use it in a particular way carries an assumption that only certain sorts of circumstances will arise."⁵⁰ McDade, as a both scholar and believing Christian, can point to tendencies in mainstream scholarship which broadly demonstrate "post-Enlightenment bias about religion and religious experience"⁵¹ and which portray the historical Jesus as something very different from the Christ of faith. He notes that other mainstream, but believing scholars such as Ben Meyer and N.T. Wright push back against those secular assumptions, and that leads to how he introduces Margaret Barker in relation to these broader currents.

A very original contribution to these questions of Jesus's religious experience, its connection with experiential patterns in first century Jewish religion and the possible value of non-Gospel New Testament writings for Jesus research has come recently from Margaret Barker: her proposals about

these three areas go against the grain of much New Testament scholarship and are therefore worth attention. I can only give an inadequate summary of her complex case. She places Jesus in contact with two religious traditions which she conjectures have contributed to the form of his self-understanding: first of all, she suggests he may have been in touch with the tradition of mystical, ascending visionary experience of God — mysticism of the throne of God, “*merkabah* mysticism” — in which Jewish visionaries ascended into the presence of God, were transformed into heavenly beings and given insight into heavenly mysteries.⁵²

McDade appreciates that Barker “offers a new paradigm which replaces the distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. From his baptism onwards, he is the Lord who has risen into the presence of God, and so he conducts his ministry with a sense that he comes ‘from above’ — in which case the Johannine pattern of descent from above becomes plausible — with a clear sense of himself as the LORD who rescues his people by an atoning sacrifice in his blood, after which he would be exalted and enthroned in heaven as the companion of God’s throne.”⁵³

He then quotes Barker in *The Risen Lord*:

What Jesus believed about himself was identical to that which the young church preached about him, even though he had been imperfectly understood at times. It makes Jesus himself the author and finisher of the faith, rather than the early communities, a supposition which has been fashionable for some time. The great message of atonement was not just a damage limitation exercise on the part of a traumatised group of disciples who could find no other way of coming to terms with the death of their leader.⁵⁴

McDade’s appreciation of Barker’s importance against the secular mainstream, and as additive to work of prominent believing scholars, comes back to the key issue of contextualization, the soil in which we plant the seed, and how that decisively influences the harvest:

Meyer and Wright have made a strong case for a body of esoteric teachings given by Jesus about his death to an inner group of disciples. Barker has amplified this and provided a possible account of the source and content of that teaching by uncovering the significance of mystical traditions within

Judaism which were afterwards excised by the Rabbinic reordering of Judaism after the traumas of CE 70 and 135. What flows into the Christian development of 2nd Temple imagery has as much right to claim continuity with Biblical Judaism as does Rabbinic Judaism. If Barker is right, then the principal Jewish context in which we must place Jesus is not that of Galilean healers and teachers, but that of mystical Judaism and Temple traditions.⁵⁵

Barker suggests, in *The Risen Lord*, that Jesus had an experience at his baptism that not only included the voice of the spirit declaring that he was Lamb of God, my beloved son, but that he received the vision of the Lamb ascending to the throne as recorded in Revelation 4–6, which is designated as “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:1).

All the gospels agree that the baptism of Jesus marked the beginning of his ministry. I want to explore the possibility that for Jesus this was the moment at which he “became” son of God. His baptism was a *merkavah*⁵⁶ ascent experience when he believed he had become the heavenly high priest, the Lord with his people.⁵⁷

We should not just consider the importance of her work for the initial setting of the Book of Mormon, but should recognize that her picture of Jesus having a profound revelation of his own divine nature and mission at his baptism matches D&C 93:12–19 very closely.

And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace; And he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness;

And thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fulness at the first.

And I, John, bear record, and lo, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove, and sat upon him, and there came a voice out of heaven saying: This is my beloved Son.

And I, John, bear record that he received a fulness of the glory of the Father;

And he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him.

And it shall come to pass, that if you are faithful you shall receive the fulness of the record of John.

I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness. (D&C 93:12–19)

So given a set of different understandings of Jesus, and a range of scholarly and religious methods and opinions as providing potential backgrounds against which paradigm testing of Barker's work for "compatib[ility] ... with other theories"⁵⁸ and to "to preserve a relatively large part of the concrete problem-solving ability that has accrued"⁵⁹ to her predecessors, does it make more sense to give the most weight to the streams dominated by secular scholars, or believers? Barker herself states,

There is no such thing as objective biblical scholarship, that is, biblical scholarship produced by those with no faith commitment. I have often said that a professor of French who had never been to France, did not speak the language, and doubted that France even existed would not be taken seriously. *The same should apply with biblical studies, but it does not.*

The result is that the much biblical study produced in the UK, outside the faith-based institutions, is of no use to the consumers of biblical scholarship, that is, the faith-based communities. Any medical school that produced no graduates fit to practise medicine and no research relevant to the human body would be closed down. *The same should apply with biblical studies, but it does not.*

All the independent biblical scholars that I know work from a faith-based perspective, and it is with us that the future lies. It is necessary to recognize this, and not allow ourselves to be convinced that those who are not earning a living by their scholarship are somehow second rate.⁶⁰

Ian Barbour has also noted that "too detached an attitude may cut a person off from the very kinds of experience which are religiously most significant. ... Religious writings use the language of actors, not the language of spectators."⁶¹

Guest Editor at *BYU Studies* Weighs in on Barker

A guest-edited issue of *BYU Studies* in 2021 provides another skeptical response to Barker's work and its implications for Latter-day Saint studies. The title is "Is the Bible Reliable? A Case Study: Were King Josiah's Reforms a Restoration from Apostasy or a Suppression of Plain and Precious Truths? (And What about Margaret Barker?)"⁶² The article was written by guest editor Eric Eliason, a BYU professor who teaches folklore and the Bible as literature, but his footnote 9 states that "the discussion from here [that is, pages 163–78, the bulk of the essay] until the conclusory section was initially drafted by Cory Crawford, who has agreed to the use of his edited draft in this essay." Crawford is assistant professor of Biblical Studies in the Department of Classics and World Religions at Ohio University.⁶³ Because of its publication in *BYU Studies*, where Barker herself had been published and reviewed several times, this essay deserves engagement and discussion.

Eliason notes both the low profile of Josiah's reform in Latter-day Saint tradition and textbooks, and the emerging recognition of his crucial importance in contemporary scholarship.

Josiah might not be the most well-known Sunday School story, but for scholars of Hebrew scripture, his is *an* important, if not *the* most important, story in understanding who wrote the Old Testament, how its overarching editorial and narrative goals were established, how it was compiled, who compiled it, and why. But do Latter-day Saints really want to embrace this scholarly understanding? After all, secular scholars calling a long-hidden, but newly revealed, scripture a self-serving fraud⁶⁴ is an accusation with which we are all too familiar. But on the other hand, might scholars have provided an explanation for "God the Son's" relative absence from the Old Testament when he is omnipresent in the pre-Christian era parts of the Book of Mormon? It is easy to see how Latter-day Saints might see both things to like and things to suspect in both the traditional and scholarly understandings of Josiah and his reforms.⁶⁵

The essay summarizes the story of King Josiah's reform as a prelude to its assessment of Barker's take, and then continues,

This is where Barker begins to go far beyond mainstream scholarship that shares her suspicion of Josiah but does not see much evidence of pre-Josianic religion persisting underground

for centuries until Jesus's day. Barker's hypothesis allows her both to explain the absence of themes important to her and to create the space into which they can be inserted — or re-inserted, as she would have it — into the narrative. Barker's work caught the attention of Latter-day Saint authors such as Noel Reynolds, John W. Welch, Daniel Peterson, and Kevin Christiansen [sic], who seized on her notion of the alleged removal of temple ideas and motifs as evidence of ancient apostasy — a particularly pronounced moment of the removal of the “plain and precious things” alluded to in the Book of Mormon. Because of this particular interest, Margaret Barker has been a regular presence at Latter-day Saint scholars' conferences and in their edited volumes. Still other publications by Latter-day Saint acolytes distill her work for a wider Church-member audience — generally with little skepticism.⁶⁶

The footnote for the “other publications” lists only one “for example” publication, my “Paradigms Regained.” In Part 1 of this series,⁶⁷ one of the reasons I included an extended survey of Latter-day Saint scholars who have drawn on her work was to provide a much more detailed picture to compare with the label of “acolytes” and the assertion that we write with “little skepticism” and, by implication, produce suspect work that needs no serious engagement to dismiss.

Eliason reports,

It is easy to see how Barker's books have found a considerable fan base among educated, perhaps even especially religiously conservative and educated, Latter-day Saints despite the books cutting directly, and perhaps uncomfortably, against the grain of the Sunday School manual and the idea that the Bible generally presents a reliable narrative. Unfortunately, it is hard to tell whether the limited and ambiguous nature of Barker's evidence proves her point that ideas and practices were suppressed or whether this lack of evidence *is* evidence that they were never there in the first place. She is often dismissed as a fringe figure in the biblical-studies field — including by professionally trained ancient scripture professors at BYU, who tend not to be her acolytes and rarely find her claims worth engaging. Even when what she says differs little from the mainstream take on Josiah, she is still often dismissed out of hand. This might not happen as much

if she had a traditional academic appointment or was willing to subject her books to the peer-review process. These are baseline requirements to be taken seriously in academia, but should they be for the pursuit of religious truth, especially in the Latter-day Saint tradition? But neither does our Latter-day Saint faith tradition see reluctance to fully follow scholarly practices, in and of itself, as praiseworthy or evidence of reliability.⁶⁸

Behind Eliason's declaration of "the limited and ambiguous nature of Barker's evidence," he provides no substantial engagement with or detailed discussion of her sources and evidence. As we shall see, he quotes some of her critics, but the analysis rarely goes deeper than quotation for assertion without backing demonstration. It happens that the bibliographies and lists of primary sources in Barker's books are intimidatingly substantial,⁶⁹ as are her language skills. And though Eliason eventually observes that Lehi and Nephi have a story that "is, remarkably, contemporary with Josiah's reforms in late seventh-century Jerusalem,"⁷⁰ *he nowhere addresses the question of whether the Book of Mormon itself counts as evidence for or against her case.* Given how much attention he gives to reviewers who question her evidence, should not this be an issue of relevance for readers of *BYU Studies*? And though Eliason in his footnote 12 lists her 2005 talk at the Joseph Smith Conference, "Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion," as published in *BYU Studies*,⁷¹ his article does not mention that her topic was the Book of Mormon. *My primary point in writing "Paradigms Regained" was to demonstrate that the existence of the Book of Mormon allowed a reciprocal test between it and Barker's work.*⁷²

Part 1 of this series included a broad, though not complete, survey of Barker's publications, citing several journal articles and significant academic engagement in a variety of institutional settings.⁷³ This shows that Barker has published more often, and published in peer-reviewed journals and books on many occasions, and has much more eminence and support among a wide range of scholars and academics in several countries than do the authors of that 2021 *BYU Studies* essay. And what was her election to the Presidency of the Society of Old Testament study but a significant "peer review," especially since knowledge of Hebrew is a requirement for membership? What was her Lambeth Doctor of Divinity but a notable peer review? I also cited McDade to provide a clearer understanding of what "mainstream" really means, and how Barker relates to some of those streams.

Notice the carefully ambiguous survey language, “often,” “tend,” and “rarely,” in Eliason’s dismissive paragraph in this sentence: “She is *often* dismissed as a fringe figure in the biblical-studies field — including by professionally trained ancient scripture professors at BYU, who *tend* not to be her acolytes and *rarely* find her claims worth engaging.” Part 1 of this series included many names of Biblical scholars who recognize Barker’s work in contrast to this kind of insinuation, rather than explicit, argument and rhetoric. And consider the rhetorical weight of the contrasting labels applied: “fringe” versus “professionally trained,” and “acolytes” versus “ancient scripture professors.” This is not rhetorically neutral language but is designed to influence the reader. Every writer wants to influence their readers, but whether that influence is earned on substance or acquired via posturing makes a difference.⁷⁴ I point this out here so that readers can consider whether the impression such language conveys accurately accounts for the specific professional engagements with her work that I have reported among a wide swath of institutionally embedded scholars over many years.

I cannot help but notice the importance of the labels and categories attached to different perspectives on Barker’s work in Eliason’s essay and how they function as indicators of the implied value of those perspectives. Labels and categories are both inevitable and useful, but in the case of his article, much of the weight of the arguments remains primarily in the existence of the labels, rather than in careful and detailed engagement.

Consider that one of the implicit prerequisites for a traditional academic appointment is that one represent the paradigm to which that academic institution and society is committed. Barker’s personal experience with those institutional commitments led her to choose her own path outside of the institutions in order to “maintain my academic freedom.”⁷⁵ As an example of the challenges faced by scholars pursuing mainstream paths relative to the paradigms of secular academia, one might consider the dramatic changes that occurred within the Maxwell Institute at Brigham Young University around 2012.⁷⁶ The change at the Maxwell Institute was, in my view, fundamentally about preferred social commitments on the part of certain academics in administrative positions which was very different from that of the founders, the editors, hundreds of contributors, and many thousands of readers, aiming instead to please outside secular scholars while making the kind of scholarship Neal A. Maxwell had encouraged much more difficult at BYU.⁷⁷ Barker may have faced similar challenges had she pursued a traditional academic post. Indeed, what Barker has accomplished over

many decades strikes me as much more impressive because she has done so without formal institutional backing, beginning as “just a housewife,” albeit one that the notably learned Archbishop of Canterbury recognized as “massively learned,”⁷⁸ and who was initially encouraged in her efforts by Father Robert Murray.

On the topic of peer review, we should think back to the peer review that Luke reports, when Jesus stood up to read from Isaiah 61 in Nazareth: “And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath” (Luke 4:28).

Should we take that “peer review” as the most important and telling source of information about Jesus? We can also look back at one of Joseph Smith’s early and most influential peer reviewers, Alexander Campbell, who famously titled his response to Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon as “Delusions.”⁷⁹ It should be evident that “peer review” is not a synonym for “certified and approved as unquestionably the last and final word on this or any topic.” Peer review has an important social function, but the process of review does not begin and end with prepublication review, nor does any single group among many competing peer groups have the last word among all those available, nor does any academic appointment bestow omniscience and infallibility.

Richard Bushman has noted,

We must at least acknowledge that no scholarship, no truth, exists in a social vacuum. Though it is rarely mentioned in the work itself, all scholarship is tied to a community of some kind and bears the marks of that community’s influence. Scholarship is the product of people who are located in institutions — universities, research institutes, or circles of like-minded thinkers. They publish their work and want to have it read by others. Their reputations, promotions, pay raises, and appointments depend on how that work is received. When they write, they use the language, the mannerisms, the forms of their scholarly community. In taking an intellectual position, they silently, but inevitably associate themselves with people of a similar outlook.⁸⁰

Witness Selection and Suppression

Much of the weight in Eliason’s essay comes from selectivity in whose opinions are quoted and whose are suppressed. For example, Eliason cites one reviewer of Barker’s *Temple Themes in Christian Worship*.⁸¹

Mary Coloe found *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* dissatisfying because “Barker’s process lacks solid argumentation, evidence, and a clear methodology. The work progresses by inference and an accumulation of text references without establishing the necessity that these texts be read intertextually. Statements are simply made without providing sufficient, and sometimes any, evidence in support. The accumulation of texts certainly suggests what Barker is proposing, but suggestion is not the same as evidence.”⁸²

Consider that Coloe agrees that “the accumulation of texts certainly suggests what Barker is proposing,” despite dissatisfaction, perhaps, I think, because Barker views her books as a serial effort, with each one building on and dependent on those that came before. A reviewer who has not read her previous work will have a different experience than one who has read it all, just as a new theater goer who comes into the middle of a play like *Hamlet* will have a different experience than one who not only arrived on time, but knows both the play and its theatrical conventions. And consider that Eliason does not mention that Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, endorsed the book on the dust jacket and awarded Barker the Lambeth Doctor of Divinity in response to her work. Why not mention this? What qualities and/or agenda makes Coloe’s obscure review notable and William’s unavoidably conspicuous response not worth mentioning?

Eliason reports that as “eminent Enoch scholar George Nickelsburg puts it in his review of *The Older Testament*, Barker’s work ‘is repeatedly marked by two basic methodological flaws: the assertion that possibility is fact, and the assumption that a rhetorical question will receive an answer that supports the author’s hypothesis.’”⁸³ If this assertion regarding Barker’s scholarship is correct and valid, then it should be easy enough to demonstrate with repeated examples, and indeed, should be demonstrated, if the one making that specific assertion does not want a visit from the Irony Police. But, for Eliason, one assertion from Authority is enough to demonstrate that Barker relies on mere assertion, and it also happens that Eliason’s essay is marked by a number of rhetorical questions which all assume that the answer supports the author’s hypothesis. I will later return to that other task for the Irony Police.

“Proof” vs. “Cause to Believe”

We should consider Barker’s own statement of what she has “proved” in her book, compared to the cited complaint by Nicklesburg as a “basic methodological flaw.” For instance, in her chapter on Job, she writes, “I propose an outline to see whether or not my theory about exilic developments is compatible with the Book of Job. Such an exercise can *prove* nothing, but the more material which can be illuminated by the hypothesis, the more it deserves consideration.”⁸⁴ It does not seem to me that Barker is under the illusion that she has proved something, but rather is aware that her approach can be enlightening with respect to her questions and contextualization. She offers not “proof” that bestows absolute knowing (see Alma 32:17–18), but rather the results of testable questions, experiments upon the word, and enlightenment on many important questions that add up to a “cause to believe” (Alma 32: 18–19) and invite further testing. She explained the kind of enlightenment she seeks in her introduction:

Where, then, are we to look for the origin of New Testament imagery labelled Greek or pagan on grounds that is it not Jewish? This is the most fundamental of the introductory questions, since, without a knowledge of the frame of reference, there can be no understanding of the points within it. The allusions will escape us, and the signs, parables and works will be interpreted because they are a part of our tradition, and not because they are in themselves significant pointers.⁸⁵

In her introduction she explains,

The link between Old and New [Testaments] is far more complex than the use of proof texts and the fulfillment of prophecies. These are the tip of an iceberg whose greater part remains invisible. I have tried to reconstruct the invisible mass from its effects which are perceived. Thereby I have left myself open to the charge of going beyond the evidence. ... Whether or not this is an acceptable method remains to be seen.⁸⁶

And on the final page she writes:

It has proved possible to isolate recurring patterns in the extra-biblical texts and assemble them into a viable whole. It may be objected that the process has been based upon the hypothesis of an early original constructed simply

by retrojection. True, but the pattern thus formed and its relevance to so many of the problems of the Old Testament invites consideration.⁸⁷

Testing of a hypothesis must be conducted on the tentative assumption that a proposition is true. We must remember that before some experimental evidence for the Higgs boson was provided, someone had to not only theorize the possibility, and to conceive of relevant experiments, but someone also had to construct the CERN supercollider that made the performance of those experiments possible. When Joseph Smith decides to try prayer, he does so on the assumption that an answer of some kind is possible. Before the results are in, the experiment proceeds on faith, at least as much in the process as in the final outcome. In considering the efforts of Bible scholars as a group, Eliason concludes:

Bible scholarship, even at its most sober, is a field characterized by best guesses, tentative conclusions, and dot-connecting with far fewer available data points than most scholars would want. Not usually, but occasionally, the wildest guesses might jump up the plausibility scale with the help of newfound evidence. Barker's thesis may someday get a boost of this variety.⁸⁸

This would be an excellent place to mention the implications of the Book of Mormon as a potential source of "newfound evidence" that could provide a plausibility boost by defining the opening setting as "the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah" (1 Nephi 1:4), who happens to be a son of King Josiah. Instead, Eliason never tests Barker's work against the content of the Book of Mormon but against the opinions of selected representatives of "mainstream" academic Biblical scholarship on one side and more traditional Latter-day Saint thinkers on the other. I recognize that most mainstream scholars, whether trained in divinity schools or secular academia, also dismiss the Book of Mormon. But few of them have read it carefully or commented professionally. For the record, I have closely considered several such attempts over the years.⁸⁹ Should the opinions of selected mainstream scholars be the only "experiment upon the word" that Latter-day Saints should weigh in considering Barker's work?

Note, as well, Eliason's unsubtle rhetorical association of Barker's work with "wild guesses" without any demonstration that this labeling accounts for her case. Rather than seeing Barker's work as "wild guesses," Dr. Rowan Williams gives credit to Barker's "massively learned and

creative re-reading of what the Bible has to tell us about the religion of ancient Israel, using her wide knowledge of material in Hebrew, Syriac and other Semitic languages, texts from Jewish, Gnostic and Christian sources”⁹⁰

Despite her learning, Barker admits that she had “no idea” of what the young Joseph Smith produced in six to eight weeks of dictation in 1829 using a stone in a hat. So why do we have such an elaborate convergence of time, place, first temple themes and numerous interconnected details? A few random but insignificant parallels might be expected between any two large texts,⁹¹ but we have an unexpected and complex phenomenon centering on Jerusalem and the first temple to somehow explain. Personally, I think the deep correspondence between Barker’s work and the Book of Mormon is far better explained by common inspiration and accuracy than as the product of independent “wild guesses.”

Witness and Partiality

In quoting Nicklesburg’s review of *The Older Testament* to bolster a lack of confidence in Barker, Eliason should mention that one of the authors that Barker has criticized in *The Older Testament* is Nicklesburg.⁹² For instance, in her chapter on *1 Enoch*, she compares his approaches to that of another scholar, Paul D. Hanson, writing that, “Several attempts have been made to explain the Semihazah-Asael conflation. *Nicklesburg’s analysis has a disappointingly tame conclusion.* ... Hanson offers a more complex solution. ... Both suggestions are open to criticism. ... Both writers have a problem with the wisdom element.”⁹³ Having been criticized by Barker, Nicklesburg in turn may not be an objective source for evaluating Barker’s work. That doesn’t mean his analysis is necessarily wrong, but the possibility should be disclosed in a fair evaluation of Barker.

I find Barker’s discussion of published arguments interesting and worth reading for its insights in how scholarship works in general, as well as how she makes her case in particular. Disagreement in interpretation among scholars is simply what happens among scholars. Barker wrestles with some specific arguments among Enoch scholars, not whether the scholars, personally, should be taken seriously on any topic whatsoever. Despite her disagreements with Nicklesburg and some others on various points, and her showing when and how they also disagree with one another, she never dismisses them as authorities unworthy of consideration. For instance, she also comments that “Nicklesburg has shown that 1 En. 62–3 is related to Isa. 14; 52 and 53,

as well as to several other non-biblical texts which suggests that all are part of a lost tradition about the last judgement, a great angel who is both warrior and priest, exaltation and ascension.”⁹⁴

Hugh Nibley commented that “scholarship is an open-ended discussion in which things are never settled. The important thing, therefore, is not to be right on a particular point but to be able to enter into the discussion.”⁹⁵ Accounting for the data at hand is what gives weight to a scholar’s arguments in moving a discussion along, but as a young Joseph Smith observed both to his dismay and his enlightenment, the same passages can be interpreted differently by different scholars (Joseph Smith — History 1:12). The problem is not usually that one or the other is unreasonable, but that paradigm debate always involves weighing options, contextualization, alternatives and available sources, and choosing which reading a person thinks is better.

Survey, Selectivity, and Representation

Eliason asserts that “there has not yet been a full critical response within Latter-day Saint circles,” and in a footnote he reports that BYU Professor of Ancient Scripture David Rolph Seely “has challenged the uncritical absorption of Barker’s views in his conference presentation, ‘The Book of Deuteronomy and the Book of Mormon,’ Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, Georgia, November 23, 2015.”⁹⁶ If you search for this particular presentation, you will find a summary that discusses an extended version of that presentation given at the BYU Law School,⁹⁷ as well as an audio recording of that BYU presentation.⁹⁸ The written summary does not mention Barker at all, nor does the recording. I don’t know if or how the shorter version of the talk given in Atlanta refers to Barker; however, there are some more accessible sources for Seely’s opinions regarding Barker and the Latter-day Saint engagement with her work.

First, Seely was one of the editors for *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, which included essays that took a traditional view of Josiah,⁹⁹ as well as essays by Barker and myself that challenged that view. In an essay published in 2016 in *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity*, Seely commented publicly on Barker:

Perhaps most interesting is a movement among some LDS scholars following the ideas of Margaret Barker, a Methodist scholar. The basic idea of this group is directly connected with the idea formulated in the Documentary Hypothesis that the D-strand — essentially the book of Deuteronomy and the

related Deuteronomistic History in the book of Judges — is a form of propaganda and a product of Josiah's reform in 623 BCE. Barker argues that Josiah's reform, called by some the Deuteronomic Revolution, effectively purged idolatrous objects and practices from Judahite religion but at the same time purged many ancient and authentic beliefs of biblical religion going back to the time of Abraham, including the tree of life, council visions, associations between stars and angels, El Elyon as the High God and Yahweh as his son, the Holy One of Israel, Melchizedek priesthood, Wisdom traditions, and the Mother of the Son of God. She further argues that these elements of the purged ancient religion are preserved in later Jewish and Christian apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature. Certain Mormon authors — because some of these teachings resonate with LDS beliefs in the Book of Mormon and in Mormon temple traditions — have adopted and promulgated this view in terms of Mormon studies.¹⁰⁰

After discussing a variety of instances of Latter-day Saint applications of the results of modern biblical criticism and scholarship, Seely notes that “while some [Latter-day Saint] scholars avoid areas dealing with higher criticism, they are perfectly willing to use methods and sometimes assumptions of higher criticism as long as it can be harnessed in the explication and defense of their faith.”¹⁰¹ This is a fair concern, and perhaps was the actual source of Eliason's statement about Seely's concern about “the uncritical absorption of Barker's views.”

Uncritical and misinformed application of scholarly studies is a problem not just for apologetics, but in numerous aspects of modern society, including healthcare and numerous social policies. But just because some Latter-day Saints — myself included — explore the potential of Barker's paradigm does not mean that we are “uncritical” or careless. I have often quoted Ian Barbour: “Commitment to a paradigm allows its potentialities to be systematically explored, but it does not exclude reflective evaluation.”¹⁰² It is through evaluation of the evidence and understanding the limits and strengths of related scholarship that we can most appropriately engage with related work. This, of course, takes time and refinement; and certainly mistakes and excessive enthusiasm can occur along the way.

Eliason writes, “So far, Latter-day Saint scholars with doctoral training in the Bible and ancient Near Eastern religions seem to have mostly found it best to refrain from much comment on her work, leaving

positive, uncritical attention to enjoy a heyday.”¹⁰³ Again, notice the ambiguity regarding the extent and methods for the survey hidden behind the word “mostly,” and the failure to mention a range of Latter-day Saint and non-Latter-day Saint scholars who have commented favorably and publicly on her work and who have referenced her in their own works.

Socialization into streams of thought, bounded by acceptance of common methods and assumptions, guided in crucial respects by the protocols that suit secular detachment from covenant and personal commitment, influences who controls positions, editorial perspectives, and promotions — all are points worth considering when assessing who appreciates and who deprecates Barker.

What Can a Christian See?

Eliason sees Barker’s “larger project” as “thoroughly and unabashedly a Christian enterprise,” asserting in a footnote,

This is not a criticism but an understanding of her work as less an attempt to understand the Hebrew Bible we have now on its own terms and more as an attempt to read between the lines to link it to early Christianity. Perhaps the most manifest confirmation of the overt Christian valence of her project is in her introduction to Barker, *Older Testament* — a work that suggests it might be about lost teachings of the Hebrew Bible but which consists mostly of a discussion of New Testament scholarship, because that is the background for understanding Jesus that she seems more interested in explaining than the history of Israelite religion.¹⁰⁴

There are several things going on here. One is the explicit suggestion that Barker is doing something other than trying “to understand the Hebrew Bible we have on its own terms,” which all objective scholars ought to do, with the implicit suggestion that having an overt Christian valence somehow goes against any possibility of understanding the Hebrew Bible we now have.

In her 2000 talk “Reflections on Biblical Studies in the Twentieth Century,” Barker noted that in the universities,

Any form of faith commitment in biblical scholarship, any attempt to work within a theological framework can be suspect. One ploy is to keep one’s biblical study in a separate compartment of one’s life, to pursue the most radically destructive investigations of biblical texts and then go to

evensong. People of commitment often take refuge in safe areas like Hebrew, or archaeology, although that is no longer “safe” as I shall show in a moment. Let me quote now from the introduction to Francis Watson’s recent book *Text and Truth* 1997, “It is believed that theological concerns have an inevitable tendency to distort the autonomous processes of biblical exegesis, a prejudice so strong that to identify a theological motivation underlying an exegetical position is often held to be sufficient refutation.” ... “The lines of demarcation between systematic theology and Old and New Testament scholarship represent more than mere division of labour; they are ideologically motivated. They represent a collective decision of biblical scholarship that biblical texts are to be construed as something other than Christian scripture.”¹⁰⁵

First, as Barker’s overall work and language skills and sources make clear, the Masoretic Hebrew Bible is not the whole story. The oldest complete copy is much later¹⁰⁶ than the Dead Sea Scrolls, which contain several pre-Christian variant texts. She observes in *The Great High Priest* regarding the Masoretic text that “The distribution of unreadable Hebrew texts is not random; *they are texts which bear upon the Christian tradition.*”¹⁰⁷ The state of the texts, the variety of texts, the challenges in figuring out how certain passages in the Septuagint relate to certain passages in the Hebrew, as well as patterns of differences in the Aramaic Targums, and the relationships between the Masoretic Hebrew and non-canonical writings, and archeology, are all things she considers. Barker explains:

What I have done is select from a wide range of material sufficient to formulate a theory which brings together many of the problems of this field, and presents them as different aspects of a fundamental misreading of the Old Testament. This misreading is one which has been forced upon us by those who transmitted the text.¹⁰⁸

Eliason reported that the introduction to *The Older Testament* discusses New Testament scholarship as a means of defining the problems that the book attempts to solve, implying to him that the book will not be interested in the history of Israelite religion. Yet the chapters of the book are these:

Introduction: The Problem and the Method
The Book of Enoch
Wisdom

The Names of God: (1) The Holy One
 Isaiah of Jerusalem
 Deuteronomy
 The Second Isaiah
 The Era of the Restoration
 The Third Isaiah
 Transformations in the Post-exilic Era: (1) The Menorah
 Transformations in the Post-exilic Era: (2) The Eden Stories
 The Names of God: (2) Elyon
 The Book of Job
 Conclusions

The Older Testament offers a very careful survey of several crucial periods and developments in the history of Israelite religion and the transmission of Hebrew texts. And she answers a relevant question, at least to those willing to challenge the “collective decision of biblical scholarship that biblical texts are to be construed as something other than Christian scripture.” Years ago I responded to an author who, based on her training in Biblical studies, confidently wrote that “no Jew expected a messiah like Jesus,” with the crucial question “Then how do we explain Christianity?”¹⁰⁹ Noticing that Barker is interested in answering that question is not by itself a “sufficient refutation” of her body of work. And at least one reader — me — finds the end of her introduction to *The Older Testament* of particular interest to the Latter-day Saints.

The life and work of Jesus were, and should be, interpreted in the light of something *other* than Jerusalem Judaism. This *other* had its roots in the conflicts of the sixth century B.C. when the traditions of the monarchy were divided as an inheritance amongst several heirs. It would have been lost but for the accidents of archaeological discovery and the evidence of pre-Christian texts preserved and transmitted *only by Christian hands*.¹¹⁰

The Company We Keep and What People Might Think

Eliason comments that “Latter-day Saint writers who ground their theology in Margaret Barker’s work open themselves to the charges of unsound reasoning leveled at her,”¹¹¹ and as an example footnotes a critic of the Church, Paul Owen, and his essay in *The New Mormon Challenge*.¹¹² He does not mention that both Barry Bickmore and I responded to Owen’s critique and that neither of us grounds our theology in Margaret

Barker's work, but rather explores the implications of her work for our preexisting theology. And I notice that in referring to Owen here, for those inclined to check specifics, Eliason's reference exposes Owen to the charges of unsound reasoning we leveled at him. Bickmore's essay in response to Owen was titled "Of Simplicity, Oversimplification, and Monotheism."¹¹³ My own response includes this observation:

Owen bases his response on two fundamental assumptions:

- He assumes the authority of the received Old and New Testament texts — at least those passages and versions that he cites as proof texts — to be substantially accurate and without significant change.
- He assumes the authority of "orthodox" interpretations of the Old and New Testaments (that is, as articulated in the councils of the third to fifth centuries), *even when in explicit contradiction to the beliefs of earlier Christians* (see p. 481 n. 169).

Barker's work deals directly with these assumptions in ways that undercut Owen's foundations:

- Barker questions the authority of several key texts and readings, starting her arguments by identifying unresolved tensions in the scriptures as we have them, including variant readings and corrupt passages, and by searching widely through relevant literatures in order to account for these tensions.
- She undercuts the authority of late "orthodox" interpretations by citing a wide range of earlier but neglected Christian texts and their Jewish antecedents, always working from a position of faith, not of skepticism.¹¹⁴

What are the Implications of the Deuteronomist Reform?

Eliason then moves to question the possible implications of Barker's approach to the Bible.

Are Church members really ready to label as ahistorical, even fraudulently apostate, virtually all of Deuteronomy and the major historical books of the Old Testament? Deuteronomy contains some of the fullest and most intricate expressions of bedrock theological ideas in the restored gospel, such as

covenants and divine love, referenced approvingly by Jesus himself! “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Jesus in Matt. 4:10, referencing Deut. 6:13). Following Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic historians articulated what Latter-day Saints may recognize as a “pride cycle” in Judges and identified faithful and unfaithful monarchs throughout 1–2 Kings — an approach that may have given rise to these themes’ prevalence in the Book of Mormon narrative.¹¹⁵

Elsewhere, noted Latter-day Saint biblical scholar Julie Smith in an essay on Huldah, which Eliason refers to in some detail, similarly commented, as a footnoted aside with no development, that “there are solid reasons to dispute Barker’s thesis [regarding Josiah’s reform], not the least of which is that it requires taking the position that a vast portion of the Hebrew Bible advocates false religion.”¹¹⁶

First, are we really labeling the Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist histories as “ahistorical, even fraudulently apostate,” or saying, as Julie Smith puts it, that “a vast portion of the Hebrew Bible advocates false religion?” Or, rather, are we considering the history implied by the state of the texts, the variety of texts, the variation in the texts, the passages directly contradicted by Jeremiah and Nephi,¹¹⁷ and the differences between the Kings and Chronicles accounts centered on the temple,¹¹⁸ and the fact that the third Isaiah directly opposes the agenda of the Deuteronomists?¹¹⁹ Even where 1 Nephi 13 points to specific “plain and most precious” parts being lost, along with “many covenants” (1 Nephi 13:26), Nephi states that the value of the “record of the Jews” is that it “contain[s] the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; wherefore, they are of great worth unto the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 13:23).

None of us following Barker’s take on the Reform have suggested that the “covenants of the Lord” have all gone away, nor that what we have now in the Bible, including Deuteronomy, lacks “great worth.” What we are saying is that the state of the texts, the variety of the texts, the contradictions in texts, the silences in the texts, and the archeology and outside texts, themselves tell a valuable story that happens to be consistent with 1 Nephi 13, as well as accounts for the attitudes of characters like Sherem, who believed in the Law and Moses, but not in prophesy or that Christ would come (Jacob 7:2, 7). For example, Neal Rappleye explicitly explains that “being against parts of the *ideology* of a particular group who uses Deuteronomy as a foundation is not the same thing as being

opposed to that text itself. Lehi and Nephi were not anti-Deuteronomy, and certainly were not anti-Moses.”¹²⁰

One of the more interesting Latter-day Saint commentaries on Deuteronomy is Hugh Nibley’s 1982 essay “How to Get Rich.”¹²¹ He comments, “That law was never rescinded, but only superseded by a higher law. . . . It is preparation for more to come when we are ready to receive it. . . . The reward it promises explicitly and repeatedly is success — prosperity and long life in the new land of promise. One looks in vain for direct promises of eternal life and exaltation.”¹²² Nibley cites many passages that describe an idealistic-here-and-now moral code that includes things like this:

He doth execute the judgment (*mishpat*) for the orphan and the widow, and he loves the stranger and wants him to be provided with food and clothing. *Therefore, you* must do the *same*: love the stranger — remember that you too were strangers [and *were* oppressed] in the land of Egypt (Deuteronomy 10:18–19).¹²³

After reading through the very high moral standards and social tolerances expressed through Deuteronomy, Nibley then goes through the covenant curses, the reversal of the promised blessings that go with disobedience. These final pages are much more than chilling, for they describe much of world history and much of the modern world, including Nibley’s observation on Deuteronomy 28:59, which promises “You will suffer from chronic epidemics.”¹²⁴ One does not have to look far to find people who have not kept that particular promise for orphans, widows, and strangers, nor must we seek far to see where that particular covenant curse is in effect. This is all very insightful and valuable, but I also notice that neither Nibley nor Eliason discusses the key places where Jeremiah and Lehi and Joseph Smith directly contradict Deuteronomy nor on the absence of the Day of Atonement from the festival calendar in Deuteronomy 16. Nibley elsewhere shows immense concern for promises of eternal life and salvation.¹²⁵ And Nibley also points out that the Book of Mormon treatment of atonement is “in the milieu of the old Hebrew rites before the destruction of Solomon’s temple.”¹²⁶ The points of difference between Deuteronomy and other Biblical texts and between versions of Biblical texts, including differences in the 10 commandments as listed in Exodus,¹²⁷ and the absence of the Day of Atonement from the calendar in Deuteronomy 16, are as important and telling in relation to the questions we raise as are the presence of relevant admonitions, laws, covenants and consequences in their own sphere.

Nephi and His Asherah

Along the way, Eliason cites Daniel Peterson's important essay "Nephi and His Asherah" to complain that "his reading is by no means the plain and obvious meaning of the text for a modern reader, at least. But why is it not?"¹²⁸ Eliason overlooks Nephi's declaration that "there is none other people that understand the things which were spoken unto the Jews like unto them, save it be that they are taught after the manner of the things of the Jews" (2 Nephi 25:5). Peterson's groundbreaking essay is an exercise in appropriate contextualization, noting how that ancient Jerusalem 600 BCE context changes the harvest for those specific seeds. Peterson asks, "Why would Nephi, without any explicit direction from his guide, have seen an immediate connection between a tree and the virginal mother of a divine child?"¹²⁹ Remember, too, that though Eliason mentions Barker's presence at the 2005 Joseph Smith Conference, he does not engage anything she said there:

The tree of life made one happy, according to the Book of Proverbs (Proverbs 3:8), but for detailed descriptions of the tree we have to rely on the non-canonical texts. Enoch described it as perfumed, with fruit like grapes (*1 Enoch* 32:5), and a text discovered in Egypt in 1945 described the tree as beautiful, fiery, and with fruit like white grapes. I do not know of any other source that describes the fruit as white grapes. Imagine my surprise when I read the account of Lehi's vision of the tree whose white fruit made one happy, and the interpretation that the Virgin in Nazareth was the mother of the Son of God after the manner of the flesh (1 Nephi 11:14–23). This is the Heavenly Mother, represented by the tree of life, and then Mary and her Son on earth. This revelation to Joseph Smith was the ancient Wisdom symbolism, intact, and almost certainly as it was known in 600 BCE.¹³⁰

Choosing Our Associations

Eliason's essay also has this paragraph, which begins well enough:

Another reason for Margaret Barker's enthusiastic reception may be her personal story's more-than-passing resemblance to Joseph Smith's — a solitary individual outside the scholarly establishment gathers together scattered ancient remnants, revitalizes marginalized themes, and restores them to their proper order to tell a coherent and compelling story of true

religion lost, then found again. It helps too that the story Barker tells corresponds, on a number of key points, quite nicely with the one revealed through Joseph Smith.¹³¹

But the paragraph ends with this:

But we have Joseph Smith for this. Do we really also need Margaret Barker — especially if carrying water for her work might discredit Restoration truth claims by association?¹³²

Consider that question in light of more of what we have from and through Joseph Smith:

Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words. (2 Nephi 11:3)

One of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth let it come from whence it may.¹³³

Have the Presbyterians any truth? Yes. Have the Baptists, Methodists, etc., any truth? Yes. They all have a little truth mixed with error. We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true “Mormons.”¹³⁴

For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift. (D&C 88:33)

Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough!

For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have. (2 Nephi 28: 29–30)

Telling Patterns in Eliason’s Rhetoric

If the Lord gives us patterns in all things (D&C 52:14), that we might know the truth of all things, truth being “knowledge of things as they

are, as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24), what patterns emerge from the overall use of rhetoric in Eliason’s essay? I have studied the patterns of paradigm debate¹³⁵ and the scriptural patterns for seeing truth.¹³⁶ What pattern appears in the *BYU Studies* essay?

Personally, I am struck by the rhetorical weight of the many labels that appear. For Barker, we see:

- maverick Methodist Bible scholar
- fringe figure
- presumably nonpartisan
- problematic methods
- limited and ambiguous nature of Barker’s evidence

For her Latter-day Saint defenders:

- considerable fan base
- especially religiously conservative
- mostly in disciplines other than biblical studies
- Latter-day Saint acolytes
- her acolytes
- *amateur* scholarship (in the etymological sense of the word, as something that derives from one’s untrained passion rather than vocational expertise)
- generally with little skepticism
- carrying water for [metaphorically implying servitude, rather than cooperation and gratitude]

For her Latter-day Saint critics:

- professionally trained ancient scripture professors at BYU, who tend not to be her acolytes

Notice that the section in Eliason’s essay that gives a good overview of “Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History” entirely lacks this kind of labeling and ironic undertone. For this reason, it is the best part of the essay.

Notice that the section “Margaret Barker on Josiah’s Reform and Its Aftermath” never quotes Barker in the main text. Of the nine footnotes for this section, five refer to Barker’s writings, mentioning by name only *The Older Testament*, *The Great Angel*, and *The Great High Priest*. Only footnote 21 (p. 168) contains a direct, if brief, quote from Barker that “wisdom was despised and impurity installed in the temple,” which refers to how *1 Enoch* depicts what happened just before the first temple was destroyed (*1 Enoch* 93:8) and as the second temple was established

(1 *Enoch* 89:73–74). Three footnotes refer to other scholars. Footnote 27 amounts to an ideological protest against “the overt Christian valence of her project” based on the preface discussing “New Testament scholarship,” rather than that reader’s expectation of an introductory discussion of “the lost teachings of the Hebrew Bible”¹³⁷ and an evident ideological preference for reading the “Hebrew Bible we have now on its own terms.” This is not Barker on the Reform, but Eliason’s filtered response to her.

Similarly, in the section on “Possible Reasons for Latter-Day Saint Barker Enthusiasm,” no enthusiastic Church members are quoted and only a very few are even named. We get some acknowledgement of the most conspicuous surface issues as “aspects of the restored gospel that dovetail quite readily with Barker’s work, especially on issues where we are distinct from most Protestants: temple culture, apotheosis, the divine feminine, and apostasy.”¹³⁸ But there is no engagement with specific names, specific books and essays, nor in-depth explorations. This means that Eliason’s “possible reasons” stand at a distance from our published and demonstrated reasons.

Wisdom and the Unexamined Life

Here is one example of the kind of thing Eliason never mentions. This concerns Barker’s reconstruction of the ancient wisdom tradition and how it relates to Nephi. Referring to the book of Daniel, Barker notes that “the text itself claims to be about a *wise man* who predicts the future, interprets dreams and functions at court.”¹³⁹ She observes that

Joseph, our only other canonical model [of a wise man], is very similar; he functions at court, interprets dreams and predicts the future. ... Daniel is sufficiently Judaized to observe the food laws, but how are we to explain his dealings with heavenly beings, and his use of an inexplicable mythology? The elaborate structures of the book suggest that it was using a known framework, and not constructing imagery as it went along, but there is no hint of such imagery in Proverbs, *except in passages where the text is now corrupt*. This suggests that the wisdom elements in the non-canonical apocalypses which have no obvious roots in the Old Testament may not be foreign accretions, but elements of an older wisdom which the reformers have purged.¹⁴⁰

While Nephi does not interact with Zedekiah's court in the manner of Joseph or Daniel, he does accept kingship in the New World (2 Nephi 5:18). Nephi also interprets dreams and predicts the future (1 Nephi 10–15). Like Daniel, he shows commitment to the Law (1 Nephi 4:14–17; 2 Nephi 5:10), has dealings with angels (1 Nephi 3:29–30; 11:21, 30; 12:1; 2 Nephi 4:24), recognizes the need to seek interpretation of symbols (1 Nephi 11:11), and speaks of the need to understand the cultural context behind prophetic writing (2 Nephi 25:1–5). Lehi discovers in the brass plates his descent from Joseph (1 Nephi 5:14–16; 2 Nephi 3:4), and the Book of Mormon shows access to Joseph traditions that do not survive in the present Bible (2 Nephi 3 and Alma 46:23–27).¹⁴¹ What else might Nephi have in common with the wisdom tradition? Starting from the observations of the common ground between Daniel and Joseph, Barker fills in other details of the lost tradition:

This was a mythology of angels and of scenes of a great judgement. ...

The exaltation to the stars appears as the wise who turn many to righteousness shining like the stars forever. ... The wise man has *knowledge* of God, is a child/servant of the Lord, has God as his father and, as God's son, will receive help (Wisdom 2:12ff). At the great judgement he will be exalted and take his place with the sons of God, the Holy Ones.¹⁴²

The pattern of the "lost" tradition therefore included, as well as the angels and the great judgement, the stars and the foreign kings, the kingship of Yahweh, the Holy Ones, exaltation, sonship and wisdom.¹⁴³

In [Jubilees] 4:17, ... Enoch learns the forbidden art of writing *and* the calendrical calculations which *1 Enoch* includes amongst the revealed secrets of heaven.¹⁴⁴

Wisdom was the secrets of creation, learned in heaven and brought to earth, the recurring theme of the apocalypses. There must have been some way in which the king, and the wise men, "went" to heaven like the prophets in order to learn these secrets by listening in the council of God.¹⁴⁵

Another of the angelic arts was metal-working, and we find wisdom attributed to a variety of craftsmen in the Old Testament. ... 1 [Enoch] 8 links this skill to the arts of war, and in Isaiah 10:13 we do find that the king of Assyria's military

prowess is called wisdom. Job 28 implies that wisdom extended to the techniques of mining, damming and irrigation. Ezekiel 27:8–9 says that the navigators and shipwrights were also wise. The knowledge of mathematics required for these skills is also presupposed by the later astronomical material in *1 Enoch*, and by the calendrical calculations.¹⁴⁶

Beyond Nephi as a king, a dreamer, an interpreter of apocalyptic visions, a foreteller who prophesies a great judgment to come (1 Nephi 11:36; 22:12–19), who claims personal knowledge of the mysteries of God (1 Nephi 11; 2 Nephi 4:23–25), and who knows of both the heavenly hosts of angels and the fallen ones (1 Nephi 1:8–10; 11:1, 30–31; 2 Nephi 2:17), he demonstrates his knowledge of writing (1 Nephi 1:2), and his writings show extensive ties to the known and surmised wisdom literatures.¹⁴⁷ He also demonstrates wisdom in relation to mining and metalworking (1 Nephi 17:9–10), shipbuilding (1 Nephi 17:8–9; 18:1–8), navigation (1 Nephi 18:12–13, 22–23), and the arts of war (2 Nephi 5:14, 34). He is likely the source of the means of calendrical calculations that his descendants used to determine the holy days and the passage of years related to Lehi's 600-year prophecy of the Messiah (1 Nephi 10:4).

Barker further notes, "Wisdom included medicine, taught to Noah (Jub. 10.10) and to Tobit (Tob. 6.6) by angels, and brought by the rebels in *1 Enoch* 8, where they taught the cutting of roots. In the Old Testament the art of healing belongs to God (Exod. 15.26; Deut. 32.39; Job 5.18) and the gift of healing was given to prophets (1 Kings 17; Isa. 39). We know virtually nothing of the medicines."¹⁴⁸

The Book of Mormon shows connection to both the spiritual power given to the prophets and the wisdom tradition of medicinal knowledge:

And it came to pass that they went immediately, obeying the message which he had sent unto them; and they went in unto the house unto Zeezrom; and they found him upon his bed, sick, being very low with a burning fever; and his mind also was exceedingly sore because of his iniquities; and when he saw them he stretched forth his hand, and besought them that they would heal him. (Alma 15:5)

And there were some who died with fevers, which at some seasons of the year were very frequent in the land — but not so much so with fevers, because of the excellent qualities of the many plants and roots which God had prepared to remove

the cause of diseases, to which men were subject by the nature of the climate. (Alma 46:40)

Another aspect of the ancient wisdom tradition involved the arts of divination, of foretelling the future. Barker observes that even though “Deut. 18 prohibits the use of all divination in no uncertain way; ... such practices are quite consistent with the ways of Daniel and Joseph.”¹⁴⁹ For example, she explains, “We have to find a place within Israel’s tradition for ... Urim and Thummim (Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8) and for the belief that the outcome of any lot was determined by the Lord (Prov. 16:33). Daniel and Joseph both give God the credit for their skills as diviners (Gen. 41:6; Dan. 2:27).”¹⁵⁰

Looking to the Book of Mormon, we easily find stories that are at home with these traditions. For instance, Nephi reports how “we cast lots — who of us should go in unto the house of Laban” (1 Nephi 3:11). This story and the description of the function of the Liahona, as strange as it seemed to Joseph Smith’s contemporaries, fits nicely into the world of the ancient wise men.

And it came to pass that as my father arose in the morning, and went forth to the tent door, to his great astonishment he beheld upon the ground a round ball of curious workmanship; and it was of fine brass. And within the ball were two spindles; and the one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness. ... 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. And there was also written upon them a new writing, which was plain to be read, which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord; and it was written and changed from time to time, according to the faith and diligence which we gave unto it. And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things. (1 Nephi 16:10, 28–29)

In *Since Cumorah*, Nibley compared the function of the Liahona to an ancient Semitic practice of divination using arrows.¹⁵¹ We also have the account of the interpreters in the Book of Mormon, which Joseph Smith later associated with the Urim and Thummim.

Now Ammon said unto him: I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records; for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are

of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. And the things are called interpreters, and no man can look in them except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not and he should perish. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer. . . . But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known. (Mosiah 8:13, 17)

Clearly, the Book of Mormon connects not just to the more traditional understandings of wisdom but also melds with Barker's reconstruction. Crucially, Nephi qualifies remarkably well as a representative of the wisdom tradition as Barker reconstructs it, as does his brother Jacob.¹⁵² My essays contain more comparisons of the Book of Mormon and Barker's extensive reconstructions of the wisdom tradition; and I should mention here that Hugh Nibley,¹⁵³ Daniel Peterson,¹⁵⁴ Val Larsen,¹⁵⁵ Alyson Von Feldt¹⁵⁶ and Taylor Halverson¹⁵⁷ have looked further and show that there are other distinct and complex wisdom patterns and concepts that *manifest throughout the text*. Eliason's essay does not so much as hint at any of this. Consider that Kuhn notes that "particularly persuasive arguments can be developed if the new paradigm permits the prediction of phenomena that had been entirely unsuspected while the old one prevailed."¹⁵⁸ Consider Alma's observation that due to experiments upon the word in which it sprouts and grows, "your understanding doth begin to be enlightened, and your mind doth begin to expand. Oh then, is not this real?" (Alma 32:33–35).

Margaret Barker, Hugh Nibley and Fashion vs. Substance

In Eliason's essay, we get some comparison between Margaret Barker and Hugh Nibley:

In many ways, Barker can be understood as filling the void¹⁵⁹ left by Nibley (with the added benefit of her presumably nonpartisan Methodist affiliation). Her wide-ranging methods and prolific publications that resonate with the Myth-and-Ritual school are similar to Nibley's. Her assertion that lost temple teachings can be recovered piecemeal through creative readings of widely divergent texts and her skepticism

of a discipline she claims has not properly understood its object of study in centuries of labor, may also remind readers of the late great Latter-day Saint scholar.¹⁶⁰

Lest we take that comparison as a compliment, the footnote explains that “the ‘Myth-and-Ritual School’ is a term for a now long-out-of-fashion approach to ancient texts that posited a close connection between performance and narrative, and even that scholars can reconstruct rituals underlying existing mythological and other texts.”¹⁶¹ We can add “now long-out-of-fashion” to the list of dismissive labels.

Scholarly Communities

The next section in Eliason’s paper, “Scholarly Critiques of Barker’s Work,” is a short, ideologically selective survey, laced with occasional interpretative passages and rhetorical questions that demonstrate unintended ironies. Earlier in this paper, I included discussion of John McDade’s scholarly consideration of Barker’s work against a broad survey of “Life of Jesus” research as a deliberate contrast; and in Part 1 of this series, I surveyed her academic career at length and in enough detail to demonstrate the presence and significance of many notable institutionally connected scholars who appreciate and admire her contributions. McDade’s study demonstrated that scholars travel in multiple streams, divided by secular and religious ideologies and institutional imperatives and personal inclinations, rather than as one homogenous collection of clear thinkers who see eye to eye on everything important. In his section on scholarly critiques, Eliason says this:

Even with these critiques in mind, it is still not entirely clear that the rejection of Barker’s conclusions by her relevant scholarly community can be attributed *entirely* to her problematic methods.¹⁶²

Because I have been able to cite many very relevant scholars, including Dr. Rowan Williams, then Archbishop of Canterbury, Crispin Fletcher-Louis, N.T. Wright, Andrei Orlov, John McDade, Robert Murray, and several others, as well as mentioning those who elected her as President of the Society for Old Testament Study, and publication of many of Barker’s essays in range of peer-reviewed journals that Eliason’s charge of “rejection by her relevant scholarly community” conveniently ignores, I can at the very least be comfortable in questioning the sole relevance and authority of the scholarly community that Eliason has in

mind. And I have raised the issue of Eliason's silence on the point of whether the Book of Mormon itself offers a valid test of Barker's methods.

Rhetorical Questions and the Beam in One's Own Eye

Recall that a critic which Eliason cited had complained of Barker's "assumption that a rhetorical question will receive an answer that supports the author's hypothesis."¹⁶³ That raises the issue of how Eliason's own rhetorical questions ought to be answered. I will quote only the rhetorical questions that he points directly at Barker's work, followed by my answers.

Might some of the reaction also stem from her own choice to stand apart from that community by not participating in identity-defining practices such as peer-review?¹⁶⁴

I have shown that the question is flawed by assuming, without investigation or demonstration, that Barker has not participated in peer review, and that the reviews that Eliason cites accurately and adequately represent the scholarly communities most relevant to the question.

Are Church members really ready to label as ahistorical, even fraudulently apostate, virtually all of Deuteronomy and the major historical books of the Old Testament?¹⁶⁵

No. Moreover, that is not required of us by the description of the loss of plain and precious things in 1 Nephi 13, nor by the Articles of Faith. For example, as quoted earlier, "being against parts of the ideology of a particular group who uses Deuteronomy as a foundation is not the same thing as being opposed to that text itself. Lehi and Nephi were not anti-Deuteronomy, and certainly were not anti-Moses."¹⁶⁶

That is, in order for Barker to discover the lost temple themes in Hebrew texts, she must often adopt an antagonistic stance to the textual tradition she is examining. Must one also adopt such a contrary stance vis-à-vis the Book of Mormon in order to make it sing with temple themes?¹⁶⁷

No, there are multiple examples of Latter-day Saint scholarship that one can reasonably cite in response.¹⁶⁸

Does this mean that we should view suspiciously the prophet Mormon — whose editorial voice we hear throughout the Book of Mormon — as another Josiah who removed and suppressed such themes?¹⁶⁹

No, and again there are multiple examples that can be provided in response, including Grant Hardy, Lisa Bolin Hawkins, and Gordon Thomasson.¹⁷⁰

Does the nonappearance, or at best minimal and much subdued appearance, of Barker's "temple themes" (including Wisdom and the Goddess) in the Book of Mormon suggest that its authors were also victims of a suppressive editor's hand, or that Joseph Smith as its translator inherited a post-Josianic tainted set of theological ideas?¹⁷¹

This sentence contains multiple assertions. When it comes to temple themes, see articles I referenced in this essay and that Eliason does not mention from my survey of Latter-day Saint scholars who have closely examined the Book of Mormon for Wisdom themes, such as Alyson Von Feldt, D. John Butler, and Val Larsen.¹⁷² When it comes to Joseph Smith and what he did or didn't inherit, notice that while Joseph Smith must necessarily receive revelation in his weakness, after the manner of his language, that he might come to understanding (see D&C 1:24–28), notice that Joseph's story — with theophany, revelation, angels, temples outside of Jerusalem, and seeking of mysteries — all demonstrates that whatever he inherited from his culture, Joseph contradicts Deuteronomy on the same key passages, as do Jeremiah, Lehi, and Nephi.¹⁷³

Do we really also need Margaret Barker — especially if carrying water for her work might discredit Restoration truth claims by association?¹⁷⁴

Yes, if we are looking for fulfillment of the prophecy of the plain and precious things in 1 Nephi 13. I directly responded to this earlier in this essay.

What all these scenarios [such as God allowing Israel to have a King against his advice] have in common is the Lord responding to human weakness and imperfection. Might something similar have been at work with Josiah's reforms?¹⁷⁵

At best, maybe. But maybe not.

Might this worthy goal [eliminating child sacrifice] have warranted the use of any ideology that could get the job done, even if the cost was oversimplifying more multifaceted truths for a time?¹⁷⁶

Again, at best, maybe. But again, maybe not.

At this point, I must step back and reflect on the patterns displayed and what those patterns tell us. Though Eliason shows some notable desire to show balance between Latter-day Saint traditional views and findings of modern scholars on the Bible in the sections giving an overview of Josiah, and in a late section surveying Julie Smith's interesting essay on "Huldah's Long Shadow,"¹⁷⁷ the pattern I see in his treatment of Barker and the questions he raises is different. It is not the pattern of conscious paradigm testing, with careful puzzle definition, and weighing accuracy of key predictions, comprehensiveness and coherence, simplicity and aesthetics, fruitfulness, and future promise. The dominant "which problems are more significant to have solved?" issues that emerge alternate between "What would the scholarly authorities think?" and "What would the most traditional Latter-day Saint think?" and seem to exhibit a notable fear that using her work might "discredit Latter-day Saint claims by association." The weight in resolving the "which paradigm is better?" issue falls mostly on deference to opinions about, rather than careful exploration of, Margaret Barker's work relative to Latter-day Saint scripture and a substantial body of work by many notable Latter-day Saint scholars. In comparison to the Bible recommendations for seeing truth,¹⁷⁸ there is some *interest*, though the lack of quotations or of any evidence of in-depth exploration does not demonstrate "May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore, what these things mean?" (Acts 17:19–20). Rather it leans to deference to authorities, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" and shows a notable strain of "seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him" (Luke 11:54).

We don't see a close *examination of the works* (John 10:38), nor a broad *consideration of the witnesses* available (Matthew 18:16 and Deuteronomy 19:15–19). Eliason cites only the arguments of skeptical critics and labels defenders as uncritical, untrained acolytes, following "old fashioned" methods. There is little consideration of the credentials and motives of critics, but much of Barker and her defenders. And as the evidence of Eliason's own rhetorical questions demonstrates, there is not much self-reflection, little *checking one's own eye for beams* (Matthew 7:3–5). While an inquiry into Barker's significance for the Church and students of our scriptures is valid, reasonable, and timely, and is doubtless motivated by good intentions, this essay does not turn out to be particularly groundbreaking or insightful or even helpful.

Pattern Recognition

I do see strong indications of another telling pattern: In drawing out the implications of her introduction to *The Older Testament*, I see *mind reading*. In the concerns about critics of the Latter-day Saints discrediting us by association, I see *fortune telling*. In concerns that adopting Barker's views might lead us to adopt suspicion of Joseph Smith as tainted by post-Josianic ideas,¹⁷⁹ and Moroni as suppressive editor, I see *catastrophizing*. We also see *labeling*, and *discounting positives* (for instance, no mention of Barker's talk on the Book of Mormon, or her Doctor of Divinity from the Archbishop of Canterbury), *negative filtering* (no real engagement with Barker's work in depth and or her productive work with Latter-day Saints, or with a wide range of top scholars and institutions), *over-generalizing* from negative critics, *dichotomous thinking* in arguing that any criticizing of negative aspects of the Deuteronomist reformers and Josiah means throwing out much of the Old Testament, *blaming* Barker for supposedly not being willing to submit to peer review or the prestige and authority of a formal academic appointment, a series of negative "*What ifs?*" demonstrated by the rhetorical questions, *emotional reasoning* displayed in the anxiety about what authorities might think or cultural disasters that might ensue, and *inability to disconfirm* demonstrated in the failure to consider easily accessible scholarship that might contradict the conclusions and arguments of the essay, and the anxiety demonstrated in saying of what Barker offers us that "perhaps what she offers us is too good *not* to be true. But, perhaps unfortunately, that does not mean that it is."¹⁸⁰

This pattern collectively matches a known set of "common cognitive distortions."¹⁸¹ By definition, cognitive distortion is

an exaggerated pattern of thought that's not based on facts. It consequently leads you to view things more negatively than they really are. In other words, cognitive distortions are your mind convincing you to believe negative things about yourself and your world that are not necessarily true.¹⁸²

This set includes what I italicized as mind reading, catastrophizing, etc.

This pattern contrasts with Kuhn's descriptions of the key values for paradigm testing, and with the Biblical recommendations for finding truth.

Potentials and Directions for Ongoing Testing of the New Paradigm

In the concluding section of *Paradigms Regained*, I wrote,

All I have done is to conduct a preliminary survey. Much more could be done. I hope more will be done. Yet clearly, Barker's overall picture holds a simple beauty that elegantly accounts for much complexity. My comparisons to the Book of Mormon have been fruitful, and most importantly, I find them wonderfully promising.¹⁸³

I also finished that essay, as my title suggests for this one, by stating my conviction that Barker's work contributes to the fulfilment of the prophesy in 1 Nephi 13:39–41 on the restoration of specific plain and precious things.

This current survey demonstrates that over the past twenty years, much more has been done by many very talented people, and I retain the hope that more will be done. I think often of Kuhn's observation:

Led by a new paradigm, scientists adopt new instruments and look in new places. Even more important, during revolutions scientists see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before.¹⁸⁴

I think of Barker's own statement:

The new paradigm is that the Enoch tradition is ancient, as it claims, and that it was the original myth of the Jerusalem temple, long before Moses became the key figure and the Exodus the defining history. The world of the first temple was the taproot of Christianity, and that is why the young Church treated Enoch as Scripture. Those who preserved the Enoch traditions were a formative influence on Christianity and its key concepts: the Kingdom and the resurrected Messiah. Since Enoch was a high priest figure, and Jesus was declared to be "a great high priest" (Heb. 4.14), we should also concern ourselves with the high priesthood.¹⁸⁵

Among her critics, as I have shown, it is common to complain that she uses texts such as *1 Enoch* to project back to the First Temple, based on their assumption of a late date for *1 Enoch*. TT, for instance, sees it as a third century BCE critique of the Second Temple. Barker notes that the oldest copies of *1 Enoch* are from Qumran, as are the oldest copies of Isaiah. There were 20 copies of *1 Enoch* at Qumran, and 21 copies of

Isaiah.¹⁸⁶ She notes that no one dates the Bible texts to the age of the oldest surviving copies, nor to the latest allusions or editing discernable in them.

