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True and Living

Daniel C. Peterson

Abstract: *What does it mean for the Church to be "true and living"? Is it prideful to make such a claim? Why is it important that the Church be both?*

In a revelation given through Joseph Smith at Hiram, Ohio, on 1 November 1831, just slightly more than a year and a half after the founding of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Lord characterized the Church as "the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased, speaking unto the church collectively and not individually" (Doctrine and Covenants 1:30).

It's a pretty stunning statement, especially given the tiny membership of the Church at the time. It had expanded rapidly from its formal organization on 6 April 1830 — by the date of the revelation the number of Latter-day Saints had reached perhaps as many as 2,000, largely owing to the assimilation of Sidney Rigdon's congregation in Kirtland, Ohio — but it remained a mere drop in the vast ocean of Christendom as a whole.

It can also be taken as a rather *offensive* statement. I recall a lengthy conversation that I had back in the early 1980s with my American downstairs neighbor in Egypt. A very friendly and kind man, he was the Lutheran pastor of the non-denominational expatriate church in the suburban town of Ma'adi, south of Cairo, and he had a lot of questions about our Latter-day Saint beliefs. They were questions that he had long suppressed out of, I suppose, a desire not to rupture our friendship. Now, though, he and his family and I and mine would soon be leaving Egypt, and he had decided that this was the time to put those questions to me.

At one point in our discussion, we turned to the subject of the "Great Apostasy," which is unavoidably entailed by the claim of a Restoration. Suddenly he asked, with some visible emotion, "Do you mean to say that there was nothing of any value in Christian history between the passing of the ancient apostles and 1820? That there is no truth in my church?"

I quickly assured him that was not at *all* what I meant to say. I can easily see, though, why an outsider might take it to mean essentially just that, and I don't think that my attempt at assurance was entirely successful. Consider, for example, such familiar scriptural passages as this one:

> I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: "they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof." (Joseph Smith—History 1:19)

Did Joseph Smith understand the Lord's statement to him in the Sacred Grove as declaring the doctrines of other Christian churches to be completely false? Some may point to a later teaching where that seems to be the case:

> The old Catholic church traditions are worth more than all you have said. Here is a principle of logic that most men have no more sense than to adopt. I will illustrate it by an old apple tree. Here jumps off a branch and says, I am the true tree, and you are corrupt. If the whole tree is corrupt, are not its branches corrupt? If the Catholic religion is a false religion, how can any true religion come out of it? If the Catholic church is bad, how can any good thing come out of it?[1]

So, was he saying that Christendom beyond the Restoration is entirely false, both root and branch? That, since the Catholic Church is completely bad, its Protestant offspring must therefore also be totally false and bad? It seems clear that he did not:

1. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1949), 6:478, archive.org/details/church-history-vol.-6_202006/page/478/mode/2up.

> 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."[2]

Or, as another report of that discourse cites him, "If the Presbyterians have any truth, embrace that. If the Baptists and Methodists have truth, embrace that too."[3] In comments given on 22 January 1843 in Nauvoo, Illinois, he remarked that "We don't ask any people to throw away any good they have got; we only ask them to come and get more."[4] "If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy," reads the thirteenth Article of Faith, "we seek after these things." Surely such things, worthy of being sought after, can be found in denominations other than just The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

It seems obvious that Joseph plainly doesn't seem to be saying that the Church holds an exclusive monopoly on the truth. Nor do I see any reason to think that he believed the Church to possess all truth: There is no peculiarly Latter-day Saint doctrine of, say, the origin of homochirality in biomolecules, no official position on whether black holes produce thermal radiation, or whether a four-dimensional topological sphere can have two or more inequivalent smooth structures, nor any specific Church teaching on the precise reasons for the Western Roman Empire's collapse (e.g., whether barbarian pressure, economic stagnation, political corruption, internal division, some combination of the four, or something else altogether).

I do think it fair and accurate to declare that the Church claims to possess all of the truth or, perhaps better, all of the *truths* necessary for salvation and exaltation (as well as all of the necessary authority to perform the ordinances of salvation and exaltation).

But is there more to be said about the divine declaration that the Church is "true and living"? I think that there is, and that there is

2. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1949), 5:517, archive.org/details/church-history-vol.-5/page/516/mode/2up.
3. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 234, archive.org/details/wordsofjosephsmi0000unse/page/234/mode/2up.
4. *History of the Church*, 5:259, archive.org/details/church-history-vol.-5/page/258/mode/2up.

probably much more that we don't yet comprehend. I'll suggest a few thoughts in what follows here.

What is *True*?

First, let's consider the adjective *true*. Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary, which is a pretty good guide to the English used by Joseph Smith and in the Doctrine and Covenants, offers multiple definitions for the word *true*,[5] among them:

> Conformable to fact; being in accordance with the actual state of things . . .
>
> Free from falsehood . . .
>
> Exact; right to precision; conformable to a rule or pattern; as a true copy; a true likeness of the original. . . .
>
> Not false or pretended; real; as, Christ was the true Messiah.

All of these seem applicable and appropriate to what is being claimed at Doctrine and Covenants 1:30. But there are some other meanings given by Webster to which I want to call attention. The first of them is:

> Genuine; pure; real; not counterfeit, adulterated or false; as *true* balsam; the *true* bark; *true* love of country; a *true* christian.
>
> —The *true* light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. John 1:9.

This seems to me quite salient. One of the ideas being asserted at Doctrine and Covenants 1:30 seems to me, inarguably, to be the proposition that this Church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—is the genuine article, the real thing, not a counterfeit. That remains a breathtaking declaration, and it is closely related to another of the definitions supplied by Webster:

> Rightful; as, George IV is the *true* king of England.

But the definition upon which I want to concentrate a little bit more is this one:

> Faithful; steady in adhering to friends, to promises, to a

5. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: S. Converse, 1828), s.v. "true", webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/true.

> prince or to the state; loyal; not false, fickle or perfidious; as a *true* friend; a *true* lover; a man *true* to his king, *true* to his country, *true* to his word; a husband *true* to his wife; a wife *true* to her husband; a servant *true* to his master; an officer *true* to his charge.

The modern English word *true* originates from the Old English *trēowe* ("faithful," "trustworthy") and ultimately from the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root **deru-*, meaning "to be firm, solid, steadfast." (Our word *durable* has the same origin.) Interestingly, **deru-* is also connected to the PIE root for *tree* or *wood* (*dóru*), which was probably taken to imply something solid, reliable, and genuine. The etymological history of *true* is closely connected, too, with words such as *trust* and the archaic *troth* (referring to faith, fidelity, or a pledge), which derive from the same Germanic root, and to concepts of faithfulness, honesty, steadfastness, and reality.

The text of the wedding vows from the "Sarum rite" at Salisbury Cathedral—which largely formed the basis of the 1549 *Anglican Book of Common Prayer*—is interesting here:

> I N[ame] take the[e] N[ame] to my weddyd wyf, to have and to hold fro thys day forwarde, for better for wors, for richer for porer, in sikenesse and in helthe, tyl deth us departe, yf holy Chyrche wyl it ordeyne; and thereto I plyght the my trouthe [pledge thee my troth].
>
> I N[ame] take the[e] N[ame] to my weddyd husbonde, to have and to hold fro thys day forwarde, for better for wurs, for richere, for porer, in sikenesse and in helthe, to be bonoure and buxum ["good/fair and obedient/pliant" ("bonny" from French *bon*; "buxom," meaning "compliant")] in bed and at bord, tyll deth us departe, yf holy Chyrche wyl it ordeyne; and therto I plyght the my trouth.[6]

My choice of this marital illustration is very deliberate, because it gets to the heart of what I want to say here. On more than one occasion in the Bible, the relationship between the Lord, on the one hand, and Israel or the Church, on the other, is compared to the relationship between a husband and a wife.

Thus, for example, in what surely must be reckoned among the most disagreeable ecclesiastical callings ever issued (you think service in

6. "Marriage Vows," *Wikipedia*, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marriage_vows.

the nursery is tough?), the prophet Hosea was commanded to marry the prostitute Gomer as a living allegory (see Hosea 1). Their marriage symbolized the Lord's relationship with unfaithful Israel, where the people's idolatry is treated as spiritual adultery, and Hosea's painful experience mirrors God's own heartbreak. Gomer's predictable infidelity thereafter is followed by Hosea's being commanded to buy her back and to love her again (Hosea 3), which illustrates the Lord's persistent and redemptive love for his people despite their repeated straying.

It is in this context that the Savior's teaching is to be properly understood:

> Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign. (Matthew 12:38–39)
>
> A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign. (Matthew 16:4)

Were there actual, literal, adulterers standing there among Christ's audience of critical Pharisees and Sadducees? Very likely.[7] But the Savior's focus seems to have been on spiritual unfaithfulness, spiritual infidelity, the betrayal of God and our covenants in favor of selfish gratification or some sort of worldly alternative.

When, at Doctrine and Covenants 1:30, the Lord pronounces the Church "true and living," I believe that he's declaring it genuinely his and recognizing its faithfulness to him. It is "true" in analogy to the way that a faithful wife is true to her husband, or a faithful husband to his wife. This is much more and much deeper than merely affirming a creed or agreeing with a list of propositions.

What is *Living*?

So, what about the adjective *living*? The Lord describes his Church as both "true *and* living."

It's certainly possible for something to be genuine and *dead*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, however, is *living*, which means, drawing upon some of the characteristics that are commonly

7. "Whenever you see a man seeking after a sign, you may set it down that he is an adulterous man." Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 157.

used to describe life, that it grows and that, in a metaphorical sense, it metabolizes nutrients, converting them into energy. It responds to stimuli and it engages with and adapts to its environment — which means, yes, that, like living biological organisms, it evolves over time; it changes.

But, and this is vitally important, it remains *true*. I've always loved the phrase *semper reformanda*, which emerged out of the Protestant Reformation. Meaning "always reforming," it comes from the longer motto *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei* ("the reformed church, always reforming according to the Word of God"). The idea behind the phrase is simply that Christian churches must examine themselves continually to ensure that they are aligned with scripture.

The need for continual "reformation" — or, if you will, for "course correction" — seems an obvious one. Everything in our world is subject to entropy, to degenerative change and decay. Even merely driving down a straight highway, a driver needs constantly to work the steering wheel of her automobile so that she doesn't end up in a ditch on one side of the road or driving into oncoming traffic on the other.

What advantage, though, does The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints possess for remaining true to its Lord? It isn't dependent for its direction and guidance merely upon arguments that are based upon the scholarly perusal of ancient documents written in ancient languages for dramatically different cultures. It isn't a wife trying to remain faithful to the wishes and desires of a long-absent and uncommunicating spouse. It's not attempting to discern today's will of a master who, apart from a written testament deposited centuries ago, hasn't been heard from in many centuries. It is led by living prophets and apostles who receive ongoing guidance from a still-present, still-speaking Lord. That is why it is importantly and divinely described as both "true and living."

A Blessing and a Treasure

We Latter-day Saints have been blessed with a greatly enlarged canon of scripture. Not only that, but we enjoy the blessing of an *open* canon. One of the purposes of The Interpreter Foundation is to delight in the riches of the treasure that has been given to us — to celebrate it, deepen understanding of it, strengthen appreciation for it, and defend it against its critics.

This volume of the journal — its sixty-seventh — offers a wide

variety of insights from faithful Latter-day Saint writers and even a non-member author. I'm grateful for their offerings. I'm also deeply grateful for the reviewers, source checkers, editors, and donors who have made this volume possible. In particular, I thank Allen Wyatt, Godfrey Ellis, Brant S. Gardner, and Rebecca Reynolds Lambert for their dedicated editorial work on the contents of this volume. This journal and The Interpreter Foundation as a whole have been created and are largely sustained by the devoted contributions of volunteers and unpaid authors. For all that they do for *Interpreter* and, for that matter and much more fundamentally, toward the building of the Kingdom, I thank them.

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Historical and Stylometric Evidence for the Authorship of Doctrine and Covenants 132

Paul J. Fields, Steven T. Densley Jr., Matthew Roper, and Larry Bassist

Abstract: *This paper examines the claim that Joseph Smith was not the author of the verses in Doctrine and Covenants 132 related to the doctrine of plural marriage. Our examination first describes the current controversy on the authorship of section 132. We next present historical evidence on the provenance of this section. We then present stylometric evidence on the possible authorship of the text. While it has been asserted that Brigham Young or perhaps some other individual was the author of section 132, our examination provides solid support for the Church's claimed origin of the section. Our extensive statistical analyses indicate there is no stylometric evidence that Brigham Young or any other potential candidate provided the words in the text of the revelation.*

There is an ongoing debate over Joseph Smith's teachings about and involvement in plural marriage. Polygamy revisionists are currently asserting that Joseph Smith did not practice polygamy and that the revelation on plural marriage documented in Doctrine and Covenants 132 was added to the text sometime after his death. Some have suggested that Brigham Young was the author of the words related to plural marriage. For example, Richard and Pamela Price state:

> Those familiar with Joseph Smith's prophetic linguistic style have long recognized that Section 132 *just does not sound like him* when compared to other prophecies by him in the

> Doctrine and Covenants. In his private writings and letters, Joseph's style is remarkably erudite, poetic, upbeat, and greathearted. And his verifiable prophetic writings that were published by the Church during his lifetime are known for their marvelous ideation and spiritual majesty. The above words [Doctrine and Covenants 132] . . . do not flow melodically, nor do the ideas build empirically to an uplifting crescendo, as do Joseph's. Instead, they are delivered haltingly and grate at the listener's sensibilities. They sound as if they were authored by a man whose writings are known for their desultory and gruff style. They sound like the words of Brigham Young.[1]

We examine the issues related to the authorship of Doctrine and Covenants 132 in three parts:

- Part One: Current Controversy About the Authorship
- Part Two: Historical Evidence for Authorship
- Part Three: Authorial Stylometric Analysis

It is the goal and purpose of this paper to evaluate the claims regarding the authorship of section 132, both from a historical and a stylometric perspective, taking into consideration not only the claims that someone other than Joseph Smith is the source of the text, but also the claim that the revelation was received years earlier than when it was transcribed.

Part One: Current Controversy About the Authorship of Section 132

Among the various groups of people on the Internet who discuss issues related to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are groups that are sometimes called "polygamy deniers."[2] The term

1. Richard Price and Pamela Price, *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy* (Independence, MO: Price Publishing, 2000), 3:226. The entire book is available, online, as *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy Online*, restorationbookstore.org/pages/joseph-smith-fought-polygamy-online. (The online version is the one that is referenced throughout this paper.) In support of their position, the Prices direct the reader to see Enid S. DeBarthe, "Who Wrote Section 132," an appendix in *A Bibliography on Joseph Smith II the Mormon Prophet-Leader* (qualifying paper, Northern Illinois University, July 1969), 289–348, salemthoughts.com/Topics/LDS_D&C-132_Writing_Style_Analysis-by_Enid_DeBarthe.pdf.
2. Mark Tensmeyer has referred to the belief that Joseph Smith only had one

"polygamy deniers" may be a bit confusing since they do not deny that polygamy was practiced among early Church members. Rather, they deny that Joseph practiced it. A more accurate term might be "polygamy revisionists," since they seek to revise the common understanding of how polygamy came to be practiced among early members of the Church. These groups hold that Joseph never practiced polygamy and, in fact, fought against it. The practice of polygamy in the Church, they claim, was promoted after Joseph's death by Brigham Young and carried on by his successors.

However, Joseph Smith is reported to have said "as early as 1831, that plural marriage was a correct principle . . . but that the time had not come to teach or practice it in the Church, but that the time would come."[3]

The beginnings of the controversy

Members of the Church were accused of practicing polygamy as early as when the first revelation on the subject was given. According to Brian and Laura Hales, "The *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, printed in Utica, New York, reported in their February 5, 1831, issue: 'They [the early Saints] have all things in common, and dispense with the marriage covenant.' "[4] The Hales speculate, "These accusations were most likely the result of critics mistakenly confusing the Church's early efforts to live the law of consecration with communal efforts of other frontier religious groups that extended their sharing of all things to include marital partners."[5] The Hales also note that "Joseph Smith was working with Genesis in February and March of 1831, where he would have found accounts of polygamous patriarchs like Abraham and Jacob." Furthermore, they note that "Joseph B. Noble recalled in 1883: 'The Prophet Joseph told him that the doctrine

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wife as the "Monogamist Model" and to a person who would follow this model as a "polygamy skeptic." Mark Tensmeyer, " 'Old Wom[e]n's Tales' versus the Historical Verification of Joseph Smith's Polygamy," in Cheryl L. Bruno, ed., *Secret Covenants: New Insights on Early Mormon Polygamy* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2024), 46.

3. Recalled by Orson Pratt in "Report of Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith," *Millennial Star* 50 (16 December 1878): 788, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/MStar/id/27192. *See also* Brian Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Volume 1, History* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 83–88.
4. Brian Hales and Laura Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), 32.
5. Hales and Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*, 32.

of celestial marriage was revealed to him while he was engaged on the work of translation of the scripture, but when the communication was first made, the Lord stated that the time for the practice of that principle had not arrived.' "[6]

While there is historical evidence that the Prophet's revelatory understanding of plural marriage may be traced to as early as 1831, Joseph Smith's first attempt to practice the doctrine took place later. Precisely when this took place is still the subject of some debate.[7] According to historian Don Bradley, "one influential view places the relationship's beginning quite early — in spring 1833 — while other interpreters suggest 1835."[8] After careful analysis, Bradley concludes that the first plural marriage took place in mid-1836.[9]

Around the same time, the earliest public denial that the Church was practicing polygamy came in the form of a "Statement on Marriage," a non-revelatory document that was incorporated as section 101 of the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. It has been attributed to Oliver Cowdery, perhaps with assistance from William W. Phelps, and was adopted by the Church in August 1835 while Joseph was out of town.[10] The relevant portion reads as follows: "Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again."[11] Joseph F. Smith reported

6. Hales and Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding,* 31–32.
7. Brian Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 1:85–126; Don Bradley, " 'Dating Fanny Alger': The Chronology and Consequences of a Proto-Polygamous Relationship," in *Secret Covenants*, 143–89.
8. Bradley, " 'Dating' Fanny Alger," 144.
9. Bradley, " 'Dating' Fanny Alger," 189.
10. Doctrine and Covenants, 1835, p. 251, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/259#620402959664369870 4. See also Ryan Combs, Brian Passantino, and the Consultation Services team, "Ask Us: Top Five Reference Questions about Doctrine and Covenants Publishing," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 26 February 2021, history.churchofjesuschrist.org/blog/ask-us-top-five-reference-questions-about-doctrine-and-covenants-publishing.
11. Doctrine and Covenants, 1835, p. 251, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/doctrine-and-covenants-1835/259. This statement was retained in the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, which was published shortly after Joseph Smith died, but it was removed in the 1876 edition. For further discussion of so-called denials of polygamy by Joseph Smith, including the 1835 Statement on Marriage, see Brian C. Hales, " 'Denying

that Brigham Young had said that Oliver Cowdery wrote it and insisted on it being inserted into the Doctrine and Covenants, "contrary to the thrice expressed wish and refusal of the Prophet Jos. Smith."[12]

Denials of polygamy continued after the death of Joseph. As Mark Tensmeyer relates, "The best-known polygamy skeptic was Joseph's son and namesake, Joseph Smith III, who famously declared in his inaugural address as president of the RLDS Church, 'I believe my father was a good man, a good man never could have promulgated such doctrine.' "[13]

Richard and Pamela Price, part of a break-off movement from the RLDS church in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, were major advocates of the theory that Joseph Smith was not a polygamist. The break-off movement "proclaim[s] the original doctrine of the RLDS Church and support[s] the independent Restoration branches that consider themselves to be the orthodox portion of that Church."[14] In 2000, the Prices self-published a book entitled *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy* and later created a website that made the book available at no cost.[15] In 2017, Brian Hales identified Richard and Pamela Price as foremost among modern proponents of the theory that Joseph Smith was not a polygamist.[16] Notably, Professor Matthew Bowman has shown that the leadership of the Community of Christ (known as the RLDS church until April 2001), now acknowledges that Joseph Smith was a polygamist.[17]

More recently, a variety of other proponents of the theory have emerged, perhaps fueled by the advent of self-publishing platforms

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the Undeniable': Examining Early Mormon Polygamy Renunciations," *Journal of Mormon History* 44, no. 3 (July 2018): 23–44; and Brian C. Hales, "Joseph Smith: Monogamist or Polygamist?," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Belief and Scholarship* 25 (2017): 117–56, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/joseph-smith-monogamist-or-polygamist/.

12. Joseph F. Smith, "Diary, 9 Oct. 1869"in *Journal of Discourses,* 7 July 1878, 20:29.
13. Mark Tensmeyer, "Old Wom[e]n's Tales," 46, quoting Joseph Smith, Heman C. Smith, and F. Henry Edwards, eds., *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* (Independence, MO: Herald House, 1967), 3:248.
14. "Who We Are," Restoration Bookstore (website), restorationbookstore.org/pages/who-we-are.
15. See Price and Price, "Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy."
16. Hales, "Joseph Smith: Monogamist or Polygamist?," 117.
17. Matthew Bowman, "Why More and More Mormon Types Are Denying Joseph Smith Practiced Polygamy," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 June 2024, sltrib.com/religion/2024/06/23/matthew-bowman-why-more-more/.

such as blogs, YouTube, and Kindle books. Professor Bowman identifies Denver Snuffer, leader of the Remnant movement, as "one of today's most prominent polygamy deniers."[18] Bowman also identifies the makers of the documentary, "Who Killed Joseph Smith?," as being members of this movement.[19] This is a claim that finds support in the fact that others who subscribe to the theory are featured on the "Who Killed Joseph Smith?" website, such as self-published author Whitney Horning[20] and YouTube personality Michelle Stone.[21] The documentary film, "Who Killed Joseph Smith?," was directed by Justin Griffin and argues that Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, were murdered by John Taylor and Willard Richards, who were acting on orders of Brigham Young, rather than by a mob.[22]

Of these various individuals, it seems that Michelle Stone has become the most prominent. However, it is difficult to tell how influential her videos are. By one measure, she has an extraordinarily high number of followers. At this time, the YouTube site, "132 Problems: Revisiting Mormon Polygamy," has 118,000 subscribers.[23] By

18. Bowman, "Why More and More."
19. Bowman, "Why More and More."
20. Whitney Horning, *Joseph Smith Revealed: A Faithful Telling: Exploring an Alternate Polygamy Narrative* (self-pub, 2019). "We may never know the complete truth behind D&C section 132. It is possible that it is a compilation of several revelations given to Joseph Smith, woven together after his death, with additions and alterations by those who believed in, lived, and taught plurality of wives." (p. 124)
21. Who Killed Joseph Smith? (website), whokilledjosephsmith.com/event-speakers/. It is also interesting to note that, although the movie itself presents no motive for the conspiracy to kill Joseph Smith, its makers now seem to believe that the motive was related to polygamy: "On the day of the documentary premiere, the Facebook page for Who Killed Joseph Smith? posted, 'But there is a third new alternative emerging: Those who still believe Joseph saw God but also believe the historical evidence proves he never practiced polygamy.' " Hanna Seariac, "Conspiracy as History: 'Who Killed Joseph Smith?' as a Case Study," *Public Square Magazine*, 18 January 2022, publicsquaremag.org/faith/leadership/conspiracy-as-history-who-killed-joseph-smith-as-a-case-study/.
22. Craig L. Foster, "What Weapon Was Joseph Smith Using to Shoot John Taylor? Review of the Recent Film 'Who Killed Joseph Smith?,' " *FAIR*, 18 January 2022, fairlatterdaysaints.org/blog/2022/01/18/what-weapon-was-joseph-smith-using-to-shoot-john-taylor-review-of-the-recent-film-who-killed-joseph-smith.
23. Michelle B. Stone, "132 Problems: Revisiting Mormon Polygamy," *YouTube*, youtube.com/@MichelleBStone. Note that on 4 May 2025, Stone announced that she would stop posting new material. Her videos are no longer publicly accessible. Michelle Stone, "The website is still up and people who want to can

comparison to other YouTube channels, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" has 2.46 million subscribers;[24] the Church's "General Conference" channel has 634,000;[25] "Come Unto Christ" has 509,000 followers;[26] and "Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ" has 361,000.[27] The next largest YouTube channel is "Mormon Stories," with 289,000 subscribers.[28] "Scripture Central" has 278,000 subscribers;[29] "Don't Miss This" has 235,000 subscribers;[30] the "Church Newsroom" has 227,000;[31] and "Saints Unscripted" has 91,000 subscribers.[32] Stone's numbers have been called into question on the basis that she had a spike in viewers and does not have a significant number of viewers for each episode in comparison with the number of subscribers.[33]

While Stone and others have been gaining attention and appear to have attracted a strong following for their views, recent survey research indicates that, so far, these most recent polygamy revisionists have not been very convincing. A recent survey of current and former Latter-day Saints conducted by the B. H. Roberts Foundation found that "nearly all members know that Joseph Smith practiced polygamy."[34] However, the percentage of "people who overtly dis-

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easily go there to request any episodes," *Facebook*, 7 May 2025, facebook.com/michelle.stone.9674. See also Michelle Stone, interview by Louise Perry, *Maiden Mother Matriarch*, June 2025, louiseperry.co.uk/podcast.

24. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *YouTube*, youtube.com/@churchofjesuschrist.
25. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ," *YouTube*, youtube.com/@churchofjesuschristgeneralconf.
26. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Church of Jesus Christ | Come Unto Christ," *YouTube*, youtube.com/@ComeUntoChrist.
27. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ," *YouTube*, youtube.com/@BookofMormonVideos.
28. Mormon Stories, *YouTube*, youtube.com/@mormonstories.
29. Scripture Central, *YouTube*, youtube.com/@scripturecentralofficial.
30. Don't Miss This, *YouTube*, youtube.com/@DontMissThis.
31. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Church Newsroom," *YouTube*, youtube.com/@churchnewsroom.
32. Saints Unscripted, *YouTube*, youtube.com/@SaintsUnscripted.
33. See Mormon News Roundup, "Michelle Stone Exposed: Debunking Her Polygamy Claims & Subscriber Scandal | Mormon News Roundup," YouTube video, 15:33, 29 January 2025, youtube.com/watch?v=nz-K7ScyLXk.
34. Stephen Cranney and Josh Coates, "How Big is Joseph Smith Polygamy Denialism in the Church? Insights from the B. H. Roberts Foundation's Current and Former Latter-day Saint Survey," *Times and Seasons* (blog), 20 March 2024, timesandseasons.org/index.php/2024/03/how-big-is-joseph-smith

agree with the idea that Joseph Smith practiced polygamy are in the single digits."[35]

Nevertheless, while the arguments of the revisionists have never gained widespread acceptance, they have persisted since the early days of the Church and show no signs of fading. In fact, in an apparent response to criticism that polygamy revisionists cannot point to reliable academic literature in their support, a new journal has been created with the stated mission to "foster a respectful, inclusive, and scholarly dialogue that bridges divides between credentialed historians and grassroots researchers, while adhering to high academic standards."[36] For that reason, it is worthwhile to examine the arguments and respond to them. Perhaps in response to the recent activity among polygamy revisionists, the Church recently posted the following statement: "Joseph Smith introduced the practice, not Brigham Young. Credible contemporary sources document Joseph's practice of plural marriage. Later, many faithful men and women who knew of Joseph's practice of plural marriage gave sworn testimony of it."[37]

Claims of polygamy revisionists

Mark Tensmeyer's research compiles the arguments in support of the conclusion that Joseph was *not* a polygamist:

- All revelation and statements on Church policy issued during the Prophet's lifetime prohibited polygamy, including the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants that was nearly finished printing at the time of Smith's martyrdom in June 1844.

-polygamy-denialism-in-the-church-insights-from-the-b-h-roberts-foundations-current-and-former-latter-day-saint-survey/. The full study can be found at "B. H. Roberts Foundation: 2023 Current and Former Latter-day Saint Survey," B. H. Roberts Foundation, 2023, bhroberts.org/2023CFLDS_Methodology_.pdf.

35. Cranney and Coates, " How Big is Joseph Smith Polygamy Denialism in the Church?"
36. "About the Journal," *Journal of Mormon Polygamy*, journalofmormonpolygamy.org/jmp/about. The first issue feature articles by Michelle Stone and Jeremy Hoop. *Journal of Mormon Polygamy* 1, no. 1 (1 April 2025), journalofmormonpolygamy.org/jmp/issue/view/3.
37. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, s.v. "Plural Marriage," Topics and Questions, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/plural-marriage.

- It would have been out of character for Smith both to have practiced polygamy and to have been dishonest about it.
- Smith had denied being involved in secret polygamy several times, especially towards the end of his life. He tirelessly investigated and disciplined those in the church who were engaged in it.
- Smith's surviving immediate family denied he had other wives. Emma was adamant that she was his only wife. Joseph Smith III also had no knowledge of his father having plural wives or of having conflict with his mother.
- The conception of David Hyrum Smith shows Smith was virile up until the time of his death. If he had any plural wives, he would have fathered children with them. There is no hard evidence of any children born to Smith by any woman other than Emma.[38]

Tensmeyer continues:

> These points remain the main arguments of the Monogamist Model and form the first part of its narrative, the part that explains how Joseph Smith was not a polygamist. Any alternative polygamy origin narratives must, to be viable in theory, also include a counter narrative on how Mormon polygamy did come about. It is primarily in the counter narrative that the versions of the Monogamist Model differ.[39]

Central to that counter-narrative is the text of section 132.[40] From

38. Tensmeyer, "Old Wom[e]n's Tales," 46. On the issue of Joseph Smith's virility, Tensmeyer observes, "The premise that Joseph Smith would have produced a child with a plural wife, had he had any, requires assumptions beyond the historical record. That sexual relations occurred in at least some of the relationships is evident but the frequency of these encounters can only be speculated. Only a small minority of sexual encounters result in the conception of a child and not all conceptions lead to the birth of a verifiable child. There is simply not enough data about the prevalence of sexual relations to conclude with any confidence that the probability of there being a verifiable child is so great that the absence of one is cause to question the historical record. The high rate of infant mortality in Joseph's children in particular is also a factor. To illustrate, Emma was pregnant at least nine times and only had four children that lived past young childhood, the first of which was born five years into the marriage" (p. 46–47n6).
39. Tensmeyer, "Old Wom[e]n's Tales," 47.
40. In apparent recognition of this, Michelle Stone named her YouTube program as "132 Problems: Revising Mormon Polygamy," in clear reference to

the earliest days of the efforts to deny that Joseph engaged in polygamy, the position of the deniers has been that section 132 "is a complete fabrication."[41] But if Joseph Smith is indeed the author of section 132, all of the efforts to prove that Joseph Smith never engaged in polygamy are fatally undermined.[42] It would not matter, for example, that Joseph Smith has no known genetic descendants by any other wife but Emma, if Joseph Smith is indeed the author of section 132. Other evidence marshaled in favor of Joseph Smith not practicing polygamy largely consists of variations of the argument that since he denied having more than one wife, he must not have been a polygamist. This argument loses force and effect if Joseph Smith actually authored section 132 and simply kept the revelation and the practice of polygamy private, among a limited number of close confidants.

One of the main reasons that the origins of polygamy have been such a fruitful ground for speculation and conspiracy theories is that Joseph Smith's "writings and recorded instructions on plural marriage are limited to the revelation on celestial and plural marriage, Doctrine and Covenants 132."[43] Furthermore, this section is not written in Joseph Smith's handwriting, thus calling into question, in the minds of revisionists, whether it comes from Joseph Smith. While it is true that we do not have any evidence endorsing polygamy that was written by Joseph's hand, it is also true that we actually do not have much that was written by the hand of Joseph about anything. Joseph Smith's publications come to us mostly through scribes. The Joseph Smith Papers website explains:

> The majority of the time, Joseph Smith relied on scribes

section 132. *132 Problems: Revisiting Mormon Polygamy*, "1: Introductions | 132 Problems: Revisiting Mormon Polygamy," YouTube video, 13:14, 13 February 2022, youtube.com/watch?v=HKkK-1mgEkY.

41. Tensmeyer, "Old Wom[e]n's Tales," 48.
42. See, for example, Denver Snuffer's recounting of how he went from believing that Joseph Smith was a polygamist and that section 132 "was of God and true" to believing that section 132 cannot be trusted due to insufficient historical provenance. He concludes that "we have nothing to tie Joseph to the practice other than the enormous library of material that was generated years–decades after the death of Joseph Smith." *132 Problems: Revisiting Mormon Polygamy*, "81: Truth at All Costs w/ Denver Snuffer," YouTube video, 2:46:23, 27 August 2023, youtube.com/watch?v=exV5Dm0xSRc. Relevant material from 1:02:34 to 1:09:42.
43. Brian Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Volume 3, Theology* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 69. Hales further notes that "no accounts of a public discourse discussing plural marriage have been found" (p. 70).

> and clerks to compose, copy, or take down his dictation of the thousands of pages attributed to him, including sacred texts, correspondence, journals, histories, administrative records, and other documents. . . . Readers should bear in mind, however, that because a large portion of Joseph Smith documents survive as copies, there is not always a correlation between holographs and more direct access to Joseph Smith's mind. In some cases, documents not found in his handwriting may have a closer connection to Smith than texts in his own hand.[44]

We should, therefore, not be surprised when Joseph Smith's support for polygamy is found in the mouths or hands of others. Aside from the text of section 132, Brian Hales found that "to reconstruct [Joseph's] theological teachings one must . . . turn to men and women who personally heard Joseph speak . . . [as well as] the recollections of some individuals who were taught by numerous eyewitnesses."[45]

It should also not come as a surprise to find that those who practiced polygamy in the early days of the Church were quite secretive about it. Aside from violating social norms, *openly* cohabitating with more than one woman would have violated the law.

> The Illinois Criminal Code provided that, "Any man and woman who shall live together in an open state of adultery or fornication, or adultery and fornication, every such man and woman shall be indicted, and on conviction, shall be fined in any sum not exceeding two hundred dollars each, or imprisoned not exceeding six months."[46]

Bradshaw explained, "The term 'open' in this statute is a key element of this crime. The meaning of this term was then and still today is generally understood in law to cover conduct that is 'notorious,' 'exposed to public view,' or 'visible,' and which is 'not clandestine.' Joseph's relationships with his plural wives did not meet this definition."[47]

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44. "Documents in Joseph Smith's Handwriting," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/site/documents-in-joseph-smiths-handwriting.
45. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy,* 3:69.
46. M. Scott Bradshaw, "Defining Adultery under Illinois and Nauvoo Law," in *Sustaining the Law: Joseph Smith's Legal Encounters*, ed. Gordon A. Madsen, Jeffrey N. Walker, and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2014), 407, quoting Criminal Code, section 123, Revised Laws of Illinois; see also Criminal Jurisprudence, section 123, Revised Statutes of the State of Illinois.
47. Bradshaw, "Defining Adultery," 408, quoting *Black's Law Dictionary*, 6th ed.

This "open" standard for "adultery" remains the law in Illinois.[48] The standard was found to be met in the 1943 case of *People v. Potter*, where the court upheld a conviction under the statute, explaining:

> Their immoral life was so brazen and notorious that every neighbor was cognizant of it. Their lustful and clandestine impulses had attained such an arrogant stage that the two parties implicated defied the law and order, and decency of the Village of Sparta.[49]

It may be that Joseph Smith believed that he could not be prosecuted for adultery or fornication so long as the practice of polygamy was not "open and notorious."[50] This could help explain why we have no evidence of him openly advocating for polygamy, and why section 132 was not published until years later.[51]

Of course, Joseph Smith not only refrained from openly endorsing polygamy, by outward appearances he seems to have fought against it. Indeed, among those who deny that Joseph practiced polygamy,

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(St. Paul, MN: West Publishing, 1990), s.v. "open."

48. 720 ILL. COMP. STAT. 5/11–35 (2023).
49. *People v. Potter*, 319 Ill. App. 409, 416, 49 N.E.2d 307, 310 (Ill. App. Ct. 1943).
50. John Dinger takes the position that the way in which Joseph Smith's polygamist unions were carried out in Nauvoo put Joseph at risk of prosecution for adultery. John S. Dinger, "Nauvoo Polygamy and the Law: Statutory and Common Law Prohibitions," in *Secret Covenants*, 269, 279. Dinger claims that the Partridge and Lawrence sisters "were sexual partners of Smith, [lived] in his house, made part of his family circle, Emma was aware of it, and she and Joseph quarreled about it regularly" (p. 290). Dinger contends (pp. 281–82, 290) that these facts are like those in the divorce action of *Davis v. Davis*, 19 Ill. 334, 336 (1857). However, in the *Davis* case, Mr. Davis did not raise the defense that his actions were not "open." Instead, he admitted to adultery. There is no reason to think he could have raised the defense since he not only cohabited with his paramour but, unlike Joseph Smith, Mr. Davis fathered a child with her and confessed that fact to his niece and others. Therefore, the *Davis* case does not support the argument that Joseph was at risk of prosecution for adultery.
51. Dinger also argues that Joseph Smith may have kept his polygamist unions secret from a fear of criminal prosecution (Dinger, "Nauvoo Polygamy and the Law," 269–94). Dinger acknowledges that "whether Smith's polygamist unions would have been criminal is up for debate" (p. 282). He takes issue with M. Scott Bradshaw and Brian Hales, who argue that Joseph's polygamy was not illegal (pp. 291–93). A full analysis of these points is not appropriate here. However, even where there are viable defenses to a criminal charge, one may understandably maintain secrecy to avoid being prosecuted in the first place.

one of the most popular books is entitled, *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy*.[52]

Admittedly, it may be difficult to understand why, on the one hand, Joseph Smith was telling people he only had one wife,[53] and on the other, he was secretly telling people that it was time to restore this biblical practice. The Gospel Topics essay on "Plural Marriage" on the Church's website addresses this issue. The article explains that as rumors of polygamy spread, and as people began to engage in "spiritual wifery" without authorization from Joseph Smith, Joseph issued carefully worded denials. The Gospel Topics essay explains:

> Nevertheless, rumors [of polygamy] spread. A few men unscrupulously used these rumors to seduce women to join them in an unauthorized practice sometimes referred to as "spiritual wifery." When this was discovered, the men were cut off from the Church. The rumors prompted members and leaders to issue carefully worded denials that denounced spiritual wifery and polygamy but were silent about what Joseph Smith and others saw as divinely mandated "celestial" plural marriage. The statements emphasized that the Church practiced no marital law other than monogamy while implicitly leaving open the possibility that individuals, under direction of God's living prophet, might do so.[54]

Conclusion of Part One

While those who claim that Joseph Smith never supported polygamy argue that there is no evidence directly from Joseph Smith in this regard,[55] the obvious rejoinder to this is that section 132 came through

52. Price and Price, *Joseph Smith Fought Polygamy*.
53. "What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery and having seven wives when I can only find one." Joseph Smith, History, 1838–1856, volume F-1 [1 May 1844–8 August 1844], p. 66, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-f-1-1-may-1844-8-august-1844/66.
54. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo," Gospel Topics Essays, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/plural-marriage-in-kirtland-and-nauvoo.
55. As Mark Tennsmeyer notes, "Secrecy changes the landscape of historical analysis in many ways." Tensmeyer, "Old Wom[e]n's Tales," 55. He explains that when secrets are being kept, we should not expect plentiful public statements, and even private records are not common. Late recollections, and even dissenter sources, become more highly valued than usual. The Underground Railroad is an example of a historical reality with little contemporary support.

Joseph Smith. To paraphrase what Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said about the Book of Mormon,[56] if someone is to take the position that Joseph Smith was not a polygamist, it must be done by crawling over, under, or around section 132.

Since the document we now know as Doctrine and Covenants 132 was dictated to William Clayton, then copied by Joseph Kingsbury for Newel K. Whitney, who later delivered the copy to Brigham Young, there has been some room for speculation that the words are not those of Joseph Smith.[57] Consequently, in Part Two we examine the historical evidence for the authorship of Doctrine and Covenants 132. Then in Part Three we apply stylometry (analysis of word-use patterns) to examine the textual evidence for whether or not the authorial style in section 132 is close to Joseph Smith's style or to the style of Brigham Young or anyone else claimed to have been related to the origin of the text.