It is not consistent to say that some of Isaiah was written in the eighth century BCE because the text says so, but that Enoch was composed in the third century BCE because there is no physical evidence for its existence before that date. A simple inspection of the text suggests that Isaiah knew Enoch but not Moses, which implies that eighth-century Jerusalem had more place for Enoch than Moses.¹⁸⁷

Notice her paradigm-defining statement, that “the Enoch tradition is ancient,” not that the books of Enoch that we have are necessarily completely ancient as they stand. That is, they may contain more recent allusions and editing and content, and still be the remnants and witnesses of an ancient tradition. In responding to TT, I quoted this from Barker:

The setting in which we have seen the earliest apocalypses function, e.g., the troubles of the second century, or the Qumran community, has, until recently, been assumed to be that of their origin. But there is no organic link between the problems of this period and the major *themes or forms* of the literature. These were only used to interpret the problems of the period, they were the established framework within which the world had to be viewed. The ultimate origin of apocalyptic must therefore lie in a setting where ascents to the upper world, the hosts of heaven, astrology, astronomy, and superhuman wisdom were as much at home as those other elements — evil angels, supernatural conflicts mirrored on earth, the visions of history and judgement which were taken up and emphasized for their relevance to the second century.¹⁸⁸

I also noted her observation that “Enoch’s journey describes accurately the geography of Jerusalem before the time of Hezekiah, that is, in the early ministry of Isaiah.”¹⁸⁹ And consider that Alyson Von Feldt not only compared Ezekiel’s vision to the tenth century BCE Ta’anach offering stand, but also noted two elongated objects on the front panel, saying “with their scroll-shaped tops tapering to narrower bases, they look like tornadoes, evoking the winds that ‘bear the earth as well as the firmament of heaven ... the very pillars of heaven’ (*1 Enoch* 18:3). Perhaps they are not trees, but rather evoke the ‘whirlwinds’ that carried

Enoch into heaven (*1 Enoch* 39:3) or the ‘whirlwind’ that came to Ezekiel encompassing the strange creatures that he sees (*Ezekiel* 1:4).¹⁹⁰

Barker devotes a long section of *The Older Testament* to a close reading of *1 Enoch*, in subsequent chapters, noticing close thematic and linguistic ties between *1 Enoch* and Isaiah. For example, she notes that in First Isaiah, “The sins of Jerusalem and the other nations will show the prophet’s ideas of right and wrong, thus the framework in which he made his judgements. Isaiah’s catalogue of sins is so striking that it demands close scrutiny. There are three dominant sins: pride, rebellion, and wisdom, the sins of the angels.”¹⁹¹ Those concerns resemble those of *1 Enoch* as well as the concerns of the visions of Lehi and Nephi in 1 Nephi. Another thing Isaiah and *1 Enoch* have in common is little concern for Moses and the Ten Commandments. That is a difference with 1 Nephi, but the proximity of the Deuteronomist Reforms and the presence of the Brass plates with books of Moses accounts for the Book of Mormon emphasis on Moses and the Exodus. Notice how Nephi makes a distinction between the importance of Moses and Isaiah:

And I did read many things unto them which were written in the books of Moses; *but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer* I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning. (1 Nephi 19:23)

That is, Nephi used the Books of Moses the Nephites had obtained on the Brass plates but declares that “to more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer,” he goes to Isaiah. In her *Eerdman’s Commentary* article on Isaiah, Barker makes another key comment on how the depiction of the Servant in Isaiah can benefit from comparisons to *1 Enoch*:

The fullest picture of the Servant is found in the “Parables” of *1 Enoch*, which describe him triumphant in heaven, that is, in the sanctuary, after he has effected the great atonement which precedes the judgment. This is described in *1 Enoch* 46–50. He is the “Anointed One” (Isa. 52:14; cf. *1 Enoch* 48:10; 52:4); the “Chosen One” (Isa. 42:1; cf. *1 Enoch* 40:5; 45:3, 49:2, 51; etc.); “the Righteous One” (Isa. 53:11; cf. *1 Enoch* 38:2; 47:4); he has the “Spirit” (Isa. 42:1; cf. *1 Enoch* 62:6); he “establishes justice” (Isa. 42:4; cf. *1 Enoch* 41:9; 45:3; 49:4; etc.); he is the “light of the peoples” (Isa. 42:6; 49:6; cf. *1 Enoch* 48:4); he is

“hidden” (Isa. 49:2; cf. *1 Enoch* 39:7; 48:6; 62:7); and “kings are amazed and humbled before him” (Isa. 49:7; 52:15; cf. *1 Enoch* 48:5–10; 55:4; 62:19). So many motifs from Isaiah’s Servant are combined in the “Parables” and given a clear context which is not apparent in Isaiah but obviously their original setting. The only realistic explanation for the Servant texts is that they were part of the royal cult, perhaps sanctuary visions or the record of a mystic’s experience (Isa. 50:4; cf. 2 Sam 23:1–7). Their form in the “Parables” includes material from later periods, but the similarity to the book of Revelation shows that this was a living tradition throughout the Second Temple period.¹⁹²

As Nibley observes,

It is important to specialize. It is sound professional policy to deal with something that nobody else understands. But there are natural limits to specialization: inevitably one reaches the point at which the study of a single star cannot be pursued further until one has found out about a lot of other stars. The little picture starts expanding into a big picture, and we soon discover that without the big picture the little one cannot be understood at all.¹⁹³

That is, a big-picture approach to Isaiah that includes *1 Enoch* will benefit from contextual clues that a more specialized and narrowly focused approach will not see.

In his important essay on “The Deuteronomist Reforms and Lehi’s Family Dynamics: A Social Context for the Rebellions of Laman and Lemuel,” Neal Rappleye writes:

As mentioned earlier, visions and Messianic teachings such as those taught by Lehi and Nephi were in conflict with Deuteronomist ideals. Yet Lehi knew that Laman and Lemuel held Moses in high regard, and thus sought to use him as an archetype for his own calling. Hence, the above suggestion that Nephi may have used the law to appeal to Laman’s and Lemuel’s Deuteronomist sensibilities, while trying to point them to something greater, may likewise apply here: Lehi draws on the figure of Moses because he knows it will appeal to Laman and Lemuel, but at the same time he is using the Moses type to suggest that he himself was a true and legitimate prophet.¹⁹⁴

Zenos, Zenock, and Enoch

Also, Nephi (1 Nephi 19) cites two non-Biblical northern prophets, Zenos and Zenock, in support of a more explicitly Christian role for the God of Israel. Apart from quotes showing an explicit awareness that the God of Israel would be “lifted up, ... crucified, and buried” Nephi mentions prophecies of the accompanying signs:

For thus spake the prophet [Zenos]: The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day, some with his voice, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation, and others with the thunderings and the lightnings of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of darkness, and by the opening of the earth, and by mountains which shall be carried up.

And all these things must surely come, saith the prophet Zenos. And the rocks of the earth must rend; and because of the groanings of the earth, many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to exclaim: The God of nature suffers. (1 Nephi 19:11–12)

From here, consider an appreciative review that John W. Welch wrote concerning George Nicklesburg’s commentary and translation of *1 Enoch*.¹⁹⁵ Welch cites Nicklesburg’s literal translation of the meanings of the names of twenty of the evil angels in *1 Enoch* who rebelled against God. He then compares those names with these prophecies of Zenos:

Thus, it seems significant that when “the prophet” (Zenos) spoke of the Lord God visiting the house of Israel in the day of destruction that would accompany the cataclysmic death of the Son of God, the Book of Mormon text in 1 Nephi 19 includes most of these heavenly elements as the instruments that will implement the visitation of the Lord. In other words, the Book of Mormon text assumes that these rebellious forces are again (or perhaps were actually always) in line under the dominion of the Lord God of Israel. The Enochic elements directly or arguably present in this prophecy include:

1. “God surely shall visit” (1 Nephi 19:11)
2. “opening of the earth,” “power” (1 Nephi 19:11)
3. “vapor,” understandable as volcanic clouds (1 Nephi 19:11; compare 3 Nephi 8:20)

5. “righteousness” (1 Nephi 19:11)
6. “thunderings” (1 Nephi 19:11)
7. “they shall be scourged” (1 Nephi 19:13)
8. “fire” (1 Nephi 19:11)
9. “lightnings” (1 Nephi 19:11)
10. “God of nature” (1 Nephi 19:12)
12. “tempest” (1 Nephi 19:11)
13. “smoke” (1 Nephi 19:11)
14. “darkness” (1 Nephi 19:11)
17. “salvation of the Lord” (1 Nephi 19:17)
18. “mountains” (1 Nephi 19:11)
19. “isles of the sea” (1 Nephi 19:12, 16) or “at that day” (1 Nephi 19:11)
20. “I [will] gather in” (1 Nephi 19:16)

Absent here, for some reason, are references to the potentates related to the sun (#15), moon (#16), stars (#4), and Hermon (#11); but more than three-quarters of the twenty heavenly chiefs named in *1 Enoch* 6:7 seem to stand in the background of the ancient Israelite prophecies used by Nephi in 1 Nephi 19. This would indeed suggest some significant linkage between Nephi’s explanation of the “sign” that should be given “unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea” (1 Nephi 19:10) and these beings in the Enochic heavenly host, whose main activity, as is clear from *1 Enoch* 8:3, also involved the dispensing of “signs.” Although in *1 Enoch* these rebellious watchers acted in defiance of the plan of God and outside the scope of their authority, both the cosmic view of *1 Enoch* and the worldview of Zenos and the prophets cited by Nephi would seem to see these principalities operating in or around the assembly of God with power to communicate signs from the heavenly sphere to mortals abroad on the earth.¹⁹⁶

Does not this indicate that Zenos, a pre-exilic prophet, knew the Enoch tradition, and therefore, provides notable “cause to believe” (see Alma 32:17–21) that the Enoch tradition is ancient? Does not this reenforce Barker’s case that Isaiah of Jerusalem knew the Enoch

tradition? Is this not another case where the Book of Mormon might be considered in testing Barker's hypotheses? There is more. In a chapter of *Enoch the Prophet*, Nibley broadly compared the themes and language of the Enoch story with some of the oldest writings of the Ancient Near East, surveying notable accounts in the myths of many different nations. After surveying Egyptian and Babylonian and other traditions, Nibley comments that

Greek mythology is an endless procession of familiarly recurring themes — the abominations of the ancients, the deeds of inspired holy men, upheavals of nature, fearful punishments and glorious ascensions, and so on. ... Thus we may see that Greeks have all the original building blocks, but they have admittedly lost the blueprints and never tire of trying to put the parts back together in the proper order. I.E.S. Edwards says much the same thing about the Egyptians.¹⁹⁷

Nibley notes that in Helaman 13:33, Samuel's declaration that "Oh that we had remembered the Lord our God in the day that he gave us our riches, and then they would not have become slippery that we should lose them" compares to an Enoch passage discovered in 1883, "Ye have not remembered the Lord in the day he gave you your riches; ye have gone astray that your riches shall not remain."¹⁹⁸ There are many other notable points of comparison between *1 Enoch* and the Book of Mormon, including ascent visions, the fountain of living waters and the tree of life,¹⁹⁹ woe oracles,²⁰⁰ and emphasis on the divine titles of the Holy One of Israel and the Lord of Hosts. In *The Older Testament*, Barker includes sections on these two titles, and in *Paradigms Regained*, I compared her observations to the use of those titles in the Book of Mormon.²⁰¹

While there was an edition of the Lawrence translation of *1 Enoch* potentially available to Joseph Smith, the unlikelihood of Smith having seen and used it is most clearly demonstrated in comparisons to the Qumran Book of Giants, which is not included in the Lawrence Enoch. Nibley first pointed out how the Qumran Mahujah/Enoch account compares to a story in Moses 6,²⁰² and Jeff Bradshaw and David Larsen have furthered that study:

Although the *Book of the Giants* scarcely fills three pages in the English translation of Martinez, we find in it the most extensive series of parallels between a single ancient text and

Joseph Smith's Enoch writings. Note that the term *giants* in the title of the book is somewhat misleading. Actually, this book describes two different groups of individuals, referred to in Hebrew as the *gibborim* and the *nephilim*. In discussing the *gibborim*, we will use the customary connotation elsewhere in the Bible of "mighty hero" or "warrior." In his Enoch writings, Joseph Smith specifically differentiated the "giants" from Enoch's other adversaries.²⁰³

In a similar vein, Jeff Lindsay and Noel Reynolds have recently examined evidence that the Book of Mormon shows dependence on material from the Book of Moses, including its account of Enoch, which again argues for the antiquity and importance of the Enoch tradition.²⁰⁴

Tentative Conclusions and Ultimate Priorities

All of this, I submit, invites our interest and rewards our efforts. But we should not forget that the point and center of all of this is neither Margaret Barker, nor Joseph Smith, but Jesus Christ. In an interview in 2017, Barker explained,

When I preach at Good Friday services, I find that people are much more able to relate to this Temple understanding of atonement, where Jesus's self-sacrifice is not substitutionary — it's the real thing. For practical reasons in the Temple, animals represented the high priest; so the symbolism was that the covenant bonds were healed and restored by self-sacrifice, not by other people doing it for you — which people rightly see as unjust. Romans 12.1, "offer yourselves as a living sacrifice," is the basis of Christian ethics. We've simply lost that. The natural order is maintained by self-sacrifice. That's the message we need today in a materialistic, consumer society.²⁰⁵

Or, as Moroni puts it,

For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for everything which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power

and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God. (Moroni 7:15–16)

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Endnotes

- 1 “Letter to Israel Daniel Rupp, 5 June 1844,” p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-israel-daniel-rupp-5-june-1844/1>.
- 2 Margaret Barker, “Being an Independent Scholar, Part 3,” Providence, Divine Action and the Church (blog), November 15, 2012, <http://christpantokrator.blogspot.com/search/label/Barker%3A%20%27Being%20an%20Independent%20Scholar%27>.
- 3 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 65.
- 4 Karl R. Popper, *The Myth of the Framework: In Defence of Science and Rationality* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 84–85, https://books.google.com/books?id=Ye2tAhDX7agC&pg=PA82&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false.
- 5 Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*, viii.
- 6 Ibid., 109.
- 7 Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 58–59.
- 8 See Larry C. Porter, “Solomon Chamberlin’s Missing Pamphlet: Dreams, Visions, and Angelic Ministrants” in *BYU Studies* 37, no. 2 (1997–98): 114, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3219&context=byusq>.
- 9 Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*, 79.

- 10 Ibid., 186.
- 11 Ibid., 17–18.
- 12 Ibid., 147.
- 13 Ibid., 153–58, 185–87.
- 14 For example, Kevin Christensen, “Paradigms Crossed” in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7, no. 2 (1995): 144–218, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol7/iss2/9/>.
- 15 Margaret Barker, *Temple Mysticism: An Introduction* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2011), 101.
- 16 Ibid., 100–101.
- 17 Margaret Barker, *King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John’s Gospel* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2014), 205. Barker elsewhere observes that Luke 24:26 on a suffering anointed one presupposes the Qumran version of Isaiah rather than the Masoretic version. See Barker, “Text and Context” in *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 303–4; also at <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/TextAndContext.pdf>. On the other hand, Barker’s reading of the Qumran Isaiah scroll is disputed. See footnote 10 in Loren Blake Spendlove, “There Is No Beauty That We Should Desire Him,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 53 (2022): 1–30, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/there-is-no-beauty-that-we-should-desire-him/>. Barker responds to this published criticism as follows: “I am puzzled by Loren Spendlove’s observation that Targum Jonathan of Isaiah gives no indication of the Servant being anointed. Tg. Isa.52.13 is *‘bdy mšyh’*, ‘My Servant the Messiah’, and later verses in the same poem say that his appearance was not that of an ordinary man, but rather *zyw qwdš’zywyh*, ‘a holy countenance shall be his countenance’, Tg. Isa. 53.2. The Targumist must have known that the Servant was the Messiah whose appearance was transfigured by his anointing. S/he must have known a Hebrew text like that of 1QIsa^a and read *mšhty*, either as *māšaḥti* ‘I have anointed’ [not *meshachti* as Spendlove renders it; the form in 2 Samuel 12.7 which he cites has a suffix which alters the pointing]; or as *mišḥāthi*, ‘my consecrated /anointed one’. Hence my use of this important piece of evidence.” Margaret Barker, e-mail message to author, September 15, 2022.

- 18 Barker, *King of the Jews*, 205.
- 19 Ian Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms: A Comparative Study of Science and Religion*, Chapter 6: Paradigms in Science (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 95, <https://www.religion-online.org/book/myths-models-and-paradigms-a-comparative-study-in-science-and-religion/>.
- 20 Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*, 109.
- 21 Ibid., 53.
- 22 See, for example, materials at Book of Mormon Central, <https://bookofmormoncentral.org/> and the related site Evidence Central, <https://evidencecentral.org/recency>.
- 23 See, for example, Kevin Christensen, “Eye of the Beholder, Law of the Harvest: Observations on the Inevitable Consequences of the Different Investigative Approaches of Jeremy Runnells and Jeff Lindsay,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 10 (2014): 175–238, <https://journal/interpreterfoundation.org/eye-of-the-beholder-law-of-the-harvest-observations-on-the-inevitable-consequences-of-the-different-investigative-approaches-of-jeremy-runnells-and-jeff-lindsay/>.
- 24 Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*, 151–52. For example, after Hugh Nibley showed Professor Matthew Black how the Pearl of Great Price account of Enoch and *Mahujah* compared to Black’s then recent publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls account, Black responded, “Well, someday we will find out the source that Joseph Smith used.” See *Hugh Nibley Observed*, eds. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Shirley S. Ricks, and Stephen T. Whitlock (Orem, UT: Eborn Books, 2021), 426.
- 25 Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*, 110.
- 26 Ibid., 94.
- 27 Ibid., 24.
- 28 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), 331. See. Also Joseph Smith Papers, Wilfred Woodruff Journal, 1843 January–1844 December, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/09e6d1b1-cd59-41d4-bc46-e3d74899ceac/0/195>.
- 29 Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, ed. Stephen. D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 95.

- 30 Wendy Ulrich, “Believest thou ... ?”: Faith, Cognitive Dissonance, and the Psychology of Religious Experience,” FAIR Conference, Provo, UT, 2005, <http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/fair-conferences/2005-fair-conference/2005-believest-thou-faith-cognitive-dissonance-and-the-psychology-of-religious-experience>.
- 31 Fred Anson, “Debunking Mormon Appeals to Margaret Barker,” Beggars Bread (website), Feb. 16, 2020, <https://beggarsbread.org/2020/02/16/debunking-mormon-appeals-to-margaret-barker/>.
- 32 Margaret Barker, “What King Josiah Reformed,” (lecture, Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, May 6, 2003), <https://speeches.byu.edu/speakers/margaret-barker/>. The text was published as “What Did King Josiah Reform?” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, JoAnn H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 523–42, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/39/>
- 33 Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*, 59.
- 34 TT quoted in Anson, “Debunking Mormon Appeals to Margaret Barker.”
- 35 John McDade, “Jesus in Recent Research,” *The Month* (December 1998): 498, https://archive.org/details/sim_month_1998-12_31_11/page/498/mode/2up?view=theater.
- 36 Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and Its Influence on Christianity* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1988), 22.
- 37 Margaret Barker, *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1987), 20–21.
- 38 Kevin Christensen, “The Temple, the Monarchy, and Wisdom: Lehi’s World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker,” *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, JoAnn H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004).
- 39 Barker, *The Older Testament*, 69.
- 40 “Margaret Barker, “The Fragrant Tree” in *The Tree of Life: From Eden to Eternity* (Salt Lake City and Provo, Deseret Book and FARMS, 2011), 59. Recent findings indicate that the tunnel is

older than Hezekiah. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “What New Archeological Discoveries in Jerusalem Relate to Hezekiah?,” *Meridian Magazine*, Aug. 19, 2018, <https://latterdaysaintmag.com/what-new-archaeological-discoveries-in-jerusalem-relate-to-hezekiah/>.

- 41 Barker, *The Older Testament*, 6.
- 42 Robert Bowman, as quoted by Anson, “Debunking Mormon Appeals to Margaret Barker.”
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Barry Bickmore’s essay in *The FARMS Review* is also very helpful here. See Barry R. Bickmore, “Of Simplicity, Oversimplification, and Monotheism,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 15, no. 1 (2003): 215–58, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol15/iss1/14>.
- 45 Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992) 10.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 See 1 Nephi 8:24–36 on the pointing and mocking from the great and spacious building, and those who subsequently feel ashamed and leave the tree and its fruit.
- 48 McDade, “Jesus in Recent Research,” 497–98.
- 49 Richard L. Bushman, “Joseph Smith’s Many Histories,” *BYU Studies* 44, no. 4 (2005): 4, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol44/iss4/3/>.
- 50 Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*, 59.
- 51 McDade, “Jesus in Recent Research,” 502.
- 52 Ibid., 502–503.
- 53 Ibid., 504.
- 54 Ibid. See also Margaret Barker, *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: T&T Clark, 1996), 109.
- 55 McDade, “Jesus in Recent Research,” 504.
- 56 *Merkavah* refers to the chariot throne in the temple and to Ezekiel’s vision of the chariot. There is a tradition in Judaism of merkavah mysticism. See Gershom Gerhard Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*,

- Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1960).
- 57 Barker, *The Risen Lord*, 27.
- 58 See Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*, 185.
- 59 Ibid., 169.
- 60 Margaret Barker, “Being an Independent Scholar, Part 2,” Providence, Divine Action and the Church (blog), November 12, 2012, <http://christpantokrator.blogspot.com/search/label/Barker%3A%20%27Being%20an%20Independent%20Scholar%27>.
- 61 See Ian Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms: A Comparative Study of Science and Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 136, <https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-7-paradigms-in-religion/>.
- 62 Eric A. Eliason, “Is the Bible Reliable? A Case Study: Were King Josiah’s Reforms a Restoration from Apostasy or a Suppression of Plain and Precious Truths? (And What about Margaret Barker?)” *BYU Studies* 60, no. 3 (2021): 159–82, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol60/iss3/14/>.
- 63 See “Cory Crawford,” Maxwell Institute, <https://mi.byu.edu/scholars/cory-crawford/>.
- 64 For example, see Robert M. Price, “Joseph Smith: Inspired Author of the Book of Mormon” in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 321–66. Price uses the account of the discovery of the book of the law as a model of pious fraud (assumed as such, without demonstration), which he then applies to Joseph Smith. It does not occur to Price to test the Book of Mormon against the 600 BCE context nor against Barker’s work with which he is familiar as offering a paradigm change. Other scholars do not see the book of the law as fraudulent. For example, William Doorly argues, “For the first time, Yahweh, their ancient God of six centuries spoke to his people through writings on a scroll.” William J. Doorly, *Obsession with Justice: The Story of the Deuteronomists* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994), 1. Also compare Brant Gardner’s citation of Norman Gottwald’s introduction to Deuteronomy for *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* [(Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1971) 102–103] in his 2003 FAIR talk on “Monotheism, Messiah, and

Mormon's Book," <https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference/august-2003/monotheism-messiah-and-mormons-book>.

- 65 Eliason, "Is the Bible Reliable?," 162.
- 66 Ibid., 164.
- 67 Kevin Christensen, "Twenty Years After 'Paradigms Regained,' Part 1: The Ongoing, Plain and Precious Significance of Margaret Barker's Scholarship for Latter-day Saint Studies," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 54 (2022), 1–64, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/twenty-years-after-paradigms-regained-part-1-the-ongoing-plain-and-precious-significance-of-margaret-barkers-scholarship-for-latter-day-saint-studies/>.
- 68 Eliason, "Is the Bible Reliable?," 162–63.
- 69 See for example, Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 241–56.
- 70 Eliason, "Is the Bible Reliable?," 170.
- 71 Margaret Barker, "Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion," *BYU Studies*, 44, no. 4 (2005): 69–82.
- 72 Kevin Christensen, "Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker's Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies," ed. William Hamblin, *FARMS Occasional Papers* 2 (2001): 6, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/paradigms-regained-survey-margaret-barkers-scholarship-and-its-significance-mormon-studies>.
- 73 Christensen, "Twenty Years After Paradigms Regained, Part 1," <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/twenty-years-after-paradigms-regained-part-1-the-ongoing-plain-and-precious-significance-of-margaret-barkers-scholarship-for-latter-day-saint-studies/>
- 74 See Hugh Nibley, "Victoriosa Loquacitas: The Rise of Rhetoric and the Decline of Everything Else" in *The Ancient State: The Rulers and the Ruled*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Desert Book, 1991).
- 75 Though he names three of my articles in the footnotes, this is the only time Eliason quotes me, on page 171, footnote 32. He complains that I gave no source for the quote, referring to my comment in my footnote 1, yet my footnote 2 in *Paradigms Regained* on the same page clearly reports that the quote came

- from autobiographical material formerly at Barnes and Noble Books' website. This material was provided by Margaret Barker as author. This is an unfortunate lapse.
- 76 A brief summary of changes beginning in 2012 is provided at Wikipedia, s.v. "Maxwell Institute," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maxwell_Institute.
- 77 See Spencer Fluhman, "On Audience and Voice in Mormon Studies Journal Publishing," BYU Maxwell Institute (blog), November 21, 2016, <https://mi.byu.edu/intro-msr-v4/>. Consider that control of what was the *FARMS Review* has passed from BYU to Claremont, and that control of the *Journal of Book Mormon Studies* has passed from BYU to the University of Illinois. And consider that rather than disappearing, the community of scholars that supported the older journals have continued to thrive with *Interpreter* and Book of Mormon Central. For a personal perspective on the transition at the Maxwell Institute, see Daniel C. Peterson, "Once More, On My Ouster from the Maxwell Institute," Sic et Non (blog), May 29, 2017, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/danpeterson/2017/05/ouster-maxwell-institute.html>.
- 78 See Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, back cover of Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, vol. 1, *The Lady in the Temple* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012).
- 79 Alexander Campbell, *Delusions: an analysis of the Book of Mormon; with an examination of its internal and external evidences, and a refutation of its pretences to divine authority* (Boston, MA: Benjamin H. Greene, 1832), <https://archive.org/details/delusionsanalysis01camp>.
- 80 Richard Bushman, "The Social Dimensions of Rationality," in *Expressions of Faith: Testimonies of Latter-day Saint Scholars*, ed. Susan Easton Black (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book, and FARMS, 1996), 73, https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1467&context=cgu_fac_pub. Compare William J. Hamblin, "How BYU Destroyed Ancient Book of Mormon Studies," Enigmatic Mirror (blog), September 8, 2015, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/enigmaticmirror/2015/09/08/how-byu-destroyed-ancient-book-of-mormon-studies/>.
- 81 Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2007).

- 82 Eliason, “Is the Bible Reliable?,” 173.
- 83 Ibid., 172–73.
- 84 Barker, *The Older Testament*, 261.
- 85 Ibid., 4–5. Compare 2 Nephi 25:1–5; 3 Nephi 17:2–3.
- 86 Ibid., 6.
- 87 Ibid., 282.
- 88 Eliason, “Is the Bible Reliable?,” 177.
- 89 For example, I carefully read and reviewed skeptical readings by: (1) Robert Price and John Charles Duffy in Kevin Christensen, “Notice and Value,” in *Remembrance and Return: Essays in Honor of Louis Midgely*, ed. Ted Vaggalis; and Daniel C. Peterson (Orem, UT and Salt Lake City: Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2019), 423–68; (2) by Ann Taves in Kevin Christensen, “Playing to an Audience: A Review of Revelatory Events,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 28 (2018): 65–114, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/playing-to-an-audience-a-review-of-revelatory-events/>; and (3) by Elizabeth Fenton in Kevin Christensen, “Table Rules: A Response to Americanist Approaches to the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 37 (2020): 67–96, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/table-rules-a-response-to-americanist-approaches-to-the-book-of-mormon/>.
- 90 Williams, *Mother of the Lord*, vol 1, back cover.
- 91 See Benjamin L. McGuire, “Finding Parallels: Some Cautions and Criticisms, Part One,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 5 (2013) 159, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/finding-parallels-some-cautions-and-criticisms-part-one/> and Benjamin McGuire, “Finding Parallels: Some Cautions and Criticisms, Part Two,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 5 (2013), 61–104, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/finding-parallels-some-cautions-and-criticisms-part-two/>.
- 92 Barker, *The Older Testament*, 290.
- 93 Ibid., 22, emphasis added.
- 94 Ibid., 40. Think also of these same themes in 3 Nephi 8–28.
- 95 *Of All Things! Classic Quotations from Hugh Nibley*, comp. Gary P. Gillum, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 230.

- 96 Eliason, "Is the Bible Reliable?," 171n33.
- 97 Kirk Magleby, "Deuteronomy in the Book of Mormon," Book of Mormon Resources (blog), November 18, 2015, <http://bookofmormonresources.blogspot.com/2015/11/deuteronomy-in-book-of-mormon.html>.
- 98 David Rolph Seeley, "Deuteronomy in the Book of Mormon" (lecture), Soundcloud.com, Book of Mormon Central channel, Nov. 18, 2015, <https://soundcloud.com/bookofmormoncentral/deuteronomy-in-the-book-of-mormon-david-rolph-seely>.
- 99 See Aaron P. Schade, "The Kingdom of Judah: Politics, Prophets, and Scribes in the Late Preexilic Period," in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, 300–303, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/39/>.
- 100 David R. Seely, "We Believe the Bible to Be the Word of God, as Far as It Is Translated Correctly": Latter-day Saints and Historical Biblical Criticism," *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 8 (2016): 64–88, here at 80, https://www.academia.edu/34550207/Studies_in_the_Bible_and_Antiquity_8_2016_. On the same page of that essay, Seely offers this comment in footnote 33, which does not sound like the voice of one who dismisses Barker's work: "Christensen, though not a trained biblical scholar, is a published scholar of Latter-day Saint scripture and is one of the most articulate and informed advocates and commentators on Barker's scholarly views and their relationships to Latter-day Saints scholarship."
- 101 Ibid., 81.
- 102 Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms*, 172.
- 103 Eliason, "Is the Bible Reliable?," 171.
- 104 Ibid., 169n27.
- 105 Margaret Barker, "Reflections on Biblical Studies in the Twentieth Century" (lecture, Society of St. Alban and St. Serius, 2000), 4, 6, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/ReflectionsOnBiblicalStudies.pdf>.
- 106 The Leningrad codex dates to Cairo, 1008 CE.
- 107 Barker, "Text and Context," 9.
- 108 Barker, *The Older Testament*, 1.

- 109 Kevin Christensen, "The Deuteronomist De-Christianizing of the Old Testament," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 16, no. 2 (June 1, 2004), <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol16/iss2/5/>.
- 110 Barker, *The Older Testament*, 6-7. I quoted this passage three times in "Paradigms Regained."
- 111 Eliason, "Is the Bible Reliable?," 174.
- 112 Paul Owen, "Monotheism, Mormonism, and the New Testament Witness," in *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, Paul Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 271-314.
- 113 Bickmore, "Simplicity, Oversimplification, Monotheism," 215-58.
- 114 Kevin Christensen, "A Response to Paul Owen's Comments on Margaret Barker," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 14, no. 1-2 (2002): 196-97, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol14/iss1/12/>.
- 115 Eliason, "Is the Bible Reliable?," 175.
- 116 Julie Smith, "Huldah's Long Shadow," *A Dream, a Rock, a Pillar of Fire: Reading 1 Nephi 1*, ed. Adam S. Miller (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute, 2017), 5n13.
- 117 See Kevin Christensen, "Prophets and Kings in Lehi's Jerusalem and Margaret Barker's Temple Theology," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 177-93, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/prophets-and-kings-in-lehis-jerusalem-and-margaret-barkers-temple-theology/>.
- 118 See Margaret Barker, "The Temple Hidden in 1 Kings," (lecture, Temple Studies Group, July 2, 2011), text at http://www.templestudiesgroup.com/Papers/2Jul11_TempleHiddenInKings.pdf.
- 119 Barker, "The Third Isaiah" in *The Older Testament*, 205: "A relatively uncritical appraisal of the book gives a picture of the enemies whom the prophet attacked, but the picture is not one for which we have been prepared. I have not found any commentary which actually dwells upon the identify of these enemies, or draws the very obvious conclusion. They were those inspired by the ideals of the Deuteronomists."

- 120 Neal Rappleye, “The Deuteronomist Reforms and Lehi’s Family Dynamics: A Social Context for the Rebellions of Laman and Lemuel,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 16 (2015), 97, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-deuteronomist-reforms-and-lehis-family-dynamics-a-social-context-for-the-rebellions-of-laman-and-lemuel/>.
- 121 Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 178–201.
- 122 Ibid., 178.
- 123 Ibid., 185.
- 124 Ibid., 199.
- 125 Ibid., 554–614. See also *Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others and the Temple*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute, 2008), 161–62, 169–70.
- 126 Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, 566–67.
- 127 In a paper written for Eco Congregation Ireland, Barker wrote: “The change from the eternal covenant to the Moses covenant can be seen clearly in the two forms of the ten commandments. The older version exhorts people to observe the Sabbath ‘for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day’ (Exod 24.11). They were to keep the Sabbath to be in harmony with the pattern of creation. But when emphasis was shifted to the Moses covenant, at the end of the first temple period and throughout the second, the commandment changed: Observe the Sabbath day. ... You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to keep the Sabbath day’ (Deut. 5. 12, 15). They were to keep the Sabbath because of their own history, led by Moses from slavery in Egypt.” Margaret Barker, “The Everlasting Covenant Between God and Every Living Creature,” p. 10, pdf download at <https://www.ecocongregationireland.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/The-Everlasting-Covenant-Margaret-Barker-DD.pdf>.
- 128 Eliason, “Is the Bible Reliable?,” 175n43.
- 129 Daniel C. Peterson, “Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23” in *Mormons, Scripture and the Ancient World*:

- Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton, (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 194, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/nephi-and-his-asherah-note-1-nephi-118-23>.
- 130 Barker, “Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion,” 76.
- 131 Eliason, “Is the Bible Reliable?,” 177.
- 132 Ibid. And consider that the Restoration story already carries a significant load of baggage that is commonly used by critics to discredit Latter-day Saint claims, *not the least of which* are the foundational stories of the vision, the angel, the plates, the witnesses, and the miraculous translation.
- 133 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 313. See also “Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 2, 10 March 1843–14 July 1843,” p. 302, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-2-10-march-1843-14-july-1843/310>.
- 134 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 316, also “Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 3, 15 July 1843–29 February 1844,” p. 14, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-3-15-july-1843-29-february-1844/20>.
- 135 See Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*. Also see, for example, Kevin Christensen, “Truth and Method: Reflections on Dan Vogel’s Approach to the Book of Mormon,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 16, no. 1 (2004): 287–354, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol16/iss1/15/>.
- 136 See Kevin Christensen, “Biblical Keys for Discerning True and False Prophets”, FAIR—Faithful Answers, Informed Response, https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Biblical_Keys_for_Discerning_True_and_False_Prophets/Seeing_the_truth.
- 137 Rather than in the introduction, Barker places information on “lost teachings” in the conclusion (pp. 279–82 of *The Older Testament*), that is, *after* her investigation and presentation of the evidence.
- 138 Eliason, “Is the Bible Reliable?,” 170.
- 139 Barker, *The Older Testament*, 91.
- 140 Ibid., 91–92, emphasis in original.

- 141 The material in 2 Nephi 3 has been compared to the Messiah Ben Joseph traditions in Joseph F. McConkie, “Joseph Smith as Found in Ancient Manuscripts,” in *Isaiah and the Prophets: Inspired Voices from the Old Testament*, eds. Monte S. Nyman, Charles D. Tate. Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1984), 11–31, <https://rsc.byu.edu/isaiah-prophets/joseph-smith-found-ancient-manuscripts>.
- 142 Barker, *The Older Testament*, 92.
- 143 Ibid., 93.
- 144 Ibid., 94.
- 145 Ibid., 95. Compare Moses 1 and Abraham 3–4.
- 146 Barker, *The Older Testament*, 95.
- 147 See Peterson, “Nephi and His Asherah,” 209–18. See also Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt, “‘His Secret is with the Righteous’: Instructional Wisdom in the Book of Mormon,” *FARMS Occasional Papers* #5 (2007): 49–83, archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20130701164749/http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/papers/?paperID=9&chapterID=74>. The document is also available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Fg1zuabUj5r156AhrIRlGAfUgBzdQpQL/view>.
- 148 Barker, *The Older Testament*, 95.
- 149 Ibid., 96.
- 150 Ibid., 97.
- 151 Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah: The Book of Mormon in the Modern World* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), 283–96.
- 152 See Kevin Christensen, “The Temple, Monarchy, and Wisdom,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, JoAnn H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 502–504, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/39/>.
- 153 Hugh Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 551.
- 154 Peterson, “Nephi and His Asherah.”
- 155 Val Larsen, “Hidden in Plain View: Mother in Heaven in Scripture,” *Square Two* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2015), <https://squaretwo.org/Sq2ArticleLarsenHeavenlyMother.html#backfrom104;>

- and Val Larsen, “Josiah to Zoram to Sherem to Jarom and the Big Little Book of Omni,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 44 (2021): 217–64, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/josiah-to-zoram-to-sherem-to-jarom-and-the-big-little-book-of-omni/>.
- 156 Von Feldt, “‘His Secret is with the Righteous,’” 49–83, and Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt, “Does God Have a Wife?,” review of *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*, by William G. Dever, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 19, no. 1 (2007): 81–118, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol19/iss1/10/>.”
- 157 Taylor Halverson, “Reading 1 Nephi with Wisdom,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016): 279–93, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/reading-1-nephi-with-wisdom/>.
- 158 Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*, 154.
- 159 Consider too, whether the full A-to-Z list of contributors to *Interpreter* and other Latter-day Saint publications are best described as a “void.” See “Journal Author Index,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/indexes/journal-author-index/>.
- 160 Eliason, “Is the Bible Reliable?,” 170–71.
- 161 Ibid., 171n30, citing Taylor Petrey for the observation.
- 162 Ibid., 174.
- 163 Ibid., 172–73.
- 164 Ibid., 174.
- 165 Ibid., 175.
- 166 Rappleye, “The Deuteronomist Reforms,” 97.
- 167 Eliason, “Is the Bible Reliable?,” 175.
- 168 See, for example, John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/42/>. Also see John W. Welch, “The Temple in the Book of Mormon: The Temples at the Cities of Nephi, Zarahemla and Bountiful” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994), 297–387, and D. John Butler, *Plain and Precious*

Things: The Temple Religion of the Book of Mormon's Visionary Men (self-published, 2012).

- 169 Eliason, "Is the Bible Reliable?," 175.
- 170 On Mormon as an editor with a distinct perspective, see Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 89–120; and Lisa Bolin Hawkins and Gordon C. Thomasson, "I Only Am Escaped Alone to Tell Thee: Survivor Witnesses in the Book of Mormon" (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1984), <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/i-only-am-escaped-alone-tell-thee-survivor-witnesses-book-mormon>.
- 171 Eliason, "Is the Bible Reliable?," 175.
- 172 See also the video "How Does the Doctrine of Christ Relate to the Ancient Temple," Book of Mormon Central, March 3, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHieRKUC6kU>. Further, see Kevin and Shauna Christensen, "Nephite Feminism Revisited" in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 10, no. 2 (1998): 9–61, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol10/iss2/5/>. Also consider D&C 1:26, "inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed."
- 173 See Christensen, "Prophets and Kings."
- 174 Eliason, "Is the Bible Reliable?," 177.
- 175 Ibid., 180.
- 176 Ibid., 181.
- 177 Smith, "Huldah's Long Shadow," discussed in Eliason, "Is the Bible Reliable?," 179–80.
- 178 Christensen, "Biblical Keys."
- 179 Eliason, "Is the Bible Reliable?," 17.
- 180 Ibid., 177. How would Eliason respond to a BYU student who applied the same rhetoric to the claims of Jesus or Joseph Smith, that perhaps what they claim is too good to be true?
- 181 I have drawn on a partial list from Robert L. Leahy, Stephen J. F. Holland, and Lata K. McGinn, *Treatment Plans and Interventions for Depression and Anxiety Disorders* (New York: Guilford Press, 2012).

- 182 Sandra Silva Casabianca, “15 Cognitive Distortions to Blame for Negative Thinking,” PsychCentral.com, (website), January 10, 2022, <https://psychcentral.com/lib/cognitive-distortions-negative-thinking>.
- 183 Christensen, *Paradigms Regained*, 86.
- 184 Kuhn, *Scientific Revolutions*, 111
- 185 Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2007), 33.
- 186 Ibid., 10.
- 187 Ibid., 43.
- 188 Barker, *The Older Testament*, 20–21.
- 189 “Barker, “The Fragrant Tree,” 59.
- 190 Von Feldt, “Does God Have a Wife?,” 101.
- 191 Barker, *The Older Testament*, 128.
- 192 Margaret Barker, “Isaiah,” *Eerdman’s Commentary on the Bible*, eds. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman’s, 2003), 535.
- 193 Hugh W. Nibley, “A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price: Conclusion: Taking Stock,” *Improvement Era* 73, no. 5 (May 1970): 84, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/new-look-pearl-great-price-conclusion-taking-stock>.
- 194 Rappleye, “Deuteronomist Reforms,” 98.
- 195 John W. Welch, “Enoch Translated,” review of *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* by George W. E. Nickelsburg, ed. Klaus Baltzer, *FARMS Review* 16, no. 1 (2004): 413–17, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1587&context=msr>.
- 196 Welch, “Enoch Translated,” 416–17.
- 197 Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 49.
- 198 Ibid., 8.
- 199 For example, *1 Enoch* 24:2–25:7 and *1 Nephi* 11:1–25.
- 200 For example, *1 Enoch* 94:6–96:8 compared to *2 Nephi* 9:30–38.
- 201 Christensen, *Paradigms Regained*, “The Holy One of Israel,” 51–51, and “The Lord and the Heavenly Hosts,” 23–25.

- 202 Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 276–81.
- 203 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, “Ancient Affinities within the LDS Book of Enoch Part Two” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 30–31, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/ancient-affinities-within-the-lds-book-of-enoch-part-two/>. More recently, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Moses 6–7 and the Book of Giants: Remarkable Witnesses of Enoch’s Ministry,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 48 (2021): 95–312, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/moses-6-7-and-the-book-of-giants-remarkable-witnesses-of-enochs-ministry/>. See also Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Enoch and the Gathering of Zion: The Witness of Ancient Texts for Modern Scripture (Companions to the Book of Moses)* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2021).
- 204 Jeff Lindsay and Noel 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/>.
- 205 Margaret Barker, “Interview: Margaret Barker, Theologian,” interview by Terrence Handley McMath, *Church Times*, Jan. 20, 2017, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2017/20-january/features/interviews/interview-margaret-barker-theologian>.

“ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT OF REVELATION AND PROPHECY”: ALMA₂’S PROPHETIC WARNING OF CHRIST’S COMING TO THE LEHITES (AND OTHERS)

Scott Stenson

Abstract: *Some students of the Book of Mormon have felt that while the coming of the Lord to the Lehites was clearly revealed to and taught by Nephi₁, those prophecies having to do with the subject may not have been widely circulated or continuously preserved among the Nephites, while others have argued for continuity of knowledge about Nephi₁’s prophecies among writers and their contemporary audiences. Reexamination of the Book of Mormon in light of these issues reveals that the teaching that Christ would appear among the Lehites was actually taught with some consistency by Alma₂ and was, it would seem, common knowledge among the Nephites. It appears that the predicted coming was well established, even if the nature of it was not. Specifically, I argue that Alma₂ often taught of the coming of Christ to the Lehites but in context with other events such as Jesus’s coming to the Jews and to others not of the known fold. To make this case, I concentrate on Alma₂’s writings, especially those in Alma 5 (borrowing liberally also from Alma 7, 13, 16, 39, Helaman 16:4–5, 13–14, and 3 Nephi 8–10). Alma 5 houses many prophetic statements that urgently point to the coming of the Lord to the Nephite church. The value of this approach is to attempt to demonstrate that Alma 5 contains more than has been supposed and, in effect, challenges claims for discontinuity in the middle portion of the Nephite record. This approach should tend to renew our interest in the other nuanced teachings of the prophet Alma₂ and others.*

Yea, thus sayeth the Spirit: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand; yea, the Son of God cometh in his glory, in his might, majesty, power, and dominion. Yea, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, that the

Spirit sayeth: Behold the glory of the King of all the earth; and also the King of heaven shall very soon shine forth among all the children of men. (Alma 5:50)

This representative passage above from Alma₂'s sermon at Zarahemla is taken from the middle portion of the Book of Mormon. It is one of many such passages. It demonstrates that the anticipated coming of the Lord, an important subject to Nephite believers,¹ was nevertheless a complex doctrine with implications beyond Jesus's birth, life, and atoning sacrifice. This scripture suggests that the "Son of God" (Alma 5:50), whom Alma₂ in the same sermon repeatedly refers to as the "good shepherd," would personally minister — "shine forth among ... the children of men" — unto many peoples, some of whom had been prepared by intense prophetic and angelic activity to receive him and his word/voice (Alma 5:38–39, 41, 57, 60).² Alma₂ himself urgently prepares "[his] people" for the approaching event (Alma 5:51). Indeed, the Lord's semi-universal first coming to the earth ("semi-universal" refers to His ministry after the Resurrection to other select peoples around the earth, including the Nephites and Lamanites) is described at points like the universal Second Coming itself, full of power and glory. Alma 13:22, 24 (verses taken from Alma₂'s contemporary teachings to Ammonihah) demonstrate certain factors potentially affecting our understanding of this significant subject. In Alma 13, we learn that angels were visiting "all nations" before the Lord was born among the Jews (Alma 13:22; see also Alma 10:20–21). We learn that the Nephites were not only apprised of Jesus's pending coming among the Jews and his redemption for all men — the "glad tidings" — but also that he would come "among all his people, yea, even to them that are scattered abroad upon the face of the earth" (Alma 13:22). They would receive from him "his word at the time of his coming in his [resurrected] glory" (Alma 13:22, 24).³ Alma₂'s

1. The Nephite interest in the subject of Christ's coming can in part be attributed to the fact that they kept the Law of Moses and possessed an extensive account of the prophetic teachings on the brass plates. The Nephites were aware that they had been broken off from the house of Israel and that their salvation and restoration, according to the covenants made to the fathers, centered in and depended upon Christ.

2. The work of angels (and prophets) is to literally prepare the way of the Lord (see Mosiah 3:13).

3. This teaching, in the form of the words of Zenos cited in 1 Nephi 19:10–11, would have been available to Alma₂ on the brass plates. It also was available to him on the small plates of Nephi₁.

teachings are consistent with Nephi₁'s (and Zenos's) but, surprisingly, may reach even further than his focus on the Lord's coming to the seed of Lehi₁.

Alma₂'s prophecies concerning the coming of the Lord to the Lehites (and others) are the subject of this paper. I will suggest that the small plates of Nephi₁ correspond with, and thus may have influenced, Alma₂'s teachings on this subject. Alma₂ may have been introduced to this subject through the many records his people inherited (it likely also belonged to Nephite oral tradition), but it seems to have been spiritually confirmed to him by the "Holy Spirit of God" (Alma 5:46). Here, it is my primary claim that these truths were generally known by Alma₂ and his people. And yet, he sought to better understand them that he might prepare his people for Christ's coming to them. He came to understand certain related truths for himself, it would seem, by cultivating the spirit of revelation and prophecy. Although Alma₂ powerfully taught the urgency of preparing for the Lord's visit to them, he does not appear to know exactly *when* or *how* it would occur. The event, it seems, was anticipated by the faithful, but no one can explain it with precision.⁴ This ambiguity around the precise nature of the predicted event may account for why the subject was not more frequently and plainly referenced after Nephi₁.⁵ A secondary objective of this study will be to demonstrate, using scriptures attributed to Alma₂ and others (see Alma 5, 7, 13, 16, 39, Helaman 16:4–5, 13–14, and 3 Nephi 8–10), the semi-universal nature of the Lord's ministry in the first century. Alma₂ appears to teach the post-resurrection ministry of Christ better than anyone (including Nephi₁) before the other-sheep doctrine is clearly expounded in 3 Nephi 15. In short, I argue for doctrinal continuity between at least Nephi₁ and Alma₂, if not also through 3 Nephi 11.

Alma₂ possessed in great measure what he termed the "spirit of revelation and prophecy" (Alma 4:20). His initial sermons in the Book of Mormon are bracketed by the idea (Alma 4:20; Alma 43:2). The Holy Spirit often inspired Alma₂, opening his mouth that he might declare the truth in the present and prophesy of the future. His sermons are

4. The question in part is how to reconcile temporally and geographically the Lord's atonement in the Old World with his ministry in the New World.

5. I imagine the Nephite relationship to the doctrine of the Lord's coming to them to be much like Latter-day Saints' relationship to the doctrine of the Second Coming. We know it is going to occur, but when and how and how many visits will be involved are not known. We have a certainty of it happening but tend to teach it in a way that does not get too specific, since we do not understand the specifics.

among the most fascinating and intricate in scripture. Most of them appear in the first half of the book of Alma, where the editor and historian, Mormon, appears to provide them to his audience without much commentary. Significantly, each of them touches on the coming of Christ, but none perhaps as powerfully as that found in Alma 5. In Mosiah 27, we first encounter the newly converted Alma₂ as he comforts his father and confesses his sins to those persons assembled after the stunning visitation and exhortation of the angel to him and the sons of Mosiah. In Alma 5–14, we see Alma₂ urgently admonish the Nephites in Zarahemla (Alma 5), Gideon (Alma 7), and Ammonihah (Alma 9:8–30; 12:2, 12:3–13:30) to repent and be born again. In Alma 32:8–33:23, we find his discourse to the “poor in heart” among the Zoramites. In Alma 36–42, we discover his fatherly counsel to his three sons, Helaman (Alma 36–37), Shiblon (Alma 38), and Corianton (Alma 39–42). Although this is not an exhaustive accounting of all of Alma₂’s experiences and words in the Book of Mormon, this summary situates some of his most important teachings and prophecies. These recorded sermons and prophecies are remarkably textured and nuanced. Each one is grounded in the written word of God and presumably in the oral teachings of the Nephite fathers, and yet they, as indicated, may expand certain doctrinal subjects even further.⁶

Like King Benjamin, Alma₂ was custodian of the Nephite records and national artifacts, including the small plates of Nephi₁. Whether these plates were seamlessly transmitted from Nephi₁ to later writers (those of the middle period of the Book of Mormon) has been a point of discussion among scholars, one not without important interpretive implications. At least one scholar has advocated for *continuity* while many others have

6. For an in-depth structural analysis of the book of Alma one may consult Joseph M. Spencer’s work on the subject. Joseph M. Spencer, *The Anatomy of Book of Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2021), 1:105–15. Robert A. Rees has written that the book of Alma represents an “archetypal conflict” between “word and sword.” He states that Mormon includes five sermons from Alma₂ in the book of Alma. Included also is the reference to Alma₂’s words to his son, Corianton. Robert A. Rees, “Alma the Younger’s Seminal Sermon at Zarahemla,” in *Bountiful Harvest: Essays in Honor of S. Kent Brown*, ed. Andrew C. Skinner, D. Morgan Davis, and Carl Griffin (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2011), 329–31, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?filename=17&article=1016&context=mi&type=additional>. John W. Welch has said that Alma₂ may have as many as “ten speeches” in the Book of Mormon, “not to mention several other shorter ... texts.” John W. Welch, “The Testimony of Alma: ‘Give Ear to My Words,’” *Religious Educator* 11, no. 2 (July 2010): 69.

perceived *discontinuity* in the transmission of scriptural records, and thus in the transmission of doctrine. This second perspective is the more commonly held view and has much merit. Specifically, Matthew Roper favors basic continuity.⁷ Those who advocate for discontinuity include Brent Metcalfe,⁸ Rebecca Roesler,⁹ Grant Hardy,¹⁰ and others. I suggest, not unlike Roper, that the case for discontinuity of transmission bears the greater burden of proof. Roper asserts that the Book of Mormon clearly teaches that Christ's coming to the Lehighes was known and taught by Alma₂ during the middle period of the Book of Mormon. In some deference to those persons who subscribe to discontinuity (a claim that in no way threatens the veracity of the Nephite record), I am less confident in the straightforwardness of the record than Roper appears to be. Continuity is present, but in certain places must be teased out by a close reading. Thus, I differ from Roper (and the others) in at least three ways: 1) although I accept the continuity claim, I am less sure that continuity is as obviously manifest as Roper indicates; 2) my effort is to suggest that Alma 5 is a text that demonstrates both continuity and Alma₂'s further search for a more refined and expanded understanding (Roper does not explore Alma 5, though he cites it); and 3) I assert that Alma₂'s apparent confusion or reticence in part stems from his strong sense that the prophecies touch on more than the Lord's life in Palestine, even reaching perhaps beyond his own land. The prophecies describe the coming of the Lord in the first century in a complex and even somewhat universal way. This argument for Alma₂'s sense of a semi-universal coming, and the enigmatic times and seasons associated with it, appear to have led Alma₂ to wonder about those truths his fathers had taught about Christ's coming to the Jews, to them, and perhaps to others.

7. Matthew Roper, "A More Perfect Priority?," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6, no. 1 (1994): 362–78, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol6/iss1/12/>.

8. 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), 395–444.

9. Rebecca A. Roesler, "Plain and Precious Things Lost: The Small Plates of Nephite," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 52, no. 2 (2019): 85–106, <https://doi.org/10.5406/dialjmormthou.52.2.0085>.

10. Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 180–84.

The Case for Discontinuity

Those scholars who subscribe to discontinuity cite problem passages such as those below. In general, the argument for discontinuity understands the relative silence of the Book of Mormon text after Nephi₁ as grounds for suggesting the loss of the small plates of Nephi₁ or the neglect of them during the middle portion of the Book of Mormon.¹¹ For instance, Roesler in her response to the debate between Metcalfe and Roper and their schools of thought seems to confuse the content of some of the passages she cites. For example, she writes, “He [Alma₂] does not know when Christ would come (Alma 13:25), how the event would happen (Alma 7:8), or details as to the timing of the Resurrection (Alma 40:4–5).”¹² But the lack of specific knowledge of timing shown in Alma 40:4–5 is about the distant future event when “all shall come forth from the dead” (Alma 40:4), not the Resurrection of Christ. Alma₂’s uncertainty in Alma 7:8, discussed hereafter, is not about the timing of Christ’s birth, but about whether or not Christ’s coming to the Lehighes would be during his mortal life. Alma 13:25 is given emphasis in Roesler’s arguments for discontinuity as she later discusses Nephi₁’s six-hundred-year prophecy presumably about the birth of Christ, then quotes Alma 13:25 and concludes, “If Alma₂ searched the records available to him, he makes no indication of it.”¹³ She assumes Alma 13:25 is about the birth of Christ, but as with the other arguments for discontinuity, this is not supported by the cited verse, for the previous verse (Alma 13:24) gives context that contradicts Roesler’s interpretation:

For behold, angels are declaring it [the day of salvation] unto many at this time in our land; *and this is for the purpose of preparing the hearts of the children of men to receive his word at the time of his coming in his glory.*

And now we only await to hear the joyful news declared unto us by the mouth of angels, *of his [actual] coming*; for the time cometh, we know not how soon. Would to God it might be in my day; but let it be sooner or later, in it I will rejoice. (Alma 13:24–25)

The coming of Christ that Alma₂ is looking forward to is not his humble birth, but “his coming *in his glory*,” apparently a glorious

11. Roesler, “Plain and Precious Things,” 89–95, 98–100.

12. Ibid., 90.

13. Ibid. 93.

post-Resurrection visitation, as described in 3 Nephi, for which the people “in our [the Nephite’s] land” would need to be prepared so that they could receive Christ’s word at that time. While the timing of the birth of Christ was prophesied by Nephi₁, there was not a specific time given for his death, resurrection, or post-resurrection ministry. Alma₂’s unawareness of the details in timing for those events, however, does not imply ignorance of the small plates.

Roesler claims that Alma₂ does not understand the coming of the Lord to the Lehites until Alma 16:20. The problem is that he has alluded to it since at least Alma 5. Moreover, Alma 5–16 is a block of scripture that may read as one chronological unit: Alma₂’s tour of the church to regulate its congregations. Roesler seems to read Alma 37 and Alma 40 from a latter-day perspective. However, Alma 37:10–12 appears to refer to a non-latter-day work among the Lamanites. She judges Alma 40 in light of her knowledge of the doctrines involved. In short, Alma₂ understands the records and the resurrection but is disabusing his son’s mind about doctrinal complexities he has apparently encountered while among the Zoramites. Roesler does make many excellent points in her argument about variation, complexity, and development, but in the end, does not establish discontinuity. Indeed, she neglects some textual evidence for continuity even as she cites passages in support of her claim. For example, Alma 37 directly alludes to 1 Nephi 5 and the small plates record, as I will discuss later. Roesler accounts for the allusion by speculating about what was on the large plates of Nephi₁ and what must have belonged to the oral tradition. Ultimately it does not matter how doctrines came down to Alma₂ as long as he more or less had them. Continuity is continuity.

Those who argue for continuity find it hard to set aside the passages that positively address the subject after Nephi₁, some rather plainly. In what follows, then, I will briefly address these before moving forward (items 3 and 4 on the list below come *after* Alma₂’s writings, and therefore, are not of great concern here, although I will offer some suggestions that may begin to answer those understandable objections.) Even though I subscribe to continuity, I fully acknowledge that the character of the Book of Mormon on this subject of the Lord’s coming to the Lehites is a messy business. Here are some of the most common concerns about continuity phrased as questions:

1. Why would Nephi₁’s (and Lehi₁’s) plain prophecies that the Lord would come to earth six hundred years from the time of their departure from Jerusalem not be used after Nephi₁’s

writing if the small plates were passed down and widely circulated (see 1 Nephi 10:4; 1 Nephi 19:8; 2 Nephi 25:19)?¹⁴

2. Why does Alma₂ suggest that he does not know whether the Lord will come to them, given how plain Nephi₁ was on the matter? He reportedly says this in Alma 7:8: “as to this thing [whether Christ will come to his people or not] I do not know.” Alma₂ then exhorts the people of Gideon to “Repent ... and prepare the way of the Lord ... for behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth” (Alma 7:9). The statement that “the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth” is ambivalent. Exactly how will he come and to whom?
3. Why would Mormon describe the people in Helaman 16:18–20 (about the time of Samuel the Lamanite) as though they were not aware of the Lord’s coming to them?¹⁵
4. Why would the people gathered near the temple at Bountiful mistake Jesus for an “angel” at his coming if they were aware of the prophecies concerning his coming to them? (see 3 Nephi 11:8)

14. In his article, Roper quotes Metcalfe as saying, “Alma, Benjamin, and their audiences did not know what Lehi₁, Nephi₁, an angel, anonymous Old-World prophets, and their sacred literature had known with certainty: that Jesus would be born six hundred years after the Lehighites departed for the Americas.” Metcalfe, Roper says, understands the Book of Mormon’s “purported anomalies” from a “naturalistic paradigm” that reads the Nephite record as a “fictional nineteenth-century narrative.” Roper acknowledges ambiguities but attempts to demonstrate that Metcalfe’s arguments can be easily refuted. Roper does acknowledge that Metcalfe raises a valid point about the six-hundred-years prophecy. Why would Lehi₁ and Nephi₁’s plain teachings on the Lord’s coming to the Old World not be specifically referenced by “Benjamin and Alma₂”? Roper unconvincingly speculates that the knowledge of Christ’s coming to the Jews was “considered a mystery, reserved for the faithful.” Roper, “More Perfect Priority,” 362–66.

15. Unbelief so often leads to misunderstanding. There is an irony in the passage as I read it. We have other accounts of unbelievers misunderstanding the ways of the Lord (see Alma 9:1–5; also Helaman 8:27–9:17). It is interesting to note that Helaman 4–5 follows a pattern established in Alma 4–5. Indeed, the writings of Helaman₂ in Mormon’s hands intersect with the prophecies of many prophets, including Nephi₁ (Zenos), Jacob (Zenos), Mosiah₂, and Alma₂. Helaman 16 begins with true prophecy and ends with conspiracy theories among the wicked. The wicked suggest that the Lord will not come among them, and yet they leave the door open when they say, in effect, that if it does appear to happen, we will know that it is “the cunning and mysterious arts of the evil one” (Helaman 16:21).

With such questions before us, it may be wise to acknowledge that the “Book of Mormon story is *not* structured around a *straightforward expectation* of Jesus’s post-resurrection appearance among the Nephites,”¹⁶ as Grant Hardy claims. But as I will demonstrate there is discernible continuity across the middle portion of the Nephite record. Granted, these passages can be easily misunderstood. Nevertheless, I believe that they may be at least partially explained. As mentioned, though, I make only a partial attempt here to answer the concerns that have to do with the Nephite expectation of the Lord’s visit after Alma₂ (i.e., Helaman 16:18–20 and 3 Nephi 11:8–12.). I do this to keep the focus on Alma₂ and so that this project does not get too lengthy. Finally, it may very well be that a conscientiousness of those prophecies anticipating the Lord’s coming to the Lehiters waned during the decades of greatest conflict and wickedness *after* Alma₂ but *before* the Lord’s coming to Bountiful. That may be the case, but that is not my sense of it for the following reasons.

The Six-Hundred-Years Prophecy

The six-hundred-years prophecy appears three times in the Book of Mormon and all references to it are located in Nephi₁’s writings (see 1 Nephi 10:4; 1 Nephi 19:8; and 2 Nephi 25:19). For good reason, then, this has led the scholars advocating discontinuity to assume that knowledge of this category of prophecy (those referencing the six hundred years) was lost to the Nephites sometime after Nephi₁’s day. Indeed, other writers after Nephi₁ who speak of Christ’s coming do not seem to be aware of it or, at least, they do not allude to it. The six-hundred-years prophecy, however, anticipates the coming of Christ “*among the Jews*” (and, as indicated, may or may not refer to the *birth of the Lord*). One wonders if this language is a reference to the Lord’s birth or to his ministry? There is nothing in the phrase “raise up” that suggests it should refer to Christ’s birth instead of the time of his ministry. If the Nephites were not sure what specifically was to occur after six hundred years, the prophecy becomes much less useful for advocates of discontinuity.

Nephi₁ reports at the beginning of his own account that his father declared the following concerning the Jews in Jerusalem:

Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord raise up among the Jews — even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world. ...

16. Hardy, *Understanding*, 182, emphasis added.

And he [Lehi₁] spake also concerning a prophet [John the Baptist] 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 shoes latchet I am unworthy to unloose. And much spake my father concerning this thing. (1 Nephi 10:4, 7–8)

This same prophecy is referenced again in 1 Nephi 19:8 and 2 Nephi 25:19. It marks time from the departure of Lehi₁ from Jerusalem (specific point in time) until the time a “prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews” (not citing the number of years or any other specific indicators of time). To use this prophecy to mark the coming of the Lord to the Lehitese seems to be problematic at best, since neither Nephi₁ nor his prophetic successors become specific about the timing of that separate event. The chronological relationship between the Lord’s coming to the Lehitese and the raising up of a prophet “among the Jews” is not discussed in the Book of Mormon. Nevertheless, why the later writers of the Book of Mormon after Nephi₁ do not reference this six-hundred-years prophecy directly is still an open question, but not one that negates the multiple predictions of the Lord’s coming to the Lehitese found after Nephi₁.

Alma 7:8

Similarly, the scholars espousing discontinuity have, in my judgment, misappropriated Alma 7:8. Alma 7:8 is one of the best examples of complexity within the text over this issue of the Lord’s coming to the Jews as opposed to the Lehitese. Citing Alma 7:8, for instance, Hardy asserts that even though Nephi₁ had plainly and repeatedly announced that the Lord would come to his own people (some five times), Alma₂ “does not know whether Jesus will come to the Nephites.” Hardy says, “he [Alma₂] later receives a revelation that this would be the case (Alma 45:10).”¹⁷ (Roesler places this revelatory shift in Alma₂’s paradigm at Alma 16.)

However, it becomes apparent that Hardy and Roesler have for the sake of argument chosen to overlook an important theological qualifier in Alma 7:8. Alma₂ has not said, “I do not say that he [Jesus] will come among us,” but he has characteristically clarified the extent of

17. Ibid.

his understanding using these words: “I do not say that he [Jesus] will come among us *at the time of his dwelling in his mortal tabernacle*.” The qualifying phrase — “at the time of his dwelling in his mortal tabernacle” — implies that Jesus, from Alma₂’s perspective, may come before or after that time, but likely not while he is tabernacled in mortal clay. Nevertheless, this qualifying detail with doctrinal implications is only of secondary importance in the passage, though of primary importance in this argument.

While in Gideon, Alma₂ has already clearly announced that there is “one thing of more importance than they all.” Using this language, he indirectly refers to that which the Lord will perform “among *his people* [the Jews]”: the blood atonement and resurrection (Alma 7:6–7, 10–13). So, in Alma 7:8 Alma₂ alludes to his knowledge of the Lord’s coming to Alma₂’s own people, even as he emphasizes Jesus’s coming to the Jews. Alma 7:8 gives us a glimpse into Alma₂’s potential gaps in doctrinal understanding. That is, Alma₂ is aware of the Lord’s coming to his people (Nephites), but he does not seem secure in his sense of its exact timing and nature. Thus, rather than say that the text is disjointed or disorienting (that is right to an extent), it might be more helpful to say that the qualifier in Alma 7:8 and its immediate context should be carefully considered.

In Alma 7:9, for example, the very next verse, we learn that Alma₂ who has spoken of the coming of the Lord to the Jews and has alluded to the Lord’s coming to Alma₂’s own people before or after Jesus’s ministry among them in the flesh, has been commanded to “Cry *unto this people* [his own 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*.” Thus, Alma₂ underscores Jesus’s coming to the Jews, alludes to his coming to his (Alma₂’s) people and the urgent necessity thereof, and perhaps leaves the door open for the Lord’s post-resurrection ministry to extend even further. Alma 7:8, which, according to some, appears not to teach the coming of the Lord to the seed of Lehi, actually may allude to that, plus push the doctrine even further, since Jesus would [minister] “upon the face of the earth,” which may allow for a wider scope than we have supposed.

In contrast to Hardy and Roesler, then, I suggest that Alma₂ began his faithful inquiry into the doctrinal nuances of the coming of the Lord sometime after his conversion in Mosiah 27 but sometime before Alma 5. It is in Alma 5 that he references fasting and praying for an understanding

of the teachings of his fathers. He had presumably understood his fathers' prophetic teachings intellectually for some time, but he says that he came to know "of myself" by the "Holy Spirit of God" what he had not yet spiritually understood (Alma 5:45–47). This is not to say that Alma₂ at the time he records Alma 5 has already received a fullness of knowledge concerning his fathers' teachings, but it appears that he has come to understand for himself that Christ comes not only to the Jews to make atonement for all men but to his people, though he cannot say when or how that event will occur even after Alma 5.

Helaman 16

Helaman 16 poses some interpretive problems that are more formidable for scholars who subscribe to continuity. While Roper does not address this chapter, I believe that it may also be explained in a way that reasonably supports the claim of continuity. First, a word on the book of Helaman and the teachings of Samuel the Lamanite. Helaman, as Hardy has noted, is patterned in part after the book of Alma. That is, Mormon narratively patterns later accounts after earlier accounts. This creates unity in the record and some degree of consistency. It does not remove all complexity, however. To the contrary, it may actually create variation and complexity because it is an abridged and edited work. In Alma 5–16 the Nephite church dwindles and Alma₂ travels forth with others to strengthen it. Similarly, in Helaman the church declines and Nephi₂ and Lehi₂ and others (including Samuel the Lamanite) travel to preach and prophesy. Nephi₂ relinquishes his role as judge just as Alma₂ did. Both accounts have dramatic prison scenes, etc. Second, Samuel, instructed and sent forth by an angel, ministers to Zarahemla and Gideon as did Alma₂. His second sermon from the wall is prophetically eclectic. This may be because he speaks from the heart without prepared remarks and we do not have the full account. Samuel speaks in turn of Zarahemla's destruction by fire in not many years if the Nephites do not repent *and* of their utter destruction within four-hundred years. Samuel speaks of the signs of the Lord's birth and death, but in doing so, alludes to Nephi₁'s (Zenos's) teaching on the other sheep.¹⁸

18. It will be demonstrated later that in Helaman 14:20–29 Samuel borrows from Zenos's prophecy as recorded by Nephi₁ in 1 Nephi 19:10–11. In 1 Nephi 19:11–12, it is clear that Zenos alludes to the "other sheep" doctrine before it is called such at 3 Nephi 15:17. I can assert this because Zenos says that the Lord would "visit some with his voice" and others "with the thunderings and the lightings of his power

That is, Samuel converts the imagery of thunder and lightning (imagery found in 1 Nephi 19:10–12; 2 Nephi 26:3–9; 3 Nephi 8–10) from the middle part of his message (Helman 14:20–29) to the latter-day theme of the restoration of the Lamanites, a favorite subject of Nephi₁ and Jacob on the small plates. Perhaps reciting Nephi₁'s (Zenos's) words in proximity to Samuel's would help to establish the connection between the prophets and the doctrine.

1 Nephi 19:11–12

For thus spake the prophet: The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel *at that day* [when the sign of darkness is manifest unto those of the house of Israel scattered like so many sheep upon the isles of the sea], some with his voice, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation, *and others with the thunderings and lightings* of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of darkness, *and by the opening of the earth...*

And all these things must surely come, saith the prophet Zenos. And the *rocks of the earth must rend*.

Helaman 14:20–22

But behold, as I said concerning another sign, a sign of his death, behold, *in that day*, that he shall suffer death the sun shall be darkened and refuse to give his light unto you. ...

Yea, at the time that he [the Lord] shall yield up the ghost there shall be *thunderings and lightnings* for the space of many hours, and the earth shall shake and tremble; and the *rocks* which are upon the face of this earth, which are both above the earth and beneath, which ye know at this time are solid, or the more part of it [rocky face of the earth] one solid mass, shall be *broken up*.

Yea, they [the rocks] shall be rent *in twain*.

Although Samuel's image of thunder and lightning and rending of the rocks of the earth is more in depth than Nephi₁'s offering to us of Zenos's writings on the subject, it is hard to miss the similarities. Each

... by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of darkness." The Lord teaches that those who would hear his "voice" would be his "other sheep."

passage refers to “that day,” the sign of darkness, the “thunderings and lightnings” and the rending of the “rocks.” Mormon, as we will later see, employs the same imagery, thus compelling us to connect the prophecies — past and present — to their fulfillment at the time of Christ’s coming to the Lehighites. Samuel appears to have been influenced by either Nephi₁ or Zenos or both in his use of this imagery. All of this was fulfilled as Mormon relates later on in 3 Nephi 8–10.

That said, Helaman 16 appears to contradict the argument for continuity. In it, unbelievers seem unaware of any prophecy about the coming of the Lord to their lands. As I understand Mormon’s account, the so-called problem passage in Helaman 16:18–20 not only strongly alludes to Nephi₁’s writings (and prefigures the account of 3 Nephi) but it cites the view of unbelievers as opposed to faithful and informed members of the Nephite church.¹⁹ There were some righteous persons in Zarahemla, “this great city,” who would yet be preserved: “them will I spare” from “fire [which] should come down out of heaven” (see Helaman 12:12–14). The unbelievers undoubtedly were not as familiar with the various prophecies as the believers, much as unbelievers to this day have a tendency to misunderstand and misrepresent the beliefs of Latter-day Saints. (For instance, how many unbelievers in our day understand the scriptural prophecy that the Lord will come to a great gathering at Adam-ondi-Ahman, as in Doctrine and Covenants 116?) They had rejected the “spirit of prophecy” by which recorded prophecy is understood (Helaman 4:12, 23). In Helaman 16 the unbelievers all but admit that they are ignorant of the scriptures and prophecies. They say, “we are servants to their [our teachers] words,” “for we depend upon them to teach us the word” (Helaman 16:21). Once the unbelievers have made their case that the “tradition” that Christ is coming is a “wicked” one (Helaman 16:20), they reason that if he should come to the Jews (they seem to understand this much, even if they do not believe it) then why will he not minister also to us? (Helaman 16:18–20).

That the wicked in Helaman 16:18–20 should presuppose that the Lord would not come unto the Nephites is interesting but hardly disqualifying, since they also advocate other erroneous ideas that had

19. In Helaman, we learn that many church members in these decades before the coming of Jesus began to deny the “spirit of prophecy” (see Helaman 4:1, 11–12, and 23). Nevertheless, in time they began to “remember the prophecies of Alma, and also the words of King Benjamin” (Helaman 4:21). Belief in the prophecies continued to wane among many. Thus, they could not understand them or just forgot them (see Helaman 16:13–23).

been in circulation since at least the time of Korihor (contemporary with Alma₂). In his attack on the Nephite church, Korihor, an anti-Christ (or a man against messianic prophecy), uses a similar line of reasoning. He claims that Alma₂ and his associates have kept the people “down” in “ignorance” due to their “words” (Alma 30:23) that they might “glut [themselves] upon the labors of this people” (Alma 30:27, 31–32). This fabrication Korihor has concocted because he is possessed of a “lying spirit,” having before “put off the Spirit of God” (Alma 30:42).²⁰ Korihor, a zealous antagonist of all true prophecy, says that the church follows “the silly traditions of their fathers” concerning Christ’s coming (Alma 30:31). He needles the Nephites accordingly: “why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things? *Why do ye look for a Christ?* For no man can know of anything which is to come” (Alma 30:13). However, the account makes it clear that Korihor’s teachings (teachings imparted to him by a false angel) were a clever perversion of the truths contained in the prophecies. Like the people of Samuel’s day, Korihor would not believe in what he could not see. His method of deception (much as theirs may have been) was to use half-truths to confuse the people about the fundamental teachings of the church.²¹ The material point here is that this apparent apostate turned atheist with a particular hostility to prophecy utterly misrepresents the doctrines of the Nephite church and its leaders in the decades before the Lord’s coming to earth.

20. On the agenda of Korihor and his possible relationship to the Zoramites, see Godfrey J. Ellis, “The Rise and Fall of Korihor, a Zoramite: A New Look at the Failed Mission of an Agent of Zoram,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 48 (2021): 49–94, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-rise-and-fall-of-korihor-a-zoramite-a-new-look-at-the-failed-mission-of-an-agent-of-zoram/>.

21. Korihor summarizes some of the teachings of the church in Alma₂’s day. There is only one problem: he perverts them almost beyond recognition. At one point, Korihor says this: “Ye say that this people is a guilty and a fallen people, because of the transgression of a parent.” Then he says, “Behold, I say that a child is not guilty because of its parents” (Alma 30:25). From this disingenuous summary we can see that Korihor cunningly twists the doctrine of the Fall as taught by Alma₂ and his fathers. Men and women are fallen, yes, but they are not guilty of their first parents’ transgression. If we were to use Korihor as our sole guide, we would assume that the Nephite church believed in what is now called “original sin” and original guilt, but that was not what the fathers or others after Alma₂ had taught (see 2 Nephi 2:4, 26–27; also Helaman 15:4–16), nor what Alma₂ and his brethren taught (Alma 29:3–5; 41:2–8). According to the law of restoration, each person is free to be an agent “unto himself” (Helaman 14:30–31). Unbelievers cannot be trusted to authoritatively expound upon doctrine for obvious reasons.

Interestingly, Alma₂'s response to Korihor's campaign of confusion, misrepresentation, and lying was to ask a few simple questions. (It was a question also asked by the "high priest" in Gideon [Alma 30:22].) Once Korihor is brought to stand before him in Zarahemla, Alma₂ reminds him of his relatively recent "travels round about the land to declare the word of God," and then he sets the record straight as pertaining to the man's accusations/talking points (talking points he has come to believe for himself because of his repeated employment of them: [Alma 30:53]):

And now, if we [Alma₂ and his brethren of the church] do not receive anything for our labors in the church, what doth it profit us to labor in the church save it were to declare the truth, that we may have rejoicings *in the joy of our brethren?*

Then [Alma₂ asks his interlocutor] why sayest thou that we preach unto this people to get gain, when thou, of thyself, knowest that we receive no gain? And now, believest thou that we deceive this people, *that causes such joy in their hearts?* (Alma 30:34–35)²²

While raising these and other questions, Alma₂ testifies that he knows Christ shall come (Alma 30:39), suggesting that the church's focus on the coming of Christ at that season was a source of great joy to the people of the Nephite church. The anticipation of the Lord's coming to earth presumably has created an unusual excitement among the church members, even though it is decades before the Lord actually arrives among them. They seem to anticipate his coming to the Jews, and given their great excitement and the nature of the prophecies that were available to them, they are particularly thrilled that the Lord will visit them. That Korihor has chosen to attack this righteous people's interest in the prophecies of Christ's coming is suggestive that he believes (and Satan knows) that if he can cast doubt here that he will succeed in his quest to destroy the work of God.

22. Although this passage does not specifically state that Alma₂ spoke of "glad tidings" (we have seen that he declared them elsewhere before we encounter the story of Korihor), just nine chapters later (about the same time) he does speak to Corianton about the "glad tidings" of Christ's ministry and mission among the Jews in context with the Lord's coming to the Lehites (see Alma 39:15–19). Alma₂ says that Corianton was to declare these glad tidings among "this people" that "they may prepare the minds of their children to hear the word at the time of his coming" among them. Glad tidings, joy, and/or rejoicing are often associated with these doctrines (see Alma 13:22–25).

The material above demonstrates that it is not disconcerting that the unbelievers in Samuel's day appear to teach concepts that contradict the prophecies as expounded through the generations by Alma₂ and his fathers. Like Korihor, they have developed their talking-points, and because of their repeated use, they (it would appear) have become integrated into their understanding despite the believers' teachings and objections to the contrary. It is as if the unbelievers teach what they want to believe and have no interest in the spirit of truth.

In Helaman 16, Mormon appears to include what he calls the "foolish and vain" imaginations of the unbelievers (in their own words) to create a sense of dramatic irony in his narrative account. He is a historian, but he is also telling a story in a way that dramatizes the deception and ignorance of those who oppose the prophets and their words.²³ Mormon seeks to prove that the word of prophecy is sure and to demonstrate the manifest ignorance of the unbelievers, who are not even aware of the ridiculous nature of their reasoning. It is admittedly less clear, however, why Samuel may not directly refer to the Lord's coming to them in Helaman 13–15. As indicated, he appears to have desired to do so, but when rejected, he returns with another message, one of destruction by fire if they do not repent. Samuel cries unto the people of Zarahemla, "repent and prepare the way of the Lord" lest ye be "hewn down and cast into the fire" (Helman 14:18; here he speaks of the ultimate spiritual death). In many ways his teachings anticipate the events of 3 Nephi even as they allude to the prophecies of that very coming. Samuel appears

23. Mormon also uses the account of Korihor to dramatize the fate of those who oppose prophecy. Korihor suffers poetic justice by being reduced to a beggar who goes about from "house to house" and who is eventually "trodden down, even until he was dead" while among the Zoramites (Alma 30:58–59; see also Ellis, "Rise and Fall"). This horrible ending is likely included to demonstrate the fate of those who oppose prophecy. It dramatically illustrates the justice of God upon those who deceive the people and misrepresent his servants. Incidentally, it appears that the Zoramites among whom Korihor begs and is killed are likely composed of separatists from Zarahemla. They may even include some of those who were present in Zarahemla when Alma₂ delivered his message to the church (see Alma 5). His final exhortation while in Zarahemla was to "be ye separate" (Alma 5:57). The Zoramites have separated themselves from their own brethren. They may have done this as an ironic gesture in response to Alma₂'s teaching. Of course, Alma₂ would have rather that they repented and prepared themselves for that which is to come. Instead, though, they have separated and entered into "great errors" and inscrutable ideas about God (and Christ) and matters such as the resurrection (Alma 31:9). Like the people in Samuel's day, "they did pervert the ways of the Lord in very many instances" (Alma 31:11).

to be one of those “just and holy men” that Alma₂ said the Lord would send to prepare the way of the Lord closer to his coming (Alma 13:26). Finally, it should be remembered that we do not have all of Samuel’s words. Most importantly, we do not have his initial sermon when he spoke of glad tidings (we may get a glimpse at this initial material in Helaman 14:2–13).

3 Nephi 11

In 3 Nephi 11:2, 10, the multitude gathered at the temple were believers discussing the “sign [that] had been given [by the prophets]” and were only temporarily confused at the descent of the angel-figure who identified himself as “Jesus Christ, *whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.*”²⁴ This is not surprising given, as I will demonstrate, that there had been much angelic activity in the land in preparation for the Lord’s coming. The multitude’s disorientation does not suggest that they were not aware of the Lord’s eventual coming to them. The sign of three days of darkness (and Jesus’s resurrection [see 2 Nephi 26:3, 8]) had been spoken of long before Samuel the Lamanite by Nephi₁ (Zenos) in context with the Lord’s planned appearances to the house of Israel (see 1 Nephi 19:10–11; also 2 Nephi 26:3, 8–9). As mentioned, Samuel had called upon these writings. He also gives the prophecies of the Lord’s birth a temporal specificity (something Alma₂ does not do): he declares that Christ will be born in “five years” (Helaman 14:2).²⁵ It appears, though, that neither Alma₂ nor Samuel has a clear sense of *how and when* he would visit them.²⁶ The argument against continuity through the middle portion of the Book of Mormon largely rests on textual complexity and what Roper calls the “argument from silence.”²⁷

Despite my defense of modified continuity, I can understand objections to the contrary given these problem passages. Because of

24. Here, Jesus seems to suggest that his coming to them was foretold by their prophets (see 3 Nephi 11:12).

25. Among the Nephites, at least initially, the understanding had been that the Lord would come into the world “six hundred years from the time [Lehi:] left Jerusalem” (see 1 Nephi 10:4; 1 Nephi 19:8; 2 Nephi 25:19). This does not suggest that they knew precisely when he would visit.

26. Mormon later appears to point his reader to the plainest of the early prophecies of Christ’s birth in 3 Nephi 1:1 when he announces: “it was six hundred years from the time Lehi left Jerusalem.” It seems that the Nephites in Alma₂’s (and Samuel’s) day had a clear sense of the time of his birth but were not clear about when and how Jesus would come among them after his resurrection.

27. Roper, “More Perfect Priority,” 363.

Alma₂'s regard for the written word (and the oral teachings of his prophet-fathers), it is admittedly odd that he and others on occasion can seem unaware of or somewhat confused about that which Nephi₁ taught (see the passages just presented).²⁸ There are many passages (some even long stretches of text, as we have seen) where the doctrine of the Lord's coming to the Lehites could be directly alluded to or plainly taught but is not (see Alma 32–34 and Helaman 7–15). Hardy articulates the general position of those belonging to the school of discontinuity. He has observed Alma₂'s and others' seeming confusion or reluctance in the material concerning the coming of the Lord to the Lehites. This is his conclusion:

Although the Book of Mormon contains some three dozen prophecies of Christ's coming, the vast majority concern his life in Palestine — that he would be born, receive baptism, work miracles, be slain for the sins of the world, and then rise from the dead. Only five passages indicate that his ministry would include a post-resurrection visit to the New World. Nephi had spoken plainly on the subject (1 Nephi 12:4–7; 2 Nephi 26:1–9, 32:6),²⁹ *but these prophecies apparently did not have wide distribution*. As late as 83 BC Alma explicitly states that he does not know whether Jesus will come to the Nephites (Alma 7:8), though he later would receive a revelation that this would be the case (Alma 45:10), and Mormon reports that other prophets at the time 'taught that he [Christ] would appear unto them after his resurrection (Alma 16:20).³⁰

The above passages from Nephi₁ (and the others) that Hardy points to are not as plain as they would seem. Each passage suggests that Nephi₁ taught his people that the Lord would visit them in the land of promise. While 1 Nephi 12:4–7 seems to describe a single visit after much destruction, 2 Nephi 26:1–9 (a parallel passage) appears to reference two

28. Matthew Scott Stenson, "Alma's Attempt to Loose Corianton's Mind from Zoramite Chains," *Religious Educator* 21, no. 2 (2020): 139–55.

29. Other revelations/prophecies that refer to the incarnation are clearer (but their sources of origin conflict): see 1 Nephi 10:4; 1 Nephi 19:8; and 2 Nephi 25:19. However, given the teachings of Lehi₁, Nephi₁, and others, the clarity of 2 Nephi 26:1 may not have been sufficient to answer all of Alma₂'s questions.

30. Hardy, *Understanding*, 182, emphasis added. The misreading of Alma 7 is understandable given that the chapter is nuanced and apparently alludes to at least two separate comings of the Lord (perhaps even three): 1) to "his people" and 2) to the Lehites (Alma 7:7–12).

or three separate visits (or seasons) on earth: 1) the “day” when Messiah would undergo “birth ... death ... resurrection” (2 Nephi 26:3); 2) the day when the Messiah would come to the Lehites “after” his resurrection to “show himself” to them and instruct them (2 Nephi 26:1); and 3) a day “that cometh” as a destruction by fire and other natural forces. The last reference to the Lord’s comings to his people says that he will come “in the flesh,” but does not disclose whether he (Jesus) will come in his mortal or resurrected flesh (2 Nephi 32:6). This complexity causes Alma₂, it would seem, to later seek to understand more perfectly about when and where and how these things were to take place. 2 Nephi 26:1 appears to be the *clearest early declaration about the coming of the Lord to them*. It seems that the time of Jesus’s birth was known to the Nephites with some precision, but not the timing of his ministry to them.

Hardy adds:

Some have seen in this disjunction evidence that Joseph Smith was inventing the story as he went along, with Nephi’s predictions being so much clearer because his words were dictated after Third Nephi had already been written. *In any case, there was not a strong expectation of Christ’s coming to the New World on anyone’s part, even after the time of Alma.*³¹

I will address this last statement in the next section of this argument. The claim for discontinuity, as indicated, has been put forth by Metcalfe,³² Roesler,³³ and Hardy. It turns out, though, that Alma₂ seems not so much unaware of or confused about his fathers’ teachings on the subject as that he tends to critically investigate the gaps in Nephite knowledge, and thus struggles for finer understanding of the “mysteries of God” (Alma 12:9–11; see also Alma 40:3). Accordingly, I do not merely attempt to push back against theories of discontinuity, but I suggest that the continuity is less than obvious; and yet I argue with Roper that it is discernibly present and verifiable, even, as Hardy and Roesler admit, relatively plain on occasion (see Alma 16:20 and Alma 45:10). Thus, my position on the question of continuity neither easily aligns with Roper,³⁴ who believes that the continuity of the record is straightforward, nor does it sync well with those who believe in discontinuity.

31. Hardy, *Understanding*, 182, emphasis added. Here Hardy cites Metcalfe, “Priority of Mosiah,” 417–18.

32. Metcalfe, “Priority of Mosiah,” 417–18.

33. Roesler, “Plain and Precious Things,” 87.

34. Roper, “More Perfect Priority.”

Accordingly, scholars have interpreted the absence of the six-hundred-years prophecy from the record after Nephi₁ and passages such as Alma 7:8 to mean that the Nephites did not know that the Lord would visit them at some point in their history. However, I have demonstrated here that this understanding is not as sound as it might be. Indeed, there are many passages as I will demonstrate that establish the idea that the Nephites had a doctrine of visitation to them and that it was taught far and wide from Nephi₁ through Alma₂ and perhaps beyond. This is not to say that the passages involved are not difficult and that the Nephites taught the doctrine frequently and in specific terms. There is no evidence for that sort of claim. What the level of understanding was among those after Alma₂ is less certain.

The Case for Continuity

There is little doubt that Nephi₁ and his successors expected continuity to occur (see Jacob 1:1–3, 8; Jacob 7:27; Jarom 1:1; and 3 Nephi 1:2). There is no definitive evidence that continuity does not hold, and the theories to the contrary are, as yet, not only unsatisfying but also unpersuasive, given the intriguing details of certain passages of scripture such as those we will examine. Indeed, Clifford P. Jones has recently made a convincing case for the strong influence of the small plates' prophecies influencing Mormon's and Moroni's writings. (Roper treats the question of Alma₂'s access to the small plates as a given. That is, he just assumes it.³⁵) Jones makes a good case that the Words of Mormon were not written *after* finding Nephi₁'s small plates but were found *at the beginning* of his work with the Book of Mosiah. Mormon then states, according to Jones, that he plans to use those small plates of Nephi₁ to influence his later editing of the remainder of the record (Mosiah–Mormon 6). After interpreting Words of Mormon 1:3–6, Jones summarizes his findings:

Thus this passage describes the importance of the prophecies on the small plates and tells us that Mormon chose at this time [before his abridgment of the large plates of Nephi₁] to make these prophecies and their fulfillment the main topic for the balance of his abridgment.³⁶

35. Ibid.

36. Clifford P. Jones, "That Which You Have Translated, Which You Have Retained," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 43 (2021): 13, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/that-which-you-have-translated-which-you-have-retained/>.

Accordingly, as might be expected, one can perceive the strong correspondence and unity between the small plates and Alma₂'s nuanced teachings in several places. (Mormon selects for us and comments upon the writings of Alma₂ in his abridgment.) A handful of examples demonstrate the textual and conceptual influence of the small plates of Nephi₁ on Mormon's abridgment of the large plates of Nephi₁ between Mosiah₂ and 3 Nephi:

1. Further, the tree and fruit imagery from Alma 5:33, 62 borrows directly from Lehi₁'s dream and/or Nephi₁'s vision (see 1 Nephi 8 and 15). This connection is rather obvious.
2. Alma₂'s saying in Alma 13:23 that certain truths have been revealed in "plain terms, that we may understand, that we cannot err" seems to borrow from Nephi's declaration in 2 Nephi 25:7 that he intends to prophesy "according to [his] plainness; in the which I know that no man can err."
3. Alma₂'s distinct phrase, "kingdom of the devil" (Alma 5:25 and Alma 41:4), only appears elsewhere in ancient scripture in 1 Nephi 22:22 and 2 Nephi 28:19.
4. Alma₂ seems to borrow from Jacob when he speaks of the Nephites being "wanderers" in a strange land (Alma 13:23; cf. "wanderers" in Jacob 7:26) and refers to "parts of our vineyard" (Alma 13:23; Jacob 5: 13, 14, 19, 38, 39, and 52). Alma₂ also appears to borrow from Jacob (Zenos) in Alma 16:17. Alma₂'s sole use of the rare phrase "true vine" is reminiscent of Nephi₁'s and Jacob's phrases, "true Messiah," "true fold" and "true church and fold" (1 Nephi 10:14; 1 Nephi 15:15; see also 2 Nephi 9:2). Possibly alluding to Nephi₁ or Jacob (Zenos), Samuel the Lamanite uses the similar phrase, "true Shepherd" (Helaman 15:13). It is interesting to notice that Nephi₁'s use of the phrase "true olive-tree" in context the imagery from Zenos's allegory in 1 Nephi 15:12–16 suggests that Samuel's use of "true shepherd" may either be borrowed from Lehi₁, Nephi₁, Jacob, or Zenos. Zenos's allegory of the vineyard also ends with allusive touches of pastoral imagery. Indeed, vineyards and pastures have been mixed in the Book of Mormon's imagery since Nephi₁ (see 1 Nephi 10:12–14; 1 Nephi 15:15–16). Zenos's allegory ends with the "Lord of the vineyard" gathering all things into "one body" or "one fold" (see Jacob 5:68, 70, 74; also Jacob 13:41; 1 Nephi 22:25).

5. Enos's saying that the preaching of the word was necessary, "stirring [his people] up continually," and that "nothing short of these things, and exceedingly great plainness of speech, would keep them from ... destruction" seems to have a parallel in Alma₂ (Enos 1:23). It was Alma₂ who sought to "stir [his people] up in remembrance of their duty ... seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them" (Alma 4:19).
6. Alma 36:22 is an unmistakable borrowing from 1 Nephi 1:8.

Here are additional points of influence within the record (some rather extensive): 1 Nephi 5:17–19 (Alma 37:1–5); 1 Nephi 16:29 (Alma 37:6–7, 41), and Jacob 4:10 (Alma 37:12).³⁷ These points of contact are not exhaustive and could be greatly multiplied. In fact, we will examine a few additional ones later. This sample of examples merely demonstrates that Alma₂ was familiar with Nephi's written words and teachings.

Here are two of the shorter examples from above presented side-by-side for easy access:

Nephi ₁	Alma ₂
And thus we see <i>that by small and simple</i> means the Lord can bring about <i>great things</i> (1 Nephi 16:29)	[B]ut behold I say unto you, <i>that by small and simple</i> things are <i>great things</i> brought to pass; (Alma 37:6; see also Alma 37:7, 41)
For behold, ye yourselves know that <i>he counseleth in wisdom</i> , and in justice, and in great mercy, <i>over all his works</i> (Jacob 4:10).	And it may suffice if only I say they are preserved for a wise purpose, which purpose is known unto God; for <i>he doth counsel in wisdom over all his works</i> , and his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round (Alma 37:12).

37. Both King Benjamin and Alma₂ seem to have received the small plates from those who transmitted the records to them (see Omni 1:25; Words of Mormon 1:10–11; Mosiah 1:2, 6; and Alma 37:1–5). (It is well understood that Mormon and Moroni possessed and often alluded to the small plates.) And, as providence would have it, the small plates, though translated last, seem to be a natural preface to the later purposes of the Book of Mormon. Clifford Jones's detailed article on the Words of Mormon confirms this reading. See Jones, "That Which You Have Translated." Nevertheless, the verbal, syntactic, and conceptual correspondences between Alma₂'s writings and the small plates of Nephi₁ make it unlikely that Alma₂ merely copies from the large plates of Nephi, or that he merely inherits broad rhetorical traditions (cultural habits of speech and written expression) that happen to also be expressed in certain specific ways by both Nephi₁ and Alma₂. In any case, in some ways the jury is still out on the question of continuity of transmission because there remain too many unanswered questions about certain passages.

Two of the other phrases in Alma 37:12, also indicate connections to the small plates: “wise purpose,” also found in 1 Nephi 9:5 (discussed further hereafter) and 1 Nephi 19:3, and “one eternal round,” found in 1 Nephi 10:19. Thus, this one verse by Alma₂ makes it fairly clear that Alma₂ is a careful student of the small plates of Nephi₁. In Alma 37:12, we have then a single verse with multiple characteristics and non-biblical phrases that seem to place the claim for Alma₂’s possession of the small plates beyond dispute. In any case, the resonances are complex and intriguing and seem to confirm that Alma₂ had strong familiarity with certain verses in 1 Nephi, or with the small plates of Nephi₁.

To solidify this point, I will demonstrate in addition to these phrasal parallels, Alma₂’s borrowing from Nephi₁ (or perhaps Lehi₁). Indeed, as indicated, Alma 36:22 contains an impressive direct quotation from the small plates (see 1 Nephi 1:8). It is one that is so exact, distinct, and lengthy that it cannot plausibly be attributed to the general tradition. Lehi₁’s words as recorded by Nephi₁ are as follows:

And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he [Lehi₁] was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God. (1 Nephi 1:8)

Alma₂ directly borrows these words from Lehi₁ as he speaks to his son Helaman₂. Alma₂ even connects them to Lehi₁ by saying, “even as our father Lehi saw”:

Yea, *methought* I [Alma₂] saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded by numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God; yea, and my soul did long to be there. (Alma 36:22)

Given the foregoing, it is unlikely that these various intersections (whether exact, as is the last example, or approximate as some are) can all be attributed to a broad rhetorical tradition as some of them are extensive and/or very precise borrowings. It is possible, considering the overlap between Lehi₁’s writings and Nephi₁’s abridgment of his father’s words, that some of what persists in the record can best be attributed to Lehi₁, but what portions of Nephi₁’s extant account to Lehi₁’s writings are not clear. (Ultimately it does not matter how the doctrines were passed down to Alma₂. The point is that Alma₂ had them from his prophet-fathers.) Although Alma₂ could have discovered some of these details on the brass plates in his possession (or among Lehi₁’s preserved writings), it is more

probable that he possessed the small plates of Nephi₁ and was a careful student of them and the other records in his possession. The subject of the transmission of small plates from Nephi₁ to Alma₂ will be examined later in more depth.

Alma 37 further demonstrates Alma₂'s likely possession of the small plates. Moreover, it suggests that the small plates were not just in his possession but were in the possession of (in some sense and in some form) the sons of Mosiah while on their mission to the Lamanites. Alma 37 suggests that Alma₂ desires to transmit to Helaman₂ "the records which have been entrusted with [him]," including the "plates of Nephi [the large plates]," the "plates of brass," the "twenty-four plates," and "*all the plates that do contain that which is holy writ*" (Alma 37:1–3, 5, 21). While 1 Nephi 5:17–19 (the small plates record) is strongly alluded to in Alma 37:3–5, the "plates of brass" are *not* what is implied as going forth among the Lamanites in Alma 37:5–12. In Alma 37:5–12, Alma₂ teaches that "by small and simple things are great things brought to pass" (Alma 37:6). As he discusses the power of "holy writ," he repeats three times the word "small" in phrases such as "small and simple," "small means," and "very small means" (Alma 37:6–7; see also 1 Nephi 16:29).³⁸ One wonders if the repetition of the word "small" in these phrases could be a reference to the small plates themselves. Perhaps Alma₂ is considering all plates in his hands as small things. However, it would be particularly natural for him to use that word if he were in possession of what Nephi₁ called the small plates. Without having access to the large plates of Nephi₁ ourselves it is hard to say what spiritual matters were common to both records. However, we do know that the small plates were the more sacred account and were about the ministry and the prophecies, as opposed to the wars, contentions, and reigns of the kings (see 1 Nephi 1–6; 1 Nephi 19:1–5).

Furthermore, Alma₂ reports that without "these records" that have been kept, "Ammon and his brethren could not have convinced so many of the Lamanites of the incorrect traditions *of their fathers*" (Alma 37:9). These records — presumably the small *and* large plates of Nephi — brought the Lamanites to a correct knowledge of their first fathers and a "*knowledge of their Redeemer*" (Alma 37:9–10). Even if this material came from the large plates of Nephi₁ it demonstrates that some important spiritual matters were also found on those plates. In that case,

38. It is of note that Nephi₁ uses this phrase to refer to the Liahona: "And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things" (1 Nephi 16:29). Further, "simple" (or "simpleness") is a word that Nephi₁ associates with his record (see 2 Nephi 3:20).

Alma₂ could have learned of the Redeemer’s coming to them from those plates. What is more plausible, though, is that he has all the records that have been vouchsafed from the earlier prophets, especially those that are most sacred. These records (he is not speaking of the brass plates in Alma 37:9) had convinced many Lamanites of the “error of their ways” and brought them to lament their actions against their Nephite brethren. Alma₂ suggests that “these things” are preserved “for a wise purpose in him [God]” (Alma 37:2, 12, 14). This phrase — “for a wise purpose in him” — is associated with the small plates as early as 1 Nephi 9:5–6 and is never used by anyone else besides Alma₂. This same phrase — “wise purpose” — can also be found in the Words of Mormon (Words of Mormon 1:7). Given the possibility that Mormon had the small plates before his abridgment of the large plates,³⁹ he may have borrowed that phrase from Nephi₁ as Alma₂ apparently does (see 1 Nephi 9:5 and 1 Nephi 19:3).

The resemblance between Nephi₁’s and Alma₂’s writings suggests that Alma₂ may well be influenced by Nephi₁ due to his possession of the small plates.⁴⁰ Below, we see Alma₂ borrowing Nephi₁’s distinct small-plates’ phrase, “for a wise purpose in him” as well as teaching that the fathers received a promise from the Lord concerning the transmission of the small plates.

Nephi ₁	Alma ₂
Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me [Nephi ₁] to make these plates <i>for a wise purpose in him</i> , which purpose I know not. But the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, <i>he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words</i> . And thus it is. Amen (1 Nephi 9:5–6).	But if ye [Helaman ₂] keep the commandments of God, and do with these things which are sacred according to that which the Lord doth command you ... behold, no power of earth or hell can take them from you, <i>for God is powerful to the fulfilling of all his words</i> . For he will fulfill all his promises which he has made unto you, for he has fulfilled his promises which he has made unto our fathers. For he promised unto them that he would preserve these things <i>for a wise purpose in him</i> , that he might show forth his power unto future generations (Alma 37:16–17).

This material seems to establish that Alma₂ was in possession of the small plates of Nephi₁ and thus was aware of the prophecies concerning

39. Jones, “That Which You Have Translated.”
40. The same language may have originated with Lehi₁’s account or the large plates of Nephi₁, but that is beside the point: Here, I seek to establish that Alma₂ had access to his fathers’ prophecies and teachings, regardless of how they came down to him.

the coming of the Lord to the Jews and to them, if not also aware of his coming to others. The textual, conceptual, and doctrinal continuity is difficult to explain away despite its irregularity. And yet, the transmission of certain essential Nephite doctrines is not straightforward. That is why the positive passages confirming the transfer of former fundamental truths are so exciting to discover in Mormon's account.

Accordingly, consider the following excerpts from Alma₂'s teachings about the time of his great sermon to the church recorded in Alma 5 (the time of the ministry of his friends among the Lamanites). Alma 16 recounts the desolation of the Ammonihahites shortly after Alma₂ and Amulek preached unto them as part of Alma₂'s regulatory tour of the Nephite lands and church, a tour that commenced in Zarahemla (Alma 5:1).⁴¹ Here, notice Alma₂'s firm grasp of the doctrine of the Lord's coming to the Jews and how it is coupled with the doctrine that Christ would come to his own people (Lehites), yet nothing is said about the precise time and place of that event. Also, notice how widely the doctrine of Christ's coming to the Lehites was taught among the Nephites according to this passage:

And Alma and Amulek went forth preaching repentance. ...

And thus did Alma and Amulek go forth, and also many more who had been chosen for the work, to preach the word *throughout all the land*. And the establishment of the church became general *throughout the land, in all the region round about, among all the people of the Nephites*.

And there was no inequality among them [as to having access to the truth]; the Lord did pour out his Spirit on all the face of the land to *prepare the minds of the children of men, or to prepare their hearts to receive the word which should be taught among them at the time of his coming*. ...⁴²

Holding forth things which must shortly come; yea, holding forth the coming of the Son of God, his sufferings and death, and also the resurrection of the dead.⁴³

41. Even though it is a couple years after the preaching that Alma₂ does in all the land, Alma 16 seems to represent Alma₂'s and the church's basic understanding of the Lord's coming(s) to the earth, and thus acts as the general background for the mission recounted in Alma 5–16.

42. This same language will be important later when we look at Alma 39:15–16.

43. These events would occur in the Old World.

And many people did inquire concerning the place where the Son of God should come; and they were taught that he would appear unto them after his resurrection; and this the people did hear with great joy and gladness. (Alma 16:13–20; see also Helaman 16:5)⁴⁴

Significantly, this relatively plain passage concludes the block of chapters that commence in Alma 5:1 and ends in Alma 16:21. From these verses,⁴⁵ we learn that Alma₂ was not alone in his knowledge that Christ would come not only to the Jews in and around Jerusalem but in his knowledge that “*after* his [Lord’s] resurrection” Jesus would come among the Leuites. However, we also learn from these verses that “many people” had questions “concerning the *place* where the Son of God should come.” We are told that the Nephites knew his visit would occur sometime “*after*” Jesus’s resurrection, but there is no sense that the people of the Nephite church had a clear understanding of the exact time and place of his coming. I would further suggest that Alma₂ (if not his people too) had some sense that the coming of the Lord would also have a semi-universal aspect. At least, Alma₂ seems to teach this in both Alma 5 and Alma 13, as we shall explain in a later section of this paper. In short, the case is compelling for continuity through at least Alma₂’s writings, even if there are still open questions for Alma₂ and his people and for scholars interested in the question of continuity.

Considering the arguments for discontinuity described earlier and the ways in which Alma 5 receives little attention elsewhere in regard to this specific question about Alma₂’s awareness of the coming of the Lord to his people, it may be of some value to revisit Alma₂’s general writings

44. Later statements that seem to reverse this fairly clear distinction, such as that material found in Helaman 16, actually do not do so. In Samuel the Lamanite’s sermon to Zarahemla, he assumes this knowledge and concentrates on the Nephite destruction four hundred years after the coming of Christ to them. Why such knowledge would motivate the wicked in his day is not clear. It is interesting to find strong resonances with Samuel’s teachings in Alma 5, 13, and 16 (see Helaman 14:9, 18; also Helaman 16:4–5, 13–14). Because that the unbelievers, according to Mormon, are “spreading rumors” about the coming of the Lord does not disqualify what the believers apparently knew and understood (Helaman 16:22). Hence, Mormon calls the rumors “foolish and vain” (Helaman 16:22). Lastly, it is no small thing that Mormon begins 3 Nephi emphasizing “those [advent] traditions” found to profusion in the prophecies of the holy prophets (3 Nephi 1:9).

45. An original heading and a narrative transition from Alma₂’s regulatory travels to his friends’ mission to the Lamanites clearly brackets this block of unified material.

with a careful eye focusing on this somewhat elusive doctrine.⁴⁶ That is, in addition to the above discussion of Alma 16:13–20, I particularly wish to concentrate this exegetical effort on Alma 5, but, as mentioned, I will take an interest in many of the other words of Alma₂ where he appears to less discernibly address this subject, including Alma 7, 13, and 39.⁴⁷ In what follows, it will be argued that in Zarahemla (and in other places such as Gideon and Ammonihah) Alma₂ underscores the urgent need of repentance among his people because the Lord is to make a visit to them to establish his kingdom among them (as he will do among others elsewhere). This event that for our purposes constitutes part of the Lord's first coming to earth, Alma₂ insists, is according to his fathers' prophecies and is what he has "fasted and prayed for many days that [he] might know of [him]self" (Alma 5:46).⁴⁸

In addition to applying close reading strategies, the method to be followed to demonstrate this assertion, as we have seen already, is also intratextual or, we might say, comparative.⁴⁹ In general, after reviewing

46. Richard Dilworth Rust has examined Alma₂'s sermon at Zarahemla from a literary and rhetorical standpoint, noting Alma₂'s "impassioned personal style" and extensive use of the "rhetorical question." Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 119, 121. Robert A. Rees has analyzed the sermon similarly. Rees, "Alma the Younger's Sermon," 332. Daniel Belnap has used Alma 5 to demonstrate that later Nephites borrowed from the narrative elements of Lehi's dream. Daniel L. Belnap, "'Even as Our Father Lehi Saw': Lehi's Dream as Nephite Cultural Narrative," in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT, and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2011), 224.

47. In contrast to Hardy's understanding of the text is Matthew Roper's argument for continuity. He explicitly refers to this search in Alma 5. Roper, "More Perfect Priority."

48. It is possible that in John 10:16 Jesus alludes to an earlier text without saying so since Alma₂ seems to draw on a source from the brass plates to connect his advent prophecies to the "good shepherd" (see Alma 5:37–60). The prophet Ezekiel associated with the Old Testament could not have been Alma₂'s direct source for this imagery since Ezekiel was a prophet of the Babylonian exile. We also know that Alma₁ had sought to regulate the church before his son attempted it, and in doing so, he used similar pastoral imagery as that employed by Ezekiel. However, Alma₁'s pastoral teachings appear to have been received by direct revelation (see Mosiah 26:20–36). Thus, Alma₂ may draw his pastoral imagery in Alma 5 from the brass plates or from his own father's revelatory experience (or some combination of them).

49. This term has now been used, defined, and demonstrated by many Latter-day Saint scholars, so it does not seem necessary here to discuss it at great length.

Alma₂'s relationship to the Nephite church and the earliest Nephite prophecies concerning the comings of the Lord to the earth, we will conduct a limited analysis of Alma₂'s preaching in Gideon (Alma 7), his preaching in Ammonihah (Alma 13), and his counsel to Corianton in Zarahemla (Alma 39). Then, it will be possible to perform an alternative reading of Alma 5 in context with some of its later appropriations by Mormon in Helaman 16 and 3 Nephi 8–10. Mormon appears to allude to Alma 5 when he discusses both the Lord's coming to the Jews and his coming to the Lehwites. I will conclude the project with a restatement of the findings and some parting observations.

The Early Nephite Church

The Nephite church is established (or reformed) by Alma₂'s father, a former priest of King Noah. After the prophet Abinadi finished his message and sealed his testimony with his life, Alma₁ fled Noah's court and recorded Abinadi's inspired remarks. Alma₁ gathered a congregation at the waters of Mormon and later led the church in Zarahemla and throughout the land (see Mosiah 18:30; also Mosiah 25:15–24). However, sometime after that, dissension erupted in the church “among the brethren” and some of the young and vulnerable in society became “unbelievers” (Mosiah 26:5; 27:1). In addition, some who had been “little children” at the time of King Benjamin's final sermon, “could not understand the words of King Benjamin,” and thus would not agree to be baptized, even though their parents presumably had been.⁵⁰ “[B]ecause of their disbelief the unbelievers could not understand the word of God” spoken by King Benjamin concerning the resurrection and the coming of Christ,” nor would they “call upon the Lord their God” for greater understanding of these truths (Mosiah 26:1–4). The unbelief and dissension in this time period of Nephite society and church history constitutes yet another departure from the “tradition of their fathers,” a tradition that is later described as foolish, vain, and silly (see Mosiah 26:1–5; Alma 30:6, 12–15,

Intertextuality refers to the literary phenomenon wherein one text alludes to an earlier text, thus by perceived association creating an interpretive conversation between the two of them. Intratextuality simply means that this interpretive conversation (or textual interplay between texts) occurs within a single collection of texts.

50. The sermon may be termed sermons as it has been divided into three parts by James E. Faulconer, *Mosiah: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2020), 15, 116. In this paper the sermons will be treated as one block or as one sermon.

31). One of those who apparently departed from the church during this season because of the persuasions of dissenters was Alma₂.⁵¹

It is in this tumultuous environment that Alma₂ and four of the sons of Mosiah traveled about the land seeking to “destroy the church of God.”⁵² Alma₂ is described in the record as being a “man of many words” who had become “very wicked and idolatrous” (Mosiah 27:8–10). Alma₂’s father and the people of the church were so concerned about the “rising generation” and their general dissension from the church over the doctrines of the resurrection and the coming of Christ that they fasted and prayed that Alma₂ and the others might “come to a knowledge of the truth” of these established/traditional teachings. In response to the faith exercised by the people of the church concerning the unbelievers, Alma₂ and his friends were visited by an angel who rebuked them with a “voice of thunder” that “caused the earth to shake upon which they stood” (Mosiah 27:11–16). The angel sent from God commanded Alma₂ to “seek to destroy the church no more” (27:17). The shock of the angelic visitation caused him to become mute and paralyzed. However, with additional fasting and prayer, after three days Alma₂ was delivered from his state of unbelief and paralysis. It is what follows next that will be of most interest to us as we proceed. For, once delivered from his disabled condition, Alma₂ stood and spoke with passion to those assembled.

Alma₂’s spontaneous utterance on this occasion contains the seeds of much of what he taught and did himself later as head of the church in Zarahemla, Gideon, Ammonihah, and elsewhere. That is why I take the time to briefly rehearse this familiar story. On this occasion, Alma₂ reported to his father and his priests that he had during the three days repented of his sins and had been born again and that the Lord, significantly, had taught him that he intended these blessings to be made available unto all who desire to “inherit the kingdom of God” (Mosiah 27:24–26). Aside from this expansion of Alma₂’s perspective on the work of the Lord, in the midst of his confession, *we learn that he had been one of those in the church who had “rejected [the] Redeemer and denied that which had been spoken of by our fathers” concerning the Lord’s coming* (Mosiah 27:30). Due to what Alma₂ appears to have

51. Faulconer, *Mosiah*, 16. Faulconer writes that in Mosiah 27 “many younger members of the church fall into apostasy, including the sons of Alma₁ and Mosiah₂.”

52. Robert A. Rees sees these events differently than they have been characterized here. He sees Alma₁ as “rescuing the church” and conducting a “reformation” of it. Moreover, he says that Alma₂ was “blessed to come of age during a period of peace and stability.” Rees, “Alma the Younger’s Sermon,” 331.

learned during his angelic encounter and ordeal, he begins to see that in some sense the Lord will “remember every creature of his creating” that “he will make himself manifest unto all” (Mosiah 27:30).⁵³ This occasion seems to be paradigm shifting for Alma₂ and causes him to search the prophecies and ask new questions about associated doctrines as found in the writings of his prophet-fathers.

During this period, Alma₂ seems to have spent time seriously examining the prophecies and considering anew the questions of the resurrection and the coming of the Lord. The record says that he and his royal friends went about “explaining the prophecies and scriptures to all who desired to hear them.” They did “bring ... many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, to a knowledge of their Redeemer” and the “good tidings” of his coming to establish his kingdom on earth (Mosiah 27:35–37).⁵⁴ During this time of repentance, development, and maturation, Alma₂ would have presumably pondered the prophecies and reflected on the teachings of the fathers concerning the resurrection and the coming(s) of the Lord to the earth. To lay a foundation to discuss Alma₂’s teachings, it would be helpful to review the prophetic tradition and writings to which he would have had access. It should be remembered in all of this that the church was struggling with dissenters over just these subjects in the time that Alma₂ was touring the land “confirming [his] faith” as well as “explaining the prophecies and the scriptures” (Mosiah 27:33, 35).

The Fathers on the Coming(s) of Christ

As we have seen, the Book of Mormon represents the coming of Christ in something of a complicated way, giving different emphases at different

53. At this time, Alma₂ learns that “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before him ... at the last day” that “he is God” (Mosiah 27:31). Thereafter, and because he and the sons of Mosiah₂ had done so much damage in all the land, they traveled about, “zealously striving to repair all the injuries which they had done to the church, confessing all their sins, and publishing all the things which they had seen” (Mosiah 27:35). From the time of his conversion, Alma₂ embraces the traditional doctrines of his fathers and begins to think broadly about the availability and reach of salvation.

54. When one encounters the phrase “good tidings” or its equivalent in scripture, “glad tidings,” it commonly refers to the coming of the Lord in some sense to the earth. This is because his coming to earth is necessary to his atoning in the flesh for the sins of humankind. The blessings of that vicarious sacrifice are unto all people. That phrase — good tidings — also relates to the Lord’s (and the angels’ and his servants’) ministering salvation to others after his great ordeals are accomplished, thus the Lord declares glad tidings to those in the spirit world and in the Americas, etc. (see Isaiah 52:7; Luke 2:10; Helaman 13:7).

moments. It is probably best to refer to the *comings* of the Lord instead of the *coming* of the Lord.⁵⁵ Here, it will be argued that Lehi₁ and Nephi₁ and others such as Jacob, Enos, Abinadi, and King Benjamin addressed the subject of the coming of the Lord. However, it will be demonstrated that the Lord's coming was not just to the Jews in Jerusalem in the first century AD. Instead, at this stage we will be most interested in Alma₂'s fathers' predictions about the Lord's coming to the Lehtes (and others) since that will allow us to understand Alma₂'s prophecies and teachings better when the time comes to examine his sermons at Zarahemla, Gideon, and Ammonihah. I will reserve my discussion of Zenos's prophecy in 1 Nephi 19:10–11 until a later section and limit myself here to the apparent line of transmission between Lehi₁ and King Benjamin. Later, I will also make a few more comments about Samuel the Lamanite's words and Mormon's use of Alma₂'s writings.

Lehi₁'s Teachings

To begin, Lehi₁ declared the coming of the Lord after seeing visions and receiving a book of prophecy (see 1 Nephi 1:19). And yet, as mentioned, there seems to be some ambiguity in what we later learn from the Nephite record about this subject. Before he escaped Jerusalem with his family, Nephi₁ records that Lehi₁ learned from a book of prophecy delivered to him about the destruction of the “great city Jerusalem” and about a book that “manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah” (1 Nephi 1:4, 12–13, 19). Nephi₁ writes that Lehi₁ went forth to bear witness of those things to come that “he had both seen and heard,” but that he was rejected by the Jews (1 Nephi 1:18–19). Later, Nephi₁ chronicles for us Lehi₁'s further teachings concerning the Messiah who should come unto the Jews. As indicated, he recounts that Lehi₁ prophesied that the Messiah or “Savior of the world” should come “six hundred years from the time that [he] left Jerusalem.” Moreover, Lehi₁ said that the way would be prepared before him (the Messiah) by a “prophet.” This Messiah or Redeemer, according to Lehi₁, would preach his gospel “among the Jews” and “rise from the dead, and should make himself manifest, by the Holy Ghost, unto the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 10:3–11). In expounding his father's “many great words” to his brothers, Nephi₁ explains that “many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men,” his father's seed would be blessed through the “fulness of the gospel”

55. This corresponds to our understanding of the coming of the Lord in our day. We know that the Lord will make several appearances to the earth when he comes again (see D&C 133:20).

received by the Gentiles (1 Nephi 15:3, 13). Lehi₁'s seed would again "come to a knowledge of their forefathers, and also to a knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him" (1 Nephi 15:14). This new "knowledge of their Redeemer" would be instrumental in gathering them in a latter day into the "true fold of God" or unto the "true olive tree" (1 Nephi 15:14–16). Nephi₁ then describes for us those things that he himself saw in apocalyptic vision concerning the Lord's coming to the Jews and Gentiles as well as his coming to Lehi₁'s seed (see 1 Nephi 11–14).

Accordingly, in the simplest of terms the Nephite fathers had a basic two-fold understanding of coming of the Lord (It will be expanded into a four-fold doctrine later). This understanding appears to surface from time to time in the middle part of the Book of Mormon, suggesting that there was doctrinal continuity on this subject at least from Lehi₁ to Alma₂. Here are two comings that Lehi₁ and Nephi₁ appear to speak of the most (and this is their order of importance):

1. The Lord's coming to the Jews in Jerusalem when he would teach his gospel, suffer, die, and be raised up (1 Nephi 10:3–11; 1 Nephi 15:13). Strictly speaking, Nephi₁ says that he spoke of the Lord's coming "in body unto the children of men." That last phrase may have wider application than just pointing to his life and ministry among the Jews.
2. The Lord's coming to the Lehiters when he would "minister unto their fathers" (1 Nephi 15:14).

To these fundamental doctrines might be added the Lord's visiting the Gentiles by the Holy Ghost and the fulness of the gospel in a latter day before his Second Coming. The Nephite fathers were aware of these doctrines as well. What there does not appear to be strong evidence for before about 1 Nephi 19:10–11 is the Lord's intent, according to Zenos's prophecy, to visit the remnants of the house of Israel about the time of his death when the sign of darkness is given to those on the isles of the sea who are of the house of Israel.

Nephi₁'s Teachings

In Nephi₁'s vision spanning much of what would become modern history,⁵⁶ we learn that the Messiah would, as Lehi₁ indicated, come

56. Matthew Scott Stenson, "Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision: Apocalyptic Revelations in Narrative Context," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (2012): 155–79, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol51/iss4/13/>. In this article, it is argued in

among his own people, the Jews (1 Nephi 11:27). The “Redeemer of the world” would again be preceded by the “prophet who should prepare the way before him” (1 Nephi 11:27). This Messiah, now referred to as the “Lamb of God,” would be baptized and “minister unto the people, in power and great glory” (1 Nephi 11:27–28, 31).⁵⁷ He would be “lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world” (1 Nephi 11:33). Nephi₁’s vision, however, not only describes the Messiah’s ministry among the Jews in Palestine but, as Nephi₁ will now record, it demonstrates that his first coming (or first comings) would include a visit to the New World. In fact, early on in his vision Nephi₁ is exhorted to watch for the special event as it is the centerpiece of his vision (see 1 Nephi 11:7). Subsequently, Nephi₁ records seeing destruction and the sign of darkness among his seed and then says,

And it came to pass that after I saw these things, I saw the vapor of darkness, that it passed from off the face of the earth; and behold, I saw multitudes who had not fallen because of the great and terrible judgments of the Lord.

And I saw the heavens open, and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven; and he came down and showed himself unto them. (1 Nephi 12:5–6)

This appearance of the Messiah/Lamb among the seed of Lehi₁ from this point on becomes an important part of Nephite teaching and prophetic tradition, one that Alma₂ will be conscious of, and as mentioned, teach widely along with others of the Nephite church. Later in Nephi₁’s vision, we learn that this messianic visitation and ministry among the Lehites would be recorded when it occurred and would yet play an important role, along with “other books,” in a future day of redemption that would begin with the “Gentiles” (1 Nephi 13:39–42). This anticipated ministry of the Messiah among his father’s seed is entertained again by Nephi₁ at some length in his final prophecy (see 2 Nephi 26:3–9).⁵⁸ There, as before,

part that Lehi₁’s dream may represent for Nephi₁ a dualism between Zion (tree) and Babylon (building). The early Nephite revelations are examined in light of apocalyptic literature.

57. The phrase “in power and great glory” seems more reminiscent of the Second Coming than the first. However, the first coming of the Lord is also often described in these terms, as we shall see.

58. Christ’s coming to the Lehites is clearly alluded to elsewhere such as in 1 Nephi 15:14. It is noteworthy that this reference is found in immediate context with what appears to be the first coming of Christ to the Jews and the restoration of the gospel in a latter day (see 1 Nephi 15:13). This reference to the Lord’s coming

we witness the destruction and works of darkness among Lehi₁'s seed, and then we are told that after the Lord's "death and resurrection" the "Son of Righteousness [Messiah] shall appear [unto Lehi₁'s seed] with healing in his wings" (2 Nephi 26:9). Nephi₁ ends his overall account exhorting us to respect the words, "which shall proceed forth from the mouth of the Lamb of God [at the time of his coming]," by which he means the words of the resurrected Messiah, who will come sometime after his resurrection in some undisclosed way among his father's seed in a future generation many centuries hence (2 Nephi 33:14).⁵⁹ Alma₂ inherits all this as the prophetic tradition transmitted by the fathers.⁶⁰

Jacob's Teachings

Jacob, Nephi₁'s brother, also has a complicated but largely consistent view of the comings of the Lord. He and his people had "searched much" and were very interested in "things to come" (see 2 Nephi 9:4). Due to their "faith and great anxiety" (Jacob 1:5), they had "many revelations, and the spirit of much prophecy" (Jacob 1:6). For instance, in 2 Nephi 6–10, Jacob, borrowing heavily from his brother's teachings (and Isaiah), provides his reader three variations on the coming of the Lord.

1. Jacob speaks of the Lord's coming among the Jews (see 2 Nephi 6:9; 2 Nephi 9:4–5, 21; also 2 Nephi 10:3–6).
2. Jacob speaks of the Lord's manifesting himself to the Gentiles (and through them to others) — "set[ting] his hand again the second time" — (2 Nephi 6:14; see also 2 Nephi 10:8–19; 21:11 and Jacob 6:2).⁶¹ (Lehi₁ and Nephi₁ had dwelt on this subject.)

among the Lehtes is also found here in context with imagery from Zenos's allegory and the sheepfold of the Good Shepherd (see 1 Nephi 15:12–16). This will have relevancy later.

59. I have not attempted to review all passages where Nephi₁ speaks of the coming of the Lord to the Jews and the Lehtes. For instance, for another example of these comings as taught by Nephi₁ (they are often taught in tandem) one may also consult 1 Nephi 19:8–14.

60. It should also be pointed out that Jacob (Israel), Zenos, and Zenock were all fathers to the seed of Lehi₁ and spoke of the coming of the Messiah among the Jews in the first century and, at least in one case, of his ministry among the seed of Lehi₁: "For thus spake the prophet [Zenos]: The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day, some with his voice..." (1 Nephi 19:10–12).

61. In a sense, this is a kind of coming of the Lord, but not in person. It has reference to his work of restoration and gathering coming forth in a latter-day (Nephi₁ referred to a similar [not exact] idea when reciting his father's prophecy at

3. Jacob speaks of the Lord's Second Coming as a divine warrior to deliver his covenant people (see 2 Nephi 6:13–14, 17).⁶² Nephi₁ had also spoken of this coming) 1 Nephi 22:24–28). Notably, Nephi₁ also understands the Messiah's Second Coming to be preceded by a grafting in of all persons who would hear his voice into the fold of the Good Shepherd (1 Nephi 13:41; 1 Nephi 22:25).

To these three concepts of the coming of the Lord found in Jacob's teachings, may be added a fourth that also originated with Nephi₁ (Zenos):

4. Although it is more speculative, if Jacob is not speaking of the Lord's coming to the Jews, he *may* speak of the Lord's coming among the Lehtes (see Jacob 1:5–7; or, if not that, he *may* here speak of the kingdom that is to be established by the latter-day Gentiles as referred to in Jacob 5:61–76).⁶³ Nephi₁ calls this kingdom Zion and the Church of the Lamb.

This last observation may need a little explanation. Understanding Jacob's reference to the "kingdom, which should come" in Jacob 1:6 depends on what is alluded to in Jacob 1:5. If verse 5 refers to the judgments of the Lord as described in 3 Nephi 8–10 (judgment is a type of visitation; see 2 Nephi 1:12, 18), then verse 6 may refer to the kingdom established at the Lord's coming to the Lehtes. But if verse 5, as is likely, refers to the Nephtes' eventual annihilation four hundred years after the Lord's coming to the Jews (a theme of great interest to Nephi₁, Alma₂, Nephi₂, and Samuel the Lamanite), then the kingdom referred to is that

1 Nephi 10:11). The Lord "shall manifest himself unto [the Gentiles]" in the latter day in power by means of a book(s) to come forth (see 1 Nephi 14:1). The divine work it ushers in prepares the way for the Lord's actual Second Coming. The Lord makes himself "manifest" to the Gentiles by the power of the Holy Ghost both in the first century and again in the latter-day. The Gentiles, unlike the house of Israel, do not have the promise to hear the Lord's word or voice and see him collectively before his Second Coming, as did the remnants of the house of Israel (see 1 Nephi 19:11; also 3 Nephi 15:23).

62. Nephi₁ sets up this discussion in 1 Nephi when he reads to his brothers Isaiah 49 as recounted in 1 Nephi 21 and then teaches them about the covenant people's deliverance by the divine warrior in 1 Nephi 22.

63. This may also be a reference to the Lord's coming to the Jews. That Jacob says 'we did labor among our people' may signal that he understands that he is preparing a people for more than redemption in the abstract but may in fact suggest that he is aware of the coming of the Lord to his people as was Nephi₁.

restored in a latter day. Jacob 1:7's connection to Jacob and his ministry "among [his] people" seems to suggest that he could have in mind the prophecies of his brother about the Lord's coming to the Lehites. It likely does not refer to the kingdom that was set up among the first-century Jews (and Gentiles) given its specifically Nephite context in verse 5. The imagery in Jacob 1:7 alludes to Moses's attempt to introduce his people to the Lord's presence amidst "great fire" and "thick darkness" when they were encamped at the foot of Sinai (Deuteronomy 5:22–28). They feared and were not able to enter into the Lord's rest (see Alma 16:16–17). In 3 Nephi, as some have noted, the account, much as in Matthew's gospel, represents the Lord as a "New Moses" delivering the higher law to his people from a holy place.⁶⁴ Accordingly, it is unclear what "kingdom," Jacob refers to in Jacob 1:7, but the imagery from verse 7 may apply to the events of 3 Nephi at Bountiful. It is true that later in Jacob 4 Jacob's focus is on the Lord's coming to the Jews to make atonement/resurrection and in Jacob 5 his focus is on the coming of the kingdom of God (or church of God) in the last days before the final burning.