Part Two: Historical Evidence for the Authorship of Section 132

Part One of this article discussed the on-going controversy relating to the authorship of section 132. In this second part, we review historical evidence linking the revelation to Joseph Smith. We first discuss the earliest extant manuscripts of the revelation and the provenance of each. We also survey evidence from Nauvoo witnesses who reported seeing the revelation and or hearing it read. Then, we review evidence from the teachings on the revelation by Joseph and Hyrum Smith, as reported by their friends and even opponents of polygamy, followed by reports of their discourses in Nauvoo on the revelation.

Manuscripts of the revelation on marriage

We now turn to the historical description of the manuscripts containing

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The ceremonies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Freemasons is another example of historical practices with little contemporary documentation. In such cases, historians have relied primarily on late recollections or even antagonistic sources. In such cases, additional caution is warranted. But these sources should not be rejected out of hand.

56. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Safety for the Soul," *Ensign*, November 2009, 88, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2009/10/safety-for-the-soul.
57. The provenance of the surviving document is set forth here: Brian C. Hales, "The Provenance of D&C 132 Documented," *Mormon Polygamy Documents* (website), mormonpolygamydocuments.org/provenance-dc-132-documented/.

the revelation on marriage. Historical sources indicate that the first written copy of the revelation on marriage was recorded by William Clayton in July 1843. Clayton was a bookkeeper who joined the Church in Lancashire, England, in 1837. He immigrated to America in 1840 and settled with the Saints in Nauvoo. Following the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, he traveled west with the Saints to Utah, where he remained until his death in 1879. From 1842 to 1844 he served as a scribe and recorder for Joseph Smith. He remained a close associate of the Prophet who introduced this British convert to the practice of eternal and plural marriage.[58] Clayton wrote in his journal that he recorded a revelation from Joseph Smith on 12 July 1843:

> This A. M. I wrote a Revelation consisting of 10 pages on the order of the priesthood, showing the designs in Moses, Abrahm, David and Solomon having many wives and concubines &c. After it was wrote Presidents Joseph and Hyrum presented it and read it to E[mma] who said she did not believe a word of it and appeared very rebellious. Joseph told me to Deed all the unincumbered lots to E[mma] and the children. He appears much troubled about E[mma].[59]

In 1871, in a letter to Madison M. Scott, Clayton explained:

> I did write the Revelation on Celestial marriage given through the Prophet Joseph Smith on 12th of July 1843. When the revelation was written there was no one present except the Prophet Joseph, his brother Hyrum and myself. It was written in the small office upstairs in the rear of the brick store which stood on the banks of the Mississippi river. It took some three hours to write it. Joseph dictated sentence by sentence and I wrote it as he dictated. After the whole was written Joseph requested me to read it slowly and carefully, which I did, and he then pronounced it correct. The same night a copy was taken by Bishop Whitney, which copy is now here, and which I know and testify is correct.[60]

58. James B. Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear: The Story of William Clayton* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002).
59. William Clayton, *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 110.
60. William Clayton to Madison M. Scott, 11 November 1871, Church History Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/ab830b42-45c7-4c77-b32f-b1a1d76dfdfd/0/0.

Three years later, in 1874, Clayton provided additional details.

> On the morning of the 12th of July, 1843, Joseph and Hyrum Smith came into the office in the upper story of the brick store, on the bank of the Mississippi River. They were talking on the subject of plural marriage. Hyrum said to Joseph,
>
> "If you will write the revelation on celestial marriage, I will take and read it to Emma, and I believe I can convince her of its truth, and you will hereafter have peace." Joseph smiled and remarked, "You do not know Emma as well as I do." Hyrum repeated his opinion and further remarked, "The doctrine is so plain, I can convince any reasonable man or woman of its truth, purity or heavenly origin," or words to their effect. Joseph then said, "Well, I will write the revelation and we will see." He then requested me to get paper and prepare to write. Hyrum very urgently requested Joseph to write the revelation by means of the Urim and Thummim but Joseph, in reply, said he did not need to, for he knew the revelation perfectly from beginning to end.
>
> Joseph and Hyrum then sat down and Joseph commenced to dictate the revelation on celestial marriage, and I wrote it, sentence by sentence, as he dictated. After the whole was written, Joseph asked me to read it through, slowly and carefully, which I did, and he pronounced it correct. He then remarked that there was much more that he could write, on the same subject, but what was written was sufficient for the present.
>
> Hyrum then took the revelation to read to Emma. Joseph remained with me in the office until Hyrum returned. When he came back, Joseph asked him how he had succeeded. Hyrum replied that he had never received a more severe talking to in his life, that Emma was very bitter and full of resentment and anger.
>
> Joseph quietly remarked, "I told you, you did not know Emma as well as I did." Joseph then put the revelation in his pocket, and they both left the office.[61]

Not long after the Prophet dictated the revelation to Clayton

61. William Clayton affidavit, 16 February 1874, Church History Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d091310b-4d88-43dd-a141-bb7ec1579934/0/0.

(precisely when is not entirely clear), this original copy of the revelation was destroyed, either by Emma Smith or by Joseph Smith at his wife's insistent requests. Previous to that time, however, a second copy had been made and entrusted to the care of Bishop Newel K. Whtiney. Clayton affirmed in 1874 that this second copy and the one he had made in 1843 were identical.[62]

While Clayton's 1874 statement was more expansive and provides more details, taken together, his accounts of the event suggest the following points:

- Joseph, Hyrum, and William were all present at the time the revelation was dictated.
- Hyrum requested Joseph to dictate a copy in writing.
- The contents of the revelation were already well known to the Prophet even before it was dictated.
- The revelation discussed the order of the priesthood and plural marriage, including plural marriage involving Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon.
- It took about three hours for Joseph to dictate the revelation and Clayton to write it.
- Before it was completed, the Prophet carefully reviewed and checked the contents for accuracy.
- Either Hyrum or Hyrum and Joseph presented and read the revelation to Emma.
- Emma reportedly reacted poorly and rejected it.
- At the request of Bishop Newel K, Whitney, the Prophet allowed another copy to be made by Joseph Kingsbury.
- The Clayton copy was soon after destroyed.
- Clayton, after examining the Kingsbury copy in later years, affirmed that the contents were identical to the manuscript he made in 1843.

The contents of the revelation, which is now section 132, are based upon a copy of the document made by Joseph Kingsbury shortly after the Clayton document was made. Kingsbury made this copy directly from Clayton's original transcription. Bishop Newel K. Whtiney had the document in his possession until 1847, when he turned it over to President Brigham Young. This manuscript, which was the source text for the revelation that was published in 1852, and for its subsequent publication in the Doctrine and Covenants, has been carefully

62. William Clayton affidavit, 16 February 1874.

preserved in the Church archives. It is eight pages in length. In 1870, 1886, and 1892 Kingsbury provided statements explaining the origin of the manuscript, stating that he made the copy at the behest of Bishop Newel K. Whitney in July 1843, not long before the Clayton copy was destroyed.[63]

In an affidavit in 1870, Kingsbury stated that "on or about" 15 July 1843 in Nauvoo he "wrote the Revelation on Celestial or plural marriage from the mouth of Bishop Newl K. Whitney as he read from the original, which was in his possession." He also affirmed that "the same, as published in the Deseret News Extra of September fourteenth 1852 is a true copy of the original."[64] In a second affidavit from 1886 he stated:

> I will say that Bishop Newel K. Whitney handed me the Revelation above referred to on either the day it was written or the day following, and stating what it was asked me to take a copy of it. I did so, and then read my copy of it to Bishop Whitney, who compared it with the original which he held in his hand while I read to him. When I had finished reading, Bishop Whitney pronounced the copy correct, and Hyrum Smith coming into the room at the time to fetch the original. Bishop Whitney handed it to him. I will also state that this copy, as also the original are identically the same as published in the present edition [1876] of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.[65]

In a third statement, made in 1892, Kingsbury provided additional details:

> I went into a room by myself,—a divided place,—a place that was divided,—I went off in there by myself, and copied

63. Joseph C. Kingsbury Affidavit, 7 March 1870, Affidavits about Celestial Marriage, 1869–1915, Book 2, 1870, 1903, Church History Library, bhroberts.org/records/S5HjRj-f3KLkk/affidavit_from_joseph_c_kingsbury_indicates_he_copied_the_plural_marriage_revelation_on_ca_july_15_1843; Joseph C. Kingsbury Affidavit, 22 May 1886, Church History Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/1b5004ff-5aa4-4da8-a087-4c82ea9f06a2/0/0; Joseph Kingsbury Testimony, Salt Lake City, Utah Territory, 17 March 1892, question 19, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints v. Church of Christ of Independence, Missouri, et al., United States Testimony, Church History Library.

64. Kingsbury Affidavit, 7 March 1870.

65. Kingsbury Affidavit, 22 May 1886.

> it,—that is I copied the revelation on plural marriage that he handed me, and just as I got through the copying of it, Hyrum Smith came in and wanted the revelation,—the original revelation was what he wanted. He came in to see how I got along with it,—That is Bishop Whitney did, and then he went out, and told Hyrum Smith that he would hand him the revelation in a few minutes, for I was not quite through the copying of it. Well when I got through making the copy, I took the one I had made myself and read it and he took the original and read it at the same time to see if I had made any mistakes, and that it was correct, and when he found that it was all correct he took the one that I had made and went out to the door and handed it to Hyrum Smith who was outside of the door ready to take it.[66]

Evidence from the Kingsbury manuscript lends support for the accuracy of his 1892 memory about his transcription of the document.[67] On page 7, the second to last page, there is a supra linear insertion of the words "and have said they were pure" (Doctrine and Covenants 132:52). On the last page there are also two of these as well, including the words "is he justified" (v. 61) and four more lines down a word is crossed out and the word "bear" (v. 63) is inserted above the word that is struck out. There are no earlier examples of such corrections in the manuscript. These appear on the last two pages, suggesting that Kingsbury may have been in a hurry to complete his transcription. This is consistent with what Kingsbury recalled about Hyrum Smith wanting to retrieve the original a few minutes before the task was complete. The editors of the Joseph Smith Papers observe that in the middle of what is now verse 61 "there is a significant shift in the handwriting style

66. Joseph Kingsbury Testimony, Salt Lake City, Utah Territory, 17 March 1892, question 19, Church History Library.

67. In 1980 Danel W. Bachman observed that "the lettering in the revelation is somewhat stronger and bolder than that of the 1878 correspondence, and is more deliberate and careful than that which appears in the journal extract, strengthens the notion that the revelation is the earliest of the Kingsbury documents." Danel W. Bachman, "The Authorship of the Manuscript of Doctrine and Covenants Section 132," in *A Sesquicentennial Look at Church History. Sidney B. Sperry Symposium, 26 January 1980* (Church Educational System, Brigham Young University [BYU], 1980), 33. See also Bachman, "A Study of the Mormon Practice of Plural Marriage Before the Death of Joseph Smith" (master's thesis, Purdue University, 1975), 207–11.

. . . likely reflecting Kingsbury's haste to finish the copy."[68] The writing is visibly smaller in size beginning at this point, as if the scribe was trying to fit the remainder of the text onto the page.[69]

Horace Whitney recorded that his father, Newel K. Whitney had him make a copy of the Kingsbury manuscript in 1847. Horace noted in his journal, "Sunday the 14th.—By Father's request, went and copied an important document, which took the greater part of the day & night."[70] An additional copy has been preserved in the hand of Willard Richards "likely before leaving Nauvoo in 1846 but certainly before 1854 when he died."[71]

Joseph's and Hyrum Smith's teachings as reported by friends and opponents

On 12 August 1843, one month after a copy of the revelation on eternal marriage was transcribed, the Prophet's brother and Church Patriarch, Hyrum Smith, shared the revelation with members of the high council.[72] Of those fifteen that were present at this meeting, there exists direct testimony from seven including James Allred, David Fullmer, Thomas Grover, Aaron Johnson, Leonard Soby, Austin Cowles, and

68. "Revelation, 12 July 1843 [D&C 132]," *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents Volume 12: March–July 1843*, ed. David W. Grua, et al. (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2021), 477n640.
69. Clayton's journal entry states that the revelation Joseph Smith dictated was ten pages. Kingsbury's manuscript is eight. It is possible that Clayton's handwriting in the original (now destroyed) manuscript was slightly larger, taking up more space on the paper than that found in Kingsbury's copy. It seems safe to conclude that the Kingsbury manuscript from which we derive the contents of section 132 was *not longer* than Clayton's had been. This casts doubt upon any theory suggesting that Clayton's copy was a corrupted and more expansive version of what the Prophet dictated on 12 July 1843. Both Clayton and Kingsbury affirmed that the Kingsbury version was a faithful copy.
70. Horace Whitney Journal, 14 March 1847, Church History Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d6546b00-e1a7-47c1-8554-bbe481467f5a/0/3. "The revelation on plural marriage was the 'document' referred to, the bishop having the only one in existence, which he afterwards gave to President Young, retaining a copy." Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes and Incidents at Winter Quarters," *Women's Exponent* 14, no. 4 (15 July 1885): 31, rsc.byu.edu/womans-view/scenes-incidents-winter-quarters.
71. *Joseph Smith Papers, Documents Volume 12: March–July 1843*, 467n576.
72. The "Council met according to adj[ournmen]t at H[yrum] Smith's office. No business before the Council. Teaching by Pres[iden]ts Hiram Smith & William Marks." Minutes of the Stake High Council, Nauvoo, Illinois, 12 August 1843, in *The Nauvoo City and High Council Minutes*, ed. John S. Dinger (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011), 467.

William Marks. The last three opposed and rejected the revelation that was presented and eventually left the Church. All but two of the remaining men that were present entered into plural marriage before leaving Nauvoo.[73]

Austin Cowles, one of the opponents of the revelation, in a May 1844 affidavit published in the *Nauvoo Expositor,* mentioned the revelation and referenced parts of it. including those that he rejected and were stated as reasons for his resignation from local Church leadership:

> In the later part of the summer, 1843, the Patriarch, Hyrum Smith, did in the High Council, of which I was a member, introduce what he said was a revelation given through the Prophet; that the said Hyrum Smith did essay to read said revelation in the said Council, that according to his reading there was contained the following doctrines; 1st, the sealing up of persons to eternal life, against all sins, save the shedding innocent blood or of consenting thereto; and the doctrine of plurality of wives, or marrying virgins; that David and Solomon had many wives, yet in this they sinned not save in the matter of Uriah. This revelation with other evidence, that the aforesaid heresies were taught and practiced in the Church; determined me to leave the office of first counsellor to the President of the Church at Nauvoo, inasmuch as I dared not teach or administer such laws.[74]

Former Nauvoo stake president William Marks also recalled Hyrum Smith's 1843 teachings to the high council, while speaking in a meeting of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints on 1 May 1865:

> The question arose as to whether Joseph the Martyr taught the doctrine of polygamy. President Marks said Brother Hyrum came to his place once and told him he did not

73. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Volume 2, History*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 139–44.

74. Austin Cowles Affidavit, *Nauvoo Expositor*, 7 June 1844, ia802907.us.archive.org/18/items/NauvooExpositor1844Replica/Nauvoo_Expositor_1844_replica.pdf. It should be noted that Austin Cowles was never a counselor to Joseph Smith, but he was called as a counselor to Nauvoo stake president William Marks in 1841. Cowles was excommunicated on 18 May 1844. See "Cowles, Austin," *The Joseph Smith Papers*, josephsmithpapers.org/person/austin-cowles; "Austin Cowles," Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austin_Cowles.

> believe in it and he was going to see Joseph about it and if he had a revelation on the subject he would believe it. And after that Hyrum read a revelation on it in the High Council and He (Marks) felt that it was not true but he saw the High Council receive it.[75]

As with the statement by Cowles, Marks's testimony indicates not only that Hyrum shared a copy of the revelation at that time, but also that it dealt with the then-current practice of polygamy, a practice which Marks, like Cowles, rejected. Ebenezer Robinson recalled William Marks, Austin Cowles, and Wilson Law discussing the revelation on plural marriage during the summer and fall of 1843. He further recalled them expressing their personal opposition to it during that time, although Robinson had not seen the revelation himself.[76]

The other opponent on the Nauvoo high council was Leonard Soby, who subsequently provided three separate statements discussing the meeting. The first, an affidavit made on 14 November 1883, states:

> On or about the 12th day of Aug, 1843, in the city of Nauvoo in the state of Illinois, in the County of Hancock, before the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, of which body and Council aforesaid he was a member, personally appeared one Hyrum Smith, of the First Presidency of said Church, and brother to Joseph Smith the President and Prophet of the same, and presented to said Council the Revelation on Polygamy, enjoining its observance, and declaring it came from God; unto which a large majority of the Council agreed and assented, believing it to be of a celestial order; though no vote was taken upon it, for the reason that the voice of the Prophet in such matters was understood by us to be the voice of God to the Church; and that said Revelation was presented to said Council as before stated, as coming from Joseph Smith the Prophet of the Lord, and was received by us as other revelations had been. The said Leonard Soby further saith, that Elder Austin Cowles, a member of the High Council aforesaid,

75. Minutes of the meeting of the First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve, Fox River, Illinois (1 May 1865), Council of Twelve Minutes, quoted in Richard P. Howard, *The Church Through the Years Volume 2: The Reorganization Comes of Age, 1860–1992* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1992), 75.

76. "Items of Personal History of the Editor. No. 21," *The Return* 3 (February 1891): 29–30, latterdaytruth.org/TEST/pdf/100726.pdf.

> did, subsequent to the 12th day of Aug 1843, openly declare against the said Revelation on polygamy and the doctrines therein contained.[77]

In a second statement in 1886, Soby affirmed, "I was present at the High Council in Nauvoo when that revelation was read."[78] The following month in a third affidavit made on 23 March 1886, Soby stated:

> That on or about the 12th day of August, 1843, I was a resident of Nauvoo, Hancock County, State of Illinois, and being a member of the High Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was present at a meeting of said council at the time herein above stated; Thomas Grover, Alphaeus Cutler, David Fulmer, William Huntington and others; when Elder Hyrum Smith, after certain explanations, read the revelation on celestial marriage.
>
> I have read and examined carefully said revelation, since published in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants of said Church and say to the best of my knowledge and belief it is the same, word for word, as the revelation then read by Hyrum Smith.
>
> The deponent says further that the revelation did not originate with Brigham Young, as some persons have falsely stated, but was received by the Prophet Joseph Smith and read in the High Council by his authority as a revelation to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.[79]

It is significant that the three members of the high council who opposed and rejected the revelation and teachings of Hyrum Smith relating to that revelation affirmed that it discussed polygamy or the plurality of wives, not just as it was practiced anciently, but its latter-day practice. Cowles, in fact, stated that those teachings about its practice

77. Leonard Soby Affidavit, 14 November 1883, Affidavits about Celestial Marriage, 1869–1915, Church History Library, bhroberts.org/records/S5HjRj-s7Chmj/leonard_soby_recounts_in_affidavit_hearing_section_132_read_in_the_nauvoo_high_council.
78. Leonard Soby Affidavit, Beverly, New Jersey, 26 February 1886, in Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record*, 6, no. 3–5 (May 1887): 228, archive.org/details/historicalrecord06jens/page/228/mode/2up.
79. Leonard Soby Affidavit, 23 March 1886, quoted in *Blood Atonement and the origin of Plural Marriage*, ed. Joseph F. Smith Jr. and Richard C. Evans (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1905), 80–81, archive.org/details/bloodatonementor01smit.

and his refusal to administer or teach that doctrine were a primary reason for his resignation as a counselor in the Nauvoo stake presidency. Soby affirmed that it was the same as the revelation published in 1852, which is now section 132 of the current Doctrine and Covenants.

Four other members of the Nauvoo high council (David Fullmer, Thomas Grover, James Allred, and Aaron Johnson) provided affidavits in 1869. According to Fullmer:

> Dunbar Wilson made enquiry in relation to the Subject of a plurality of wives as there were rumors afloat respecting it, and he was "Satisfied there was something in those rumors, and he wanted to know what it was." Upon which the said Hyrum Smith Stepped across the road to his residence and Soon returned, bringing with him a copy of the revelation on Celestial Marriage given to Joseph Smith July twelfth A.D. 1843 and read the Same to the High Council and bore testimony to its truth. . . . David Fullmer further Saith, that Wm. Marks, Austin A. Cowles, and Leonard Soby were the only persons present who did not receive the Revelation and testimony of Hyrum Smith and that all the others did receive it from the teaching and testimony of the Said Hyrum Smith. And further that the copy of Said Revelation on Celestial Marriage published in the Deseret News Extra of September fourteenth A.D. 1852 is a true copy of the Same.[80]

Thomas Grover, in an affidavit sworn on 6 July 1869, testified that on this occasion,

> Hyrum Smith reasoned upon said Revelation for about an hour, clearly explaining the same, and then enjoined it upon said Council, to receive and acknowledge the same, or they would be damned, and further, that from the day that William Marks, A. A. Cowles and L. Soby refused to receive said Revelation as from God they continued to dwindle until they apostatized.[81]

80. David Fullmer Affidavit, 15 June 1869, 40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Book 1, 1869, Church History Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/ddb18b5f-a095-451d-b0b9-9bff9733bbd9/0/0.

81. Thomas Grover Affidavit, 6 July 1869, 40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Church History Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/07178969-4012-48dc-9257-e9df0dd76e86/0/0.

Two additional statements were made in October 1869. James Allred testified that he was,

> present, at the High Council, on or about the twelfth day of August A.D. 1843, held in Hyrum Smith's Brick office, in Nauvoo, Hancock Co. Illinois, when Hyrum Smith read the Revelation on Celestial Marriage to said High Council, and enjoined it upon them to manifest their willingness to receive or reject the same, at the same time bearing his testimony of its truth, William Marks, A. A. Cowles and Leonard Soby were the only members of the Council present, who voted against the Revelation and the Testimony of Hyrum."[82]

Aaron Johnson testified that he was present when "Hyrum Smith presented and read the Revelation on Celestial Marriage given or dated July twelfth 1843" and Johnson affirmed the truthfulness of the testimony given by Fullmer, Grover, and Allred.[83] On 10 October, Fullmer, Grover, and Johnson also provided a joint affidavit that stated:

> We hereby Jointly and Severally certify that on the twelfth day of August A.D. 1843 Hyrum Smith presented to the High Council in his brick Office at Nauvoo Assembled, the Revelation on Celestial marriage, given to Joseph Smith, and written on the twelfth day of July 1843. and that the teaching of Hyrum Smith referred to in the minutes of the Council on Said twelfth day of August 1843 was on the Subject of Said Revelation, endorsing the Same and enjoining it on the Council.[84]

In addition to the firsthand testimony of members of the high council who opposed and those who supported Hyrum Smith's teachings on that occasion and the revelation that was read, there was secondary testimony from others who were told about the meeting shortly

82. James Allred Affidavit, 2 October 1869, 40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Church History Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/625b18cd-576a-4c13-8a2e-d5dc9b09399b/0/0.

83. Aaron Johnson Affidavit, 2 October 1869, 40 Affidavits on Celestial Marriage, Church History Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/2723ba4c-dd40-45a8-ac3a-1ac9c15b4149/0/0.

84. David Fullmer, Thomas Grover, and Aaron Johnson Affidavit, 10 October 1869, Affidavits about Celestial Marriage, Church History Library, bhroberts.org/records/S5HjRj-VnDnwd/affidavit_from_david_fullmer_aaron_johnson_and_thomas_grover_saying_hyrum_read_and_taught_the_plural_marriage_revelation_to_the_nauvoo_high_council.

thereafter. Hosea Stout, who kept minutes at the high council meetings but was apparently not present at the time, stated that shortly thereafter, "I saw several of the counsellors, who informed me as to the purport of the revelation, which corresponded to what is published and [is] now in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.[85]

Apostle Lyman Wight did not follow the Saints to Utah, but settled in Texas until his death in 1858. Gideon Carter, an associate who never joined a restoration group, reported that Wight told him that "he saw and heard the revelation establishing plural marriage before Joseph Smith's death." He also reported that Wight often described Hyrum Smith's initial negative reaction to the revelation and his eventual conversion, after Joseph told Hyrum to ask God if it was true:

> The matter caused Hyrum much distress and anguish of heart, he well-nigh sweat blood over it, so repugnant was it to his feelings, and such his dread of seeing it introduced into the Church; but he inquired of God according to Wight's statement, and he received from the Lord the same revelation that Joseph had that it was a true doctrine, and a commandment from God. That revelation was made known to some of the Twelve before Joseph Smith's death; and after it was read in one of the counsel meetings with some of the Twelve. Joseph bore testimony that it was of God, and it was a principle wherein there was wisdom, truth, and virtue, and capable of bringing great good to the world; but owing to the sinfulness of men, and their weakness it would damn more men than it would save."[86]

James Leithead, a member of the Church in Nauvoo, in a late recollection stated that, while at Hyrum Smith's house in the summer of 1843, Hyrum told him about the revelation and said "that he had carried that revelation to the High Council for their consideration" and that most of those present received it, though several rejected it.[87] Mercy Rachel Fielding Thompson, the widow of the Prophet's former scribe,

85. Hosea Stout to Joseph F. Smith, 24 July 1883, quoted in H. Michael Marquardt, *The Rise of Mormonism, 1816–1844* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2005), 618–19.
86. Gideon Carter statement, 27 February 1894, Affidavits about Celestial Marriage 1869–1915, Church History Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d75f9b0a-0165-43c3-b52d-6e6fe2c76eb0/0/0.
87. James Leithead, "That Nauvoo Discourse," *Deseret Evening News*, 8 April 1904.

Robert B. Thompson, stated that Hyrum had told her that he had read the revelation to the high council. She also stated, "He put it into my hands and left it with me for several days."[88] Other members of the Church stated that Joseph and Hyrum Smith had shared and allowed them to examine and read the revelation on plural marriage, including Cyrus Wheelock, Charles Lambert, Lucy Walker and Malissa Lott (plural wives of Joseph), and others.[89]

Ebenezer Robinson, who rejected plural marriage, affirmed that Hyrum Smith taught the doctrine to him and his wife in the fall and winter of 1843. Writing to Joseph Smith III in 1873, he reluctantly chided the Prophet's son for claiming that neither Joseph nor Hyrum ever supported or "built up" polygamy. He wrote:

> Now if teaching a doctrine and recommending others to embrace and practice it, is not building it up, then I do not understand the English language. This your Uncle Hyrum did. He came to our house in Nauvoo, Ill., in the Fall, say November and December, 1843, and taught the doctrine to myself and wife, more than once.[90]

The Robinsons later rejected it.

William Law and his wife, Jane, who both rejected the revelation and thereafter apostatized, swore affidavits published in the *Nauvoo*

88. Mercy R. Thompson, Letter to Amos M. Musser, 31 January 1886, in "An Important Testimony," *Deseret News*, 17 February 1886, bhroberts.org/records/S5HjRj-Dh3Zbk/mercy_fielding_thompson_recalls_seeing_the_plural_marriage_revelation.

89. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 2:144–51.

90. Ebenezer Robinson to Joseph Smith III, 30 December 1873, *The Return* 1 (December 1889): 174, latterdaytruth.org/TEST/pdf/100726.pdf. Ebenezer and his wife Angeline both affirmed that Hyrum told them that Hyrum also stated that "while he had heretofore opposed the doctrine, he was wrong, and his brother Joseph was right; referring to his teaching it." Ebenezer Robinson and Angeline E. Robinson Affidavit, 29 December 1873, in *Biographical and Historical Record of Ringold and Decatur Counties, Iowa* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing, 1887), 543, archive.org/details/biographicalhist02chic/page/542/mode/2up. Ebenezer reaffirmed this in another affidavit in 1885. "This is to certify that in the later part of November, or in December 1843, Hyrum Smith (brother of Joseph Smith, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) came to my house in Nauvoo, Illinois, and taught myself and wife the doctrine of spiritual wives or polygamy. He said he heard the voice of the Lord give the revelation on spiritual wifery (or polygamy) to his brother Joseph, and that while he had heretofore opposed the doctrine, he was wrong, and his brother Joseph was right all the time" (pp. 543–44).

Expositor stating in 1844 that they had both read the revelation and discussed it before rejecting it and turning against the Prophet Joseph. In his 1844 affidavit William stated,

> I hereby certify that Hyrum Smith did, (in his office,) read to me a certain written document, which he said was a revelation from God, he said that he was with Joseph when it was received, he afterwards gave me the document to read, and I took it to my house, and read it, and showed it to my wife, and returned it the next day. The revelation (so called) authorized certain men to have more wives than one at a time, in this world and in the world to come. It said this was the *law*, and commended Joseph to enter into the *law*.—And also that he should administer to others. Several other items were in the revelation, supporting the above doctrines.[91]

In an 1844 affidavit, Jane Law stated,

> I certify that I read the revelation referred to in the above affidavit of my husband, it sustained in strong terms the doctrine of more wives than one at a time, in this world, and in the next, it authorized some to have the number of *ten*, and set forth that those women who would not allow their husbands to have more wives than one should be under condemnation before God.[92]

Years later, in 1885, William Law stated:

> In 1843 Hyrum Smith handed to me a writing to read, and to be returned to him. I took it home and upon reading it found that it purported to be a revelation to Joseph Smith, authorizing polygamy in the Church. After reading it I went directly to Joseph Smith and showed him the document. He looked at it, and said it was all right. Said it was a great privilege granted to the *High Priesthood*. He spoke strongly in its favor. I remarked that it was in contradiction to the "Doctrine and Covenants," [Section 101 in the 1835 publication]. He said they were given when the Church was in its infancy, when they were babes, and had to be fed on *milk*, but now they were strong and must have meat. He seemed much disappointed in my not receiving the *revelation*. He was very

91. William Law Affidavit, 4 May 1844, *Nauvoo Expositor* 1, no. 1 (7 June 1844).
92. Jane Law Affidavit, 4 May 1844, *Nauvoo Expositor* 1, no. 1 (7 June 1844).

> anxious that I would accept the doctrine and sustain him in it.[93]

When interviewed two years later, in 1887, Law was asked what he remembered about the revelation on marriage. He replied:

> Hyrum gave it to me in his office, told me to take it home and read it and then be careful with it and bring it back again. I took it home and read it and showed it to my wife. She and I were just turned upside down by it; we did not know what to do. I said to my wife, that I would take it over to Joseph and ask him about it. I did not believe that he would acknowledge it, and I said so to my wife. But she was not of my opinion. She felt perfectly sure that he would father it. When I came to Joseph and showed him the paper, he said: "Yes, that is a genuine revelation." I said to the prophet: "But in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants there is a revelation contrary of this." "*Oh*," said Joseph, "*that was given when the church was in its infancy, then it was all right to feed the people on milk, but now it is necessary to give them strong meat.*" We talked a long time about it, finally our discussion became very hot and we gave it up. From that time on the breach between us became more open and more decided every day, after having been prepared for a long time.[94]

93. William Law Affidavit, 17 July 1885, quoted in Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of Polygamy* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1914), 126, books.google.com/books/about/The_True_Origin_of_Mormon_Polygamy.html?id=cGIwAQAAMAAJ.

94. "Wilhelm Wyl interview with William Law in Shullsburg, WI, 30 March 1887," *Salt Lake Daily Tribune*, 31 July 1887. In this interview, some forty-three years after Law's apostasy, Law remembered being allowed by Hyrum Smith to take the manuscript home and read the revelation with Jane. He also stated that he afterward confronted Joseph who confirmed the authenticity and truthfulness of the revelation. At the time of the interview, Law thought that the revelation was much shorter than what was later published by the Church in Utah and only remembered that it dealt with polygamy, although he said this part was "substantially the same." It is possible that the document which Law and his wife read was only a partial copy of the revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants. The part they remembered and found troubling dealt with plural marriage. Given the other evidence that the revelation spanned the contents of what is now found in Doctrine and Covenants 132, it seems more likely that Law's memory and description on this point was faulty.

For further details on testimonies and references to the revelation, see appendix A.

Reports of Joseph's and Hyrum's Nauvoo discourses on the revelation

Additional evidence for the existence of the revelation on eternal marriage in Nauvoo can be found in reports of discourses by Joseph and Hyrum Smith from 1843 until their deaths in June 1844. There is, in fact, historical evidence that Joseph Smith was already familiar with the contents and principles of that revelation before 12 July 1843.[95] The revelation responds to questions regarding how God justified some of the ancient patriarchs and prophets in having many wives and concubines (Doctrine and Covenants 132:1), and another question regarding adultery (v. 41). The later portion of the revelation conveys commandments given to Emma Smith, plus a few doctrinal matters. This has led some historians to suggest that the earlier portions of the revelation (perhaps vv. 1–50) may have been received in Ohio, though not written at that time, while the later portion addressing Emma Smith (vv. 51–56) was added during the Nauvoo period, when the combined revelations were written down for the first time.[96]

William Clayton reported some of the Prophet's teachings while Joseph was visiting with some of the Saints at Ramus, Illinois, on 16 May 1843:

> He said that except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant and be married for eternity while in this probation by the power and authority of the Holy priesthood they will cease to increase when they die . . . they will not have any children in the resurrection, but those who are married by the power & authority of the priesthood in this life & continue without committing the sin against the Holy Ghost will continue to increase & have children in the celestial glory. The unpardonable sin is to shed innocent blood or be accessory thereto. All other sins will be visited with judgement in the

95. There is evidence that portions of the revelation were known to him as early as 1831. See Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 1:87–91; 2:68–70.

96. "Section 132 appears to be an amalgamation of several communications to Joseph Smith, each given at separate times and under different circumstances. Two portions of it probably originated in Ohio and a third in Illinois." Danel W. Bachman, "New Light on an Old Hypothesis: The Ohio Origins of the Revelation on Eternal Marriage," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 26.

> flesh and the spirit being delivered to the buffetings of Satan until the day of the Lord Jesus.[97]

Joseph Smith preached another discourse on 21 May 1843, notes of which were recorded by Willard Richards, Franklin D. Richards, and Howard Coray. These seem to make reference to Doctrine and Covenants 132:7. According to Willard Richards's account, Joseph said, "We have no claim in our eternal comfort in relation to Eternal things unless our actions & contracts & all things tend to this end."[98] According to the account of Franklin D. Richards, Joseph taught, "Our covenants here are of no force one with another except made in view of eternity."[99] Howard Coray recorded, "that which is done by us that is not done with a view to eternity is not binding in eternity."[100]

The following month at Nauvoo (11 June 1843), the Prophet discussed, among other things, the relationship between angels and gods and taught that "gods have an ascendency over angels" and that "angels remain angels," though "some are resurrected to become gods by such revelations as god gives in the most holy place — in his temple."[101] The language of the June 1843 discourse evokes that which is found in the July 1843 revelation, highlighting the distinction between angels and gods in the resurrected state, explaining that those outside the new and everlasting covenant of marriage remain in their angelic state, a state of lesser power, and they "are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever" (Doctrine and Covenants 132:17). Meanwhile, those who receive the new and everlasting covenant and are faithful shall be gods "because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them" (v. 20).

In July 1843, just a few days after the Prophet dictated the revelation on marriage to William Clayton, Joseph preached a public discourse in Nauvoo on the importance and necessity of eternal marriage

97. Clayton, *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, 102.
98. "Joseph Smith Diary, by Willard Richards (21 May 1843)," in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 205, archive.org/details/wordsofjosephsmi0000unse/page/204/mode/2up.
99. "Franklin D. Richards 'Scriptural Items,' " in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 208.
100. "Howard and Martha Coray Notebook," in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 207.
101. "Joseph Smith Diary, by Willard Richards (11 June 1843)," in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 212.

covenants, using language and doctrines found in the revelation on marriage.[102]

Then, on August 27, the Prophet preached about the priesthood: "He showed that the power of the Melchisek P'd was to have the power of an 'endless lives.' "[103] The reported reference to "endless lives" may seem peculiar, but it is reminiscent of the revelation on eternal marriage: "This is *eternal lives* — to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent" (Doctrine and Covenants 132:24).

Charlotte Haven, a young nonmember visiting Nauvoo at the time, heard discussions about the idea of eternal marriage, although not about polygamy. "I had heard," she wrote to her family, "that in some cases the marriage is not only for time but for time and for eternity."[104] On 5 January 1844, Jacob Scott wrote to Mary Warnock to recount some of the teachings regarding eternal marriage and proxy sealings for spouses who are dead:

> Several Revelations of great utility, & uncommon interest have been lately communicated to Joseph & the Church; but where you all are you cannot obey them; one is, that all Marriage contracts or covenants are to be "Everlasting," that is; The parties (if they belong to the Church and will obey the will of God in this relationship to each other) are to be married for both Time and Eternity, and as respects those whose partners were dead, before this Revelation was given to the Church, they have the privilege to be married to their deceased husbands, or wives (as the case may be) for eternity; and if it is a man who desires to be married to his deceased wife, a Sister in the Church stands as Proxy or as a representative of the deceased in attending to the marriage ceremony, and so in the case of a widow who desires to be joined in an everlasting covenant to her dead husband and if they are not thus married for Eternity they must remain in a state of celibacy and be as the angels, ministering spirits, or servants to the married to all eternity, and can never rise to any greater degree of glory. Many members of the Church have already availed themselves of this privilege

102. "William Clayton Diary (16 July 1843)," in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 233.
103. "William Clayton Diary (27 August 1843)," in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 247.
104. Charlotte Haven Letter, 15 October 1843.

> and have been married to their deceased partners, and in some cases where a man has been married to two or three wives, and they are dead, he has been married to them all; in the order in which he was married to them while living, and also widows have been married to their dead husbands, but only to one husband. I intend to be married to the wife of my youth, before I go to Ireland. I would be respectably glad to have you all here to witness our second nuptials. The work of Generation is not to cease forever with the Saints in the present life. There are many things connected with this subject which I am not at liberty to communicate to you where you are living which would make the matter plainer to your minds and more satisfactory. Therefore, beware how you treat this subject for no doubt it is of God.[105]

Joseph Smith, during a discourse in Nauvoo on 10 March 1844, preached against the shedding of innocent blood and of the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, which unpardonable sin could not be forgiven. He also spoke of King David in this connection. As recorded by Franklin D. Richards, the Prophet,

> illustrated the case of David said he could not obtain celestial glory and the reason why he had any hope or obtained a Promise that of his seed one should be raised up to reign over Israel forever was because that he had not spoken against the spirit & because he had not done this he was renewed unto repentance and obtained promise that God would not leave his soul in Hell.[106]

These public teachings seem to be a reference to the doctrine found in the revelation on celestial marriage, which warns against the shedding of innocent blood and the sin against the Spirit (Doctrine and Covenants 132:26–27) as well as King David's fall from exaltation and his crime against Uriah the Hittite (v. 39).

On 8 April 1844, Hyrum Smith gave a discourse in which he discussed the eternity of the marriage covenant and the principle of

105. Jacob Scott to Mary Warnock, Nauvoo, 5 January 1844, in James Wesley Scott, *The Jacob and Sarah Warnock Scott Family 1779–1910* (2002), 22–23, mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/JS0857.pdf.

106. Franklin D. Richards, "Scriptural Items," 10 March 1844, in Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 335.

proxy marriage for deceased spouses.[107] Hyrum's discourse uses language and ideas found in several parts of section 132.

While none of the reports from those who resided in Nauvoo between 1843–1844 (from sources both friendly and unfriendly to plural marriage) cite the full contents of the revelation, they do echo ideas, phrases, and teachings found throughout section 132. This suggests that both Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum avoided speaking publicly about polygamy during the last two years of their lives. However, as has been documented, they did discuss it in more private settings, including with some who later opposed the teachings about plural marriage and other doctrines contained in the revelation.

For further information on comparing Doctrine and Covenants 132 with other historical documents, see appendix B.

Conclusion of Part Two

The historical evidence strongly associates the Prophet Joseph Smith with the origin of the revelation now known as Doctrine and Covenants 132. The original transcription, Clayton's manuscript, and other surviving manuscripts all seem consistent with other available sources. The Kingsbury manuscript, for example, provides evidence of scribal haste on the last two pages, but not shown anywhere else in the manuscript. This may indicate that the copyist was trying to hurry as he got toward the end. This is consistent with Kingsbury's later testimony that mentions Hyrum Smith's premature arrival at the office before he had finished making the copy from Clayton's document.