Nephi₁ sums up Jacob's teachings in 2 Nephi 6–10 in 2 Nephi 11 by referring to at least two of the comings of the Lord: the Lord's coming to the Jews (see 2 Nephi 11:4, 6–7); and the Lord's latter-day "coming" to the Gentiles (see 2 Nephi 11:5). The foregoing list (of items 1–4 above) is provided to demonstrate that Jacob, like Lehi₁ and Nephi₁, has a sophisticated understanding of the Lord's coming.⁶⁵

Enos's Teachings

Enos also appears to allude to the coming of the Lord to the Jews and to the Lehites in his record. "[A] voice" to his mind whispers that because

64. The ideas of Jesus as the New Moses and delivering a second law are commonly referred to by scholars. Andrew C. Skinner, "Israel's Ancient Psalms," *The Sermon on the Mount in Latter-day Saint Scripture*, ed. Gaye Strathearn, Thomas A. Wayment, and Daniel L. Belnap (Provo, UT, and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2010), 61–62. John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount: A Latter-day Saint Approach* (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1990): 7, 18–19.

65. One of Jacob's phrases in reference to the Lord's coming is that they had a "hope of his glory" (Jacob 4:4), and its companion phrase, his people had a "hope of glory in him," (Jacob 4:11). The first phrase suggests the coming of the Lord to the Jews to perform his atonement for all of humankind; the second phrase seems to point to the Nephite believers' anticipated but conditional assurance of their final inheritance in the kingdom of heaven.

of his “faith in Christ, whom he has never before seen or heard,” his sins are forgiven (Enos 1:5, 8). He is told that “many years pass away before he [the Lord] shall manifest himself in the flesh” (Enos 1:8). This appears to refer to the Lord’s coming to offer himself a sacrifice in the Old World. The word “flesh” most often refers to mortality. However, “these words” cause Enos to consider his own people’s situation broken off and in a land far away from those redemptive events to come. Thus, Enos “struggle[s] in the spirit” to lay hold of a blessing for his own people. Again, his account says the “voice of the Lord came into his mind” (Enos 1:10). In language reminiscent of the original covenant made to Lehi₁ and Nephi₁ (see 1 Nephi 2:20–21), Enos is told that “I will visit thy brethren according to their diligence in keeping my commandments” (Enos 1:10). Then the Lord adds this in some contrast to what he has already said: “I have given unto them *this land*, and *it* [also] is a holy land” (Enos 1:10). He concludes, “wherefore, I will visit *thy* brethren, according as I have said” (Enos 1:10). That the Lord here may refer to his visit to them in a future day seems at least possible given Enos’s response to this targeted promise: “And after I, Enos, had heard these words, my faith began to be unshaken in the Lord” (Enos 1:11). It is no surprise that the rest of Enos’s days were spent “among the people of Nephi₁, prophesying of things to come, and testifying of the things which I [he, not unlike Nephi₁ and Jacob] had heard and seen” (Enos 1:19, 26).

Abinadi’s and King Benjamin’s Teachings

After Enos, the spirit of prophecy was enjoyed by many others and the records were handed down from one prophet to another (Jarom 1:4; Omni 1:13).⁶⁶ To these early Nephite teachings might be added those of

66. It should not be seen as a paucity in the spirit of revelation or in the chain of transmission when figures such as Jarom or Abinadom say that they do not have anything to add or that they do not know of other “revelation save that which has been written” (Jarom 1:2; Omni 1:11). It seems that writers after Enos were faithful in transmitting the small plates record but that they had little time to dwell on spiritual matters because of their relentless enemies. Survival was their greater concern. In any case, it is clear that the small plates and the spirit of revelation at least among the most faithful Nephites reaches Mosiah₂’s day, Mosiah₂ the seer and father of King Benjamin. The records of the prophets and the kings come together into his hands and from him they are passed to Mormon (Omni 1:25; Words of Mormon 1:10–11). If the small plates are lost among the records for a time that seems to appear between the time of Jesus’s coming to the Lehiites and Mormon’s discovery of them among those records that had been transmitted to him (Words of Mormon 1:3).

Abinadi and King Benjamin, each of whom had much to say about the coming of the Lord, his resurrection, and his ascension. It is Abinadi who says that Moses and all of the holy prophets spoke of his coming to his people. Abinadi taught that “God himself should come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of a man, and go forth in mighty power *upon the face of the earth*” (Mosiah 13:33–35).⁶⁷ It was also this prophet who used Isaiah 53 from the brass plates to apparently point to others outside the known fold who were yet to be counted among the Lord’s seed. Abinadi recounts that Isaiah said that “when⁶⁸ thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin he [the Lord] shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days” (Mosiah 14:10).⁶⁹ In this way, the messianic servant referred to by Isaiah would have opportunity to “justify many” (Mosiah 14:11). Christ’s seed, according to Abinadi, would include “all those [past, present, and future] who have hearkened unto the words” of the holy prophets (Mosiah 15:11).⁷⁰ The Lord would go and see the righteous spirits of the dead and organize the work of gathering among them.⁷¹ Further, his personal ministry as the Good Shepherd would even include those not among his flock in the Old World, as we learn in 3 Nephi 15:16–16:3 and John 10:16–18. Alma₂ presumably has a portion of this (Lehi’s, Nephi’s, Jacob’s, and Abinadi’s teachings) in his mind when he testifies in Zarahemla about the coming of the Lord (Alma₂ repeatedly calls him the “good shepherd,” as indicated), for, as we will

67. The phrase “take upon him the form of a man” seems to qualify the inclusive phrases, “among the children of men” and “upon the face of the earth.” It is easy to see how one might consider this language a fusion of the Lord’s coming to the Jews and his other appearances to those elsewhere on the earth.

68. Can we not interpret the word “when” to mean, “at about the same time as?”

69. One wonders if the phrase, “he shall prolong his days,” cannot be rendered, “he shall have his ministry extended after his resurrection.” If this is sound, then it is obvious how the work of God might “prosper” despite the Lord’s recent rejection by the Jews in the Old World.

70. Abinadi teaches that “ever since the world began” there have been prophets declaring the coming of the Lord among humankind. He exclaims, “And O how beautiful upon the mountains were their feet” (Mosiah 15:13, 15). According to the angel who spoke with King Benjamin, the prophets before Moses had been in some sense among “all the children of men, to declare [Christ’s coming] to every kindred, nation, and tongue” (Mosiah 3:13).

71. Elder Bruce R. McConkie understood this as referring to the Lord’s visit to the spirits of the dead between the laying down of his body and the taking of it up again. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 359–63.

see, he appears to have more than his own people in mind when he alludes to the Lord's post-resurrection ministry in Alma 5 and 13.

Further, it is King Benjamin who teaches similar doctrine in a way that can be easily missed. In Mosiah 3, we learn of an angelic announcement of the coming of the Lord. In response to King Benjamin's prayers, the angel announces to him "glad tidings of great joy," or, in his own words, the angel speaks to him, "concerning that which is to come." In his remarkable message, a message spanning all dispensations (past, present, and future), the angel declares that "the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay" among the Jews (Mosiah 3:1–5).⁷² And yet, the angel indicates that the Jews would reject him, even though they would have received "types, and shadows" and the "law of Moses" to point them to him many years beforehand (Mosiah 3:14–15). In the midst of this teaching, the angel underscores the redemptive implications of his message and touches on those without law or not under law (see Mosiah 3:11, 16). In the following passage, though, the Lord appears to refer to the seed of Lehi₁ and others of the tribes of Israel among whom he would visit according to the fathers' prophecies.

And the Lord God hath sent his holy prophets *among all the children of men* [before Christ], to declare these things to *every kindred, nation, and tongue*, that thereby *whosoever* should believe that Christ should come, the same might receive remission of their sins, and rejoice with exceedingly great joy, *even as though he had already come among them*. (Mosiah 3:13)⁷³

72. Again, the coming of the Lord to the Jews is described in terms of power. This motif is consistent among the prophets (see Mosiah 13:34; Alma 5:50) and can cause us to confuse it with descriptions of the Second Coming. The angel's phrase, "For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant" (Mosiah 3:5) seems to surface again in the teachings of Alma₂. In Alma 7:7, the prophet writes, "the time is not far distant that the Redeemer liveth and cometh among his people" (i.e., the Jews).

73. Nicholas J. Frederick has explored a similar phrase to that which completes this quotation in his intertextual studies on the Book of Mormon and the New Testament. Nicholas J. Frederick, "If Christ Had Not Come into the World," in *Abinadi: He Came Among Them in Disguise*, ed. Shon D. Hopkin (Provo, UT, and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2018), 118–21. In his work, Frederick attempts to demonstrate that Abinadi and Paul reason with their audiences in a similar way and in similar words. Both defend the resurrection using

In this way, the angel has suggested to King Benjamin the coming of the Lord among the Jews to perform his blood atonement for all people *and* implied that Christ would also minister “among all the children of men ... to every kindred, nation, and tongue,” including the Lehtes and other remnants of the house of Israel. Hence, King Benjamin’s people may rejoice for these two reasons. (Granted, the emphasis, as in all gospel teaching is upon the Redeemer’s blood atonement; however, there appears to be an unstated assumption here that has bearing on this study.) To be clear, it should be noted that the angel could not say, “even as though he had already come among them [every kindred, nation, and tongue],” if Christ were not “already” expected to “come among them.” The word “them” in the line, “even as though he had already come among them,” seems primarily to refer to the remnants of the house of Israel.⁷⁴ Some of the persons the angel refers to are those already scattered among the nations. According to the angel, from the beginning “holy prophets” have been sent among “every kindred, nation, and tongue,” to prepare the way for the Lord’s ministry to them (Mosiah 3:13).⁷⁵ King Benjamin’s teachings are consistent with the teachings of Lehi, Nephi (and Zenos), Jacob (Isaiah), and Abinadi. The angel concludes his message on the blood atonement of Christ by projecting out to a latter-day when

what he calls a “hypothetical proposition” or a pattern of if/then statements. Our interest here is less concerned about the resurrection and its defense and more about what the angel claims in King Benjamin’s ears about the coming of the Lord after his resurrection and ascension. The phrase “even as though he [the Lord] had already come among them” seems to state a future event in the past tense. The phrase collapses time and tense. “As though” is hypothetical and directed toward the future, while “had already come” is stated in the past tense. It is not clear whether the angel and King Benjamin inspire Abinadi, or vice versa. John Hilton III has written about the influence of Abinadi on King Benjamin. John Hilton III, “Abinadi’s Legacy: Tracing His Influence through the Book of Mormon,” in *Abinadi: He Came Among Them in Disguise*, ed. Shon D. Hopkin (Provo, UT, and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2018), 93–116.

74. The prophets among the Jews are not referred to until Mosiah 3:15. The transition is signaled by the phrase “and also.” That is, verse 13 is to be understood universally, whereas verses 14–15 refer to the Jews in particular.

75. The traditional reading of this is that the angel predicts the coming of the Lord to perform his atonement. After all, as John A. Tvedtnes says, the coming of the Lord for that purpose is for the Nephites the “central religious theme” and “principal message” of their prophets’ teachings. That is not disputed here. However, implied in the quotation above is the idea that the Lord will make appearances to the Lehtes (and others) around the same time period. John A. Tvedtnes, “That Which is to Come,” in *The Most Correct Book: Insights from a Book of Mormon Scholar* (Salt Lake City: Cornerstone Publishing, 1999), 236.

a “knowledge of a Savior” would be had *again among the children of men* (Mosiah 3:20). In that day, he says, none would be “blameless before God” (Mosiah 3:20–21). Thus, again all would be accountable in the day of the Lord’s Second Coming. This is consistent with the earliest teachings.

In summary, then, from at least the time of Lehi₁, the Nephite prophets had a complex understanding of the coming of the Lord. Their first interest was in the coming of the Lord to the Jews to make atonement for all on conditions of repentance. This is not disputed. Nevertheless, it would seem that the prophets were aware of and taught the coming of the Lord in a variety of ways that support the belief that there was a continuity of understanding among them about the coming of the Lord to the Lehites. Nephi₁ firmly established this tradition among his own people, but it actually can be traced back to Zenos through Nephi₁ (see 1 Nephi 19:10–12). I acknowledge that it is difficult to say what proportion of the Nephites understood these prophecies, but I assume that many of the most faithful must have comprehended them since they would have had the spirit of prophecy as did their leaders, and we know that the Nephi₁ church was taught these doctrines in Alma₂’s day (Alma 16:16–19; see also Mosiah 5:1–4).

In what follows, we will review Alma₂’s teachings and suggest that Alma 5 constitutes a powerful prophecy and warning about the coming of the Lord to the seed of Lehi₁, according to the tradition belonging to his prophet-fathers. Alma₂ prophesies in this manner while also seemingly alluding to the other-sheep doctrine that was perhaps a less defined part of the earlier prophetic tradition (see 1 Nephi 13:41; 1 Nephi 22:25; Mosiah 26:20–28). It is this tangle of prophecies about the coming of the Lord that have been just explained that advocates of discontinuity assume had been lost from the Nephite’s collective memory. In contrast, I claim that there appears to be a continuity on this subject among the prophets and the community of believers, even if there are remaining questions and concerns about the precise sequence and nature of pending events for Alma₂ and his people.

Alma₂’s Prophecy and Warning in Alma 5

Now it is time to turn our attention to Alma 5 to see in which ways that prophetic text reflects the coming of the Lord. Alma 5 is a much-appreciated chapter of scripture among the rank-and-file members of the Lord’s Restored Church. Often its intrinsic power is noted, and its doctrinal content and textual characteristics are taught. Perhaps certain readers view it as a sermon on the power of the word of God,

on repentance from the sin of pride, or on bringing forth good works. Some readers of it may draw attention to its laundry list of penetrating rhetorical questions: “if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?”; others share a verse or two from it to encourage greater devotion or endurance (Alma 5:26). We often hear of the “mighty change” of heart and of having the Lord’s “image in [our] countenances” (Alma 5:14). All this is edifying, but it seems that we are to a degree missing the message of the sermon in our fascination with its individual verses and salient textual features. Here, it is suggested that Alma 5 constitutes a *prophecy and warning* to the Nephite church of the Lord’s coming to the New World to establish among them his kingdom. It is this anticipated event that Alma₂ seems to have sought to better understand. In Alma 5, Alma₂ declares the coming of the Lord and his kingdom. He presents that kingdom in locally relevant and yet also more expansive terms (as he did in Alma 13).

Alma 5 is addressed to a divided people in Zarahemla in about 83 BC during a time of disciplinary regulation. Alma₂ has recently relinquished the judgment seat that he might dedicate his efforts to “bearing down in pure testimony against them” (Alma 4:19). His audience appears to be composed of the proud *and* humble members of the Nephite church, as well as others not of the church who have gathered out of curiosity. Alma₂’s powerful sermon represents an urgent (and at times confrontational) appeal from the head of the church to repent and be born again before the coming of the Lord to his people in this land. In it, Alma₂ reviews recent redemptive history among the fathers in the “land of Mormon” and “in the wilderness” and then asks his listeners a series of penetrating questions to prepare them for the day of the final judgment and, it appears, more immediate events (Alma 5:3, 5). Alma₂ suggests that the proud of the church have fallen into transgressions such as idolatry, sophistry, sexual immorality, and neglect of the poor (Alma 5:55). Thus, he declares repentance to them. Alma₂ warned the proud that the “ax is laid at the root of the tree” and, he says, all they not of the fold of the “good shepherd,” must soon face the consequence (Alma 5:52, Alma 5:37–60). Alma₂ prophesies that all unrepentant “workers of iniquity” will be sooner or later “hewn down and cast into the fire” (Alma 5:35, 52, 56). “For behold,” Alma₂ affirms, “*the time cometh* that whosoever doeth not the works of righteousness, the same [will] have cause to wail and mourn” (Alma 5:36). All this, he insists, is

consistent with what his fathers have taught, “concerning things which are to come” (Alma 5:44).⁷⁶

After explaining that the church members must heed the invitation of the “good shepherd” and prepare themselves for the time to shortly come, Alma₂ asks his people, “Do ye not suppose that I know these things [that Christ will shortly come to us after the judgments of God are manifest] myself” (Alma 5:37; 45)? He says, “Behold, I testify unto you that I do know of these things whereof I have spoken are true” (Alma 5:45). He explains that some of the questions that he once had as a young man have been since put to bed “by the Holy Spirit of God” (Alma 5:46). Alma₂ reports that he has come to understand for himself that these things are true: “Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself” (Alma 5:46). Since his conversion, Alma₂ appears to have learned many truths.⁷⁷ Perhaps as a result of his rebirth (as indicated earlier), Alma₂ begins to take a serious interest in what his fathers had taught about the coming of the Redeemer. This new interest in the teachings of the prophet-fathers appears to have caused Alma₂ in subsequent years to immerse himself in the prophecies. (At the very least, Alma₂ would have had to unlearn what he thought he knew about the scriptures, since he had dedicated himself to destroying the church and fighting against the claims of prophecy when young.) In his season of personal reformation, Alma₂ must have had it confirmed to him “by the Spirit of God” that the Lord would not only come unto the Jews to perform the atonement and resurrection but that he would visit his own people (the Lehites) and establish his earthly kingdom among them. However, despite his efforts, Alma₂ appears not to have found answers to all of his questions about how and when this event would unfold, since, as he later teaches his son, “*there are many mysteries which are kept, that no one knoweth save God himself*” (see Alma 5:46; also Alma 37:11; Alma 40:3).

76. Alma₂’s use of the phrase “hewn down and cast into the fire” in Alma 5:35 appears to refer to earthly events just beyond Alma₂’s day, whereas the phrase’s use in Alma 5:52 and 56 seems to refer to the fires of the second death that engulf one beyond the veil of death.

77. Among those truths that Alma₂ learned at the time of his conversion are these: 1) that unless men and women are born of the Spirit, or born of God, they cannot “inherit the [heavenly] kingdom of God” (Mosiah 27:24–27); 2) that his fathers had declared that the “Redeemer” would come into the world (Mosiah 27:30); and 3) that in some future day, “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before him” (Mosiah 27:31).

After Alma₂'s conversion at the time the angel reproved him and his friends, he seems to have ruminated on the nuances and gaps in his previous assumptions about the teachings of his fathers, including those teachings connected to the Lord's coming to the Jews and Lehi's seed. Before Alma₂ concludes his message in Alma 5 by commanding the church members in Zarahemla to repent (and inviting the others present to "Come and be baptized unto repentance"), he seems to prepare the hearts and minds of his people with an urgency for what is to come among them. The Lord, the "good shepherd," intends to visit them if not others also (Alma 5:37–38). Here are some of the most relevant statements demonstrating Alma₂'s urgent concern that the Lord would soon come among them:

1. "Behold, ye must prepare *quickly*; for the kingdom of heaven is *soon* at hand" (Alma 5:28)
2. "I say unto you that such an one is not prepared; and I would that he should prepare *quickly*, for the hour is *close* at hand, and he knoweth not when the time shall come; for such an one is not found guiltless" (Alma 5:29).
3. "Wo unto such an one, for he is not prepared, and the time is *at hand* that he must repent or he cannot be saved" (Alma 5:31).⁷⁸

It appears that Alma₂ has at least two truths in mind when he declares to the Nephite church to "prepare quickly" for the "kingdom of heaven is soon at hand." The kingdom is the church, and if it is "soon at hand," then it cannot be already on the earth. What is present cannot be prepared for "quickly," cannot arrive "soon," nor can it be "close at hand." And yet, we know that Alma₂ is "a high priest over the church of God"

78. There is little reason for Alma₂ to prepare his people with such manifest urgency if the Lord is not coming among them to establish his kingdom. In 3 Nephi, we see Jesus Christ establish his church and kingdom anew among the Lehiters. "Old things are done away, and all things have become new" (3 Nephi 12:47; see also 3 Nephi 15:2–3). In response to Metcalfe, Roper argues that time is represented "ambiguously" in the middle part of the Book of Mormon, and thus "simply do[es] not require the narrow interpretation upon which Metcalfe seems to insist." Roper points out that words such as "quickly," "shortly," or "soon" are relative markers of prophetic time. According to Roper, Metcalfe understands Alma₂'s prediction that the "kingdom of heaven is soon at hand" to predict "Jesus's advent," or birth into the world. In contrast to what, I presume, is acceptable to both of them, I understand that phrase, and its accompanying "ambiguous" terminology, to refer to the visitation of the Lord Jesus Christ to the New World. It is then that Jesus will set up his kingdom among the Lehiters. Roper, "More Perfect Priority," 363.

(Alma 5:3), so what “kingdom” can Alma₂ and his people anticipate? On the one hand, just as Alma₂’s fathers did, he appears to have in mind the coming of the Lord to the Jews in Jerusalem to perform the atonement and resurrection, for he has much to say about “his people” (Nephite church) being “cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers” (Alma 5:21; see also Alma 5:22–27). And when Jesus came unto the Jews, he did establish his church and kingdom on earth in that region of the earth. So clearly, and most importantly, Alma₂ on the one hand anticipates the coming of the Lord to make himself the atonement for sin (see Alma 5:48; also Moses 4:6–8).

However, on the other hand, Alma₂ seems to have in mind more than that seminal event. He appears to be thinking of the Son of God’s ministry thereafter to his other sheep. I say this because of the general sweep of Alma₂’s sermon. Alma₂ in part declares that “whatsoever I shall say concerning that which is to come, is true” (Alma 5:48). The phrase “whatsoever I shall say” suggests that what Alma₂ has said and will say in Alma 5 is perhaps multifaceted, or that it may reach further than expected. Here again, Alma₂’s address expands in scope (this expansion is signaled in verses 33–36 where Alma₂ uses encompassing words such as “all men” and “whosoever”). Alma₂ explains that he is “called to speak ... unto *this people* ... concerning things which are to come” (Alma 5:44). Then he adds, I am called to preach unto “*everyone that dwelleth in the land*; yea, to preach *unto all*, both old and young, both bond and free” (Alma 5:49). Here, carried away by angelic zeal (see Alma 29:1–2, 7–8), Alma₂ addresses in what the poets call an apostrophe “*all ye ends of the earth*, for,” he announces, “the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand” (Alma 5:50). This gradual transition in prophetic perspective toward the more universal, while not removing Alma₂’s initial focus on the state of the church, is not accompanied by an image of a virgin or babe but with the “King of heaven” striding forth in colossal power and dominion as “*King of all the earth*” (Alma 5:50). This is but a variation of the good shepherd motif that runs through much of the sermon.⁷⁹

Alma₂ apparently intends to prepare his people for more than their date with death or judgment (both subjects touched on in Alma 5). He also seems to have in mind the coming of the Good Shepherd to his

79. Kings were commonly associated in the Hebrew writings Alma₂ had in possession with shepherds and flocks. King David is the classic example of the royal shepherd. As Alma₂ knew, Lehi₁ and Nephi₁ had combined the royal and pastoral before him (see 1 Nephi 10:12–14; see 1 Nephi 22:24–28).

sheep throughout much of the vineyard.⁸⁰ Alma 5 harmonizes well, then, with his fathers' writings and with what we have already seen present in Alma₂'s other teachings (see Alma 13:22–26; Alma 16:16–17). Alma₂'s message seems to be this: the Nephite church “must prepare quickly; for [the heavenly King and thus] the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand” among them. This prophetic prophecy and warning also fosters hope of good things to come unto all the nations of the earth either directly or indirectly (or both) (see 1 Nephi 19:10–12; Alma 13:22–26). In this context, Alma₂ using his fathers' imagery announces to the Nephite church:

Behold, he [the Good Shepherd] sendeth an invitation *unto all men*, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you.⁸¹

Yea, he saith: Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and waters and life freely.

Yea, come unto me and bring forth works of righteousness, *and ye shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire* —⁸²

For behold, the time is at hand that *whosoever* bringeth forth not good fruit or *whosoever* doeth not the works of righteousness, the same have cause to wail and mourn. (Alma 5:33–36)

Upon reading this invitation “unto all men” to repent and be spared, one wonders whether Alma₂ again describes the final day of judgment (see 5:15–25) or whether he addresses a more imminent event, the same that his fathers had spoken of: the coming of the Lord to the New World

80. The phrase “good shepherd” is used rarely in the Book of Mormon. Nephi₂ is the only other person to use it besides Alma₂ (Alma 5:38–39, 57, 60; Helaman 7:18). There are many references to the shepherd and the sheepfold in the Book of Mormon, and some writers use phrases like “one shepherd” (1 Nephi 13:41; 3 Nephi 15:21; 3 Nephi 16:3); or “true shepherd” (Helaman 15:13); or just “shepherd” (Mormon 5:17), but the phrase “good shepherd” seems almost exclusively to belong to Alma₂. Of course, it is a concept and phrase that has Old Testament origins.

81. Mormon uses this language later in his account of the Good Shepherd's voice speaking to the distraught survivors after their ordeals at the time of his coming to the more righteous part of those assembled at Bountiful.

82. About half of all instances of the phrase “hewn down and cast into the fire” are directly associated with either Zenos's allegory in Jacob 5 or Alma 5 (Jacob 5:42, 46, 66, 6:7; Alma 5:35, 52, 56; see also Helaman 14:18).

and others. Jesus's ministry to his other sheep (the more righteous part of the Lehtes) was to personally bring unto this remnant of the house of Israel the blessings of the infinite atonement and his healing power.

In summary, then, in Alma 5 Alma₂ prophesies unto his people that the Lord who comes to make atonement for all will also be the same who establishes his work and kingdom among them and perhaps others among the nations of the earth. These truths he has come to understand by the Holy Ghost. That Alma₂ in Alma 5 (and Alma 13 and 16) prophesies of the coming of the Lord to the seed of Lehi₁ in a future day explains why it is that Mormon who is in possession of the early prophesies appears to allude to Alma₂'s words and general teachings even as he records the events of Helaman and 3 Nephi.

Mormon's Use of Alma₂'s Writings

Many of the fathers' prophesies that appear early on in the Book of Mormon are echoed later in the text. From internal evidence, for instance, we can tell that Lehi₁, Nephi₁, and Zenos influenced later writers, including Alma₂, Samuel the Lamanite, and Mormon in 3 Nephi. This already has been demonstrated. Similarly, figures and their words after Lehi₁, Nephi₁, and Zenos such as Abinadi and King Benjamin are also very influential (see Alma 10:19).⁸³ (One of the most interesting examples of influence is tracing how Mosiah₂'s speech in Mosiah 29 gets picked up later in the decades that precede the coming of the Lord to the Lehtes [see Helaman 4:21; Helaman 5:2]). Here, though, it is necessary to understand that Alma 5 and 13 seem to be borrowed from by Mormon in 3 Nephi 8–10. In 3 Nephi, Mormon borrows from Alma₂ without signaling that he is doing so. He does it with a purpose. He desires to demonstrate that the words of the prophets were fulfilled in those events having to do with the coming of the Lord to the Lehtes. The first passage wherein Mormon seems to borrow from Alma₂ is Helaman 16:13–14. It corresponds to Alma 13:26. The other place wherein Mormon appears to borrow from Alma₂ is 3 Nephi 8–10. From Mormon's perspective, it appears that these chapters seem to fulfill Alma 5:33–36.⁸⁴ To be clear,

83. Listed here are two works with many contributors who in part explore the influence of Abinadi and King Benjamin. Shon D. Hopkin, ed., *Abinadi: He Came Among Them in Disguise* (Provo, UT, and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2018) and John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *King Benjamin's Speech Made Simple* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/46/>.

84. I will later isolate a verse or two for examination: 3 Nephi 9:14, 22.

I am not arguing here that history was influenced by Alma₂ as much as I am asserting that Alma₂ accurately predicted history and that his prophetic words were fulfilled in the coming of Christ to the Lehaites. Mormon's relation of the history in 3 Nephi 8–10 seems to intentionally confirm this.

Mormon's Use of Alma₂ in Helaman

Mormon appears to use Alma₂'s writings as he describes events near the coming of the Lord to the New World. For instance, Mormon's words in Helaman 16:13–14 seem to correspond to Alma₂'s words in Alma 13:22–26. Helaman 16:13–14 (Helaman 16:4–5 appears to lightly echo Alma 16:19–20) represents Mormon's words just following Samuel the Lamanite's second sermon to Zarahemla on the destruction that awaits them if they do not repent as well as on the signs of the Lord's birth and death (and, by implication, resurrection). In Helaman 16, as Mormon concludes his account, he writes the following:

But it came to pass that in the ninetieth year of reign of the judges, there were great signs given unto the people, and wonders; *and the words of the prophets began to be fulfilled.*

And angels did appear unto men, wise men, and did declare unto them glad tidings of great joy; *thus in this year the scriptures began to be fulfilled.* (Helaman 16:13–14)

Among Alma₂'s earlier words to the Ammonihahites in Alma 13:24–26, vs. 26 appears particularly resonant with the above words from Helaman 16:14, if not directly influential. Alma 13:24–26 seems to be one of the prophetic passages that Mormon adapts as he writes of the coming of the Lord to the Lehaites in Helaman 16:13–14:

For behold, angels are declaring it unto many at this time *in our land; and this is for the purpose of preparing the hearts of the children of men to receive his word at the time of his coming in his glory.*

And now we only await to hear the joyful news declared unto us by the mouth of angels, of his [actual] coming; for the time cometh, we know not how soon. Would to God it might be in my day; but let it be sooner or later, in it I will rejoice.

And it shall be made known unto just and holy men, by the mouth of angels, at the time of his coming, *that the words of our fathers may be fulfilled, according to that which they have*

spoken concerning him, which was according to the spirit of prophecy in them. (Alma 13:24–26)⁸⁵

The immediate context for Alma 13:26, then, is Alma₂'s teaching to the Ammonihahites that “angels are declaring it [the Lord’s coming] unto many at this time in our land ... for the purpose of preparing the hearts of the children of men to receive his word at the time of his coming in his glory” among them (also see Alma 39:16). Significantly, Alma₂ does not say here that the Lord will not come to them, but he says that “we know not how soon” it will be before he comes to us. He teaches affirmatively that “the time cometh” and that when that time cometh, “it shall be made known.”⁸⁶

Thus, Mormon seems to associate these passages — Alma 13:26 and Helaman 16:14 — to demonstrate that Alma₂'s words were beginning to come to pass. Mormon does this by not only borrowing words from Alma₂ (“men,” “angels,” and “fulfilled”) but by relating clustered concepts. To be specific, Mormon’s phrase “wise men” can reasonably be paired with Alma₂'s phrase “just and holy men”; Mormon’s statement “And angels did appear unto men” may be compared to Alma₂'s “And it shall be made known unto ... men, by the mouth of angels,” and so on (see also Alma 10:20–21).⁸⁷ Both Alma₂ and Mormon also refer to the authorities before

85. The full passage in Alma 13:22–26 is complex and interesting. Earlier in this century, Terryl L. Givens explained that Harold Bloom considered the Book of Mormon’s treatment of the “‘doctrine of angels’ as being of ‘extraordinary interest.’” Passages such as that found in Alma 13:22–26 are among the most interesting on the doctrine of angels. Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 6.

86. This passage alludes to two time periods. For Alma₂ first says that angels minister “at this time [in his day]” that Jesus might be received “at the time of his coming in his glory [sometime after his day].” And, he says, although angels already minister to us in preparation for the time when Jesus comes, “we ... wait to hear ... of his [actual] coming.” This later angelic message will be delivered “at the time of his coming” or, we might say, “[closer to] the time of his coming.” Something like this is described in 3 Nephi 19:1–3.

87. And now I [Amulek] say unto you that well doth the Lord judge of your iniquities; well doth he cry unto this people, by the voice of his angels: Repent ye, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Yea, well doth he cry, by the voice of angels that: I will come down among my people, with equity and justice in my hands ... But it is by the prayers of the righteous that ye are spared; now therefore, if ye will cast out the righteous from among you then will not the Lord stay his hand; but in his fierce anger he will come out against you ... and the time is soon at hand except ye repent. (Alma 10:20–21, 23)

them: Mormon refers to the “prophets” and the “scriptures” to make his point; Alma₂ similarly refers to “our fathers” to make essentially the same point. Both Alma₂ and Mormon teach in more or less the same language that, according to the fathers’ prophecies, angels prepare the way of the Lord by appearing unto men. The implication for Mormon’s reader is that Samuel the Lamanite who was sent forth by an angel to preach to the people of Zarahemla is a later fulfillment of Alma₂’s earlier declaration (see Helaman 13:7; Helaman 14:9). Moreover, this angelic activity of which Samuel’s experience is but a part is to prepare the people for the coming of Christ to them.⁸⁸ It is not lost on Mormon that both Alma₂ and Samuel declare repentance in Zarahemla for a similar purpose: to prepare the way of the Lord to them.

As Mormon also must have known, the early part of Samuel’s overall prophecy in Helaman 13–15 seems to represent a doctrinal anomaly that bears on the coming of the Lord. Of the five passages that foretell of the utter destruction of the Nephite civilization using the timeframe of four hundred years (2 Nephi 26:9; Alma 45:4–14; Helaman 13:9; 3 Nephi 27:32; and Mormon 8:6), only Samuel’s teaching in Helaman 13:9 appears to be anchored to the birth of Christ (see Helaman 13:6–7). The other four renditions of the four-hundred-years prophecy rather plainly mark time from the coming of the Lord to the Lehighes. This discrepancy among prophecies invites the question: Are we correctly understanding Samuel’s words at Helaman 13:6–7 or is he articulating a different or second prophecy that only resembles the others but is not the same as the others? In Helaman 16, Mormon does not address this question. He appears to assume our understanding of the matter. Mormon treats Samuel’s teachings as if they are in harmony with all the others. And why would they not be? This seeming difference between Samuel and prophets both before and after him is particularly remarkable since Samuel’s teachings fairly plainly borrow from Lehi₁, Nephi₁ (Zenos), and Alma₂. Most importantly, Samuel the Lamanite borrows from 1 Nephi 19:10–12 where Nephi₁ tells us that Zenos prophesied of the coming of the Good Shepherd to many among the house of Israel at the time of the sign of his death. This intertextual reality may also explain in part why Samuel feels confident announcing that the Lord’s coming into the world as a baby among the Jews is in “five years” (Helaman 14:2). I surmise as much because the 1 Nephi 19:10–12 passage also tells us that

88. Hardy also connects the two passages in a footnote (e14). Grant Hardy, ed., *The Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2018), 455.

the Lord comes among the Jews “in six hundred years from the time [Lehi₁] left Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 19:8). It does not seem problematic that Samuel cites an angel as the source of his teachings since he plainly refers to the prophets, prophecies, and the holy scriptures (Helaman 15:7, 13).

For these reasons, I suspect that Mormon borrows from Alma₂ and others to illustrate his point that prophecy is reliable and was indeed coming to pass that the people in Zarahemla might avoid the consequences that both Alma₂ and Samuel had spoken of. Each had warned of fire upon Zarahemla if they did not repent and prepare for the coming of the Lord to them (see Alma 5:33–36 and Helaman 13:11–14). Not unlike Samuel, Mormon interweaves many known prophecies with the events that are transpiring at this season in real time before the people of Nephi₁.

Mormon's Use of Alma₂ in 3 Nephi

To explain Mormon's apparent use of Alma 5:33–36 (especially verse 33), will require a bit more explanation and exegetical work than did Mormon's use of Alma 13:26. To demonstrate how Alma₂ may suggest those very events recorded in 3 Nephi 8–10, I will show how Mormon may use Alma 5:33–36 (and Alma 5:52, 56) to reflect the dramatic events that transpire just before the personal appearance of the Lord to the Lehiites. To set the scene, let us remind the reader of the events recorded in 3 Nephi. In addition, Mormon makes an argument that these characteristic events are unto the fulfilling of the fathers' prophecies (see 3 Nephi 1:4, 13, 18, 20, 26; 3 Nephi 9:16; 3 Nephi 10:11, 14–15; 3 Nephi 11:12). In 3 Nephi 8:6–7 the account describes for us in vivid, natural imagery the destruction foretold by Nephi₁ (Zenos) and Samuel the Lamanite. Indeed, their prophecies predicting thunder, lightning, fire, and darkness in the land are abundantly fulfilled when Jesus comes to the New World (see 1 Nephi 12:4–6; 1 Nephi 19:10–11; 2 Nephi 26:3–9; Helaman 14:26–27; 3 Nephi 8:6–7, 12, 17, 19–20).

Below is Mormon's historical account and argument for the prophetically anticipated events. Consider these representative passages from Mormon's account in 3 Nephi 8–10 (there are many others):

And there was also a great and terrible tempest; and there was *terrible thunder*, insomuch that it did shake the whole earth.

...

And there were exceedingly *sharp lightnings*, such as never had been known in all the land.

And the city of *Zarahemla* *did take fire* [presumably due to the sharp lightning] (see 3 Nephi 8:12, 17, 20, 24; also 3 Nephi 9:3)⁸⁹

Mormon records these events to demonstrate the fulfillment of earlier prophecy. Given that Samuel the Lamanite borrows from Zenos's relevant prophecy quoted by Nephi₁, that the Lord would visit "some [remnants of the house of Israel on the isles of the sea] with his voice, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation, and others with the thunderings and the lightnings of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and by vapor of darkness," it seems reasonable to suggest that Alma₂ and Samuel who appear to have that prophecy in mind (if not before them) are also aware that the Lord at this time of destruction would visit "some with his voice because of their righteousness."

Although Alma₂'s nod to the early Nephite teaching does not itself mention thunder and lightning, it does reference "fire" falling on the unrighteous in *Zarahemla* while using a phrase characteristic of Zenos's prophecies (more on this in a second). Further, Alma₂ also predicts that "the time is at hand [soon upon them] that whosoever bringeth forth not good fruit [probably Zenos's phrase], or whosoever doeth not the works of righteousness, the same have cause to wail and mourn" (Alma 5:35–36). Mormon describes the fulfillment of Alma₂'s (and Helaman's) words in this similar language:

And it came to pass that it [the sign of darkness] did last for the space of three days that there was no light seen; and there was *great mourning* and *howling* and *weeping* among the people continually; yea, great were the *groanings* of the people, because of the darkness and the great destruction which had come upon them. (3 Nephi 8:23)

Mormon reports that in the darkness and amidst the human suffering, out of heaven "there was a voice heard" by the most righteous part of the people who had been spared (3 Nephi 9:1; see also 3 Nephi 10:3). Significantly, the heavenly "voice" resembles in part Alma₂'s prophetic channeling of the "good shepherd[s]" voice in

89. Recall that Alma₂ and Samuel the Lamanite predicted this (see Alma 5:35–36; Helaman 13:12–14, 14:20–27).

Alma 5:33–42, 57, 59–62.⁹⁰ According to Mormon, while the righteous lament in utter darkness, “Jesus Christ[,] the Son of God[,]” announces that “the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled” (3 Nephi 9:16). Mormon has used those scriptures to prove this very point and will do more of that soon. The Good Shepherd characteristically invites all who have not been cut off to “come unto [him]” (3 Nephi 9:22; see John 10:15–18). Mormon records his tender words of invitation, words that resemble the shepherd’s voice found in the Gospel of John⁹¹:

Yea, verily I [the Good Shepherd] say unto you, if ye will *come unto me* ye shall have eternal life. Behold, *mine arm of mercy is extended towards you*, and whosoever will *come*, *him will I receive*; and blessed are those who *come unto me*. (3 Nephi 9:14)

As Mormon was apparently aware, it was Alma₂ who declared not many decades before the following while among the church in Zarahemla (and later throughout the land):

Behold, he [the Good Shepherd] sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the *arms of mercy are extended towards them*, and he saith: Repent, *and I will receive you*.

Yea, he saith, *Come unto me* and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea; ye shall eat and drink of the waters of life freely;

Yea, *come unto me* ... and bring forth works of righteousness, *and ye shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire* —

90. In the current 2013 official edition of the Book of Mormon as well as in the prior 1981 edition printed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, footnote “a” in 3 Nephi 9:14 cites “Alma 5:34 (33–36),” recognizing the connection. In Alma 5, Alma₂ makes it clear that the invitation that he extends is that of the “good shepherd” (vv. 37–38).

91. 3 Nephi 9 has a robust intertextual relationship with the Gospel of John. This can be determined because it uses familiar Johannine phrases and concepts such as “come unto me;” “I am in the Father, and the Father in me;” and “I am the light and the life of the world” (3 Nephi 9:13–18). This intertextual relationship becomes even clearer when the speaker, “a voice heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land,” identifies himself as “Jesus Christ the Son of God” and employs language we associate with John 10:15–18. John 10:15–18 is where we find the Old-World pronouncement of the Good Shepherd about his duty to visit his other sheep. Specifically, the Nephite account employs the familiar sentiment that “for such I [Good Shepherd] have laid down my life, and have taken it up again” (3 Nephi 9:22; see John 10:17–18).

For behold, the time is at hand that whosoever bringeth forth not good fruit, or whosoever doeth not the works of righteousness, *the same has cause to wail and mourn.* (Alma 5:33–36; see also 3 Nephi 9:13)

Notice how Alma₂'s words both allude to the dream and vision of his fathers Lehi₁ and Nephi₁ (and Zenos) as well as parallel those words found in 3 Nephi 9:14 (see italicized words above) where the Good Shepherd begins to invite his bewildered sheep who nevertheless hear his invitation in the darkness to "Come unto [him]." The passage's use of "fire" and "wail and mourn" in context with the fathers (including Zenos) may also suggest something of the destruction that awaits the unrepentant at the Lord's coming. At least Mormon seems to think so. Significantly, some of these phrases are rather unique in scripture,⁹² thus making it more likely that Alma₂'s words are adapted by Mormon, who apparently sees in them the fulfillment of Alma₂'s prophecy (and others' prophecies).⁹³ From here (Alma 5:33–36), as mentioned, Alma₂ stresses

92. Noel B. Reynolds and Jeff Lindsay have pointed out that the verb sequence of *weep*, *wail*, and *gnash* can be found in Mosiah 16:2 and Alma 40:13. This is the standard sequence in scripture for the words. They have explained that this phrasal sequence could possibly derive from the brass plates version of the Book of Moses since the series of verbs occur in proximity in Moses 1:22. See Parallel #59 in 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/>.

93. Alma₂'s phrase "arms of mercy are extended towards them" seems to influence 3 Nephi 9:14 (again, footnote "a" in the current official edition of the Book of Mormon in that verse cites "Alma 5:34 (33–36)" as a relevant passage). Actually, Alma₂ may have received the phrase (or a variant of it) from either Jacob (see Jacob 6:5) or Abinadi (see Mosiah 16:12). It is interesting to note that Jacob uses the phrase in context with a second phrase found in Alma 5:33–36: "hewn down and cast into the fire." That phrase must be Zenos's. It is found at least five times in the allegory Jacob records for us (see Jacob 5:42, 46–47, 49, and 66). The phrase "hewn down and cast into the fire," a phrase used by Alma₂ three times in Alma 5 (verses 35, 52, and 56), is generally used to refer to the second death at final judgment. But, in one instance it is used to refer to the fire we associate with the judgments at the Second Coming (see Mormon 8:21). Alma₂'s use of the phrase seems to refer to the judgments we associate with the coming of the Lord to the Lehiites, an event that is a type of the Second Coming, as mentioned.

Lastly, Alma₂'s phrase "wail and mourn" is rather peculiar. The closest scriptural phrases to it are found in Micah 1:8, 3 Nephi 8:25, or 3 Nephi 10:10. It

in his sermon to Zarahemla the importance of heeding the “voice of the good shepherd” (Alma 5:37–38). As also indicated, he seems to declare these words unto all people of the earth even though only his congregation in Zarahemla can hear him. Alma₂ declares with the zeal of an angel:

Yea, thus saith the Spirit: Repent, *all ye ends of the earth*, for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand; yea, the Son of God cometh in his glory, in his might, majesty, power, and *dominion*. I say unto you, that the Spirit saith: Behold the glory of the King *of all the earth*; and also the King of heaven shall very soon shine forth *among all the children of men*. (Alma 5:50; see also 3 Nephi 11:14; 3 Nephi 22:5)

Before concluding his sermon, Alma₂, now considering the fires of the spiritual death, warns the church again about being “hewn down and cast into the fire” (Alma 5:52, 56), exhorting them to heed the “voice of the good shepherd” (Alma 5:37–39, 41, 57, 60). Accordingly, it seems plausible that Alma₂ anticipates (with the Nephite church) the coming of the Lord to the Lehites (and others). As stated, this claim is suggested to us by Mormon who attempts to demonstrate over and over in his abridgment of Nephi₁’s large plates that the sophisticated and nuanced prophecies of Alma₂ (and the prophecies of others before and after him) were fulfilled at the time of the Lord’s coming to the seed of Lehi₁. Indeed, Mormon says that the thunder and lighting and fire and darkness and wailing and mourning of the Lehites at the Lord’s coming are signs unto the fulfilling of many of the prophets’ words. Mormon explains that “many [prophets] have testified of these things at the time of the coming of Christ” (3 Nephi 10:15). He thus exhorts us to search the scriptures and see if it is not so (see 3 Nephi 10:14).

We have attempted to conduct a search of the scriptures in this paper to determine the awareness of the Nephites of the coming of Christ

is a rare phrase that seems to foreshadow the destructive events found in 3 Nephi (see 3 Nephi 8–10 and 3 Nephi 10:10). Mormon seems conscious of such prophecies as Alma₂’s in his account (see 3 Nephi 10:11). Modern scripture (not the Book of Mormon itself) predominantly uses the comparable but standard phrase, “weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth” (see D&C 19:5; 85:9; 133:73). To wail is to howl, cry, weep, anguish, or lament. According to Mormon, Alma₂’s reference to fire (in Zarahemla) and wailing and mourning seems to have documented fulfillment in 3 Nephi 8–10. Even if this is not so, Mormon appears to borrow from Alma 5 to make his case, thus he treats it as a prophecy with relevance to the Lord’s coming to the Lehites.

during the middle portion of the Book of Mormon using the sermons and teachings of Alma₂. It is my thesis that Alma₂ is one of those prophets who foretold of Jesus's coming to the Lehighes and did so in Alma 5 and in many other places in his writings. All this has been laid out. In addition, Alma₂ seems to have had more in mind than even that. His teachings correspond to Nephi₁'s (Zenos's) and also are confirmed by Samuel the Lamanite and Mormon himself. This is the continuity I spoke of earlier. It is not straightforward or irrefutable in every detail, but it is discernible and has scriptural warrant. Subscribing to doctrinal continuity from Nephi₁ to Alma₂ (and perhaps through Mormon) on this matter of the Lord's coming to the New World seems a very feasible stance.

Conclusion

In summary, near the end of Alma 5, Alma₂ declares that according to his divine priesthood commission, he has spoken in the "energy of [his] soul" unto "everyone that dwelleth in the land" (Alma 5:43). He has attempted to speak in a manner so "plainly ... concerning the things which are to come" that his people "cannot err" (Alma 5:43). Alma₂ has spoken of those sacred prophecies attributed to the "fathers" (Alma 5:47). He has borne witness in these terms: "I say unto you, that I know of myself that whatsoever I [have said and] shall say unto you, concerning that which is to come, is true" (Alma 5:47). All this has been Alma₂'s duty and according to his holy calling and order. He explains:

For I am called to speak after this manner, according to the holy order of God, which is in Christ Jesus; yea, I am commanded to stand and testify unto this people *the things which have been spoken by our fathers concerning the things which are to come*. (Alma 5:44)

Alma₂ then asks his somewhat resistant audience to consider his testimony and how it came to him,

Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?

Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. *Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I know of myself* [and not merely due to the fathers' writings] *that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me*

by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me. (Alma 5:45–46)

In the foregoing, a good-faith response to the scholars advocating for discontinuity has been attempted to further explore the intriguing observation that after Nephi₁ the teaching that the Lord would come among the Lehites was not widely circulated or understood. These scholars' valuable observations have prompted a deeper look into this subject, and thus have inspired this project. It has been asserted here that Alma₂ often taught that the Lord would soon come among them (see Alma 5, 7, 13, 16, 39). Indeed, he apparently urgently attempted to prepare them for the occasion. However, Alma₂ was careful not to make definitive claims about *when* or *how* the event(s) would occur, much as he sets aside these issues (mysteries) about the appointed times, kinds, and numbers of the resurrection in Alma 40. Here, we have addressed concerns about problem passages in the Book of Mormon and the early and late prophecies and teachings of the fathers. In so doing, we have attempted to demonstrate from Alma₂'s teachings at Zarahemla, Gideon, Ammonihah, and elsewhere that he was aware of and relatively clear-headed about the reality of the coming of the Lord to the New World. He even appears to have broadened that picture either by taking his cue from his ancient fathers' teachings (i.e., those of Zenos, Isaiah, and Nephi₁) or as moved upon by the spirit of revelation and prophecy. Thus, Alma₂ taught that the coming of the Lord in the first century would not only be to the Jews and the Lehites, but that it would entail a semi-universal quality and would be accompanied by angelic ministration and power and glory.

This secondary claim, provides a valuable perspective on Alma₂'s teachings (and the feverish prophetic and angelic activity he describes occurring in so many other parts of the earth) because we typically associate the first coming of the Lord to the Jews in the Old World with Jesus's obscurity, poverty, and meekness.⁹⁴ And yet, the prophets, including Alma₂, testified that the Lord's first coming was to be in great power and authority and unto many (1 Nephi 19:10–11; Alma 5:50;

94. Parley P. Pratt's hymn "Jesus, Once of Humble Birth" encapsulates the traditional approach to the first and second comings of the Lord. In the hymn, the speaker contrasts the Lord's first coming with that of his second, "Jesus, once of humble birth, Now in glory comes to earth. Once he suffered grief and pain; Now he comes on earth to reign. Now he comes on earth to reign." ("Jesus Once of Humble Birth," *Hymns*, no. 196.) Alma₂ speaks of both comings as universal and in power and glory.

Alma 13:22, 24; Alma 16:16, 17, 19–20). The King of all the earth, the Good Shepherd, would come unto the children of men scattered among all nations. In that sense, his first-century advent (or his first-century advents) is a reliable pattern for the Second Coming, when Christ again will make multiple appearances unto various assemblies of believers expectantly awaiting his arrival. No one knows the day or hour of those appearances, but we do know that he will come among us and others. Like the Nephite church in Alma₂'s day, we also must prepare the way of the Lord, "making his paths straight" (Alma 7:19). Relatively soon he will reveal himself unto all who are spared the fires of divine judgment (see D&C 133:19–21). And, as Alma₂ taught concerning the Lord's first appearance and ministry, he will again stand among us and establish his kingdom anew. After the Good Shepherd manifested himself to his other sheep among the Leuites, they lived in peace and love for hundreds of years until they again, according to the prophecies, "dwindled in unbelief" (Alma 45:9–14; Helaman 13:9).⁹⁵ A similar season of peace and rest at the Second Coming will be ushered in for a thousand years. "The Prince of Peace" will reign "and the government shall be upon his shoulder" (Isaiah 9:6–7).

Lastly, in this study it has been suggested that Alma 5 is a prophetic warning consistent with earlier prophecies and later recorded history. Particularly in the latter part of Alma 5 it seems that Alma₂ has in mind the ministry of the Lord to his people after his resurrection from the dead. He is represented in that part of the sermon as great in power and dominion and as striding upon the earth and establishing his universal kingdom in some first-century sense. This is apparently what Alma₂ had learned by the "Holy Spirit of God" since the coming of the angel to him and his friends after their rebellions. We have seen that Alma₂, as a student of the scriptures, had clearly understood that the

95. In Alma 45:10, we learn that the prophet had clear understanding of the coming of Christ to his father's seed: he says that in "four hundred years from the time that Jesus Christ shall manifest himself unto them, [the Nephites] shall dwindle in unbelief." This clear statement suggests that Alma₂ assumes a knowledge of the Lord's coming as he prophesies of a later apostasy and destruction. This prophecy is consistent with statements from Nephi₁, (1 Nephi 12:19–20), Samuel (Helaman 13:9), Jesus himself (3 Nephi 27:32), and others. Although Alma₂ did not know the exact time of the Lord's coming among them, he apparently had a sharp sense of the end of his people, for he says that all this will occur in "four hundred years" from the "time that Jesus Christ shall manifest himself" to the seed of Lehi₁. This prophecy, in contrast to the others about Christ's coming in power to all the earth, "shall not be made known, even until the prophecy is fulfilled" (Alma 45:9).

Redeemer would come among the Jews, and that he yet sought to further understand the precise nature of his ministry on earth thereafter. Alma₂ can be seen to struggle for more precise knowledge of the events that would occur among his own people. In the course of Alma 5, we see him compelled by the “Holy Spirit” to declare repentance and baptism as well as to prophesy of the coming of the Good Shepherd to his other sheep, to all those who would hear his voice and harden not their hearts in advance of his coming. We have seen that this is fulfilled at the time of the Lord’s coming when Mormon emphatically points out that the prophecies concerning his coming have been fulfilled.

Through the spirit of revelation and prophecy, Alma₂ felt driven to travel throughout the Nephite lands declaring the coming of the Lord among his people and the urgency of setting the church in order that the people of the Lord might receive their King and Shepherd and be spared the calamities associated with that day of salvation and reckoning. There remain questions about the continuity of the prophecies concerning the Lord’s coming to the Jews and his other peoples on the face of the earth after Alma₂, but it seems that it cannot be doubted that Alma₂, student of Nephi₁ and others, taught fairly widely that the coming of the Lord would be to his own people and unto others of his sheep elsewhere on earth.

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TOWARD A GREATER APPRECIATION OF THE WORD *ADIEU* IN JACOB 7:27

Godfrey J. Ellis

Abstract: *The phrase “Brethren, adieu” (Jacob 7:27) has been criticized over the years as an obvious anachronism in the Book of Mormon. That criticism holds no validity whatsoever, as others have pointed out, since many English words have French origins. It’s worth considering, though, a deeper meaning of the word. In French, it carries a nuance of finality — that the separation will last until a reunion following death (à Dieu, or until God). This deeper meaning of adieu appears to have been known by Shakespeare and frontier Americans although the second meaning is not generally recognized by English speakers today. However, Jacob 7:27 appears to reflect this deeper meaning as do certain uses of another valediction in the Book of Mormon — that of farewell. With the deeper meaning of adieu in mind, the parallel structure in Jacob 7:27 — “down to the grave,” reflecting the finality of adieu — becomes more apparent. The question of whether Joseph Smith was aware of the deeper meaning of adieu is taken up by looking at how the word was used in the Joseph Smith Papers. The take-away is that rather than reflecting an error on the part of Joseph Smith, the word adieu, with its deeper nuance of finality until God, is not only an appropriate term, it appears to strengthen rather than undermine the case for the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.*

The presence of the unusual phrase “Brethren, adieu” in Jacob 7:27 resulted in one of the earliest criticisms of the Book of Mormon by those who rejected its ancient origins. It was judged to be a ridiculous blunder on the part of Joseph Smith and was often cited as a classic anachronism that proved the book had no true historicity but was the product of a naïve nineteenth-century farm boy who happened to have unusual intelligence and writing ability. Many guffawed from the sidelines: “The Nephites, had they really existed, would not have known

French! This proves Joseph Smith was a fraud!” This criticism has been extensively countered by numerous Latter-day Saint authors, scholars, and teachers¹ and it is not the main intent of this present study to repeat this defense in detail. Still, there are two valid reasons why it is worth at least a summary of the defense against the charge that the word *adieu* is an anachronism that disqualifies the Book of Mormon.

Perceived Issues With the Word *Adieu*

One reason for rehearsing the defense of *adieu* yet again is that its use as an argument against the Book of Mormon is still alive and well and out there on the Internet and in print. As recently as 19 July 2022, the word was listed in the widely read information source, *Wikipedia*. It came under the topic of “Anachronisms in the Book of Mormon.”² Fortunately, that assertion was eventually removed for not being a “serious scholarly claim.” While I am grateful that it was deleted, it is concerning that the criticism was available that widely and that recently.³ Unfortunately, there are still books, websites, and some church groups that pass the objection along. Paul J. Gassman in a 2014 book, for example, makes this declaration:

[Jacob 7:27] ends the Book of Jacob with the words, “Brethern [sic] adieu.” The word “adieu” is a French word which means good bye. The problem with the use of this French word is that the French language was not developed or derived from Latin until 700 A.D. How does someone, who supposedly wrote on these golden tablets 500 years before Christ, write a French

1. One good example of this is from a discussion of the word in “The French word ‘adieu’ in the Book of Mormon,” FAIR Answers Wiki, https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Book_of_Mormon/Language/%22Adieu%22. See also, Steve Reed, “Jacob’s usage of the word ‘adieu’ in the Book of Mormon,” *oneClimbs*, June 19, 2011, <https://oneclimbs.com/2011/06/19/jacobs-usage-of-the-word-adieu-in-the-book-of-mormon/>.

2. “Anachronisms in the Book of Mormon: Revision history,” *Wikipedia*, version from July 19, 2022 at 21:41, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Anachronisms_in_the_Book_of_Mormon&oldid=1099266373. The current version, last edited February 6, 2023, is at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anachronisms_in_the_Book_of_Mormon.

3. See, for example, the comment by user Trevdna at 23:01, 19 July 2022, “Anachronisms in the Book of Mormon: Revision history,” https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Anachronisms_in_the_Book_of_Mormon&action=history&offset=20220719230137%7C1099277584.

word that was not derived till approximately 700 years after Christ?⁴

Included as a part of a 2013 volume, Paul D. Wegner at the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, mentions *adieu* in a list of alleged contradictions and anachronisms in the Book of Mormon. He complains: “the modern French word *adieu* occurs in Jacob 7:27, but it is unlikely that it is older than the ninth century AD.”⁵ That book with its criticism of the word *adieu* has been praised by religious scholars, including those at such influential religious educational sites as Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Union College, Denver Seminary, and elsewhere.

Various forms of these statements have been shared on miscellaneous websites as well, such as this declaration from Martin Cowan’s book, *Mormon Claims Answered*, shared on the website of the Utah Lighthouse Ministry and elsewhere:

In Jacob 7:27, the French word “Adieu” concludes the book of Jacob. How did a French word get into the English translation of the Reformed Egyptian language? The *B. of M.* dates Jacob between 544 and 421 B.C. The French language did not even exist until around 700 A.D.⁶

Some writers are not particularly shy in drawing bold conclusions from this single word. For example, Jon Gary Williams quickly gravitates to the “fraud” end of the spectrum:

4. Paul J. Gassman, *The Book of Mormon and Basic Christian Doctrine: A Study in Truth* (Geneva, MN: Timonhy N. Gassman, 2014), 231, https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Book_of_Mormon_and_Basic_Christian_D/Go8hBwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=adieu+french+%22book+of+mormon%22&pg=PA231&printsec=frontcover.

5. Steven B. Cowan and Terry L. Wilder, *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishing Group, 2013), 137, https://www.google.com/books/edition/In_Defense_of_the_Bible_A_Comprehensive/U6KMDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=french+language+jacob+7:27+mormon+adieu&pg=PA137&printsec=frontcover.

6. Marvin W. Cowan, “The Book of Mormon,” in *Mormon Claims Answered* (Salt Lake City: Utah Christian Publications, 1997), <http://www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/mclaims4.htm#internal>. See also “Fallacies In The Book Of Mormon,” <https://www.angelfire.com/ok2/discouragement/Cults/Mormonism/Fallacies.html>. An example of a blog using a similar statement is Heinz Schmitz, “The Book of Mormon on this Day in History,” *The Bookshelf* (blog), Sept. 22, 2020, <https://thebookshelf2015.blogspot.com/2020/09/the-book-of-mormon-on-this-day-in.html>.

In Jacob 7:27, the French word *adieu* occurs. But how could a **modern** French word have found its way into those ancient plates? This is additional evidence of fraud and presents grounds for rejecting the *Book of Mormon*.⁷

The second reason for my offering a basic defense for *adieu* is that, while the explanation is possibly well known in some circles in the Church, it may still be a stumbling block to many members as well as to anyone learning about the Book of Mormon for the first time. It thus seems relevant to reiterate why the use of *adieu* is not a proof disqualifying the veracity of the Book of Mormon. I will discuss the defense of this word before examining some deeper aspects of the word choice in Jacob 7:27.

The Basic Defense for the Word *Adieu*

The fact most critics miss when claiming that *adieu* is an anachronism is that because the text of the Book of Mormon is a *translation*, the presence of *adieu* does not imply that Book of Mormon peoples spoke French, any more than the presence of English words implies they spoke English. Further, while *adieu* has been borrowed from French, it had become a proper English word long before Joseph Smith's day.

It is obvious that the Nephites did not speak French in the sixth century BCE when Jacob lived, which was a thousand years before the French language emerged from Latin and later influenced English. The fact that Joseph Smith's translation of an ancient record through the power of God employs a word that sounds French provides no evidence that the Book of Mormon is false. In sum, the ancient writer and prophet, Jacob, was not the one who used the word *adieu* — the word is simply part of Joseph Smith's translation and was intended to convey Jacob's concept, not his actual word choice.

Many who criticize the use of *adieu* are merely flagging a word that seems to them to be a foreign term. To be fair, their discomfort is somewhat understandable. The phrase "Brethren, adieu" may seem, even to faith-filled readers, to be incongruous. It may feel just as jarring as if the verse had ended with the phrase, "Brethren, aloha" (or *sayonara*, *hasta la vista*, *cheerio*, etc.).

7. Jon Gary Williams, *The Book of Mormon: A Book of Mistakes, Error, and Fraud* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press, 2000), 7, <https://studylib.net/doc/18593397/the-book-of-mormon--a-book-of-mistakes--error>. Emphasis in original.

It should be noted that the anglicized French word *adieu*, while seldom used by anglophones today, was in common usage in frontier America. It had become an accepted English word at least as early as the time of William Shakespeare, and even earlier, at the time of Geoffrey Chaucer (see below). It was certainly in common use by the time of Joseph Smith.