The testimony from a variety of witnesses, some of whom rejected polygamy, also provides substantial evidence that the revelation was not only known to some in Nauvoo in 1843 and 1844, but also that it dealt with polygamy and was the same revelation that later became known as section 132. Evidence from reports of teachings in Nauvoo in 1843 and 1844 provides an additional category of proof, echoing passages found throughout the various manuscripts of that revelation.

The significance of the documents is not just in their quantity, but in their variety and overlapping consistency. Mark Tensmeyer summarizes this aspect of the evidence, which seems particularly helpful in connection with the historical evidence for section 132:

107. Unpublished Hyrum Smith Discourse, 8 April 1844, in Richard E. Turley Jr., *Selected Collections from the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Provo, UT: BYU Press), DVD #1, vol. 6, 1984–91.

> The reality of Joseph Smith's practice and teachings on plural marriage does not rise or fall on any one piece of evidence or even one kind of evidence. The sources surrounding the celestial marriage revelation are prime examples of how the overlapping details from contemporary, later, friendly, and hostile witnesses exclude the possibility of it being the product of conspiracy. Many aspects of the academic narrative of polygamy are supported with intricate and diverse sources. . . . Evidence for Smith's polygamy comes from too many sources, and those sources come from too many different times and places. The prospect that a hypothetical conspiracy led by Brigham Young is responsible not only for introducing polygamy into Mormonism, but for falsifying the evidence that Smith was the founder, fails even as a theoretical explanation.[108]

This historical evidence points to Joseph Smith being the recipient of the revelation recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 132. The evidence places the wording in the revelation as contemporaneous with Joseph Smith's lifetime, as opposed to a later creation.

Part Three: Authorial Stylometric Analysis of Section 132

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints claims that section 132 is a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, recorded in 1843, and that he may have first received this doctrine in the early 1830s. However, as laid out in parts One and Two, some people still assert that the verses in section 132 concerning plural marriage were not written or dictated by Joseph Smith. A common assertion among revisionists is that Brigham Young or someone else produced the parts of the text relating to plural marriage.

In this part of our study we test these claims by examining indicators of authorial style in the text, compared to the styles of other potential authors who, it is claimed, played a role in these competing origin stories of section 132. We also include scribes, secretaries, and clerks for Joseph during the Nauvoo period.

Stylometric analysis

We examine the evidence for authorship of section 132 using indicators of authorial style in the text. *Stylometry*, which is the statistical

108. Tensmeyer, "Old Wom[e]n's Tales," 95.

analysis of word-use patterns in texts, is well-established for authorship attribution. For example, stylometry was used to determine that James Madison was the most probable author of the twelve disputed *Federalist Papers*.[109] Stylometry has also been successfully applied to religious texts, such as the New Testament.[110] Other researchers have performed stylometric analyses of the Book of Mormon as well as other Church documents.[111]

Stylometry works by counting grammatical *function words* such as *and, the, of, any*, and so forth, as style indicators. Since any author tends to use function words in an idiosyncratic pattern, it is possible to create a style profile from an author's known writings that can distinguish him or her from other authors. In a text of disputed authorship, by comparing and contrasting the style profile of potential candidate authors, we can rule out candidates whose word-use profile is far from the word-use profile in the disputed text. The candidate whose

109. Frank Mosteller and David L. Wallace, *Inference and Disputed Authorship: The Federalist* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1964), archive.org/details/inferencedispute00most/mode/2up.

110. Anthony Kenny, *A Stylometric Study of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

111. Wayne A. Larsen and Alvin C. Rencher, "Who Wrote the Book of Mormon? An Analysis of Wordprints," in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1982), 157–88, archive.org/details/bookofmormonauth0000unse/page/156/mode/2up; John L. Hilton, "On Verifying Wordprint Studies: Book of Mormon Authorship," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynold (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1997), 225–53, archive.org/details/bookofmormonauth0000unse_p1z2/page/224/mode/2up; G. Bruce Schaalje et al., "Extended Nearest Shrunken Centroid Classification: A New Method for Open-Set Authorship Attribution of Texts of Varying Sizes," *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 26, no. 1 (2011): 71–88, doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqq029; Paul J. Fields, G. Bruce Schaalje, and Matthew Roper, "Examining a Misapplication of Nearest Shrunken Centroid Classification to Investigate Book of Mormon Authorship," *Mormon Studies Review* 23, no. 1 (2011): 87–111, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1837&context=msr; Matthew Roper, Paul J. Fields, and G. Bruce Schaalje, "Stylometric Analyses of the Book of Mormon: A Short History," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 21, no. 1 (2012): 28–45, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1492&context=jbms; Scripture Central Staff, "What Can Stylometry Tell Us about Book of Mormon Authorship?," KnoWhy 389, 20 August 2020, scripturecentral.org/knowhy/what-can-stylometry-tell-us-about-book-of-mormon-authorship; Scripture Central Staff, "Is It Possible That a Single Author Wrote the Book of Mormon?," KnoWhy 399, 20 August 2020, scripturecentral.org/knowhy/is-it-possible-that-a-single-author-wrote-the-book-of-mormon.

word-use profile is closest to the text would be the most probable author.

In examining the possible authorship of section 132, the research question we consider is: What is the stylometric evidence for the authorship of Doctrine and Covenants 132? To answer the question, we examine the stylometric evidence to see if it fits the official Church claim for the authorship of section 132 or if it better fits the claim of different authorship.

Because the assertion is that the plural marriage verses of section 132 were added after Joseph's lifetime, we perform the analyses by splitting the section into two parts: a non-plural marriage part (vv. 4–28, and 41–60) and a plural marriage part (vv. 1–3, 29–40, and 61–66).[112]

For candidate authors, we included everyone who played a role in the competing origin stories of section 132. We also included individuals who were Joseph's scribes, secretaries, or clerks in Nauvoo. The candidate authors are:

- Hyrum Smith — Asked Joseph to dictate the revelation
- Joseph Smith — Dictated the revelation
- William Clayton — Wrote the revelation as Joseph dictated
- Joseph Kingsbury — Made a copy of the revelation and later gave it to Brigham Young
- Willard Richards — Served as Joseph's private secretary in Nauvoo from 1841
- Thomas Bullock — Served as private clerk to Joseph Smith in Nauvoo from 1843 to 1844
- Brigham Young — Prophet of the Church when the revelation was officially announced and published in Salt Lake City
- Orson Pratt — Announced the revelation in General Conference in Salt Lake City, and was the Church's voice on the subject

To establish the style profile or "voice" of each of the candidate authors, we used revelations given through Joseph and Brigham, material scribed for Joseph by Clayton and Richards, and the candidates' own writings such as letters, journals, and articles. The material covers the years 1831 to 1850, with most from the period of 1840 to 1845. See appendix C for a list of the documents for each candidate that were used in the stylometric analysis.

112. Other possible pairings of the text are discussed later in this paper.

Using resampling, we drew 6,000 samples, each of 2,500 words randomly drawn from each of the thirteen sets of texts from the candidate authors, as well as from the two parts of section 132. To create word-use profiles, we counted the occurrences of 221 different function words. To identify the linear combinations of the function word frequencies that best distinguish the sets from each other, we used Stepwise Discriminant Analysis (SDA).[113] Using these linear combinations of function word frequencies, we compared and contrasted the two parts of section 132 to the sets of texts for each candidate author.[114]

Results of the analysis

Figure 1 shows the distance each candidate author's texts are from Doctrine and Covenants 132, with both parts combined. The statistical metric we used is the Mahalanobis distance, which is a relative distance measure that accounts for the correlation between variables and the variances within data sets. It is a robust measure of dissimilarity, widely used in multivariate classification analysis. In our study, the Mahalanobis distances are twelve-dimensional measures of dissimilarity. The distances displayed in figure 1 show the least dissimilar sets of texts at the bottom of the chart, with the most dissimilar at the top.

It is clearly evident in figure 1 that the revelatory sections of Joseph Smith from both the Kirtland and Nauvoo periods are the least dissimilar.[115] Joseph Smith's doctrinal epistles and instructions, his texts

113. Stepwise Discriminant Analysis (SDA) allows for structured comparisons between candidate authors. SDA is like a smart detective who helps identify the most important characteristics (words) that best differentiate candidate groups (sets), one step at a time. *Starting Point:* Begin with no words in the "differentiation formulas." It's like having a blank slate. *Adding the Best:* The analysis looks at all available words and picks the one that, by itself, does the best job of separating the data sets. It adds this word to the formulas. Think of it as finding the most helpful clue first. *Refining the Formulas:* Then, it looks at the remaining words and finds the one that, when added to the words already selected, further improves the separation of the data sets. It keeps adding words, one by one, that contribute the most to making the sets distinct. *Stopping When We Have Enough:* This process continues until adding more words does not significantly improve the ability to differentiate the sets. It is like the detective stopping when she has enough strong clues to confidently identify the different individuals. This way, stepwise discriminant analysis builds a strong and concise set of words that are most effective in distinguishing among the sets of texts.

114. The SDA results are solidly reliable giving 100% correct classification and 100% correct cross-classification.

115. The Mahalanobis distance is a dissimilarity metric. It has an inverse

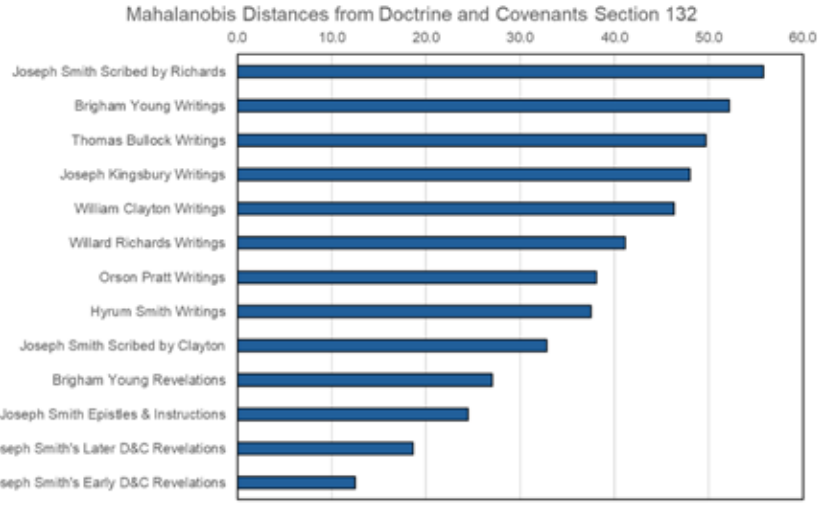

Figure 1. The dissimilarity from Doctrine and Covenants 132 of all sets of comparison texts measured by Mahalanobis distance. The texts closest in similarity to section 132 are Joseph Smith's revelatory sections. The other comparison texts are increasingly farther away and thus increasingly dissimilar.

scribed by William Clayton, and Brigham Young's revelatory texts are the next in dissimilarity, but they are nearly twice as far from section 132 as Joseph's revelatory sections in the Doctrine and Covenants. The personal writings of all of the candidate authors are distinctly dissimilar to the text of section 132 because these texts are over two times and nearly three times farther from section 132 than Joseph Smith's revelatory sections.

We now look more closely at the five sets of texts with the least dissimilarity from section 132: Joseph Smith's early revelations; later revelations; and epistles and instructions; Brigham Young's revelations; and Joseph Smith's writings as scribed by William Clayton.

Figure 2 shows a three-dimensional graph with 99.9% confidence ellipsoids around the samples to display the results. The ellipsoids represent a volume within which it is reasonable to estimate the author's style to 99.9% confidence. If the ellipsoids do not overlap, then it is unreasonable to claim they represent the same authorial style (the evidence indicates they are different styles). If the ellipsoids overlap, then there is insufficient evidence to indicate that the authorial styles are different (the styles are either the same or indistinguishably similar).

relationship with similarity. Consequently, less dissimilarity implies more similarity.

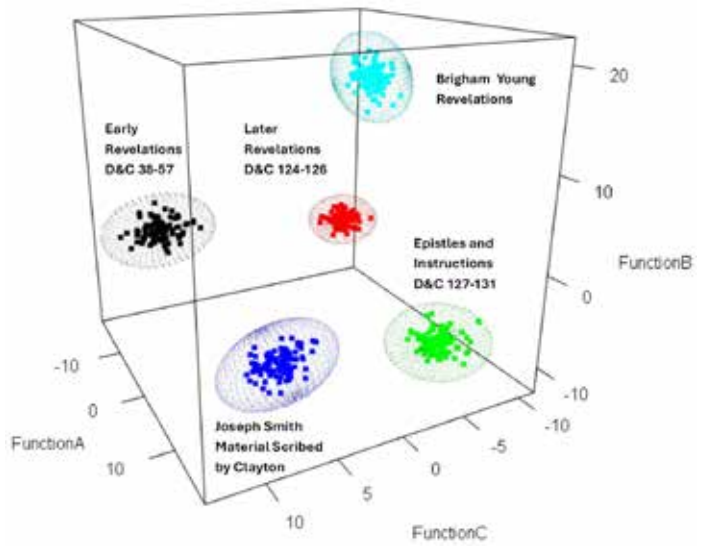

Figure 2. The five sets of comparison texts closest to section 132 separate distinctly from each other. All other comparison texts are far outside this cube and are thus not displayed. They are so far away as to not be in authorship contention.

Only the five sets of texts closest in style to section 132 are shown, since all the other data sets are so far away that they can be easily eliminated as displaying the same authorial style as section 132. The three dimensions (functions A, B, and C) are the three dimensions that are linear combinations of the grammatical words that measure the authorial distinctiveness of the candidate authors' texts.

In figure 2, Function A is the linear combination of word frequencies that identifies the greatest distinction among all the data sets. Function A separates Joseph Smith's early revelations in Doctrine and Covenants 38–57 (black) and later revelations in Doctrine and Covenants 124–126 (red) from his material scribed by William Clayton (blue) and his epistles and instructions in Doctrine and Covenants 127–131 (green).[116]

Function B is a different linear combination of word frequencies that identifies the next greatest distinction among the data sets. Function B

116. In a separate study we analyzed the contributions of scribes to Joseph's dictated writings. We examined Oliver Cowdery, W. W. Phelps, Fredrick G. Williams, Willard Richards, Robert B. Thompson, and William Clayton. Of these, Clayton exhibited the least influence on Joseph's writings. His contribution was only about 10%. So, Joseph's material scribed by Clayton can be considered mostly Joseph's composition.

clearly separates Brigham Young's authorial style in his revelations (light blue) from Joseph Smith's revelatory style.

Function C is the dimension with the next greatest distinction among the data sets and it separates Joseph Smith's non-revelatory texts as scribed by Clayton (blue) from Joseph's epistles and instructions as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants (green).

To more fully show the distinctions in authorial style, we present another view of the results in figure 3 by rotating the three-dimensional display about 45° counterclockwise. We present another view of the results in figure 4 after rotating the three-dimensional display 90° counterclockwise again.

The question is: Using the same linear combinations of function word frequencies for the two parts of section 132 (the non-plural marriage portion and the plural marriage portion), where will they be compared to these five data sets? Also, will the two parts of section 132 be near each other or far apart? Will the plural marriage portion be near Brigham Young or near Joseph's early or later revelations? Will it be near Joseph's material as scribed by Clayton, near the epistles and instructions, or not close to any of these?

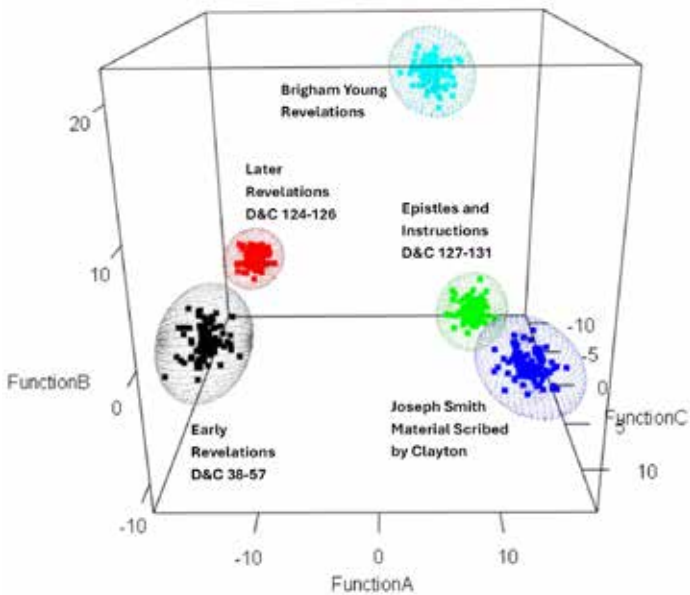

Figure 3. Function A separates Joseph's early and later revelations at the bottom left (black and red) from his material scribed by Clayton and his epistles and instructions at the bottom right (blue and green). Function B separates Brigham's revelations at the top (light blue) from Joseph's texts at the bottom.

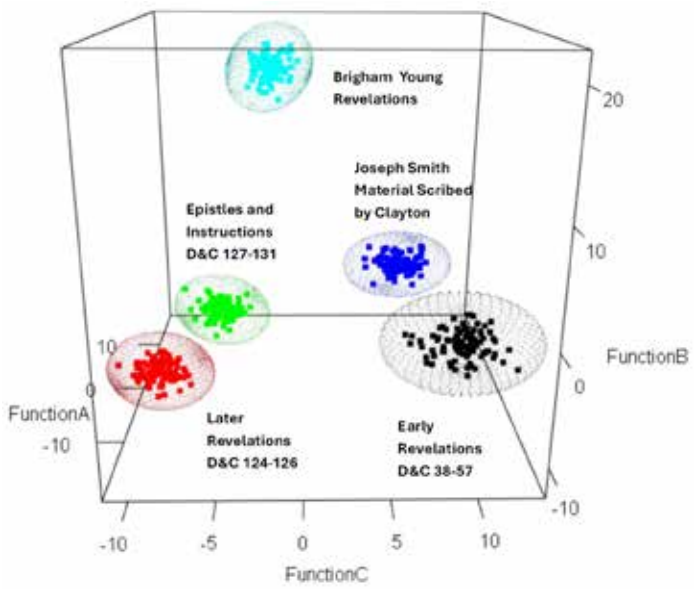

Figure 4. Function C separates the early revelatory sections (black) at the front right from the later revelatory sections at the front left (red).

Figure 5 shows where the two parts of section 132 are among the five sets from the same viewpoint as in figure 2. The two parts of section 132 are closest to each other (shown in brown and purple), and they are both close to the early Doctrine and Covenants revelatory

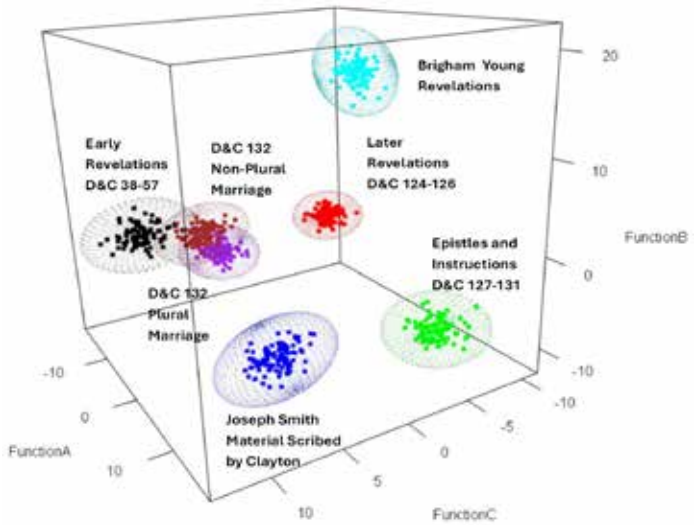

Figure 5. The two parts of section 132 (brown and purple) plotted among the five closest candidate sets. The two parts are nearest to the early revelations (black).

sections (shown in black). SDA classifies 100% of the samples from both parts of section 132 to the early revelations. They are both next closest to the later Doctrine and Covenants revelatory sections (red). They are not at all close to Joseph's other materials (dark blue and green), which are also later in time and of a different genre. They are far from Brigham Young (light blue) or anyone else considered, all of whom are so far away that they are outside the cube.

Figures 6 and 7 display rotations of the cube to further indicate the distinctions among the texts. It is evident that the two parts of section 132 clearly group with Joseph's texts (at the bottom of the display) and are far from Brigham's revelations (at the top).

Figure 8 zooms in on the two parts of section 132 and the early revelations. It is evidence that the plural marriage and non-plural marriage parts of section 132 are not meaningfully distinct from each other, and they are not meaningfully distinct from the early revelatory sections.

To show more fully the distinctions in authorial style, we present three more views of these sets by rotating the cube display. Figure 9 shows the front view, figure 10 a top view, and figure 11 shows a

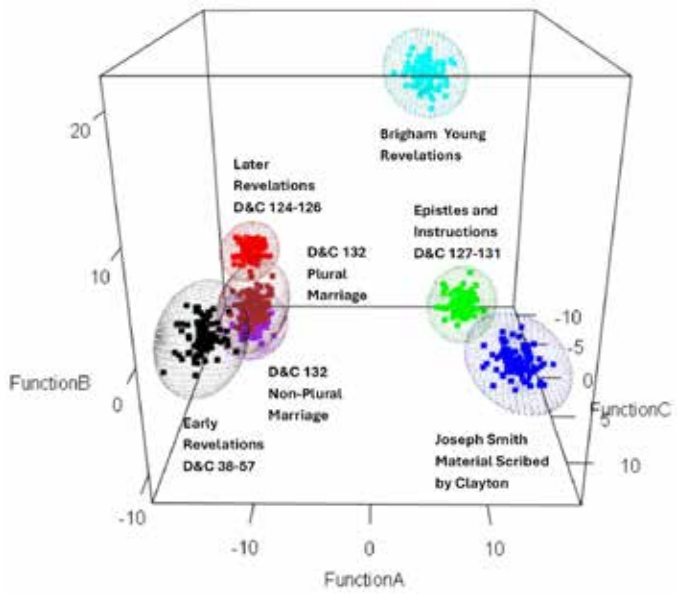

Figure 6. Function A shows that the two parts of section 132 (shown in brown and purple) are near the early and late revelations at the bottom left (shown in black and red) and that they are distinct from Joseph Smith's other revelatory material at the bottom right (shown in blue and green). Function B shows that the two parts of section 132 are far from Brigham's revelations at the top (shown in light blue).

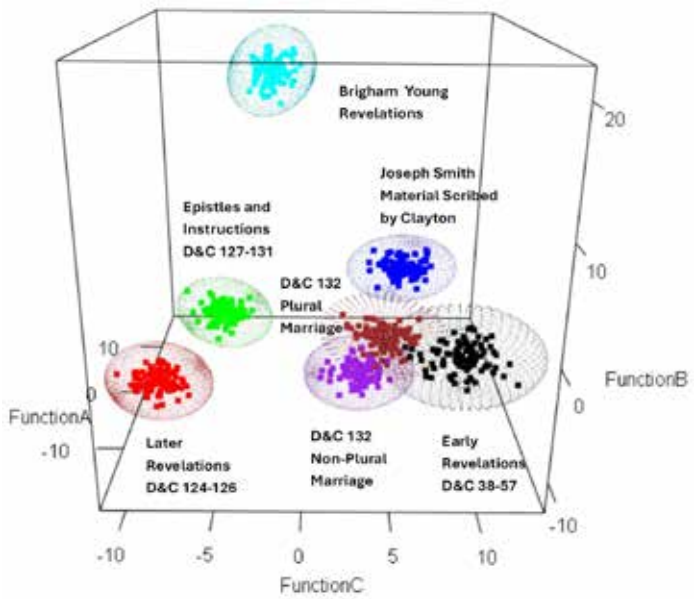

Figure 7. Function C shows that the two parts of section 132 (shown in brown and purple) overlap with the early revelations at the front right (shown in black) and separate from the later revelations at the front left (shown in red).

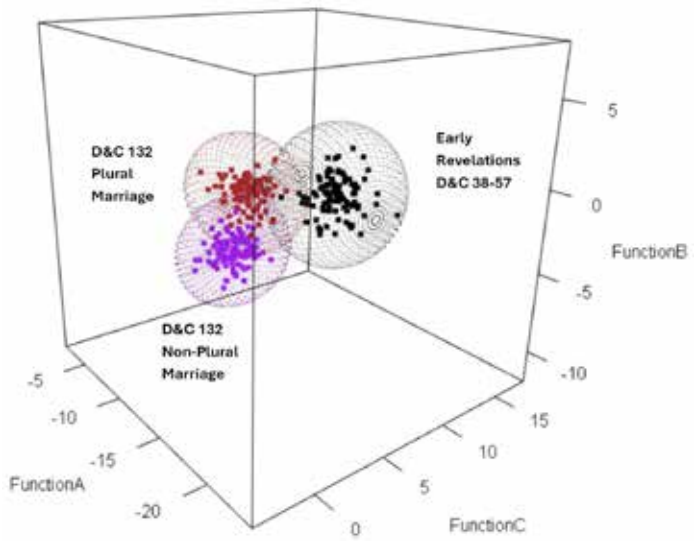

Figure 8. Zooming in on the two parts of section 132 (shown in brown and purple) and the early revelatory sections (shown in black), the three 99.9% confidence ellipsoids overlap and are not meaningfully distinctive.

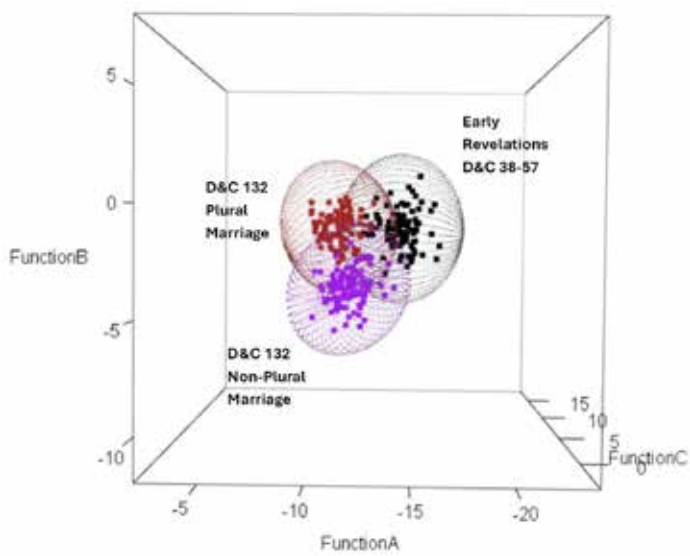

Figure 9. Front view showing that the plural marriage and non-plural marriage parts of section 132 (brown and purple) overlay with the early revelations (black).

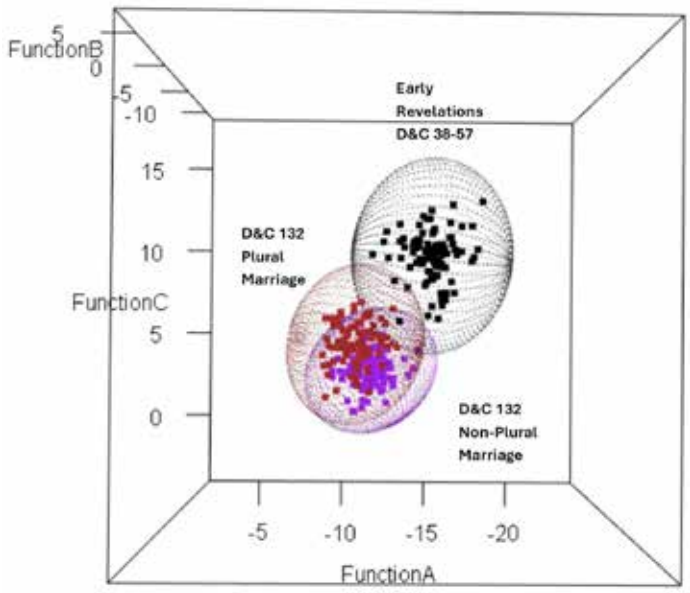

Figure 10. Top view showing considerable overlap of the two parts of section 132 (brown and purple) with each other and with the early revelations (black).

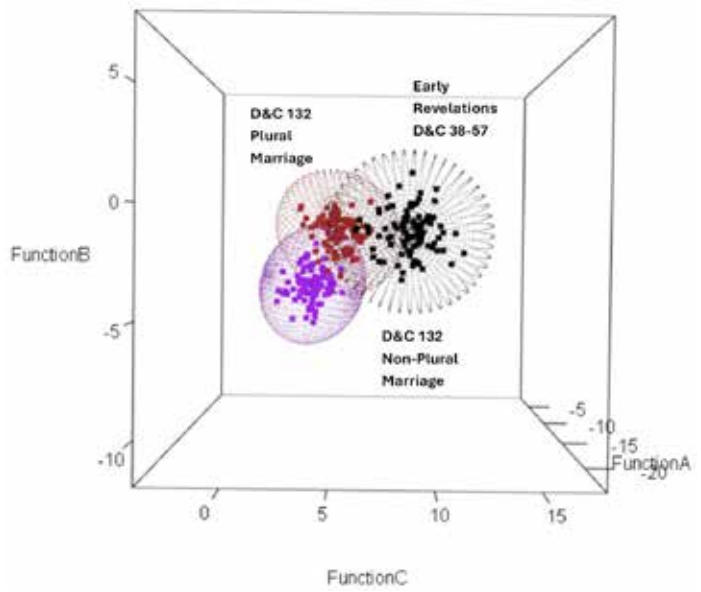

Figure 11. Right side view showing that the ellipsoids of all three data sets overlap considerably.

side view. In all three displays, we can see considerable overlap of the revelatory texts. No matter how one looks at the results, the plural marriage and non-plural marriage parts are not meaningfully distinguishable from each other and they group closely with the early revelatory sections.

Contrary to Richard and Pamela Price's opinion as stated in Part One, the grammatical patterns in both parts of section 132 are similar to Joseph Smith's word-use pattern and dissimilar from Brigham Young's word-use pattern.

Based on the results of the analysis, we found no stylometric evidence contrary to the Church's official declaration of the authorship of Doctrine and Covenants 132. If the revelation indeed originated in the early 1830s, then it should be congruent in style with other contemporaneous sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. This is what the results show. Further, we found no evidence of authorial style difference within the plural marriage and non-plural marriage texts of section 132, thus making remote the possibility of different authorship.

The results of the stylometric analyses can be viewed in even greater detail in an immersive, virtual reality, three-dimensional display at ldsstylometrics.org/DC132Authorship/.

Additional analyses are presented in appendix D. These analyses demonstrate the validity of the methodology used and they further corroborate the results. Finally, see appendix E for an in-depth critical evaluation of an unpublished but circulated analysis of section 132, conducted by Ethan Lloyd.

Conclusion of Part Three

Assertions contrary to Joseph's authorship of section 132 are not congruent with the stylometric evidence. The stylometric evidence does not support the assertion that Brigham Young wrote section 132, either in part or as a whole. Further, stylometric evidence does not indicate that any of the other candidate authors provided the words for the revelation. The authorial styles of both parts of section 132 are not distinguishably different, and they both align with other relevant sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. The stylometric evidence is consistent with the Church's claimed origin of the revelation.

Summary and Conclusions of This Study

The combined historical and stylometric evidence presented in this study strongly supports the long-standing claim that Doctrine and Covenants 132 originated with Joseph Smith and was dictated by him in July 1843, rather than being composed later by Brigham Young or any other potential author.

Multiple, independent, contemporary witnesses — both friendly and antagonistic to plural marriage, as well as those who remained in the Church and those who did not — consistently reported the existence, content, and public and private readings of the revelation during Joseph Smith's lifetime. While no surviving diary entries in Joseph's own hand replicate the wording of section 132, extensive first-hand reports by his scribes and close associates, taken during his Nauvoo-period sermons and instructions, document him teaching the same doctrines and using language closely aligned with the text of the revelation.

In addition, stylometric analysis shows that the linguistic features in section 132 are congruent with the Prophet's other revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, even as far back as 1831. Thus, the mutually supportive consistency of the historical records and statistical authorship analysis make highly implausible the alternative assertions for the authorship of section 132.

Appendix A: Tables of Testimonies and References to the Revelation on Marriage

Table 1. First-hand testimonies of Joseph Smith's revelation on marriage in 1843 and 1844.

Person	Event	Date	Document
William Clayton	Transcribed manuscript dictated by Joseph Smith	12 July 1843	Diary 12 July 1844 Letter 11 November 1871 Affidavit 1874
Joseph C. Kingsbury	Made copy from Clayton manuscript	Mid July 1843	Affidavit March 1870 Affidavit May 1886 Testimony 1892
Horace Whitney	Made copy from Kingsbury manuscript	14 March 1847	Journal 14 March 1847
Austin Cowles	Heard Hyrum Smith read revelation, "Plurality of wives" "David and Solomon" "marrying virgins"	12 August 1843	Affidavit May1844 *Nauvoo Expositor*
William Marks	Heard Hyrum Smith read revelation "doctrine of polygamy"	12 August 1843	RLDS First Presidency and Twelve minutes 1 May 1865
Leonard Soby	Heard Hyrum Smith read revelation "Polygamy" Same as published	12 August 1843	Affidavit November 1883 Letter February 1886 Affidavit March 1886
David Fullmer	Heard Hyrum Smith read revelation "Plurality of wives" "Celestial Marriage" Same as published	12 August 1843	Affidavit 1869
Thomas Grover	Heard Hyrum Smith read revelation	12 August 1843	Affidavit 1869
James Allred	Heard Hyrum Smith read revelation "Celestial Marriage"	12 August 1843	Affidavit 1869
Aaron Johnson	Heard Hyrum Smith read revelation "Celestial Marriage"	12 August 1843	Affidavit 1869
Mercy Rachel Fielding	Had manuscript at home for several days	After 12 August 1843	Statement 31 July 1886

Person	Event	Date	Document
Charles Lambert	Heard Clayton read revelation	1843–June 1844	Autobiography 1885
Lucy Walker	Saw manuscript at Mansion House	1843–June 1844	Testimony 1892
Malissa Lott	Shown manuscript by Joseph Smith	1843–June 1844	Testimony 1892
Cyrus Wheelock	Heard revelation read	November 1843	Testimony 1892
William Law	Read revelation "Authorized . . . more wives than one at a time" "In this world and the world to come"	Late 1843	Affidavit May 1844 *Nauvoo Expositor*
Jane Law	Read revelation "Ten wives" Condemnation if rejected	Late 1843	Affidavit May1844 *Nauvoo Expositor*

Table 2. Second-hand testimonies of Joseph Smith's revelation on marriage in 1843 and 1844.

Person	Event	Date	Document
Jacob Scott	Revelation	January 1844	Letter 5 January 1844
Ebenezer Robinson	Hyrum told him and his wife that he "heard the voice of the Lord give the revelation" on polygamy to Joseph Smith	November-December 1843	Affidavit 1885
Charles Smith	Hyrum Smith met with a group of elders and said Joseph Smith had given a revelation on "plurality of wives"	Winter 1843–1844	St. George Stake Historical Record 26 November 1882
Lyman Wight	"He said that he saw and heard read the revelation establishing plural marriage before Joseph Smith's death."	Before June 1844	Gideon Carter Affidavit 27 February 1894
James Leithead	Hyrum confirmed there had been a revelation and he had read it to the high council.	Summer 1843	*Deseret News* 28 March 1904

Table 3. Doctrine and Covenants 132 verses on marriage referenced in Nauvoo.

Verses	Source	Date
D&C 132:3–4	William Clayton	16 July 1843
D&C 132:5	Franklin D. Richards	16 July 1843
D&C 132:7–10	Willard Richards Franklin D. Richards Howard Coray Levi Richards Jacob Scott Hyrum Smith	21 May 1843 21 May, 16 July 1843 21 May 1843 16 July 1843 5 January 1844 April 1844
D&C 132:15	Hyrum Smith	April 1844
D&C 132:16–17	William Clayton Franklin D. Richards Jacob Scott Hyrum Smith	16 May 1843 16 July 1843 5 January 1844 April 1844
D&C 132:19	William Clayton Charlotte Haven Jacob Scott Hyrum Smith	16 May 1843 15 October 1843 5 January 1844 April 1844
D&C 132:20	Willard Richards	11 June 1843
D&C 132:22	Franklin D. Richards	16 July 1843
D&C 132:24	Wiliam Clayton	27 August 1843
D&C 132:26–27	William Clayton Austin Cowles Nauvoo Expositor Preamble	16 May 1843 4 May 1844 7 June 1844
D&C 132:28	William Clayton	16 July 1843
D&C 132:30	William Clayton	16 May 1843
D&C 132:38–39	Austin Cowles	4 May 1843
D&C 132:45–46	Hyrum Smith	April 1844
D&C 132:62–63	Jane Law	4 May 1844
D&C 132:63	Franklin D. Richards	16 July 1843
D&C 132:64–65	Jane Law	4 May 1844

Appendix B: Tables Comparing Doctrine and Covenants 132 with Other Historical Records

Bold text appearing in the tables in this appendix has been added for emphasis.

Table 4. Joseph Smith's instruction 16 May 1843.

Doctrine and Covenant 132	William Clayton Journal 16 May 1843
And again, verily, I say unto you, if a **man marry** a **wife** by my word, which is my law, and by the new and **everlasting covenant** . . . by him . . . unto whom I have appointed this **power** and the keys of the **priesthood** (132:19)	He said that except a **man** and his **wife** enter into an **everlasting covenant** and be **married** for eternity while in this probation by the **power** and authority of the Holy **priesthood** . . . Those who are **married** by the **power** and authority of the **priesthood.**
Therefore, **when they are out of the world . . . They cannot be enlarged** (132:16–17).	**They will cease to increase when they die** [they will not have any children in the resurrection].
Which **glory** shall be a fulness and a **continuation** of the **seeds** forever and ever (132:19). As touching Abraham and his **seed**, out of the world they should **continue**; both in the world and out of the world should they **continue** as innumerable as the stars (132:30).	Those who are married by the power and authority of the priesthood in this life and continue without committing the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost will **continue** to increase and have c**hildren** in celestial **glory**.
Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man **marry** a wife according to my word . . . **and he or she shall commit any sin or transgression** of the new and everlasting covenant whatever, and all manner of blasphemies, and if they commit no murder wherein they shed innocent blood, yet they shall come forth in the first resurrection, and enter into their exaltation; but they shall be **destroyed in the flesh**, and shall be **delivered unto the buffetings of Satan** unto the day of redemption, saith the Lord God. **The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost**, which shall not be forgiven in the world nor out of the world, is that ye commit **murder wherein ye shed innocent blood, and assent unto my death**, after ye have received my new and everlasting covenant, saith the Lord God; and he that abideth not this law can in nowise enter into my glory, but shall be damned, saith the Lord (132:26–27).	Those who are **married** by the power and authority of the priesthood in this life and continue without committing **the sin against the Holy Ghost** will continue to increase . . . The unpardonable sin is to **shed innocent blood or be an accessory thereto**. **All other sins** will be **visited with judgement in the flesh** and the spirit **delivered to the buffetings of satan** until the day of the Lord Jesus.

Table 5. Joseph Smith's discourse on 21 May 1843.

Doctrine and Covenants 132	Joseph Smith 21 May 1843
All **covenants**, **contracts**, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations that are **not made** and entered into . . . for time and for all **eternity** are of no efficacy, virtue, or **force**, in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are **not made** unto this end have an end when men are dead (132:7).	We have no claim in our eternal comfort in relation to **Eternal** things unless our actions & **contracts** & all things tend to this end (Willard Richards) Our **covenants** here are of no **force** one with another except made in view of **eternity** (Franklin D. Richards) That which is done by us that is **not done** with a view to **eternity** is not binding in **eternity** (Howard Coray)

Table 6. Joseph Smith's discourse on 11 June 1843.

Doctrine and Covenants 132	Joseph Smith 11 June 1843
[Those who do not receive the New and Everlasting covenant of marriage] are not **gods**, but are **angels** of God forever and ever (132:17). Ye shall come forth in the **resurrection** . . . Then shall they be **gods**, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be **gods**, because they have all power, and the **angels are subject unto them** (132:19–20).	**Gods have ascendancy over the angels angels remain angels**. — some are **resurrected** to become **gods** by such revelations as god gives in the most holy place. — in his temple.

Table 7. Joseph Smith's discourse on 16 July 1843.