It has been estimated that some 45% of English vocabulary originates from the French language. The following fictional story illustrates how French words have crept into the English language:

Acting as our own *chauffeur*, I picked up my *chic, brunette fiancée* from her *cul-de-sac* to take her to a *matinée ballet*. Rather than giving a *critique* of the *performance*, which seemed as *pensive* as a *déjà-vu mirage* on a long, hot *avenue*, the *audience* called for the *ingénue* to provide an *encore* of her *risqué dance* from her *répertoire*. Then, in the *derrière* of the *théâtre*, behind the *grande façade*, we went to a fancy *café* where, as a *célébration soirée*, my *parents* were hosting a *réunion* for us. In this *milieu*, the guests chose *hors d'oeuvres* from the *menu* and then gave us, the *belle* and *beau*, gifts of *pot-pourri*.⁸

Given that the English language contains so many French-origin words, it should come as no surprise that many words utilized in the Book of Mormon also have French origins and French cognates. A helpful reviewer of an earlier draft of this article asked for a list of such words in the Book of Mormon, but such a list would be at least in the thousands and likely in the tens of thousands. Perhaps showing five French or Old French-origin words in just the very first verse of the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 1:1, will make the point:

I, Nephi, having been born of goodly *parents*, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many *afflictions* in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly *favoured* of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the

8. For more on this topic, see Joanna Gonzalez, “French Words in English: 35 Words You Thought Were English... But Are Actually French,” *FluentU: French Language and Culture Blog*, November 26, 2022, <https://www.fluentu.com/blog/french/french-words-phrases-used-in-english/>.

mysteries of God, therefore I make a *record* of my proceedings
in my days.⁹

Because of the vagaries of the English language, some French-origin words “stick” and some do not. *Adieu* is one that was used more in Joseph Smith’s time and less in our own. For comparative purposes, we tracked the use of three valedictions,¹⁰ *adieu*, *farewell*, and *goodbye* using Google’s Ngram Viewer,¹¹ an online search engine that graphs usage based on “a corpus of books ... over selected years.”¹²

As can be seen in Figure 1, the valediction *adieu* has a roller-coaster history. The modern replacement of *adieu* with *goodbye* is plainly visible.¹³ An apparently high-frequency usage period for *adieu* occurred during the time of William Shakespeare, who used *adieu* 96 times in his 38 plays (more on this below). Another high frequency period occurred in the 80-year period from approximately 1820 to the late 1800s, which includes the publication date for the Book of Mormon and other events of the Restoration. Joseph Smith certainly could have known this common word. This assertion will be further supported later in this paper.

9. Most dictionaries provide the etymology of words. These examples all come from *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <https://www.etymonline.com>.

10. A *valédiction* (as opposed to a *salutation*) means a departure wish or blessing.

11. I am indebted to Jeff Lindsay for pointing me to this valuable research tool.

12. Google Books Ngram Viewer, <https://books.google.com/ngrams/info>. Ngram is subject to limited data for pre-nineteenth-century works and is not a reliably guide as to the real frequency of use of the word. This can be seen in the rapid fluctuations on the left side of the graph, which are due to there being less literary data for that early time period. However, it does provide an approximation of usage.

13. How or why the replacement happened is not fully known, but it is interesting to note that the change corresponds with the spread of the telephone. See “1870s–1940s: Telephone,” *Imagining the Internet: A History and Forecast*, <https://www.elon.edu/u/imagining/time-capsule/150-years/back-1870-1940/#:~:text=By%201900%20there%20were%20nearly,its%20purchase%20of%20Western%20Union>.

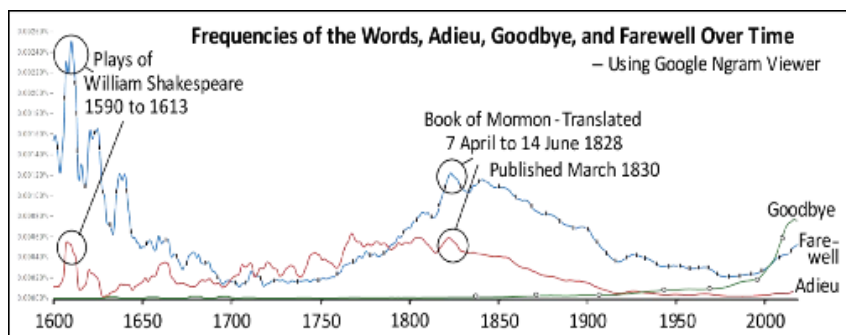


Figure 1. Google Ngram chart comparing frequency of use of “adieu,” “goodbye,” and “farewell” from 1600 to the present.

A second source for evaluating the use of language at the time of Joseph Smith is Noah Webster’s *American Dictionary of the English Language*, published on April 14, 1828, just as Joseph Smith was translating and publishing the Book of Mormon. Webster’s dictionary confirms that *adieu* was an entirely acceptable English word of the time. Webster’s first and primary definition was, “Farewell; an expression of kind wishes at the parting of friends.”¹⁴ And, indeed, to modern readers, especially upon a surface reading of the Book of Mormon “Brethren, adieu” appears to be just that: a temporary farewell to his family — “kind wishes at the parting of friends.” However, the following should demonstrate that the word usage actually goes much deeper than that.

The Deeper Meaning of *Adieu*

If all that *adieu* meant was a farewell valediction at a temporary parting, it would be equivalent to the Spanish *adios*, which is almost universally used as a goodbye valediction. Both *adieu* and *adios* mean “à” (to or until) and *Dieu* or *Dios* (meaning God). That’s where the similarity ends. The Spanish *adios* has a flavor of “until we meet again” and that could be next month, next week, tomorrow, or, even, later today. Among modern Spanish speakers, *adios* has all but lost its connection with God. For most French speakers, *adieu* has a decidedly different flavor. It carries the connotation, “I will not see you again on Earth; I will see you only after death when we both stand before God at the judgment bar.” This is an important nuance. A popular French-to-French dictionary expresses this subtlety. It offers as its first and primary definition:

14. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the American Language* (1828), s.v. “adieu,” <https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/adieu>.

Formule dont on se sert en prenant congé de qqn *qu'on ne doit pas revoir* de quelque temps (opposé à *au revoir*) ou même *qu'on ne doit plus revoir*.¹⁵

Translated, this says:

An expression that one would use when taking leave from someone who one *does not expect to see again* for some time (as opposed to goodbye) or even *that one will never see again*.
[emphasis added, my translation]

The French language provides other words and terms to express a *temporary* farewell, all of them implying a reunion in the very near future. Most often, they would say *au revoir*, meaning until we “re-see” you or, more simply, see you again. *Au revoir* is the phrase that comes up in Google Translate when one calls up the French equivalent of *goodbye*.¹⁶ They might also say “à la prochaine” meaning “until the next time.” They often say “à demain,” meaning “until tomorrow.” They equally might say “à bientôt” meaning “until well-early” (*bien-tôt*) or, in other words, “see you soon.” Younger French speakers often say “*salut!*,” meaning “I salute you.”¹⁷ French speakers would not say “*adieu*.” That could be taken as implying “we’ll never see you again alive” or even “well, that takes care of you!” Never, in almost three years in France, did I hear anyone say *adieu* to me or anyone else. I was quickly corrected, as I first learned the language, when I once said *adieu* to someone who I would see the following week.

The same French dictionary offers a second but closely related definition of *adieu*. It is a goodbye to a *situation* or an *object* rather than a goodbye to a person. It carries the same nuance of, if not finality, at least a significantly extended period of time. This second and related meaning is “en parlant d’une *chose* perdue,” meaning, “when speaking of a *thing* that is lost” (emphasis added). Examples given in the dictionary are:

“*Adieu, la belle vie!*,” meaning “Goodbye to the good life!”

“Vous pouvez dire *Adieu*, à votre tranquillité!,” or “You can say *goodbye* to your peace and tranquility!”¹⁸

15. *Le Robert Micro Poche: Dictionnaire d'apprentissage de la langue française*, ed. Alain Rey (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1988), s.v. “adieu.”

16. Google Translate, s.v. “goodbye,” <https://translate.google.com/?sl=auto&tl=fr&text=goodbye&op=translate>.

17. This word can be used as both a salutation or a valediction, much like the word *aloha*.

18. *Le Robert Micro Poche*, s.v. “adieu.”

Again, this second definition speaks to a finality that the word *adios* does not have. I will return to this second definition shortly.

Shakespeare's extensive use of the word *adieu* reflects the same, deeper finality that both definitions (*adieu* to a person and *adieu* to a thing) imply. Shakespeare used *adieu* in the majority of his 38 plays and often, though not always, to imply an extended separation or the finality of death. Here are just four examples of when Shakespeare used *adieu* with the deeper meaning.

- In "Twelfth Night," Viola expresses finality when she says, "And so adieu, good madam: never more will I my master's tears to you deplore."
- When the Prince of Morocco in "The Merchant of Venice" definitively loses his love, Portia, who will marry another, he bids her "adieu."
- When Thisbe stabs herself in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," she cries out, "Thus Thisbe ends: adieu, adieu, adieu."
- In "Hamlet," when the ghost of Hamlet's father departs for the very last time, he similarly cries, "Adieu, adieu, adieu! Remember me."¹⁹

There are similarly a great many examples of the use of *adieu* in early to modern literature. Perhaps three from the 1300s to modern day will suffice:

1. As early as the late 1300s, in "A Farewell to Love," Chaucer implied this finality of the word when he wrote, "Of love as for thi final ende: Adieu, for y mot fro the wende."²⁰
2. At the same time as the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830, in a short story entitled "Adieu," Honoré de Balzac has Genevieve crying, "Adieu, adieu! all is over, adieu!" as she raises her arm to heaven "uttering a long-drawn moan with every sign of the utmost terror."²¹

19. I am indebted to Jeff Lindsay for suggesting examples of Shakespeare's use of "adieu."

20. "A Farewell to Love (and Venus' Greeting to Chaucer)," Harvard's Geoffrey Chaucer Website, <https://chaucer.fas.harvard.edu/pages/farewell-love-and-venus-greeting-chaucer>. The approximate meaning of this quote is that Love is a final end, therefore, "Adieu (to love), for you must go on." The goddess of love (Venus) is telling Chaucer that Love is not the solution; he must seek Wisdom.

21. Honoré de Balzac, *Adieu*, trans. Katharine Prescott Wormeley (n.p.: DigiCat, 2022), chap. 3, <https://www.google.com/books/edition/Adieu/sYmCEAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PT40&printsec=frontcover>.

3. In a modern novel attempting to evoke an earlier period, *Adieu, Miss Gracie, Adieu!*, a dying man says:

Well, Miss Gracie, I feel for sure now that I have only a few moments remaining with you, as I can feel my own life slipping away from this earth and expected that the ancestors will soon come to take me to the other world with them. ... But for now, it is my turn, and I bid you goodbye. ... Adieu, Miss Gracie, Adieu!²²

Many other citations of the use of *adieu* could be cited, but suffice it to say that the word was used in both French and English with both the meaning of *farewell* and the meaning of “until God.”

Returning to Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary, Webster offers his own *second* meaning for this French-origin word. His second definition also carries this deeper nuance of finality. He writes that the word was also used as a “commendation *to the care of God*; as an *everlasting adieu*” (emphasis added).²³

With this nuance of earthly finality, *adieu* becomes not merely an acceptable word choice for Joseph Smith, but represents an ideal word choice. This deeper understanding of *adieu* adds considerably to an appreciation of the placement of this word in Jacob 7:27, as will be shown later.

Tight vs. Loose Translation

A question that has existed from the time the Book of Mormon was originally translated concerns how closely the wording Joseph Smith dictated to his scribes was controlled.²⁴ It is generally understood that Joseph Smith did not “translate” in the sense of reading from another language and then rendering its meaning into English.²⁵ A very young and hard-working farm boy did not have the time or the education to do that. In any case, nobody, including Joseph himself, could read the

22. Nita Clarke, *Adieu, Miss Gracie, Adieu!* (Frederick, MD: America Star Books, 2009), 224.

23. Webster, *American Dictionary of the American Language*, s.v. “adieu.”

24. I acknowledge and thank my son, Braden Ellis, for encouraging me to add the question of how tight or loose the translation was to my discussion of *adieu*.

25. Stanford Carmack wrote that Joseph Smith “was a translator in the sense of being the human involved in transferring or re-transmitting a concrete form of expression (mostly English words) received from the Lord.” Stanford Carmack, “Joseph Smith Read the Words,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 41–64, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/joseph-smith-read-the-words/>.

language on the plates, whether that was modified biblical Hebrew, reformed Egyptian, a native dialect, or some blended evolution of the three. The meaning was given to him by direct revelation. But how tightly controlled was the vocabulary that Joseph was given?²⁶

For many years, the prevailing perspective was that the wording Joseph dictated to his scribes was only loosely controlled and that Joseph often used his own rural idioms and current vocabulary in describing the abstract concepts that he saw in his visions. This was the view of such scholars as B.H. Roberts, John A. Widtsoe, Sidney B. Sperry, Daniel H. Ludlow, and Robert L. Millett. Evidence for this long-standing perspective was based in large part on perceived grammatical errors and other apparent mistakes in the Original Manuscript. For example, based on a study of omissions and problematic variants in the Isaiah passages, Stan Spencer concludes that these “may be among the ‘mistakes of men’ referred to in the title page of the Book of Mormon. Their existence supports the Book of Mormon’s own portrayal of Joseph Smith as an unlearned reader of a revealed text.”²⁷

A more recent perspective is emerging primarily from the *Book of Mormon Critical Text Project* led by Royal Skousen and a number of scholars working with him using the original manuscript and the printer’s manuscript of the Book of Mormon. For example, Stanford Carmack, who worked on the project with Royal Skousen, has demonstrated that what appears to be poor grammar is actually the presence of archaic phrases and grammatical forms that were in use in early modern period

26. A related question concerns the methodologies used in the translation process — whether he primarily used the Urim and Thummim spectacles that he found with the plates or primarily used a seer stone in the bottom of a hat. That question has intensified recently with the publication of several writers including, but not limited to, Don Bradley, *The Lost 116 Pages: Reconstructing the Book of Mormon’s Missing Stories*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2019); Brant A. Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011); Spencer Kraus, “An Unfortunate Approach to Joseph Smith’s Translation of Ancient Scripture,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 52 (2022): 1–64, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/an-unfortunate-approach-to-joseph-smiths-translation-of-ancient-scripture/>; and the work of Royal Skousen, Stanford Carmack, and Stan Spencer. This question of the exact methodology of the translation is not relevant to our discussion of his use of the word *adieu*.

27. Stan Spencer, “Missing Words: King James Bible Italics, the Translation of the Book of Mormon and “Joseph Smith as an Unlearned Reader,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 38 (2020): 106, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/missing-words-king-james-bible-italics-the-translation-of-the-book-of-mormon-and-joseph-smith-as-an-unlearned-reader/>.

(defined as the “final quarter of the 15th century ... to the end of the 17th century”²⁸) but were not generally in use in frontier America. In his view, that made it unlikely that they came from Joseph or that they were necessarily mistakes at all. Based on his research, he concludes that “a broad early modern view of most of its [the Book of Mormon’s] English usage accounts nicely for this bad grammar.”²⁹ Based on the *Critical Text Project* he leads, Royal Skousen concludes that “Joseph Smith received an English-language text word for word, which he read off to his scribe. ... [T]he original English-language text itself was very precisely constructed.”³⁰ He repeated that conclusion in the second edition of his influential work, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, where he writes that there is “strong evidence that [Joseph Smith] dictated the text word for word and that he controlled for the spelling of the strange Book of Mormon names.”³¹ The tightness of the translation was also demonstrated by Emma Smith’s account that Joseph once looked up from the process, “pale as a sheet, and said, ‘Emma, did Jerusalem have walls around it?’ When I answered ‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘Oh! I was afraid I had been deceived.’”³² In the words of Jeff Lindsay:

In my opinion, analysis of the dictated language suggests it was not Joseph’s words nor in his Yankee dialect. Further, the tight textual relationships within diverse portions of the Book of Mormon and its extreme intertextuality with the Bible also suggest some form of tight control in verbiage rather than Joseph constantly looking for his own words to express impressions. ... If Joseph was indeed seeing text and not just getting impressions, this helps explain the rapid

28. Stanford Carmack, “Is the Book of Mormon a Pseudo-archaic Text?,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 28 (2018): 188, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/is-the-book-of-mormon-a-pseudo-archaic-text/>.

29. See Stanford Carmack, “Bad Grammar in the Book of Mormon Found in Early English Bibles,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 36 (2020): 1–28, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/bad-grammar-in-the-book-of-mormon-found-in-early-english-bibles/>. See also Carmack, “Joseph Smith Read the Words.”

30. Royal Skousen, “Some Textual Changes for a Scholarly Study of the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (2012): 99–117, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol51/iss4/8/>.

31. Royal Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022), xxxi.

32. Edmund C. Briggs, “A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856,” *Journal of History* (January 1916): 454.

pace of dictation, the distance between his language and the language of the dictated text, and the tendency for highly precise allusions and citations within the Book of Mormon and relative to the Bible, and the ability of many intricate wordplays and Hebraisms such as chiasmus to survive the translation.³³

If the entire translation was tightly controlled, as now appears likely, why is it even relevant whether the word, *adieu*, was a term that was used in Joseph Smith's time period when it is no longer used in our own (which I have demonstrated)? If this term was given by the Lord to represent Hebrew usage, why is there, as Loren Spendlove has pointed out, "no recorded use of לַאֱלֹהִים (*l'elohim* or, *to God*) or לַיהוָה (*le'YHWH* or, *to Jehovah*) as a valediction in the biblical text?"³⁴ Why would the Lord have directly provided that particular word *adieu* (or, *to God*)?

Don Bradley, a scholar who worked on the *Critical Text Project*, points out one possible response to this question:

There is ample evidence that Joseph Smith's translation process did involve a visionary component ... [but] the experience of sight does not occur in the eyes, but like the experience of seeing something in memory, in the mind. ... The experience of sight involves the mind's active construction of images, rather than merely their passive reception.³⁵

This construction can only be built on the canvas of the recipient's past linguistic, visual, and conceptual frameworks. The Lord typically reveals his mysteries in a context that humans can understand and at the speed that they can assimilate. As G. Bruce Schaallje put it, "After all, whatever else the translation process involved (divine inspiration, angels, plates, interpreters, stones, hats, scribes), it involved Joseph Smith's mind."³⁶

33. Jeff Lindsay, "It Depends on What the Meaning of 'It' Is: Reconsidering the 'Burning in the Bosom' and 'Studying It Out' in Doctrine & Covenants 9," *Arise From the Dust: A Blog of Latter-day Saint Exploration* (blog), December 12, 2018, <https://www.arisefromthedust.com/it-depends-on-what-meaning-of-it-is/>.

34. Loren Spendlove, private communication, July 22, 2022.

35. Bradley, *Lost 116 Pages*, 41.

36. G. Bruce Schaallje, "A Bayesian Cease-Fire in the Late War on the Book of Mormon," *The Interpreter Foundation* (blog), November 6, 2013, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/blog-a-bayesian-cease-fire-in-the-late-war-on-the-book-of-mormon/>.

Bradley goes on to quote Elder B.H. Roberts as saying that “since the translation is thought out in the mind of the seer, it must be thought out in such thought-signs as are at his command, expressed in such speech-forms as he is the master of.”³⁷ As taught in the D&C 1:24, “Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language.”³⁸ This is not inconsistent with the prevailing view that there was tight control over the translation. Joseph Smith may have been given the word *adieu* not because it was Jacob’s word, but because it was in Joseph Smith’s repertoire and he would have understood it. Perhaps even more importantly, it was in the repertoire of those who would read the new book and become a part of the fragile, new religious movement that the Book of Mormon was instrumental in launching. The word was familiar to Joseph and his associates, even if it is not familiar to many people today. It may have been given because it fit so well into Joseph’s (and others’) level of spelling, grammar, or vocabulary — as a word with which he and his readers were comfortable. It is entirely reasonable that Joseph was given words using his idioms and language and in a sense that reflected his world view and understanding.

Even given Stanford Carmack’s assertion that the Book of Mormon is primarily an archaic text using early modern language³⁹ and includes phrases and vocabulary that reflect other time-periods and situations, it is significant to note that it appears that nothing was given to Joseph that he and his contemporaries (and we) could not understand.⁴⁰ They may not have even noticed anything originating outside their “normal” use,

37. Bradley, *Lost 116 Pages*, 42.

38. An example of this is Abraham 3:15–23, where the great prophet receives a magnificent analogy of a celestial hierarchy of spirits compared to a cosmic hierarchy of planets. That revelation was given in a form and structure that could be understood by Pharaoh and the people of Egypt at Abraham’s time (3:15). The hierarchical principle continues to inspire and edify today, even though it doesn’t fit a modern understanding of astronomy and astrophysics. Had Abraham and Joseph Smith been shown black holes, dark matter, string theory, and quantum mechanics and tried to “declare these things,” they would not have been understood and almost definitely would have been rejected out of hand.

39. Carmack, “Is the Book of Mormon a Pseudo-archaic Text?” 232.

40. This is also the view in “Book of Mormon Evidence: Archaic Vocabulary,” (Evidence Central, August 3, 2022, <https://evidencecentral.org/recency/evidence/archaic-vocabulary>) in their comment, “[T]he book’s vocabulary often feels old or archaic, without being incomprehensible to modern audiences.”

any more than most readers do today.⁴¹ Stanford Carmack himself notes that “Joseph Smith did receive and read a revealed Early Modern English text. Understandably, he may not have been fully aware of it.”⁴² This idea — that Joseph Smith may not have been aware of some of the archaic expressions, literary parallelistic forms, and nuances of vocabulary — is a point to which I will return later in this paper.

In this paper the word *adieu* is the key issue. I will attempt to demonstrate the presence of two, distinct *levels* of separation with the word *adieu* — one a temporary departure and the other a deeper separation by death. The most frequent valediction in the text, however, is not *adieu*. It is another word in the Book of Mormon: *farewell* or *fare-thee-well*. According to Etymonline.com, *farewell* comes from Old English *faran* “to journey, set forth” and *wel* “abundantly, very, very much.”⁴³ Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary similarly defines *farewell* as “a compound of fare, in the imperative, and well. Go well; originally applied to a person departing.”⁴⁴

In those definitions, there is no indication of any particular time frame for the goodbye separation or whether the separation is brought on by death or not. However, the Book of Mormon seems to use *farewell* in both situations — for brief separations and for terminal separations. I will discuss that next.

Levels of Departure or Valediction

Since the Book of Mormon was written by multiple authors, one might expect usage to vary, and it does. In places, *farewell* has the flavor of Noah Webster’s 1828 definition of *adieu* as a casual departure: “an expression of kind wishes at the parting of friends.” Since there is no hint of a separation by death, I will call this a valediction at “the first-level.” In other places, The Book of Mormon uses *farewell* to imply a more permanent, final, and death-related departure, meaning a separation until a reunion before the pleasing bar of God (or the judgment seat).

41. One example, of many, for an archaic expression that was not used in Joseph Smith’s time and is not even found in the Bible but occurred in the printer’s manuscript for Mosiah 3:19 is “but if,” meaning “unless.” Other archaic expressions terms and phrases include “cross,” meaning “contradict.” Other examples can be found in Evidence Central, “Book of Mormon Evidence: Archaic Vocabulary.”

42. Carmack, “Joseph Smith Read the Words,” 64.

43. *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. “farewell,” last updated October 16, 2014, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/farewell>.

44. Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. “farewell,” <https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/farewell>.

I will call this a “second-level” valediction. In most of the times it is used, it is left to the reader to recognize which of the two levels is intended. Fortunately, that can usually be determined from context, as demonstrated in Table 1, which identifies the ten occurrences of either *adieu* or *farewell* in the Book of Mormon. Four occurrences suggest a temporary separation (level one) while six others carry this nuance of finality (level two). It is the *context* that reveals whether the parting is temporary or carries the “until God” finality.

Table 1. Temporary first-level or final second-level valedictions.

Reference	Context of the Scripture	Level 1	Level 2
2 Nephi 33:13	Nephi, addressing his beloved brethren as a voice crying from the dust: “ <i>Farewell</i> until the great day”		✓
2 Nephi 33:14	Nephi, addressing rejectors who will be condemned at the last day: “an <i>Everlasting Farewell</i> ”		✓
Jacob 6:13	Jacob, addressing the listeners of his sermon: “ <i>Farewell</i> , until the pleasing bar of God”		✓
Jacob 7:27 (focus of paper)	Jacob, addressing 1) the reader of the Small Plates: “ <i>Farewell</i> ” and 2) to his brethren: “ <i>Adieu</i> ”	✓	✓
Alma 37:47	Alma, addressing his son, Helaman, whom he will shortly accompany on a mission to the people: “ <i>Farewell</i> ”	✓	
Alma 38:15	Alma, addressing his son, Shiblon, whom he will shortly accompany on a mission to the people: “ <i>Farewell</i> ”	✓	
Ether 12:38	Moroni’s colophon to Gentiles and “brethren whom I love:” “ <i>Farewell</i> ... until the judgment seat of Christ”		✓
Moroni 8:30	Mormon, writing to Moroni, “Until I shall write unto you or shall meet you again:” “ <i>Farewell</i> , my son”	✓	
Moroni 10:34	Moroni, to all — “I soon go to rest in the paradise of God” until I “meet you before the pleasing bar of ... Jehovah:” “ <i>Farewell</i> ”		✓

The first two occurrences of the valediction, *farewell*, are in 2 Nephi 33:13–14. Here, *farewell* designates two types of separation, but in this case both types occur *within level two*. In 2 Nephi 33:13, Nephi is dying and speaks “as the voice of one crying from the dust.” That clearly identifies the entire verse as a level-two valediction. To fellow believers and “beloved brethren,” he says a single “farewell until that great day shall come.” This is conceptually similar to the deeper nuance of *adieu*

in that it is a goodbye to those he will see again, but only after death. To those who “will not partake of the goodness of God” (2 Nephi 33:14), however, he bids “an *everlasting* farewell” because he will *not* see them again. His testimony, he warns, “shall condemn [them] at the last day.” There are two expressions of valediction, but this time the two *both* carry the “until God” nuance, so both valedictions occur within level two.

The next occurrence in the table is that of Jacob as he concluded his last major sermon and expected to not see them again until “I shall meet you before the pleasing bar of God” (Jacob 6:13). This suggests another *adieu*-like, level-two valediction. The third entry is Jacob 7:27, which is the focus of this paper and will be explored more deeply later on.

The next two occurrences of *farewell* occur at the beginning of the 18th year of the reign of the judges (Alma 35:12). Alma begins addressing his three sons, giving them what Alma 35:16 refers to as “commandments.” These occurrences require a more detailed examination. Alma 36 is Alma’s testimony in the form of what John Welch and Greg Welch have called “one of the finest examples of chiasmic composition anywhere in world literature.”⁴⁵ Alma 37 consists of his passing on the responsibility of the sacred records to Helaman with an admonition to keep the plates and Nephite artifacts safe. It concludes with a further testimony of the power of the plates to bring people to Christ. Perhaps somewhat curiously, he ended these two powerful chapters by giving Helaman the charge, “Go unto this people and declare the word, and be sober. My son, farewell” (Alma 37:47). The curiosity is not the admonition to be sober — that is easily explained.⁴⁶ The curiosity is, rather, why he would say *farewell* at the end of a sermon. The typical conclusion to a sermon is the Hebrew-origin word, *amen* (אמן, *’āmēn*). That word is used 37 times in the Book of Mormon, and in all of those places, as well as in other sacred scripture, it is used primarily as an affirmation or confirmatory response to a prayer or a sermon. Brant Gardner calls this a “testificatory amen” and notes that it generally triggers a chapter

45. See John W. Welch and Greg Welch, “Chiasmus in Alma 36,” in *Charting the Book of Mormon: Visual Aids for Personal Study and Teaching*, ed. John W. Welch and Greg Welch (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/chiasmus-alma-36-0>.

46. Joseph Cannon defines *sober* as not so much the absence of alcohol but as a disposition or tone. He writes, “A sober person shows no trace of haste or impatience and is free from harshness and violence and is of a moderate disposition, not readily excited or carried away.” Joseph A. Cannon, “The Gospel in Words: The gospel in words: ‘Sober,’” *Deseret News*, July 30, 2009, <https://www.deseret.com/2009/7/30/20376381/the-gospel-in-words-the-gospel-in-words-sober>.

break.⁴⁷ Although the extended chiasmic account of Alma's re-conversion in Alma 36 was addressed to his oldest son, the masterpiece is most certainly a testimony/sermon and logically had to have been composed in written form. Alma 37 also has a sermon feel to it — one would expect an *amen* somewhere. Even though a closing *amen* can sometimes have a secondary farewell undertone, *amen* was meant primarily as a seal to a prior sermon or sermon-like expression. Why, then, did Alma close his sermon to Helaman by saying, "My son, *farewell*"?

The same question can be posed regarding Alma's much briefer sermonette to his second son, Shiblon. He very briefly re-testified of his conversion story and offered him some personal admonitions. In Alma 38:1, he told Shiblon, "I say unto you, even as I said unto Helaman...." Although Alma 35:18 specifically asserts that Alma gave "everyone his charge, separately," it may be that Shiblon also heard/read the life-changing chiasm of Alma 36 and the instructions of Alma 37. He was not to become the next record-keeper, so the "commandments" to Shiblon could be much shorter, and they were. Like that of Helaman, Alma's sermonette to Shiblon also did not end in the traditional *amen* but in the same valediction given to Helaman, that of "My son, *farewell*." It may be that Alma was saying *farewell* to these two sons because he then told both to "go" (Alma 37:47, 38:15).

This raises the next question, which is whether the *farewell* in these two cases invokes a temporary level-one separation or an *adieu*-like second-level separation by death until the bar of God. There is no mention of death and, indeed, Alma not only sent his two sons on a mission to preach to the people, he appears to have gone with them. Alma 43:1 tells us that "the sons of Alma did go forth ... and Alma, also, himself ... also went forth." Did he go to a different area than the sons? It doesn't sound like it according to the heading of the 1981 edition of Alma 43, which declares that "Alma and his sons preach the word." If he is with his sons, that would indicate no particular departure at all, or at best an extremely brief, and definitely first-level separation. In fact, a more permanent separation by death does occur, but not until a year or so later. At some point in the nineteenth year of the reign of the judges (Alma 45:2), Alma left Zarahemla.

47. Brant A. Gardner, "Labor diligently to write: The ancient making of a modern Scripture — Chapters 4 & 5," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 35 (2020): 47–106, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/labor-diligently-to-write-the-ancient-making-of-a-modern-scripture-2/>. Gardner did not discuss the possible use of "amen" as a valediction.

And it came to pass that he was never heard of more; as to his death or burial we know not of. ... [A]nd the saying went abroad in the church that he was taken up by the Spirit, or buried by the hand of the Lord, even as Moses. ... [W]e suppose that he has also received Alma in the spirit, unto himself; therefore, for this cause we know nothing concerning his death and burial. (Alma 45:18-19)

A reviewer of this article suggested that, since Alma died or was taken up, his instructions or sermons to his sons may have anticipated a separation by death (an *adieu*-like, second-level separation). That doesn't seem likely. His third son, Corianton, was young ("thou art in thy youth," Alma 39:10), so Alma was not an old man. He also accompanied them on a mission and preached to the people, so that suggests, at least to me, that the farewell was a first-level, not a second-level, valediction.

Regarding this third son, Corianton, we see a unique situation in many ways. The 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon spends 91 verses in 4 chapters in which Alma discusses Corianton's sexual sins, pointing out his failures as a missionary, and answering a question he had about the resurrection. At the end of this long sermon, he closes with *amen* and not *farewell* as he said to his two older sons. Perhaps that difference can be explained in that the other two were ready to go while Corianton needed both a further affirmation of the truths his father was teaching him, which were then punctuated by *amen*, and some time to demonstrate his repentance before his *farewell* to go on the mission. That is, of course, supposition.

Returning to Table 1, the next occurrence of *farewell* comes from Moroni's marvelous colophon on faith and charity, which was inspired by his work with the records in Ether. At the end of the colophon, he writes, "And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ" (Ether 12:38). That is clearly an *adieu*-like, second-level valediction.

The next entry comes from Moroni's father, Mormon, who wrote him an epistle denouncing infant baptism, a practice that Mormon sees as denying the atonement of Christ. Moroni is now "wander[ing] withersoever I can for the safety of mine own life" (Moroni 1:3). Mormon ended that epistle by writing, "Farewell, my son, until I shall write unto you, or shall meet you again" (Moroni 8:30). Given Mormon's expectation to "meet you again," it logically appears that the *farewell* in this instance was a temporary *goodbye* at the first level of departure.

Granted, Mormon may in fact have been killed and may not have seen Moroni after all, but it was his *expectation* that he would see Moroni again that marks this as another first-level valediction.

The final farewell in the Book of Mormon “seals up” the entire body of scripture as we know it. In the last verse of the book, he addresses us, the readers, by writing,

And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen. (Moroni 10:34)

That occurrence of *farewell* is as close to the French nuance of *adieu* as we can get. If that is not a second-level valediction, nothing is. He is saying *farewell* while acknowledging the separation, by death, that is the deeper meaning of *adieu*.

Parallelistic Structures in Jacob 7:27

Many scholars have noted that parts of the book of Jacob are parallelistic in nature.⁴⁸ That does not necessarily mean chiasmic, for there are multiple forms of parallelist structures. In one of the most recent analyses of the book of Jacob, Loren Spendlove posits several small chiasms and other parallel structures.⁴⁹ This is consistent with the parallelistic structures that Donald Parry, Noel Reynolds, and others have seen in the small plates.⁵⁰ Jacob 7:27 also seems parallelistic. The first phrase, “And I, Jacob, saw that I must *soon go down to my grave*” seems strongly reflected in the last phrase, “Brethren, *adieu*” — especially with the second-level meaning of *adieu* in mind. Both strongly imply a parting by death. The two parallel statements complement each other and, because of this, appear to strongly validate the appropriateness of *adieu*.

48. See, for example, Donald W. Parry, “Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon,” *Maxwell Institute Publications* 61 (2007): 131–48, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1060&context=mi>; and Noel B. Reynolds, “Nephi’s Small Plates: A Rhetorical Analysis,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 50 (2022): 99–122, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/nephis-small-plates-a-rhetorical-analysis/>.

49. Loren Spendlove, “Rethinking the Encounter Between Jacob and Sherem,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 54 (2022): 65–96, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/rethinking-the-encounter-between-jacob-and-sherem/>.

50. Reynolds, “Nephi’s Small Plates,” and Parry, “Poetic Parallelisms.”

Is the rest of the verse parallelistic, possibly even chiasmic? Caution is appropriate, as several scholars have recently pointed out.⁵¹ Well-intentioned scholars sometimes imagine Hebrew parallelisms where they do not exist. It may be possible to see the entire verse as an ABC–CBA mini-chiasm, although that is not essential for this discussion of the appropriateness of the term *adieu*. In that scenario, “down to grave” (step A) and “adieu” (step A') would be the anchors of an *inclusio*.⁵² The B steps would be instructing his son to “take the plates” (B) and instructing his brethren to “read (take) my words” (B'). The C steps would be instructing Enos to continue to obey Nephi’s commandment to restrict the Small Plates to only those things he “considered to be most precious; that I should not touch, save it were lightly, concerning the history of this people” (Jacob 1:2). The C' step would be the result of that restriction in C, which would mean that the “writing has been small.” This chiasm is problematic, possibly even unlikely.

If verse 27 of Jacob 7 is not chiasmic, it at least appears to be parallelistic. The verse as a whole repeats three times: 1) the concepts of “down to the grave”; 2) a valediction that could be a terminal, i.e., second-level, valediction (“to the reader I bid farewell”); and 3) “Brethren, adieu” — especially considering the deeper meaning of separation “until God.” Interestingly, another author has even posited a tiny chiasm based only on the last three lines of the verse. Angela Crowell asserts that with “the synonyms ‘farewell’ and ‘adieu’ we have the repetition of the same idea.”⁵³ The B steps are the repeat of the word *brethren* and the C turning point being “read my words.” Her proposed chiasm may have been based on *adieu* being a simple first-level valediction reflecting *farewell* as if these are two simple first-level goodbyes. Even if Crowell did not intend

51. For example, Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards, “Truth or Cherry Picking: A Statistical Approach to Chiasmic Intentionality,” in *Chiasmus: The State of the Art*, ed. John Welch and Donald Parry (Provo, UT: BYU Studies and Book of Mormon Central, 2020), 311–17. See, also, Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards, “Does Chiasmus Appear in the Book of Mormon by Chance?,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (2004): 103–30.

52. An *inclusio* is a wording repetition “at the opening and closing of [an] account [that] constitutes a framing device” and a terminological bracketing of a rhetorical unit. See Matthew L. Bowen, “Nephi’s Good Inclusio,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 181–95, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/nephis-good-inclusio/>.

53. Angela Crowell, “The Learning of the Jews,” *Zarahemla Record* 41 (February 1989): 2, <https://nebula.wsimg.com/8e1f6a540915e80fbfef5e21fff9a24?AccessKeyId=AA525AED21BB7CA23BE6>.

it, *farewell* could be considered a second-level valediction, like *adieu*. However, even though she calls this “a skillful chiastic arrangement,” it is even less likely than the entire verse being chiastic. Not only are such tiny chiasms particularly suspect, but she immediately invalidates the proposed chiasm by claiming that *adieu* is based on “the Hebrew verb *barak* mean[ing] ‘kneel’ or ‘blessing.’”⁵⁴ If *barak* (or *baruk*, Hebrew: בָּרַךְ)⁵⁵ means kneeling or blessing, that would mean that they are not synonymous separations at all, but rather a valediction and a blessing, which constitute two events: saying goodbye and presumably kneeling to give a blessing.

Whether Jacob 7:27 contains a chiasm of one verse, a chiasm of one sentence (less likely), or some other form of parallelism is not essential for this study. The critical question is that of intentionality — did Jacob *intend* to create some form of parallelism to poetically form a mental image emphasizing the concept of a final separation by death? The specific mirroring of the *first* phrase in the verse, “go down to the grave,” and the last line, which bids his brethren a final *adieu* with its deeper nuance of a final separation, seems essential and intentional.⁵⁶ When Jacob says he “must *soon* go down to my grave,” he is implying that he is not merely giving up the leadership and the prophetic mantle, after which he may live another 5 to 10 years — in a sense “retiring.” Individuals in the ancient world seldom retired as we think of that term; they remained in office or in the work unless completely incapacitated or until they died. In this case, Jacob appears to be dying imminently. He doesn’t appear to be blessing anyone; blessings in scripture are usually described and highlighted, often in detail. He is telling us that he will “soon” depart, and he will not see his family and his brethren in this life. He will only see them again after the grave and before the judgment bar of Christ. In other words, he is writing at level two: until God (*à Dieu*). Many readers of the Book of Mormon, not understanding the deeper meaning of *adieu*, will likely not recognize and appreciate the intentional parallelistic nature of verse 27. Knowing that deeper meaning, one can

54. Ibid.

55. Strong’s Concordance H1288, s.v. “*barak*”, Bible Hub, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1288.htm>.

56. It is interesting that the book of Jacob both begins (chapter 1) and ends (chapter 7) with “commandments” about what to write upon the small plates, which might suggest that the entire book may be parallelistic. This is an idea that, as mentioned earlier, goes far beyond the goals of this short paper.

see that *adieu* is not an awkward mistake but eloquently mirrors the phrase “down to the grave.”

Was Joseph Smith Aware of the Deeper Meaning of *Adieu*?

So far in this paper, we have discussed three uses of *adieu*, none of which are used to any great degree today. There is evidence that Joseph Smith, the Smith family, and their contemporaries used *adieu* in all three situations.⁵⁷ The three uses are:

1. As a simple goodbye valediction.
2. In the deeper French nuance of separation by death.
3. As applied to a final or near-final separation from conditions, events, or inanimate objects.

Each of these potential uses will be considered in the following three sections.

***Adieu* as a Goodbye Valediction**

Evidence that the Smith family used *adieu* at the first level as defined in 1828 by Noah Webster comes from the official Church website. The site provides an article entitled, “Why are the words *adieu*, *bible*, and *baptize* in the Book of Mormon?” In that article, Edward J. Brandt reports that:

The earliest known document relating to Church history is a recently discovered letter written in 1829 by the Prophet’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith, to her sister-in-law Mary Smith Pierce. . . . In the letter, she enthusiastically shares news of her son’s work in translating an ancient record and tells something of the nature of its contents. Then, after telling of the happenings of the family, she concludes with “I must now bid the[e] farewell then *adieu* Lucy Smith.” This suggests the possible common use in the Smith family of the word *adieu*.⁵⁸

57. I am indebted to, and greatly appreciate, an anonymous reviewer for pointing me to *The Joseph Smith Papers* (<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org>) and examples there that provided this evidence of the three uses.

58. Edward J. Brandt, “Why are the words *adieu*, *bible*, and *baptize* in the Book of Mormon? These words weren’t known in Book of Mormon times,” *Ensign* (October 1985), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1985/10/i-have-a-question/why-are-the-words-adieu-bible-and-baptize-in-the-book-of-mormon>.

Few if any French speakers would end a letter the way Lucy Mack Smith ended this one unless Lucy knew she would never again see or correspond with Mary in this life, and that seems highly unlikely. She would surely correspond with her sister-in-law again and likely visit her as well. Thus, she could end the letter with a *goodbye, yours truly, talk to you soon, much love*, or any number of other endings, but not “until we meet again after death at the pleasing bar of God,” as the deeper meaning of *adieu* implies. An implication that there was an imminent and final separation by death did not and should not have occurred to her. Brandt’s conclusion that the word was possibly in “common use in the Smith family” appears to be correct.

Another example comes from a letter written to Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith in which John Greene closes with the following valediction: “I must bid you adieu for the present, but I will write you again & I wish you to write to me.”⁵⁹ This is clearly a first-level closure since he anticipates future correspondence back and forth.

Emma Smith, the prophet’s wife, also used *adieu* in a letter to Joseph. She wrote, “I could hardly pacify Julia and Joseph when they found ou[t] you was not coming home soon ... so adieu my Dear — Joseph.”⁶⁰ Because she obviously expected to see him again, this marks *adieu* as a first-level and temporary goodbye.

Adieu With the French Nuance of Separation by Death

There is evidence that Joseph Smith and his contemporaries recognized that *adieu* can also imply a final separation from other people through death. In bidding her family a final and second-level goodbye, Lucy Mack Smith wrote a poem about her impending death. In part of that poem, she wrote:

Go, to my father’s children tell
That lives no more on earth thy wife. ...
My friends, I bid you all adieu;
The Lord hath called, and I must go.⁶¹

59. “Letter from John P. Greene, 30 June 1839,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 76, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-john-p-greene-30-june-1839/2>.

60. “Letter from Emma Smith, 3 May 1837,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 36, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-emma-smith-3-may-1837/2>.

61. “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 19, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/26>.

Lucy Mack Smith was clearly anticipating a second-level separation through death. She called this poem a “mournful recital” calling for “momentary sympathy.”

The next example of a second-level *adieu* comes from the Martyrdom Account written by John Taylor. He anticipated, at the very least, an extended separation from his family by fleeing to another country — Canada. The intent was to avoid his murder by a mob as well as avoid the martyrdom of Joseph Smith and other Church leaders:

I calculated to go to upper Canada, for the time being and should need a companion; I said to <Br.> Wheelock; “Can you go with me ten or fifteen hundred miles? ... I told him “he had better see his family who lived over the river.” ... [After making all the preparations I could, previous to leaving Nauvoo, & having bid adieu to my family, I went to a house adjoining the river.⁶²

John Taylor was clearly trying to avoid a separation by death. His instruction to Brother Wheelock anticipated the long separation from their families and possibly even death. As it turned out, John Taylor and other Church leadership did not go to Canada after all. Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum ended up, as John Taylor apparently feared, martyred in Carthage, Illinois. John Taylor was only spared from death by the providential intervention of his pocket watch.

The last example of *adieu* with its strong concern of an imminent separation by death comes from a letter dictated by Joseph Smith to Oliver Granger concerning Church debt at the time. In fact, Granger did pass away three months later.

I have since heard that you have had a relapse, and that you were very sick again, this I was sorry to hear— However I hope you will yet recover and that we shall see you at this place before long. ... This I must beg leave to urge upon you to do, for delays are dangerous, your health is precarious and if any thing should occur — so that you were to bid adieu to mortality it would be impossible for me ever to get the run of the business and I should be again involved in difficulties

62. “John Taylor, Martyrdom Account,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 27, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/john-taylor-martyrdom-account/27>.

from which it would be impossible for me to extrecate [*sic*] myself.⁶³

***Adieu* Applied to Conditions, Events, or Objects**

There are also several examples of both *farewell* and *adieu* that point to the secondary definition of *adieu*, although in these cases, the words refer not to a separation from people but an end to desirable conditions, as given in the second definition in the French dictionary quoted earlier.⁶⁴ This first example comes from Joseph Smith, himself.

[M]ust we be expelled from the institutions of our country; the rights of citizenship, and the graves of our friends and brethren, and the government lock the gate of humanity, and shut the door of redress against us? — If so, farewell freedom; adieu to personal safety⁶⁵

The implication is that, if the government had indeed adopted such unjust policies, freedom and safety would be permanently lost.

Another example comes from a proclamation over the signatures of Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith that was published in the *Times and Seasons* on 15 January 1841. It was meant to encourage Saints outside the United States to immigrate to Nauvoo and asking them to say a permanent *adieu* to their “pleasant places” and share in the persecution and tribulation that eventually resulted in the martyrdom of the prophet and the brutal winter exodus to the West.

Therefore let those who can, freely ... bid adieu to their homes and pleasant places of abode, and unite with us in the great work of the last days, and share in the tribulation, that they may ultimately share in the glory and triumph.⁶⁶

63. “Letter to Oliver Granger, 4 May 1841,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 2, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-oliver-granger-4may-1841/2>.

64. *Le Robert Micro Poche*, s.v. “adieu.”

65. “History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844],” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 1788, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844/160>.

66. “Proclamation, 15 January 1841,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, 277, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/proclamation-15-january-1841/5>.

Joseph Smith and Rhetorical Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon

Although it appears that Joseph Smith did understand the finality nuance of the word *adieu*, which he was given in Jacob 7:27, the question of whether Joseph Smith was aware of all and every subtlety of the book he was instrumental in bringing to publication is a valid one. For example, it doesn't seem likely that he was aware of chiasmus and other parallelistic forms contained in the Book of Mormon. Simple logic suggests that, if Joseph Smith had been aware of chiasmus in the book, he surely would have told somebody about it. It would not have taken 137 years for John Welch to discover it in 1967. Book of Mormon Central (now called Scripture Central) poses this rhetorical question:

Is it really likely that any forger would spend the time to research this complex literary form, perfect his or her mastery of it, use it in dozens of instances in his fabricated scripture, and then never once mention its presence or lead anyone to its discovery? Such a scenario seems highly unlikely. ... On the other hand, their presence is easily accounted for if the Book of Mormon was truly written by ancient prophets who inherited the Hebrew literary tradition from their ancestors.⁶⁷

Further, the FAIR website quotes the predominant expert on chiasms, John Welch, as saying, "I would qualify or clarify my position simply to assert a very low probability that Joseph Smith knew anything about chiasmus in 1829."⁶⁸

Conclusions

In stark opposition to what detractors of the Book of Mormon have claimed and still claim, the use of *adieu* does not prove fraud. It is, instead, another tangible witness of the Restoration. It is my opinion that, rather than being embarrassed by *adieu* in the Book of Mormon and implicitly apologizing for it, we as Church members can celebrate and appreciate its appearance in the text. *Adieu* does not reflect Joseph Smith's foolishness; it reflects his faithfulness. *Adieu* does not

67. Book of Mormon Central, "How Much Could Joseph Smith Have Known About Chiasmus in 1829?" July 3, 2017, <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/knowhy/how-much-could-joseph-smith-have-known-about-chiasmus-in-1829>.

68. "Question: Was Knowledge of Chiasmus Available in Joseph Smith's Era?," FAIR (website), https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Question:_Was_knowledge_of_chiasmus_available_in_Joseph_Smith%27s_era%3F.

show anachronistic carelessness; it shows inspired revelation. *Adieu* is not evidence that the Book of Mormon is false; rather, it could be considered as further evidence that it is true.

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ELIAS: PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

Jan Francisco

Abstract: *The Prophet Elias is a puzzle, with a handful of pieces scattered through the standard works and the teachings of Joseph Smith. Rather than proving a point conclusively, this paper will put the pieces together to show a new picture of this important figure. The interpretation in this article weaves together the scriptures regarding Elias into a cohesive narrative, with the prophet Noah at the center. The pieces of the puzzle investigated here are Elias's role as the angel Gabriel in the New Testament, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Kirtland Temple, in the Book of Revelation, and in D&C 27. These few visitations occur during significant transfers of priesthood power. Elias — the keyholder — is identified as holding “the keys of bringing to pass the restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began, concerning the last days” (D&C 27:6). This vast calling of restoring all things in the last days requires the original Elias (Noah) at the heavenly helm and various agents of Elias (John the Baptist and John the Beloved, among others) working on the earth during different phases of the restoration.*

Scholarship on Elias relies on a limited pool of primary source material, so it is understandable how scholars are left to ultimately conclude: “When Elias, the man, lived, and what he did in his life, must for the present remain in the field of conjecture.”¹ This paper is an attempt at viewing the prophet Elias with a lens that unifies the scriptural sources in a cohesive narrative with the prophet named Elias at the center of all the work done in his name by different actors in different dispensations. This is a different interpretation than the one found in the Bible Dictionary and other publications from The Church of Jesus Christ of

1. John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, combined single-volume edition, ed. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), 243–44, <https://archive.org/details/evidencesreconci0123john/page/242/mode/2up>.

Latter-day Saints.² Rather than a Greek model of making a point and then proving that point, this essay follows the Hebraic path of finding relevant details in a spirit of curiosity and investigation. The resulting web of information and interpretation presents an interesting paradigm shift of who Elias could be and how he is working in our time.

Elias is the Greek version of *Elijah*, an ancient Hebrew name meaning “the Lord is God” or “Jehovah is God.”³ *El* means God and *Yah* means Jehovah or Lord. Both names have the same origin and etymology — *Eliyyahu* in Hebrew is *Elijah* in English and *Elias* in Greek. Most Bible translations have replaced all “Elias” references with “Elijah,” thus erasing a separate Elias from Christianity.⁴ Without the revelations from Joseph Smith regarding a prophet named Elias, he would be totally forgotten.

While there are times when it is obvious that the subject in the New Testament is the prophet Elijah, there are many references (especially in the Joseph Smith Translation) that should not be changed to Elijah, most in connection with John the Baptist and on the Mount of Transfiguration.

While the rest of the world has erased Elias, Joseph Smith’s teachings have kept him in our religious consciousness. It is instructive to trace back through the decades to examine how our present understanding of the doctrine and of the person of Elias has formed.

Transformation of the Elias Doctrine

Joseph Smith taught that there is a distinct individual named Elias who endowed others with “a spirit and office” to prepare the way — a role which echoes the preparatory nature of the Aaronic priesthood. In a sermon about Elias, Elijah, and Messiah, Joseph Smith said:

The Spirit of Elias was a going before to prepare the way for the greater, which was the case with John the baptist. . . The spirit of Elias is to prepare the way for a greater revelation of God, which is the Priesthood that Aaron was ordained unto. And when God sends a man into the world to prepare for a greater work, holding the keys of the power of Elias, it was called the

2. The Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Elias.” See also George A. Horton, “Elias,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: MacMillan, 1992), 2:449.

3. Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Elias.”

4. Out of the 64 English versions of the Bible available at Bible.com, only four include “Elias” as a term distinct from “Elijah”: The Geneva Bible, the King James Version, Douay-Rheims Challoner Revision (1752), and Darby’s Translation (1890).

doctrine of Elias, even from the early ages of the world. . . The person who holds the keys of Elias hath a preparatory work. . . This is the Elias spoken of in the last days, and here is the rock upon which many split, thinking the time was past in the days of John and Christ and no more to be. But the spirit of Elias was revealed to me, and I know it is true.⁵

In his sermon, Joseph describes the spirit of Elias, the priesthood of Elias, the keys of Elias, the doctrine of Elias — variations on the theme of Elias's power and authority being transferred and used by others doing preparatory work. Elias's mission is laid out straightforwardly as a forerunner for the Lord, the messenger of the covenant who would make the paths straight. The doctrine of Elias as a forerunner is well understood today, but there is more to his mission. Joseph Smith also taught that Elias was to gather Israel.⁶ He compared the responsibilities of Elijah and Elias with an analogy about building the temple:

This power of Elijah is to that of Elias what in the architecture of the Temple of God those who seal or cement the stone to their places are to those who cut or hew the stones the one preparing the way for the other to accomplish the work. By this we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise i.e. Elijah.⁷

In other words, Elias brings the stones to the temple and Elijah cements them together. Elias is a gatherer, whereas Elijah is a sealer; the two are linked in their offices. Members of Christ's church progress through the preparatory ordinances first (Elias) and then move on to the higher ordinances (Elijah). The gathering aspect of Elias's mission is part of the larger picture of Elias preparing the world for Zion's return, though this facet has not been passed on through the decades after Joseph Smith. Elias as a forerunner, however, was well-understood and the doctrine of Elias became synonymous with this role as a messenger who prepares the way. In the early 1900s, John A. Widtsoe wrote:

It is concluded from this and other passages (D&C 77:9, 14) that the mission and spirit of the prophet Elias are to do the necessary preparatory work whenever the gospel dispensation

5. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2002), 347–48.

6. *Ibid.*

7. "Discourse, 10 March 1844, as Reported by Franklin D. Richards," 33, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-10-march-1844-as-reported-by-franklin-d-richards/2>.

period is about to be opened. This is in full accord with the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith that “The spirit of Elias is to prepare the way for a greater revelation of God, which is the Priesthood of Elias, or the Priesthood that Aaron was ordained unto. And when God sends a man into the world to prepare for a greater work, holding the keys and power of Elias, it was called the doctrine of Elias.”⁸

The doctrine of Elias and the idea of an individual prophet, Elias, are addressed by Widtsoe as interrelated subjects. Widtsoe begins his section on Elias by focusing on the Elias who comes to the Kirtland Temple to commit the gospel of the dispensation of Abraham to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

From this reference to “the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham,” it has been concluded that Elias was a prophet who lived near the time of the patriarch, Abraham. Really, nothing more definite is known about the person Elias and his activity on earth. It is very evident that he was a personage of importance, for he held the “keys” of authority in a mission of vital importance in carrying out on earth the plan of salvation.⁹

He then acknowledges that other students of the scriptures thought that the individual named Elias who bestowed priesthood keys at the Kirtland Temple was Noah, or Gabriel, and that “this inference may or may not be correct.”¹⁰ At this point, the doctrine of Elias seems to eclipse the individual Elias, with the uncertainty of his identity precluding further investigation into that topic.

Following Widtsoe’s explanations, Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

As previously stated, the restoration of the Gospel did not come through just one messenger, but there are several who came and bestowed their keys of authority and power. The name Elias, is a title. This we have been taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Is it not possible, therefore, since so many ancient prophets had a hand in the restoration, that in speaking of the Elias who was to come and restore all things,

8. Widtsoe, *Evidences*, 243–44. Here Widtsoe cites *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 335–36.

9. Widtsoe, *Evidences*, 243.

10. *Ibid.*, 244.

do we not have a composite picture of several Eliases, rather than one single individual?¹¹

Joseph Fielding Smith begins the shift away from an individual named Elias to a group of people doing Elias's work — operating under the *title* of Elias. The doctrine of Elias, which Joseph Smith taught, includes the preparatory actions and ordinances within the gospel, acted on by various individuals who were endowed with the spirit and power of Elias. So, in a sense, a group of people doing Elias's work is correct; however, without the keyholder Elias directing the work, it seems incomplete.

Following Joseph Fielding Smith, Bruce R. McConkie wrote with certainty about the multiple actors of Elias in *Mormon Doctrine*, in the Bible Dictionary, and his ideas are echoed in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*.¹² The current understanding is that Elias is four different things: 1) the Greek form of Elijah; 2) a title for a forerunner; 3) a title for others with specific missions or restorative functions; and 4) a man who lived in the days of Abraham, about whom we have no information.¹³ McConkie seems to have codified the previous teachings, which is how Elias is presented in the Church today. Indeed, Joseph Smith taught about the preparatory nature of Elias' work and that many were endowed with the spirit of Elias (including the Prophet Joseph when John the Baptist came to him), and our current understanding of the *doctrine of Elias* follows Joseph's inspired teaching.

A piece of the puzzle went missing when Elias the individual disappeared. Since we have no clear explanations of who he was or when he lived, the specific identity of the prophet Elias has been fragmented. Joseph Smith taught about Elias, Elijah, and the Messiah — three distinct individuals, keyholders who operated in the heavenly realm, bringing ordinances and priesthood power to the earth. His sermon teaches that Elias was an individual who then engaged others in his work, just like Elijah and the Messiah. He spoke of Elias as an individual, and that others were endowed with the *spirit of Elias* or the *power of Elias* — a spirit and power bestowed upon them from the original Elias. In the same way that we speak of the spirit of Elijah bringing blessings to those

11. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1947), 2:71. Smith references *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 355.

12. Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Elias"; Horton, "Elias;" and Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 219.

13. Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Elias."

engaged in family history and temple work, the same diffusion of power from Elias is transmitted to those gathering Israel and preparing for the Lord's second coming.

As far as what Joseph Smith taught about the identity of the individual prophet Elias, it is difficult to say with certainty, as only a small percentage of what he said or thought made it on a written page.

Contemporary scholars have wondered if there even is a specific person named Elias. Samuel Brown investigated the issue and concluded:

To my eye the debate about whether Elias is a separate individual — indeterminate except by fiat or faith — misses a crucial point. Whatever their genesis, there can be little doubt that Joseph Smith saw Elijah and Elias as distinct entities. I believe that they both arise from Elijah, that Elias assumed the traits of the standard Christian Elijah, and that understanding the bifurcation sheds light on early Mormonism's approach to the conquest of death.¹⁴

Scholars and Church leaders may or may not be correct, but in respectful transparency concerning our history and doctrine, we can acknowledge that in our unfolding restoration, not everything has always been known in its fullness, and there is room for more clarity on this issue. Disregarding the traditional, inherited view of Elias and looking at the scriptural evidence of an individual named Elias allows for a fresh look at the man and a view of the breathtaking scope of his mission as the archangel of the restoration of all things.

Evidence of Elias as a separate individual from Elijah, and more than a group of men doing similar jobs, is evident in three ways. The first evidence is that he is documented as distinct from Elijah in D&C 27 and in the Kirtland Temple (D&C 110). The second is in the teachings of Joseph Smith on the complementary roles of Elias and Elijah.¹⁵ The third is the affirmation of his identity, purpose, and individuality in D&C 27:6–7. Revelations received by Joseph Smith hold the keys to discovering the identity of the invisible prophet Elias.

14. Samuel M. Brown, "The Prophet Elias Puzzle," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 39, no. 3, (Fall 2006): 2, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1030110>.

15. "Discourse, 10 March 1844," 33.

Elias the Restorer

Elias the keyholder is identified in scripture as the messenger who came to Zacharias: the angel Gabriel. This is the main foundation upon which this article will build.

And also with Elias, to whom I have committed the keys of bringing to pass the restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began, concerning the last days; And also John the son of Zacharias, which Zacharias he (Elias) visited and gave promise that he should have a son, and his name should be John, and he should be filled with the spirit of Elias. (D&C 27:6–7)

The language is unambiguous — a specific individual named Elias holds “the keys of bringing to pass the restoration of all things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began, concerning the last days.” This Elias is identified in the next verse, which is a continuation of the same sentence, so it is not likely that the Lord is indicating a different individual. Elias, the keyholder of the restoration of all things, is the angel Gabriel, who visited Zacharias and promised him that he would have a son (Luke 1:17).

Joseph Smith had this insight into the identity of Gabriel:

The priesthood was first given to Adam, ... He is Michael, the Archangel, spoken of in the scriptures — *Then to Noah who is Gabriel, he stands next in authority to Adam in the priesthood;* he was called of God to this office and was the Father of all living in his day, and To him was Given the Dominion. These men held keys. first on earth, and then in Heaven.¹⁶

The angel Gabriel is the premortal name of Noah, who then may have acquired the title or name of Elias at some point after the flood. The three names — Noah, Gabriel, and Elias — are used in this paper to refer to the same individual. When the scriptures or their mission dictate a particular name, that is how they will be represented in the paper, though they all refer to the individual holding priesthood keys. Larry Dahl wrote about Noah’s priesthood keys as well:

16. “Discourse, between circa 26 June and circa 4 August 1839–A, as Reported by Willard Richards,” The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-between-circa-26-june-and-circa-4-august-1839-a-as-reported-by-willard-richards/1#facts>. Emphasis added.

Standing next in authority to Adam, then, places Noah in a key role in the plan of salvation, in priesthood functions pertaining to this earth, and in the restoration of the gospel and priesthood keys to the earth in various dispensations, including our own.¹⁷

Noah-Elias was commissioned to shepherd in the restoration of all things pertaining to the last days. The remainder of the paper will investigate his actions as Elias, which paints a picture of his broad mission on the earth. To set the stage of Noah-Elias's work, it is helpful to review the details of his mortal life.

When Noah was born, he was given a meaningful name that was symbolic of the role he would play as a bridge between worlds and throughout dispensations. As the great-grandson of Enoch, the prophet of Zion, Noah was the promised link between the old world and the new. His name meant “rest” or “comfort.”¹⁸ His birth provided the continuation of the family of Adam, through which line the Messiah would be born: “And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall *comfort us* concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed” (Genesis 5:29).

The promise of Noah's birth brought great relief to his forebears. Enoch and other righteous saints had already been removed from the earth; they were translated with their great city of Zion (Moses 7:42–47). In the covenant that God made with Enoch he was promised that his posterity would continue through Noah until the meridian of time when the Son of Man would come and atone for the world.¹⁹

Enoch's vision of his descendants — the line from himself to Noah to Christ — comforted him. If not for this branch of his family staying behind while the rest went to Zion, there would have been no survivors during the flood. With no family of Adam living on the earth, the Messiah could not have come through the Adamic bloodline to save the human race. Methuselah (Enoch's son), Lamech (Methuselah's son), and

17. Larry E. Dahl, “Noah, Who is Angel Gabriel, is Next to Adam in Priesthood,” *Church News*, 12 March 1994, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/archives/1994-03-12/noah-who-is-angel-gabriel-is-next-to-adam-in-priesthood-140465>.

18. Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Noah.”

19. Matthew L. Bowen, “‘This Son Shall Comfort Us’: An Onomastic Tale of Two Noahs,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 23 (2017): 263–98, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/this-son-shall-comfort-us-an-onomastic-tale-of-two-noahs/>.

then Noah (Lamech's son) were the self-sacrificing volunteers that kept the little bridge of humanity open between the old Zion of the Patriarchs and the coming Zion of the Millennial earth. This brought great relief to Enoch and his people. The name meaning "rest" or "comfort" seems to fit Noah's role, though providing Enoch comfort in his posterity was only the beginning of the "rest" Noah would give.

The infant Noah was exceptional from birth. In the apocryphal *Book of Enoch*, Lamech was concerned with the appearance of his infant son, Noah, and asked his father, Methuselah, to discern what to make of it.

And now, my father, hear me: unto Lamech my son there hath been born a son, the like of whom there is none, and his nature is not like man's nature, and the color of his body is whiter than snow and redder than the bloom of a rose, and the hair of his head is whiter than white wool, and his eyes are like the rays of the sun, and he opened his eyes and thereupon lighted up the whole house. And he arose in the hands of the midwife, and opened his mouth and blessed the Lord of heaven.²⁰

Lamech went to Methuselah with the previous description, who then went to Enoch. Enoch gave this reassurance about the glorious baby:

And I, Enoch, answered and said unto him: "The Lord will do a new thing on the earth, and this I have already seen in a vision, and make known to thee that in the generation of my father Jared some of the angels of heaven transgressed the word of the Lord. And behold they commit sin and transgress the law, and have united themselves with women and commit sin with them, and have married some of them, and have begot children by them. And they shall produce on the earth giants not according to the spirit, but according to the flesh, and there shall be a great punishment on the earth, and the earth shall be cleansed from all impurity. Yea, there shall come a great destruction over the whole earth, and there shall be a deluge and a great destruction for one year. And this son who has been born unto you shall be left on the earth, and his three children shall be saved with him: when all mankind that are on the earth shall die [he and his sons shall be saved].

20. David R. Hocking, ed., *Annotated Edition of the Book of Enoch* (Salt Lake City: Digital Legend, 2021), 98.

And now make known to thy son Lamech that he who has been born is in truth his son, and call his name Noah; for he shall be left to you, and he and his sons shall be saved from the destruction, which shall come upon the earth on account of all the sin and all the unrighteousness, which shall be consummated on the earth in his days. And after that [the Flood] there shall be still more unrighteousness than that which was first consummated on the earth; for I know the mysteries of the Holy Ones; for He, the Lord, has showed me and informed me, and I have read (them) in the heavenly tablets.²¹

Apocryphal embellishments notwithstanding, Noah was special. His spirit was strong and bright, even in infancy. The glory of the angel Gabriel, second in the heavenly hosts encased in a tiny, fragile human body. The Bible describes him as “just and perfect” (Genesis 6:8–9). He received his ordination to the priesthood at the age of ten. His fathers and grandfathers all received it at much more advanced ages, only Enoch is close to Noah — he received it at 25 — but even that is the difference between a man and a child. Noah was trusted with great power and authority in his earliest days (D&C 107:52).

His role in the flood is well known and understood. It was a baptism, a renewal, a fresh start — cleansed from the blood and sins of Noah’s wicked generation, and “to fulfill all righteousness,” like the Savior (Matthew 3:15).²² Noah became, like Adam, the Father of all Living.²³

The waters receded, plants bloomed, the animals offloaded, his vineyard planted, and Noah had a conversation with the Lord about what was next: “And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I will establish my covenant with you, which I made unto your father Enoch, concerning your seed after you. (Genesis 9:15 JST). This begins his role of the “restorer” of all things.

21. Ibid.

22. Paul Y. Hoskisson and Stephen O. Smoot, “Was Noah’s Flood the Baptism of the Earth?,” in *Let Us Reason Together: Essays in Honor of the Life’s Work of Robert L. Millet*, ed. J. Spencer Fluhman and Brent L. Top (Provo, UT, and Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2016), 163–36, <https://rsc.byu.edu/let-us-reason-together/was-noahs-flood-baptism-earth>.

23. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God’s Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel* (Salt Lake City, Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014), 283, <https://interpreterfoundation.org/reprint-igil2-5-in-gods-image-and-likeness-2/>.

And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself. And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy; And the general assembly of the church of the firstborn shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch. And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will establish my covenant unto thee, which I have made between me and thee, for every living creature of all flesh that shall be upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between me and thee; for all flesh that shall be upon the earth. (Genesis 9:21–25 JST)

Joseph Smith's translation adds meaning and depth to the covenant of the rainbow that is absent in Genesis.²⁴ The rainbow represents the everlasting covenant that God made with Enoch: The promise of Zion's return, an inheritance on the earth, a righteous posterity receiving the truth, not simply a promise not to flood the earth again.

This covenant with the Lord could be the reason why Noah-Elias was chosen to hold the keys of a restoration of all things. Enoch, in Zion, was promised that he and his city would return. Meanwhile, Noah, on earth, received the same covenant — that Enoch and Zion would eventually return. He will prepare the earth for the restoration of Zion, and he will oversee the earth finally coming to “rest” (Moses 7:48, 54, 58, 60–61). Enoch's concern that the earth would finally rest was potentially the deeper meaning to Noah's name, and this would not be achieved until the last days.

Noah-Elias's actions through the dispensations show the scope of what it means to direct the restoration of all things in the last days. As Gabriel, he heralded the births of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, their mortal missions preparatory to their millennial missions. As Elias, he

24. W. Jeffrey Marsh and Thomas E. Sherry, “Precious Truths Restored: Joseph Smith Translation Changes Not Included in Our Bible,” *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* 5, no. 2 (2004): 57–74, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/re/vol5/iss2/7/>.

restored the covenant associated with Abraham and directs the effort of his righteous posterity gathering and being endowed with power so that they can “be taught the truth and look upward” to initiate the return of Enoch’s church of the Firstborn (Genesis 9:22 JST). Hence, Elias’s work is multi-faceted — he will be a restorer of Zion, a forerunner of Christ, a gatherer of Israel, and an endower of patriarchal power to the House of Israel. All these missions look forward to the great event of Zion’s restoration and the earth’s ultimate rest under Christ’s Millennial reign. In some of these duties he acts himself, in others he has enlisted assistants and endows them with “the spirit and power of Elias” to accomplish the work.

Elias the Forerunner

When Zacharias was officiating in the temple, the angel Gabriel appeared and announced that Zacharias and Elisabeth would have a son, and he would be given the “spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:5–19).

The first part of the promise sounds like he may be given the spirit of Elijah rather than Elias, “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.” The rest of it, though, points to the role of a forerunner, “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” When Zacharias’ tongue was loosed at the birth of his son, he expounded on the infant’s role:

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; *As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began* that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember *his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham*, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear. . . And thou, child, shalt be called *the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways*; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the *remission of their sins*. (Luke 1:68–77)

Zacharias’s words echo the description of Elias’s key in D&C 27:6–7, “the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.” References to baptism and the Abrahamic Covenant round out the

Elias-specific language. Zacharias understood that his son would be the forerunner for the Lord, the witness prophesied of in Malachi 3:1.²⁵ This role of the messenger was unique to John the Baptist, and, as an agent of Elias — endowed with the spirit and power of Elias by the original Elias — he was also called an Elias.

When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to ask him: Who art thou? And he confessed, and *denied not that he was Elias*; but confessed, saying: I am not the Christ. And they asked him, saying: How then art thou Elias? And he said, *I am not that Elias who was to restore all things*. And they asked him, saying, Art thou that prophet? And he answered no. . . And they asked him, and said unto him; Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias who was to restore all things, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying; I baptize with water, but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is of whom I bear record. He is that prophet, even Elias, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose, or whose place I am not able to fill; *for he shall baptize, not only with water, but with fire, and with the Holy Ghost*. (John 1:20–28 JST)

John the Baptist confessed that he was the Elias, the one who came beforehand to witness of the Messiah, but there would be another Elias who would come to restore all things.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, *Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things, as the prophets have written*. And again I say unto you that Elias has come already, concerning whom it is written, Behold I will send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me; and they knew him not, and have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them. But I say unto you, *Who is Elias? Behold, this is Elias, whom I send to prepare the way before me*. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of *John the Baptist and also of another who should come*

25. “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts” (Malachi 3:1).

and restore all things, as it is written by the prophets. (Matthew 17:10–14 JST)

John was the one prophesied to come before the Lord in Malachi 3:1. He was so important as “the prophet of the Highest” that each one of the gospel writers begins their narrative with John in the wilderness, before reporting on Christ’s teachings and life (Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 1:76; John 1:15). He and the Savior were linked in their missions, Gabriel even visited their parents in order — first Zacharias and Elisabeth, then Mary and Joseph. John was to come before Jesus.

John’s mission echoes the mission of Noah on a micro-scale: Both preside over baptisms of water to prepare for the baptism of fire. As Noah-Elias is working towards the baptism of fire for the whole earth at the second coming of the Savior, so John-Elias is working towards the baptism of fire for individuals, as he presided over the ordinance of baptism of water for his dispensation and ours (D&C 13). Noah-Elias ordained John to bear the keys of the Aaronic priesthood and do the work of the forerunner of the Messiah; he has continued that mission to the present day.

John the Baptist was killed by Herod and Herodias near the beginning of Christ’s ministry (Mark 6:17–27). His influence as the keyholder of the Aaronic priesthood, however, carried on. He visited Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on the banks of the Susquehanna River on May 15, 1829, bestowing upon them the Aaronic priesthood (D&C 13). It is also possible that he was the Elias to visit Christ, Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Jesus took his three head apostles up onto a mountain to pray, and Jesus became “altered and his raiment was white and glistening” (Luke 9:29). He talked with two angels identified as Moses and Elias. This is one instance where the scribes and scriptorians automatically change Elias to Elijah, but there are a few clues in other texts to let us know that this Elias was John the Baptist. The most obvious one is Mark 9:3 JST: “And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. Or in other words, John the Baptist and Moses.” To Jesus’s followers, Elias *was* John the Baptist. Jesus referred to him as Elias on multiple occasions (Matthew 11:13–15; 17:10–14 JST). Thus, to have Elias (John the Baptist) there as well as Moses seems to be what the JST is clarifying. However, the Bible Dictionary entry and footnote on the same verse makes it more complicated:

Interestingly, the LDS Bible Dictionary (prepared under the direction of Elder Bruce R. McConkie) says that “[t]he curious

wording of JST Mark 9:3 does not imply that the Elias at the Transfiguration was John the Baptist, but that in addition to Elijah, the prophet, John the Baptist was present.²⁶

If this was a time of receiving priesthood keys for Peter, James, and John, they received not only the keys of the Aaronic priesthood (John-Elias), but they also received the sealing keys (Elijah) and the keys of gathering Israel (Moses) (Matthew 16:19, Acts 2:38; 6:5–6; 8:38; 10:47; 19:2–6). McConkie seems to be saying that there were three heavenly messengers on the Mount — Elijah, Moses, and John the Baptist. This corresponds to the keys that the Apostles had after Christ’s death.

Another clue is in the revelation received by Joseph F. Smith now canonized as D&C 138. He lists all the great and noble leaders of the Church throughout the dispensations. Included on his list are Noah, Elijah, and “Elias, who was with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration” (D&C 138:41, 45, 47). Missing from President Smith’s list is “John the Baptist.” It is very possible that John the Baptist was the “Elias, who was with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration.”

The last bit of insight to the event is in the Doctrine and Covenants:

Nevertheless, he that endureth in faith and doeth my will, the same shall overcome, and shall receive an inheritance upon the earth when the day of transfiguration shall come; When the earth shall be transfigured, even according to the pattern *which was shown unto mine apostles upon the mount; of which account the fulness ye have not yet received.* (D&C 63:20–21)

There is more to the experience on the Mount of Transfiguration than we currently have recorded. The keys that Peter, James, and John carried in the apostolic Church following Christ’s death correspond to the keys held by Elijah, John the Baptist, and Moses — sealing, baptizing, and missionary work. We do not have the fulness of the account on the Mount of Transfiguration, but it is a reasonable assumption to say that Elias (John the Baptist), Elijah, and Moses were all there.

The mission of John-Elias the forerunner was initiated by Noah-Elias as the angel Gabriel, who visited the parents of the Lord and of John the Baptist. He ordained John-Elias to go before the Lord and prepare the

26. See the question, “Did Joseph Smith Make an Error by Claiming that Elias and Elijah are two Different People?” FAIR, https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Question:_Did_Joseph_Smith_make_an_error_by_claiming_that_Elias_and_Elijah_are_two_different_people_when_they_are_in_fact_one_and_the_same%3F. See also Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Elias.”

way. John the Baptist executed his mission perfectly, carrying the keys of baptism beyond death and then bestowing them upon Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, and then upon Joseph and Oliver on the banks of the Susquehanna River. Those keys have been necessary in every dispensation of the gospel, and John-Elias has been the messenger bringing them to the last two dispensations. He, in turn, received his errand from the original Elias, Noah, who presides over the vast work of the restoration of all things pertaining to the last days. There could not be a Millennial Messiah if there was not first a mortal Messiah; both Eliases paved the way for that to come about.

Elias the Gatherer

The next puzzle piece to investigate is how Elias is connected with Abraham. Within the covenant that the Lord made with Noah at the end of the flood was the important clause that “I will establish my covenant with you, which I made unto your father Enoch, concerning *your seed* after you. . . when *thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward*, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy” (Genesis 9:15, 22 JST). Noah’s posterity would welcome Enoch’s Zion back to the earth. (Genesis 9:23 JST). The covenant promise of righteous posterity was then renewed with Abraham.

Behold, I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee. *As it was with Noah so shall it be with thee*; but through thy ministry my name shall be known in the earth forever, for I am thy God. (Abraham 1:18–19)

These verses show the chain of priesthood authority from “the Fathers” to Abraham (Abraham 1:2). The covenant the Lord made with Enoch and then Noah was renewed with Abraham, and Abraham’s name would be attached to the covenant ever after. Hence, the Abrahamic Covenant is a continuation of an ancient promise between the Lord and his patriarchs.

For Elias to restore Zion on the earth in the last days, as has been prophesied by all the holy prophets, there needs to be a people, a posterity, who embrace the truth and look upward. This posterity is created and gathered because of the Abrahamic Covenant. Their scatterings and gatherings are all apparently presided over by Elias as well, as part of his restoration mission.

Q. What are we to understand by the angel ascending from the east, Revelation 7th chapter and 2nd verse?

A. We are to understand that the angel ascending from the east is he to whom is given the seal of the living God over the twelve tribes of Israel; wherefore, he crieth unto the four angels having the everlasting gospel, saying: Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, *till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads*. And, if you will receive it, *this is Elias which was to come to gather together the tribes of Israel and restore all things*. (D&C 77:9)

The angel in Revelation 7:2 holds considerable authority, commanding the four angels who have the everlasting gospel, presiding over the reaping of the earth. Identified as Elias, it could be that Gabriel, the second in command in the Heavenly Host, is the one with authority and the keys to restore all things by gathering the tribes of Israel.

Just as John the Baptist was an *agent* of Elias serving as the messenger who prepared the way of the Lord, Elias has thousands of agents working on the gathering. The first and most notable is John the Revelator, given the title of Elias:

Q. What are we to understand by the little book which was eaten by John, as mentioned in the 10th chapter of Revelation?

A. We are to understand that it was a mission, *and an ordinance for him to gather the tribes of Israel*; behold, this is Elias, who, as it is written, must come and restore all things. (D&C 77:14)

John the Revelator is an agent of Elias given a mission to gather Israel, he was also given a translated body to enable him to do the work of gathering until Christ comes again (D&C 7). His singular responsibility to write the vision of the last days (The Revelation of St John the Divine) is also in line with the mission of Elias to restore all things pertaining to the last days (1 Nephi 14:20–26, Revelation 10:1–10).

Other agents who have received the commission to gather Israel combine all the roles of Elias: as a baptizer, restorer, and gatherer.

Yea, open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying: Repent, repent, and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; Yea repent and be baptized, every one of you, for a remission of

your sins; yea, be baptized even by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. (D&C 33:10–11)

These words were given to Ezra Thayre and Northrup Sweet as they were called to be among the first missionaries in this dispensation. The reference to John the Baptist's mission is evident in their instructions and hearkens back to his role as an Elias, a preparer in the lives of people to make them ready for the Lord. They are also commissioned to baptize with water to make ready for the fire that follows. All of this is Elias language.

Orson Pratt, Sidney Rigdon, James Covell, and the elders of the Church were all given similar Elias-specific calls (D&C 34:5–7; 35:3–4; 39:11, 19–20; 42:6–8). The entire missionary force in the Church since 1830 has been working as agents of Elias, gathering, baptizing, and preparing hearts to accept Christ's imminent coming.

Joseph Smith taught about being called in the spirit of Elias as well. James Burgess recorded the ideas Joseph presented on March 10, 1844:

I must go back to the time at Susquehanna river when I retired in the woods pouring out my soul in prayr to Almighty God, An Angel came down from heaven and laid his hands upon me and *ordained me to the power of Elias* and that authorised me to baptise with water unto repentance, It is a power or a preparatory work for something greater.²⁷

There are many agents of Elias, doing the work of “an Elias” by gathering Israel, baptizing them, preparing them for the coming of the Lord and the reception of the Spirit in their lives. The Abrahamic Covenant creates a bond between God and His people; missionary work in our dispensation is responsible for finding lost Israel and renewing the covenant with them. This vast work is directed by *the* Elias, the archangel commanding the four angels of the everlasting gospel who received the original covenant from God that Zion would return when there were a people ready to receive them.

Elias the Endower of Priesthood Power

Elias's connection to the covenant of Abraham was explained in the last section; Elias's connection to the person Abraham is the focus of this section. Much of the confusion surrounding the identity of Elias is

27. “Discourse, 10 March 1844, as Reported by James Burgess,” 15, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-10-march-1844-as-reported-by-james-burgess/1>. Emphasis added.

rooted in D&C 110:12: “Elias appeared and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed.” The connection between this Elias and the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham has led to the conclusion that:

A man called Elias apparently lived in mortality in the days of Abraham, who committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland (Ohio) Temple on April 3, 1836 (D&C 110:12). We have no specific information as to the details of his mortal life or ministry.²⁸

In actuality, we know of a person named Elias who was alive when Abraham was on the earth: Noah. Abraham was born 247 years after the flood. Noah died 350 years after the flood, so they overlapped for about a century (Genesis 9:29, Genesis 11).

Looking further at Abraham’s ordination to the priesthood is also instructive in linking the two together. When Abraham explains his desire for seeking the religion of his ancestors, he says:

Finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, *I sought for the blessings of the fathers*, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace and desiring to receive instructions and to keep the commandments of God, *I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the Fathers. It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time*, yea even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me. I sought for mine appointment unto the Priesthood *according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed.* (Abraham 1:2–4)

Abraham, a direct descendant of Noah and Shem, sought his birthright blessing of priesthood ordination from “the Fathers.” He was a rightful heir. He belonged to their lineage. Considering that he was 62

28. Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Elias.”

years old when he left Haran, which happened after this ordination, Noah and Shem would have been the leaders of the patriarchal presidency who could bestow this right on him (Abraham 2:14). Perhaps he didn't receive the priesthood directly from their hands, but they would likely have been the presiding "Fathers" in the assembly of the eleven generations of living Fathers from Noah to Abraham (Genesis 11).

John Widtsoe mentioned that this is not a new theory: "It should be said that some students believe that Elias who appeared in the Kirtland Temple was Noah, the patriarch."²⁹ It seems reasonable to believe that Elias, a named keyholder in revelations, is the very being who bestowed priesthood keys at the Kirtland Temple, especially when Noah-Elias and Abraham overlapped during their mortal ministries. The same Elias who held the keys and covenant when Abraham received them in mortality could have passed them on to Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple. This allows for the covenant to be perpetuated so that the promise of Noah that "thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward" (Genesis 9: 22 JST) will be fulfilled. The covenant is identified in Abraham's name, but it is the same covenant given to Enoch and Noah, and now administered in our temple ordinances.

Conclusion

The scriptures present a cohesive narrative that can arguably place Noah at the center of all of Elias's work. Each piece of the puzzle gives us a fuller picture of what the keys of the "restoration of all things pertaining to the latter-days" entails. In all four standard works, specific language of Elias signals his involvement in the calls to gather and prepare for the Lord's coming. Phrases such as "by the mouth of all the holy prophets," "preparing the way of the Lord," and baptism by water before the baptism of fire all indicate that the work involves Elias.

The overarching work of Elias as the restorer of all things encompasses the prophecies about Christ's first and second comings, the gathering of Israel, the latter-day restoration, and the establishment of Zion. Noah-Elias is the keyholder responsible for recruiting other agents of Elias to assist in this vast work. From John the Baptist to John the Revelator to Joseph Smith and the missionary force of the Church today, Eliases are gathering, baptizing, and preparing people to receive the Lord and His Spirit. The covenant driving this work involves the return of the city of

29. Widtsoe, *Evidences*, 244.

Enoch and a people prepared to receive them and the Lord. There are a lot of moving parts to the fulfillment of this promise.

Ultimately, the “rest” and “comfort” of Noah was not only in continuing humanity after the flood, but in the promise given to Enoch of the earth’s final “rest” during the reign of the Millennial Messiah (Moses 8:2–3).³⁰ Elias is the archangel leading the work of restoration in the Church today. The puzzle pieced together in this article may give us new insights about his identity and work.

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30. Bowen, “This Son,” 263–98.

NEPHI’S “BOUNTIFUL”: CONTRASTING BOTH CANDIDATES

Warren P. Aston

Abstract: *In May 2022, George Potter published an article that makes the most comprehensive case to date that Khor Rori in southern Oman is the most likely location for the place “Bountiful” described by Nephi. However, despite its many positives, there are a number of reasons to question the suitability of Khor Rori and to favor the other major candidate for Bountiful, Khor Kharfot. I propose that a careful reading of Nephi’s account coupled with recent discoveries based on field work show Khor Kharfot to be a superior candidate meeting all criteria we can extract from the text. To support a thorough comparison, aspects of both candidates are weighed, including pictorial comparisons of key features. I am in full agreement with Potter that with the entire eastern coast of Arabia now explored, only two candidates for Bountiful remain in contention — Khor Rori and Khor Kharfot. No other location still merits serious consideration.*

In Nephi’s account of his family’s journey from Jerusalem to the Promised Land in the New World, one location plays a particularly prominent role. Nephi names this location Bountiful (1 Nephi 18:1), and it has been the quest of several individuals (including myself) to determine the real-world location of Bountiful. Following extensive exploration, there are two candidates for this location — Khor Rori and Khor Kharfot. I have been the chief proponent of the latter location, while George Potter has been the proponent of the former. Both locations are located in southern Oman, a region that fits comfortably with the Nephi’s account of travel and locations along Lehi’s Trail, as roughly shown in Figure 1. The numbered locations in Figure 1 correspond to: 1) three days of travel (from the borders of the Red Sea) to the Valley of Lemuel; 2) travel in a “nearly south-southeast direction”; 3) four days of travel to Shazer; 4) “many days” travel in the “same direction”; 5) mountains near



Figure 1. The basic parameters of the entire Old World Lehite land journey.

the Red Sea; 6) “many days”; 7) “nearly the same course”; 8) at or near Nahom; and 9) “nearly eastward” to Bountiful.

Khor Rori, a site in southern Oman that is the subject of Potter’s recent article advocating it as a candidate for Bountiful,¹ is a fascinating place of great beauty, with one view provided in Figure 2. Since my first visit there in 1987, I have visited often over the years, watching the progress of the ongoing excavations and restoration of the fortress city of Sumhurum that sits above the bay. No one doubts the historical significance of Khor Rori, especially in its role in trade since the late first century BC. I have explored the area many times — the ruins, the bay and its cliffs, and particularly its access wadi, Wadi Darbat, with its waterfalls, small lake, and rivers in the upper reach of the wadi.

While Khor Kharfot is also a fascinating place, its beauty and features are of a different kind. See, for example, the view from Google Earth provided in Figure 3 and the photograph in Figure 4. It is isolated by its surrounding terrain, today being accessed mostly by sea. The only *land* access is through Wadi Sayq, which leads through the steep Qamar mountains to the desert plateau; its beginning now lies in a restricted area at the Yemen border eastwards of Nahom. The inlet mouth of the wadi that is named Khor Kharfot is uniquely pristine and undeveloped, allowing a wide range of fauna and flora, including large trees, to remain



Figure 2. Google Earth view of Khor Rori and its access wadi, Wadi Darbat, facing northwards. Taken January 14, 2020, <https://earth.google.com/web/@17.04826069,54.44055207,37.67282052a,5699.32273148d,35y,0.00002243h,68.5200663t,-0r>.



Figure 3. Google Earth view of Khor Kharfot and its access wadi, Wadi Sayq, facing west. This image of Khor Kharfot, taken September 1, 2020, followed a cyclone event that temporarily created two fingers of the lagoon just behind the beach. See <https://earth.google.com/web/@16.73196485,53.33227915,8.05873828a,1351.97913069d,35y,-80.33533324h,81.50555784t,0r>.

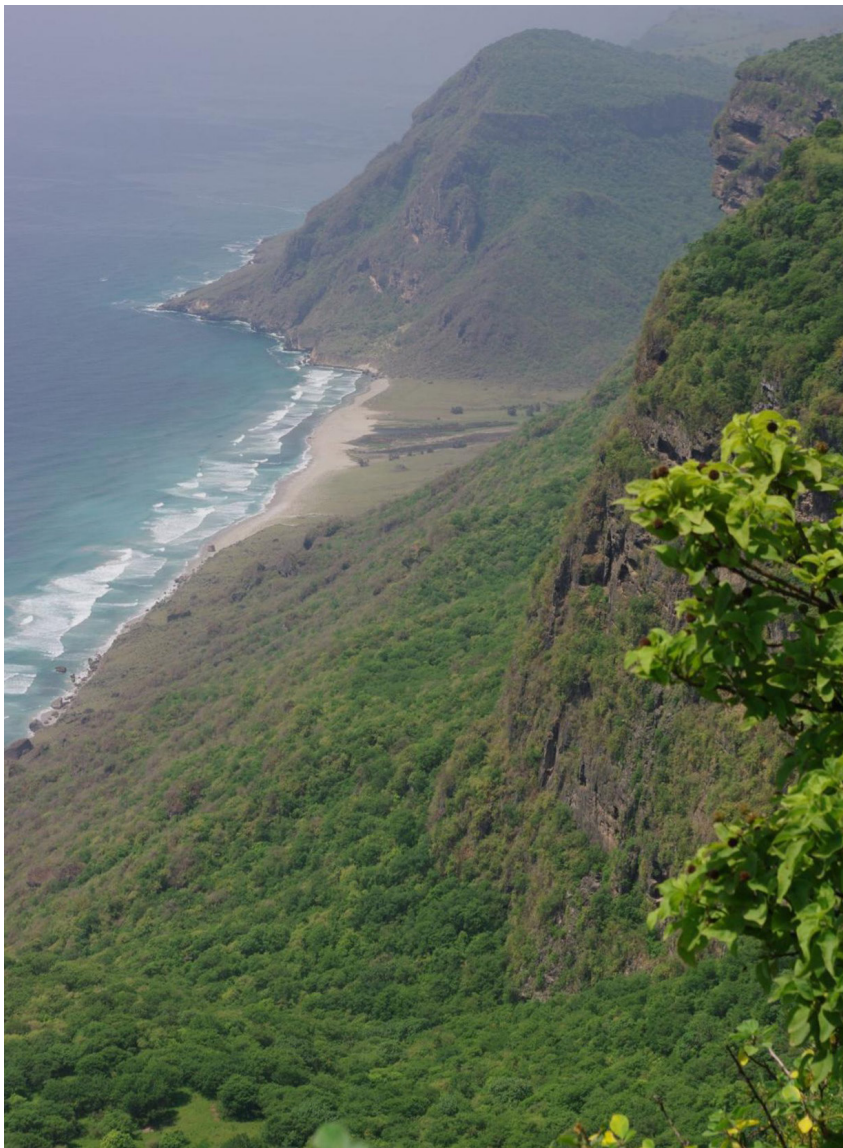


Figure 4. This view of Khor Kharfot facing southwest has been used in numerous publications, including the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, to represent the Old World Bountiful.

within a distinctively fertile coastal area that extends several kilometers in either direction. While uninhabited today, its numerous human traces establish that people have lived here intermittently since the Neolithic period.

Strictly by the Book: Nephi's Descriptors of Bountiful

Readers should be aware that the subject of this essay, the Old World Bountiful, is emphatically *not* merely a debate of academic interest between two members of a small group of aficionados of Book of Mormon geography. Establishing the plausibility of the real-world location of Nephi's Bountiful is fundamental — increasingly so as time passes — for the Book of Mormon to be taken seriously as a genuinely ancient account. Indeed, from its publication until recent decades, the description of a lush place of fruit and timber in Arabia was regularly considered an obvious Achilles' heel of the entire Book of Mormon, along with the notion of an ancient book recorded on gold plates.

With that in mind, it is interesting to ponder why Nephi, with his overarching spiritual objectives and practicalities such as the limited space on the plates, gave us so much information about Bountiful, the place where his family ended their long trek from Jerusalem and where he built his ship. Significantly, those details were left intact centuries later when Mormon edited the earlier writings. Based on my research, I believe that no other location in the entire Book of Mormon has such a level of descriptive detail recorded, not even such pivotal Old-World locations as the Valley of Lemuel, Shazer, and Nahom, and New-World locations such as Zarahemla and Cumorah.

Whether Nephi was prompted to record this documentation to one day provide a means to establish the credibility of the record, his evocative yet matter-of-fact depiction of the place has fascinated readers of his narrative since it was first published. His text seemed wildly implausible in many particulars when judged against what was known about the Arabian Peninsula in 1830. Accurate information about Arabia providing plausibility for the claims took more than a century to *begin* becoming available; that process continues in 2023.²

Over the years, believing readers of Nephi's account, trying to reconcile his description with their knowledge of Arabia, have proposed a number of possible real-world locations for Bountiful. These have ranged from Aden in Yemen at the southernmost point of the Arabian Peninsula to Qurm Kalba in Sharjah, the United Arab Emirates, just outside of northern Oman. As satellite imaging became more accessible in the late twentieth century, it became possible to make more informed proposals, and, eventually, conditions allowed exploration on the ground. The one-day visit to southern Oman by Lynn and Hope Hilton in 1976 and my own explorations from 1987 onwards were very preliminary beginnings but clearly revealed the path ahead.

Conditions did not allow the Hiltons to visit outside the immediate area of the capital, Salalah, meaning that neither Khor Rori nor Khor Kharfot were visited. As related in their book, *In Search of Lehi's Trail*, their visit to Oman followed a suggestion by Hugh Nibley; they concluded that the main aspects of Nephi's Bountiful could be found in the wide Salalah bay. The section "Land Bountiful" in their book thus concluded that the main aspects of Nephi's Bountiful could be found in the wide Salalah bay. That section of the book provided two images: a two-page spread of a beach sunset at Salalah with the cliffs of Raysut on the horizon³ and a small image of trees at one of the springs nearby.⁴ By the time of my first visit to Oman in 1987, I was aware of Khor Rori and went there soon after arrival, becoming the first Latter-day Saint to visit the place, as far as I know. Going there merely to see what I assumed must be the place Nephi's ship was built, I was immediately perplexed to find that key features described in Nephi's text were either widely scattered or missing. This led to a closer examination of his writing that resulted in the twelve requirements for Bountiful that I will discuss shortly. I began asking questions about what else might lie along the coast in both directions.

The way forward really came in 1992, at the completion of a four-year effort of *land* exploration of the entire east coast of Arabia, examining the terrain from Aden in Yemen eastwards to northern Oman.⁵ Most of the hundreds of kilometers of coast, often without road access, proved every bit as barren and forbidding as the popular stereotypes of Arabia. Nine coastal locations in Yemen and Oman — those having, as a logical minimum, access from the west and a fresh water source — were first identified, and I discovered that the presence of fresh water did not itself ensure vegetation. The majority of the places proved unimpressive because of poor soil quality. All locations were then compared to Nephi's text. The only potential candidates that passed this closer scrutiny were in southern Dhofar, Oman, in an area next to the border of Yemen, where the annual monsoon from the Indian Ocean provides moisture that permits significant vegetation in suitable settings.

Since then, further exploration — initially hampered by difficult access — has reduced the possibilities to the two sites under discussion here. With the eastern Arabian coast now fully explored, no surprises await discovery: Nephi's "Bountiful" seemingly must be one of these two locations — Khor Rori or Khor Kharfot.⁶

As already noted, Nephi's description of the Old World Bountiful has no parallel anywhere in either the Old or New World accounts in the

Book of Mormon. Combined with some logical requirements, his text distills into twelve requirements that form a vivid word-picture of a very particular place, one that remains at odds with the common perception of Arabia even today:

- Linked, directionally, to Nahom, the burial place of Ishmael.
- Terrain must allow feasible passage from Nahom to Bountiful.
- Must be on the coast and suitable for an encampment.
- Must have year-round fresh water.
- Must have plentiful food sources.
- May be part of a wider fertile area.
- Must be near a distinctive mountain.
- Must have oceanside cliffs.
- Must have timber suitable for shipbuilding.
- Must have ore suitable for creating tools.
- Little or no population.
- Favorable coastal conditions.

These twelve requirements are discussed in additional detail in the following sections.

Directionally Linked to Nahom

As the Lehites traveled in the wilderness, Ishmael died and was buried “in the place which was called Nahom” (1 Nephi 16:34). Nephi is very specific in recording the fact that from Nahom they traveled “*nearly* eastward from that time forth” (1 Nephi 17:1) until they arrived at the place where they built their ship. Thus, Bountiful lay “*nearly*” eastward of Nahom. Given that Nahom is now firmly correlated with the tribal district of Nihm in Yemen, this fact alone eliminates proposals on the central and southern coast of Yemen and any that lie on the central and northern Omani coast.⁷

Only the southern part of the Dhofar region of Oman — and nowhere else — can be considered “eastward” of Nahom. This can be stated quite unequivocally, as in the verse last quoted, Nephi used the same wording he had earlier used in describing the travel direction from the Valley of Lemuel (“*nearly* a south-southeast direction,” 1 Nephi 16:13, 14, 33). Nephi’s abilities in accurately determining variations from the cardinal directions means that Bountiful must lie close to Nahom’s 16th degree north latitude.

The correlation of southern Dhofar being “nearly eastward” of Nahom’s latitude (about 15.50 degrees north latitude) and *also* containing the only viable candidates for Bountiful (Khor Rori at 17.2 degrees N latitude, and Khor Kharfot at 16.44 degrees N latitude) has been one of most stunning developments yet in establishing the historicity of the Nephite scripture.

Suitable Terrain for Passage From Nahom to Bountiful

At some places along the Arabian coast, the terrain is so rugged that any overland travel from the interior is impossible. In such places, only a drainage wadi could provide a pathway to the coast. The low Qara ranges behind the Salalah bay, inland of Khor Rori, have multiple access wadis providing access to the ocean, but, paradoxically, the highest and most extensive mountain barriers are found along the Qamar coast, the westernmost section of southern Dhofar where Khor Kharfot is situated. In this area, therefore, a wadi route through these mountains is required.

Coastal Location Suitable for an Encampment

Bountiful was a coastal location (1 Nephi 17:5) suitable for an initial seashore encampment in tents (1 Nephi 17:6), but also with higher ground available for more substantial dwellings during the unavoidable months of rain, heavy seas, and annual monsoonal winds. Most importantly, the place had to offer a harbor — a suitable place for the construction and launching of a ship capable of carrying the group (1 Nephi 18:8).⁸ Although it can, and has, been done, large vessels are not easily constructed over a year or more on an exposed beach, subject to tidal surges and winds. In ancient times, the most practical solution was usually the shores of a sheltered inlet or lagoon that protected from tides and storms while still allowing ready access to the ocean.

Year-Round Fresh Water

Fresh water at the site is, of course, required by their stay of what was certainly several years. That fresh water was *abundant* is implicit in the description of the flora awaiting the Lehite group upon their arrival. Further, it was most likely *readily accessible* so that the ship construction could proceed without diverting significant energy and time to carrying water in from elsewhere.

Plentiful Food Sources

Nephi tells us twice that "Bountiful" was named specifically for its "much fruit" and also "wild honey" (1 Nephi 17: 5, 6). While unmentioned, other food resources not proscribed under Mosaic Law would certainly have included the abundant fish in the ocean and small game that could be hunted (1 Nephi 18:6).

It was much more than just a suitable place to build and launch a ship. As discussed shortly, the record very strongly indicates that Bountiful was uninhabited when Lehi arrived. If so, this requires that the fruit mentioned was not cultivated but grew wild. The Hebrew term for "fruit" normally refers to *edible* fruit, and despite being abundant, Nephi's use of the singular "fruit" may imply that there was not necessarily a great *variety* of fruits. Historically, the "fruit" referred to in Nephi's day was most likely fig, date, and tamarind, although others remain possible.

The apparent availability of fruit upon arrival may explain the lack of any mention of the group growing crops at Bountiful, unlike the description of their arrival in the New World (1 Nephi 18:24). However, some agricultural pursuits during the years of their stay at Bountiful are certain. As they still do today for the desert-dwelling Bedouin, the group's camels could still provide hides and hair throughout their time at Bountiful. Camel meat, however, was prohibited by the law of Moses (Leviticus 11:4), and since the camel was considered unclean, the milk also would not be consumed.⁹

A Surrounding Fertile Land

Nephi's use of "the land which we called Bountiful" (1 Nephi 17:5) and "the land Bountiful" (1 Nephi 17:7) suggests that a wider, more general area may have also enjoyed fertility in addition to the particular location where the Lehites initially camped (1 Nephi 17:6), thus making any candidate location for Bountiful without a comparable surrounding fertile area less likely.

Near a Distinctive Mountain

A mountain must be singular and distinctive enough that Nephi records the voice of the Lord telling him to go "into *the* mountain" (1 Nephi 17:7) before recording — using the same phraseology — that he did as directed and adding that he went "up" to do so. From this wording, the implication is clear that the mountain needed no further identification or explanation by the Lord. Nephi's later, third, mention of the mountain retains the same wording of going "into *the* mount," expanding it to note

that he went there to “pray off” (1 Nephi 18:3), thus requiring that the mountain was close enough to the coastal encampment to access *often*.

In all three instances, the wording of going *into* the mount (rather than “onto,” “upon,” or “up to” it) is used. This may signify that Nephi did not necessarily climb to the *summit* of the mountain, instead perhaps using the privacy of an accessible but still elevated location on its slopes, such as a recess or cave for his frequent communications with the Lord.¹⁰

Oceanside Cliffs

The incident of Nephi’s brothers attempting to take his life by throwing him into the depths of the sea (1 Nephi 17:48) makes no logical sense unless there were substantial cliffs overlooking the ocean from which to throw him. Oceanside cliffs typically have rocks at their base from erosion and would constitute a real danger to anyone falling on them from a height, whereas a beach without cliffs would not pose any danger, especially for a young man who is described as being “large in stature” (1 Nephi 2:16) and “having much strength” (1 Nephi 4:31).

Timber for Shipbuilding

Any candidate for the site of Bountiful must have enough shipbuilding timber of types and sizes to permit building a vessel able to carry several dozen persons and remain seaworthy for at least a year (1 Nephi 18:1-2). Note that Nephi did not ask where to locate *timber*, only *ore* to make tools, which strongly implies that timber was readily available but not the tools needed to fashion that timber into a ship.

Ore for Making Tools

Ore, from which metal could be smelted to construct tools, was available in the vicinity (1 Nephi 17:9–11, 16), perhaps with some type of *flint* (1 Nephi 17: 11). By choosing the term “ore” it seems likely that Nephi, whose expertise in *metalsmithing* is clear throughout the record,¹¹ left the specifics to the Lord in his request for guidance to make the tools necessary for working with *wood*. While it remains probable that he carried some type of flint with him to make fire, his wording might imply that flint was also available at, or near, the location of the ore source. Iron is the most likely metal utilized by Nephi for tools.

Little or No Population

Very importantly, despite the attractiveness of the place, 1 Nephi 17 is full of indications that Bountiful had little or no resident population at

that time who could contribute tools and manpower to the ship building process. Consider that rather than simply consulting locals or making a local purchase, it required a specific *revelation* to show Nephi where ore could be found (1 Nephi 17:9–10) to make basic tools. Great effort was then expended by him to fashion his own bellows of skins, locate the ore, make fire by striking stones together, smelt it and then manufacture the tools he would need. Such items as basic tools, bellows, and a fire source would have been easily obtained by anyone living in or near a populated seaport.

It is also clear from the record that Nephi *needed* the labor of his brothers and of Zoram, whereas a populated location would likely offer other, more willing, sources of labor.

Of course, Lehi could also easily have been directed to bring sufficient portable wealth from his estate in Jerusalem to simply purchase an entire ship, or commission the building of one had the group been headed for a shipbuilding area. While one could argue that the shipbuilding stage was part of their preparation for the New World, the group had already faced many years of difficult travel dominated by hunger and privation. The more likely reason that they had to construct their own ship is that no vessels in that part of the world were adequate for a journey of the magnitude required.

The frequently dissenting Laman and Lemuel left Bountiful readily enough on a long and dangerous sea voyage, surely their first time on the open sea, when the time came. This very strongly suggests that there was little at Bountiful to distract them from assisting Nephi in building the ship or to entice them to remain. I suspect that years of encounters with mostly Arab peoples on their journey would have broadened their cultural outlook. Had they been living for some time in or near a thriving port, commercial opportunities for wealth would surely have appealed after years of desert privation. Furthermore, had Bountiful been in or near a trading center, with ships and camel caravans coming and going, that would have given them an easy opportunity to return to their beloved Jerusalem.

After arriving in the New World, Lehi learned by revelation that Jerusalem had been destroyed (2 Nephi 1:4). Although precise dating of the destruction and of the Nephite departure from Bountiful remains unclear, it is very possible the destruction took place while the Lehtes were still at Bountiful. If so, it is significant that Lehi learned of it by *revelation*, not from locals at Bountiful who would have known this momentous news from arriving travelers within months of it happening.

It also seems unlikely that Lehi's group, at such a critical juncture in their journey, would have been intended to settle for years where they would be exposed to the distractions and pagan beliefs then prevalent in Arabia. Rather, the place "prepared" of the Lord may have been intended to keep them *apart* from other people for that very reason.

Favorable Coastal Conditions

Finally, coastal conditions had to include ready access to the open ocean and to suitable winds and currents (1 Nephi 18:8–9) that could carry Nephi's ship toward the New World. The ship would have landed along the Pacific coast, as Alma 22:28 seems to stipulate when it mentions that the *west* coast of the land was the place of "first inheritance." It remains true that the west coast of the Americas can be reached by sailing below the African and South American continents, but many researchers, including this writer, prefer the less dangerous option of a voyage eastward across the milder latitudes of the Indian and Pacific oceans.¹² Sailing east from the Indian Ocean onwards is normally problematic as the prevailing winds and currents are in the opposite direction, but in recent decades we have learned that ENSO weather events¹³ regularly facilitate such travel.

Contrasting Khor Rori and Khor Kharfot: Toward Resolution

Both the Khor Rori and Khor Kharfot sites meet the two logical candidate requirements — that is, the logistical necessity of having terrain allowing travelers to reach the coast from the interior desert, and both having fresh water available year-round. The locations are near each other, as shown in Figure 5.

It should be noted, though, that in his writings, Potter assumes that the Lehiite land journey across Arabia essentially used the trade route in reverse, including the final leg from Nahom to Bountiful.¹⁴ However, there is no evidence that an established eastward trail from Nahom ever existed or was used. Instead, from the region of Nahom the main trade route veered southeast toward Marib, then east toward the main transit point for trade at Shabwah, and ultimately southeast again to the port of Bir Ali on the coast, as shown in Figure 6. The only established route to Dhofar was from Shabwah (not directly from Nahom) going northeast to the small desert caravanserai of Shisr, often speculatively called "Ubar," and only then southwards to Wadi Darbat and Khor Rori.¹⁵ Compared to the plausible eastward route to Khor Kharfot as shown in Figure 5, the southward and northward bends proposed by Potter, though not



Figure 5. Map of possible routes from Nahom to Bountiful based upon Nephi's statement that the travel direction from Nahom was "nearly eastward from that time forth" (1 Nephi 17:1). As shown, the route to Khor Kharfot is slightly nearer to true east than the route to Khor Rori, which trends a little more to the north.



Figure 6. A simplified map using solid black lines to show the major overland trade routes (which operated in both directions).

ruled out, are not as clearly consistent with Nephi's indication that they traveled "nearly eastward" (1 Nephi 17:1) after departing Nahom.

While there is no doubt whatsoever that the Lehite group used, perhaps for long stretches, sections of trade routes, so far as the final stage of the journey — from Nahom to Bountiful — is concerned, Nephi's account describes anything but a well-worn trade route with its varied directions and regularly spaced water sources as the Potter scenario

posits. Having traversed the interior areas eastwards of Nahom more than once, I have likely experienced first-hand some of the underlying reasons (generally zero water sources, isolation, lawlessness, etc.) why Nephi graphically described this final leg as the most difficult of their entire journey (1 Nephi 17: 1–5). As satellite imagery and any map will show, even in modern times, the region north of Marib and extending east to Dhofar remains devoid of waterholes and settlements of any consequence, and has almost no roads.

That aside, both places share several of the “Textual Indicators” specified in Nephi’s record. They are both coastal locations that can be considered “nearly eastward” of Nahom, both have local wild honey sources and high cliffs. Both also have ore sources, iron in both cases, over 30 km (18 miles) from Khor Rori at Mirbat, and less than a half kilometer (a third of a mile) from the seafront at Khor Kharfot.¹⁶

Most importantly, both places are suitable for ship construction and have a harbor to access the ocean. Potter downplays the inlet at Khor Kharfot by critiquing the accuracy of a painting that I commissioned several years ago (see Figure 7) showing what the geological and historical features tell us about the place two and a half millennia ago.

Potter writes, “Although today there is no inlet at Khor Kharfot, Aston has presented an illustration showing what a harbor might have



Figure 7. A depiction of what Khor Kharfot may have looked like ca. 600 BC. While Khor Kharfot is a smaller inlet, construction of a “ship” and launching it into the ocean is entirely possible in this setting.

looked like in Lehi's time."¹⁷ A sand barrier today usually does block the inlet at Khor Kharfot, as one does at Khor Rori itself and at other spots along the Omani coast, all believed to be relatively recent developments. However, I have myself experienced and documented an occasion when Khor Kharfot's sand bar beach was opened to the ocean, just as Khor Rori's sand bar opened to the ocean even more recently, as shown in Figure 8. Contrary to Potter's critique, the painting does, in fact, present a completely plausible view of the ancient inlet at Khor Kharfot.

The topography in the painting is otherwise much as it appears today except that the western plateau at the base of the mountain is less eroded. Erosion has diminished its width over the centuries, evidenced by ruins on the western plateau that have collapsed since they were built. This plateau appears to be the most likely place for permanent settlement in accordance with archaeological findings over recent decades.

The recent view of the inlet at Khor Rori in Figure 8 is shown from the elevated Sumhurum ruins. Points of interest are the breach visible in the sand-bar beach across the inlet in the distance, leading to the open ocean, and the ship displayed in the upper-left representing a typical vessel known to be in use when this was a functioning port. The two promontories enclosing the sand bar, Inqitat Mirbat on the east (left) side and Inqitat Taqah on the west (right) side, are visible in the distance.

We should also at least briefly note that Khor Rori and Khor Kharfot are not the only harbor possibilities in Dhofar; quite a large harbor can still be seen at Al Balid, close to Salalah city. It was constructed directly next to the beach following the collapse of Khor Rori, becoming the



Figure 8. This general view from the ruins of Sumhurum looks towards the ocean across the large inlet at Khor Rori.

only functioning harbor for the capitol from roughly the eighth to the sixteenth century AD.¹⁸

The *differences* between Khor Rori and Khor Kharfot, however, are vividly evident when we examine the remaining indicators: the availability of wild fruit, being part of a wider fertile area, accessible shipbuilding timber, a distinctive mountain nearby, and no resident population. As modern analogues of the past, these five aspects represent the greatest disparity between the two sites and will now be discussed. As far as possible, they are illustrated here by contrasting photographic views of them as they appear today. Care has been taken to display favorable views of each location, with images taken from 1987 to 2022.

Wild Fruit

The primary species that would have been considered “fruit” by the Lehighites are figs (see Figure 9) and dates, while tamarind trees were also a valued commodity with multiple uses in that era. These species grow wild and abundantly at Khor Kharfot today.

In contrast, visitors to the Salalah bay, including Khor Rori, encounter an area characterized by thin, overgrazed soils. However, they can certainly see “much fruit,” but it is primarily in the form of modern irrigated orchards and plantations, mostly growing commercial species of bananas, dates, coconuts, and citrus, all introduced to Oman



Figure 9. Wild fig trees at Khor Kharfot.

in recent centuries. Recent studies suggest the possibility that date palms may have grown at Sumhurum at Khor Rori in the past, but note that it remains possible that the evidence for this may have been brought there by visiting traders.¹⁹ Dates do not grow naturally in the Salalah bay in modern times.

Aside from the cultivated plantations — which, it must be noted, are several kilometers from Khor Rori — the fig and tamarind trees that Nephi would be familiar with are found growing naturally only in some pockets of Wadi Darbat in the Qara hills, several kilometers inland from Khor Rori. This does not rule out Khor Rori on the basis of fruit, of course, but the abundance of natural fruit immediately present at Khor Kharfot is a relative advantage of that site.

The Land at Both Sites

There is a recent study of the *geomorphology* (the physical structure of an area and its soils, how it was formed and has evolved over time) of the Salalah region.²⁰ While quite technical in nature, the paper has numerous representative images of the terrain, of Wadi Darbat, and of Khor Rori that can readily be understood. The data in the paper gives no reason to suppose that natural vegetation in the thin stony soils of the Salalah plain was noticeably more abundant 2,600 years ago. Only kilometers inland from the coast, in the upper part of Wadi Darbat and adjacent wadis, does anything approaching Khor Kharfot's fertility survive.²¹

A comparable but more focused study, published in 2016, of Khor Kharfot's setting in the Qamar mountains is also available.²² As with the previous report, the images throughout are informative.

Ancient Traces of the Name "Bountiful"?

As seen in his recent article at *Interpreter*, George Potter has embraced the claim of a Salalah historian of the Shahri tribe that the ancient biblical tribe of Ophir settled in the Salalah area, specifically at Wadi Darbat and Khor Rori, giving their name to the harbor there.²³ The significance he points out is that Ophir can mean "abundance" or "fruitful,"²⁴ thus correlating with Nephi's statement that Bountiful was so named "because of its much fruit and also wild honey" (1 Nephi 17:5, 6).

Regardless of the merits of this claim from the Old Testament period, what is surely a stronger case can be made with Khor Kharfot's name, which derives from *kharifot* in the local Mehri (or Mahri) language. It is thus very old and predates even the arrival of the Arabic language, but still occasionally appears on maps and satellite images of the Kharfot

area and nowhere else in Arabia. So, it is exciting to discover that *kharifot* actually may have *dual* meanings that relate to abundance and fruit: first, a link to the annual monsoon rains that make Khor Kharfot the most naturally fertile location on the Arabian coast, and second, the concept of ripe fruit.

In particular, *kharifot* comes from the Mehri root *xrf* > *xérf* “to produce fruit”; *xarf* “summer; rainy period, period of monsoon rains (mid-June to early Sept)”; *šexāref* “to collect ripe fruit”; and is an abstract noun ending in *-ot*. In related pre-Arabic languages from the region it has similar derivations: see Socotri (or Soqotri, a language spoken near the Horn of Africa in the Socotra Archipelago) *xōrf* “harvest” and Ḥarsūsi (spoken in a remote region in south-central Oman) *xōref* “autumn.”²⁵ There is also an etymological link between *kharifot* and *khareef*, the common Arabic term for the monsoon rains in light of *ḥarīf* (خريف) “autumn, fall; monsoon-season” and *ḥarīfi* (خريفوي) “autumnal.”²⁶ When the *-ot* or *-ut* ending (signifying an abstract quality) is added, the term *ḥarīfot* (خريفوت) results.²⁷ The etymological connections make Khor Kharfot and *kharifot* an excellent match for the name Bountiful.

A further potential historical link to the Book of Mormon account survives in the origin accounts preserved by the Maya people of southern Mexico and Central America. Their records indicate that their ancestors left from Tulan, or a “place of abundance” that lay to the west, far across the oceans. For example, several Guatemalan documents detail ancient Mesoamerica legends about coming from a distant “Lugar de la Abundancia” (“place of abundance”).²⁸ While Spaniards translated Tulan as “Lugar de la Abundancia,” in recording the myths, the term derives from a Nahuatl word referring to a “place of reeds” or “place of cattails [or bullrushes]”²⁹ which also provides a significant clue to the identity of this place. Very early on, it seems, Tulan became almost ubiquitous in the early accounts of origins and over time came to be associated with their creation legends. What is relevant here is the simple fact that branches of the Maya claim that their forbears came from a unique place, one with characteristics striking enough to be remembered in detail in their foundational accounts over a thousand years later.³⁰

A Wider Fertile Area

Figure 10, showing the aridity near the stream of Wadi Darbat as it approaches Khor Rori, should be considered with the satellite overview presented earlier in Figure 2. These images, when compared to photographs from Khor Kharfot, speak eloquently of the contrast



Figure 10. A general view facing southwards shows the stream of Wadi Darbat flowing over the Salalah plain towards Khor Rori at the coast.

between the two settings. Khor Rori is an almost barren plain with natural vegetation present only several kilometers inland in the upper wadis.

Khor Kharfot, on the other hand, sits near the eastern end of a belt of extensive vegetation extending a total of over 60 km (over 37 miles) of atypically fertile terrain, all of it at, or very near, the coast.³¹ Figure 11 is typical of the surrounding area.

Timber and Shipbuilding

The culmination of Lehi and Sariah's epic Old World journey from Jerusalem to Bountiful is the building of a ship under Nephi's direction that conveys the group many thousands of kilometers to the Americas. This pinnacle in the saga — the ship and its long ocean voyage — is complex and cannot be dealt with simply or quickly; a full treatment would fill several books. What follows is, at best, a summary with links to more detailed sources.

Potter expresses concern that the trees at Khor Kharfot are inadequate for shipbuilding and includes an image of a small "gnarly" fig tree.³² It might have been better if Potter, who visited Khor Kharfot in 2011, had used images of large trees that are actually at the site (see Figure 12) and even large trees growing inland of his own site candidate, Khor Rori (Figure 13).



Figure 11. A general view facing southwards across Khor Kharfot's bay, just inland of the freshwater lagoon.

As can be readily seen, there indisputably are large timber trees growing today at Khor Kharfot, and also inland of Khor Rori. The question then becomes: assuming Nephi built a hulled vessel, is the timber from these species suitable for shipbuilding?

There still exists a common misunderstanding that early Arabia lacked useful wood and relied on imported timber. Much more was available than we usually realize, however. After reviewing a range of tree species in Arabia and their uses, one authority stated with specific reference to ship construction:

The presence of these wood resources in the Arabian landscape mitigates the general misconception in boat-building studies that the Arabian peninsula was bare of trees and reliant on imported timber for boat-building.³³

While teak was imported from India for shipbuilding in *northern* Oman since about the third millennium BC, the clear scriptural implication seems to be that the place “prepared of the Lord” for the Lehiite group had all the materials needed for the ship without recourse to obtaining timber from elsewhere. The wording of 1 Nephi 18:1 (we “did go forth ... and we did work *timbers* of curious workmanship”) conveys the impression that the timber was at hand. It is also worth noting that



Figure 12. One of numerous large *Tamarindus indica* and *Ficus sycomorus* trees growing at Khor Kharfot.



Figure 13. Inland and east from Khor Rori, a tamarind tree growing at Wadi Sha’boon. Image taken 2022.

Nephi uses the plural whenever timber is mentioned, suggesting that more than one type of wood was involved, as is usual in shipbuilding.

While almost every commentator describes the preferred timber for ship hulls in the Indian Ocean as teak it was very often (and eventually mostly) another timber, *Artocarpus hirsutus*, commonly known as “aini”

or “wild jack” from India, that was often used to build conventional ships. It was actually *superior* to teak in several ways — more durable, more resistant to ship worms, and less expensive. The oft-cited 1980–1981 “Sindbad” voyage of the sewn “Sohar” ship from Oman to China used this timber for the hull, not teak.³⁴

A Closer Look at Tamarind Timber

While it is true that the tamarind timber that is still available at both Khor Rori and Khor Kharfot does not figure prominently in shipbuilding, most people are unaware that the heartwood of this species *is* classified as a “hard wood.” Tamarind trees grow to about 24 meters (80 feet) tall and are understood to have arrived in Arabia from Africa in ancient times. The timber, “prized for its strength and termite resistance ... is hard and durable,” and was used in ancient Sri Lanka for “side planks for boat[s].”³⁵

Its use is attested for boatbuilding in parts of Africa.³⁶ Plus, tamarind is one of the timbers being used to build *Ceiba*, the world’s largest all-wooden sailing cargo ship, in Costa Rica, due for completion and launching sometime in 2023 according to the latest report (see Figure 14).³⁷

Tamarind, properly caulked and perhaps treated with a sealant made from local materials, may yet prove to be a resource Nephi used to build his ship. However, at this point in our understanding of timber assets that may have been available to him in both the Qara and Qamar regions of Dhofar, I prefer to remain open to all possibilities for his ship, both as to the wood used and the design. Caution is surely warranted when we examine two assertions by Nephi, as discussed in the following sections.

Curious Workmanship

Nephi’s phrase that “we did work timbers of *curious* workmanship” (1 Nephi 18:1) has generated a lot of attention by commentators over the years. Those who believe that the Old World Bountiful “prepared of the Lord” nevertheless lacked suitable shipbuilding timber 2600 years ago suggest that the word “curious” must mean that that the family did not log local timber, but used wood imported from India that was “pre-cut in an unfamiliar manner.”³⁸

The word *curious* itself has several common meanings besides the ones most used today. Rather than meaning “unusual” or “inquisitive” as it does in modern English, in Joseph Smith’s era it also refers to anything “made or prepared skillfully,” “done with painstaking accuracy or attention to detail,” and “careful; fastidious.”³⁹ Hagoth, the Nephite

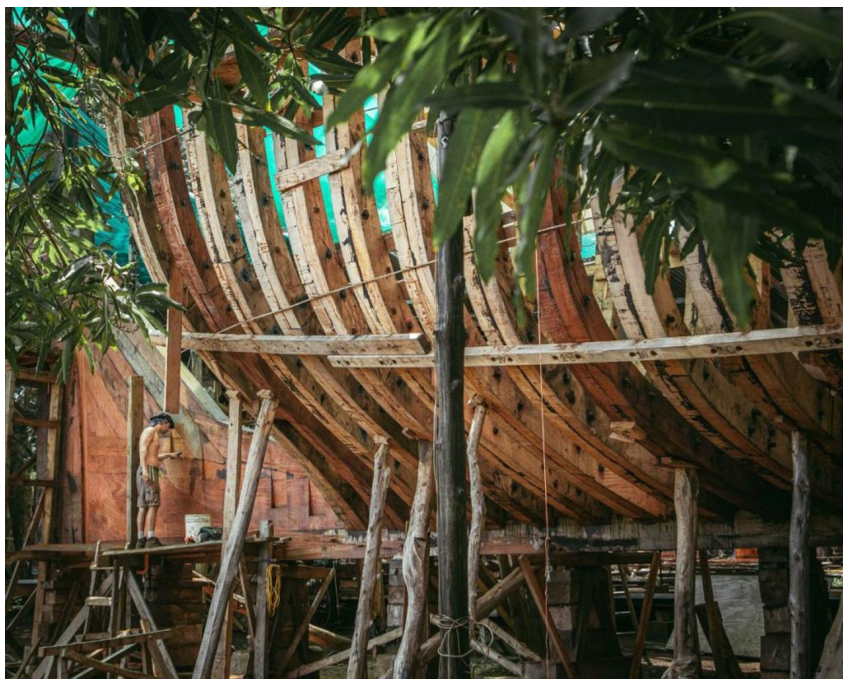


Figure 14. The huge all-timber ship, *Ceiba*, being completed in Costa Rica, uses a local variety of tamarind timber (*Tamarindo del Monte*) in its construction. Image courtesy of the Sail Cargo project.

shipbuilder (Alma 63:5–8), was said to be “an exceedingly curious man,” meaning “wrought with care and art; elegant; neat; finished.”⁴⁰

Rather than reading the text in a modern sense (i.e., that Nephi worked timbers in an unusual way, or that the timbers were themselves somehow unusual), the modern reader should understand that Nephi seems to have been stating that the timbers were worked in a careful and skillful way, just as he had earlier referred to the Liahona as a “round ball of *curious* workmanship” (1 Nephi 16:10). We should not overlook the fact that, if nowhere else, Nephi and his family quite possibly would have had opportunities on their journey while at the Red Sea to observe various vessels, enabling them to recognize that the ship they were constructing differed from the ships of their day.

Combined with the fact that the building of the ship required revelatory guidance “from time to time” (1 Nephi 18:1, 3), Nephi’s comments link this guidance to the working of the “timbers” (1 Nephi 18:1, 2) in particular, and apparently also the manner of the ships building (1 Nephi 18:2), perhaps necessitated by the vessel’s design. Both

aspects thus differed from other ships they knew. At a minimum, they required a long-distance ship rather than the purely local craft such as those they may have already seen.

Not After the Manner of Men

Some of the broad principles of shipbuilding and its history can yield insights into the task facing Nephi, his brothers, and Zoram.⁴¹ 1 Nephi 18:2 tells us — twice — that the ship was not built after the “manner of men.”

Among the many possibilities raised in attempting to explain what the “manner of men” referred to, one is that Nephi was directed to reverse the shipbuilding technique of that era; instead of building the *hull first* and then adding the skeleton, perhaps he built the *skeleton first*, before adding the hull or “shell.” This is actually a technique that was not introduced until during the first millennium AD, allowing improvements to be made to ocean-going ships.⁴²

Could Nephi Have Built Some Type of Raft or Catamaran?

Noting that I have previously raised the possibility that Nephi's ship may have been some kind of a raft or catamaran, the Potter article charges me with a “dangerous supposition — that Joseph Smith made errors in his translation of the Book of Mormon” — and states that “the prophet certainly knew the difference between a ship and a raft.”⁴³ However, I have never stated that I believe Nephi's ship was a raft. The possibility has been raised only to make the point that we must not confine ourselves to narrow definitions of what a “ship” might be.

I actually favor a mortise and tenon timber ship. But in a work translated from an ancient language, the word *ship* can refer to a wide variety of structures, and we must not assume we can infer details of the design or construction from a single word. We have no indication that the divine translation process gave Joseph detailed information beyond the English words of the text itself.⁴⁴

Potter also downplays the abilities of rafts by stating that they lack the “capabilities” of ships and cannot be steered.⁴⁵ Both assertions are factually wrong. Rafts can indeed be steered through a combination of sail adjustments, and centerboards are known to have done so for hundreds of years at least.⁴⁶

In some respects, rafts are actually superior to conventional ships. For example, they can carry larger loads than hulled ships and are essentially sink-proof. Anthropologist and retired Master Chief Petty Officer, P. J. Capelotti, referring to the *Kon Tiki* raft voyage across the same ocean

that the Lehiters probably crossed, made a general point about the merits of rafts that will strike many Latter-day Saints as significant:

By its very structure, a raft is a floating warehouse. They were therefore the perfect vessel to carry the contents of a culture across an ocean. They are not fast, but they are virtually indestructible. If a conventional sailboat gets a small hole in its hull, it sinks. By contrast, a . . . raft can lose two thirds of its hull and still keep its crew and twenty tons of cargo afloat.⁴⁷

In 1947, the raft that Heyerdahl is best remembered for, the balsa log *Kon Tiki*, sailed westward across the Pacific Ocean from Peru, reaching Tahiti in 101 days after covering some 6,900 km (4,300 miles). Potter notes that the *Kon Tiki*'s journey ended when it smashed into a reef but fails to mention that as the traditional raft design became better understood, numerous later voyages by Heyerdahl and others were, in fact, steered to safe arrivals regardless of wind direction. Almost 60 years after it took place, for example, the *Kon Tiki* voyage was repeated by a team that fittingly included a grandson of Heyerdahl, and the *Tangaroa* covered the same route in just 70 days before landing safely.⁴⁸ That journey confirmed the efficacy of ancient steering methods, though these methods had not been properly understood by Heyerdahl, resulting in the crash.

Heyerdahl's pioneering endeavors were the primary stimulus for dozens of other ventures using rafts to cross the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian oceans, as well as shorter sailings in various parts of the world. Such efforts continue to the present, often learning new lessons that result in faster sailing times.