Doctrine and Covenants 132	Joseph Smith 16 July 1843
For all who will have a **blessing** at my hands shall abide by the **law** which was appointed for that blessing, and the **conditions** thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world (132:5).	All **Blessings** that were ordained for man by the Council of Heaven were on **conditions** of obedience to the **Law** thereof. (Franklin D. Richards, "Scriptural Items" 16 July 1843)
And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All **covenants**, **contracts**, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not **made** and entered into and **sealed** by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all **eternity**, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power . . . are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this **end have an end when men are dead** (132:7).	No man can obtain a Blessing unless the **contract** or **covenant** be **made** in view of **eternity**. All contracts in view of this Life only **terminate with this Life**. (Franklin D. Richards, "Scriptural Items" 16 July 1843). P.M. spoke of **contracts** & **covenants made** from life **end** with life. The necessity of the Temple that the Servants of God may be **sealed** in their foreheads. (Levi Richards Journal, 16 July 1843).
Therefore, **when they are out of the world** they **neither marry nor are given in marriage**; but are appointed **angels** in heaven, which angels are **ministering** servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and exceeding, and eternal weight of glory. For these angels **did not abide my law**; therefore they cannot be enlarged, but remain **separately and singly**, without exaltation in their saved condition, to all eternity; and are angels of God forever and ever (132:16–17).	Case of the woman & 7 husbands Luke 20–29 &c. ["neither marry, nor are given in marriage" Luke 20:35]. Those who **keep no eternal law in this life** or make no eternal contract are single & alone **in the eternal world** (Luke 20–35) and are only made **Angels** to **minister** to those who shall be heirs of Salvation never becoming Sons of God having **never kept the Law of God** i.e., eternal Law. (Franklin D. Richards, "Scriptural Items" 16 July 1843).

Doctrine and Covenants 132	Joseph Smith 16 July 1843
For all who have this **law** revealed unto them must obey the same. For behold, I reveal unto you a new and **everlasting covenant** (132:3–4). And again, verily I say unto you, if **a man** marry a **wife** by my word, which is my **law**, and by the new and **everlasting covenant** (132:19). "**Law of my Holy Priesthood**" (132:28).	P. M. went to the Grove and heard pres. J. preach on the **law of the priesthood** . . . He showed that a **man** must enter into an **everlasting covenant** with his **wife** in this world or he will have no claim on her in the next. He said that he could not reveal the fulness of these things until the Temple is completed (William Clayton Journal, 16 July 1843)

Table 8. Hyrum Smith's discourse April 1844.

Doctrine and Covenants 132	Hyrum Smith 8 April 1844
And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All **covenants**, **contracts**, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not **made** and entered into and **sealed** by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all **eternity**, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (**and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power** in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred), are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this **end have an end when men are dead** (132:7). **Shall be of full force** when they are out of the world (132:19)	The idea of marrying for eternity is the seal of the covenant, and is easily understood and as to speaking of it, I could make all the world believe it, for it is noble and grand; it is necessary in consequence of the broken covenants in the world . . . When I look at the seal of the new covenant and reflect that **all the covenants made by the authority of man** are only made to be of force during the natural life and **end** there. I rejoice that what is done by the Lord has an endless duration. No marriage is valid in the morn of the resurrection unless the marriage covenant be sealed on earth by **one having the keys and power from the Almighty God** to seal on earth, and it shall be bound in heaven. Such a sealing will have full effect in the morn of the resurrection . . . **The Lord has given Joseph the power to seal** on earth and in heaven [for] those who are found worthy having the spirit of Elijah and Elias, he has power to seal with a seal that shall never be broken, and it **shall be of force** in the morn of the resurrection.
Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion. Will I accept an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name? Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed? (132:8–10). [Authorized sealings are only done by revelation and "commandment" under the direction of the Lord's authorized servant who holds that power (132:7).]	I wish the Elders to understand it is lawful for a man to marry a wife, but it is unlawful to have more, and God has **not commanded any of you** to have more.

Doctrine and Covenants 132	Hyrum Smith 8 April 1844
If man **marry** a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting **covenant**, and it is **sealed** by the Holy Spirit of promise . . . [for] **time** and through all **eternity**" (132:19).	The idea of **marrying** for **eternity** is the **seal** of the **covenant**. When I look at the **seal** of the new **covenant**.
And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All **covenants**, **contracts**, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not **made** and entered into and **sealed** by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all **eternity**, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power . . . are of **no** efficacy, virtue, or **force** in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this **end have an end when men are dead** (132:7). [Unauthorized marriages] are **not of force when they are dead** (132:15).	When I look at the seal of the new covenant and reflect that **all the covenants made by the authority of man** are only made to be of **force** during the natural life and **end** there.
Therefore, if a man **marry** him a **wife** in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, **their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead**, and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world. Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed **angels** in heaven. . . . But remain **separately** and **singly**, without exaltation (132:15–16). If a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting **covenant**, and it is **sealed** unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power, and the keys of this priesthood . . . it shall be done unto them, in time and throughout all **eternity** (132:19).	I **married** me a **wife**, and I am the only one who had any right to her. We have five children, **the covenant was made for our lives. She fell into the grave before God showed us his order**. God has shown me that **the covenant is dead**, and had no force, neither could I have her in the resurrection, but we should be as the **angels**—it troubled me. President Joseph said you can have her sealed to you on the same principles as you can be baptized for the dead. I enquired what can I do for any second wife? You can also **make a covenant with her for eternity** and have her **sealed to you by the authority of the priesthood**. I named the subject to my present wife, and she said, "I will act as proxy for your wife that is dead, and I will be **sealed** to you for **eternity** myself for I never had any other husband. I love you and I do not want to be **separate** from you nor be forever **alone** in the world to come." . . . What honest man or woman can find fault with such a doctrine as this? None.[117]

117. Note the implication is that in this case a man, as in Hyrum's case, would have two wives in eternity

Doctrine and Covenants 132	Hyrum Smith 8 April 1844
And I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the **keys** of this priesthood are conferred (132:7). For I have conferred upon you the **keys** and **power** of this priesthood. . . And verily, verily, I say unto you, that whatsoever you **seal on earth** shall be **sealed in heaven**; and whatsoever you **bind on earth**, in my name and by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally **bound in the heavens** (132:45–46). Authorized sealings continue in the "**resurrection**" (132:19).	I rejoice that what is done by the Lord has an endless duration. No marriage is valid in the morn of the resurrection unless the marriage covenant be **sealed on earth** by **one having the keys and power from the Almighty God** to **seal on earth**, and it shall be **bound in heaven**. Such a sealing will have full effect in the morn of the resurrection. . . . **The Lord has given Joseph the power to seal on earth and in heaven** [for] those who are found worthy having the spirit of Elijah and Elias, he has **power to seal** with a seal that shall never be broken, and it **shall be of force** in the morn of the **resurrection**.
Those who are worthy of a far more, and exceeding, and **eternal** weight of **glory** (132:16). They shall pass by the angels, and the gods which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a continuation of the seeds forever, and ever. Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore, shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue (132:19–20).	We will come up in the morn of the resurrection; and every soul that is saved will receive an **eternal** increase of **glory**.

Table 9. David and Uriah.

Doctrine and Covenants 132	Opponents of Plural Marriage
David also received many **wives** and concubines, and also **Solomon** . . . and in nothing did they sin **save in those things which they received not of me. David's wives** and concubines were given unto him by the hand of Nathan, my servant, and others of the prophets who had the keys of this power; and **in none of these things did he sin against me save in the case of Uriah and his wife** (132:38–39).	In the latter part of the summer, 1843, the Patriarch Hyrum Smith, did in the High Council, of which I was a member, introduce what he said was a revelation given through the Prophet; that the said Hyrum Smith did essay to read the said revelation in the said Council, that according to his reading there was contained the following doctrines; . . . that "**David** and **Solomon** had many **wives**, yet they **sinned not save in the matter of Uriah**" (Austin Cowles Affidavit, 4 May 1844, *Nauvoo Expositor*). Joseph taught that **David did not sin in having many wives, only in the case of Uriah** (Samuel Bennett, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1 November 1844). There is a certain feature embodied in that revelation to which I invite the attention of every honest man and woman. It is this:--**David did not sin in the case of Uriah, save in the death of Uriah**. And Hyrum Smith did say — this I can prove from the best testimony — that ***Solomon did not sin in having many wives and concubines***, but that his sin consisted in worshipping their heathen Gods. (J. Gibson Divine, *Messenger and Advocate*, 15 March 1845).

Table 10. Sealing up unto eternal life.

Doctrine and Covenants 132	Opponents of Plural Marriage
Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man marry a wife according to my word, and they are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, according to mine appointment, and he or she shall commit any sin or transgression of the new and everlasting covenant whatever, and all manner of blasphemies, and **if they commit no murder wherein they shed innocent blood**, yet they shall come forth in the first resurrection, and enter into their exaltation; but they shall be destroyed in the flesh, and shall be delivered unto the buffetings of Satan unto the day of redemption, saith the Lord God. The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven in the world nor out of the world, is that **ye commit murder wherein ye shed innocent blood, and assent unto my death**, after ye have received my new and everlasting covenant, saith the Lord God; and he that abideth not this law can in nowise enter into my glory, but shall be damned, saith the Lord (132:26–27).	[The revelation on plurality of wives which Hyrum Smith read to the high council in the Summer of 1843 taught] the sealing up of persons to eternal life, against all sins, **save the shedding of innocent blood or of consenting thereto** (Austin Cowles Affidavit, 4 May 1844). Inasmuch as they have introduced false and damnable doctrines into the Church, such as . . . the doctrine of unconditional sealing up to eternal life, **against all crimes except the shedding of innocent blood**. ("Preamble" *Nauvoo Expositor*, 7 June 1844).

Table 11. The number of plural wives.

Doctrine and Covenants 132	Opponents of Plural Marriage
And if he have **ten** virgins given unto him by this law	It authorized some to have the number of **ten** (Jane Law Affidavit, 4 May 1844, *Nauvoo Expositor*). He taught the doctrine that a man could have ten wives (Samuel Bennett, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1 November 1844) According to this revelation every high priest is entitled to the number of ten wives (J. Gibson Divine, *Messenger and Advocate*, 5 March 1845).

Table 12. Warnings in the revelation.

Doctrine and Covenants 132	Opponents of Plural Marriage
And again, verily, verily, I say unto you, if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or . . . she then becomes the transgressor (132:64–65)	[The revelation] set forth that those women who would not allow their husbands to have more wives than one should be under condemnation before God. (Jane Law Affidavit, 4 May 1844, *Nauvoo Expositor*).

Appendix C: Documents Used in the Stylometric Analysis

Hyrum Smith

- Diary or Journal of 1832–1833[118]
- Letter to Hannah Grinnels and children, 16 March 1839[119]
- Letter to Thomas H. Owen, Esq., 4 June 1844[120]
- Writings, approximately 1844[121]

Joseph Smith

The revelations of Joseph Smith are divided into three periods. See The Joseph Smith Papers for source documents to all Doctrine and Covenants sections used in the stylometric analysis.[122]

Early Doctrine and Covenants revelatory sections

- Doctrine and Covenants 38–57; January to July 1831

Doctrine and Covenants revelatory sections from Nauvoo period

- Doctrine and Covenants 124; 19 January 1841
- Doctrine and Covenants 125; Early March 1841
- Doctrine and Covenants 126; 9 July 1841

Doctrine and Covenants epistles and instructions from Nauvoo period

- Doctrine and Covenants 127; 1 September 1842 (epistle)
- Doctrine and Covenants 128; 7 September 1842 (epistle)
- Doctrine and Covenants 129; 9 February 1843 (instructions)
- Doctrine and Covenants 130; 2 April 1843 (instructions)

118. Hyrum Smith mission diary, Hyrum Smith papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/SCMisc/id/63762/rec/1.
119. Hyrum Smith letter to Hannah Grinnels and children, Hyrum Smith papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/SCMisc/id/63765/rec/4.
120. Hyrum Smith letter to Thomas H. Owen, Esq., Hyrum Smith papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/SCMisc/id/63772/rec/6.
121. Writings, Hyrum Smith papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/SCMisc/id/68524/rec/17.
122. "Sources behind the Doctrine and Covenants," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/site/sources-behind-the-doctrine-and-covenants.

- Doctrine and Covenants 131; 16 May 1843 (instructions) and 17 May 1843 (discourse)

William Clayton

There are two categories for the writings of William Clayton used in the stylometric analysis.

William Clayton as scribe for Joseph

- Letter to Jennetta Richards, 23 June 1842[123]
- Letter to Emma Smith, 16 August 1842[124]
- Letter to Wilson Law, 16 August 1842[125]
- Journal Entries, 16 August; 23 August 1842[126]
- Letter to James Arlington Bennett, 8 September 1842[127]
- Letter to Joseph L. Heywood, 13 February 1844[128]
- Letter to John Smith, 17 June 1844[129]

William Clayton's writing

- Letter "To the Saints in England," 10 December 1840[130]

123. Letter to Jennetta Richards, Richards, 23 June 1842, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-jennetta-richards-richards-23-june-1842/1.
124. Letter to Emma Smith, 16 August 1842, p. 173, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-emma-smith-16-august-1842/1.
125. Letter to Wilson Law, 16 August 1842, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-wilson-law-16-august-1842/1.
126. Reflections and Blessings, 16 and 23 August 1842, p. 135, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/reflections-and-blessings-16-and-23-august-1842/1.
127. Letter to James Arlington Bennet, 8 September 1842, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-james-arlington-bennet-8-september-1842/1.
128. Letter to Joseph L. Heywood, 13 February 1844, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-joseph-l-heywood-13-february-1844/1.
129. Letter to John Smith, 17 June 1844, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-john-smith-17-june-1844/1.
130. William Clayton, "To the Saints in England," 10 December 1840, Church History Library, MS 5215. Also quoted in James B. Allen, "To the Saints in England: Impressions of a Mormon Immigrant," *BYU Studies* 18, no.3 (Spring 1978): 477–80, website-files-bucket.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/articles/article_pdfs/To_the_Saints_in_England.pdf.

- Diary (1840–1842)[131]
- Diary (1 December 1842–12 July 1843)[132]
- Letter, 16 May 1844[133]
- "History of the Nauvoo Temple," ca. 1845[134]

Joseph Kingsbury

- History of Joseph Corrodon Kingsbury Copied from his own handwriting in his little books where he kept his diary by his grand-daughter Rosalie Meservy Watson as written by his own hand 1846, 1847, 1849, 1850, and later.[135]

Willard Richards

There are two categories for the writings of Willard Richards used in the stylometric analysis.

Willard Richards as scribe for Joseph

- Letter to Sidney Rigdon, 27 March 1843[136]
- Letter to Col. Isaac Morley, 16 June 1844[137]
- Letter to Emma Smith, 23 June 1844[138]
- Letter to Thomas Ford, 23 June1844[139]

131. William Clayton, vol. 1, 1840–1842, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU, Vault MSS 47, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/MMD/id/74192/rec/1.
132. *An Intimate Chronicle the Journals of William Clayton*, 93–111.
133. William Clayton, Letter 16 May 1844, *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 11, 554–56, centerplace.org/history/ts/v5n11.htm.
134. William Clayton History of the Nauvoo Temple, 1845, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/81f4f09b-8564-479f-83c5-b7a1ca6d4695/0/0.
135. Joseph C. Kingsbury autobiography and journal, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/b677dc12-d4b5-4ab6-b728-c6b3c5068183/0/0. Also, archive.org/details/journal-of-joseph-c-kingsbury.
136. Letter to Sidney Rigdon, 27 March 1843, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-sidney-rigdon-27-march-1843/1.
137. Letter to Isaac Morley, 16 June 1844, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-isaac-morley-16-june-1844/1.
138. Letter to Emma Smith, 23 June 1844, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-emma-smith-23-june-1844/1.
139. Letter to Thomas Ford, 23 June 1844, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-thomas-ford-23-june-1844/1.

- Letter to Thomas Ford, 24 June 1844[140]
- Letter to Jesse B. Thomas, 26 June 1844[141]
- Letter to Thomas Ford, 26 June 1844[142]
- Letter to Emma Smith, 27 June 1844[143]
- Letter to Orville H. Browning, 27 June 1844[144]

Willard Richards's writing

- Journal and biographical sketch (1836–1839)[145]
- Letter to Brigham Young, 15 June 1840[146]
- Letter to Llewellen Mantle, 16 April 1841[147]
- Letter to James Arlington Bennet, 15 December 1842[148]
- Letter to Orson Hyde, 26 May 1844[149]
- Letter to J.A. Bennett, 20 June 1844[150]

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140. Letter to Thomas Ford, 24 June 1844, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-thomas-ford-24-june-1844/1.
141. Letter to Jesse B. Thomas, 26 June 1844–A, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-jesse-b-thomas-26-june-1844-a/1.
142. Letter to Thomas Ford, 26 June 1844, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-thomas-ford-26-june-1844/1.
143. Letter to Emma Smith, 27 June 1844, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-emma-smith-27-june-1844/1.
144. Letter to Orville Browning, 27 June 1844, p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-orville-browning-27-june-1844/1.
145. "History of Willard Richards," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 27 (1865): 118–20,133–36,150–52,165,doctrineandcovenantscentral.org/history/willard-richards/.
146. Willard Richards letter to Brigham Young, 15 June 1840, bcgmaxwell.wordpress.com/2014/12/08/willard-richards-to-brigham-young/.
147. Willard Richards journals and papers, 1821–1854; Outgoing correspondence; Letters, 1848 January–May; Willard Richards letter to Llewellen Mantle and wife; Church History Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/54faf5dc-89af-4e0f-b8c0-d895fef283c5/0/0.
148. Willard Richards journals and papers, 1821–1854; Outgoing correspondence; Letters, 1840, 1842–1843; Willard Richards letter to James A. Bennet; Church History Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/22fd8e05-feda-4fbf-9c49-701644e8d423/0/0.
149. Willard Richards letter to Orson Hyde, *History of the Church*, 6:406–8, byustudies.byu.edu/online-book/history-of-the-church-volume-6/210.
150. The Joseph Smith Papers, History, 1838–1856, volume F-1 [1 May 1844–8

- Article "Two Minutes in Jail," 27 June 1844[151]
- Letter to Brigham Young, 30 June 1844[152]

Thomas Bullock

- Journal, 31 August 1845 to 5 July 1846[153]

Brigham Young

There are two categories for the writings of Brigham Young used in the stylometric analysis.

Brigham Young's writing

- Letter to Joseph Smith, 7 May 1840[154]
- Letter to Willard Richards, 17 June 1840[155]
- Letter to Mary Ann Young, 16–30 October 1840[156]

Brigham Young's revelations

- Revelation for Reuben Miller, 30 January 1846[157]
- Word and Will of the Lord, Doctrine and Covenants 136, 14 January 1847[158]

August 1844], pp. 128–30, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-f-1-1-may-1844-8-august-1844/134.

151. "Two Minutes in Jail," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, 24 July 1844; *Times and Season* 5, no. 14, 1 August 1844, 598–99, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/19CMNI/id/13234.
152. Willard Richards letter to Brigham Young, 1844 June 30-August, Church History Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d24cd0bc-93d8-4e16-b563-ebc7be00f008/0/0.
153. Thomas Bullock typescript of Nauvoo journal, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU, cdm15999.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15999coll31/id/19422.
154. Letter from Brigham Young, 7 May 1840, p. 151, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-brigham-young-7-may-1840/1.
155. Brigham Young letter to Willard Richards, 17 June 1840, bcgmaxwell.wordpress.com/2014/12/12/brigham-young-to-willard-richards/.
156. Brigham Young letter to Mary Ann Young, 16–30 October 1840, bcgmaxwell.wordpress.com/2014/12/12/brigham-young-to-mary-ann-young/.
157. Revelation to Reuben Miller, *Brigham Young Journal*, mi.byu.edu/blythe-by-revelation/#_edn5. See *Wikipedia*, s.v. "List of non-canonical revelations in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_non-canonical_revelations_in_the_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints.
158. Earliest copy of Doctrine and Covenants 136, Historian's Office history of the Church, 1839–circa 1882; 1847 January 1–December 29; Church History

- Dream, Brigham Young office files, 17 February 1847[159]

Orson Pratt

- "To the Saints," 25 August 1845[160]
- "To the Saints," 8 November 1845[161]

Possible candidates not used and reasons why

- **Robert B. Thompson:** Though he was one of Joseph's scribes and the version of Doctrine and Covenants 124 we are using is in his handwriting, he died on 27 August 1841. So, he was not living when Doctrine and Covenants 132 was first recorded in 1843.
- **Newell K. Whitney:** He was in Nauvoo and sometime between 12–14 July 1843 he asked Joseph if he could have a copy of the revelation. After receiving permission, he had his clerk, Kingsbury, make a copy. However, Whitney is an unlikely candidate since Kingsbury stated that in the transcription process Whitney had simply verified that Kingsbury's copy correctly matched the original manuscript after Kingsbury read his copy out loud to Whitney.
- **Horace Whitney:** He was Newell K. Whitney's son, and made two copies of the Kingsbury document in 1847, but he cannot be considered a viable candidate for authorship of the original revelation, nor parts of it.

We also did not include other polygamists and Church leaders that have no specific connection to Doctrine and Covenants 132.

Appendix D: Additional Analyses

Validation studies

We performed additional analyses to test the validity of our procedure

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Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/a7f96aea-d4ce-4c49-86f1-fa283c5e0b01/0/75.

159. Brigham Young, vision, 1847 February 17; Church History Library, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/455d14f4-6788-46c2-a167-4d69f0f3bb6d/0/0.
160. "Message," *Times and Seasons* 6, no. 15, 15 August 1845, 995–98, latterdaytruth.org/pdf/100151.pdf.
161. "Farewell Message of Orson Pratt," *Times and Seasons* 6, no 18, 1 December 1845, 1042–44, latterdaytruth.org/pdf/100151.pdf.

before conducting the actual analysis of the textual data. We included in the set of candidate authors two authors who we knew should be ruled out as authors of section 132 (called negative controls). One was Parley P. Pratt who contributed to many early Church documents, but who had no known connection to the origin of section 132. As expected — if the analysis methodology is accurate — the result showed that his authorial style was distinctly different from that in section 132. The other negative control was James J. Strang. Using his own writings and claimed revelations, his authorial style was easily seen as incongruent with section 132 texts, as expected for someone who is not a potential author. Interestingly, Strang's revelations are closer than Brigham Young's revelations to the section 132 texts, which provides further evidence against Brigham Young as the author of section 132.

Another validating analysis was to test the power of our procedure to detect even small textual differences that we knew existed (called positive controls). We determined the sample size and number of resamples, so that the results were stable, and we detected the known positive controls.

Additionally, some people have suggested that the counsel to Emma Smith in Doctrine and Covenants 132:51–56 belongs with the plural marriage verses. Therefore, we included these verses in the plural marriage verses and found that doing so did not change any of the analysis results.

Corroborating study

To corroborate our results, we used multivariate hierarchical cluster analysis, which is a classification technique that groups into clusters each data point, in sets of data, so that each point is in a cluster containing the most similar data points, and the clusters are separated by their dissimilarity. This procedure classified 700 data points, each representing one of the samples of words randomly drawn from the seven groups of texts. Cluster analysis correctly classified 99% of the data points into their respective groups. It connected the groups that are closest to each other and then the groups that are the next closest, and so on, until all the groups were connected.

Figure 12 displays a dendrogram of the clusters. The horizontal axis is the relative distance the clusters are from each other. The longer a horizontal line is that connects clusters, the more distant (or dissimilar) the clusters are from each other. Figure 12 shows that

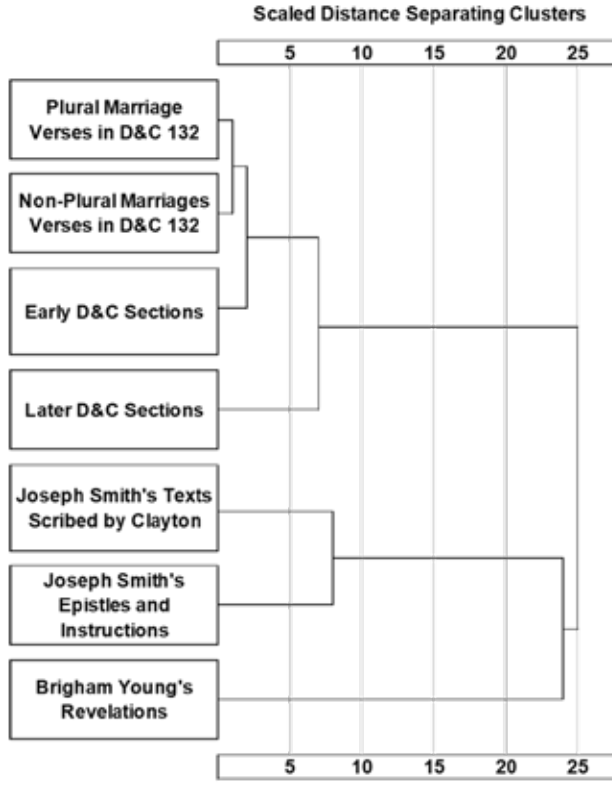

Figure 12. Hierarchical cluster analysis of the five groups of text closest to section 132. The revelatory sections group together. Joseph Smith's epistles and instructions group with his material scribed by William Clayton. Brigham Young's revelations are dissimilar from all the other texts.

the plural marriage and non-plural marriage portions of section 132 cluster together tightly, and they form a group with the early revelatory sections. The later revelatory sections then join with that group, even though they are somewhat dissimilar. Joseph Smith's epistles and instructions and his materials scribed by William Clayton cluster together, and they are separate from the revelatory sections. Next, Brigham Young's revelations link with Joseph Smith's non-revelatory cluster, but are highly dissimilar.

The cluster analysis confirms the results presented in Part Three: that the plural marriage and non-plural marriage portions of section 132 are similar to each other and together they are closely similar to the early revelation sections, while Brigham Young's revelations are highly dissimilar.

Appendix E: Examination of Ethan Lloyd's Analysis

Ethan Lloyd, a statistics student, recently performed a stylometric analysis of Doctrine and Covenants 132 that has been circulated among some members of the Church.[162] Although it appears sophisticated, unfortunately Lloyd's analysis is not statistically valid, and his claims are misleading.

Lloyd randomly chose sections from the Doctrine and Covenants and counted the twenty-five most frequent words and some other features. He did a two-dimensional Principal Components Analysis (PCA)[163] on them and, by eyeball, declared that the plural marriage verses in section 132 was an outlier and thus not written by Joseph Smith. His analysis is problematic for a number of reasons:

1. Lloyd references DeBarthe (starting on p. 4) who says in her work that she compared the text to Brigham Young, Orson Pratt, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, "and some others." Lloyd did not compare to these authors nor to anyone else as possible authors.
2. Though some people use most frequent words to attempt stylometric analyses, it has been shown that they are not the most distinguishing words. Function words (used in our analysis) have repeatably proven more powerful.
3. Lloyd's use of random sections of the Doctrine and Covenants does not take into account time frames nor possible genres.
4. Lloyd says that he split the text into roughly 1,000-word blocks, but some sections should have had more blocks than he used. (It is unclear why he did not have more blocks.) Also, he reports certain counts, but his data are

162. Ethan Lloyd, "A Stylometric Analysis of Doctrine and Covenants 132," (unpublished, date unknown).

163. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is a dimensionality reduction technique used to simplify complex datasets by transforming them into a new set of uncorrelated variables, called *principal components*. These components are ordered by the amount of variance they explain in the original data, with the first component being the linear combination of all the variables that captures the most variance, the second the linear combination capturing the second most, and so on. PCA aims to reduce the number of variables, while retaining as much of the variation as possible, making it easier to analyze and visualize data.

different. Thus, his data handling or statements about them are suspect.

5. Lloyd's splitting of section 132 into plural marriage (vv. 31–40, 51–66) and non-plural marriage (vv. 4–33, 41–50) portions seems to lack reason.
6. Examining verses 1–3 shows they are clearly about polygamy practiced anciently, yet Lloyd does not include them.
7. To distinguish between possible authorial candidates and to perform authorship attribution, Stepwise Discriminant Analysis (SDA) is the most powerful approach, while Lloyd's choice of PCA is not approprate given the data.
8. When using SDA on Lloyd's frequent words with Bonferroni adjustment (0.05/25 = 0.002 to enter), only one word is selected and the correct classifications and cross-classifications are deficient. Without Bonferroni adjustment, using 0.05 to enter, only three words are selected and again the correct classification rates are deficient. Attempting to include all twenty-five of his words in a discriminant analysis results in fourteen words not meeting tolerance criteria, and again classification is deficient. Because of the way he constructs and analyzes the data, he has only eleven degrees of freedom for the analyses.
9. When attempting SDA on Lloyd's additional features, no features are selected at the 0.05 level. In fact, the closest to entering is *adjectives* with a p-value to enter of 0.18, which is far from being significant enough to enter.
10. When Lloyd plots his PCA results, he views the results and makes an "eyeball conclusion," which is not a statistically valid technique.
11. A proper evaluation of Lloyd's PCA results shows that his plural marriage portion of section 132 is not an outlier. It is customary with multivariate data to use a 0.001 level of significance and thus a 99.9% confidence ellipse. Figures 13 and 14 show that the plural marriage portion (the lower left point) is within this ellipse, and thus not an outlier.
12. Using Lloyd's split of section 132 with our candidates' texts, we performed SDA analyses, yielding the same results as discussed in the main body of this paper.
13. Using Lloyd's split of section 132 with our candidates' texts,

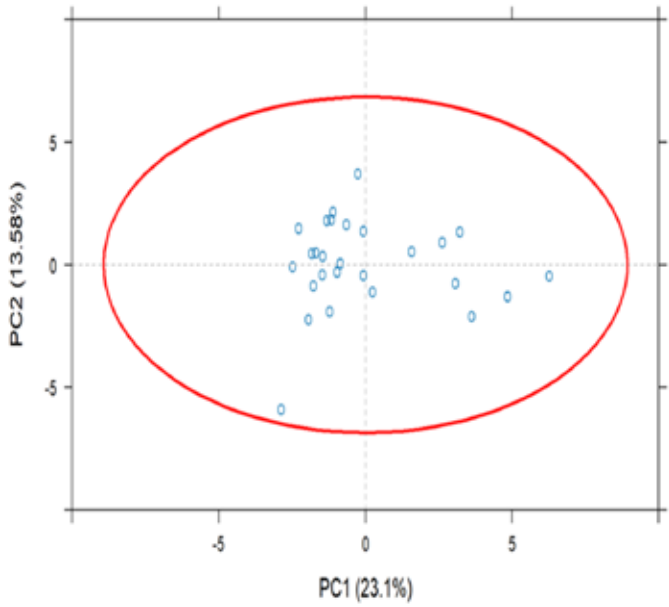

Figure 13. PCA results of most frequent words data.

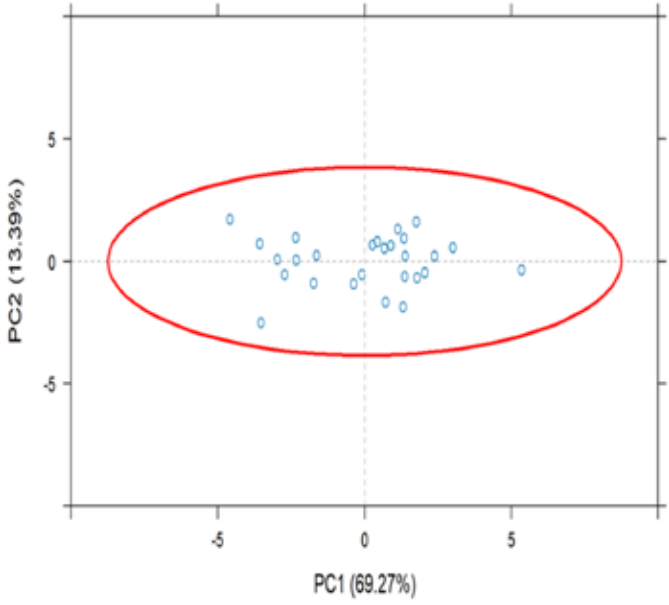

Figure 14. PCA results of other features data.

we performed multidimensional PCA, yielding results similar to our SDA results.

We conclude that Lloyd's analysis is inadequate and that his assertions are misleading.

[**Authors' Note:** *We wish to thank Alex D. Smith, historian with the Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for his assistance in identifying potential candidate authors of section 132, and appropriate representative documents for comparative analysis. We also wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for their time spent reviewing this article and for their many suggestions that have greatly strengthened its final form.*]

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Larry Bassist *has over forty years of experience in statistical analysis specializing in both quantitative and qualitative analyses. He has worked in the pharmaceutical and electronics industries, taught statistics at Brigham Young University—where he earned a Master's degree in Applied Statistics—and currently does training and consulting with Breakthrough Consulting Group. He has contributed professionally to publications and presentations on diverse topics in statistical science as well as in the digital humanities. As an avid genealogist, his greatest personal interest is in Family History.*

Finding the Elect Lady

Spencer Kraus

Review of Lincoln H. Blumell, Lady Eclecte: The Lost Woman of the New Testament *(Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2025). 314 pages. $48.00 (hardcover).*

Abstract: *For centuries, the consensus reading of 2 John 1 maintained that the epistle was written to a local church, metaphorically addressed as an "elect lady." This has most especially been the case over the last 150 years of scholarship. However, new findings from Lincoln Blumell challenge the consensus reading, restoring the elect lady to her proper place as an actual individual in the early Christian world. This lady, moreover, can be identified by name, and it is only through haplography that confusion over her identity has been introduced at all. Blumell's restoration of the text of 2 John 1, based on papyrological and manuscript evidence, is groundbreaking work that will shape scholarship on the New Testament and early Christianity for years to come.*

Before my review formally begins, a disclosure is needed. During my studies at Brigham Young University, I was fortunate to work as a research assistant for Lincoln Blumell. During this time, he came across his findings that would eventually be published as *Lady Eclecte: The Lost Woman of the New Testament*.[1] I reviewed and read each chapter of the book at various stages of the writing process, often multiple times. Aware of any bias I may have, I nonetheless

1. Lincoln H. Blumell, *Lady Eclecte: The Lost Woman of the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2025).

highly encourage any and all readers interested in the New Testament to read this book.

Blumell's work revisits an often-overlooked epistle in the New Testament, 2 John. Moreover, it focuses almost entirely on a single verse — in fact, it could be more accurate to say that it focuses almost entirely on the first four words in the Greek text of 2 John 1, typically translated as "The elder, to the elect lady" (Ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ). The opening address to this letter has been so securely steeped in tradition that various attempts to understand the irregular Greek formula (and otherwise unattested form of address) have been presented over the years, without considering the possibility that the received reading is incorrect. Blumell, however, argues precisely that — and provides plenty of evidence for why the received reading should be emended (p. 83–84).

Utilizing his training in papyrology and the New Testament, Blumell is uniquely qualified to address this letter. This letter, after all, notes that it was originally written on papyrus: "Although I have much to write to you, I would rather not use papyrus and ink" (2 John 1:12; translation found on p. 59). Indeed, Blumell shows many correspondences between 2 John and other Greco-Roman papyri that have been preserved, showing that it is a typical letter of the first century AD, rather than an imagined "literary fiction" as other scholars have attempted to argue (pp. 58–70). And, as this epistle matches other papyri in length, style, and phraseology, so too did its original address: "The elder, *to the lady Eclecte*" (Ἐκλέκτῃ τῇ κυρίᾳ), meaning this epistle was written to an actual woman in the early Christian church (p. 83).

By emending the address in this way, the word *elect* is translated as a name, followed by the definite article (τῇ), followed by the word *lady* in the dative as a modifier. This address "conforms to the typical pattern of address in Roman-period letters that is also attested in 3 John 1," with the definite article having been lost in a simple case of haplography (pp. 70, 83). This reading does, however, result in a few questions: 1) How does this reading make sense of the epistolary evidence? 2) Is this reading even attested in the manuscript evidence? And 3) Is the name Eclecte even attested?

Blumell answers each of these questions in full, providing plenty of evidence to defend his assertion. First, Blumell demonstrates that the emended opening to 2 John would make perfect sense in light of other Greco-Roman papyri written around the same time as 2 John. For example, the address's utilization of the modifier *lady* is typical of other

papyri, which (alongside the masculine *lord*) "are often a courteous form of address irrespective of status" in the papyri, and "were often used for family, friends, and social equals and not just for superiors" (p. 73). To demonstrate this, some papyri even paired the terms lord or lady with familial addresses such as brother or sister (pp. 74–75). Furthermore, like all other addresses, the modifier follows the name of the recipient, suggesting that (like other letters), a dative definite article should precede the modifier. As summarized by Blumell, "The problem with the reading in 2 John 1 is the missing definite article τῇ between the name (Ἐκλέκτῃ) and the modifier (κυρίᾳ); all the papyrological examples . . . contain the definite article" (p. 81).

This form of address would also fit in with John's other epistle in the New Testament, which also uses this exact same form of address: "The elder to the beloved Gaius" (Ὁ πρεσβύτερος Γαΐῳ τῷ ἀγαπητῷ). Indeed, based on a shared authorship between these two letters, both 2 John and 3 John should be expected to "contain numerous structural, stylistic, and phraseological parallels," which they indeed do (p. 76). This also goes for the form of address, as ancient authors typically employed the same form of address across multiple letters. This tendency has allowed scholars to reconstruct entire lines of text missing from other papyri (pp. 76–79). Thus, just as John here employs the form "A to B the [modifier]," so too should we expect a similar address in 2 John. A solid defense for the shared authorship of 2 and 3 John is found especially on pp. 47–54, but generally throughout chapter 3 as well, and the papyrological evidence presented by Blumell will be important for future biblical commentators to discuss.

By understanding that an early scribe (if not the author himself) simply dropped the article due to haplography by seeing the letter string τῇ twice in a row, the restoration of this article makes more sense. It is also not uncommon among the epistolary evidence, which has led scholars transcribing the papyri to often note where the article should be expected (pp. 80–84). In short, this is such a typical phenomenon that no one should be surprised to see it happen to an epistolary address in the New Testament as well. The restoration of the epistolary address also clarifies that only Eclecte can be rendered as a personal name, and not Kyria as some interpreters in the past have done (pp. 75–76, 98, 144–50). Blumell provides an in-depth discussion on all of the scholarship that has previously been done surrounding this matter, making a close reading of the book invaluable to fully appreciate his argument.

Second, Blumell examines the manuscript evidence for 2 John to see if this reading is otherwise attested. While most early manuscript evidence simply offers the received text, "a case for Ἐκλέκτῃ τῇ κυρίᾳ can be made on textual grounds, and not just papyrological grounds, as this reading is evinced in multiple manuscripts" (p. 87). To make this case, Blumell examines virtually every printed edition of the Greek New Testament from the Middle Ages to the present day, showing that multiple individuals early on believed Eclecte should be rendered as a proper name (pp. 87–98). This is not only fascinating from a textual standpoint, but it provides critical information to demonstrate how this verse has been understood through the years and how we have come to the point where this verse has almost universally been interpreted as a metaphor rather than a personal address.

Blumell also discusses manuscript evidence from papyri, majuscules, and minuscules of the New Testament up to about the year AD 1500. Furthermore, through a close examination of much of the early manuscript evidence, Blumell shows that many papyri and majuscules are missing the opening address to this verse, so "one cannot conclusively determine the exact reading of the address" in most attestations of this verse (p. 103). In the minscule evidence, Blumell's emended reading does occur in some important manuscripts, with the earliest dating to the eleventh century AD. Many of the manuscripts that contain this reading are closely related in textual tradition and context (pp. 104–9). Furthermore, despite their later composition, many scholars have noted that minuscule manuscripts can be helpful in text-critical matters, and their pedigree is more important than their date (p. 109). They have even proven to contain authentic readings known to church fathers that are otherwise unattested in the earlier papyri — at least one of which has since been included in twenty-first century printings of the Greek New Testament and English translations of the Bible (pp. 109–13). In like manner, the name *Eclecte* was known to Clement of Alexandria (whose writings initially spurred Blumell's investigation, as described in chapter 1) and is found in important minuscule manuscripts.