In 1973, the *Las Balsas* expedition set sail from Ecuador with three rafts. Each 14-meter-long (46-foot-long) raft consisted of seven balsa logs and maneuvered with the use of *guayas*, short centerboard planks between the logs. No metal was used in the construction. The design proved to be "very stable, with little roll" as they crossed the Pacific. After 179 days at sea and covering some 14,000 km (8,700 miles), the three rafts arrived together on the Australian coast, a distance record that still stands.⁴⁹

Since we are dealing with something unique and "not made after the manner of men," we would surely be wise to stick to the text and avoid judgments about the style of the ship. After all, in view of the capabilities and advantages of rafts noted earlier, if Nephi did build some kind of raft, he was in good company.

The Unknowns Regarding Timber at Both Locations

Leaving aside the other descriptors in Nephi's text, the question of shipbuilding timber remains unresolved. This may be summarized as follows:

Firstly, both Khor Rori and Khor Kharfot have accessible native timber growing that would have been available to Nephi, either from the upper part of Wadi Darbat or an adjacent inland wadi in the case of Khor Rori, or at the water's edge at Khor Kharfot. However, the suitability of the available tree species for use in shipbuilding is disputed by most commentators.

Pollen studies near Khor Rori and along the Qara coast have not revealed any timber species not currently growing in the area and, therefore, Potter's support for Khor Rori relies on the possible importation of wood from India or possibly from Africa. Trade between India and Arabia, for thousands of years, has been well known for a long time.⁵⁰ Potter cites studies that appear to support a shipping trade in timber to Khor Rori earlier than the third century BC, but they refer to *northern* Oman and the Arabian Gulf, over 1,000 km (600 miles) from Khor Rori and too distant to be available to Nephi.

He also mentions ruins that have been discovered on "Inqitat," one of the two promontories enclosing the harbor area at Khor Rori, suggesting that they may evidence shipping earlier than is documented by the building of Sumhurum. In the first place, there are ruins on *both* of the promontories, properly named Inqitat Mirbat (on the east) and Inqitat Taqah (on the west). In both cases, the dating of the ruins remains unclear, although some of them might date as early as the fourth or eighth century BC, but they are regarded as the remains of fortresses built by "pastoral settlements" and include later burials from the Islamic period. There is nothing to suggest that anything more substantial — especially seafaring activities — is implied by them.⁵¹

Furthermore, well-established archaeology tells us that Khor Rori did not begin to function as a port until the end of the third century BC and the only evidence for trade by sea stems from that period — around three centuries too late for Nephi. (See Figure 15 for a view of some of the ruins.)

Even after the late third century BC date, there is no evidence for the building of *large* ships, only small local craft, and presumably repairs to those craft. Although some archaeologists believe Khor Rori was an active harbor before the Sumhurum period, to date there is no concrete



Figure 15. This view from Sumhurum's ruins at Khor Rori faces inland toward the waterfall curtain of Wadi Darbat, visible across the arid Salalah plain in the center of the background hills.

evidence for this theory. As of 2022, the situation can be factually summarized as follows:

- Khor Rori did not begin functioning as a trading port until late in the third century BC.
- Sumhurum city was also founded late in the third century BC.
- Seafaring activities at Khor Rori involved incoming/outgoing trade shipping. Minor repairs to ships and construction of small local fishing vessels are likely, though no large ships are known to have been built in the port.
- Importation of timber (e.g., teak) from India and Africa, as happened in northern Oman and the Gulf, is not recorded during any period at Khor Rori.
- No evidence is currently known that suggests timber species were once present in the Khor Rori/Wadi Darbat area that are not extant today.⁵²

A very different situation exists at Khor Kharfot, where the largest remnant of the ancient forests that once existed in Arabia still grow close to the ocean. Further investigation is needed to determine if the timber species that we know exist here (and at Khor Rori) could have served

Nephi in the building of his vessel. Certainly, the idea of timber being imported to Khor Kharfot from anywhere is so unlikely that it can safely be discounted. However, no pollen studies have yet been done at Khor Kharfot, or anywhere else along the Qamar coast, that might reveal additional species present in the past.

Both locations, therefore, have unresolved issues where shipbuilding timber is concerned and require further research.⁵³

A Distinctive Mountain Nearby

The mountain where Nephi prayed "oft" and that both he and the Lord always referred to as "the" mountain is a significant feature of the Nephite Bountiful. It was a place of communion with Deity, made doubly sacred by the numerous revelations received there to guide Nephi in the building of the ship. Being a geological feature, we can expect that in 2,600 years it would have changed very little in appearance. Both sites have candidates for the mountain.

In Potter's article, the real-world location of the proposed mount is not clearly stated. After many years of suggesting that Nephi's mount was Jebel Samhan near Mirbat, east of Khor Rori,⁵⁴ in Potter's latest article this mount now appears under its lesser-known Arabic name, thus obscuring its location for the average reader.

There have always been insurmountable problems with this proposal. Jebel Samhan is indeed a high mountain, the highest in Dhofar, but being 31 km (19 miles) distant from Khor Rori (as the crow flies and therefore considerably more by ground), Nephi would then have to cover the same distance to return to camp, making a total of much more than 62 km (38 miles). This is too far to realistically suppose that he often traveled that far, walking or riding, to pray. Furthermore, I have verified several times that Jebel Samhan is not even visible from the highest points in the Khor Rori and Taqa area, thus jarring with the implication of the Lord and Nephi referring to it as "the" mount.

The inadequacy of Jebel Samhan as a candidate for Nephi's mount may now be moot, as Potter in his article now proposes a much closer location that he names Jebel Taqa. Taqa or Taqah is the name of the district and of a town near Khor Rori, but it does not appear to be a recognized mountain. The proposed mount at Khor Rori is an elevated region visible on the west side of the travertine curtain that crosses Wadi Darbat and is surrounded by higher terrain inland and on each side, as can be seen in Figure 16.



Figure 16. The “mount” inland of Khor Rori forms part of the travertine ledge across Wadi Darbat. In this view at its base, facing northwest, the mount, named Jebel Taqa in the Potter article, is the triangular hill occupying the left side of the image. Higher terrain stands on both sides of it.

At more than 5 km (3 miles) one-way inland from the coast at Khor Rori, this distance is a huge improvement over Jebel Samhan, and could now be feasibly reached on a regular basis. But I leave the reader to contrast this unremarkable hill with the obvious and impressive mountain on the west side of the bay at Khor Kharfot shown in Figure 17.

No Resident Population

Building on the earlier commentary regarding the multiple indicators in Nephi’s account that argue for the Old World “Bountiful” to have been an unpopulated place, the following images serve to visually contrast the two candidate sites. Figure 18 shows Khor Kharfot as it appears today; it is also how it would have appeared throughout history except for brief periods of occupation evidenced by its ruins. Figure 19, on the other hand, shows Khor Rori as it was from late in the third century BC onwards, dating that is now firmly established by its ruins. It remains possible that it may have functioned as a small harbor for local boats before that time, and there are ruins nearby that demonstrate habitation dating prior to Nephi’s day.



Figure 17. The “mount” at Khor Kharfot, facing westwards at sunset.



Figure 18. Facing east, this view graphically illustrates the unpopulated nature of Khor Kharfot, which has no resident population even today. The contours of the inlet originally offering access to the ocean, still visible today, closely follow the flat central part of the wadi.



Figure 19. Representation of Khor Rori when it was active as a port, controlled by the fortified city of Sumhurum in the background. Image from a film produced by the government of Oman.

Nephi's Ship

Nephi repeats that his ship was “not built after the manner of men” (1 Nephi 17:8, 9, 51; 18:1, 2), contra the assertion in Potter’s article that “it appears that Nephi’s ship, with the exception of an added deck, was rather conventional for the period.”⁵⁵ Potter then displays a schematic that appears to be a modified version of what is indeed a completely conventional, very common *dhow*, a vessel long built on both sides of the Indian Ocean, as a “possible model for Nephi’s ship,”⁵⁶ with suggested dimensions of about 80–120 feet (24–37 meters) in length, about 30 feet (9 meters) wide, and perhaps displacing over 100 tons.⁵⁷ On the same page, a photograph of a model of just such a vessel is shown.⁵⁸

A written evaluation of this proposed ship schematic (Figure 1 in Potter’s paper) was prepared for this author by an expert with theoretical and practical experience in ancient Arabian ship design. He noted that the design appears “more Indian or Pakistani” than an Arab *dhow*, and lists the following design defects that would probably render such a vessel inoperable in open water:

The way the waterlines are drawn indicate the ship was bow-down [adversely impacting steering and handling — author comment after clarification from the expert].

The waterlines as drawn are slightly curved, not straight.

The beam (maximum width) as stated as 30 feet [9 meters] is nowhere close to that on the plan [creating stability issues — author comment after clarification from the expert].

The draft at 8 feet [2.4 meters] seems not nearly enough for the ship to be stable and exposes too much topside [also creating stability issues — author comment after clarification from the expert].

The masts are vertical, rather than leaning forward slightly as on nearly all dhows.

The aft mast looks much too large in diameter.⁵⁹

This response from an expert in Arabian ship design should encourage additional caution in all discussions about the style of Nephi's ship. Aside from the logical requirement that the ship apparently had decking on which people could dance at the time of the great storm at sea, I find no echo of Potter's assertions and claims about the design of Nephi's ship in the scriptural text that was written, we must remember, by the man who built the ship.

I believe that the location of Bountiful, where Nephi's ship was built, needs further resolution before we can comment more intelligently on the ship and draw even tentative conclusions about its style and size.

Hulled-Ship Options

While remaining open to other possibilities, my own assessment is that a *hulled* vessel with a deck remains the most likely style of vessel built. To imagine Nephi and his co-workers fashioning hundreds or thousands of nails to create a *nailed* vessel seems unlikely to me. That being the case, there are only a handful of other known ship-construction methods that can be considered for an ocean-going hulled vessel.

The *clinker* or *lapstrake* construction method dates back at least to the fourth century BC in Europe and is still used today. The edges of the wooden planks overlap each other before being joined together by nails, wooden "bolts," or by gluing. A variation on this, also still used today, is *carvel planking* (not to be confused with *caravel*, a small ship design), where the planks of wood are laid out edge to edge and then fastened to a strong framework inside the hull. Both clinker and carvel approaches to hull design are illustrated in Figure 20.

Perhaps best known among students of Nephi's ocean voyage is the time-honored sewn ship in which the timbers are sewn or lashed together with roping made of fibers, counterintuitively resulting in a

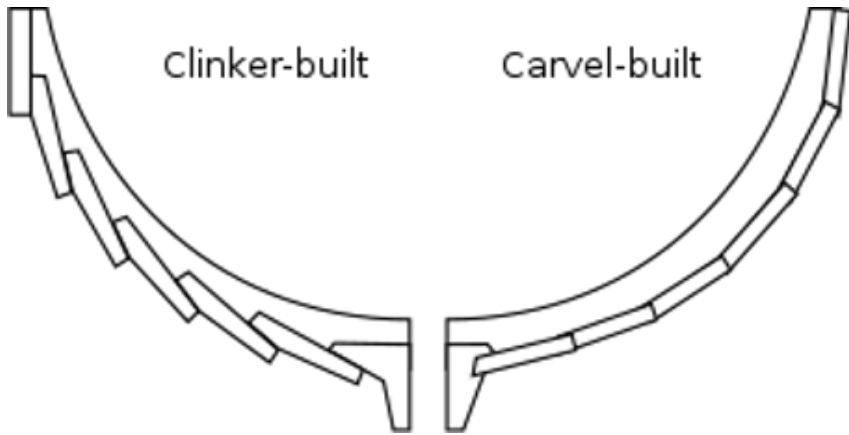


Figure 20. Comparing the clinker and carvel methods of wooden ship construction. Wikimedia, last edited December 24, 2022, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Clinker-carvel.svg>. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License.

vessel that can sail great distances with a sizeable load. I have already mentioned the sewn *Sohar* ship used in the successful “Sindbad Voyage” from Oman to China in 1980–1981, a highly publicized voyage that first drew enormous attention to this style of shipbuilding.⁶⁰

Another large sewn ship built in Oman was the *Jewel of Muscat* that sailed from Muscat to Singapore in 2010.⁶¹ A scene during its construction is shown in Figure 21.

Of particular note is the *Phoenicia*, built to a 600 BC Phoenician design, that sailed many times further than the other ships named during several voyages from 2008 to 2019, and upon which the author experienced life as a member of the crew for two weeks in 2009. The *Phoenicia*, shown in Figure 22, was recently purchased by the Pennsylvania-based Heartland Research Group to be displayed in Montrose, Iowa (across the Mississippi River opposite Nauvoo), as a plausible example of a ship that could have carried Mulek to the Americas about the same time as the Lehite voyage.⁶²

There is another very old ship construction method, *mortise and tenon*, in which the timber boards are skillfully fitted together and interlock (see Figure 23). Like sewn ships, this technique still allows the frame of the ship to flex in seas where a more rigid design may pull apart. Particularly fine workmanship can result in a vessel that is almost totally waterproof without additional measures. A later refinement known as the *Phoenician joint* was developed by the Phoenicians in the first



Figure 21. Caulking of the sewn ship *Jewel of Muscat* in Oman, photographed in 2009.

millennium BC and spread rapidly. One marine-archaeologist suggested that this very development “could have given rise to the Phoenicians’ reputation for seafaring excellence.”⁶³

A generic factor in almost all hulled ships, however, is that they require caulking to plug up leaks that may threaten to sink the vessel. Caulking can be fashioned from a huge range of materials, many of them readily available in southern Oman. They included discarded roping, clay, moss, reeds, or other plant fibers soaked in tree resin or wax, and cloth soaked in animal fats and crushed limestone. Such materials could have been applied in a variety of ways, including being forced between planking by hammering, sewn into wadding placed along the seams, or coated on various components.⁶⁴

Finally, ships have long been built combining more than one of these techniques. A well-known example is the *Khufu* “Solar Barque” ship dating from around 2600 BC now displayed on the Giza plateau in Egypt. It used mortise and tenon construction together with fiber lashings, a combination that aligns with my own tentative conclusions for Nephi’s ship. Despite being a non-specialist, my personal favorite is a mortise and tenon ship, with at least some timbers strengthened by *lashings* made of fiber ropes and/or strips of hide. Probably something, in fact, quite like the ship depicted in the Church’s recent series, *Book of Mormon Videos*,



Figure 22. The *Phoenicia* 600 BC design sewn ship. Courtesy Leon Harmse, the Phoenicia Expedition.

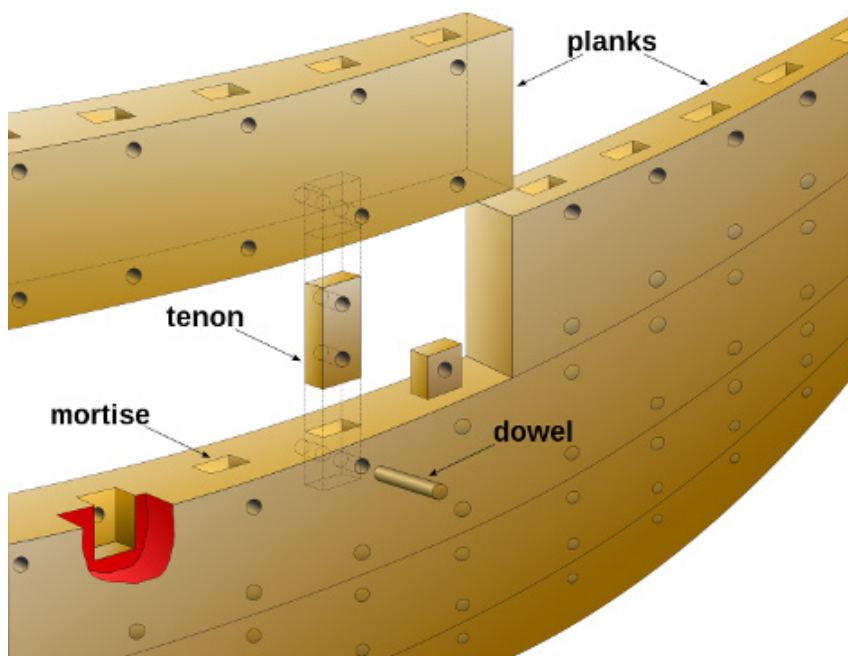


Figure 23. Drawing of a mortise and tenon joint hull by Eric Gaba, Jan. 2006, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mortise_tenon_joint_hull_trireme-en.svg. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License.

"The Lord Commands Nephi to Build a Ship: 1 Nephi 17-18."⁶⁵ A scene from this video is shown in Figure 24.

Conclusion

In contrasting the two candidates for the Lehiite Bountiful in light of scriptural evidence, Khor Rori appears to lack several foundational elements required by Nephi's text. Almost certainly it lacks the wild fruit that greeted the Lehiite group upon arrival, and certainly it has no distinct nearby mountain where Nephi often prayed. And, contrary to the multiple textual indicators, Khor Rori was certainly inhabited in Nephi's day.

Khor Rori lacks the all-important timber suitable for constructing a ship, thus requiring timber to be shipped from India. However, the archaeological evidence provides no indication that Khor Rori ca. 600 BC was functioning as a port for large ships and thus likely could not have



Figure 24. In the Church film of the Lehiite exodus, admirably accurate in most regards, Nephi's ship is built using the mortise and tenon method, with lashing suggested in various later glimpses while sailing. Image available at <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media/image/brother-ship-f608f8b>.

provided Nephi with either imported timber or shipbuilding expertise. This article notes, however, that the issue of shipbuilding timber still requires further research to reach resolution for both candidate locations.

From a scriptural perspective, Khor Kharfot matches the descriptors in Nephi's account more closely than does Khor Rori and, in fact, is the only location where *all* of the requirements are met. The pristine and isolated Khor Kharfot also seems to be reflected in the implications of Nephi's text much more closely than does Khor Rori in a populated Salalah bay. Those who believe in the historicity of Nephi's account can point to the remarkable fact that not one, but two locations — separated by just 120 km (75 miles) by air — are a remarkable contrast to over 1,600 km (1,000 miles) of the eastern Arabian coast. If it should eventually transpire that Khor Rori is indeed where Nephi built his ship, I would be surprised, certainly, but would still heartily embrace additional support for the Book of Mormon as an authentic account of an Arabian journey 2,600 years ago.

As the Book of Mormon continues its march out of obscurity, the unfolding of its Old World setting to date should engender confidence

that further clarity regarding Bountiful, Nephi's ship, and its great ocean voyage to the New World remain ahead of us.

[Author's Note: *I appreciate the talents of Jennifer Powell evident in the superb work she did creating the maps used in this paper. Readers should be aware that both Khor Kharfot and Wadi Sayq are now protected sites under Omani law. Neither area can be visited without a permit issued by the government of Oman. They are not accessible by road at any point. Please contact me if further clarification is needed.]*

Warren P. Aston is an independent researcher based in Brisbane, Australia. Since 1984 his exploratory efforts throughout the Near East and Mesoamerica have identified the candidates for "Nahom" and the Old World "Bountiful" now accepted by most Latter-day Saint scholars. In 2013 he co-founded the Khor Kharfot Foundation, leading several international teams undertaking fieldwork at the site. He is the author of *In the Footsteps of Lehi* (1994); *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia: The Old World Setting of the Book of Mormon* (2015) and numerous papers and articles. Warren's findings have been reported in Church Education System manuals, BYU Studies Quarterly, Encyclopedia of Mormonism, and the Journal of Book of Mormon Studies. They have also been presented at non-Latter-day Saint forums such as the annual Seminar for Arabian Studies in the UK and in publications such as the Journal of Arabian Studies. His work continues in both Arabia and Mesoamerica, including a major Book of Mormon Central exploratory project focused on the hill Ramah/Cumorah.

Endnotes

- 1 George D. Potter, "Khor Rori: A Maritime Resources-Based Candidate for Nephi's Harbor," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 51 (2022): 253–94, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/khor-rori-a-maritime-resources-based-candidate-for-nephis-harbor/>.
- 2 See the update provided in Warren Aston, "New Exploration and Research in Oman 2021–2022," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 53 (2022): 255–64, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/a-research-note-continuing-exploration-and-research-in-oman/>.

- 3 Lynn M. Hilton and Hope Hilton, *In Search of Lehi's Trail* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 108–9.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 112.
- 5 A complete exploration of the eastern Arabian coast — itself an exercise in “proving contraries” — was completed in 1992 by the author, the only time such an examination has been done. See the brief account in Warren Aston, *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia: The Old World Setting of the Book of Mormon* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2015), 110–11 and the findings of the survey, 112–126, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/lehi-and-sariah-arabia-old-world-setting-book-mormon>.
- 6 The small inlet of Mughsayl at the eastern beginning of the Qamar mountains was once proposed as a potential candidate for Bountiful. Wm. Revell Phillips, “Mughsayl: Another Candidate for Land Bountiful,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16, no. 2 (2007): 48–59, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/mughsayl-another-candidate-land-bountiful>. This proposal was discussed in Warren Aston, “Identifying Our Best Candidate for Nephi’s Bountiful,” *Journal of Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17, nos. 1–2 (2008): 58–84, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/identifying-our-best-candidate-nephi's-bountiful>. As it lacks most of the basic scriptural requirements to be taken seriously, Mughsayl is not discussed further here.
- 7 See Warren Aston, “A History of NaHoM,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 78–98, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol51/iss2/6/>.
- 8 For example, the 80-foot-long sewn hull of the Sohar ship, built by traditional methods without nails and sailed from Oman to China in 1980–1981, was built on a slight rise on the beach where ships had long been built. See Tim Severin, *The Sindbad Voyage* (London: Arena, 1982), 51.
- 9 See “Dairy From The Desert: An Update On The Camel Milk Situation (Or Non-Situation),” *Orthodox Union Kosher* (blog), August 16, 2016, <https://oukosher.org/blog/consumer-kosher/dairy-desert-update-camel-milk-situation-non-situation/>.
- 10 For a perceptive examination of multiple ways that this detail (among others) of the 600 BC Lehite exodus paralleled the earlier

Israelite Exodus from Egypt, and how Nephi subtly crafted his account drawing on this fact, see "Book of Mormon Evidence: Tabernacle, Ship, and Nephi," Book of Mormon Central, August 15, 2022, <https://evidencecentral.org/recency/evidence/tabernacle-ship-and-nephi>.

- 11 Potter maintains that Nephi obtained most of what he needed to construct a ship from locals and hypothesizes that Nephi "learned from local smelters how to forge his own tools" (Potter, "Khor Rori: A Maritime Resources-Based Candidate," 276–77). He also says, "It is unlikely in his era that the young son of an elite family would have toiled in manual labor, let alone having been a master blacksmith before leaving Jerusalem" (ibid., 282). This position is quite at odds with the conclusions of other researchers, such as John A. Tvedtnes, *The Most Correct Book: Insights from a Book of Mormon Scholar* (Springville, UT: Horizon, 2003), 78–97, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/most-correct-book-insights-book-mormon-scholar>; Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "Lehi's House at Jerusalem and the Land of his Inheritance," in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 113–17, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/lehis-house-jerusalem-and-land-his-inheritance>; Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 1:78–80; Neal Rappleye, "Lehi the Smelter: New Light on Lehi's Profession," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 14 (2015): 223–25, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/lehi-the-smelter-new-light-on-lehis-profession/>; and Robert F. Smith, "Lodestone and the Liahona," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/node/159>. Hugh Nibley also observed that Nephi was "adept in ores — where to find ores, and how to make the bellows." Hugh W. Nibley, "Lecture 15 — Book of Mormon — 1 Nephi 17–19, 22; Toward the Promised Land," *Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Semester 1: Transcripts of Lectures Presented to an Honors Book of Mormon Class at Brigham Young University, 1988–1990* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1993), 179, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/70/>. Most recently, the metalworking implications of Lehi and Nephi's scribal abilities are touched upon by Noel B. Reynolds, "A Backstory for the Brass Plates," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day*

- Saint Faith and Scholarship* 53 (2022): 199–254, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/a-backstory-for-the-brass-plates/>. Reynolds writes that Lehi and Nephi’s scribal training allowed them to “fabricate and use metal plates and other writing tools and materials” (ibid., 200).
- 12 John Sorenson agrees with an easterly crossing of the Indian and Pacific in his “Winds and Currents: A Look at Nephi’s Ocean Crossing” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), 53–56, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/node/161>. A more detailed examination of the voyage is provided by Kirk Magleby, “Test #6 Relative Distances,” *Book of Mormon Resources* (blog), March 18, 2014, <https://bookofmormonresources.blogspot.com/2014/03/test-6-relative-distances.html>. He points out that the Indian/Pacific route of about 25,000 km would take around 120 days if we assume a sailing speed of 5 knots per day and factor in the 4 days of the tempest that drove them back.
 - 13 For more information on ENSO cycles, see “What is El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO)?,” National Weather Service (website), <https://www.weather.gov/mhx/ensowhat>.
 - 14 See, for example, George Potter and Richard Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness: 81 New, Documented Evidences That the Book of Mormon is a True History* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2003), 53–72, 107–120, 127.
 - 15 See the maps in Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 114, 117.
 - 16 Iron ore sources adjacent to the shore at Khor Kharfot are documented in Aston, *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia*, 141–42, and in Iftikhar Abbasi, “Geological Assessment of the Khor Kharfot Sediments, Western Dhofar Region, Sultanate of Oman,” *Sultan Qaboos University [SQU] Journal for Science* 21, no. 1 (November 2016): 20, 23, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/geological-assessment-khor-kharfot-sediments-western-dhofar-region-sultanate-oman>. For Khor Rori, the ore deposits are some 30-km distant at Mirbat, as discussed in Phillips, “Metals of the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 36–41, 82, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1255&context=jbms>.

- 17 The critique is found at Potter, "Khor Rori: A Maritime Resources-Based Candidate," 260, citing Aston, *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia*, 133.
- 18 See Agnese Fusaro, "The Islamic Port of al-Balid (Oman), between Land and Sea: Place of Trade, Exchange, Diversity, and Coexistence," *Journal of Material Cultures in the Muslim World* 1, nos. 1–2 (2021): 67–95, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349250415_The_Islamic_Port_of_al-Balid_Oman_between_Land_and_Sea_Place_of_Trade_Exchange_Diversity_and_Coexistence.
- 19 Bellini et al., "Food plants in pollen records from ancient Southern Arabia: The evidences from Sumhuram (Southern Oman)," *Journal of Arid Environments* 177 (2020), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341796258_Food_plants_in_pollen_records_from_ancient_Southern_Arabia_The_evidences_from_Sumhuram_Southern_Oman.
- 20 Andrea Zerboni et al., "Geomorphology of the Jebel Qara and coastal plain of Salalah (Dhofar, southern Sultanate of Oman)," *Journal of Maps* 16, no. 2 (2020): 187–98, https://www.academia.edu/78192206/Gomorphology_of_the_Jebel_Qara_and_coastal_plain_of_Salalah_Dhofar_southern_Sultanate_of_Oman_.
- 21 See the dating of Khor Rori's beginnings and descriptions of the soil ("rocky-gravel plain") and vegetation in Mauro Raffaelli, Marcello Tardelli, and Stefano Mosti, "Khor Rori Natural Environment," in *A Port in Arabia Between Rome and the Indian Ocean (3rd C. BC–5th C. AD): Khor Rori Report 2*, ed. Alessandra Avanzini (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2008), 673–80, <https://researchgate.net/publication/259284777>.
- 22 Abbasi, "Geological Assessment of the Khor Kharfot Sediments."
- 23 Potter, "Khor Rori: A Maritime Resources-Based Candidate," 280–82.
- 24 Alred Jones, Jones' *Dictionary of Old Testament Proper Names*, s.v. "Ophir" (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1990), <https://www.christianity.com/bible/dictionary/smiths-bible-dictionary/ophir.html>. Cf. Bruce Metzger, ed., *NRSV Exhaustive Concordance*, s.v. "Ophir" (Nashville: Nelson, 1991), 150, <https://archive.org/details/nrsvexhaustiveco0000unse/page/150/mode/2up?q=ophir>;

- and David Baker, "Ophir," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:26, "gold," <https://archive.org/details/anchorbibledicti0005unse/page/26/mode/2up?q=ophir>.
- 25 See T. M. Johnstone, *Mehri Lexicon and English-Mehri Word List* (London: Routledge, 1987), 446, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Mehri_Lexicon_and_English_Mehri_Word_lis/h8M5BW-ccEAC?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=autumn.
 - 26 See Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 4th ed. (Ithaca, NY: Spoken Language Services, 1994), 273.
 - 27 My appreciation to Robert F. Smith for bringing this information to my attention.
 - 28 Alfred A. Fraser, "Legend and myth in Leyendas de Guatemala," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta, 1974), 81, 89, 97, 177, 193, and 195, <https://archive.org/details/Fraser1974/page/81/mode/2up?q=abundancia>. See also Georges Raynaud, Miguel Ángel Asturias, and J. M. González De Mendoza, *Anales de los Xahil*, trans., *Annales de los Xahil* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México, 1993), 3–7, <https://books.google.com/books?id=iBr30Zm5cuAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=%22Abundancia%22&hl=es&sa=X&#v=onepage&q=%22Abundancia%2C%20oh%20hijos%20m%C3%ADos.%22&f=true>. See also "Anales de los Cakchiqueles," Wikipedia, s.v. "Annals of the Cakchiquels," last updated November 4, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annals_of_the_Cakchiquels.
 - 29 Cynthia Kristan-Graham and Jeff Karl Kowalski, "Chichén Itza, Tula, and Tollan: Changing Perspectives on a Recurring Problem in Mesoamerican Archaeology and Art History," in *Twin Tollans: Chichén Itzá, Tula, and the Epiclassic to Early Postclassic Mesoamerican World*, ed. Cynthia Kristan-Graham and Jeff Karl Kowalski (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Trustees for Harvard University, 2007), 22, <https://books.google.com/books?id=GZVUd9I0gpAC&pg=PA22&dq=tulan+reeds&f=false#v=onepage&q=tulan%20reeds&f=false>.
 - 30 A fuller account presenting this and other apparent links from the Maya, with further intriguing descriptive details of the departure place and a possible memory of the Liahona, is contained in Warren Aston, *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia*, 189–95.

- 31 The belt of fertile land — visible in satellite imagery — extends some 9 km (over 5 miles) east to the Rakhyut area and over 50 km (31 miles) west into the Hawf-Jadib area in Yemen.
- 32 Potter, "Khor Rori: A Maritime Resources-Based Candidate," Figure 10.
- 33 K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 148, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107049918.009>. See also G. F. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 91, <https://archive.org/details/arabseafaringini00hour/page/90/mode/2up>. We must also not overlook the fact that pockets of timber still survive in various wadis in Yemen. There is a wide body of literature on this; see, for example, M. Hall et al., "Arabia's last forests under threat ii: Remaining fragments of unique valley forest in southwest Arabia," *Edinburgh Journal of Botany* 66, no. 2 (2009): 263–81, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/231980535_Arabia's_last_forests_under_threat_ii_Remaining_fragments_of_unique_valley_forest_in_southwest_arabia. Studies also describe patches of "luxuriant" forest, such as Peter Cowan, "Sites of Interest: Wadi Rijaf, Jebel Bura', Yemen," in *Phoenix* 20 (2004): 11–12, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280085354_Sites_of_Interest_Wadi_Rijaf_Jebel_Bura'_Yemen.
- 34 Severin, *Sindbad Voyage*, 35.
- 35 See these properties enumerated in PIJ, "Tamarind Tree," *Permaculture News*, Feb. 20, 2009, <https://www.permaculturenews.org/2009/02/20/tamarind-tree/>.

For the use of tamarind in ship construction specifically, see Sila Tripati, "Traditional Boat-Building and Navigational Techniques of Southern Orissa," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka*, New Series 42 (1997): 15–27, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23731497>. Page 18 lists tamarind as among the woods that were used for boat planking in Sri Lanka.
- 36 F. A. Chimsah, G. Nyarko, A-H. Abubakari, "A review of explored uses and study of nutritional potential of tamarind (*Tamarindus indica* L.) in Northern Ghana," *African Journal of Food Science* 14, no. 9 (October 2020): 285–94, <http://41.66.217.101/>

- handle/123456789/3006. See p. 291, which lists “side planks for boats” as a use of tamarind hardwood.
- 37 See the “Shipbuilding” section, *SailCargo Inc.* (blog), <https://www.sailcargo.inc/blog?category=Shipbuilding>. Also see their 2022 report, “SAILCARGO End Of Year Newsletter,” *SailCargo Inc. Newsletter*, December 19, 2022, <https://mailchi.mp/sailcargo/sailcargo-end-of-year-newsletter?e=4e703ead43>. The use of a local variety of tamarind timber (Tamarindo del Monte) in the construction of the huge all-timber ship, Ceiba, in Costa Rica, was advised per personal correspondence with the SailCargo Inc. office manager. Leah Tunney, email message to author, Oct. 9, 2021.
- 38 Potter, “Khor Rori: A Maritime Resources-Based Candidate,” 274.
- 39 Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* tells us what the word “curious” might have meant to the translator of Nephi’s text, Joseph Smith. See Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. “curious,” (New York: S. Converse, 1828), <https://archive.org/download/noah-websters-1828-dictionary-ellen-g-white-estate/NWAD%20-%20Noah%20Webster%E2%80%99s%201828%20Dictionary.pdf>.
- 40 Ibid., meaning #7, “wrought with care and art; elegant; neat; finished; as a curious girdle; curious work,” citing Exodus 28:8 and 35:32 (*maḥašābōt*).
- 41 Before continuing, landlubbers and sailors alike would do well to review the concise illustrations provided by Christoph Bachhuber, “Basic Principles of Design, Construction, and Propulsion for Ancient Ships,” (PowerPoint, Brown University, September 26, 2011), https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/courses/maritimearchaeology11/files/18127007.pdf.
- 42 See Patrice Pomey et al., “Transition from Shell to Skeleton in Ancient Mediterranean Ship-Construction: analysis, problems, and future research,” *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 41, no. 2 (2012): 235–314, https://www.academia.edu/11015997/Transition_from_Shell_to_Skeleton_in_Ancient_Mediterranean_Ship_Construction_analysis_problems_and_future_research_.
- 43 Potter, “Khor Rori: A Maritime Resources-Based Candidate,” 255–56.

- 44 For an accessible introduction to the multi-faceted subject of translation, see "Why New Testament Words and Phrases Are in the Book of Mormon, Part 8: Were These Expressions Parts of Joseph Smith's Linguistic Toolbox?," KnoWhy #540, Book of Mormon Central, November 21, 2019, <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/knowhy/why-new-testament-words-and-phrases-are-in-the-book-of-mormon-part-8-were-these-expressions>. Notes 3 and 4 provide examples of excellent scholarship by Royal Skousen and Brant Gardner.
- 45 Potter, "Khor Rori: A Maritime Resources-Based Candidate," 256–57.
- 46 Thor Heyerdahl, *The Kon-Tiki Expedition* (London: Flamingo, 1996), 78–85, 126–27, 156.
- 47 See Aston, *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia*, 206. Also see the very readable review of what has been learned from nearly 40 modern raft voyages in P. J. Capelotti, "The Theory of the Archaeological Raft: Motivation, Method, and Madness in Experimental Archaeology," *Journal of Experimental Archaeology* (EXARC) 2012, no. 1 (2012), <https://exarc.net/issue-2012-1/ea/theory-archaeological-raft-motivation-method-and-madness-experimental-archaeology>.
- 48 Torgeir Sæverud Higræff and Betty Blair, "Tangaroa Pacific Voyage (Summer 2006): Testing Heyerdahl's Theories about Kon-Tiki 60 Years Later," *Azerbaijan International* 14, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 28–53, https://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai144_folder/144_articles/144_tangaroa.html.
- 49 Kim Tao, "Las Balsas: The world's longest raft journey," Australian National Maritime Museum (website), July 16, 2020, <https://www.sea.museum/2020/07/16/las-balsas-the-worlds-longest-raft-journey>.
- 50 There is an enormous body of literature on the subject of pre-modern ocean trade from India and Asia to Arabia and a great variety of dates claimed. Potter, "Khor Rori: A Maritime Resources-Based Candidate," 289n49 references two authorities and then five citations from a single, general source (*ibid.*, 289n50, 51, 52, 53, and 54). For a comprehensive primary source, see Nicole Boivin et al., "Archaeological, Linguistic and Historical Sources on Ancient Seafaring: a Multidisciplinary Approach to the Study of Early Maritime Contact and Exchange in the Arabian Peninsula," in *The Evolution of Human Populations in Arabia*, ed. M.D.

Petraglia and J.I. Rose (New York: Springer, 2009), 251–78, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226692223_Archaeological_Linguistic_and_Historical_Sources_on_Ancient_Seafaring_A_Multidisciplinary_Approach_to_the_Study_of_Early_Maritime_Contact_and_Exchange_in_the_Arabian_Peninsula. Note

especially Boivin’s map, Figure 7, that illustrates that the focus of trade was northern Oman and the Arabian gulf. See also the section summarizing Iron Age (Lehi’s era) sea trade on p. 265. The paper concludes with references to the most relevant primary sources. In a general sense, there was certainly sea contact between India and Arabia long before Nephi’s day, but the relevant question is whether there was trade with Dhofar (southern Oman — over 1000 km/600 miles distant) where the two Bountiful candidates are located. On this point, as discussed earlier in this paper, Khor Rori’s port does not appear to have functioned prior to the late third century BC. Prior to that time, it is likely that only small local dhows and fishing boats would have arrived or departed there.

- 51 Multiple sources confirm this specific dating; for example, see Alexia Pavan, “Trade and Commercial Routes Along the Indian Ocean From the Early Centuries BC to the Beginning of Christian Era,” in *South Arabia and its Neighbours: Phenomena of Intercultural Contacts* (Sana’a: DAI, 2015), 121–34, https://www.academia.edu/19885728/%20Trade_and_commercial%20routes_along_the_Indian_Ocean_from_the_early_centuries_BC_to_the_beginning_of_Christian_era_new_lights_from_the_Indian_pottery_discovered_at_Sumhuram_Sultanate_of_Oman_in_South_Arabia_and_its_Neighbours_Phenomena_of_Intercultural_Contacts_pages_121_134_Wiesbaden_2015. While the entire report deserves study, also see pages 24–28 in the 2020 report, *Sumhurum Preliminary Report* (SUM06A) by the Italian Mission to Oman, http://www.arabiantica.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/SUM06A_Report.pdf.
- 52 Dr. Alessandra Avanzini, email message to author, June 30, 2022. The summary about Khor Rori was confirmed to the author as correct, and current, by Dr. Avanzini, long-time head of the University of Pisa archaeological mission at Khor Rori.
- 53 Such research continues. A forthcoming paper by the author will deal entirely with timber resources in Oman and the implications for shipbuilding.

- 54 See Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 130–31, which discusses and depicts Jebel Samhan, noting that it is “about twenty miles away” from Khor Rori.
- 55 Potter, “Khor Rori: A Maritime Resources-Based Candidate,” 255.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 255, Figure 1.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 257.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 257, Figure 2.
- 59 Anonymous expert, email messages to author, July 4, 2022, and September 21, 2022. As the expert is not a Latter-day Saint and requested that his name not be published, the email exchanges with him were forwarded to the editors of *Interpreter* to confirm the source.
- 60 Severin, *Sindbad Voyage*, 1982.
- 61 See “Background,” *Jewel of Muscat*, <https://jewelofmuscat.tv/background/>.
- 62 Rian Nelson, “Heartland Research Purchases Phoenicia (600 BC Replica Ship),” *BookofMormonEvidence.org* (blog), December 13, 2021, <https://bookofmormonevidence.org/heartland-research-purchases-phoenicia-600-bc-replica-ship/>.
- 63 See the timeline at Wikipedia, s.v. “Phoenician joints,” last edited August 17, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phoenician_joints.
- 64 See Yuxuan Gong et al., “Study on the ancient putty from the site of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 CE) Baochuanchang Shipyard, Nanjing, China,” *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 23, no. 9 (February 2019): 185–95, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330800157_Study_on_the_ancient_putty_from_the_site_of_the_Ming_Dynasty_1368-1644_CE_Baochuanchang_Shipyard_Nanjing_China.
- 65 See “The Lord Commands Nephi to Build a Ship: 1 Nephi 17–18” and “Nephi and His Family Finish the Ship: 1 Nephi 18:1–4,” Book of Mormon Videos, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media/collection/1-nephi-17-18>.

IN NEW ZEALAND: EVEN MORE FAITHFUL LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Louis Midgley

Review of Selwyn Kātene, ed., *Let Their Light So Shine: Mormon Leaders in New Zealand* (Wellington, NZ: Huia Publishers, 2021). “Foreword” by Charles A. Rudd (pp. vii–viii); “Preface” by Peter Lineham (p. ix–x); “Introduction” by Selwyn Kātene (pp. 1–3); “Contributors” (pp. 215–18); “Glossary” (and “Mormon Terms”) (pp. 219–21); “Index” (pp. 222–30). NZ \$30.00 Hardbound.

Abstract: *This is a review of the third in the series of books of essays on what Selwyn Kātene again calls “Mormon Leaders in New Zealand.” This volume as at least as excellent, if not even better, than the other two volumes, which received very favorable reviews. Every effort must be made to preserve and publish an accurate history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand/Aotearoa. Such effort is to be praised, especially when it is set out in such a handsome and exceptionally well-edited and published version as one finds in this entire valuable series. Despite this and the two other previous volumes in this series, there are yet more Latter-day Saints whose stories of faith and dedicated service in building the Kingdom of God in this beautiful land must be told in future volumes of this truly remarkable series.*

Let Their Light So Shine is the third in an excellent series of books edited by Selwyn Kātene, each of which has featured twelve faithful Latter-day Saints in New Zealand. The first volume in this series was entitled *Turning the Hearts of the Children*¹ and the second was *By Their*

1. *Turning the Hearts of the Children: Early Maori Leaders in the Mormon Church* (Wellington, NZ: Steele Roberts, 2014). For my review of this volume, see Louis Midgley, “Remembering and Honoring Māori Latter-day Saints,”

*Fruits You Will Know Them.*² Even though the first two volumes were published by Steele Roberts, and this most recent volume is published by Huia Publishers,³ all three volumes have exactly the same format and first-rate book binding.⁴ Interested individuals and also especially libraries in both New Zealand and the United States should be very pleased with the high quality of the volumes in this exceptional series.⁵

Selwyn Kātene draws the title for this volume from the true story of how Elder William Gardner, a Latter-day Saint missionary from Utah, was for two days alone and lost in thick brush in the Coromandel. On 13 July 1886, “he saw a light shining in the window of a Māori home. The people there fed him and dried him off and then listened to his gospel teachings” (p. 1). This was possible because Mita and Katariana Watene always had a light in their window for just such an occasion. And the previously wet, cold, tired, and hungry Elder Gardner would soon respond to the generosity of this wonderful couple with his own truly life-giving *koha* (gift) by bringing to them, and then their *whanau* (extended family), the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. This true story is typical of the twelve accounts found in this volume.

In his fine “Preface” to *Let Their Light So Shine*, Peter Lineham⁶ indicates that, among other things, this book contains “the authentic

Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture 21 (2016): 275–90, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/remembering-and-honoring-maori-latter-day-saints/>.

2. *By Their Fruits You Will Know Them: Early Maori Leaders in the Mormon Church* (Wellington, NZ: Steele Roberts, 2017). For my review, see Louis Midgley, “The Māori Latter-day Saint Historical Narrative: Additions and Amendments,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 32 (2019): 199–228, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-maori-latter-day-saint-historical-narrative-additions-and-amendments/>.

3. Huia Publishers is a distinct publisher but has been both willing and able to match exactly the format and other features provided by Steele Roberts, which is impressive.

4. Each of these three hardcover volumes is built to last, since they can be opened at any place and they will almost lay flat without stress on the binding.

5. Currently, Huia Publishers has all three volumes for sale in hardcover. Huia has an ISBN number for a paperback for this volume, but it does not have this available for sale. Huia Publishers (and Steele Roberts) and/or Selwyn Kātene might also consider making this series of books available through an inexpensive print on demand service in the United States and Canada, and, when the original print run has been exhausted, also in New Zealand and Australia.

6. Peter Lineham, who is Emeritus Professor of History at Massey University, is by far the world’s authority on various churches and religious movements in New Zealand. I highly recommend his “Preface” to this volume (see pp. ix–x).

voice of the converts and the role of dreams and prayer.” The fact is that there are faithful Latter-day Saints everywhere who take prayer very seriously, since we are a community of faith that began with a prayer that soon led to the truly remarkable recovery of the Book of Mormon. Faithful Saints also believe there are priesthood keys, the proper use of which necessarily depends upon answers to genuine prayer, which is clearly not merely a kind of “religious” routine for genuine Latter-day Saints.

Lineham also calls attention to the “striking blend of Māori and Mormon respect for their forbears.” It is true that Māori Saints, who are not, as many Māori unfortunately now are, caught up in crime, are also often mindful of even their very ancient ancestors. However, this concern, which is often stressed by Māori Saints, is also found among Latter-day Saints everywhere, who are aware of and concerned about finding their own roots, since this is one of the crucial reasons for Latter-day Saint temples.

Lineham also indicates “that the outsider is bound to be impressed by the dynamics of the Mormon family, of the high level of interweaving of Maori and *Pākehā* [white people] within the Mormon community, of the ways in which sport played such a dominant role in the reshaped Maori community, and the ways in which hard work, especially manual labour, shaped people’s ethics and qualities” (p. ix). Selwyn Kātene has provided, in his “Introduction” (pp. 1–3), a chart indicating, among other things, the leadership roles held by the twelve Latter-day Saint leaders featured in this new volume (p. 2). I am also aware of *Pākehā* Latter-day Saints in New Zealand who were raised by faithful Latter-day Saint mothers, despite indifference of their fathers towards the Church of Jesus Christ — mothers who saw to it that their children became genuinely faithful Latter-day Saints. These stories should also be told.

This “interweaving of *Pākehā* and Māori” among the Saints in New Zealand has, from my own perspective, been essential for the continued growth of the Latter-day Saint community of faith, and also for its stability, given the sea of sin that has steadily eroded genuine faith in God in New Zealand. There are good indications that this mixing and blending among Latter-day Saints will also continue in New Zealand. There is now much ethnic diversity within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand, partly as a result of the large influx of Latter-day Saints from the islands of the Pacific, which should continue.

Let Their Light So Shine has again provided twelve essays in which the lives of twelve faithful Latter-day Saints are carefully examined.

One learns much about how and why each became a genuinely faithful Saint. These wonderful biographical accounts often include selected accounts of their loving parents, and sometimes their own children, and their extended families, as well as friends, and associates in the larger community of faithful Saints. Some of those whose stories are told in this volume have served in important callings in the Church of Jesus Christ in both New Zealand and elsewhere, as well as service in government at both the local and national levels. Woven here and there into these accounts are also sketches of the truly remarkable history of the Church of Jesus Christ in New Zealand.

Some Crucial Changes in the Latter-day Saint Community of Faith

My own first missionary endeavors in New Zealand took place in 1950–52, which was just at the beginning of a major transformation of the Church of Jesus Christ in New Zealand. Māori Latter-day Saints were then beginning to move into provincial centers and also into large urban centers such as Auckland and Wellington, and hence away from the direct influence of their home *marae* (meeting grounds).⁷ They did this for employment, and then eventually also for training in universities. This was also at the beginning of the surge of Samoans and other Pacific islanders into urban areas in New Zealand, many of whom were then, or would soon become, faithful Latter-day Saints.

I was fortunate to befriend Nitama Paewai (see pp. 121–40), who was one of the first two Māori Latter-day Saints to receive university training. The story of how he came to be trained to deal with both health conditions and other problems faced by human beings is amazing. For three decades, Dr. Paewai’s medical practice covered the entire area near Kaikohe in the far north of New Zealand, where he had his “surgery,” as it is known in New Zealand. He was a huge influence for good. With his wife, he was also of subsequent service in and for the Church of Jesus Christ. This and more are nicely set out in this volume by Api Te Rina Paewai.

Contrasting with Dr. Paewai’s time, it is now routine for Māori Latter-day Saints, and Pacific Islanders whose parents have moved to New Zealand, to be trained in university, often focusing on medicine and law. This improves both their employment opportunities and their

7. The influx of Latter-day Saints from islands in the Pacific, especially Samoa, was then just beginning to take place.

capacity for service in the Church of Jesus Christ and in the communities in which they choose to live.

In addition to Dr. Paewai, in *Let Their Light So Shine*, Selwyn Kātene has once again featured eleven other truly remarkable Latter-day Saints. I must also stress the point made regarding the amazing blending of peoples in and through the marriages that have taken place in New Zealand. These true stories also call attention to many others who were essential parts of the life journeys of those whose lives are now very carefully and lovingly set out.

Some Additional Details

Like the first two volumes in this series, the essays in this volume are organized chronologically by the date when the featured Saints were born. *Let Their Light So Shine* differs somewhat from the first two volumes in this series by including essays on five Pākehā faithful Saints,⁸ each of whom also saw and recognized the light of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

These are the featured Saints, with additional useful information about their associates and, of course, their extended families:

- Matene Rutatenga (1802–1899), pp. 5–16
- James Rongotoa Elkington (1898–1985), pp. 19–33
- William Roberts* (1907–1994), pp. 35–56
- Puti Tipene (Steve) Watene (1910–1967), pp. 57–76
- Pateriki Te Rei (1912–1995), pp. 77–88
- Ian Garry* (1915–1997), pp. 89–100
- Kenneth Molony Palmer* (1918–1988), pp. 101–20
- Nitama Paewai (1920–1990), pp. 121–40
- Geoffrey R. Garlick* (1924–2010), pp. 141–55
- Ben Couch (1925–1996), pp. 157–72
- Douglas J. Martin Jr.* (1927–2010), pp. 173–94
- Te Puoho Kātene (1927–2010), pp. 195–213

The first volume in this series also featured one Pākehā – Percy Going, from Maromaku. There are, of course, many other truly faithful Saints in or from Maromaku, whose faith journeys might also be set out in some future volumes in this series. This truly remarkably faithful Latter-day Saint community in Maromaku is not all that far from Kawakawa, which provides two ways to reach the wonderful Bay of

8. Those who are identified as Pākehā Latter-day Saints are identified with an asterisk (*) after their name.

Islands, where the Māori first became Christians. This is my favorite place in New Zealand.⁹ More of the story of some of the faithful Saints from Maromaku might be told in a future volume in this series.

Why New Zealand?

After its beginning in 1814, Anglican missionary endeavors among the Māori declined toward the end of that century. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand, commencing on Christmas Day 1882, rapidly became essentially a Māori community of faith. After World War II, there was some growth among the Pākehā in the Church of Jesus Christ in New Zealand, which was just beginning during my first life-changing missionary endeavors in New Zealand in 1950–52.¹⁰ At this time, the Brethren authorized the construction of the Church College of New Zealand (aka CCNZ), which was the equivalent of an American high school. The Brethren also authorized a community established in the 1950s that came to be known as Temple View,¹¹ where the service missionaries lived who constructed the CCNZ and the Hamilton New Zealand Temple.

In addition, perhaps fifty places of worship were constructed in New Zealand. The Saints in New Zealand had previously worshiped at what might have been available at a Māori *marae*, in homes, or in often very unsatisfactory rented facilities. Construction began with a modern Latter-day Saint meeting house at Scotia Place on Queen Street in Auckland. Huge changes have subsequently taken place in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand. For example, in Auckland, in 1950–52, one branch met on Sundays in the very dismal Druids Hall on upper Queen Street. There are now thirteen stakes in the Auckland area. In Wellington, the Saints met on Sundays on the second floor of the Farmers Dominion Bank and also to the north of Wellington at the Tukapuwhahia Māori *marae* in Porirua. Now in this area there are three stakes. A temple has recently been announced for

9. Kawakawa has recently become famous because Friedrich Hundertwasser, a truly eccentric Austrian visual artist, created for it some now world famous and very strange toilets, which are located at 60 Gillies Street — the main street in Kawakawa. Hundertwasser was buried somewhere near Kawakawa. I strongly urge those at all curious about Hundertwasser's toilets to do a little Google search.

10. The Church College of New Zealand (CCNZ) was a blessing for all the Saints in New Zealand. However, among other things, the cost of CCNZ and the excellent quality of other schools in New Zealand eventually led to it being closed.

11. See "Temple View," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_View.

Wellington, which will be constructed at a glorious site on the hillside opposite Porirua.

One must keep in mind that the first temple outside the United States and Canada was dedicated on 11–15 September 1955 in Zollikofen, which is just a few miles outside of Bern, Switzerland.¹² In 1952, the temple near Hamilton, New Zealand, the second one outside the United States and Canada, was at least in the planning stages. The Hamilton Temple was dedicated in 1958. Temple View, in the area nearby, has become a remarkable Latter-day Saint gathering place. A second temple in New Zealand is now being built next to the Missionary Training Center and the Manukau Heights Stake Center on the right (south side) of Redoubt Road in Auckland. This temple will be visible to everyone who travels on the major highway south of the older center of Auckland.

My summary of the Church's growth is inadequate, but in the twelve accounts of faithful Saints in *Let Their Light So Shine*, we see evidence of the frequent and easy mixing of Māori and Pākehā Latter-day Saints in worship and marriages.

It is not possible to fully explain the reasons I found each of these twelve stories exceptionally interesting. Most of these accounts were for me also emotionally moving.¹³ I read this remarkable book in one sitting. I found myself tittering about some things.¹⁴ I was also often deeply moved by some of the essays — I will also admit — even to tears by some of these accounts of truly exceptional Latter-day Saints. My academic friends and those in my home ward would be very much surprised to know of my emotional response while reading some of the accounts of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand in *Let Their Light So Shine*.

The most moving of these accounts, at least for me, was the one written by Douglas J. Martin Jr., the son of Douglas James Martin. Doug, as he was known, was the first Seventy to be called from New Zealand. I admit that this was for me just a bit annoying, since I wanted a Māori to have that privilege. But I have now changed my mind for several good reasons.¹⁵ We learn that “Doug, as he would come to be

12. I cannot resist mentioning that my wife and I were the first couple sealed in the Temple in Zollikofen.

13. Currently, all those who self-identify as Māori, as a result of intermarriage with Pākehā, are only partly Māori, at least according to a news item I noticed in on my last visit to New Zealand, which happened just as the Covid problem began. That was likely my last visit to a land I love.

14. My wife liked to say that it was a true joy to have a wholesome laugh.

15. One reason is that I was not at all disappointed when my dear friend Ian S. Ardern was called to be a Seventy.

known, was blessed with two sets of parents” (p. 173). The essay gives a detailed account of both his then-young unmarried birth parents, who wanted nothing to do with the child they brought into this world, and his adoptive parents — very strict Scots — who had no children and who immediately cared for and adopted him. We also learn more about his birth mother, who Doug eventually tracked down and sought to befriend.

We also discover that it was at the *hui tau*¹⁶ held at Bridge Pa in 1953 (a conference I still very fondly remember) where Doug was baptized. Soon after his baptism, Doug very much wanted to marry Wati Crawford, the daughter of Syd Crawford, who had confirmed him a member of the Church of Jesus Christ. Doug had to seek the full approval of Syd to marry Wati, which he was finally able to secure from his future Māori father-in-law. This is a brief and inadequate sketch of the truly wonderful account of Elder Doug Martin, who subsequently became a very faithful, gifted Latter-day Saint and, as Selwyn Kātene has it, a great leader.

The Future of this Book Series

I am hoping that my very favorable response to *Let Their Light So Shine* will encourage many Saints, in New Zealand and elsewhere, to purchase copies from the publisher — and then also pass this book along to their family and friends. When the initial print run for the three volumes in this series has been exhausted, additional copies could and should then be made available through a print-on-demand service in New Zealand and Australia, as well as the United States. I pity those Saints who have not somehow managed to serve as missionaries in that New Zealand, or to at least spend a full month on vacation in New Zealand.

In addition, I strongly urge Selwyn Kātene to soon make available a fourth volume in this series. I have some strong suggestions of those who *could and should* be included in the next volume in this important series of books. My own list includes Stephen Midgley (1945–2022),¹⁷ Mic Stinson, Matt Chote, and Cleve Barlow, who was the last one to be initiated in a *Whare Wananga* (house of Maori tribal lore and history). In

16. These were, beginning early in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand, wonderful annual five-day general conferences of the Church in New Zealand. Soon after I returned from my first mission to New Zealand, these came to an end when the first wards and stakes were created. They have recently been revived for Māori Latter-day Saints, some of whom remember or have heard about those truly wonderful five-day conferences.

17. I do not believe that I am related to Stephen Midgley.

1999–2000, I was able to spend many hours discussing many wonderful things with Dr. Barlow in his office at Auckland University.

After Cleve Barlow became a Latter-day Saint, he saw much in his earlier initiation in the *wananga* that conformed rather snugly to the Latter-day Saint temple endowment. His *wananga* was conducted somewhere in the Hokianga region of the Northland by the Anglican Reverend Māori Marsden. Reverend Marsden saw no relationship at all between his Anglican faith and his own Māori faith.

And, of course, there is also the truly remarkable Herewine Jones (1955–2021), who I encountered three times. The first was early in 1999 at one of his *wananga*¹⁸ at a *marae* near Kaikohe in the Northland of New Zealand. The second time was at another of his *wananga* held at a location near Point Chevalier, where we lived. For days prior to that event, I was busy gathering the courage to ask Herewine if he had manuscripts that I could copy. Herewine and I were the first to arrive at the *marae*, and so I was able to speak with him for a few minutes prior to the beginning of that one-day *wananga*. At the very end, as he was cleaning a white board, he suddenly turned to me and said that the Spirit had indicated to him that I was someone interested in having copies of his notes and that I would also know what to do with them.

About six weeks later, both of us were again the first to arrive at a *marae* near Manukau Harbor south of Auckland. Herewine immediately indicated to me that I did not seem all that interested in his papers. However, the problem, as I saw it, was that I found it very difficult, if not impossible, to track him down, since he was here and there doing his thing. Herewine suddenly invited me to be his companion, and hence be ready to take over, if he needed a rest. He even gave me an opportunity to do just that. Herewine seemed pleased with what I had to say.

I have recently learned that while Herewine Jones was struggling with the cancer that eventually took his life, he had what he called “some unfinished business.” Among other things this included visiting Jack (Haki) McDonald, a former New Zealand missionary, who had befriended Herewine. Subsequently, when Herewine visited Salt Lake City, he would stay with Haki. I was delighted to have Haki turn up at

18. These were, among other things, an adaptation and presentation of *tikanga* (the right way to live) and other sometimes esoteric Māori lore. He discussed how much of this fits rather snugly with the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. While my wife and I were serving as missionaries in New Zealand in 1999–2000, those remarkable lectures by Herewine Jones were the primary occasions for convert baptisms, as well as the renewal faith among the Saints in New Zealand.

my home in Provo to indicate that Herewine, over two decades later, remembered me and wanted me to know that he approved of the essays I have published in which I have both set out and defended the truly remarkable nineteenth-century Māori historical narrative. Most of these essays can be easily accessed under my name at the Interpreter Foundation web page.¹⁹

I also hope that the papers of Herewine Jones are now, or will soon be, properly preserved and available in an archive such as the facility found at the Matthew Cowley Pacific Church History Centre, near the Hamilton Temple, or in a university archive, or even both, since Herewine was widely known outside of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Even at my now advanced age — I will soon be 92 — I would be delighted to see Selwyn Kātene publish at least one more volume in this remarkable series of books on the history of Māori and Pākehā leaders in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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.

19. See <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/author/louis/?journal>.

“THAT THEY MIGHT COME AGAIN UNTO THE REMNANT OF THE HOUSE OF JACOB”: ONOMASTIC ALLUSIONS TO JOSEPH IN 3 NEPHI 26:8–10 AND 4 NEPHI 1:49

Matthew L. Bowen

Abstract: *The prophecies in 3 Nephi 26:8–10 and 4 Nephi 1:49 are third-generation members of the same family of texts derived from Isaiah 11:11–12 and Isaiah 29:4, all of which ultimately rely on yāsap (yôsîp or yôsîp) idioms to describe the gathering of Israel and the concomitant coming forth of additional scripture. Mormon, following Nephi, apparently engages in a specific kind of wordplay on the name Joseph in 3 Nephi 26:8–10 and 4 Nephi 1:49 that ultimately harks back to the divine promises made to Joseph in Egypt (2 Nephi 25:21; see also especially 2 Nephi 3:4–16, Genesis 50:24–34 JST) and to his descendants. This wordplay looks forward to the name and role of the prophetic translator through whom additional scripture “[would] be brought again” and “[would] come again” in the last days.*

The basic meaning of the verb *yāsap* is to “add” or “increase,”¹ with the more developed idiomatic senses of “to do [something] again, more”² (literally, to “add to do”).³ The name *Joseph* (*yôsēp*) is a third-person masculine singular form of this verb in its causative stem,

1. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2001), 418. Hereafter cited as *HALOT*. See also *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 414–15. Hereafter cited as *BDB*.

2. *HALOT*, 418.

3. *BDB*, 415.

meaning “may Yahweh add” (see Genesis 30:23–24).⁴ In previous studies, I have treated wordplays related to the name *Joseph*. For example, Nephi’s autobiographical adaptation of wordplay on Joseph in Genesis 37:5, 8 (“**and** they [Joseph’s brothers] hated him **yet the more**,” *wayyôsipû ‘ôd*) in 2 Nephi 5:2 (“their [Nephi’s brothers’] anger **did increase** against me”) demonstrates Nephi’s consciousness of biblical wordplay on *Joseph* and its narratological and rhetorical potential.⁵ Nevertheless, building on previous findings, I endeavor to present new insights that are brought out in the passages explored here that have not been heretofore recognized.

As has been noted previously,⁶ a comparison of Nephi’s quotations of Isaiah 11:11 and 29:14 in 2 Nephi 25:17 (in connection with the Lord’s “promise ... unto Joseph,” v. 21)⁷ and 29:1–2 (in connection with the Lord’s promises to Nephi himself) reveals how central the Hebrew *yāsap* (*yôsîp*) idiom is to Nephi’s juxtaposition and exegesis of two of Isaiah’s prophecies. Nephi twice issues his own prophecies that juxtapose Isaiah’s promise of the Lord’s universal gathering of scattered Israel from Isaiah 11:11 with Isaiah’s separate prophecy of the coming forth of a sealed book as part of a “marvellous work and a wonder” (Isaiah 29:14) in order to create a single eschatological prophecy. The two prophecies’ shared use of the verb *yāsap* appears to be the lexical basis for Nephi’s joining them together, as shown in Table 1.

The divine promise to Nephi “that **these things which I write** shall be kept and preserved and handed down unto my seed from generation to generation, **that the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph** [*yôsēp*] that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand” helps

4. Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Vol. 1, *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 230–33; Cf. Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (Stuttgart, DEU: W. Kolhammer, 1928), 212.

5. Matthew L. Bowen, “‘Their Anger Did Increase Against Me’: Nephi’s Autobiographical Permutation of a Biblical Wordplay on the Name Joseph,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 23 (2017): 115–36, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/their-anger-did-increase-against-me-nephis-autobiographical-permutation-of-a-biblical-wordplay-on-the-name-joseph/>

6. See Matthew L. Bowen, “‘He Shall Add’: Wordplay on the Name Joseph and an Early Instance of Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon,” *Insights* 30/2 (2010): 2–4; 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/>.

7. Book of Mormon citations will generally follow Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

us appreciate the “Joseph”-centric nature of Nephi’s “Gezera Shawa”-type⁸ quotations of Isaiah in 2 Nephi 25:17 and 29:1 as evincing direct and deliberate wordplay on the name *Joseph*.⁹

Table 1. Nephi’s Prophetic Interpretation of Isaiah 11:11 and 29:14.

Isaiah 11:11–12 and 29:14	2 Nephi 25:17, 21; 29:1–2
<p>And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again [<i>yôšîp</i>] the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:11–12; emphasis in all scriptural citations is mine.)</p> <p>Therefore, behold, I will proceed [<i>yôšîp/yôšîp</i>] to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. (Isaiah 29:14)</p>	<p>[T]he Lord will set his hand again [<i>yôšîp</i>] the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore he will proceed [<i>yôšîp/yôšîp</i>] to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men. (2 Nephi 25:17)</p> <p>Wherefore for this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved and handed down unto my seed from generation to generation, that the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph [<i>yôšîp</i>] that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand. (2 Nephi 25:21)</p> <p>But behold, there shall be many at that day when I shall proceed [<i>yôšîp</i> or <i>yôšîp</i>] to do a marvelous work among them, that I may remember my covenants which I have made unto the children of men, that I may set my hand again [<i>*wē’ôšîp</i>] the second time to recover my people which are of the house of Israel — and also that I may remember the promises which I have made unto thee Nephi and also unto thy father, that I would remember your seed, and that the words of your seed should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed, and my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth for a standard [<i>nēs</i>] unto my people which are of the house of Israel. (2 Nephi 29:1–2)</p>

In this study, I propose that we see similar allusions to the name *Joseph* much later on in the Book of Mormon when the author-editor

8. *Gezerah shawah* (*gēzērâ šāwâ*) means “‘equal ordinance’ or ‘statute.’” H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 18. Arland J. Hultgren states, “According to that principle, two texts using the same word can be brought together, and what is taught in the one can be applied to the other as well.” *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 182.

9. Bowen, “He Shall Add,” 2–4; Bowen, “Onomastic Wordplay on Joseph and Benjamin and *Gezera Shawa* in the Book of Mormon,” 261–64.

Mormon, following abridgment and arrangement of Jesus's post-resurrectional sermons at the temple in Bountiful, states his intent for their inclusion: "And **these things have I written** which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people. And I have wrote them to the intent that **they may** be brought **again** [cf. *yôšîpû*] unto this people from the Gentiles, **according to the words which Jesus hath spoken**" (3 Nephi 26:8). Mormon's statement not only reflects the language of 2 Nephi 25:17, 21 and 29:1–2, including the divine promises regarding the writings of Nephi and his successors (especially that "the words of your seed should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed"), but it also reflects the onomastic wordplay found in those passages. Mormon repeats the same technique when he articulates Ammaron's purpose in hiding up all the previously kept prophetic Nephite records. Again, the language of 2 Nephi 25:17, 21; 29:1 is evident: "And he [Ammaron] did hide them up unto the Lord, **that they might** come **again** unto the remnant of the house of Jacob, **according to the prophecies and the promises of the Lord**" (4 Nephi 1:49).

In this article, I will attempt to demonstrate that 3 Nephi 26:8–10 and 4 Nephi 1:49 are third-generation members of the same family as 2 Nephi 25:17, 21 and 29:1–2, derived from Isaiah 11:11–12 and Isaiah 29:4, all of which rely on *yâsap* (*yôšîp* or *yôšîp*) idioms to describe the gathering of Israel and the concomitant coming forth of additional scripture. I will further attempt to show that Mormon, following Nephi, engages in a specific kind of wordplay on the name Joseph in 3 Nephi 26:8–10 and 4 Nephi 1:49 that ultimately harks back to the divine promises made to Joseph in Egypt (2 Nephi 3:4–16; 25:21; Genesis 50:24–34 JST) and his descendants and looks forward to the prophetic translator through whom additional scripture "[would] be brought again" and "[would] come again." This coming forth of this additional scripture, written by Nephi and his descendants, constitutes an essential element in the fulfillment of the prophetic promise that the Lord "shall ... again [cf. *yôšîp*] bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph to the knowledge of the Lord their God" (3 Nephi 5:23) and the final gathering that would follow (see especially 3 Nephi 5:24–26). The fulfillment of the divine promises to Joseph, Nephi, and their descendants is ultimately necessary to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Truths "Brought Again unto This People": A Statement of Purpose by Mormon

In 3 Nephi 26:8–9, Mormon crafts a statement of purpose for recording his abridgment of the account of Christ's post-resurrectional appearance at the temple in Bountiful and the things that he taught the people at that time (3 Nephi 11–26). This statement of purpose draws on Nephi's earlier language in 2 Nephi 25:17; 29:1, language that is itself directly dependent on Isaiah 11:11 and 29:14:

And these things have I written which are **a lesser part** of the things which he taught the people. And **I have wrote them to the intent that they may be brought again** [cf. *yôšîpû*] **unto this people from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken.**

And when they shall have received this — which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith — and **if it should so be that they shall believe these things, then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them.** (3 Nephi 26:8–9)

The designation "this people" in 3 Nephi 26:8, like the designation "this people" (*hā'ām-hazzeḥ*)¹⁰ in Isaiah 29:14 from which it was probably originally taken, has reference to the people's covenant status as belonging to the house of Israel. "This people" constitutes the same referent as "his people" in 2 Nephi 25:17 and "my people which are of the house of Israel" in 2 Nephi 29:1. The longer purpose clause, "to the intent that **they may** be brought **again** [*yôšîpû/yôšîpû*] unto this people," functionally echoes the *yôšîpû/yôšîpû* language of 2 Nephi 25:17 (+21) and 29:1, as well as Isaiah 11:11 and 29:14 from whence it all originates. Mormon's use of this language adopts and adapts the concept of divine

10. The expression "this people" (*hā'ām hazzeḥ/hā'ām-hazzeḥ*) occurs twice in Isaiah 29:13–14 as part of an established ballast between these two verses, which describe the nature of Israel's (and the world's) apostasy and the Lord's intent to remedy that apostasy: "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as **this people** [*hā'ām hazzeḥ*] draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men; therefore, behold, I will proceed [*yôšîpû*] to do a marvellous work among **this people** [*hā'ām-hazzeḥ*], even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." Notably, the Lord quoted from Isaiah 29:13 during Joseph Smith's First Vision (see Joseph Smith—History 1:19).

adding to give his latter-day audience more detailed insight into *how* his record would come forth as additional scripture in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy of the coming forth of the sealed book.

The phrase “from the Gentiles” in 3 Nephi 26:8 reveals an additional source of second-generational influence. Nephi’s prophetic interpretation in 1 Nephi 22:8–12, a text apparently derived from Isaiah 29:14; 49:22–23, Genesis 22:18 (and, to a lesser degree, from Isaiah 11:11), clearly lays out the role of the Gentiles in the gathering and restoration of Israel in fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. Mormon’s statement of authorial intent in 3 Nephi 26:8–9 describes the role of the Gentiles in very similar terms, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Second- and Third-generation Prophetic Interpretations of Isaiah 11:11 and 29:14

1 Nephi 22:8–12	3 Nephi 26:8–9; 5:23–24
And after that our seed is scattered, the Lord God will proceed [<i>yôsîp</i> or <i>yôsîp</i>] to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles [Isaiah 29:14] which shall be of great worth unto our seed. Wherefore it is likened unto the being nursed by the Gentiles and being carried in their arms and upon their shoulders. And it shall also be of worth unto the Gentiles — and not only unto the Gentiles but unto all the house of Israel — unto the making known of the covenants of the Father of heaven unto Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. And I would, my brethren, that ye should know that all the kindreds of the earth cannot be blessed unless he shall make bare his arm in the eyes of the nations . Wherefore the Lord God will proceed [<i>yôsîp</i> or <i>yôsîp</i>] to make bare his arm in the eyes of all the nations, in bringing about his covenants and his gospel unto they which are of the house of Israel. Wherefore he will bring them again [cf. <i>yôsîp</i>] out of captivity, and they shall be gathered together to the lands of their first inheritance [cf. Isaiah 11:11–12]. And they shall be brought out of obscurity and out of darkness [Isaiah 29:18], and they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel [Isaiah 49:26].	And these things have I written which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people. And I have wrote them to the intent that they may be brought again [cf. <i>yôsîpû</i>] unto this people from the Gentiles , according to the words which Jesus hath spoken. And when they shall have received this — which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith — and if it should so be that they shall believe these things, then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them. (3 Nephi 26:8–9) Yea, and surely shall he again [<i>yôsîp</i>] bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph [<i>yôsêp</i>] to the knowledge of the Lord their God. And as surely as the Lord liveth will he gather in from the four quarters of the earth all the remnant of the seed of Jacob , which are scattered abroad upon all the face of the earth. (3 Nephi 5:23–24)

Nephi’s explanation of Isaiah 48–49 to his brothers in 1 Nephi 22 is the text that most clearly describes the relationship between Isaiah’s prophecy of the coming forth of the sealed book (Isaiah 29) and the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.¹¹ Previously in his vision of the tree of life, Nephi had seen that the “the book of the Lamb of God which had proceeded forth from the mouth of the Jew” (i.e., the biblical record) would “c[o]me forth **from the Gentiles** unto the remnant of the seed of my brethren” (1 Nephi 13:38). The coming forth of “other books,” including the Nephite records, would follow the same pattern: “by the power of the Lamb **from the Gentiles** unto them” (1 Nephi 13:39). Thus, as Nephi later told his brothers, “then shall the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed” (1 Nephi 15:13). Shon Hopkin suggests that “the Gentiles” in the preceding verses

are associated with those who were led by God to the Americas (see 2 Nephi 13:12–19), those who persecuted the descendants of the Jews and the Lamanites (1 Nephi 13; 2 Nephi 29:5; 3 Nephi 29:8), those who would live in a day of wickedness and apostasy (see 2 Nephi 27:1, 28), those who would receive the fullness of the gospel and carry the Book of Mormon to others (see 1 Nephi 13:38; 15:13–16; 2 Nephi 30:3) and those who would be identified today as Christians (see 1 Nephi 13:19–23; 2 Nephi 26:20).¹²

Jesus uses the designation “Gentiles” in his teachings at the temple in Bountiful (as preserved by Mormon), and Mormon uses “Gentiles” in 3 Nephi 26:8 in precisely this same sense. In fact, Mormon anchors his prophetic statement of purpose in the teachings of Jesus at the temple in Bountiful with the phrase “according to the words which Jesus hath spoken.”

11. Matthew L. Bowen, “‘The Lord God Will Proceed’: Nephi’s Wordplay in 1 Nephi 22:8–12 and the Abrahamic Covenant,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 50 (2022): 51–70, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-lord-god-will-proceed-nephis-wordplay-in-1-nephi-228-12-and-the-abrahamic-covenant/>.

12. Shon D. Hopkin, “To the Convincing of the Jew and Gentile That Jesus Is the Christ,” in *The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon: A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, eds. Dennis L. Largey, Andrew H. Hedges, John Hilton III, and Kerry Hull (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015), 284.

Jesus had taught the Lamanites and Nephites, using Isaiah-derived *yôšîp* language, regarding the eschatological gathering and restoration of Israel (“my people”): “And verily I say unto you: I give unto you a sign that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place, that I shall gather in from their long dispersion my people, O house of Israel, and **shall establish again** [cf. *’ôšîp*] among them my Zion” (3 Nephi 21:1; cf. Isaiah 11:11). The “sign” of this future gathering and restoration would be his words (and the words of the Nephite prophets), as a scriptural record, being “made known unto the Gentiles, that they may know concerning this people which are a remnant of the house of Jacob and concerning this my people which shall be scattered by them” (3 Nephi 21:2). Jesus declared that this divinely added scriptural record would “come forth from the Gentiles”:

Therefore when these works, and the works which shall be wrought among you hereafter, shall come forth **from the Gentiles** unto your seed, which shall dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity — for thus it behooveth the Father that it should come forth **from the Gentiles**, that he may shew forth his power unto the Gentiles, for this cause that the Gentiles — if they will not harden their hearts — that they may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel. (3 Nephi 21:5–6)

Clarifying the Prophecy of the Coming Forth of the Sealed Book

When we examine Mormon’s “Joseph” wordplay in 3 Nephi 26:8 in the broader context of his larger editorial statement in 3 Nephi 26:8–10, some additional key details emerge. The Lord’s words in 3 Nephi 26:10 appear to reflect an additional wordplay on the name Joseph in terms of canon-formula terminology:

And these things have I written which are **a lesser part** of the things which he taught the people. And **I have wrote them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people from the Gentiles**, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken.

And when they shall have received this — which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith — and **if it should**

so be that they shall believe these things, then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them.

And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation.

Behold, I were about to write them all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbid it, saying: I will try the faith of my people. (3 Nephi 26:8–11)

As noted previously, Mormon's purpose clause "to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people from the Gentiles" suggests the eventual divine addition of things (words) that will become scripture, as promised by the resurrected Lord himself. However, this divine scriptural addition will be limited and probationary — i.e., the Lord would use this scriptural addition (the "lesser part") to test or try the faith of the believing Gentiles through whom it would come forth. Cheryl Brown notes that "The Lord was ... cautious about what *was* contained in the record, withholding even some very good things in order to test the faithful."¹³ Regarding the divine withholding described in these verses, Tad R. Callister remarked, "God withholds certain truths because their release would be premature in His divine timetable. The Savior made this observation to His disciples: 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now' (John 16:12). Our lack of spiritual maturity and readiness may delay the timetable for our receipt of certain answers."¹⁴

Belief in and faithfulness to this "lesser" addition would result in even greater scriptural additions. Regarding this possibility, Moroni later wrote: "And whoso receiveth this record and shall not condemn it because of the imperfections which are in it, the same shall know of greater things than these" (Mormon 8:12).¹⁵

13. Cheryl Brown, "I Speak Somewhat Concerning That Which I Have Written," in *The Book of Mormon: Jacob through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy*, eds. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr., (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990), 55–72.

14. Tad R. Callister, "Not Always Knowing Is Part of God's Plan," *Church News*, 18 May 2020, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/not-always-knowing-is-part-of-gods-plan?lang=eng>.

15. Some of these "greater" things would include the revelations given to the brother of Jared, to whom Christ personally ministered face-to-face, just as he had among the Lamanites and Nephites at the temple in Bountiful (see Ether 3:18). Regarding these revelations, Moroni writes, "Behold, I have written upon

Along with the promise of the divine “adding” of scripture that he gives in 3 Nephi 26:8, Mormon raises the possibility of a divine “withholding” of scripture. In the Pentateuch, Moses stands as the central figure in the giving of divine law. Deuteronomy preserves strict injunctions against human adding to or human diminution of this law: “**Ye shall not add** [lō’ tōsipû] unto the word which I command you, **neither shall ye diminish** [wēlō’ tigrē’û] ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2); “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: **thou shalt not add** [lō’ tōsēp] thereto, **nor diminish** [wēlō’ tigma’] from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32 [MT 13:1]; cf. Deuteronomy 5:22 [MT 18]; Proverbs 30:5).

Injunctions such as these, sometimes called canon-formulae or *Textsicherungsformel* (“text securing formula”), have certainly influenced the development of modern notions of scriptural “canon.” G. André notes that in these canon formulae, “the hiphil of *yśp* with ‘al [i.e., add] is used as the opposite of *gāra’ min* [i.e., diminish from].”¹⁶ The broader view of the Deuteronomic legislation is not that divine law and aspects of it will never be added to or “done away”¹⁷ [**tiggāra*’]¹⁸ André continues, “The warning against apostasy indicates that in its present literary context the formula defends the substance of Yahwism and is not intended to define a canon.”¹⁹

Moses, as recorded in Deuteronomy, declared that the Lord would raise up a prophet with the same authority of Moses to give divine law and scripture: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall

these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw. And there never was greater things made manifest than that which was made manifest unto the brother of Jared” (Ether 4:4). He further records that the Lord stated, “And he that will contend against the word of the Lord, let him be accursed. And he that shall deny these things, let him be accursed. For unto them will I show no greater things, saith Jesus Christ, for I am he who speaketh” (Ether 4:8). The Lord also extended an invitation, “Come unto me, O ye Gentiles, and I will shew unto you the greater things, the knowledge which is hid up because of unbelief” (Ether 4:13).

16. G. André, “יָסַפ, *yāsap*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 6:122.

17. See, e.g., 2 Nephi 25:27; 3 Nephi 9:19; 12:47; Moroni 8:8; D&C 22:1.

18. Cf. Numbers 27:4: “Why should the name of our father be done away [*yiggāra*’] from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father.”

19. André, “יָסַפ, *yāsap*,” 122.

hearken ... I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18). On another occasion, when the Lord gave Moses the commandment to write scripture ("thou shalt write the things which I shall speak," Moses 1:40) he also foretold: "And in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and **take** many of them from the book which thou shalt write, behold, **I will raise up another like unto thee; and they shall be had again** [cf. *yôšîpû/*wêhôsîpû*] among the children of men — among as many as shall believe" (Moses 1:41).²⁰ Even in foretelling the unauthorized human diminution of the divine words that Moses would write, the Lord foretold the divinely authorized restoration of the those words in language that also seems to have anticipated the name and role of the raised-up "another like unto" Moses — a *Joseph*.²¹

Deuteronomy 18:15–19 also has a Christological interpretation (and perhaps, as David Calabro has recently argued, so does Moses 1:41),²² in which the Lord himself is the raised-up prophet "like unto Moses," and a lawgiver. In 3 Nephi, Mormon's inclusion of Jesus's "Sermon at the Temple"²³ and other teachings at the temple in Bountiful highlights Jesus's role as lawgiver in the same mode as Moses (i.e., as the lawgiver of whom Moses was a type) in Deuteronomy and the raised-up prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15–19 to whom Israel was under obligation to "hear:" "Behold, I am **the law** [*hattôrâ*] and the light. Look unto me and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life" (3 Nephi 15:9).

20. See Matthew L. Bowen "And They Shall Be Had Again': Onomastic Allusions to Joseph in Moses 1:41 in View of the So-called Canon Formula," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 32 (2019): 297–304, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/and-they-shall-be-had-again-onomastic-allusions-to-joseph-in-moses-141-in-view-of-the-so-called-canon-formula/>.

21. Ibid.

22. David M. Calabro, "An Early Christian Context for the Book of Moses," *Tracing Ancient Threads in the Book of Moses: Inspired Origins, Temple Contexts, and Literary Qualities*, Vol. 1, eds. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, David R. Seely, John W. Welch and Scott Gordon (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2021), 505–90. Reprinted in *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 47 (2021): 181–262, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/an-early-christian-context-for-the-book-of-moses/>.

23. See John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount: A Latter-day Saint Approach* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990); John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute; FARMS, 1999).

This post-resurrectional theophany and teaching fulfilled a prophecy from Nephi: “And after that Christ shall have risen from the dead, he shall shew himself unto you, my children and my beloved brethren, and **the words which he shall speak unto you shall be the law** [cf. *hattôrâ*] which ye shall do” (2 Nephi 26:1). Nephi anticipated the time when the “law [would] be done away [**tiggāra*]” (2 Nephi 25:27; *gāra*’, “diminish,” “restrain,” “withdraw,” “remove”²⁴ is a synonym of *’āsap* [“gather”] in the sense of “withdraw,” or “take away”).²⁵ Christ would authoritatively “do away with” or “diminish” (*yigra*’) “old” applications of divine law and “add” the “new.” In the Sermon at the Temple he declared, “Therefore those things which were of old time which were under the law [*hattôrâ*], in me are all fulfilled. Old things are done away [**yiggārē’û*], and all things have become new” (3 Nephi 12:46–47).

Nephi’s prophecy coheres with his Christological interpretation of Deuteronomy 18:15–19. Nephi records:

And the Lord will surely prepare a way for his people unto the fulfilling of the words of Moses, which he spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that all they which will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people. And now I Nephi declare unto you that this prophet of whom Moses spake was the Holy One of Israel. Wherefore he shall execute judgment in righteousness. (1 Nephi 22:20–21)

While Nephi’s Christological interpretation — with its ultimate latter-day and millennial fulfillment — is assuredly valid, the criteria for discerning true prophets in Deuteronomy 18:20–22 suggests that ancient Israel also understood Deuteronomy 18:15–19 as constituting an etiology for prophets as an institution and authoritative prophecy more generally. In other words, “raised-up” prophets could authoritatively add to previously given divine instruction (cf., e.g., Jeremiah 36:32).²⁶

One portion of Nephi’s vision of the tree of life (recorded in 1 Nephi 13) emphasizes the unauthorized human diminution (“taking away”) of divine words and law in the sense denoted in Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:31

24. HALOT, 203–204.

25. HALOT, 74.

26. Jeremiah 36:32: “Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and **there were added** [*nōsap*] besides unto them many like words.”

[MT 13:1]. Nephi's angelic guide informed him that "the Gentiles" of "the great and abominable church" would "take away," "keep back," and "diminish" (*gāra'* or *'āsap*) divine law, covenants, and scripture:

For behold, they **have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb** many parts which are plain and most precious; and also **many covenants of the Lord have they taken away**; ...

There are many plain and most precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God. And after that these plain and precious things were **taken away**, it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles ... because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book ... and because of these things which are **taken away** out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceeding great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them. (1 Nephi 13:26, 28–29)

The text of 1 Nephi 13 also details the divine response to the human diminution of the divine word in the latter days: the Lord would not allow this diminution to permanently prevail: "Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that state of awful wickedness which thou beholdest that they are in because of the plain and most precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which **hath been kept back** by that abominable church, whose formation thou hast seen" (1 Nephi 13:32). Like the term "diminish" in Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:31 [MT 13:1] and perhaps "take away" (if it does not reflect *'āsap*), the expression "kept back" may also reflect the Hebrew verb *gāra'* (see especially Numbers 9:7).²⁷ What is "kept back" through unauthorized, human diminution of divine law, covenant, and scripture, God promises to bring forth in all its plainness and preciousness:

And it came to pass that the angel of the Lord spake unto me, saying: Behold, saith the Lamb of God, after that I have visited the remnant of the house of Israel — and this remnant of which I speak is the seed of thy father — wherefore after that I have visited them in judgment and smitten them by the hand of the Gentiles, and after that the Gentiles do stumble exceedingly because of the most plain and precious parts of

27. Numbers 9:7: "And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back [*niggāra'*], that we may not offer an offering of the Lord in his appointed season among the children of Israel?"

the gospel of the Lamb **which hath been kept back by that abominable church**, which is the mother of harlots, saith the Lamb, wherefore I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, saith the Lamb, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them in mine own power much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious, saith the Lamb. (1 Nephi 13:34)

The Lord would meet the human diminution of scripture with the bringing forth — or re-adding — of the same “plain and precious things [words]” that had been “taken away.” These restored words would constitute scriptural records: “These last records which thou hast seen among the Gentiles ... shall make known the plain and precious things [words] **which have been taken away** from them [i.e., the records “of the twelve apostles of the Lamb”]” (1 Nephi 13:40).

Just as apostasy and recalcitrance has resulted in the human diminution of scripture, they have also, in some cases, prompted God to “take away” from scripture — or at least withhold access to and the understanding of it. Nephi’s brother Jacob cited the pre-exilic Judahites as an example of those from whom God has “taken away” the understanding of prophecy and scripture:

But behold, the Jews [the ancient Judahites] 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. (Jacob 4:14)

Jacob, using Zenos’s allegory and Isaiah 11:11, prophesied that the Lord would remedy the apostasy and scattering that inevitably resulted from this diminished understanding: “And in the day that **he shall** set his hand **again** [cf. *yôšîp*, i.e., add his hand] the second time to recover his people is the day — yea, even the last time — that the servants of the Lord shall go forth in his power to nourish and prune his vineyard; and after that the end soon cometh” (Jacob 6:2).²⁸

28. See Matthew L. Bowen, “‘God Hath Taken Away His Plainness’: Some Notes on Jacob 4:14, Revelation, Canon, Covenant, and Law,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 39 (2020): 81–102, <https://journal.>

The divine withholding of scripture envisioned in 3 Nephi 26:10 ("And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation") is less akin to the example in Jacob 4:14 and more akin to what the Lord describes in 2 Nephi 28:30: "For unto him that receiveth **I will give more**; and them that shall say we have enough, from them **shall be taken away** even that which they have." Obtaining "the greater things" or "more" is predicated on reception of — i.e., belief in and obedience to — the "lesser things."

Mormon hews to the divine principle taught by Alma the Younger to the apostate Nephites of Ammonihah²⁹ in language that helps us appreciate the connection between "the greater things" that Jesus taught at the temple in Bountiful and the type of esoteric teachings that we closely associate with the holy temple today:

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart, only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.

And therefore he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God, until they know them in full.

And he that will harden his heart, to him is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell. (Alma 12:9–11)

Thus, in the end, Mormon strictly limits his record to "the things [words] which have been commanded me of the Lord," a point which he gives double emphasis: "Therefore I Mormon do write the things which have been commanded me of the Lord. And now I Mormon make an end of my sayings and proceed to write the things which have been commanded me" (3 Nephi 26:12). It is perhaps worth noting that

interpreterfoundation.org/god-hath-taken-away-his-plainness-some-notes-on-jacob-414-revelation-canon-covenant-and-law/.

29. Cf. footnote b to 3 Nephi 26:10 in the 1981 and 2013 editions of the Book of Mormon.

Mormon's "proceed[ing] to write" these things will ultimately constitute an important part of the Lord's "proceed[ing] [*yôšîp*] to do a marvelous work" in the coming forth of the sealed book (Isaiah 29:14).

"That They Might Come Again unto the Remnant of the House of Jacob"

Mormon makes another important third-generational statement based on Isaiah 11:11–12 and 29:4 (via 2 Nephi 25:17, 21; 29:1) at the conclusion of 4 Nephi in his laconic abridgment of the record of Ammaron:

And it came to pass that after three hundred and five years had passed away — and the people did still remain in wickedness — and Amos died, and his brother Ammaron did keep the record in his stead.

And it came to pass that when three hundred and twenty years had passed away, Ammaron being constrained by the Holy Ghost did hide up the records which were sacred, yea, even all the sacred records which had been handed down from generation to generation, which were sacred, even until the three hundred and twentieth year from the coming of Christ.

And he did hide them up unto the Lord, **that they might come again unto the remnant of the house of Jacob, according to the prophecies and the promises of the Lord.** And thus is the end of the record of Ammaron. (4 Nephi 1:47–49)

Mormon's inclusion of the purpose clause "that **they might come again** [cf. **lěma'an yôšîpû*] unto **the remnant** [*šě'ār*] of the house of Jacob according to the prophecies of the Lord" possibly derives from Ammaron's own account, and it expresses the core idea of Mormon's prophecy in 3 Nephi 5:23: "Yea, and surely **shall he again** [cf. *yôšîp*] bring a **remnant** [*šě'ār/šě'ērît*] of the seed of **Joseph** [*yôšēp*] to the knowledge of the Lord their God." Both 3 Nephi 5:23 and 4 Nephi 1:49 share a genetic origin in the *yôšîp*- and remnant-language of Isaiah 11:11 ("the Lord **shall set his hand again** [*yôšîp*] the second time to recover **the remnant** [*šě'ār*] **of his people** [*'ammô*])" and the prophecy of the coming forth of the sealed book of Isaiah 29:14 ("behold, I **will proceed** [*yôšîp/yôšîp*] to do a marvellous work among **this people** [*hā'ām hazzeh*], even a marvellous work and a wonder").

A comparison of 4 Nephi 1:49 and the previously discussed second-generation *yāsap/yôšîp* texts in 2 Nephi 25:17, 21 and 29:1–2, with a focus

on the additional key term "promises," helps us to better see the genetic relationship between these texts:

And he [Ammaron] did hide them up unto the Lord, **that they might come again** [cf. *lěma'an yôšîpû*] **unto the remnant of the house of Jacob, according to the prophecies and the promises of the Lord.** And thus is the end of the record of Ammaron. (4 Nephi 1:49)

The *yôšîp* wordplay recalls Joseph in Egypt as the one to whom special divine promises of preservation, gathering, and restoration were made. It also looks forward to the name and role of the one who would serve as the human instrumentality — a Joseph ("may He [God] add," "may He do [something] again") — through whom ancient scripture could "come ... again" in fulfillment of the divine promises to Joseph (and Lehi and Nephi, his descendants).

Conclusion

Like 3 Nephi 5:23, 3 Nephi 26:8–10 and 4 Nephi 1:49 reflect the use of the Hebrew *yāsap/yôšîp* idiom in the tradition of Nephi's use of Isaiah. Comparisons of these three texts with 2 Nephi 25:17, 21 and 29:1–2 reveals that the former are third-generation members of the same family of prophetic texts stemming from Isaiah 11:11–12 and Isaiah 29:4, all of which ultimately rely on *yāsap/yôšîp* idioms to describe the gathering of Israel and the concomitant coming forth of additional scripture.

Mormon, following Nephi's masterful use of Isaiah, engages in a specific kind of wordplay on the name Joseph in 3 Nephi 26:8–10 and 4 Nephi 1:49 that ultimately harks back to the divine promises made to Joseph in Egypt (2 Nephi 25:21; see also especially 2 Nephi 3:4–16; Genesis 50:24–34 JST) and to his descendants. This wordplay emphasizes the fulfillment of the promises to Joseph the patriarch and looks forward to the name and role of the prophetic translator through whom additional scripture "[would] be brought again" and "[would] come again" in the last days in fulfillment of those promises — a *Joseph*. Related to this wordplay — and against the conceptual backdrop of the Deuteronomic canon formulae — 3 Nephi 26:10 details the divine, probationary withholding of the "the greater things" that Jesus taught at the temple in Bountiful from this additional scripture, contingent upon the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of the recipients of the "lesser part."

The Joseph wordplays in 3 Nephi 26:8–10 and 4 Nephi 1:49 are innovative in that they bring the onomastic theme forward to the work

that Mormon himself was specifically called to do, during his life and times, in terms of preparing the record to be “brought again” or to “come again” to Lehi’s descendants — descendants of the patriarch Joseph — through the agency of the prophet Joseph Smith. In other words, they more directly link Mormon’s life and work with the prophet Joseph Smith’s life and work.

Additionally, the Joseph wordplay in 3 Nephi 26:8–10 accentuates not only the Lord’s initial limiting of what would be “brought again” as “the lesser part” of what Jesus taught at the temple in Bountiful, but also that “the greater things” would be divinely included or *withheld*, contingent upon the faithfulness of the Lord’s people. Thus, 3 Nephi 26:8–10 serves as an extension of the concept of the divine addition and diminution (taking away or withholding) of scripture articulated by Nephi (see 2 Nephi 28:27–30; cf. 29:1–10) and the principle of divine addition and withholding of the word described by Alma in Alma 12:8–9. All of this helps readers appreciate additional senses in which the name Joseph denotes divine increase and suggests the concept of eternal increase.

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MOVING BEYOND THE HISTORICITY QUESTION, OR A MANIFESTO FOR FUTURE BOOK OF MORMON RESEARCH

Newell D. Wright

Review of Daniel Becerra, Amy Easton-Flake, Nicholas J. Frederick, and Joseph M. Spencer, *Book of Mormon Studies: An Introduction and Guide* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2022). 184 pages. \$19.99 (hardback), \$15.99 (paperback).

Abstract: *Book of Mormon Studies: An Introduction and Guide by four Brigham Young University religion professors reviews the field of Book of Mormon studies from the late nineteenth century to the current day. After the historical review of the field, the authors lay out a research agenda for the twenty-first century that, by and large, moves on from the Book of Mormon historicity question that so engaged twentieth-century scholars. This review examines the authors' claims and demonstrates that the scope of the book is not as broad as it could or should be. Absent perspectives, blind spots, incomplete twenty-first-century research trends, and a discussion of research tools should have been included in the book but were not included. This review ends with a discussion of "the gatekeeper problem" in Book of Mormon studies.*

Daniel Becerra, Amy Easton-Flake, Nicholas J. Frederick, and Joseph M. Spencer, all professors of religion at Brigham Young University, have put together an impressive book, a history of Book of Mormon studies entitled *Book of Mormon Studies: An Introduction and Guide*.¹ The volume is positioned for and targeted to three different types

1. Daniel Becerra, Amy Easton-Flake, Nicholas J. Frederick and Joseph M. Spencer, *Book of Mormon Studies: An Introduction and Guide* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2022).

of readers. The first reader segment consists of “believing Latter-day Saints — especially young ones — who are interested in contributing to Book of Mormon scholarship” (p. 5). The second segment is “the many Latter-day Saints who ... want to deepen their private study of the Book of Mormon without any ambitions about producing new scholarship” (p. 5). For this segment, the authors hope the book will aid in navigating a growing corpus of Book of Mormon scholarship and help them discover the best of what has been produced. Finally, “and most delicately,” as the authors say, “we write for non-Latter-day Saint scholars (and nonscholars) who have some interest in the Book of Mormon and might appreciate some guidance in navigating a field that’s so deeply shaped by the concerns of believing readers” (p. 6).

Brief Overview

Book of Mormon Studies has an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. Most helpful for both seasoned and new Book of Mormon scholars is the annotated bibliography at the end of the book. In the following sections I provide a brief overview of the content of the book before offering a brief critique and summing up.

Chapter 1

The first chapter provides a history of the field of Book of Mormon studies, covering approximately 120 years of scholarship, from Orson Pratt’s restructuring of the Book of Mormon into chapters and verses in 1879 to roughly the end of the twentieth century. Serious students of the Book of Mormon such as the aforementioned Orson Pratt, James E. Talmage, B.H. Roberts, George Reynolds, Janne M. Sjödahl, Roy A. West, William E. Berrett, and Milton R. Hunter each produced works that pushed the serious study of the Book of Mormon forward. The first scholars trained in a relevant discipline — Hugh W. Nibley, Sidney B. Sperry, and M. Wells Jakeman — arrived on the scene in the late 1940s and helped to found the nascent field of Book of Mormon studies. The chapter details the contributions of each of these scholars, including the tough questions they began tackling after the publication of *No Man Knows My History* by Fawn McKay Brodie.

These three scholars (Nibley, Sperry, and Jakeman) dominated the world of Book of Mormon studies through the mid-1960s when each, for different reasons, stopped publishing about the Book of Mormon, leaving

the field to younger scholars.² The following years largely witnessed a pause in Book of Mormon studies during which several notable events occurred, including the Church's withdrawal of sponsorship for various historical projects, the Mark Hofmann forgeries, countercultural movements, the debate over blacks holding the priesthood, an increase in criticism against the Church, and President Ezra Taft Benson's renewed emphasis on the Book of Mormon. These events spurred the creation of the second wave of Book of Mormon scholarly studies in the twentieth century and the creation of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) in 1979.

FARMS honored the three pioneers — Jakeman, Sperry, and Nibley — by making their works available to a new generation. It also featured the work of new scholars such as John W. Welch and John Sorenson. One aspect of FARMS that *Book of Mormon Studies* laments was the intense focus on the ancient origins of the Book of Mormon, or the historicity question, at the expense of other questions.³ In particular, FARMS scholars found themselves in more or less constant arguments with authors published by Signature Books.⁴ FARMS devoted a lot of time, effort, and ink to defending traditional views of the Book of Mormon and challenging the thesis in Signature Books' publications that the Book of Mormon is, at best, a work of inspired fiction. This conflict between FARMS and Signature Books, *Book of Mormon Studies* points out, "determined the shape of Book of Mormon studies for most of the 1990s" (p.22). The twentieth-century question that FARMS sought

2. My father, H. Curtis Wright, was one of these younger scholars, and he was also Hugh Nibley's first graduate student. His most notable publication was "Ancient Burial of Metal Documents in Stone Boxes: Their Implications for Library History" in the *Libraries and Culture* Vol. 1 (Winter 1981), 48–70. This was a brief article with an extensive bibliography of references to metal documents in stone boxes. The article was ostensibly about librarianship, but Latter-day Saints immediately saw the significance of what he wrote. He later expanded his bibliography through 2006 in a self-published book titled *Modern Presentism and Ancient Metallic Epigraphy* (Wings of Fire Press: Salt Lake City, 2006).

3. Indeed, *Book of Mormon Studies* describes it as "unsafe for believing scholars to speak of reading the Book of Mormon as literature" because of the ongoing controversy about the Book of Mormon being either an ancient text or inspired fiction with a nineteenth century origin (pp. 19–20).

4. One of my associates described the publisher and those who published with Signature Books as "the Signaturi," complete with suggestions of being a nefarious secret society determined to tear down traditional views of the Book of Mormon from within the Church.

to answer, *Book of Mormon Studies* suggests, was this: “Is the Book of Mormon the ancient text it claims to be?” (p.24).

The influence of FARMS began to wane early in the new millennium, *Book of Mormon Studies* posits, with the publication of two books: Terryl L. Givens’ *By the Hand of Mormon*,⁵ a reception history, and Grant Hardy’s *Understanding the Book of Mormon*,⁶ a work of literary criticism. Both books “bracketed” the truth claims about the Book of Mormon. That is, they set the historicity question aside and focused on other important aspects of the Book of Mormon. Both books were published to wide acclaim by a major university press not affiliated with the Church and, *Book of Mormon Studies* suggests, opened the way for others to write about the Book of Mormon without reference to historicity.

Chapter 2

The second chapter of *Book of Mormon Studies* describes the field of Book of Mormon studies as the authors see it today. They identify seven principal areas of study: textual production, historical origins, literary criticism, intertextuality, theological interpretation, reception history, and ideology critique. Each of these will be briefly described.

Textual production tries “to reconstruct as responsibly as possible the circumstances surrounding the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon” (p. 32). An example of this approach that the authors highlight is *From Darkness into Light* by Michael Hubbard MacKay and Gerrit J. Dirkmaat,⁷ a research project that benefitted from systematic study of documents made public by the Joseph Smith Papers Project.

The next research area, historical origins, focuses on the origin of the Book of Mormon, the historicity question that FARMS focused on. An impressive work in this vein, according to *Book of Mormon Studies*, was Brant Gardner’s six-volume commentary on the Book of Mormon, *Second Witness*.⁸ *Book of Mormon Studies* includes in this category studies that suggest the “Book of Mormon is a modern document and

5. Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

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

7. Michael Hubbard Mackay and Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, *From Darkness Unto Light: Joseph Smith’s Translation and Publication of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2015).

8. Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007).

so should be studied as a product of nineteenth-century culture and influences” (p. 41).

The third area of research, literary criticism, is defined by *Book of Mormon Studies* as a “type of criticism that, when applied to scripture, involves analysis of how a text organizes the stories and ideas it presents to the reader, especially focusing on the way form gives shape to content” (p. 43). Hardy’s *Understanding the Book of Mormon* is the paradigmatic example of this area of research, but many other researchers have engaged in literary criticism over the years, including some who publish in *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*.⁹

The fourth area, intertextuality, “refers to relationships of interaction between a volume of scripture and some other text. In Book of Mormon studies, this usually concerns the relationship between the Book of Mormon and the Bible” (p. 46). For example, what is one to make of New Testament language in the Book of Mormon? One of the authors of *Book of Mormon Studies*, Nicholas J. Frederick, has made intertextuality a major portion of his life’s work.¹⁰ This category also includes comparative studies that examine similar language and concepts in the

9. For example, Val Larsen laid out a rationale and methodology for literary criticism in his article, “First Visions and Last Sermons: Affirming Divine Sociality, Rejecting the Greater Apostasy,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 36 (2020): 39–43. According to Larsen, “A literary reading of a text is sensitive to structure, symbols, archetypes, intertextuality, and how the text speaks to present issues or concerns. While a textual historian may properly focus on the author’s communicative intent in the moment of composition, a reception historian on how a text was understood at a given moment in time, those who offer literary readings typically seek to create a new moment in reception history by revealing unseen dimensions of meaning now cognizable and compelling. Such meanings, unlike historical meanings in their narrowest sense, are not fixed in time or by time. They are shaped by events that occur *ex post facto*, including events happening now. So while history may add important dimensions of meaning to a text, in a literary reading it subserves other larger truths and rhetorical purposes,” 42. All of Larsen’s many articles in *Interpreter* use literary criticism as the primary methodology. See also Steven L. Olsen, “Abridging the Records of the Zoramite Mission: Mormon as Historian,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 52 (2022): 183–90.

10. For example, see *They Shall Grow Together: The Bible in the Book of Mormon*, eds. Charles Swift and Nicholas J. Frederick (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2022). A second *Book of Mormon Studies* author, Joseph M. Spencer, also has an article in *They Shall Grow Together*.

scriptures of different religious traditions, such as *Postponing Heaven* by Catholic scholar Jad Hatem.¹¹

The fifth area, theological interpretation, can be described as “reasoned reflection on God or on revelation” (p. 51). The authors are careful to distinguish between doctrinal and theological interpretations of scripture. Doctrine is, in the words of Adam S. Miller, “authoritative, decided and announced by leaders of the Church. By contrast, theology is deliberately academic and speculative, addressing questions of interest to the life of faith but of little or no institutional importance” (p. 53). An example of theological research is John Christopher Thomas’s *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon*.¹² Another example is the *Brief Theological Introduction* series published by the Maxwell Institute in 2020.

Reception history, the sixth research area, traces “the ways people have received, appropriated, and used scriptural texts throughout history” (p. 54). This includes the history of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, from its translation and printing in the nineteenth century to today. One example *Book of Mormon Studies* mentions is nonmember Paul Gutjahr’s *The Book of Mormon: A Biography*.¹³ This book chronicles such aspects of the Book of Mormon as its influence on missionary work and its depiction in literature, art, illustration, film, and theater. Givens’ influential *By the Hand of Mormon*, the book that first broke away from a focus on historicity, is also an example of reception history.

The last research area is ideology critique, often perspectives of “underrepresented demographics and diverse disciplinary backgrounds.” These studies focus on topics “like disability, gender, race, postcolonialism, [and] social justice” (p. 57). Reflecting the zeitgeist of our times, these same approaches appear in disciplines ranging from agriculture to zoology and everything in between, so it is no surprise they also appear in Book of Mormon studies.

11. Jad Hatem, *Postponing Heaven: The Three Nephites, the Bodhisattva, and the Mahdi*, trans. Jonathon Penny (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2015). One of the authors of *Book of Mormon Studies*, Joseph M. Spencer, was also a series editor for *Postponing Heaven*.

12. John Christopher Thomas, *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2016).

13. Paul C. Gutjahr, *The Book of Mormon: A Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

Chapter 3

Chapter three, “Overcoming Obstacles,” discusses the contribution of Royal Skousen and his critical text project. Much is made in *Book of Mormon Studies* about the need for a critical text as a foundation for Book of Mormon studies. The chapter also reviews the history of various commentaries and calls for a newer type of commentary to be written — one that is written not by a single individual but by a group of scholars. These commentaries would resemble the *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*,¹⁴ which, though not a commentary, was written by multiple authors who condensed and incorporated most of twentieth-century Book of Mormon research into a single volume.

The chapter also calls for more civil discourse in the discussion of the historicity question and the questions raised in the emerging research agendas detailed in chapter two. “It’s time for all accusation and all questioning of motivation to cease,” the authors say. They continue:

We can feel confident doing this because taking the Book of Mormon seriously is already assuming the position of the apologist. We need to recognize that both scholars particularly shaped by twentieth-century concerns and scholars particularly shaped by twenty-first-century concerns are all apologists together, to the extent that they work seriously on the Book of Mormon. All earnest readers of the Book of Mormon attune themselves to its truth, even if in the act of thinking further about difficult issues they occasionally draw conclusions that make more traditional believers temporarily uncomfortable. Certainly all readers of the Book of Mormon who explicitly avow faith in the truth of the book deserve the benefit of the doubt from all other readers who avow faith in the truth of the book. We’re all working on a truth that’s grander than any of our individual approaches to it can reveal. (p. 79)

Book of Mormon Studies calls for more academic charity in research, defined as the “practice of attributing the most reasonable or most defensible argument to one’s opponent before critiquing it. In the context of faith, it includes the assumption — unless clear evidence indicates otherwise — that scholars are working in good faith for good purposes” (p. 76). They make the claim that this is necessary because readers are

14. Dennis L. Largey et al., eds., *Book of Mormon Reference Companion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003).

just as likely, if not more likely, to dismiss the Book of Mormon “over questions about racism, gender, or violence today as they are over questions about historicity” (p. 81).

This chapter is a plea for tolerance from researchers who do not focus exclusively on the historicity of the Book of Mormon. It asks for tolerance for those who move beyond the historicity question.

Chapter 4

Chapter four, “Common Questions,” looks at questions that have arisen during the first two decades of the twenty-first century regarding the Book of Mormon and contrasts how they are now answered with how they were answered by twentieth-century scholars. It attempts to answer the question about “what ‘the truth of the Book of Mormon’ means” (p. 83) in a broadening field of Book of Mormon inquiry. The chapter poses seven questions relevant to both twentieth- and twenty-first-century researchers: “How was the Book of Mormon translated? Why have changes been made to the text of the Book of Mormon? Did the Book of Mormon derive from nineteenth-century texts? What about anachronisms in the Book of Mormon? Does language from Isaiah belong in the Book of Mormon? Does the Book of Mormon depend on the New Testament? Where did the events of the Book of Mormon take place?” (p. 84). One example will suffice to describe the flavor of this chapter.

The Book of Mormon contains language from the New Testament that was written scores or hundreds of years before such language was written down in the Old World. What are we to make of this? A traditional, twentieth-century answer holds both Book of Mormon and New Testament authors had access to “similarly worded ancient texts (in, say, the brass plates) that aren’t extant today” (p. 101). Newer approaches accept that the New Testament language is there by divine design and researchers then seek to understand what it means in a different theological context. The contemporary scholars cited say the language is not simply plagiarism, as critics have claimed, but rather provides new ways of understanding old and familiar language by locating it in new theological contexts.

Chapter 5

Chapter five, “New Directions,” provides a rationale for moving away from an exclusive focus on historicity and towards other compelling

questions. Based on their experience teaching religion at Brigham Young University, the authors state:

[R]eaders of the Book of Mormon today are as likely — if not in fact *more* likely — to reject the Book of Mormon for reasons that have nothing to do with historicity. They're as likely or more likely to drop the book and the religion endorsing it because the volume seems to them to be irrelevant, archaic, boring, unenlightening, or ethically troubling. This is something we see among our students too often, and there's reason to help a new generation see the book's power that we see. (p. 112)

They liken the historicity debate to starting a car repeatedly in a garage, but never taking it out on the road to see how it drives and where it will take them. Making sure the engine works is important, but once that has been determined, there is much to learn about the car that can be learned only by going for a ride. The authors freely acknowledge they stand on the very large shoulders of twentieth-century researchers, but they argue there are new and different questions to answer that are relevant to a different time, age, and set of readers.

The rest of the chapter examines questions contemporary readers are likely to raise, along with perspectives on these new questions. Racial identity is an important current issue. When the Book of Mormon seems to cast goodness as white and evil as black, how do we go about explaining these passages? Women are clearly underrepresented in the Book of Mormon. Why? What can we learn from their absence? What about mental health problems and other disabilities? Why is there so much violence in the Book of Mormon? How is that relevant for us today? What about politics and war? As *Book of Mormon Studies* states, "A reader with intense worries about political instability and growing political polarization is less likely to balk at the lack of a recognizable geographic model that fits the Book of Mormon than at the book's apparent readiness to be politically appropriated by extremist groups" (p. 121). In short, how is the Book of Mormon relevant to pressing issues in the twenty-first century?

Answering this last question, the authors claim, is the goal of twenty-first century Book of Mormon studies. The authors desire to show the book's relevance, that it is not "simply boring, irrelevant, clichéd, or uninformative" (p. 122). They want to show the importance of the Book of Mormon in an increasingly secular world, that it presents "a nuanced

and rich Christology and a theology of grace that has deeply important practical implications for the life of faith” (p. 123).

The Appendix

The greatest contribution of this book may be its appendix. There are five sections in the appendix, four of which are annotated: getting started, getting serious, getting specialized, and getting around. A final section lists other sources cited in the book. As I compared citations in the appendix with my quite substantial library, I discovered that I was missing important volumes and articles. Thus, the appendix alone was worth the purchase price of the book.

Critique

I really liked all 184 pages of *Book of Mormon Studies: An Introduction and Guide*. The four authors have gone to extraordinary lengths to remain fair and even-handed in their treatment of twentieth-century scholars and scholarship while at the same time promoting their twenty-first-century agenda. My impression is that they have, by and large, succeeded in this effort. And yet, the book still has some holes in it. I will now examine the problems of absent perspectives, research trends that could have been added to chapter five, research tools, and what I call “the gatekeeper problem.” I then sum up and conclude.

Absent Perspectives

While I quite like this book, it would have been stronger if they had included as an author someone — anyone — for whom historicity is still a burning issue.¹⁵ While the authors do try to be scrupulously fair, the deck is clearly and myopically stacked in favor of what they frame as the twenty-first-century view. Sometimes their bias is explicit and conscious (e.g., as is made clear in chapter 5), but other times it is implicit and perhaps unconscious.

An example is the uneven representation of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* (which one of the authors, Joseph M. Spencer, edits) and *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*. There are thirty references from the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* in the

15. A quick look at the Faculty of Religious Education suggested some names, e.g., David Seely, Gaye Strathearn, David Calabro, and from outside of the BYU Religion department, e.g., Brant Gardner, Noel B. Reynolds, and John Gee.

appendix, but only a single,¹⁶ must-read reference from the *Interpreter*, David M. Belnap's summary essay entitled, "The Inclusive, Anti-Discrimination Message of the Book of Mormon," a 175-page article that advances the chapter-five agenda in *Book of Mormon Studies*.¹⁷ Further, most articles cited from the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* come from 2017 or later; earlier papers advocating for historicity are not cited. Finally, the description of *Interpreter* in *Book of Mormon Studies* is far from kind. The journal is positioned in the book as a backward-looking publication in which FARMS retreads who have nothing new to say¹⁸ publish marginally relevant historicity papers. In one place, they even get the name of the journal wrong, calling it the *Mormon Interpreter* (p. 40). Here is what *Book of Mormon Studies* has to say about *Interpreter*:

Theory/Approach: The Book of Mormon is an ancient document, as will be demonstrated through comparative study of the text and ancient Near Eastern documents and sources. **Major Figures/Movements:** High Nibley and the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies in the twentieth century; scholars publishing in the *Interpreter* in the twenty-first century. (p. 41)

As publications in the *Mormon Interpreter*¹⁹ (later renamed *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*) show, there nevertheless remains much work to do on the historical origins of the Book of Mormon. (p. 40)

16. There are more references in the appendix to *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* than to the *Interpreter*.

17. David M. Belnap, "The Inclusive, Anti-Discrimination Message of the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 42 (2021): 195–370, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/the-inclusive-anti-discrimination-message-of-the-book-of-mormon/>.

18. "There's seldom much that's new these days in the battle over the Book of Mormon's historicity ... [D]efenders today tend to retread the ground of their own scholarly forbears while adding few substantially new arguments or evidence" (p. 111). To be sure, they also state that "there nonetheless remains much work to do on the historical origins of the Book of Mormon — especially to tame the zeal of amateur archaeologists who claim more than the evidence allows" (p. 40). This concession is mostly just another attack on those who think historicity is an essential issue.

19. The original name of the journal was *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, not the *Mormon Interpreter*. The title was changed in accord with President Russell M. Nelson's call to use the official Church name.

The *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* publishes a good deal of scholarship on the Book of Mormon, most of it in the vein of traditional twentieth-century scholarship. (p. 153)

The reason, then, for privileging the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* over the *Interpreter* in *Book of Mormon Studies* is that the former is *avant garde* and the latter is backward-looking.

This privileging of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* does not seem to be warranted by impact on the discipline of Book of Mormon studies, as measured by a citation analysis. Articles in *Interpreter* are likely to be cited twice as often as articles appearing in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*. Using Harzing's *Publish or Perish* software,²⁰ I pulled all articles that have citation data from Google Scholar from 2012 to 2018 from the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* and compared them with articles about the Book of Mormon published in the *Interpreter* during the same period. Newer articles are cited less frequently than older articles, so I did not include anything newer than 2018. Also, older articles are cited more frequently, as they have been around longer, so I did not look at articles published before 2012.²¹

The *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* published 35 articles of all types that were cited at least once during that time period, for a total of 91 citations, or 2.68 citations per article. *Interpreter* published 69 articles focusing on the Book of Mormon that were cited at least once during that time period, for a total of 391 citations, or an average of 5.75 citations per article — more than double the citation rate of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*. I believe that the influence of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* will continue to wane, because it is now locked behind a paywall and is not freely available to the three target audiences described at the beginning of *Book of Mormon Studies*. This same analysis suggests a bright, impactful future for *Interpreter*. This blindness towards the *Interpreter* is one example of the authors' unconscious bias.²²

20. Version 8; harzing.com.

21. As well, The Interpreter Foundation was not organized until August 2012, with its journal launched at the same time. There would have been no citations to *Interpreter* articles before this time.

22. Indeed, as one reviewer of this article pointed out, the authors of *Book of Mormon Studies* seem to portray *Interpreter* as a historicity journal, which suggests they are largely unfamiliar with its contents. There are many *Interpreter* papers on the Book of Mormon that do not touch on historicity (for example, see footnotes 9, 17, 27, 28, and 32 in this article). And though I am trying to practice the academic

The Book of Mormon as Temple Text

In the discussions about the major questions being asked in the twenty-first century, the authors ignored several very big questions that are important to many readers and scholars, including the Book of Mormon as a temple text.

Book of Mormon Studies describes John W. Welch's book, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*,²³ as "essential" (p. 144). In his book, Welch examines the Sermon at the Temple in the Book of Mormon as a temple text. This laid the foundation for other studies that followed. At approximately the same time, non-member scholar Margaret Barker was illuminating the function of the Old Testament temple in several books and papers.²⁴ Building on the work of Welch and Barker, noted science fiction author D. John Butler attempted to fully illuminate the temple text in the Book of Mormon, particularly in 1 Nephi 8–14, 2 Nephi 4, several chapters in Alma (29, 30, 37, 45, 46), Helaman 5, Ether 3 and in other places.²⁵ According to Butler,

We're collectively on the brink of realizing that the Book of Mormon is a temple book. *Plain and Precious Things* set out a paradigm for studying the Book of Mormon as temple literature, which is to say an overarching idea that the Book of Mormon was written by temple worshippers for temple worshippers, in the imagery of the temple, and teaching temple doctrines. Without seeing the temple in it, we can't fully understand the Book of Mormon.²⁶

charity they advocate in *Book of Mormon Studies*, this may also be evidence that they are not as well-versed in the universe of Book of Mormon research as they hold themselves out to be.

23. John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount: A Latter-day Saint Approach* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990).

24. For a review of Barker's scholarship, see Kevin Christensen, "Twenty Years After 'Paradigms Regained,' Part 1: The Ongoing, Plain, and Precious Significance of Margaret Barker's Scholarship for Latter-day Saint Studies," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 54 (2022): 1–64, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/twenty-years-after-paradigms-regained-part-1-the-ongoing-plain-and-precious-significance-of-margaret-barkers-scholarship-for-latter-day-saint-studies/>.

25. D. John Butler, *Plain and Precious Things: The Temple Religion of the Book of Mormon's Visionary Men*, self-published, 2012, and *The Goodness and the Mysteries: On the Path of the Book of Mormon's Visionary Men*, self-published 2012.

26. *Goodness and the Mysteries*, 1.

Other scholars have also come to the same conclusion. Bokovoy argues that the interaction between Nephi and the Spirit of the Lord in 1 Nephi 11 is a temple text.²⁷ He followed up with another article about temple imagery in Jacob's sermons.²⁸ Don Bradley's *The Lost 116 Pages: Reconstructing the Book of Mormon's Missing Stories*, described by *Book of Mormon Studies* as "particularly unique and celebrated" (p. 141), has two chapters on temple allusions in the Book of Mormon. Joseph M. Spencer, one of the authors of *Book of Mormon Studies*, gives a unique, Latter-day Saint temple reading of Isaiah 6 (2 Nephi 16).²⁹ In another book, Spencer provides an interpretation of 1 and 2 Nephi as creation, fall, atonement, and veil. He concludes "that Nephi's whole record is oriented by and structured around this most crucial, clearly temple-centered theme."³⁰ The Book of Mormon as temple text is an area ripe for future research.

Mother in Heaven

As the *Book of Mormon Studies* authors seek to find the feminine in the Book of Mormon, they have left out any mention of Mother in Heaven. "Mother in Heaven," says Val Larsen, "is remarkably visible in the Book of Mormon."³¹ Hints about Mother in Heaven are particularly strong in the Book of Mormon when talking about the tree of life in Lehi's

27. David E. Bokovoy, "'Thou Knowest that I Believe': Invoking the Spirit of the Lord as Council Witness in 1 Nephi 11," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 1 (2012): 1–23, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/thou-knowest-that-i-believe/>.

28. David E. Bokovoy, "Ancient Temple Imagery in the Sermons of Jacob," in *Temple Insights: Proceedings of the Interpreter Matthew B. Brown Memorial Conference*, "The Temple on Mount Zion," eds. William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 171–86. Recently reprinted in the *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 46 (2021): 31–46, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/ancient-temple-imagery-in-the-sermons-of-jacob/>.

29. Joseph M. Spencer, *The Vision of All: Twenty-five Lectures on Isaiah in Nephi's Record* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2016), 167–78.

30. Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Studies, 2016), 57.

31. Val Larsen, "Hidden in Plain View: Mother in Heaven in Scripture," *SquareTwo*, Vol. 8 No. 2 (Summer 2015), <https://squaretwo.org/Sq2ArticleLarsenHeavenlyMother.html>.

dream and Nephi's vision, as Larsen has pointed out upon at least four occasions.³²

Much of the groundwork for scholarly studies on Mother in Heaven was laid by Margaret Barker in her many books about the temple³³ and by Kevin Christensen, who first brought her to the attention of Restoration scholars.³⁴ Daniel C. Peterson's work on this topic was seminal.³⁵ Studying Mother in Heaven imagery in the Book of Mormon would go a long way to countering the other, prominent, negative female symbol in the Book of Mormon: "the mother of abominations" and "the whore of all the earth" (1 Nephi 14:9–12). This is another potentially fruitful area of research not mentioned in *Book of Mormon Studies*.

Missing Discussion of Research Tools

A missing area in the appendix for would-be Book of Mormon scholars is a section on research tools. For example, WordCruncher³⁶ is an indispensable search tool for my scholarly research into the Book of Mormon and other documents³⁷ but is not mentioned in *Book of Mormon*

32. In addition to his "Hidden in Plain View" article, see Val Larsen, "First Visions and Last Sermons: Affirming Divine Sociality, Rejecting the Greater Apostasy," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 36 (2020): 44–51, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/first-visions-and-last-sermons-affirming-divine-sociality-rejecting-the-greater-apostasy/>; Val Larsen, "Josiah to Zoram to Sherem to Jarom and the Big Little Book of Omni," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 44 (2021): 226–35, 264, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/josiah-to-zoram-to-sherem-to-jarom-and-the-big-little-book-of-omni/>; and my forthcoming article in the *Interpreter*, co-authored with Val Larsen, "Theosis in the Book of Mormon: The Work and Glory of the Father, Mother and Son, and Holy Ghost."

33. For example, Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord: Volume 1: The Lady in the Temple* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2012). Note that Margaret Barker was featured in a YouTube.com video produced by the church and displayed on the official church YouTube.com channel about the temple. See "Temples through Time," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6a10hpWeZA>.

34. Kevin Christensen, "Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker's Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies," *Occasional Papers* 2 (2001), 1–94, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/paradigms-regained-survey-margaret-barkers-scholarship-and-its-significance-mormon-studies>.

35. Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 16–25, 80–81, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol9/iss2/4/>.

36. Available for free download at <https://wordcruncher.com/>.

37. See <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/wordcruncher/> for a long list of WordCruncher compatible documents.

Studies. WordCruncher lets one search, study, and analyze words or phrases in many helpful ways.

Another indispensable tool is the 1828 *Webster's Dictionary*.³⁸ Regardless of where they come down on the question of historicity, Book of Mormon scholars should be attentive to the meaning of English words used in the book at the time when it was first published. In my own reading of the book, a week rarely goes by without consulting this dictionary at least once or twice.

As a specialist in qualitative research, I have also found text management tools to be enormously useful. My favorite is NVivo,³⁹ which allows one to manage large volumes of textual material, as well as graphics and video. It does not generate interpretations of the data — that is the scholar's job — but it helps one tag and organize data and identify intertextual linkages that enrich the meaning of a passage or that develop themes across a set of related passages.

Though I do not pretend to be a scholar of Hebrew, Greek, or other ancient semitic languages, I do find some language tools helpful in my study of the Book of Mormon and the Bible. One free, online, go-to resource I use is the Polyglot Bible.⁴⁰ Most words in the Old and New Testaments are rendered in Hebrew or Greek and described and explained in English. When I question how a word or phrase in the Book of Mormon is used in the Old or New Testaments, I turn to the Polyglot Bible. Other similar tools are available, either freely or for purchase.

Another useful tool for believing scholars is the Scripture Citation Index.⁴¹ Each time a prophet, apostle, or other general authority cites a verse of scripture in a General Conference talk, that use is linked in this index, which includes conference addresses from 1942 onward, plus *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* and the complete *Journal of Discourses*. One lesson I have learned from using the Scripture Citation Index is that many, many verses of scripture have never been commented upon by Church authorities, especially in the Old Testament. But even in the Book of Mormon, entire chapters exist without authoritative comment (e.g., 2 Nephi 20; Alma 52 and 59; Helaman 1; and 3 Nephi 3) and many chapters have only one or a few references, meaning there are many comment-free verses to ponder. Even when there is a reference to

38. Available online at <https://webstersdictionary1828.com/>.

39. To purchase NVivo, visit <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/home>. They offer a free, one-week trial.

40. <https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/poly/>.

41. <https://scriptures.byu.edu>.

a particular verse, the authoritative commenter often offers a different interpretation than the one I am considering. This leaves much room for speculation, especially for theological research.

There are other useful research tools that could have been highlighted in the book, perhaps in the appendix, but were not.

The Gatekeeper Problem

Another problem with the book and its contents is that it feels somewhat inbred. I greatly admire much of the work done by the authors, but I also admire work done by other scholars not affiliated with the organizations in which the authors exercise gatekeeping power. The authors have been remarkably productive researchers and have made valuable contributions to our understanding of the Book of Mormon, but so have others unaffiliated with the Maxwell Institute, the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, the Latter-day Saint Theology Seminar, and the Academy of Book of Mormon Studies. The authors of *Book of Mormon Studies* complain⁴² about too restrictive gatekeeping and a lack of openness to alternative perspectives in the FARMS era. Whether those concerns have merit, the authors themselves generally include in their list of contemporary scholarship work primarily done by the authors and others affiliated with the organizations in which they serve as principals. The value of their survey would be greater if their canon of worthwhile research were more open and broader.

Summary

Book of Mormon Studies: An Introduction and Guide is a very useful history of and future agenda for Book of Mormon studies in the twenty-first century. It was written by Book of Mormon scholars and features new and continuing research on the Book of Mormon. While the scope of the work is more limited than it should be, I highly recommend the book for anyone who is a serious student of the Book of Mormon.

42. “Still more worrisome is a further temptation: to allow defense of the Book of Mormon to become a kind of gatekeeping *among* the saints. That is, far too often accusations are made by one believer about another. Whether they’re written and published or whether they’re just whispered into individual ears in quieter settings, such accusations should have no place in the field of Book of Mormon studies” (p. 75).

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