Blumell's analysis of the manuscript evidence is important and fresh. As each important manuscript is discussed, Blumell offers insights to why this reading has not been challenged despite the uncertainty that can be found in the earliest manuscript evidence. It is also critical for his demonstration that sometimes those who transcribe the Greek text from important manuscripts let tradition shape

the way they interpret missing letters or lines. Rather than note where extra letters could be included, for instance, sometimes transcriptions make the text appear more secure than it actually is. By going to the manuscripts himself, Blumell is able to provide better transcriptions while also dealing with how others have transcribed this in the past. In these instances, Blumell shows a deep familiarity with both the manuscripts and the scholarly debate surrounding those manuscripts.

Third, through a lengthy overview of the epistolary evidence, Blumell shows that the name *Eclecte* is not only attested, but it is more attested than other women's names in the New Testament. Other scholars who claim that it is not attested in the ancient world are simply parroting older studies that did not benefit from the treasure trove of papyrological and epistolary evidence that has since come to light (pp. 115–50). This also explains another point of contention that scholars have wrongly used to say Eclecte cannot be a personal name: the use of the adjective *elect* in verse 13. Despite being a completely different part of speech with no way to possibly be read as a personal name, Blumell responds to this argument by showing how puns on people's names were typical in papyri (pp. 142–44). In this case, verse 13 ends the epistle by referring to Eclecte's "elect sister"—*elect* being a clear pun on Eclecte's name. Thus, while not only reflecting familiarity between the addressee and the sender, this pun may "reflect back and reciprocally highlight that Eclecte is true to her name" (p. 144). That is, Eclecte is herself "elect"—or, we could say, "an elect lady."[2]

Ultimately, there is little reason to reject this reading, as Blumell shows through a detailed analysis how this reading is not only attested, but it is the best (and perhaps only) way to make sense of this letter in

2. Latter-day Saints may be aware that 2 John 1 was used by Joseph Smith when organizing the Relief Society in 1842, with the understanding that 2 John was 1) written to an actual woman and 2) this woman was called "elect" because she was "elected to preside" over the women of this ancient congregation. Lincoln Blumell and I will discuss how this can be understood in light of the reading "the lady Eclecte" and the pun in verse 13 in our forthcoming commentary on the Johannine Epistles in the *BYU New Testament Commentary*. For Joseph Smith's remarks at the organization of the Relief Society, see Jill Mulvay Derr et al., eds., *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-day Saint Women's History* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016), 32–34, https://www.churchhistoriansspress.org/the-first-fifty-years-of-relief-society/part-1/1-2/1-2-1.

light of the papyrological and textual evidence available to us. Only tradition has kept the received text of 2 John 1 from being challenged.

Two other important discussions in the book can easily justify buying the volume. First, in chapter 2, Blumell discusses the past 150 years of scholarship surrounding 2 John 1 in a concise manner, showing how scholars have almost universally concluded that 2 John 1 should be understood as a metaphor. This assumption has, in turn, only limited the scholarly discussion surrounding this epistle, and has often led others to grapple with it in almost comedic ways to assert that this must be a fictitious letter. This is also a warning for those who delve into biblical studies: while relying on the consensus understanding of a particular verse may be helpful, in some cases the consensus is just wrong. Works such as Blumell's can effectively push back against the consensus and reshape how we understand a passage of the New Testament. This is not the first time some influential work has done this, either. A similar treatment by Eldon Jay Knapp in 2005 likewise demonstrated that a consensus reading of Romans 16:7 was wrong, and the male name *Junius* should properly be rendered as the female name Junia.[3]

The second discussion comes in chapter 6, which provides a detailed commentary of 2 John *as an epistle written on papyrus*. Understanding this context (which is explicitly named in 2 John 1:12) can be critical to properly understanding the epistle itself. This epistle was written to an actual woman, and the children mentioned in this epistle appear to be other Christians meeting in Eclecte's house-church (similar to other cases in the New Testament where women hosted Christian worship services in their homes). By restoring the lady Eclecte to her proper place in 2 John as an actual woman, many of the issues surrounding various textual issues (such as the singular and plural second person pronouns) are likewise resolved, as John is writing to an actual woman *and* those meeting in her house.

In short, Blumell notes, "If 2 John did not have an interpretive tradition that promoted the received reading ε′κλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ, which sees in this unattested form of address a metaphorical personification of a church, and this letter had been discovered in the last century among the papyri, this traditional reading and interpretation would have never emerged," but rather would have naturally "been restored and articulated as ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἐκλέκτῃ <τῇ> κυρίᾳ . . . because of all the

3. See Eldon Jay Knapp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005).

papyrological parallels for this form of address and because the loss of the definite article immediately following a word terminating with the same two letters is a well-attested phenomenon" (p. 83). Furthermore, by restoring Eclecte to this letter,

> [Second] John is precisely what it presents itself to be: a genuine personal letter sent between parties. . . . The principal recipient is a named woman who is known to the elder and, based on the content of the letter, holds a prominent place within the Christian community where the letter is sent. She is personally known to the elder, is a trusted confidant, and is regarded as wielding enough influence and authority to help ensure that his directives are carried out. (p. 178)

This brings to light an important figure and an important woman in early Christianity while highlighting her prominence in the early Christian community.

I cannot recommend this book enough and believe that it is a groundbreaking piece of scholarship that will shape how 2 John is read by future interpreters for years to come.

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Of Book of Mormon Stories—and Giants

Brant Gardner

Abstract: *Stories of giants have occurred throughout the ages and in different cultures. These stories contrast to the scientific evidence that there never have been races of giant humans, even though there are some specific cases of unusually tall individuals. If the stories don't come from true experience, where do they come from?*

In January 2018, the *Annotated Edition of the Book of Mormon* was published, attractively bound in leather. The Amazon listing for the edition, which is still available, has the following sales invitation — an invitation that even implies apostolic endorsement:

> This book has seen unprecedented demand. The first printing sold out in a matter of days. The second printing has now finally made it to the publisher and the books are back in circulation. This particular edition seems to have struck a vital nerve among readers. . . . Unlike almost every similar publication over the last 50 years, this one's "appeal-to-authority" is not that of the scholars, but rather the authority of Prophets and Apostles.[1]

The *Annotated Edition of the Book of Mormon* is explained and illustrated according to concepts promoted by those who espouse the Heartland model of the Book of Mormon. Stephen O. Smoot provided an extensive review of the book and concluded, among other things, that the editors "approach archaeology with enormous carelessness and an overall untrustworthy methodology." The part of his review that is particularly important for this paper concerns a photograph that

1. David R. Hocking, ed., *Annotated Edition of the Book of Mormon* (Cottonwood Heights, UT: Digital Legend Press, 2018).

the *Annotated Edition* uses to illustrate Ether 1:34, which refers to "the brother of Jared being a large and mighty man." Smoot remarks of this photo:

> The picture . . . is juxtaposed next to a clipped 1925 newspaper article with the sensational headline: "Mound Giants in Indiana Said to Antedate Indian." However, the [*Annotated Edition of the Book of Mormon*] provides no documentation for when and where the photograph was taken, who took the photograph, and what the "giant" skeleton in the photograph really is. The obvious goal here in the [*Annotated Edition of the Book of Mormon*] is to associate the "giant" skeleton with the newspaper article describing "giants" discovered in a mound in Indiana and thereby link Ether 1:34 with these findings.[2]

The association of stories of giants with the Book of Mormon in editions of the Book of Mormon marketed to English-speaking Latter-day Saints creates a perception of new importance for some of these old stories. The apparently large number of sales of this edition suggest that these ideas are being presented to a large number of Latter-day Saints and are being accepted and believed.

Giants in the Book of Mormon

The *Annotated Edition of the Book of Mormon* isn't the only place where we find Latter-day Saints promoting the claim that there were giants in the Book of Mormon. A website promoting the Heartland model looks at the question of giants in the Book of Mormon:

> Were there giants in the Book of Mormon, if so, where?
>
> **Jaredites in the Land Northward:**
>
> > And the brother of Jared being a **LARGE** and mighty man . . . (Ether 1:34)
> >
> > And they were **LARGE** and mighty men as to the strength of men. (Ether 15:26)

2. Stephen O. Smoot, "Forgeries, Unprovenanced Artifacts, and Pseudo-Archaeology," Part 2 of "A Review of the Annotated Edition of the Book of Mormon," *The Interpreter Foundation Blog*, 3 June 2019, interpreterfoundation.org/blog-a-review-of-the-annotated-edition-of-the-book-of-mormon-part-2/.

Zarahemlaites in the Land Southward:

> And they came down again that they might pitch battle against the Nephites. And they were led by a man whose name was Coriantumr; and he was a **descendant of Zarahemla**; and he was a dissenter from among the Nephites; and he was a **LARGE** and a mighty man. (Helaman 1:15)

If there are zero giant bones in the land of your model (Mesoamerica, Baja, Malay, etc.), then it's <u>not</u> Book of Mormon lands.[3]

In this declaration, giants are not only accepted as real but as crucial evidence for the Book of Mormon, even suggesting that if there are no giants, then a geographic model of the Book of Mormon must be wrong.

These declarations follow the typical early accounts of finding large bones. These reports are suggested to be proof of the Book of Mormon, a proof supported by specific verses from the Book of Mormon. It is perhaps understandable that some Saints might assume the presence of giants in the Book of Mormon. After all, the Bible declares:

- There were giants in the earth in those days. (Genesis 6:4)
- And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, *which come* of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. (Numbers 13:33)
- That also was accounted a land of giants: giants dwelt therein in old time; and the Ammonites call them Zamzummims. (Deuteronomy 2:20)
- The valley of the son of Hinnom, *and* which *is* in the valley of the giants on the north. (Joshua 18:16)

Without attempting to understand the biblical references to giants, the presence of the term might encourage some to suspect that the Book of Mormon might also speak of giants. However, there is no mention of giants in the Book of Mormon. Zero. What we have are statements that Jared was a "large and mighty man" (Ether 1:34) and that some of the Jaredites were "large and mighty men as to the strength of men" (Ether 15:26). Those texts undeniably use the word large. Is

3. "Giants," Book of Mormon Geography Lands—Western New York Model (website), bookofmormongeography.org/lands/cumorah/giants/.

"large" the same as "giant?" Those promoting websites related to the Heartland model of the Book of Mormon and the *Annotated Edition of the Book of Mormon* that incorporates their ideas certainly think so.

Why Believe that There Might be Giants?

The idea that there were giants in the Book of Mormon might be supported by many reports of giants in North American history. Stories of giants have occurred throughout the ages and in different cultures. These stories contrast to the scientific evidence that there never have been races of giant humans, even though there are some specific cases of unusually tall individuals. If the stories don't come from true experience, where do they come from?

Humans are a story-telling people. Ancient peoples told stories, some of which have been written down. We still tell stories. Some of those also end up being written — increasingly on social media. Many have no known author. Stories are the way we understand our world and our place in it.

We cannot help but create stories. It is built into the way our brains work. V. S. Ramachandran and Sandra Blakeslee provide an overview of how our brains work to make sense of the world:

> At any given moment in our waking lives, our brains are flooded with a bewildering array of sensory inputs, all of which must be incorporated into a coherent perspective that's based on what stored memories already tell us is true about ourselves and the world. In order to generate coherent actions, the brain must have some way of sifting through this superabundance of detail and of ordering it into a stable and internally consistent "belief system" — a story that makes sense of the available evidence. Each time a new item of information comes in we fold it seamlessly into our preexisting worldview.[4]

The brain *wants* to make understandable stories. The power of the brain to create those stories is highlighted in an experiment performed with a young man whose corpus callosum (the connector between the two hemispheres) had been cut. This meant that the two halves of his brain worked just fine, but they could not communicate with each

4. V. S. Ramachandran and Sandra Blakeslee, *Phantoms in the Brain: Probing the Mysteries of the Human Mind* (New York: Quill William Morrow, 1999), 134.

other. That typically did not create a difficulty, but when information was presented that required the inter-brain-hemisphere communication, it produced an interesting result.

> In one experiment by Michael Gazzaniga and Joseph LeDoux, [the young man with the severed corpus collosum] was presented with a picture of a chicken claw on the right side of the screen (left hemisphere) and a picture of a snow scene with a snowman and a car stuck in the snow on the left side of the screen (right hemisphere), and he was asked to choose from a series of picture cards the card most obviously linked to the scene presented on the screen. The correct answer was a picture of a chicken for the chicken claw, and a picture of a shovel for the snow scene. PS [the young man] pointed to the chicken with his right hand and to the shovel with his left. When asked what he had seen, he answered (presumably from his left hemisphere), "I saw a claw and I picked the chicken, and you have to clean out the chicken shed with a shovel." Gazzaniga and LeDoux's interpretation of this "creative fabrication" is that PS's speaking left hemisphere had to explain why PS's left hand was pointing to the shovel. It was unaware of the snow scene, because of the cut corpus callosum, and had to supply the best theory it could give the limited information it had to work with.[5]

Few of us have the problem that the young man had, but all of us have the problem of understanding the world around us and incorporating the limited information available to us into a cohesive story. That need to create stories leads directly to the stories of ancient giants.

When English-speaking settlers arrived in the New World, they likely brought their own stories of giants, perhaps supported by the biblical mentions of giants. It didn't take them long to discover that the Native Americans they encountered also had stories of ancient giants: "Many sources on southeast American Indian literature mention post-contact Indians and describe them as tall in stature. Indeed, explorers and travelers throughout the Americas reported these newly discovered people as being of great height."[6] Though they were seen as

5. Ian Glynn, *An Anatomy of Thought: The Origin and Machinery of the Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999), 282.

6. Mehmet Yasar Iscan and Morton H. Kessel, "Giant Amerindians: Fact or

tall in comparison to the newly arrived Europeans, there are Native American tales of even taller ancestors. The stories declare that there were giants.

In 1970–73, Charles Betts recorded some of the native Pawnee ideas, noting that they refused to pick up fossilized bones, believing them to be the remains of ancient giant humans.[7] A Pawnee story teaches that "the first men who lived on earth were very large Indians. . . . [They were] very big and very strong [and] used to hunt the buffalo on foot. They were so swift and strong that a man could run down a buffalo."[8] The combination of stories of very tall Native Americans, and their own legends of giants raises the question of whether those stories might be true or, if not, what triggered them.

Native Legends of Giants and Their Sources

Native North American stories of giants originated not in direct experience with living giants but with their bones found by later peoples. Adrienne Mayor reports one of the Pawnee origin stories:

> At last Tirawa got angry and made the waters rise. The ground became soppy mud. "These great people sank down in the mud and were drowned. The great bones found on the prairie are the bones of these people." We have been in deep canyons and have seen big bones underground, the elders told Grinnell, and they "convince us that these [giants] did sink into the soft ground." "After the destruction of the race of giants, Tirawa created a new race of men, small, like those of today."[9]

Mayor has made a study of the ways ancient peoples interacted with, and formed stories about, their discoveries of the bones of ancient animals. She began her studies of historical peoples' interactions with fossilized bones with the Greeks and Romans. She discovered the very plausible origin of the gold-guarding griffin, which is a mythical animal with the beak and wings of a bird and the body of a lion. She found that along an important gold trade route were fossilized dinosaurs with beaks on the heads and claws on the feet. The later people

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Fantasy?" *Southeastern Archaeology* 16, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 73.

7. Adrienne Mayor, *Fossil Legends of the First Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 182–83.
8. Mayor, *Fossil Legends,* 192.
9. Mayor, *Fossil Legends,* 192–94.

took that information and created a fantastical beast around the confusing information of those bones.[10] She writes, "In Medieval Europe, the stupendous bones of prehistoric animals were believed to belong to giants, saints, and celebrities from antiquity. The big bones were placed in coffins and reburied by the hundreds in medieval churches as saints' relics."[11]

Mayor reports the clear connection between legends of giants and the discoveries of fossils:

> This spectacle of enormous bones and teeth eroding out of the banks of the Hudson at Claverack (south of Albany, New York) in 1705–6 drew curious crowds from miles around. Two groups in particular—the Indians of the Hudson Valley and Dutch and English farmers—debated the identity of the remarkable remains, and word of the New World "giants" electrified intellectual circles in the Colonies and Europe. . . . Taylor himself had heard local Indians describe a "Gyant of incredible Magnitude," but he had "disbelieved it till he saw the Teeth" of the Claverack skeleton in 1705. According to the Indians (probably Iroquoian-speaking Mohawks, Algonquian Mohicans, Abenakis, and Pequots, among others), the Claverack remains belonged to a giant called *Weetucks* or *Maushops,* who lived about eight or ten generations ago (some said it had died out "centuries ago").[12]

Remembering what was quoted from Dr. Ramachandran above, the Native Americans and early Dutch and English settlers all had to find ways to create an understandable story out of the discoveries of the large fossil bones and teeth. They lived at a time prior to our more scientific understanding of extinct animals. Nevertheless, we should be cautious about too quickly concluding that these people were naïve. Mayor also reports:

> According to forensic anthropologist Douglas Ubelaker, nonhuman bones, especially femurs, can fool even the most experienced medical experts. In his study of modern FBI files, he found that about 15 percent of "human" bones thought to be those of murder victims turn out to be animal

10. Adrienne Mayor, *The First Fossil Hunters: Paleontology in Greek and Roman Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 15–28.
11. Mayor, *First Fossil Hunters,* 77.
12. Mayor, *Fossil Legends,* 34.

bones. Ubelaker points out that similarities of mammal anatomy, the finder's expectations, and the context of discovery encourage the misidentification as human. Those same factors figured in antiquity.[13]

The widespread stories of ancient giants shared enough similarities that they are reasonably connected to the stories told to explain the large, fossilized bones, especially femurs that might appear human except for their large size. With the combination of the finder's expectations, and perhaps knowledge of other stories of giants, the task of clothing these fossilized animal bones in a giant human "skin" is understandable — understandable, but not historically accurate.

Very Tall Native Americans

The stories of the post-contact encounters with tall Indians are very different from the legends based on the fossilized bones. These stories are not told of an ancient and extinct population but rather one that was living at the time of the reports. One of those more modern stories is discussed in the story of the redhaired giants of Northern Piute lore, discussed below. Fortunately, even though those encounters were hundreds of years in the past, modern archaeologists have access to the bones of many of those peoples, and modern methods can be used to determine living height from the discovered bones, even when the full skeleton has not been found.[14]

A basic question about giants would be to define just how tall one must be to qualify as a giant. There is no absolute answer, and certainly it is one that can change over time and for specific populations. There are many professional basketball players who do not look particularly giant when they are seen on the court, but standing next to someone of either average or less than average height, they would certainly count as giants. The question of how tall is tall has a generalized definition, at least when examining the bones of past populations.

Classification of stature into "tall" and "short" is subjective

13. Mayor, *First Fossil Hunters,* 80.
14. Paul W. Sciulli, Kim N. Schneider, and Michael C. Mahaney, "Stature Estimation in Prehistoric Native Americans of Ohio," *American Journal of Physical* Anthropology 83, no. 3 (November 1990): 278. The emphasis of the article is to establish formulas for determining overall height based on specific bones.

and absolute values are not written in stone. However, some authors sort these groupings as:

< 130.0 cm [4 ft 3 in] – dwarf
< 150.0 cm [4 ft 11 in] – very short
< 160.0 cm [5 ft 3 in] – short
> 170.0 cm [5 ft 7 in] – tall
> 180.0 cm [5 ft 11 in] – very tall
> 199.9 cm [6 ft 7 in] – giant[15]

Iscan and Kessel examined the remains of Native Americans in Florida and found that they ranged from 158.2 cm [5 ft 2 in] to 174.7 cm [5 ft 9 in] in height.[16] In a different study, Paul W. Sciulli, Kim N. Schneider, and Michael C. Mahaney examined the remains of 64 Native Americans (35 male and 29 female). Their article focuses on creating equations for determining stature, but they do report averages of 154.1 cm [5 ft 0 in] for the females and 164.3 cm [5 ft 5 in] for the males.[17]

In the conclusion to their paper, Iscan and Kessel note:

> The osteologic data presented in this paper clearly contradict the historical writings and artistic representations. Indeed, Sciulli and Giesen (1993), commenting on Ohio and Eastern Woodland Native Americans, point out that statures calculated from East Asian regression tables used by osteologists will, if anything, produce *overestimation* of stature. With the exception of one individual, there is no record of osteometric data in which the average measurements exceeded 179.9 cm [5 ft 11 in].[18]

As with modern populations, there are individuals who are extremely tall, but they are the exceptions to an average member of that population. Thus, even with some rare exceptions, according to the best information available to archaeology, the discovered remains of Native North Americans fall into the "tall" category, but just below "very tall" and far short of "giant."

Of course, it is possible that there was some example of a much larger person. Robert Wadlow (1918–1940) was truly giant, standing

15. Iscan and Kessel, "Giant Amerindians," 75.
16. Iscan and Kessel, "Giant Amerindians," 75.
17. Sciulli, Schneider, and Mahaney, "Stature Estimation," 276.
18. Iscan and Kessel, "Giant Amerindians," 76.

at 8 ft 11 in. He is widely considered the tallest human in history.[19] The exceptional height of certain individuals is behind the photograph that was published in the *Annotated Edition of the Book of Mormon.* Stephen Smoot notes, "The skeleton in the photo is not that of an ancient Native American from Indiana. It's actually the skeleton of Charles Byrne, an Irishman who suffered from gigantism and died in 1783. His skeleton (the one in the photo used in the *AEBOM*) is housed at the Royal College of Surgeons in London."[20]

These men were exceptional, and such tall individuals represent an extremely small percentage of the populations in which they lived. Similarly, one can find exceptionally short humans. Nevertheless, we have physical data sufficient to understand the typical populations both of our time and in the past. Regardless of possible exceptional individuals, no race of giants, dead or living, has yet been discovered. Anywhere.

What About the Many Reports of Giants?

Before the availability of modern archaeological methods and the science of osteology, there were stories of giants in the press, which was the Internet of the day:

> In the 1800s, reports began to surface of the discovery of very large skeletal remains in the burial mounds of North America. These skeletons were described as reaching seven to eight feet (2.4 meters) in length, with a lower frequency of discoveries spanning nine to 11 feet (3.3 meters) in length, and having very large skulls and gigantic lower jawbones. Historians often detailed these remains in early local historical records, such as the following from Cass County, Michigan:
>
> > "It was a mound about thirteen feet high. . . . the diameter of its base was about fifty feet . . . Portions of the skeletons were in a good state of preservation. The femur, or thigh bone, of one of the males, which Dr Bonine has now in his possession, is of great size and indicates that its owner must have been at least

19. Alia Hoyt, "Robert Wadlow Gentle Giant's Extraordinary Life," How Stuff Works (website), 10 April 2025, history.howstuffworks.com/historical-figures/robert-wadlow.htm.
20. Smoot, "Forgeries."

> seven feet in height." —Alfred Matthews, History of Cass County, Michigan 1882[21]

In the two examples listed here, both refer to the large size of specific bones, not a full skeleton. Those reports parallel those we have seen that misinterpreted fossil bones as human. We must remember, as Dr. Ubelaker noted, that many animal bones so resemble human bones that mistakes can easily be made.

Still, other reports at least appear more substantial:

> One of the specific reports I knew about from the beginning was a report from Indiana in the 1920s. In 1925, several amateurs digging in an Indian mound at Walkerton, Indiana, uncovered the skeletons of eight very ancient humans measuring in height from eight to almost nine feet. All eight giants had been buried in "substantial copper armor."[22]

Good hoaxes usually have good stories, and part of the story is some attempt to show that the fantastic information can be trusted. In this case, we are asked to trust "several amateurs digging in an Indian mound." Also important is that this is a report of amateurs that was never corroborated. As with many stories on the Internet, there is no evidence — only the report. No actual skeletons have been made available for study. The "substantial copper armor" has never been presented for examination.

Another long-lived story concerns the red-haired giants of Lovelock cave. One Internet site reported:

> In 1911, the Sunset Guano Mining Company was formed specifically to mine the guano. During the mining process, several artifacts were discovered, including bones, baskets and weapons indicating early settlers to the area. In 1924, interestingly more than ten years after they were found, archaeologists were notified of these artifacts. And even though several of them had either been lost or destroyed, more than 10,000 were successfully recovered. Two of the successfully recovered artifacts included a male and female

21. Jason Jarrell, "The Adena Giant Revealed: Profile of Prehistoric Mound Builders," Ancient Origins (website), 8 December 2015, ancient-origins.net/unexplained-phenomena/adena-giant-revealed-profile-prehistoric-mound-builders-004876.
22. "St. Joseph County Giants in Copper Armor," Greater Ancestors: World Museum, Chris Lesley, 20 May 2012, greaterancestors.com/walkerton/.

> mummified red-haired giant. The male giant measured 8-feet tall, and the female giant measured 6.5-feet tall.[23]

It certainly has some sound of validity. The illusion of validity falls before actual examination of the remains. Sheilagh Brooks, Carolyn Stark, and Richard H. Brooks examined John Reid's redheaded giants, Reid being the one who initially examined the remains from the Lovelock cave. They note that a biography of Reid specifically notes a body that was 7 ft 7 in tall.[24]

They provide some interesting background on the stories:

> Stories about the Redheaded Giants have many variations, and they are found among several Great Basin peoples, such as the Northern Paiute and the Shoshone. Those which Reid may have heard involved a race of extremely tall redhaired people, referred to as Tule Eaters, who lived in the Humboldt Sink area. These people frequently were described as cruel, wicked, and possibly cannibalistic. Supposedly the Northern Paiutes feared and hated them. According to one version of the story, fighting broke out between the Giants and the Northern Paiutes. The Northern Paiutes chased the Giants into Lovelock Cave and covered the entrance with brush, which they fired to suffocate the Giants.[25]

There were indeed skeletal remains of at least thirty-two individuals, according to an archaeological excavation of Lovelock Cave in 1912 (hardly the 10,000 from the Internet article).[26] This expedition is the source of the confirmation of the redhaired giants stories. As Brooks, Stark, and Brooks describe that early excavation:

> Reid conducted the first analysis of the skeletal materials he had recovered by measuring the thigh bones or femora. The results of his measurements ranged from 14 ½" to 18 ½". By estimating this length in relation to the presumed length

23. Jennifer Young, "This Ancient Legend about Giants in Nevada will Completely Blow Your Mind," Only in Your State (website), 10 November 2022, web.archive.org/web/20230201065323/https://www.onlyinyourstate.com/nevada/giants-of-lovelock-cave/.
24. Sheilagh Brooks, Carolyn Stark, and Richard H. Brooks, "John Reid's Redheaded 'Giants' of Central Nevada: Fact or Fiction?" *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 243.
25. Brooks, Stark, and Brooks, "Redheaded Giants," 244.
26. Brooks, Stark, and Brooks, "Redheaded Giants," 245.

> of his own thigh bone, he calculated that these individuals during their life had been 7'7" (for the 16 1/23" femur) and even 9'6" (for the 18 ½" femur). Hair is preserved on some of the skulls, which still have soft tissues adhering. The hair is a brownish red in color, confirming the description in the Redheaded Giant stories of these people being red haired. Because of his size estimates and the hair color, Reid was certain that he had found and identified the Redheaded Giants described in the Northern Paiute stories he had heard in his youth.[27]

The authors did their own examination of the remains, using more modern techniques. They provided a chart of the estimated stature of the skeletal remains. Most were from 5 ft 6 in to 5 ft 9 in tall. The tallest was 6 ft 1 in, plus or minus 2 inches.[28]

Adrienne Mayor provides a detailed analysis of why remaining hair would appear red:

> Depending on variable factors (temperature, light, humidity, acidity, chemical reactions, and minerals in the matrix), dark hair of extreme age often turns rusty red or orange. That is why many Egyptian mummies have red-blond hair, and the hair of well-preserved bodies of extinct mammoths and sloths is reddish, even though they may have been black or brown in life.[29]

As with misinterpreting fossilized bones, some of the reported stories can be attributed to misinterpretations of the more recent Native American populations. However, at times the problem has not been so much misinterpretation as deliberate hoax. Among these are modern photographic manipulations, which simply make these hoaxes easier to "document."

One Internet hoax was traced to an altered photograph created in 2002 that made it appear that there were normal-sized people next to a giant skeleton.[30] Those trusting what their eyes told them and not understanding the ways in which the photograph had been

27. Brooks, Stark, and Brooks, "Redheaded Giants," 245.
28. Brooks, Stark, and Brooks, "Redheaded Giants," 247.
29. Mayor, *Fossil Legends,* 343.
30. James Owen, "'Skeleton of Giant' Is Internet Photo Hoax," *National Geographic*, 15 December 2007, nationalgeographic.com/history/article/skeleton-giant-photo-hoax.

manipulated can be somewhat forgiven for accepting the offered "evidence."

The prevalence of believers in these ancient giants shows in an article by Bradley Leper, Curator of Archaeology and Manager of Archaeology and Natural History fat the Ohio History Connection:

> It seems I can no longer give a public program about Ohio's amazing ancient American Indian mounds without someone in the audience asking me about giants, or the lost tribes of Israel — or even aliens. I try to address these questions politely and explain that there is no hard evidence that any of these things had anything to do with Ohio's mounds. Occasionally, if the person asking the question is a true believer, they'll accuse me of lying and hiding the evidence that would prove me wrong. Some people actually believe that the Ohio History Connection (along with the Smithsonian Institution) has skeletons of giant humans in our collections that we keep hidden from the public. The first time someone accused me of this I was dumbfounded and asked, "Why on earth would we do that?"[31]

When the scientists, based on available hard data, declare that there is no evidence for these ancient giants, promoters of the myths turn to suggestions that the data really do exist but are being hidden. Have the scientists ignored that evidence? In the modern Internet era, it is all too easy for stories to be created and accompanied with "photographs," which have been equally created to match the desired story. In September of 2020, USA Today online reported:

> **The claim: Giant human skeletons were "found by the thousands" and destroyed by the Smithsonian**
>
> An old hoax has resurfaced in an Instagram meme claiming that giant skeletons were found but were destroyed because "having to explain the existence of these skeletons, contradicted the evolution of mankind and creation." The July 25 [Instagram] post by the user @conspiracytheories, which has gained over 54,700 likes, reads, "Giant skeletons were found by the thousands, but most were destroyed or

31. Bradley Lepper, "Archaeology: Saga of Giant Mound Builders is a Tall Tale that Won't Go Away," The Columbus Dispatch, 26 April 2020, dispatch.com/news/20200426/archaeology-saga-of-giant-mound-builders-is-tall-tale-that-wonrsquot-go-away.

> thrown in the ocean by the Smithsonian and Vatican." The account has not responded to USA TODAY's request for comment. The claim has made its way across the internet in different variations over the years. A similar post appeared in 2015 claiming that the Supreme Court ruled that documentation of the giants was to be declassified, Jacksonville.org reported, finding the claim to be false.[32]

The *Florida Times-Union* report mentioned in *USA Today* reports:

> Social media posts claim that photos of the remains of a giant race of people found in the Midwest disappeared because the Smithsonian Institution wanted to suppress the information. The facts: The posts also say that the Supreme Court ruled last year that documentation of the giants was to be declassified in 2015. Not true on either count.[33]

Conclusions

Stories of giants that have become associated with the Book of Mormon are based in just that—stories. There is no scientific evidence upon which giants can be based. Still, we do have the concept of "large and mighty" men in the Book of Mormon.

The phrase "large and mighty" is a literary set, but it was not exclusive to other similar literary phrases. Ammon was described as a "strong and mighty man" rather than "large and mighty" (Mosiah 7:3). Coriantumr is first described as "large and mighty" (Helaman 1:15), but the subsequent reference is only to a "mighty man" (Helaman 1:16). If not to giants, then to what do these ideas refer?

As inheritors of at least some of the culture of the ancient Mediterranean, Book of Mormon writers would have participated in certain cultural values where physical traits were simply assumed and often were not intended as physical descriptions. Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey describe those cultural understandings:

> According to the data we possess, men tend to be

32. McKenzie Sadeghi, "Fact Check: Online Post Showing Giant Human Skeletons Is an Old Hoax," *USA Today Online*, 8 September 2020, usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2020/09/08/fact-check-post-showing-giant-human-skeletons-old-hoax/5534909002/.
33. "Fact Check: This is One You Could Call a 'Giant' Hoax," *Florida Times-Union*, 6 January 2015, jacksonville.com/story/news/2015/01/06/fact-check-one-you-could-call-giant-hoax/15645794007/.

> perceived as either tall, medium, or short. In the ancient papyri from Egypt, for example, we find "iconistic" descriptions of persons, both men and women, who are described as of "medium height" or "medium or less." . . . In other descriptions, however, the designation of a man as "tall" or "short" may not be realistic or accurate and may actually be intended to convey information about character, rather than stature. . . . Generals and warriors are often portrayed heroically as "tall." Herodes describes a certain Celtic warrior as "Heracles," who was "as tall as a tall Celt, about eight feet height." . . . Generally, tall stature is related to the virtue of courage . . . and is naturally in aggressive males who command armies and rule empires.[34]

When we remember that those who actually wrote the histories (and the Book of Mormon) had not met many of the people about whom they wrote, the probability that heroic character was declared through their descriptions becomes as likely in both the New World and in the Old. Why were there "large and might men?" They were heroic. It was intended to describe a quality and not a physical trait.

The lack of contextual information that would allow us to read "large" as meaning "tall" (or "giant") is lacking. The cultural heritage of using physical descriptions for non-tangible characteristics strongly suggests that we should see these references as indicating either a military standing or a spiritual power (in the case of Ammon).

The science is also clear. Scientists have recovered hundreds of human remains in the New World. Some are taller and some are shorter. None were "giant." Despite the reports of giant skeletons, none have ever been presented for examination. Only the "discoverer" has ever seen them. In the 1800s as well as in modern social media, exaggeration is frequent, and outright hoaxes are not unusual.

Although there are apparently many Latter-day Saints who support the Heartland model of the Book of Mormon, they should understand that when "giants" are claimed to be significant evidence of the Book of Mormon, it is an idea based on perhaps faithful overenthusiasm.

34. Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of Ancient Personality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 137.

Nevertheless, it should not be accepted. Such claims do not support the Book of Mormon at all.

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Intellectual Colonialism and *Air Bud* Theology: More on Queer Theory and the Church of Jesus Christ

Gregory L. Smith

Review of Taylor G. Petrey, Queering Kinship in the Mormon Cosmos *(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2024). 214 pages. $21.94 (paperback).*

Abstract: *Taylor Petrey's* Queering Kinship in the Mormon Cosmos *attempts to "queer" Latter-day Saint concepts to create an account more congenial to queer theory, a postmodern philosophy and approach to texts. Here the aim is to destabilize and deny sexual essentialism, the law of chastity, and the eternal destiny of humanity as understood by the Saints. The words of Church leaders are misrepresented through omission and reorganization. Readings of Latter-day Saint scholars and scripture likewise suffer distortion and inaccurate representation. The work betrays several double standards, including the intellectual colonialism inherent in the efforts to distort and thereby appropriate Latter-day Saint culture and writings for its own purposes. Means to avoid this negative pattern are suggested, including rigorous honesty in textual claims and the participation of the scholarly community in effective peer review of irresponsible or misleading work.*

Taylor Petrey is one of many in academia who undertake the "queering" of history and theology. His latest book, *Queering Kinship in the Mormon Cosmos*,[1] is the second half of a project begun in his previous work, *Tabernacles of Clay* (p. 7).[2] As I previously reviewed Petrey's earlier work,[3] I thought it appropriate to examine his latest scholarship.

Foundational Concepts

What exactly is queering? And why ought the "Mormon" Cosmos be subjected to it? *Queer* was long used as a slur against homosexuals.[4] Gay rights activists reappropriated it and "used [it] provocatively . . . to convey an assertive and radical alternative to conventional notions of sexuality and gender."[5] (Latter-day Saints can doubtless understand why a persecuted minority might, in a show of resilience or defiance, embrace a mocking label — like *Mormon* — bestowed by their enemies.)

The term *queering* is part of queer theory, an academic movement that is notoriously difficult to define — and this is regarded by its advocates as a good thing.[6] In this regard, *queering* is a verb — it is something that is done to something else; it is a process or an evaluation from a particular point of view. In the balance of this review, when I use *queer*, *queered*, or *queering* (lowercase, non-italicized), I am using the term as a verb, referring to a process. If, however, I refer to *Queering* (uppercase first letter, in italic), then I am specifically referring to Petrey's book — the subject of this review essay.

It should be clear that it is important to define terms in an effort to facilitate understanding. Toward that end, I will first distinguish between *sex* and *gender* and then sketch queer theory's intellectual antecedents in broad strokes.[7] Doing so requires a brief tour of postmodernism, with emphasis on its strategy of deconstruction. This will bring us to queer theory proper.

Sex versus gender

Until relatively recently, *sex* and *gender* were essentially synonyms when describing humans.[8] During the last century, "*sex* came increasingly to mean sexual intercourse," which led to *gender* often "replac[ing] it (in early use euphemistically) as the usual word for the biological grouping of males and females."[9]

Current scientific, medical, and sociologic work makes a clear distinction between the two. (Feminist scholarship often insisted on the differences, though these distinctions were subsequently challenged by some queer theorists.[10]) In present-day technical discussions *sex* refers to *biologic* sex — the physical state of being an embodied male or female, normally with reproductive potential and the appropriate internal and external genitalia and secondary sexual traits.[11] *Gender,* on the other hand, refers to the traits or social roles *attributed* to individuals by their culture because of their sex and their internal psychology.[12]

Queer theory draws on these distinctions, but given its suspicion of binaries and skepticism of claims about the essence of things (see discussion below), there is often considerable blurring.[13] In making my argument, I will use the terms in the precise sense described above but will reproduce the terminology used by queer theorists when quoting them.

Postmodernism

Queer theory derives in large part from the postmodern project, especially the philosophy of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. It shares the methods and intellectual stance of many other species of so-called *Critical Theory* in the humanities' academic hothouses.[14] (American readers may be familiar with Critical Race Theory, which applies similar tactics to issues of race, rather than sexuality.[15])

Fundamental to these ideologies is the idea that all communication — or *discourse*, in the jargon — must involve issues of power and hierarchy. This power is not necessarily imposed top-down, though it might be, but is instead an omnipresent web of social control and influence of which we may be completely unaware, but in which we all participate.[16] (It is worth noting that any who dispute this characterization can simply be said to be unaware of the real truth of the matter, which only the enlightened theorist can see. This is a handy — if circular and unfalsifiable — escape hatch. We can also enjoy the paradox of such an absolutist claim about the truth of how things really are being made by those who ostensibly reject claims of absolutes and settled truth from anyone else.)

The fixation on issues of power is combined with the broader postmodern concern about subjectivity. Put briefly, postmodernism denies our ability to access objective truth, since all evidence is filtered and interpreted through our biases, often in self-serving ways. Even if we found truth, we would not know we had. There are no stable categories, no fixed points of reference. Insisting otherwise is said to be a delusion or part of an illegitimate effort (conscious or not) to enforce unjust power relationships. (From whence comes the fixed category of just or unjust in this analysis? It is best not to expect logical consistency.[17]) While some believe that the message found in any act of discourse is a joint product of author and audience,[18] in its more extreme forms, postmodernism holds that no meaning exists until it is *created* by the audience, independent of any facts outside the subjectivity of

the audience. Even the author's intent has no bearing on what the audience can or should receive.[19]

Deconstruction

To justify these stances, postmodern theorists often use *deconstruction*—a complex set of tactics difficult to summarize fully. To deconstruct a text is "to show how it undermines the philosophy it asserts, or the hierarchical oppositions on which it relies, by identifying in the text the rhetorical operations that produce the supposed ground of argument, the key concept or premise."[20]

Postmodernists are critical of *logocentrism*, "the privileged role that *logos*, or speech, has been accorded in the Western tradition."[21] Critics have summarized deconstruction as opposing "the concern with truth, rationality, logic, and 'the word' that marks the Western philosophical tradition."[22] "Deconstruction is better viewed as *unduction*: as the negation, reversal, and contradiction of all methodological attempts to achieve knowledge or truth. . . . induction without end and without conclusion."[23]

Philosopher John Searle mentions three of the deconstructionists' many strategies, and we will soon see how prominent they are in queer theory:

1. First, and most important, the deconstructionist is on the lookout for any of the traditional binary oppositions in Western intellectual history, e.g., speech/writing, male/female, truth/fiction, literal/metaphorical. . . . These hierarchical oppositions allegedly lie at the very heart of logocentrism.[24] . . . The aim is to resituate, undo, or displace the entire system of values expressed by the classical opposition.
2. A second strategy is to look for certain key words in the text that, so to speak, give the game away.
3. A third strategy is to pay close attention to marginal features of the text such as the sort of metaphors that occur in it, because such marginal features "are clues to what is truly important."[25]

We see this worldview at work when *Queering*'s author writes on social media that "the Bible . . . is always read through a specific lens and it is the lens that matters, not the book itself."[26]

Queer theory proper

If postmodernism and deconstruction are difficult to describe succinctly, queer theory is even more so. "The pliant nature of queer theory has enabled it to maintain relevance by insisting on its own 'radical unknowability.'"[27] "Queer is a 'deliberately ambiguous term' that is simultaneously a way of naming, describing, doing and being. This is where queer theory finds its radical potential as a term to challenge, interrogate, destabilize and subvert, but it also means there is difficulty in pinpointing queer theory's meaning."[28]

Above all, queer theory seeks to undermine the sexual binary and all that goes with it. "It is a radically anti-essentialist theory, arguing that everything — desire, sexual norms and gender, certainly — is interpretable as social construction and open to challenge and change."[29]

Social construction implies that sex and/or gender are not genuine, essential categories that exist regardless of what humans think or desire. Instead, they are merely conventions established and maintained by society — often with oppressive intent or results.[30] For the queer theorist, being either male/female is certainly not essential or foundational to who and what we are. For example, Petrey claims that both sex (presumably biological) and gender "are historical and ideological, not natural and fixed."[31] Since sex and gender are merely cultural creations, we are free to modify or ignore them at will and such things certainly cannot tell us how we ought to behave.[32]

This attack on heterosexual, male/female norms is foundational and explicit:

> Michael Warner most famously notes: "The task of queer social theory . . . must be to confront the default heteronormativity of modern culture with its worst nightmare, a queer planet." . . . Warner coined the term "heteronormativity" to describe the pervasive and largely invisible heterosexual norms that underpin society. An example of heteronormativity in practice is the representation of "ordinary" family units as comprising a "mother" and a "father," and where alternative family arrangements are either not represented, or are depicted as a deviation from this norm.[33]

We note that activism is a prominent part of the theory: "Beginning in the 1990s, [queer theory took] . . . radical political energy and translated it into philosophical/academic language and applied it to the interpretation of a variety of cultural forms."[34] "Several of the main areas of

thinking and political action that have influenced queer theory" include "lesbian color theory and activism; lesbian feminism; poststructuralism; postmodernism; lesbian, gay, and bisexual activism; gay and lesbian studies, trans activism and theory."[35]

This is no shameful secret — its partisans are quite clear: "When we situate queer theory within a particular academic genealogy, we must acknowledge that it has *always also been inflected by histories of activism* and resistance to oppressions."[36]

A map for what follows

We will explore Petrey's ideological project in four parts.

In Part 1, we will examine how he treats historical material from Church leaders. We will see blatant misrepresentation and distortion of their words, and a failure to follow the basics of sound historical practice.

In Part 2, we see how these flaws grow out of queer theory's approach to texts.

In Part 3, having thereby established the intellectual context, we will examine three attempts by *Queering* to queer scripture and Church doctrine. We will again see unjustified claims, including citations to the literature that do not support the argument being made and a failure to grapple with the extensive literature that disagrees.

In Part 4, we will conclude with some broader perspectives on intellectual colonialism and the double standards embodied in *Queering*'s approach.

Part 1—Disordered Cosmos, Distorted Texts

"I argue," *Queering* declares, "that the [scriptural] text and its interpretative history do not preclude gender and sexual fluidity" in God or humanity (p. 72).

This claim requires considerable unpacking, but we should first recognize it as a striking example of what one wise friend has called "*Air Bud* theology."[37] For those who do not recall this cinematic gem, *Air Bud* is a Disney film starring a dog who plays basketball. When the opposing team protests at the manifest absurdity of having a dog on a basketball team, the dog's coach retorts, "You check in your rulebook. Bet you don't find anything in there that says the dog can't play."

Now, the proper answer to this would be, "Only a moron would think there would be." In the interests of the story, the referee replies, "He's right. Ain't no rule says a dog can't play basketball."[38] Hijinks ensue.

As we will see, *Queering* offers us *Air Bud* theology—"ain't nothing in scripture that explicitly comes right out and says that God and humanity can't be sexually fluid." That's slightly sillier than a dog wearing high-top sneakers.

This sort of sophistry is a good example of why ambitious intellectuals have always preferred a religion based on a book to one based on living prophets.[39] As queer theory affirms, and as we will see *Queering* demonstrate in shameful detail, any scriptural text can be made to say anything if one works at it doggedly.

Infuriatingly, modern prophets talk back.

Distorting Spencer W. Kimball

Back-talking prophets are more easily dealt with once safely deceased. The humble ellipsis (. . .) is a marvelous tool for such efforts—and much other propaganda, for that matter. It is unmatched in its ability to hide while revealing, especially if the target is not around to protest. It gives a scholarly sheen to dull dishonesty.

Jerald and Sandra Tanner, for instance, are masters of the technique. All too often, I've seen ellipses used to disguise an inconvenient fact.[40] Their methodological heirs have continued the tradition. *Queering* and its predecessor volume are no exception.

For example, Spencer W. Kimball could sue *Tabernacles* for libel if he were still alive. *Tabernacles* claimed: "Kimball noted that homosexuality and bestiality both were deserving of the death penalty and that 'regrettably,' 'the law is less severe now,' as was the community's attitude."[41] What Kimball wrote, in fact, was that "like adultery, incest, and bestiality they ['homosexual practices'] carried the death penalty *under the Mosaic law*."[42] Note that this says nothing about such acts "deserving" the death penalty. Instead, he argues that in the Old Testament God declared such acts sinful—just like heterosexual adultery. Kimball elsewhere points out that Sabbath breaking is a rebellion with dire consequences. Although "Israel's swift and severe punishment for infractions is not exacted today, this does not lessen the seriousness of the offense to the Lord for violating his day."[43] By *Tabernacle*'s logic, the prophet therefore believed Sunday shoppers deserved to be shot at dawn.[44]

When we check the original statement, we find the deception is even worse. *Tabernacles* altered Kimball's meaning to the extent that an ellipsis would not suffice. Instead, it resorted to rearranging his words. Kimball's original read: "The law is less severe now, and *so*

regrettably is the community's attitude to these grave sins."[45] What Kimball saw as regrettable was not (as *Tabernacles* would have it) that homosexuals aren't executed, but that society regards homosexual sin indulgently.

This type of misrepresentation quickly erodes trust in any author purporting to do "history."[46] It is not a question of a different emphasis or an alternate interpretation of the evidence. Instead, this is simply distortion in service of an ideology.

Distorting Erastus Snow

So, as soon as I saw *Queering* cite an 1878 address of Apostle Erastus Snow with ellipses, I was immediately suspicious.[47] Those suspicions proved well-founded.

Queering wishes to use Snow as evidence that a "line of interpretation [in the Church] depicting" Adam as initially androgynous and unsexed "was not an aberration" (p. 85). In plainer terms, he wishes to argue that within the Church there is a stream of thought that does not regard Adam as having a sex at his creation. This *Air Bud*-esque loophole can then allegedly be used to argue against the importance of sex in Genesis, and thereby minimize or deny the eternal nature of biological sex for God's children and their actions before, during, and after this life. (We will shortly explore these efforts in greater detail.)

Let us examine the entirety of *Queering*'s citation of Snow's 1878 address. (All omitted material is *Queering*'s, indicated by ellipses.)

> LDS Apostle Erastus Snow made a[n] observation about the lack of distinction between male and female in the original creation by citing Genesis 5:20:
>
> > The being we call man, but which in the language of these Scriptures was called Adam—*male and female created he them, and called their name Adam* [Gen. 5:2], which in the original, in which these Scriptures were written by Moses, signifies "the first man." There was no effort at distinguishing between the one half and the other, and calling one man and the other woman. This was an after distinction, but the explanation of it is—one man, one being, and he called their name Adam. But he created them male and female, for they were one, and he says not unto the woman "multiply," and unto the

> man "multiply," but he says unto them, "multiply and reproduce your species." He speaks unto them as belonging together, as constituting one being, and as organized in his image and likeness. . . . [338 words are here omitted] One party says [God] is a man, and the other says he is a woman. I say he is both. . . . He created man *in the image of God, male and female created he them*, *he called their name Adam*, which signifies in Hebrew, the first man. So that the beings we call Adam and Eve were the first man placed here on this earth, and their name was Adam, and they were the express image of God.[48]
>
> Snow interprets Genesis 5:2, when the "male and female" are both called Adam, as referring to a singular intersex being. . . . From this, Snow concludes, "Deity consists of man and woman." Snow is not referring here to LDS teachings of a male god and a separate female god but rather to a divine hybrid in a single God — he uses a singular (masculine) pronoun for God and Adam consistently in this speech. Then, just as this singular God is both male and female simultaneously, so is Adam originally male and female simultaneously. Snow describes this singular Adam as "blended" and made of "component parts." Snow's account depicts a genderqueer deity who creates the genderqueer Adam without calling them "man" or "woman" and making "no effort at distinguishing between the one half and the other." As noted above, this reference to a "primal androgyne" has a long history in Jewish and Christian exegesis, and Snow applies it here to describe God in the LDS tradition as well. (pp. 85–86, ellipses in original.)

Snow treated this matter in three talks, not the single one mentioned by Queering. One that is unmentioned was also in 1878, and the other in 1885.

Examining 1878 without ellipses

Queering begins poorly by omitting vital context. Snow's talk began by describing the creedal God of Catholicism and Protestantism "without body, [or] parts."[49] Snow's sentence immediately preceding the mention of Adam is a description of the human body:

> If we study physiology or anatomy, we are led to exclaim with the Psalmist of old, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," and see a beautiful harmony in all the parts, and a most exquisite design. This is proven by an examination of the various parts of the human form. And every organ adapted to its special use, and for its special purpose, and combining a whole, a grand union — a little kingdom composed of many kingdoms, united and constituting the grand whole, the being we call man.[50]

So even here, *Queering*'s tidy story of an androgynous, "gender-queer"[51] humanity is questionable when we read more of the talk. Snow is asking us to consider the *present* human form — which is clearly sexed, and constitutes *man* (meaning *humanity*, male and female, not an androgynous being).

It is profitable to consider Snow's 1878 words *without* the ellipses that *Queering* uses. In the following excerpt from Snow's words, I use boldface to indicate the words that were excised in *Queering*. (These lengthy paragraphs are mostly to allow the reader to check the context and thrust of Snow's actual argument. I will discuss the excised bits one at a time following the full text.)

> The being we call man, but which in the language of these Scriptures was called Adam — male and female created he them, and called their name Adam, which in the original, in which these Scriptures were written by Moses, signifies "the first man." There was no effort at distinguishing between the one half and the other, and calling one man and the other woman. This was an after distinction, but the explanation of it is — one man, one being, and he called their name Adam. But he created them male and female, for they were one, and he says not unto the woman multiply, and to the man multiply, but he says unto them, multiply and reproduce your species, and replenish the earth. He speaks unto them as belonging together, as constituting one being, and as organized in his image and after his likeness**. And the Apostle Paul, treating upon this subject in the same way, says that man was created in the likeness of God, and after the express image of his person. John, the Apostle, in writing the history of Jesus, speaks in the same way; that Jesus was in the likeness of his Father, and express**

image of his person. And if the revelations that God has made of himself to man, agree and harmonize upon this theory, and if mankind would be more believing, and accept the simple, plain, clear definition of Deity, and description of himself which he has given us, instead of hunting for some great mystery, and seeking to find out God where he is not and as he is not, we all might understand him. There is no great mystery about it; no more mystery about it than there is about ourselves, and our own relationship to our father and mother, and the relationship of our own children to us. That which we see before our eyes, and which we are experiencing from time to time, day to day, and year to year, is an exemplification of Deity.

"What," says one, "do you mean we should understand that Deity consists of man and woman?" Most, certainly I do. If I believe anything that God has ever said about himself, and anything pertaining to the creation and organization of man upon the earth, I must believe that Deity consists of man and woman. Now this is simplifying it down to our understanding, and the great Christian world will be ready to open their mouths and cry, "Blasphemy! Sacriledge!" Open wide their eyes and wide their mouths in the utmost astonishment. What! God a man and woman? The Shakers say he was, and Ann Lee says, "Christ came in the form of a man in the first place, and now comes in the form of a woman," and she was that form.

Then these Christians — they say he has no form, neither body, parts nor passions. One party says he is a man, and the other says he is a woman. I say he is both. **How do you know? I only repeat what he says of himself;** that he created man in the image of God, male and female created he them, and he called their name Adam, which signifies in Hebrew, the first man. So that the beings we call Adam and Eve were the first man placed here on this earth, and their name was Adam, and they were the express image of God. **Now, if anybody is disposed to say that the woman is in the likeness of God and that the man was not, and if vice**

> **versa, I say you are both wrong, or else God has not told us the truth.**[52]

As mentioned, Snow is rebutting the creedal view of God as a mystery, a being without body, parts, or passions. He makes his point of view clear in the omitted material:

> There is no great mystery about it; no more mystery about it than there is about ourselves, *and our own relationship to our father and mother*, and the relationship of our own children to us. That which we see before our eyes, and which we are experiencing from time to time, day to day, and year to year, is an exemplification of Deity.[53]

In the excised material, Snow teaches that humanity is in the "image" of God in precisely the same way as children are in the image of earthly parents. Our own mortal experience of parents and children mirrors God's experience with us. This is not androgynous, or unsexed. *Queering* tells us that "Snow is not referring here to LDS teachings of a male god and a separate female god but rather to a divine hybrid in a single God" (p. 85)—but this is nonsense. Snow is doing precisely what *Queering* claims he is not doing. Human parents are clearly separate, are clearly two individuals, and clearly sexed. Snow tells us that women and men are *both* in the image of God in that sense.

Later in the 1878 talk, Snow says that Satan wishes to possess "the tabernacles [bodies] of Adam, which means a man and his wife—male and female, whom he called Adam, and rule the earth."[54] For Snow, *Adam* is explicitly "a man and his wife" with two separate, physically sexed bodies, which demonic powers wish to control. Contra *Queering*, Adam is not an androgynous proto-being that will only later be sexed.

Snow references Darwin's explanation for "the present order of beings we call man"—the plural, present-day *beings* are here too referred to by the singular *man*. Furthermore, Snow later demonstrates his use of the singular *man* in situations that indisputably involve sexed men and women when he writes:

> This being we call man, is only God in embryo. And Moses tells us that the Creator conversed with this man whom he called Adam, consisting of male and female. He conversed with *them*, showed himself to *them*, spoke with *them* at different times, gave *them* instructions, gave *them* his law, visited *them* repeatedly in *their* new home, in the place we call

> the Garden of Eden, the garden that the Lord planted for man — eastward in Eden.[55]

It is clear, then, that *Adam* (in other words, humanity) is being used by Snow for both male Adam and female Eve, not as reference to a single androgynous being.

Does Snow give us any further hints as to how he sees this? Indeed, he does, only one sentence after the quoted section, but we will not learn it from *Queering*:

> I sometimes illustrate this matter by taking up a pair of shears . . . you all know they are composed of two halves, but they are necessarily parts, one of another, and to perform their work for each other, as designed, they belong together, and neither one of them is fitted for the accomplishment of their works alone. And for this reason says St. Paul, "the man is not without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord." In other words, *there can be no God except he is composed of the man and woman united*, and there is not in all the eternities that exist, nor ever will be, a God in any other way.[56]

A pair of scissors has two blades that work in unity. They work together, meshing, and are part of a larger whole, but there is no genderqueer gobbledygook here — "there can be no God except he is composed of the man and woman united"; "there [never] will be . . . a God in any other way."

Perhaps even this is not clear enough? "I have another description," continues Snow: "There never was a God, and there never will be in all eternities, except *they* are made of these two component parts; a man and a woman; the male and the female."[57]

The term *God*, for Snow, is not the single androgynous being of queer theory's fever dreams. God does not consist of an amorphous blend of male and female essence or potentiality. God is "*a* man" and "*a* woman."

Despite *Queering*'s distortions, Snow certainly is "referring here to LDS teachings of a male god and a separate female god," and not at all "to a divine hybrid in a single God." When Snow says that "deity consists in man and woman," it is simply indefensible to read him as *Queering* does, if historical standards mean anything.

Queering says that "Snow describes this singular Adam as 'blended' and made of 'component parts'" (p. 85). In another afront to

scholarly norms, those terms are misused as they become bereft of their context. Consider Snow's discussion of mortal death as he compares it to a male and female participant in Godhood:

> As I said, man was created, male and female, and two principles are blended in one; and the man is not without the woman nor the woman without the man in the Lord; and there is no Lord, there is no God in which the two principles are not blended, nor can be; and we may never hope to attain unto the eternal power and the Godhead upon any other principle. Not only so, but *this Godhead composing two parts, male and female, is also composed of two elements, spiritual and temporal*. Or in other words, two organisms; the one capable of dwelling within the other. The spirit dwelling within the outer tabernacle, answering to the spirit what our clothing answers to this body, as a covering and shield and protection. (p. 272)
>
> The spirit teaches the tabernacle; and the spirit makes use of the tabernacle. When once it finds itself embodied in this tabernacle, it begins to use the fingers and hands of the tabernacle, and makes these its servants. The moment it is separated this tabernacle lies senseless. . . . It cannot set itself in motion, it cannot keep itself in motion; it is the spirit that does all this. (p. 273) [58]

Godhood requires both *spiritual* (the spirit) and *temporal* (the physical) bodies. These are two separate things that work in close unity, "one capable of dwelling within the other." But it is senseless to read this as Snow saying that the spirit and body are entirely the same thing, or undifferentiated. There is a tight union, just as Paul requires a blend of man and woman for the Christian life — but Paul is not talking about an androgynous primordial Adam, nor a single being with male and female essences blended. And neither is Snow.

"Time," continues Snow, is "a term . . . used in reference to the short period belonging to mortality, while eternity is used in the measure of the time of the Gods. . . . But this course of God being 'one eternal round,' is marvelous in our eyes, and who can comprehend it? But we see, yes, *we see right before us to-day*, his image, man — male and female."[59]

Snow summarizes all this by saying:

> As I said, a union of two principles — the refined element

> that is organized into spirit, and the grosser element we call tabernacle, organized as an outer clothing, the two united and blended together, and *the two principles, male and female, united. And for what purpose? Why, we see here, for the purpose of* ***procreation****; for the purpose of endless increase*, and the building up, and enlarging, and extending the kingdoms and dominions of eternity. Else why are all these vast creations, the shining orbs, that indicate to feeble man on this lower earth the existence of these glorified worlds! Why all this if there were not the works of the *Gods* of eternity going on, and that continually?[60]

For Snow, the "blending" of male and female is about *procreation* (another not-inconsequential detail left out by *Queering*). This is as far from its "primal androgyne," or being "male and female simultaneously" (p. 85) as you can get. Snow even uses an analogy that makes explicit mention of male and female parents and children:

> And we may say to every child, though there are fathers many and mothers many, but to you there is but one . . . Honor your father and your mother, and let your father and mother honor their father and mother, and this is the chain of the Priesthood, and power let down from the eternities to man on the earth. And may God enable us to grow in this chain, and climb higher and higher, onward and upward, and work ourselves up to the eternal power and godhead.
>
> . . .
>
> [God] is enlarging and extending his dominions, he is multiplying his kingdoms, and his offsprings, over which he is extending his benign influence, and blessings, and glory, and honor, for ever and ever.
>
> . . .
>
> [The divine purpose] is to gather out men and women, and locate and organize them, and classify them together, and instruct them, and lead them on and inspire them with faith, and build them up, and teach them the laws of life and health, and lift them up that they may exercise faith, and lay hold upon the promises of God and climb up upon this chain that is laid down from the Gods of eternity to their children on earth.[61]

Even as the 1878 talk stands, *Queering* has grossly misread and misrepresented it. It is difficult to be this wrong by accident.

A talk from 1885

Having seen how much additional text has been stripped away from Snow and how his meaning has been twisted beyond recognition, let's reflect on the duties of a serious historian. A decent historian helps contextualize a speaker's remarks. So says the American Historical Association.[62] A decent historian, then, would perhaps question if Snow had spoken on the same topic elsewhere. Though *Queering* does not mention it, there is an 1885 talk that further contradicts the ideas imputed to Erastus Snow:

> So that when the Father said unto His Son in the beginning, let us make man in our image and after our likeness, it conveys to us the idea that man was organized in the same form and general appearance of both the Father and the Son. This especially in relation to the man himself; for you will remark the wording of the text which we have read — "in the image of God created He him" — referring to Adam — "male and female created He them." You will perceive a difference in the language in regard to the creation of females.
>
> Now, it is not said in so many words in the Scriptures, that we have a Mother in heaven as well as a Father. It is left for us to infer this from what we see and know of all living things in the earth including man. The male and female principle is united and both necessary to the accomplishment of the object of their being, and if this be not the case with our Father in heaven after whose image we are created, then it is an anomaly in nature. But to our minds the idea of a Father suggests that of a Mother: As one of our poets says:
>
> "In the heavens are parents single?
> No; the thought makes reason stare!
> Truth is reason; truth eternal
> Tells me, I've a Mother there."[63]

It seems unfair that we weren't shown this talk. As we've just seen, *Queering's* claim about the 1878 talk is mostly bluster: "Snow is not referring here to LDS teachings of a male god and a separate female god but rather to a divine hybrid in a single God" (p. 85). But as can easily be seen, Snow precisely and unequivocally taught in 1885

about two separate divine beings, one of each sex. He refers, in fact, to Eliza R. Snow's "O My Father"—a very explicit articulation of the idea. It turns out that *Queering* has cited some bits of Snow's 1878 talk, which can be warped if one excludes enough of it, while not even disclosing that the 1885 one exists:

> Hence when it is said that God created our first parents in His likeness—"in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them"—*it is intimated in language sufficiently plain to my understanding that the male and female principle was present with the Gods as it is with man*. It needs only a common understanding of the organism of man and of all living creatures, and the functions of this organism to show the primary object of the Creator, and that is the multiplication of the species, the fulfillment of the commandment given, to multiply and replenish the earth, given to both man and beast. We need only to study the anatomy and construction of the human system, and to understand its powers and capabilities, to comprehend the object and purpose of the Creator.[64]

We see again male and female plural Gods, the physical bodies of living things, and the emphasis on reproduction. All of this may be "in language sufficiently plain" to Snow's understanding and any reader not blinded by queer theory, but it will escape *Queering*'s readers because they have not been given the necessary facts. For Snow, humans, animals, and Gods are all sexed. And the purpose of that sex is "the multiplication of the species . . . to multiply and replenish the earth," via "the anatomy . . . of the human system . . . [with] its powers and capabilities."

As in 1878, for Snow this is all ultimately about *procreation*—not gender fluidity.

A second talk from 1878

A competent historian thus needs to consider all the speaker's other statements. In the present case, this duty extends to a *third* instance of Snow treating the same ideas in terms fatal to *Queering*'s ahistorical reading. In a talk given only about a month *before* the 1878 address vivisected by *Queering*, Snow said,

> We must believe that man is made in the image of God, and consequently that we are of the same species as the gods.

> However child-like and feeble we are in this condition of mortality, we are nevertheless descended from the gods, made in their image and after their likeness. . . . The fathers have told us we have descended from the Gods.[65]

Queering's "singular God who is both male and female simultaneously" (p. 85) is again nowhere to be found. *"Gods"* is plural. Snow goes on to insist that the divine "we"[66] means others were involved in the creation:

> And that when God said to his associates, let us make man in our image, after our likeness, he was not alone. And as Paul said, "there be gods many and lords many," but so far as we are concerned, there is given unto us one God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.[67]

Further, Snow says that Jesus

> was in the likeness of his Father, and the express image of his person. And the accounts we have of Jesus represent him as being physically and in all essential parts, in the likeness of man. That he ate and drank, and partook of the elements that enter into the composition of our earthly tabernacle. . . . Otherwise there was, so far as his person and outward appearance was concerned, no essential difference between him and Adam's race generally.[68]

Queering is a work of poor (or dishonest) history

The 1885 talk confirms beyond doubt that *Queering* has misrepresented Snow's thought, unless we are to believe the Apostle changed his mind between 1878 and 1885. That is implausible on three grounds:

1. Snow's meaning in 1878 is not what *Queering* claims, as I have demonstrated;
2. The 1878 and 1885 talks use the same terms, expressions, and scriptures to discuss the same topic. The 1885 address is a recapitulation of the materials and teachings Snow used in 1878; and
3. The second unmentioned 1878 talk *predates* the cited one — proving that Snow's thoughts have followed a consistent line throughout, both before and after the 1878 address twisted in *Queering*.

It is hard to imagine a more iron-clad historical demonstration that *Queering*'s reading is tendentious.

After this disaster of interpretation and representation, it is worth asking—is Erastus Snow the best one can offer? It appears the author sought any scrap that could be twisted or deformed into a queer shape if one squints and doesn't look too closely. The bankruptcy of its treatment of Snow is compelling evidence that the author can find or manufacture nothing better. Someone less ideologically driven would have faced and reported the facts squarely.[69] As the American Historical Association warns,

> The desire to score points as an advocate should never tempt a historian to misrepresent the historical record or the critical methods that the profession uses to interpret that record.[70]

"This book looks to the LDS tradition," we are told, "as a resource of undoing gender and sexuality by revealing the lack of a coherent heterosexuality or heterogender in the tradition itself" (pp. 160–61). This is a *historical* claim—that the tradition is not coherent in some way, which is to say that certain facts about it are true or not true. And *that* requires reading texts and interpreting them. To claim there is a "lack of coherency" on these points explicitly commits *Queering* to representing the texts fully and fairly to argue for their incoherency. The author cannot simply give an incomplete account of Snow's thought and then claim *mission accomplished*.

There simply is no convincing way to read Snow's statements, in their full context, and conclude that they support *Queering*'s account. Either this is lying to the reader, or the author is a poor reader indeed.

Part 2—What is the Point?

Wise readers might simply stop here—they have heard enough to see where this is going. Only camera tricks can make *Air Bud* into Michael Jordan.

Still, those who cannot turn away, drawn by the horrible fascination of a plane wreck or a so-bad-it's-good movie, might wonder what all this is in aid of.

Performativity and "queering"

One prominent queer theorist is Judith Butler, and *Queering*'s debt to her is clear (pp. 4–5, 15, 19–20, 61–62, 124–25, 130, 142, 158).[71]

"Butler's main idea," wrote Martha Nussbaum, "first introduced in *Gender Trouble* in 1989 and repeated throughout her books, is that gender is a social artifice. Our ideas of what women and men are reflect nothing that exists eternally in nature. Instead they derive from customs that embed social relations of power."[72]

> Butler emphasizes "performance" as an analytical category that also allows for radical political and critical intervention. . . . Butler suggests that all identities — gendered and sexual, in particular — are forms of scripted performance that are always available for subversive reinterpretation.[73]

This "subversive reinterpretation" gets at what is meant by "queering" — evidence of queer theory's inextricable link to politics and advocacy:

> To "queer" becomes an act by which stable boundaries of sexual identity are transgressed, reversed, mimicked, or otherwise critiqued. "Queering" can be enacted on behalf of all non-normative sexualities and identities as well, all that is considered by the dominant paradigms of culture to be alien, strange, unfamiliar, transgressive, odd — in short, queer.[74]

Despite its post-modern cachet, this approach is hardly new. It is a new cut of an old fashion, described by Isaiah as putting "darkness for light, and light for darkness . . . bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah 5:20).

Queering and parody

To "queer" the "Mormon cosmos," then, is a sort of parody in service of a political project: "Not surprisingly, postmodern[ism] and queer theory and practice share both a theoretical base . . . and artistic techniques (*irony and parody*)."[75]

In one sense, therefore, we could decide that it is pointless to review a parody. A parody and its irony are not to be taken seriously, and any distortions, exaggerations, or misrepresentations are part of the fun — though they may have a serious point to make. (It would be obtuse to review Jonathan Swift's devastating satire of English policy toward Ireland by indignantly pointing out that no one in the English government was truly urging cannibalism. Then again, being an altogether more skilled writer fighting for a better cause, Swift didn't need to stoop to misrepresenting texts to make it appear as if the government

actually did say so.) As we have already seen, *Queering* is not a parody in that sense. It retains all the outward dress of an academic undertaking — for example, it quotes Erastus Snow and then argues that his words *demonstrate* a stream of androgyny in the concept of God and humanity.

If the reader is supposed to catch that all this is just a bit of exaggerated fun, it is probably too subtle. The disguised weaknesses of *Queering's* tactics *are* in some ways parodic of scholarship — but that is unlikely to be what the author is aiming for.

"This isn't a matter of making queer theory compatible or reconciled with Latter-day Saint thought," we are told. "Rather, it is a method or approach that may be taken to any system, including Latter-day Saint thought" (p. 5). Petrey explicitly states that the book's goal is to show that "in a delightfully perverse way, Mormonism could be a central example in a queer religious imaginary" (p. 2).

The end goal is to invert, send-up, or undermine its source. The plan is subversive, in Judith Butler's sense — to deconstruct and destabilize in support of what is ultimately a political undertaking. As *Queering* puts it,

> The emphasis here on "queering" religion as a destabilizing verb rather than as an adjective suggests that there is not only an active role on the part of the interpreter but also no essence to a tradition, only its interpretation. . . . This is not a reclamation but a resignification. (p. 3)

Thus, *Queering* wants to appropriate Church symbols, history, and doctrine, and turn them to its own ends:

> Judith Butler's concept of resignification refers to the process of reinterpreting and reusing existing language, symbols, and cultural norms in order to *challenge* and *subvert* their traditional meanings. . . .
>
> Not only . . . does the project of redescription engage at the level of language and the possible, but such possibilities are already present. (p. 4, emphasis added.)

If the desire, though, is simply to appropriate symbols (not to reclaim, but to resignify) and not to argue for any compatibility or reconciliation — why does Erastus Snow need to be misrepresented? What does it matter what any Church leader, member, or text said about anything?

It matters because the point of deconstruction is to weaken and

call into doubt texts and the ideas upon which they are based. It is disingenuous to imply that one is only exploring "possibilities." The whole *point* of deconstruction and queer theory is destabilization.

As Searle observed, deconstruction attempts to set up shop in the microscopic cracks and interstices of the text — the simple words supposedly freighted with hidden meaning and the text's "marginal features."[76] The industrious queer theorist is thus always on the lookout for these toeholds and pry-points, imaginary or otherwise. The intent is to expose "the inconsistencies and possibilities embedded within the tradition" (p. 3). "Rather than starting from the normative system, queer theory then looks to what is repressed or ignored for clues about to where to begin any analysis" (p. 5).

This doesn't happen with Erastus Snow — we aren't shown what Snow ignores or represses. Instead, we're told what he is supposedly saying *overtly*, even when it turns out he isn't saying it. The only things ignored or repressed are the sections from Snow that *Queering* leaves safely unmentioned.

"These projects often blur the boundaries between properly constructed historical analysis and constructive theology" (p. 5). But doesn't "properly constructed historical analysis" require at the very least that we not misrepresent our sources? There are ground rules of historical analysis — no matter how "logocentric" a committed postmodernist might regard them — that historians need to observe if they are going to drape their work in that idiom.[77] After all, *Queering* asserts:

> The sources that I use to analyze these questions are largely the conventional, even canonical ones. . . . These voices are neither as stable nor as inhospitable to queer analysis as they might hope to be. (p. 6)

Note well, this is a *historical* claim — that the sources really are saying some things somewhere that really are "hospitable" to *Queering*'s worldview.

Queering clearly wants to have it both ways. It is steeped in postmodernism, which at times even insists that the meaning that texts have is only created by readers as they encounter the text. We see this when it says there is "no essence to a tradition, only its interpretation" (p. 3). Yet, it also implicitly wants us to conclude that the texts truly mean something helpful to its political project, and that this somehow proves something.

We're told this approach is a means of "thinking"[78] through

issues — but if I must mislead you to get you to think, you might join postmodernists in suspecting that my discourse is about manipulation and power, not truth or genuine thought.

Queer theory seeks to "undo" "gender and sexuality" — vital and treasured absolutes in the worldview of believing Church members — using postmodern tools founded on the stance that discourse is about power. And power is a zero-sum game in queer theory's telling. So let us have no nonsense about this being a benevolent or neutral exercise.

But is it a historically or textually supported exercise? If so, then its motives do not matter. If not, we can then return to the motives to understand why it stumbles so badly.

Part 3—God, Adam, and Genesis

We will now examine *Queering*'s approach to scriptural texts. We will consider three cases:

1. An attempt to make the Godhead "genderqueer" and "homoerotic."
2. An attempt to undermine the Church's reading of the creation (the abuse of Erastus Snow's talk was part of this effort, as demonstrated in Part 1).
3. An attempt to make Adam androgynous, only later separated into male and female (Part 1 has likewise already seen Snow as an unwilling participant in this undertaking).

Case #1: A "Genderqueer" Godhead

Given that an embodied, sexed God is foundational to Latter-day Saint thought (p. 28), destabilizing that view is *Queering*'s first task: "There is much more ambiguity and fluidity of gender and sexuality in LDS narratives about the Godhead than has been previously recognized" (p. 28). Again, we have a textual, historical claim.

Given that the Church rejects the "divine essence" oneness of the creedal God of trinitarianism, *Queering* tells us:

> Divine unity is rooted in solidarity, covenant, and relationship. This notion of divine love, then, fully open and expansive in its variety, not only is the basis for the Mormon challenge to trinitarian ontology but also may be the very basis of a queer approach to a projectionist Godhead. . . . (p. 30)

> The ideal relationship in cisgender male-female marriage is difficult to distinguish from the relationship between the male members of the Godhead in LDS teaching. The metaphysics of "oneness" and "unity of purpose" describe the covenant relationship both between husband and wife and between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Godhead is explicitly invoked in relationship to male-female marriage. (p. 31)[79]

So far, so good. The queering soon follows. Given the desire of Jesus that his followers be one, as he and the Father are one (John 17:21), we are told:

> All relationships should follow this model. Seeing divine love between same-sex partners in the Godhead as the archetype for heterosexual love also reverses the foundations. Same-sex love is not a perverse counterfeit of mixed-sex love, but rather both draw on the same principles of unity, commitment, and effort to achieve oneness. (p. 32)

This is an enormous leap. Does anyone really fall for such rhetorical tricks if they don't start out wanting to be fooled? Let's examine the problems with it.

First, the argument relies on the fallacy of equivocation, reading all love as the same, when in fact there are many kinds of love (e.g., charity, brotherly love, and parental love, which are desirable but not sexualized, versus marital love, which is).

Second, to describe the Godhead as "same-sex partners" misrepresents the doctrine — certainly the Godhead are "partners" in a certain sense, but not in a sexual one however, as the term inevitably implies to a twenty-first century reader. Rather than "same-sex love," the archetype is *familial* love between Father and Son. (Unfortunately for *Queering*, that entails heterosexual families and reproduction.)

Third, the Saints have never regarded "same-sex love" as anything but an ideal, if it means "two people of the same sex with love for each other." It is when that love is combined with sexual desires and acts that the problems arise. We note that *Queering* talks about "unity, commitment, and effort to achieve oneness" — which were never the problem. We're told that it is "difficult to distinguish" between a male-female marriage and the relationship of the Father and Son. It isn't. For one, the former properly includes sexuality and reproduction; the latter does not because it is parental.

For Latter-day Saints, the parent-child relationship between Father and Son is not a metaphor; it instead describes their relationship as literally as it does that of John Adams and John Quincy Adams.[80] It is strange (but evidently necessary) to have to spell out that parent-child incest — as either corrupt symbol or horrific literal reality — has nothing of the holy or divine about it. This is certainly true in a Latter-day Saint cosmos and would be true in virtually any human society not afflicted with queer theorists.[81] Use of that kind of subtext is troubling, to say the least.

Beyond parody

Still, the text will not remain *sub-* for long. *Queering* quotes Latter-day Saint philosopher Blake Ostler:

> Blake Ostler's description of the all-male Godhead, for instance, holds some resources for imagining this divine unit among these men: "It is the relationship of the other that inspires the divinity in the divine persons. For they are divine because they love with a self-giving love so that they are one in each other. What distinguishes the Mormon view most from the conventional tradition is that the divine nature is possessed by more than one instance of that nature and is shared with others through a freely chosen relationship of indwelling love." (p. 32–33)[82]

It was here that I realized that queer theory truly is beyond parody:

> The *homoeroticism* here describes long-standing LDS views on the Godhead. *Ostler frequently uses language to describe this divine love as penetration, indwelling, inside, in, and opening*. He explains, "They actually are 'one' 'in' each other. The intelligence, knowledge, power, light, truth or life that proceeds from God's presence is like a spiritual force-field that penetrates into each of the divine persons and imparts the same spiritual energy and life to each of the divine persons." Drawing on the Gospel of John to make this point, as Ostler does for divine love . . . is also significant since this gospel has a man whom Jesus loves at the center of its story, *replete with homoerotic themes.* (p. 33, emphasis added)

Difficult as it is to believe, *Queering* takes Ostler (and Jesus' love for a disciple) as grist for the homoerotic mill the author is attempting to

build. Ostler said "penetrating" and "indwelling," to describe the oneness of the Godhead, and in queer theory, that's all it takes to be off and running. This has all the intellectual sophistication and insight of pre-teen boys sniggering when someone says *but* or *under where*.

Ostler also joins Snow and Kimball as an author whose meaning has been twisted by omission. Just prior to the sentence quoted, Ostler makes his meaning clear: "The divine persons exist in a unity that includes loving, interpenetrating, and intersubjective *awareness of another*."[83] Authors simply can't protect themselves from a reader so determined to be so wrong — "Being misunderstood is one thing, being willfully misunderstood quite another."[84] (As one commentator wrote of similar queering to create a homosexual divinity, this is "the worst kind of literalism."[85])

Queering gets worse:

> The *interpenetrative love shared here* [D&C 35:2] between three men, which makes them "one" (flesh?) "in" one another, calls into question the heteronormative logic of the divine realm in Mormon thought. Further, this passage notes that it is through this love that kinship with God is formed, "that they may become the sons of God." Kinship here is not merely a biological relation but a relationship of becoming formed intentionally and through practice. The *Father and the Son are equally one "in" one another, and a disciple joins their homoerotic fellowship* by sharing their unity with them and with others. (p. 33)

This is a spectacular example of deconstructionist tactics: here a supposedly "significant" and revealing word from the first misrepresented text (Ostler) is used to distort a second (the Doctrine and Covenants). Once again, it seems sadly necessary to point out that becoming a redeemed "son" through adoption ought not to involve parent-child incest any more than Jesus's literal Sonship does. Coyly sneaking "flesh?" between parentheses doesn't change this.

In short, hearing "interpenetrating love" or "Father-Son" and thinking "homoeroticism" may tell us a great deal about the author and his method — but nothing useful about the text, Church theology, or the thought of Ostler or anyone else.[86]

It is disturbing to see father-son love reflexively and repeatedly read in sexual terms. But even this supposed homosexual subtext cannot be permitted by *Queering* to imply masculinity or fixed sexual/gender

categories (we will forgo a detailed discussion of the incoherence of seeing same-sex eroticism while denying the fixity and reality of biological sex):

> The notion of interpenetration is a point to critically evaluate. This phallocentric description of God's presence as a force that penetrates in order to impart life into other divine persons belongs to a specifically masculine-gendered metaphysics. The homoerotic elements of this relationship need not be occasion to reinstall androcentrism, gender essentialism, or even the phallocentrism of the penetrative logic ("in-ness") of love. Love, it seems, is meant to unite, not divide. A reformulation of such imagery, while preserving the notion that love accommodates otherness, is one resource for thinking about how all kinds of bodies, persons, subjectivities, and identities may be incorporated into LDS articulations of deity. (p. 34)
>
> The analysis of the Godhead as an idealized same-sex relationship need not reify the notion of maleness and femaleness as an unreconstructed binary. (p. 48)

We are once again struck by the realization that if this is the best the author can offer — "critically evaluate" seems mighty generous — the evidence really is overwhelmingly against him. It all reads like a bad joke.

Ostler argues that "the divine persons are essentially related to each other in a genetic sense as members of the same divine family. . . . [Jesus] is the Father's *Son* — the perfect reflection of the Father's likeness and image because he is begotten as issue of the Father."[87]

Queering takes the same material and incredibly concludes: "The very insistence that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are 'male' produces an acutely homoerotic scene of divine love" (p. 48). If the reader finds this consistent with any sort of legitimate intellectual or historical methodology — or at all insightful, illuminating, persuasive, or honest — I simply cannot help him.

If you truly believe a dog can shoot free throws — well, reasoned argument won't get far. But reason and logic are logocentric and so targets of queer theory as well.

Does God have a body or a sex?

Most non-LDS commentaries see God as unembodied or unsexed

in Genesis, albeit with some potential ambiguity in the background, as the *Yale Anchor Bible* discusses:

> In this crescendo of the poem, God's creation of *ʾadam* in his image is now shown to include the human duality of sex and gender, which yet still corresponds to "the image of God." The meanings of these parallel phrases and concepts are not explicitly articulated, leaving a residue of ambiguity regarding how the human duality of male and female articulates "the image of God." God in [Genesis 1] does not have sexual features, but these differential qualities — human and divine, male and female, unity and duality — are here interrelated. . . . The humans' ability to reproduce — involving their sexual complementary as male and female — is entailed in their creation in God's image. (p. 135)
>
> The text may be reticent for good reason, perhaps because of the topics of God's body and sexuality, but the implications of this text go beyond simple obscurity. (p. 136)[88]

Others see the text more strongly against God having a sex and/or a body.[89] That said, there are some that insist on God's corporeality and his maleness:

> Does the image [of God] refer primarily to the spiritual nature or to the bodily form . . . of man? The idea of a corporeal resemblance seems free from objection on the level of OT theology; and it is certainly strongly suggested. . . . God is expressly said to have a "form" which can be seen . . . and that they ever advanced to the conception of God as formless spirit would be difficult to prove.[90]
>
> Without question, in the broader background of this [Genesis 1] statement about God's image in man there is the notion of Yahweh's human form.[91]
>
> A closer look reveals that Genesis 1 does mean that: humans were made in the bodily image of God.[92]
>
> God had the human bodily form *first*. Humans did not project it onto God. God made humans — men and women — in the image and likeness that God already had.[93]
>
> We may not share the text's assumption that God has a human form. . . . But the Bible's first description of human

> beings asserts that we were created, male and female, in the bodily image of God. We bear God's form, not first in our brains, spirits, or souls, but in our entire male and female embodied selves. Sex is included in this. This is already implicit in how Genesis goes out of its way to affirm that both men and women were made in God's image. . . . Here, male and female bodies are both godlike and sexual, and there is no contradiction between the two.[94]
>
> We [moderns] can no longer assume, as the text's authors did, that God had a body. The Bible itself emphasizes this idea much less than many texts of its time. And even Genesis 1—in shifting to plural language at the crucial point ("let *us* make humanity in *our* image")—averts its eyes from God's body. The focus is not on God's body. That is assumed. Instead, the focus of this text is on the creation of male and female embodied humans as the climax of creation and the extension of God's power and blessing.[95]

There is thus more support for the Latter-day Saints than *Queering* concedes, and certainly more support than *Queering* has successfully conjured for itself. Opinion may be divided about God's sex and body, but an incestuous homoerotic genderqueer trinity is pure fantasy, and a distasteful one at that.

Case #2: The Creation

There are at least four creation accounts recognized in the Church—Genesis, Moses, Abraham, and the temple endowment. *Queering* claims that

> it should be clear that the temple rites do not resolve these interpretive issues by providing some fixed point, nor should these private rites play a role in the public interpretation of Genesis 1–3 as found in the Proclamation. Rather, the temple version of the creation is one more alternative that adds instability to the interpretive tradition. (p. 74)

This conclusion is anything but "clear." Joseph Fielding Smith, for example, evidently saw the temple as uniquely normative. Of Genesis, Moses, and the temple, he wrote, "I think the temple account, which was given by revelation, is the clearest of all of these."[96] I think most Saints see it thus.[97]

In any case, *Queering* benefits from the fact that most Church members will not engage in public discussion or disputation about the temple endowment:

> It is a sacred rite, and recipients covenant not to discuss it publicly. While there is room for interpretation about what specific parts of the ceremony must not be disclosed, devotees and many scholars tend to err on the side of caution. There are some important gender critiques of the ritual. Yet, exegesis of the ritual is complicated not only because it is a sacred, secret rite but because the rite as text is unstable. The endowment ritual has undergone revisions most recently in 1990 and again in 2018. Changes include gendered pronouns and significant changes in gendered covenants. For these reasons, I leave it out of my analysis of LDS interpretations of Genesis 1–3 here. (p. 74)

Given the interpretive fantasies of an interpenetrative homoerotic Godhead to which readers have already been witness, they can heave a trembling sigh of relief to hear that the author will not subject the temple to similar distortion. No changes to the temple ritual affect the teaching of a literally sexed Godhead or humanity, despite an attempt to imply it.

Perhaps the postmodern quest for hidden subtext was stealing over me, but by this point I began to suspect that if the temple was more amenable to distortion, it would not have been spared.

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

Queering is particularly keen to deconstruct Latter-day Saint readings of the creation, since Genesis is used in The Family: A Proclamation to the World:[98]

> However, few have analyzed the source texts in scripture alluded to in the Proclamation. . . . Does the text of Genesis and the various LDS canonical iterations of Genesis support the interpretation of the Proclamation that Adam and Eve are archetypes of fixed, binary gender identity, roles, and heterosexuality? In all cases, I argue that the text and its interpretative history do not preclude gender and sexual fluidity. (p. 72)

As before, we see that the intent is not a simple repurposing of symbolism or doctrine to describe a different cognitive world. Instead,

we have what might be called a historical-textual approach — a claim that foundational texts do not mean what the Church and its leaders claim they mean. And the clear goal is to delegitimize the Church's articulation of its doctrine. This is not a benign endeavor.

Incompatible?

Queering declares the four accounts contradictory or incompatible, and there are certainly ways in which they could be thus read (pp. 73–77). We must not ignore, however, that the Saints have overwhelmingly tended to view them as *complimentary*, with the temple seen as the best and most authoritative account, with all others read in its light.[99]

Even if there were ways of reading Genesis in isolation that supported a rejection, by queer theory, of heterosexuality and binary gender, Church members would not have read it that way when the temple taught otherwise. It is difficult to see how the most sacred, important rites would not have always been uniquely authoritative. I certainly know of no case in which a Church leader says otherwise.

Why does it matter? Because *Queering* wishes to deconstruct the orthodox ways of reading Genesis in part through appeals to historical-critical claims about the Genesis text while claiming that even the temple cannot save the orthodox interpretation.

The post-modern credentials of this undertaking are a bit shaky. The only reason to quote the Bible and claim that the Church's reading is wrong or unstable is because the Bible is seen as normative in some way. It is a text with authority about what one ought to do or believe — and that requires an author (be it God or human) with a point of view that can be discerned and understood. A queer theory that appeals to the "proper" exegesis of the Bible (or the claim that their opponents have misread the Bible) is sneaking the author and his intentionality through the back door. Either that, or the appeal is a pure power play, a cynical effort to manipulate.

It has long been recognized that the upshot of such efforts (and likely not an incidental one) is that deconstructionists

> effectively strip the Bible of any stable meaning so that it cannot state a fact, issue a command, or make a promise. [By extension, the same logic applies to Latter-day Saint scriptures, temple worship, and leaders.] Furthermore, without the author to serve as touchstone of the distinction between meaning and significance, every interpretation

> becomes just as authorized a version as another. A text that cannot be set over against its commentary is no authority at all. Finally, biblical authority is undermined by the instability of meaning because, if nothing specific is said, the text cannot call for any specific response. Interpreters can give neither obedience nor belief to texts that lack specificity. If there is no meaning in the text, then there is nothing to which the reader can be held accountable.[100]

As we will now see, even if we follow *Queering* and eliminate the temple's vital interpretive role from consideration, its reading of Genesis is dubious. *Queering* uses the tropes and style of an academic, historical, "we can actually read texts and be better or worse at getting at what they mean" approach. If it is sincere in this undertaking, then its approach can be evaluated and critiqued. If it is insincere — merely putting on a show of critical assessment to disguise an infinite regress of textual play or a determined ideological advocacy drenched in eisegesis — then it is not to be trusted. It promises "a close reading of [the] text" (p. 77). We will assume it means what it says and engage on those terms.

Genesis and genre

Many have pointed out that different texts have different expectations and conventions that control how they are written and read. In a word, *genre*.[101] *Queering* largely ignores this aspect of the text, and instead engages in "queer hermeneutics" (p. 71).[102]

Jan Fokkelman argued passionately for an appreciation of genre and the coherence of the biblical text as it now stands:

> How often do we hear that there is contradiction in the text, or that there is a tension that must be a trace of a complex genetical process, or that there is too much repetition, another sure sign that more than one writer has worked on the text? And as soon as one encounters a textual seam, a doubling, or a locus of tension, one is supposed to stop listening and to forge hypotheses about the background of the text, the intention of the author, and especially about its origins, growth and redactional reworkings.[103]

Queer theory is obsessed with these textual seams and points of tension — the heritage of deconstruction's focus on the marginal features of the text. In this case, that approach reflects a particularly

naïve, tone-deaf approach to the Bible, because its genre and narrative style use just such traits to communicate meaning.

"No precise designation for [narratives] has been agreed upon; *saga, legend, myth, folktale, etiology, story,* and *theological narrative* have all been candidates. The designation *story* (or *story of the past*) is perhaps most helpful in determining how these materials functioned."[104] They "express . . . a people 's understanding of reality . . . not simply of facts . . . but of the inner meaning of those facts."[105]

"Like many ancient creation myths, this familiar story is more a mythic description of the dynamics of present human life than an attempt to reconstruct early history," writes one.[106] This will be no surprise to temple-going members, who there experience a ritual drama that uses creation to articulate their own past, present, and future.[107] Genesis 2 in particular is written "in the fashion of narrative literary forms."[108]

There are certainly Saints who have read Genesis and parallel texts as literalistic history — but if *Queering* is going to appeal to the text, it must be read in its genre, and not in one mistakenly imputed to it. To willfully violate what one author has called the "covenant" between communicator and listener as regards genre is to assure misunderstanding.[109]

One dictionary of the Old Testament agrees:

> One of narrative criticism's most significant contributions has been the discovery and description of the distinctive character of Hebrew narrative. Diverse cultures do not tell stories in the same way. The fact would seem obvious, but in practice the chasm between the conventions encoded in biblical narrative and those that configure Western literary tradition has not been readily apparent. . . . Hebrew narrative is marked by its distinctive appreciation for symmetry, expressed most often through myriad forms of *repetition*. Repetition of vocabulary, grammatical structures, events or images unites diverse events and signals their common import.[110]

If *Queering* is going to appeal to historical-critical data, the failure to grapple with genre is one of its historical missteps, with significant consequences.

Genesis: two accounts?

One of the earliest conclusions of Old Testament textual critics was that Genesis contains *two* creation accounts.[111] *Queering* assumes that view, which serves the postmodern approach to texts very well. It provides another opportunity to claim that the accounts do not all say the same thing: "The account of the creation of human beings in the first creation story in Genesis 1–2:4a is significantly different from the one in Genesis 2:4b–3" (p. 77).[112]

Queering adopts the standard "Documentary Hypothesis"[113] approach to the text: "This problem is well-known and may be explained by identifying different sources behind the final text, the 'Priestly' source for Genesis 1 and the 'Yahwist' source for Genesis 2–3. The differences between them are instructive for the question of how to think about the place of sexual difference in these creation accounts" (p. 77). The author will later be more blunt, labeling them "contradictory stories" (p. 79).

This tidy division of the Creation into disparate sources that fundamentally disagree has, however, come under sustained attack for decades. It can no longer be assumed as the default critical position. A 2005 dissertation noted, "It was so easy to affirm a diversity of sources through genre or content that the possibility of an editor or author who saw them as interconnected was essentially dismissed."[114] "We should not speak of a second, parallel story of creation," wrote Walter Brueggemann. "Rather, [Genesis 2] is a more intense reflection upon the implications of creation for the destiny of humanity."[115]

Many authors have emphasized that, regardless of the sources used, the author of Genesis has placed the two accounts together in the final text. Whereas early source critics saw this as a "patchwork" approach where disparate and even contradictory sources were simply preserved side-by-side, many modern exegetes insist that the author saw no contradiction or inconsistency between them:

> The exact shaping power we find in Chapters I and II [of Genesis] renders it highly probable that [the final authors] were conscious of the fact that by shaping and by creating structures their own contribution was considerable, if not decisive.[116]

"While the two accounts have different origins and transmission histories, they have been brought together in a theologically sophisticated fashion to function *together*."[117] "In spite of the initial difficulty in

establishing the inner relationship between [Genesis 1 and 2] both on the oral and literary levels, it is clear at some period in the composition of the book of Genesis that the two accounts were linked in one continuous narrative."[118]

In 2013, the *Oxford Bible Commentary* observed: "The general trend in OT study at present is towards a greater interest in the present form of the text . . . [which] is often more coherent than an older generation of critics was willing to accept, even though evidence of reworked older material often remains apparent."[119]

Queering is thus reading anachronistically,[120] as did the giants of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German biblical scholarship:[121]

> The biblical writers and redactors . . . had certain notions of unity rather different from our own, and that the fullness of statement they aspired to achieve as writers in fact led them at times to violate what a later age and culture would be disposed to think of as canons of unity and logical coherence.[122]

Genesis 1–2 is sophisticated enough that if we think we have spotted a genuine contradiction, we are probably the ones who are confused, and not the ancient author.[123] One dissertation cautions against "an emphasis on the *contemporary* relevance of Genesis 1–11 for social equality, gender ideologies, and ecology. It is in this latter emphasis that aggressive socio political and advocacy criticisms have taken hold."[124] But, it urges, "it is crucial in our analysis that we strive to understand the text as it would have been read and understood by the ancient community."[125] That's certainly how the Church uses it in the Proclamation, while *Queering* is of the "aggressive socio political and advocacy" stream.

Discussions of the essential unity and harmony of Genesis 1–2 are legion.[126] Hamilton, in 1990, stated,

> The rhetorical features of Gen. 1–11 are so distinctly woven into one tapestry as to constitute an unassailable case for the unity of the section, and most likely composition by a single hand. In particular they find chiasmus in these biblical accounts. . . . The detection of two Creation stories . . . based on different names for deity and inconsistencies loses its appeal. The case for homogeneity is much greater than the case for heterogeneity.[127]

Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 are thus now seen by many as "two complimentary portrayals of creation."[128] The Jewish Publication Society

says that "Chapter 2 is not another creation story. As such it would be singularly incomplete. In fact, it presupposes a knowledge of much of the preceding account of Creation. Many of the leading ideas in the earlier account are here reiterated, though the mode of presentation is different."[129] *The Oxford Bible Commentary* declares, "It is hardly correct to call ch[apter] 2 a second and alternative creation story. . . . [Creation of the world] is introduced in order to provide a setting for the main story."[130]

The *New Cambridge Bible Commentary* points out that "contemporary studies in literary theory have taught us that a passage's context is the most important determining feature of interpretation."[131] For Genesis 2, that context is Genesis 1.

Thomas Brodie puts it more colorfully:

> The two creation texts (Genesis 1–2) are indeed very different, but in the context of ancient literature they are also deeply complementary: together they represent the two basic literary forms for depicting creation. . . . As such, and in their content, these creation narratives form a unity. But much modern biblical criticism was virtually founded on the separating of these two texts (Genesis 1–2), and biblical studies as a whole became contaminated by the example of that foundational barbarism.[132]

Bill Arnold emphasizes, "They may have come from different authors originally, but Gen 1 and Gen 2–3 have been edited together in such an intentional way as to produce a binocular or synoptic view of creation."[133]

Iain Provan agrees: "Whatever the truth of the process by which Genesis 1–2 came into their current form, they certainly do not sit on the page *now* as two creation stories. They exist now as one entity, albeit looking at creation from slightly differing perspectives."[134] The recent *Anchor Yale Bible* translation concurs.[135] Childs urges,

> The [Genesis 2] material thereafter functions, not as a duplicate creation account, but as a description of the unfolding of the history of mankind as intended by the creation of the heavens and the earth. The structure of the book has thus altered the semantic level of chapter 2 by assigning it a different role. The [Genesis 2] material functions on the level of figurative language, once-removed now from its original literal sense. The remarkable success of the redactional

> linkage is attested to by the history of interpretation which had little difficulty reading the chapters as a unity until the Enlightenment.[136]

There is irony in queer theory — whose postmodernism opposes and denies virtually everything the Enlightenment stood for — now insisting on Western canons of strict logical consistency, or demanding that people reflexively accept an approach to Genesis derived from Enlightenment categories of thought. How strange to insist we embrace Brodie's "foundational barbarism."

Concludes Bird:

> The union of the [Genesis 1] and [Genesis 2] accounts of creation as successive episodes in a comprehensive statement of origins requires the canonical interpreter to observe both the order of the component accounts and the tension between them. It also requires attention to new meanings that move beyond the original terms and intentions of the individual accounts as they are brought within a new and larger context of interpretation.[137]

In sum, the Latter-day Saint habit of reading the accounts as a complimentary whole is well justified and may even represent the majority view today. This does not mean it is *true* — but the point is that many informed observers of diverse ideologies believe other than *Queering*. To make anything more than ideologically driven assertions, it must offer an actual argument and show why the other side is wrong. We are instead given no good reason to accede to *Queering*'s presentist reading, and no good tools in the references for determining if we are being misled.

Is there a source in this text?

Unsurprisingly, *Queering* wants to queer the idea of sexual essentialism — the idea that biological sex has something fundamental and unchangeable to say about human or divine nature independent of human culture or convention.[138] It gets an early start by queering even God's name: "Elohim — the Israelite deity whose name is queerly morphologically plural but functions as a singular when it takes a verb" (p. 77). The text is said to be "immediately ambiguously gendered," in part by God's creative act in Genesis 1:

> Elohim speaks in the plural: "Let us make *adam* in our image, according to our likeness" (1:26). The "image" of Elohim is

> reflected in the male and female *adam*. There is no sense that male and female are preexistent forms; rather, they are contingent, created features that appear at the moment of the creation of the world. (p. 78)[139]

Remarkably, *Queering*'s section on Genesis 1–2 contains only six sources[140] for the author's reliance on textual interpretation:

1. References to later Jewish and Christians sources that saw the primal Adam as androgynous (p. 79n42).[141]
2. A feminist reading arguing for "intersex creation" (p. 79n43).[142]
3. Two queer-theory sources on the passage (p. 77n39).[143]
4. On the translation of *adam* (p. 78n40).[144]
5. On the translation of *rib* (p. 78n41).[145]
6. On NRSV translation of "in the image of God created he them" vs. "he him" (p. 77n38).[146]

I will briefly assess each in the following sections.

Later Jewish and Christian sources (Source #1)

Later Jewish and Christian readings are of limited utility for determining what the original author(s) believed and are of no value in assessing Latter-day Saint readings. If *Queering* just wanted any old texts for queer readings, these quite late ones would suffice without involving Restoration theology. (If the Saints appealed to a late rabbinic reading that supported their doctrine on sex, one suspects this would not pass unchallenged.) But the underlying goal is to queer (destabilize and delegitimize) the Church's doctrine.

Feminist reading (Source #2) and Queer Theory (Sources #3a and #3b)

The feminist reading and two queer-theory sources (#2, #3a, and #3b) are also of limited help — they merely tell us that other gender theorists, using the same tactics and techniques utilized in *Queering*, achieved similar readings. But that is precisely the point at issue — are these readings *justifiable* from the text if we use the criteria of history and critical study? Are they anything but postmodern *ex nihilo* conjuration from the void?

Source #2 by Mieke Bal contains no novel argument for an androgynous Adam. It simply appeals to and repeats a previous feminist reading by Phyllis Trible,[147] who is even said by a later analyst to be

"not interested in the intentionality of the author."[148] It is thus not clear why her approach should carry any weight in the case being made in *Queering*. Trible is frequently cited by later commentaries, but almost always to explain why her reading is ill-founded.[149] A detailed treatment by Susan Lanser was published a decade later. Lanser's paper rebutted both Trible and Bal by name. Neither author comes off well if one cares what the text likely meant to its ancient audience.[150]

(Source #3a and source #3b's queer-theory references are examined below in Case #3, which treats Adam's alleged androgyny.)

Appeals to Hebrew lexicon (Sources #4, #5, and #6)

The fourth note appeals to a paper by David Clines[151] to argue that "*adam* is not a proper name, as it has become in common English usage, but a gender-neutral term meaning a human being that takes the definite article 'the': the *adam*" (pp. 77–78).

This is correct so far as it goes, and not controversial for our purposes. The same paper, however, contradicts a key part of *Queering*'s thesis. *Queering* insists that the being created in Genesis 2 is not initially male. Clines disagrees completely:

> The human in question, from the beginning of the narrative, *is* a man, a man with a woman/wife (eventually) but the text, for its own good reasons, does not want to call him a "man" [*adam*] but "the human" [*ha-adam*]. . . . The fact that the human *is* a man, and *is* Adam, does not mean that [*ha-adam*] *means* a man, any more than it *means* Adam (the proper name).[152]

It thus turns out that this is another source whose inconvenient details *Queering* does not disclose. (We will again defer full treatment of Adam's alleged androgyny to Case #3).

Queering's sources #5 and #6 likewise appeal to text-critical scholarship on the meaning of Hebrew words. Sources #4–6 therefore imply (a) that the original text matters more than the translation because it gets us closer to the proper meaning; (b) that one can understand the original text to assess its proper meaning and translation; and (c) that a translation can convey the meaning of the original with varying degrees of accuracy. All these implicit assumptions are foreign to queer theory and postmodern readings generally.

Such an appeal to historical-critical information cannot, with consistency, ignore data that run against its theories. It cannot claim its

translation is more accurate and then refuse to consider whether more apt cultural translation or historical-critical concepts might undercut its views.

(This is *not* to say that one must accept every argument so advanced. Each must be assessed on its merits. But one cannot use an approach on the one hand and then rule it out as irrelevant as soon as it becomes inconvenient on the other—if rigor is valued.)

It thus remains clear that although, at times, *Queering* wishes to leverage historical-critical perspectives, it will warp its method as its agenda requires. There is no intellectual consistency here, no fundamental method. If "queer hermeneutics" (p. 71) is simply a free pass that allows arbitrary appeals to anything one likes without regard for completeness or self-consistency, then it is valueless.

Putting a basketball jersey on a dog won't really let him score slam dunks.

Case #3: An Androgynous Adam?

All the above leads to a key issue in *Queering*'s exegesis—does Genesis make *adam* initially an androgynous being, only later differentiated into sexes? Avoiding sexual essentialism for Adam and Eve is arguably even more important for the purposes of *Queering* than denying it to God. As the Proclamation demonstrates, for humans to be fundamentally male or female is fatal to the entire worldview of queer theory.

Queering tries to find sexual ambiguity in Genesis 1:

> As the text explains, "In the image of God he created him; male [*zakar*] and female [*nəqebah*] he created them" (Gen. 1:27). The text is immediately ambiguously gendered. First, the human being is singular ("him"), and then the human being is plural ("them"). Second, the human being seems to be male in the singular but both male and female in the plural. (p. 78)

Queering argues further of Genesis 2:

> Many interpreters have conflated the two creation stories in an attempt to resolve this problem. In this conflation, following Genesis 1:27, the *adam* is both male and female, an intersex creation, who is subsequently divided in the second creation account in Genesis 2:21. Such an interpretation that the *adam* is a "primal androgyne" has a long history

> in both Jewish and Christian contexts. In this interpretation, the woman was "taken from" (2:22, 23) the man because the *adam* was both "male and female" before this moment. Indeed, the interpretive weight must be placed on the claim that the woman was "taken from" the *adam*, that the separation between male and female occurs only at that moment. (p. 79)

As noted above, *Queering* provides a footnote to later commentary that sees Adam as a "primal androgyne." Unfortunately for the queer argument, it would be difficult to find a topic about which textual critics have been more scathing, or more generally united. (Complete unity is a rare thing in biblical studies.) As summarized in one dissertation on Genesis 2, "That some would argue for man and woman being created from an original bisexual, or asexual being (around [Genesis] 2:23) is unfounded and historically naïve."[153]

Next I consider Genesis 1 and 2, in turn.

Genesis 1 androgyny

On this theme in Genesis 1, scholars have been relatively univocal:

> The persistent idea that man as first created was bi-sexual and the sexes separated afterwards [he here cites Jewish material referenced by *Queering*] is far from the thought of the passage.[154]

> The plural in [Genesis 1:]27 ("he created them") is intentionally contrasted with the singular ("him") and prevents one from assuming the creation of an originally androgynous man.[155]

> It is an important part of [Genesis 1's] presentation that the division of the sexes belongs to the immediate creation of humanity. A consequence of this is that there can be no question of an "essence of man" apart from existence as two sexes . . . there can only be anything like humanity and human relations where the human species exists in twos. . . . Every theoretical and institutional separation of man and woman, every deliberate detachment of male from female, can endanger the very existence of humanity as determined by creation.[156]

> Hebrew 'adam is a generic term for humankind; it never

> appears in Hebrew in the feminine or plural. . . . The term encompasses both man and woman, as shown in [Genesis 1:]27–28 and 5:1–2.[157]
>
> The idea is not unknown in ancient literature that man was first created bisexual and only subsequently were the sexes differentiated. *Such is clearly not the meaning here.* Rather, the verse affirms that God created in his image a male and a female ʾāḏām. Both share the image of God. Sexuality is not an accident of nature, nor is it simply a biological phenomenon. Instead it is a gift of God.[158]
>
> That the species *adam* is still understood as collective/plural and bisexual (i.e., sexually dimorphic) is evident in [the] recapitulation of 1:27 in 5:2 and in [the] explicit referral of the name/common noun to the plural object: "Male and female he created them; and he blessed them and named *them adam* (5:2).[159]
>
> [Genesis 1] is not concerned with sexual roles, the status or relationship of the sexes to one another, or marriage. It describes the biological pair, not a social partnership; male and female, not man and wife. The specification is not dictated by any prehistory that told of a separate creation of man and woman. . . . dependent upon [the] overarching theme of the sustainability (fertility) of the created order. . . . Sex at its most fundamental, biological level is not to be despised or deprecated. It is God's gift and it serves God's purpose in creation by giving to humans the power and the responsibility to participate in the process of continuing creation by which the species is perpetuated. . . . To be human means also to be male *or* female (*the plural of [Genesis] v. 27 also works against any notion of androgyny*).[160]
>
> This systematic change in the two most important texts about the creation of ʾāḏām as zākār ur^{e}qēbāh [male and female] *do not support the thesis of an androgynous being* in the [Genesis 1] account of creation. The [Genesis 1] writer needs a differentiation in male and female because it foreshadows the blessing of fertility of v. 28.[161]
>
> It is better to translate *hādām* not as "the (sexless) earthling/groundling" but as "the man."[162]

> There is no evidence that *haadam* suddenly gains gender at the end of the chapter. Rather, his song in Gen. 2:23 presupposes that woman was taken from him when he was already a "man."[163]

> Without reference to "male" and "female" the reader [in Genesis 1] would intuit the gender of human beings. However, with gender stipulation the narrator not only gives sexuality special weight but also anticipates their ensuing roles in the blessing. . . . The [Septuagint] follows this shift with τὸν ἄνθροπον [ton anthropon], "humankind." This makes better sense than presuming a bisexual, androgynous, or even two persons.[164]

> There is no possibility that the verse is teaching that humans were first androgynous (having both male and female physical characteristics) and afterward were separated.[165]

Robert Alter translates Genesis 1:27 as "God created the human in his image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them." His translation notes read,

> The term *'adam* [in verse 26], afterward consistently with a definite article . . . is a generic term for human beings, not a proper noun. It also does not automatically suggest maleness . . . and so the traditional rendering "man" is misleading, and an exclusively male "*adam*" would make nonsense of the last clause of verse 27. . . . In the middle clause of . . . verse [27], "him," as in the Hebrew, is *grammatically but not anatomically masculine*. Feminist critics have raised the question as to whether here and . . . in chapter 2, *'adam* is to *be imagined as sexually undifferentiated until the fashioning of woman, though that proposal leads to certain dizzying paradoxes in following the story*.[166]

One of *Queering*'s own queer theory sources (Source #3a) discusses Genesis 1 and essentially concedes that it cannot be read in *Queering*'s needed way. It then abandons any further discussion of Genesis 1. The source states:

> The [Genesis 1] account notes at the first appearance of humanity its twofold sexual division [which thus does not support *Queering*'s reading]. . . . The binary sexual differentiation of humankind seems, therefore, to be part of God's

> orderly cosmos from the beginning. . . . Because the linguistic structure of Genesis 1:27 does underscore a binary division of humankind ("male and female he created them") and moves immediately to an emphasis upon reproduction, the text easily lends itself to interpretations that valorize the relation between woman and man and make that relation key to the understanding of human ontology and vocation. . . .
>
> The primary point I wish to make, however, is that whatever the original authorial intentions behind Genesis 1:27 might have been, the structure and content of the text as it stands do seem to encourage interpretations that grant a foundational status to binary sexual division as a crucial defining feature of humankind.[167]

Even the Family Proclamation would not argue with much of that. Aside from complaints about theologians who have used the text to conclude negative things about homosexuality and a weak appeal to Greek and Roman evidence that men who had reproductive sex did not always abstain from same-sex activity (the relevance of which for ancient Judaism seems marginal), the source provides little support for the treatment of Genesis 1 by *Queering*.[168] It concedes far more than *Queering* does but is probably wise to do so.

Ironically, the queer author complains of Trible: "It has to be recognized that her argument veers perilously close to the rhetoric of 'gender complementarity' so often used in support of heterosexist positions."[169]

Tellingly, then, *Queering*'s sources do not even agree with each other about the implications of their ideologically-driven readings.[170]

Genesis 2 androgyny

What about Genesis 2? The *Anchor Yale Bible* writes in terms that will resonate with any temple-going Saint:

> *haʾadam* [the adam] is the ancestor and symbol of all humans. At the same time *haʾadam* is, as the story unfolds, a single **male** character. The first mention of ʾadam in 2:5 — in his absence — states his role "to work the soil." This is a predominantly male role in the biblical world. The singleness and implicit or incipient maleness of the first man becomes foregrounded when Yahweh sets out to make a partner for him. . . .

> Some scholars have tried to de-patriarchalize the figure of *haʾadam* by emphasizing the collective, gender-neutral meaning, sometimes arguing that *haʾadam* has no sex or gender at all until the creation of woman. . . . But to regard *haʾadam* as a sexually polymorphous or unsexed creature is to miss the multivalence of this character, who is both "the human" and "the man." In other words, the de-patriarchalized interpretation treats the word as if it were simply a floating signifier, independent of the story's implied meanings or "implicature." In the context of its creation, *haʾadam* is implicitly a symbolically collective "humankind" *and* a single "man," with the dual meanings circulating in different proportions throughout the story.[171]

This analysis serves as an overall summary of the commentary on these verses. We've already seen one of *Queering*'s sources contradict it on this point.[172] Skinner states that "the notion that the first human being was androgynous, and afterwards separated into man and woman . . . finds no countenance in the passage."[173] This assessment is cited with agreement by Gordon Wenham.[174] Lanser is very specific on this point:

> A fairly standard process of inference is at work . . . in the conventional reading of *hāʾādām*'s maleness in Genesis 2. Let me postulate that when a being assumed to be human is introduced into a narrative, that being is also assumed to have sexual as well as grammatical gender. The masculine form of *hāʾādām* and its associated pronouns will, by inference, define *hāʾādām* as male. I am not suggesting that one *cannot* read *hāʾādām* as a sex-neutral figure; I am saying that readers *will* not ordinarily read Genesis 2 in this way. Gendered humans are the unmarked case; it is not *hāʾādām*'s maleness that would have to be marked but the *absence* of maleness. In this instance . . . two reinforcing systems of inference are at work: the inference brought, a priori, *to* the reading of Genesis 2:7 that a living creature named with masculine pronouns will be male, and the inference drawn, a posteriori, *from* the reading that since the creature being created as a helper is "woman," then the creature for and from whom she has been created is already "man." As far as I can determine, this process of inference operates as

> fully in Biblical Hebrew as, say, in modern French, which is also a language of dual gender. . . .
>
> Ironically, Bal's [*Queering's* source] own description of this moment unwittingly reproduces precisely the androcentrism of Genesis 2 itself: "God brings the woman 'to *hā'ādām*,' she says, 'who, by the recognition of *the other*, assumes *his own* sexual identity" (emphasis mine). This focus on the male subject is reinforced by the narrator's use, in the very next two verses (2:24 and 2:25) and on three occasions thereafter, of the possessive structure *hā'ādām wĕ'ištō* — the (hu)man and his woman.[175]

Some further examples:

> We should not conclude either from [Genesis 2] or from 1:27 that the first human being was androgynous. . . . To suggest that the primal being was an androgyne is to read into the text what is not there.[176]
>
> [An androgyny] theory requires some gymnastics. . . . God does not propose to divide an earth creature into two beings who are counterparts for each other. Rather, God decides to make a counterpart for the 'adam, for the already existing (hu)man being. . . . He is not an earth creature before the separation and a male human being afterwards. . . . [When he meets Eve he] has not changed physically; sexuality has not been newly created. . . . the first creature in the story is a (male) man from the beginning.[177]
>
> That the story [of Genesis 2] is *told* from the point of view of the man and is thus clearly androcentric in construction does not alter this basic tone of the account as a tone of mutuality and equality.[178]
>
> If we are reading Genesis 2 along with Genesis 1, we have already been told in Genesis 1.27 that the *'adam* . . . is both male and female.[179]

Bird provides a fitting conclusion:

> Presented as an individual (*ha'adam*, with the article, in contrast to [Genesis 1's] collective *'adam*, without the article) and envisioned as a male (specifically, a peasant farmer), the name by which he is designated betrays his true identity — and the problem of his singularity. For although he bears the

> appellation of the species, he does not fully represent it. The personification is defective in its limitation to the male alone. The remainder of the chapter describes in dramatic action the overcoming of that defect and the resolution of the tension latent in the initial presentation.[180]

It would seem the Church's doctrinal view is on much firmer ground than *Queering* will allow. It is definitely on firmer ground than is *Queering* itself.

Queering's queer-theory source (Source #3a) says of Genesis 2:

> [Genesis 2] can also be seen as serving the interests of hegemonic heterosexuality. . . . The story as a whole seems not only to insist upon binary sexual difference but also to underscore the inevitability of sexual reproduction. . . .
>
> Yet there are certain features of this text that make its support for the heterosexual contract somewhat problematic. It is interesting to note, for example, that the text finds it necessary to specify in 3:16b that the woman's "desire" or "longing" will be directed toward her man, and that this specification of heterosexual desire occurs in a list of those features of human existence that result from the pair's transgressions. What are we to make of this surprising and often ignored statement? A reader might very well conclude from it that heterosexual desire on the part of the woman is itself a consequence of — or even a punishment for — the woman's misdeeds rather than an original component of her created nature. . . .
>
> And it is striking that the text as worded seems to display a certain amount of insecurity about the woman's desire for the man, having to insist upon that desire as something that God ordains while also allowing a reader to reach the conclusion that such desire is a consequence of the woman's rebellion, a consequence that might not have been any more certain than other such consequences as, for example, the woman's increased pain in childbirth, the man's having to toil and labor as he works a recalcitrant earth, or the snake's having to crawl upon its belly.[181]

With allies like this, *Queering* needs no opponents. The "insecurity" about heterosexual desire is only visible to those seeking to undercut the pre-Fall sexual complementarity that is everywhere implied and

stated. God's "very good" creation can hardly proceed to "be fruitful and multiply" (for animals *and* humans) if the two sexes are intended to have no mutual desire or instinctual drive toward reproduction.

Queering's source also appeals to Trible and Bal for an androgynous reading, but we have already seen how weak and ill-supported they are.[182] There is nothing novel in its treatment of the same issues. The author even goes on to acknowledge the saliency of the critiques of Trible and Bal's reading and concludes by rather lamely claiming the Genesis 2 account is "riven with tensions and contradictions."[183] This is *Queering*'s approach, but as we've seen, such a reading is anachronistic and flat.[184] The supposed problems and "contradictions" come mainly from trying vainly to make the text say something it resolutely doesn't want to say, and reading it in a presentist style foreign to its genre.

The queer theory source then moves on — with some evident relief — to a completely different tactic:

> It may be productive to read this text in dialogue with the work of Howard Eilberg-Schwartz. For, in a provocative study indebted to Freud, Eilberg-Schwartz argues that the discourse of the Hebrew Bible is overdetermined at numerous points by an attempt to deny the implications of an unconscious homoerotic relation between Israel's male deity and that deity's male worshiper. Is it possible, then, that the representation of Yahweh's search for an appropriate partner for Adam is the reflex of a felt need, on the part of the text's writer, to preclude the possibility of this sort of homoerotic relationship?[185]

The answer, in a word, is "no." The study is doubtless "provocative," but that hardly means reasoned or plausible. ("Provocative" even seems calculated to sound like praise without having to commit to an opinion on the actual merits of an argument. "It *may* be productive to read" — well, is it, or isn't it? And if it is, why don't you tell us why?)

Regardless, Eilberg-Schwartz and concerns about Butlerian performativity occupy the remainder of the queer theory essay.[186] This is much more in *Queering*'s vein, and it is no more convincing here. Eilberg-Schwartz's oeuvre is entitled *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*. That, and its debt to Freud, perhaps tell us all we need to know, at least in a family publication. It demonstrates, at least, the level of erudition that *Queering* offers.[187]

Mark S. Smith's treatment of Israelite monotheism contains a blunt castigation of this stunted approach: "It is unnecessary and it is not supported by *any* biblical text to argue that monotheistic Yahweh involved either androgyny or homoeroticism. Such views appear eisegetical and seem based on a wooden reading."[188] *Queering* uses this source (p. 82n45) but didn't listen.

The debt to Freud also demonstrates one of the many enormous self-contradictions in queer theory and the other post-modernisms — they are fiercely proud of their radical skepticism about almost everything, while often enthusiastically swallowing, wholesale, the pseudoscientific bilge of Freud and fellow-traveler Ludwig Feuerbach.[189] (Feuerbach's central claim was that ideas about God were nothing but humans projecting themselves onto the divine.[190] Karl Marx was deeply enamored of this supposed "solution" to the issue of religion, though he extended and critiqued Feuerbach's approach.[191])

Anyone who thinks Feuerbach's or Freud's just-so stories explain anything is hard to take seriously.[192] Their approaches are the poster children for unfalsifiability.[193]

After all we've seen, can it *really* be fairly said with *Queering* that "as *many* interpreters have noted, even the version in Genesis is *far more compatible* with gender fluidity than gender essentialism" (p. 77, emphasis added)?

No. And, the dog can't really slam dunk, either.

No unanimity

We must acknowledge that a few of the sources considered above contain some marginal support for *Queering*'s reading. Noort writes that "describing the human being as androgynous does not fit into the scope of the narrative" in Genesis 2. He also argues that the "*ʾāḏām* in Gen 2:7–17 is 'neither man nor woman,'" which helps *Queering's* case.[194] But, he also says that in Genesis 1 that there is no androgyny.[195]

Provan likewise sees Genesis 2 as featuring an initial "protohuman" or "earthling," but also emphasizes that the reader will already have encountered Genesis 1, in which there is no androgyny.[196] Thus neither of these authors supports *Queering*'s reading of Genesis 1, though agreeing somewhat with its take on Genesis 2.[197] In any case, we have just seen the many authorities who reject androgyny in the primordial *ʾāḏām* in Genesis 2.

Provan also avoids calling the *ʾāḏām* in Genesis 2 a "male" since he argues (like *Queering*) that we require gender differentiation before we

can speak meaningfully of "male" and "female." He also wants to avoid the idea that males preceded females.[198] (This idea has certainly been abused throughout the history of interpretation to give men power over women.) This avoidance is not without a double edge, however, since it also deprives feminist readers of the astute observation that God creates in an ascending hierarchy with woman as the crowning finale — if the initial *ʾāḏām* is not male, then males and females come into existence at the same moment of the *ʾāḏām*'s fission.[199]

Demanding both sexes be created before either can be described is a weak argument in the context of Latter-day Saint theology, which has embodied Heavenly Parents. Adam and Eve are, thereby, hardly the first male and female. Rather, sex differentiation long predates the Genesis creation. And Adam has just seen all the animals paraded in front of him to be named — are we to presume that *they* were not already sexed? The text will not support it.

Besides, how dim must we make the first human, to think that he/it sees each paired species, and yet could not conceive of him/itself as male without ever having seen a human female? Part of the pathos of the scene — and the reason for the man's joyful burst of poetry upon meeting the woman — comes precisely because of what Adam knows was missing. The Biblical account would be the poorer without this dimension.

Holotypes

Queering is keen to find any shred of gender ambiguity and triumphantly brandishes the fact that in the JST revision of Genesis (Moses 2:27) God and Jesus's sexed bodies are said to be the "image" after which male *and* female bodies are created (p. 80).

Note that *either* scenario can be recruited to the queer reading. In Genesis, God is not given a sex and this is claimed to support a queer reading:

> The "image" of Elohim is reflected in the male and female *adam*. There is no sense that male and female are preexistent forms; rather they are contingent, created features that appear at the moment of the creation of the world. (p. 78)

But, when Joseph Smith makes God's sex utterly unambiguous in Moses, then *this* is flipped around and queered as well. And in the bargain, *Queering* can claim that there are thereby "new contradictions

and gaps" (p. 79) between these passages, which supposedly just goes to prove their interpretive instability.

Using a get-out-of-jail-free card like this is nice work if you can get it, but it is transparently self-serving. The answer is determined upfront. It is also deeply uninformed to think that any fuzziness or ambiguity or "queerness" is introduced by creating a female body that uses a male as the template (the Father's and the Son's, in this case).

The confusion is not surprising, since queer theorists seem to know little about biology and accept even less.[200] The idea, however, is simple for those without an ideological need to deny sexual essentialism.

Each species described by science has a *holotype.* As the American Museum of Natural History puts it, this "is the single specimen that a researcher designates as the name-bearing representative of a new species."[201] So, if a new species of mammal were discovered (say a canine gifted at hoops, species *Airus budis*), a *single individual* (female *or* male) would be designated the species holotype by its discoverer. All other classification, study, and identification of other members of the species must refer to that single individual.[202]

For those species for whom males and females are greatly dissimilar, "researchers sometimes designate an *allotype* — a specimen of the opposite sex of the holotype." This is done much more informally, and is not even officially regulated or tracked.[203] (We can well imagine a critical theorist in high dudgeon if females *could not* be encompassed in a male "holotype" definition.)

Just as a modern scientist can define a species by a single exemplar of *either* sex, so does God act as the "holotype" for humanity in Moses. Sexes are a fundamental *part* of species. It's almost incoherent to think of species without this core aspect. There must be a Mrs. Air Bud, even if we've never met her.

No biologist is so ill-informed (or so incompetent) as to be unable to recognize the female of a species based on a male holotype specimen unless there are massive anatomical differences — which there assuredly are not in humans. One would not (as both *Queering* and a few commentators seem to think) even need to have *seen* a female example of the species to: (1) identify the holotype as a novelty; (2) recognize that the holotype was male; (3) predict that a female must also exist; and (4) have a decent idea of what she would be like. The biologist, like Adam, has seen many animals, and their sexed complementarity is a given.

I daresay most nonprofessionals would not struggle either, save in

a few unusual cases. No ancient audience, with their intimate knowledge of domestic and prey animals, would have any trouble either. If a detail-oriented field like present-day biology can get by like this, the premodern scripture surely can.

Genre, again

In one of the twentieth century's magisterial commentaries, Gerhard von Rad underlined how vulnerable Genesis 2 was to misappropriation and misreading by those ignorant of its conventions:

> The text of [Genesis 2] presents a *narrative*. It is not doctrine (at least not in direct sense), but rather it tells a story, a part of a traveled road that cannot be traversed again. One must therefore bear in mind that here a factual report is meant to be given about facts which everyone knows and whose reality no one can question. They concern the field upon which the story of man with God is played; and the means of presentation, which serve to make the process more tangible, are correspondingly different from those applied by the historian. We read a narrative that proceeds amidst the simplest and clearest imagery; but that, of course, does not mean it does not intend throughout to report actuality. The story certainly also contains a didactic element, but much less directly than does [Genesis 1]; it is concealed in the facts that are placed before the reader. And here is the source of so many false expositions. The narrative demands that we follow the way it goes precisely. . . . There is perhaps no other biblical text . . . whose witness proceeds from a road as narrow as a razor's edge. One misses the road completely if one does not entrust oneself to it completely.[204]

But it is this trust that queer theory simply will not permit itself. It clings to postmodernism's "hermeneutic of suspicion."[205] To obsess, as it does, about precisely where in a linear temporal sequence of an origin story the sexing of humanity occurs will virtually guarantee that it will be misled, because that is simply not how this type of story works.[206] Queer theory's vision of a proper reading wants answers that the Genesis author would never have given to questions he would never have asked.

Claus Westermann was the other twentieth-century titan of Genesis commentary and he, too, emphasized chapters 2–3:

> The passage has shown that there are certain extremes which are to be avoided. Among these are approaches which are purely literary-historical or belong merely to the history of religions as well as those which begin from an already formulated ideology and from fixed dogmatic principles.[207]

What could better describe queer theory than the last? He continues:

> The text of Gen 2–3 is complex and contains many different elements; account must be taken of this complexity. All attempts to explain Gen 2–3 which look for the key to the explanation in one motif or in a single detail of the text are of their very nature questionable. The history of exegesis has shown that the starting point must be the text as a whole and its structure, and that only exegesis based thereon leads anywhere.[208]

Bird is likewise adamant about the genre and its conventions:

> Of fundamental importance for an understanding of the author's statements about sexuality is the literary form and structure of the narrative. In the [Genesis 2] account, story and the storyteller's art replace the liturgical cadences and technical terminology of priestly declaration [in Genesis 1]. Circular movement marks the narrative structure, in contrast to the linear progression of Genesis 1, and dramatic action is employed to describe states and relationships. *Time has no meaning here and sequence of action no ontological significance. The first and final acts of creation together describe a single action*; the creation of humankind is not complete until the woman stands beside the man, manifesting that essential aspect of humanity hidden or latent in the first exemplar. Only when the pair appear together on the stage do the divine-human interaction and the consequential action of the story begin.[209]

Summing up

Ironically, even if we grant *Queering*'s reading of an androgynous or unsexed Adam for the sake of argument, we can now see that the scripture undermines the argument that sex isn't foundational to God's creative work. Critical commentary is unanimous that the sexual nature of humans, and the vital complementarity inherent in heterosexual

pairing is the whole point: "The intention is clear: the process of creation itself explains how man and woman belong together."[210]

Queer theory presents a ludicrous spectacle as it ties itself in knots to eke out even a brief sliver of primordial time in which there was a potential transient "non-sexed" humanity.[211] Meanwhile the Bible goes to extraordinary lengths to celebrate, affirm, and insist upon the necessity and divine origin of sexed humanity[212] and heterosexual marriage.[213]

Queer theory is reduced to plucking the grit from the gears of the story and then relying on false bravado to claim that such scraps were the *real* reason for the machine's construction. Its decision to ignore genre conventions makes nonsense of the text, and it can only find its own distorted reflection in it. In short, to read Genesis 2 as *Queering* does is to fail exegetically on almost every level. *Queering* strolls into a game of chess and insists on playing Candyland — a game where the outcome is predetermined from the start and the players consume imaginary empty calories.

Part 4—The Double Standards

We could pursue the foregoing type of analysis indefinitely. Even if the reader's patience is not already exhausted, mine is. If you choose to read *Queering*, prepare for lots more of the same. If you've seen one *Air Bud*, you've essentially seen the sequels.

The most maddening thing about postmodern theories is how thoroughly saturated they are with double standards. They assure us confidently that no one can be confident about much. They are skeptical of almost everything except themselves and their tribe. They tell us all discourse is about unrecognized power plays — and proceed as if they are revealing hidden truths with no ulterior motives: "The cliché that one often ends up where one started points out how assumptions about gender might shape how one reads these texts" (pp. 71–72). Very likely true, and certainly a cliché — but doesn't that apply at least as much to *Queering*?

Postmodern theorists offer us logical arguments containing logical flaws to convince us that logic is impotent.[214] They insist that communication acts can only reflect the recipient's culture, bias, and power quest, not the mind or message of the author — and then brandish textual proofs when someone's reading disagrees with theirs.[215]

The author of *Queering* provided a beautiful example recently: An online post offered an early Christian work as proof that God has a

body. Our queer theorist took issue: "Posts like this are historical, philological, and theological malpractice. Its fine to look for precedents of LDS theology in ancient Christianity, but such efforts need to not distort it for cheap apologetics."[216]

What can one say but, *Amen*? I'm even tempted to say, "It's fine to look for precedents of [queer theory] in LDS theology, but such efforts need to not distort it for cheap [queer] apologetics." Otherwise, what you get is "historical, philological, and theological malpractice"—as demonstrated.

This sounds a lot like someone who believes that texts have an inherent meaning to them, and that we need to consider historical and philological factors before we opine about what they mean. It sounds like he thinks one could misrepresent texts and make them say things they don't say, and that others can tell when we're misrepresenting them.

He has further posts arguing that pro-gun advocates are guilty of "an incredibly tortured misreading of the second amendment"[217] and that Donald Trump has offered "as clear of a document to justify authoritarianism as you can possibly imagine."[218]

Couldn't we reply that he just hasn't "queered" Trump's blueprint adequately to appreciate that it is really a map for egalitarianism? I suspect that would meet spirited resistance. Why should his reading of the Second Amendment be accepted in preference to an allegedly tortured pro-gun interpretation? Queer theory cannot provide a cogent answer—in fact, if consistent, it should welcome the queer, tortured reading above the supposedly clear and commonplace.

Quite simply no one lives—no one *can* live—their life as if queer theory or the other Critical Theories are actually true. I suspect everyone—like *Queering's* author, apparently—believes deep down that texts *do* have an intended meaning, and that we *can* usually discern what that is to a reasonable degree, and that it *is* wrong to torture the text or distort it for ideological purposes, at least if it is for an ideology we dislike.

(If you doubt it, refuse to pay the theorists their salaries and watch how quickly they become believers in a definitive meaning of written contracts. There will be no kibbitzing about a hidden subtext to be queered to support contract-breaking instead of contract-keeping, even if thieves *are* an oppressed, underrepresented minority.)

After all, queer theorists write texts arguing for their views—a strange choice if no one can understand their meaning.

Everyone — including *Queering*'s author — would be upset if *their* texts were misrepresented. He'd be outraged if I "queered" his book and claimed it praised Adolf Hitler or Donald Trump. We all *know* that this is the case. And yet, we're expected to humor the fiction that they really believe the ideology that pervades their books.

Power and influence

Not only is queer theory and its attendant worldview hostile to the core of Latter-day Saint practice and theology, but *Queering* goes out of its way to describe its prominence and legitimacy:

> Today, queer studies of religion may be transgressive in some quarters but at the same time enjoy a claim to the academic mainstream. Most major seminaries and divinity schools employ scholars who specialize in these methods or offer classes on them, for instance. University presses publish this work, and there are numerous subgroups at the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion that deal with these topics. These are hardly fringe movements anymore, at least within the elite and rarefied halls of the academic study of religion. (p. 3)

By this description, key elite areas of our culture have embraced queer theory and its metaphysical commitments. It is, as we have seen, an ideology that is all-consuming and does not brook rivals. It is philosophically founded on the premise that all discourse is a zero-sum exercise of power over societal rivals.

A maligned minority

The Church of Jesus Christ has been a minority faith since its founding. Their lot was persecution and repeated attempts to force conformity with the religious, political, economic, and social views of the dominant culture.[219]

In the nineteenth century, anti-Mormons used cultural power to mis-define what members were and how they should be viewed. They did this by systematically misrepresenting Church doctrine and texts, attempting to shame them, and encouraging those on the cultural fringes of the Church to act as spokespeople or paragons of how a sensible "Mormon" "should" behave.

While the Church and its members became more tolerated as the twentieth century progressed, American society has retained

a significant core of bigotry and bias against them.[220] Conservative Protestants go to great lengths, for example, to deny the Saints' self-understanding as Christians.[221]

Matters have improved from the days in which members of the Church were jailed and disenfranchised because of their beliefs, to say nothing of violence committed against them. But being a member of the Church remains a substantial liability in the American political arena, for example. Warned one researcher, "Aversion to Mormons is still an important force in American public opinion, and if anything it is increasing."[222] Fully 18% of the electorate would not vote for a "Mormon" as president as of 2015.[223] Gay presidential candidates were ruled out by 24% of voters in the same survey. Queer theory is keen to paint itself as defending the weak and marginalized LGBTQ+, but Church members cannot be said on these grounds to have much advantage.

In terms of those who have negative perceptions of them, "Mormons . . . have fallen below evangelical Christians, Muslims, and atheists."[224] David Smith noted in 2014 that although there is hostility against Mormons from both the secular left and religious right, "it is the former that has increased heavily over the last five years."[225]

Queer theory is clearly part of this ideological coalition on the secular left. "If anti-Mormonism is not more widespread than other prejudices," warned Smith, "it is certainly more socially acceptable."[226] As of 2023, "One quarter of Americans hold an unfavorable view of Latter-day Saints,"[227] which is about the same percentage as those who believe same-sex relationships are morally wrong.[228]

Media

We can be glad that the caricature and cruelty previously directed toward homosexuals in media and entertainment is much reduced from what it once was. Many modern media properties are careful to include gay characters and to paint them in a favorable light. (Some would argue that this is even done when it ill-serves the story.)

Similar consideration does not apply, however, to members of the Church. Any religious believer tends to be stereotyped or maligned in modern Hollywood, but the Saints continue to be singled out for even worse treatment.

A Broadway musical that mocks Church members and their beliefs continues to be an enormous hit.[229] In 2025, a Netflix miniseries portrays the Saints as exceedingly violent, blames Brigham Young for the

massacre at Mountain Meadows, resurrects the murderous Danite trope, frames Church members as domestic terrorists, blames them for attempting to exterminate Native Americans, says that the Saints saw violence as a way of spreading their faith, and paints women as powerless victims of a brutal patriarchy.[230]

A 2024 horror movie starring Hugh Grant murdering sister missionaries made over $58 million[231] with an aggregator reporting 91% approval from critics.[232] One sister missionary who suffered a real-life stabbing attack in her apartment wrote, "The more realistic portrayal of these missionaries made the doctrinal and social inaccuracies more nuanced and harder to identify for those unfamiliar with the Church. . . . With no consequence, Hollywood creates a false narrative and presents $52 million worth of moviegoers with a distorted perception while hiding behind 'artistic license' as an explanation."[233] (As we will see below, Petrey is a fan of the movie.)

As Terryl Givens concluded of the twenty-first century media environment, "Beneath the trendy veil of appreciative diversity and difference lurk the familiar nineteenth-century slurs."[234]

Who has the power?

As queer theorists are quick to point out when discussing *sexual* minorities, living as a minority of *any sort* in a host society has unique challenges.[235] One psychologist — highly educated, and a voluntary immigrant to the United States from his native Philippines — asked:

> "Why do I think that anything made in the United States is better than anything made in my motherland of the Philippines?" "Why do I believe that speaking fluent English without a Filipino accent is a marker of intelligence and higher social status?" "Why do I feel ashamed and embarrassed to admit that I am proficient in Tagalog and that I am Filipino?" and "Why do I stay away from the sun and use skin-whitening products to make my skin lighter?"[236]

His answer was "internalized oppression"; that is: "a devaluation or inferiorization of one's self and one's group."[237] The problem does not arise in a vacuum — "oppression occurs when one group has more access to power and privilege than another group, and when that power and privilege is used to maintain the status quo (i.e., domination of one group over another)."[238]

Who has the power in the case of queer theory and the Latter-day

Saints? *Queering* begins with its author detailing how mainstream and broadly disseminated queer studies has become in academia (pp. 3, 13). It certainly sounds like it has power and cachet. His book, after all, has been published by an academic press. His previous book, which misrepresented the historical record egregiously, nevertheless received the Best Book Award from the Mormon History Association.[239] The author has also been the editor of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought,* which gave him yet more power and influence in Mormon Studies. He is framed as an expert by the press.[240] In sum, he can subtly or overtly affect how the academy and the world sees the Church and its members.

Now, a thought experiment — how welcome would someone with *my* views about sex and gender be in *his* gender studies class, *his* academic religion class, or the university department that *he* chairs? What are the chances that I could ever be hired in that environment, and what are the chances that I could keep a job if I did get one, without constantly self-censoring?

After all, the author tells us that my faith — the most important thing in my world, the core of my identity — "is deeply imbued within its contextual values of patriarchy, racism, and heterosexism" (p. 3). What's more, this isn't a problem only in the distant past, but "Mormonism" has an "ongoing, active participation in such a culture" (p. 3). Those don't sound like good things. Who would even want to associate with such a culture?

Don't worry, though — despite all the racism, patriarchy, and so forth, "the tradition is unable to be reduced to and caricatured by this description" (p. 3). Well, thank goodness we won't be stooping to reductive caricature! All "the tradition" needs is a little queering. The theology can then be salvaged from itself.

Who has more influence on how elite opinion sees the Church — the average member in the pew or Petrey? The question answers itself. This would *seem*, at least at first glance, to be a case where oppression is possible, maybe even probable by the lights of Critical Theory. Queer theory teaches us that *all* discourse is fundamentally about power — and that includes books written by a gender studies professor about a religious group for the academy. I *don't* think all discourse is about power, but I'm willing to believe some *do* think this and *do* act accordingly.

Intellectual colonialism

The point is simple — *Queering* is part of an attempt by a dominant elite and evangelizing worldview to colonize the thought and practice of an unpopular minority group.[241] If this kind of thing were happening to a more fashionable minority instead of the Saints, critical and queer theorists would regard it as morally reprehensible. The double standard is striking. Oppression, it seems,

> is "the act of imposing on . . . others . . . a label [such as "racist" or "sexist"], role experience . . . that is unwanted, needlessly painful, and detracts from physical or psychological well-being . . . [such as] . . . degrading job roles, ridicule, and negative media images and messages that foster and maintain distorted beliefs."[242]

One example is "anti-Mormonism":

> In the case of anti-Mormonism . . . non-Mormons hold power and privilege over Mormons (i.e., non-Mormons are more likely to be in positions of power), and that position is used to maintain power and privilege. . . . This justification is often based on the supposed superiority of one group over another. Again, in the case of anti-Mormonism, non-Mormons deny access to resources based on the argument that Mormons are abnormal, deviant, pathological, and are abominations [racist, heterosexist, patriarchal, their leaders wanting homosexuals killed, etc.] — inferiorizing labels and perceptions imposed onto them by the dominant group.[243]

Now, I must immediately 'fess up. The authors didn't quite say this — in fact, instead of "Mormon" and "non-Mormon," they used the terms "nonheterosexual" and "heterosexual," respectively. *Mea culpa*. The argument is otherwise unchanged. I trust that if Petrey had read the paragraph as it originally stood, he would be nodding enthusiastically — no one should be treated that way.

So why doesn't he bother to apply the lesson to a *different* minority group? "The paradigm of oppression . . . can be applied to any group with a common identity and an historical narrative bound up in oppression."[244]

One need not have a recent "forceful entry by a foreign group" to see these dynamics at work. All that is needed is a "society . . . characterized by social inequalities, cultural or worldview imposition of

the dominant group [like queering your theology and misrepresenting your leaders and history], . . . devaluation of oppressed groups' cultures or worldviews, and stereotypical recreation of oppressed groups' identities by the dominant group."[245]

Franz Fanon on colonialism

Franz Fanon was born on the island of Martinique, one of the French Caribbean colonial possessions. He served in the Free French Forces in World War II and later practiced psychiatry in Algeria during the revolts against French colonialism that convulsed that country during the 1950s.

Now, I hardly endorse all of Fanon's views or choices—I don't admire his Communist sympathies (though I think I understand their appeal to him) or aspects of his personal life. He was, however, a keen observer and extraordinarily articulate. His psychiatric case studies from victims on both sides of the Algerian wars are harrowing reading, and they betray a deep sensitivity and humanity.[246] His analysis of colonialism is still a landmark. He described various phases of the colonial experience, and it is worthwhile to see what they might teach us here.[247]

Phase 1: "Forced entry of a foreign group into a territory to exploit its natural resources"

In intellectual terms, this is precisely what *Queering* is attempting. It says as much—the intent is to take "sources" that "are largely the conventional, even canonical ones . . . reinterpreting them from a queer perspective and challenging heteronormative representations within the faith" (p. 6). It will "look at theological questions and texts, not to reify their authority but to *destabilize the interpretative traditions* that have been built up around them" (p. 157, emphasis added).

Amusingly, *Queering* even says that Ostler's work "holds some resources" (p. 32) it can use. These "resources" from "the LDS tradition" (p. 160) are then misappropriated and distorted for its ends.

At best, then, Latter-day Saint thought is a raw material of which the natives are not making proper use. It is necessary that their academic betters intervene. All that bauxite is just *sitting there*.[248]

Petrey's manipulative use of statements by Church leaders is emblematic of this phase. When he disagrees with leaders, he is willing to misrepresent them and works mightily to problematize or queer

their discourse, regardless of the facts. Yet he also pushes a list of quotes from them that support the use of other Bible translations.[249]

If he regards apostolic teachings as authoritative, why does he strain out the gnat of a matter, like which Bible version to read, while swallowing the camel of legitimizing gay sex? It looks rather cynical—he obviously doesn't regard two centuries of unanimous apostolic teaching on chastity as inspired or binding.[250] Then, despite his manifest disdain for and distrust of these leaders, he is willing to exploit his co-religionists' respect for them to push what he wants.

A trusting theological native might assume that anyone quoting leaders as authoritative has friendly intentions. But at base, the Saints' convictions and norms are made just another fulcrum for alien priorities. Fanon describes the typical reactions:

> The native's reactions are not unanimous. While the mass of the people maintain intact traditions which are completely different from those of the colonial situation . . . the intellectual throws himself in frenzied fashion into the frantic acquisition of the culture of the occupying power and takes every opportunity of unfavorably criticizing his own national culture.[251]

What then happens?

> The native intellectual has thrown himself greedily upon Western culture. Like adopted children who only stop investigating the new family framework at the moment when a minimum nucleus of security crystallizes in their psyche, the native intellectual will try to make European culture his own. He will not be content to get to know Rabelais and Diderot, Shakespeare and Edgar Allen Poe; he will bind them to his intelligence as closely as possible.[252]

Trade *Western culture* for *secular queer theory*, *Shakespeare* for *Judith Butler,* and *Diderot* for *Derrida*, and we have a close match (though the queer theorist gets shortchanged compared to the Algerian).

Phase 2: "Recreate the indigenous culture as defined by the colonizer"

"This isn't," we're told, "a matter of making queer theory compatible or reconciled with Latter-day Saint thought. Rather, it is a method or

approach that may be taken to any system, including Latter-day Saint thought" (p. 5).

So, the goal is not to create a harmony, nor is it even to elevate minority voices within the tradition. It allegedly needn't even be the Latter-day Saint tradition that gets this treatment. Any would do. Notwithstanding, the leaders and the canon will be seized, to queer "the gendered assumptions of each of the central characters of the Godhead *from within the tradition*" (p. 6, emphasis added). This will redefine the tradition in queer theory's own image and starts with the most sacred beings and relationships in Restoration theology.

Fanon's model says that "the colonizer imposes its culture, disintegrates the indigenous culture [that sounds a lot like deconstruction, actually], and recreates the indigenous culture *as defined by the colonizer*."[253] As *Queering* states, "this is not a reclamation but a resignification" (p. 3). Quite so — it is not taking *back* something that once belonged to queer theory. It is seizing and fundamentally *altering* the resources to mean something entirely different in order to undermine the original.

Queering will instead create a "Mormon cosmos not as an idealization of either sex or kinship but rather as a desire, a lust, *a fantasy expression* of human relations" (p. 13, emphasis added). The point is to "traverse the Mormon cosmos in ways that often turn it on its head or inside out" (p. 7). Indeed; a Disney-fied native village, a lovely backdrop for the tourists: "Kinship must not be collapsed into the family, the domestic, or the heterosexual" — which is to say the entire meaning it is given in the Saints' actual theology — "but must be disruptive of these concepts" (p. 13).

"The notion of a humanoid god itself is ontologically and philosophically unsustainable without veering into science fiction, yet that does not mean it is not useful to think with," we are told (p. 23). *The benighted savages have charming myths, which might provide an aesthetic for my next operetta — but no thinking man can take them seriously.* There's not even a pause to acknowledge that the Saints might have had some ontological or philosophical thoughts about the matter beyond the realm of *Buck Rogers*.

A Victorian citizen-scientist could not be more condescending than this:

> The approach offered here participates in some respects in what has broadly been called "the ontological turn" in the social sciences and religious studies, which emphasizes

> "taking seriously" the worlds constructed by cultural subjects as theoretical elaborations. (p. 24)

But this *isn't* taking it seriously — *Queering* expressly intends to invert the meaning and undermine these ideas. *We really treasure your culture. How about we make it a logo on a Coca-Cola cup?* It is the syrupy insincerity that cloys the most. I prefer my intellectual imperialism as open flourishments on the gunboats.[254]

> For many, this cosmos is real, and really present. The analysis in the current volume does not take away from this, but it does allow a Mormon cosmos to be accessed and found meaningful by those who may view its metaphysical claims as otherwise nonsensical or irrelevant. (p. 24)

For some, the "Latter-day Saint sloganeering that 'family is forever' does not seem like a description of heavenly bliss" (p. 15). The Saints' deepest doctrines, the pinnacle of their worship, and the sum of their theology is reduced by *Queering* to "sloganeering" to accommodate those who find it either "nonsensical" or "irrelevant." We are patted on the head and assured that this portrayal takes nothing away from us — but I am not so sure.

Phase 3a: "The colonized are portrayed as wild, savage, and uncivilized"

"Colonialism," says one introductory work, "regularly includes the shaming of native people and alienated groups for the putative inferiority of their culture."[255] The barbarians need to be tamed, brought to the light, "the colonizer has to nobly monitor, tame, and civilize. . . . [It] essentially conveys that tyranny and domination, and hence oppression, are necessary."[256]

This attitude litters *Queering*. "The mainstream church . . . held its *hegemony* over the bulk of its membership" (p. 10, emphasis added). "My primary purpose is not an analysis of early Mormon plural marriage practices to get to the 'truth' of the matter — and certainly not to redeem them" (p. 12). That's a fairly candid statement — they won't be dispassionately analyzed, ascertaining the *truth* (which gets postmodern scare quotes) isn't the goal, nor can they hope for the redemption that sympathetic understanding or study might provide. But they *will* be queered.

Even those who might be thought ideological fellow travelers don't escape the need for correction; beware "the lack of intersectional

analysis in earlier Mormon feminist depictions of Heavenly Mother" (p. 62). Fortunately, they have a white, male academic to uplift them with the latest swanky Critical Theory.

A Latter-day Saint "conservative feminist," Valerie M. Hudson Cassler, is chastised because she supposedly "takes for granted men's indispensability, while women's indispensability must be rooted in a function of their bodies" (p. 64). That sounds pretty primitive and backward. It also sounds like a summary that Hudson would not agree accurately reflects her views.[257] But one suspects Petrey is still smarting from the philosophical and theological drubbing she gave him during his last foray into these woods.[258] All discourse is about power.

Unlike Petrey, those who have sought to oppose the Family Proclamation have only thought to emphasize "its noncanonical status or laid out ideological objections to its teachings" (p. 72). So, even those who were supposedly on the right ideological track remained too blinkered to see where the *real* solution lies.

(Postmodernism reminds us that whatever *Queering* offers must be just as much an "ideological objection," but that goes safely unanalyzed.)

"The teaching of 'spirit birth' holds some popular support" (we can practically hear the condescending chuckle as a titter runs round the seminar room), but "the doctrine itself is historically, logically, and ethically dubious" (p. 68).

Those poor Mormons — they don't know their history, they don't do logic, and the popular masses can't think through the ethical implications either. (I do not intend here to defend or debunk the teaching itself, merely to highlight the author's implicit attitude and approach.)

You can almost hear Rudyard Kipling — "half devil, and half child."[259]

Phase 3b: "Improving" the world

No culture is perfect; they all have their injustices and imperfections. In Algeria, Fanon observed how the French colonizers tried to use the "plight" of Algerian women (who tended to be veiled and not seen on their own in public) as both an excuse for their domination and as a tool to extend it:

> Around the family life of the Algerian, the occupier piled up a whole mass of judgments, appraisals, reasons, accumulated anecdotes and edifying examples, thus attempting to confine the Algerian within a circle of guilt. . . . Colonial society blazes up vehemently against this inferior status of

> the Algerian woman. Its members worry and show concern for those unfortunate women, doomed "to produce brats," kept behind walls, banned. . . . The occupier, smarting from his failures, presents in a simplified and pejorative way the system of values by means of which the colonized person resists his innumerable offensives. What is in fact the assertion of a distinct identity, concern with keeping intact a few shreds of national existence, is attributed to religious, magical, fanatical behavior.[260]

Petrey likewise complains about the "traditional" preoccupations of some thinkers within the Church: "It has long been an annoyance of mine that so much intellectual and financial capital was invested in LDS-Evangelical dialogues in earlier decades, where LDS tried to prove they were Christians."[261]

A secularist might well find this difficult to understand — as Petrey does too — but many of these efforts were not and are not motivated by a desire to "prove" something. I know many who participated in those discussions, and they typically doubted that they would convince those who made such claims — but a reply was given to help others who might be listening. The nineteenth century gave us considerable experience with what happens when other religions define us to government and the popular mind. In any case, someone who spends years trying to prove that queer theory has anything worthwhile to say about Restoration scripture has no standing to cast aspersions on another's wasted intellectual capital.

Frankly put, one thing that sincere Christians cannot do is allow the claim that we do not follow Christ to pass unchallenged. We may be terrible Christians — in fact, Christianity is predicated on the idea that we all *are* terrible at it, which is why we need Christ in the first place. But, if someone denies we follow Christ as Lord, Savior, and God — well, we must resist that claim however we can with whatever poor tools we have — even if it annoys Petrey, even if it costs money, and even if we tire of repeating ourselves. If he does not understand this, he has understood nothing, whatever his pretensions.

The author tells us what he would prefer:

> [As a consequence, the Saints] took very seriously debates about faith and works, Christology, biblical authority, etc. These seemed a profound waste of time to me, who sought

> different and more challenging conversation partners to deal with more weighty philosophical questions.[262]

Petrey is welcome to whatever questions please him, with any conversation partners who will have him, but this statement drips with arrogance. How dare those devout Christians defend their views on matters that have interested Christians for the last two millennia! What a waste to spend time and money on questions of eternal significance, if the restored gospel means anything at all.

He is annoyed that some with intellectual gifts spent time on questions that might have worried their less sophisticated brothers and sisters. It falls to the self-anointed wise and enlightened, those who are bored by the preoccupations of the masses, to deal with the "challenging" and "weighty" matters.

"Such approaches [as I sought]," he tells us, "would be less worried about proving the myths, and more invested in making the world better."[263] Let us give him the benefit of the doubt, and assume that the term *myth* is being used in the sense of "founding narrative" or "story which gives metaphysical meaning," and not in the sense of *fiction*—though a similar supposedly revealing "slip" would be seized on by a queer theorist to launch the deconstruction. We can see plainly, though, the same sort of claims that Fanon highlighted with the colonizer's preoccupation with Algerian women—the way the natives are doing it doesn't help the world. If anything, it makes it worse. The intellectuals (as representatives of the superior culture) must save the day, as Petrey tells us:

> Some of the LDS intellectual class have begun to take more seriously secularism not as an enemy but as a real conversation partner, and begun a post-secular Mormonism. Such a conversation must join in the examination of power. . . . Perhaps such a venture is also a dead end, but at least it might have something to say to the anti-temple of secular religion other than violence. Otherwise, we are all lost.[264]

This really is extraordinary—post-secular Mormonism (whatever that might be besides trendy buzz words) is potentially the only possible response "other than violence." Without it, "we are all lost."

This borders on the delusional. Queer theory is not going to save the world or the Church, if that's what "we" means. I wager more good is done for the world in one month by an average ward (notwithstanding

its members' sins and foibles) than queer theory has done in its entire existence.

One assumes Petrey thinks queer theory is an important part of this undertaking. Otherwise, it would be criminal to waste time with it. But to expect us to believe that queer theory can be anything but a tool for secular colonialism and religious parasitism is blind faith at best.

This is the same type of messianic conviction one sees with other intellectual salvational schemes — from the Jacobins to the colonial apologists to the Marxists. We're assured this is about "the examination of power," but it is surely also about the *exercise* of power in its own right. Imagine reposing confidence or power in someone who in the same breath is so manifestly and arrogantly devoid of empathy for those not in his clique.

If we *are* truly otherwise all lost (in whatever senses), then doesn't it become very tempting to do whatever it takes to make sure the worst doesn't happen? In the various Marxist iterations, for example, the ostensible goal of a fair and better world justified the slaughter of millions. Even if this is seen only in academic or intellectual terms — why shouldn't I shade the data? Why shouldn't I misrepresent the facts? Why shouldn't I shout down those who disagree? Why shouldn't I exercise whatever power I accrue to assure my own ascension? The stakes are simply too high to tolerate "the LDS intellectual class" losing. Such considerations could explain much of what so mars Petrey's work.

What luck that the colonists will get wealth, land, and dominion while *also* being the only ones to do the right thing and spread civilization. It is very convenient. If Petrey took his philosophical postmodernism sincerely and consistently, he could avoid such foolishness.

Phase 4: Institutional capture and assimilation

By now, some may be thinking, "Surely none of this can apply because *Queering*'s author is a member of the Church." Such a reaction is superficially appealing, but it ignores a great deal of what we know about colonialism and its fourth phase. Fanon sees it as the culmination of the first three — "the establishment of a society where the political, social, and economic institutions are designed to benefit and maintain the superiority of the colonizer while simultaneously subjugating the colonized." An important part of this is "institutions . . . that

reward those who assimilate into the colonizers' ways, while punishing those who do not."[265]

For example, studies of Asian-Americans found that "when [they] were not recognized as being 'American' and were seen as 'foreigners,' they were more likely . . . [to] attempt to prove that [they] belong[ed] to the dominant in-group . . . by demonstrating culture knowledge and practices of that group."[266]

Due to intense psychological and social pressure, the "colonized might develop a desire to rid [themselves] of such identities and to emulate the colonizer because their ways are seen as superior. Further, the colonized may eventually feel a sense of gratitude and indebtedness toward the colonizer for civilizing and enlightening the colonized."[267]

There is, I think, something of a tragic sense of this in the sole section of *Queering* that struck me as disarmingly, unexpectedly candid:

> I concede that I too am haunted by polygamy, not only because it was a part of my own family lineage but because my own hard-fought respectability has come at the expense of a disavowal of polygamy at an individual and a corporate level. Latter-day Saints were able to enter into the mainstream of American politics, education, business, and culture by embracing a respectability politics of conventional sexual and kinship practices. My subjectivity as an integrated, assimilated Mormon who has benefited from elite institutions has depended on my own normalization into conventional American sexualities. And I am just one example of the largely successful Mormon assimilation project that has hinged on a disavowal of patriarchal polygamy . . . such a disavowal is the condition for contemporary Mormon assimilation, and the fear of its undoing remains palpable. (p. 154)

We see all the hallmarks to which Fanon points — the almost pathetic gratitude for acceptance, the sense that all of this is potentially tenuous, the need to *personally* disavow polygamy to keep his "own hard-fought respectability," and the sincere conviction that he really is better off and more enlightened because of what the colonizer has offered. (Irony remains abundant — Petrey recognizes the nineteenth-century oppression, likely because he was at risk from its

legacy. He is blind to the twenty-first century colonial oppression that he is part of, perhaps because he stands to benefit from it.)

"One of the most destructive and insidious consequences of colonialism," writes one, "happens when the colonized begin to think, feel, and act like the colonizers, particularly as it relates to the stereotypes and prejudices of themselves and their own people."[268] One can certainly see that spirit in Petrey's caricature of Latter-day Saint intellectual life before the glorious advent of "post-secular Mormonism."

Personally, I am not nearly so convinced of the success of "the largely successful Mormon assimilation project." I am grateful that I do not have the risks that my ancestors did — but I do not regard my family's continued economic or political safety and acceptance as a done deal, polygamy or no.

As illustrated previously, the elite academic and media worlds largely continue in an implacable hostility and often outright bigotry, while our doctrine on sex and gender increasingly threatens any place we might have had in "the mainstream." Queer theory is at the forefront of these efforts to marginalize us. The fact is, we are at risk for precisely the same reason as we were with plural marriage — we refuse to accede to the dominant society's stance on sex and marriage, even if the political meaning of that refusal has changed.[269]

I know professionals in the academy, social work, psychology, and medicine who keep their heads down in training, lest they run afoul of similar moral crusaders who could threaten their licensure or tenure. Medical trainees are blackballed — and told so in writing — because of their faith's social views. That's the sort of thing elites only do when they are implacably convinced of both their own rectitude and their own overwhelming power.

Church members who dared to flout elite opinion on gay marriage in California often suffered substantial personal and economic harm. Their ongoing right to "express their beliefs" was explicitly challenged by a government official, who made barely veiled threats.[270]

In short, if Petrey is convinced of the success of Latter-day Saint assimilation, that is likely only because *he* has assimilated and no aspects of his personal beliefs are seriously at odds with the dominant culture in which he swims. He is, as he says, an "integrated, assimilated Mormon" — and evidently working to colonize the rest.

His assurance is typical of the reactions of many to colonialism — those who hope to assimilate typically feel pressure to actively deny the on-going racism or prejudice that their group experiences.[271]

It is also typical for some of the colonized to turn on their fellows:

> Oppressed group members may begin to discriminate against one another and choose to emulate and identify with oppressors. . . . The oppressor becomes the model of acceptable humanity. To effectively emulate the oppressor, the oppressed must devalue his or her own group membership.[272]

Native American authors believe that it matters a great deal

> whether or not our own people, our story tellers, content creators, professors, lawyers, doctors, scholars, engineers, scientists, teachers . . . and so on maliciously laugh at, make fun of, criticize, speak ill of, or degrade even for the slightest moment in their own mental process, any spiritual practice, or expressive natures of our own . . . practices.[273]

Those who opt for assimilation and denigration of their past identity are valuable to the colonizer: "The oppressors would always 'hold-up' and point to the few Natives who were supportive" of what the rest saw as racist imagery.[274]

Petrey provides a sterling example of the same phenomenon. When *Heretic*—the Hugh Grant movie featuring the torment and murder of sister missionaries—came out, his reaction was striking:

> As a scholar of religion and a Latter-day Saint, I consider that this is perhaps the greatest LDS story ever told and a crucial commentary . . . I'll get straight to the point. Only an endowed Latter-day Saint can understand this film fully. It is written for them and many missed it.[275]

We first note the gushing, over-the-top praise. Even if we grant that the film is a genuine work of art (which may be stretching even Latter-day Saint generosity too far) this seems a bit much—"the *greatest* LDS story *ever* told?" "Crucial?" *Please*. At least Fanon's colonized intellectual could embrace Shakespeare. This isn't a considered, measured judgment; this is a full-throated rendition of "Rule, Britannia."

We see, too, the frantic waving of credentials: Latter-day Saint, scholar of religion, temple initiate—*I should be taken seriously here, I am uniquely qualified to hold forth*. Who would dare challenge such an intersectional flush of identities?[276]

Petrey goes on to explain that *Heretic* is a somewhat coded reenactment of the temple endowment:

> The entire film is an inversion of the LDS endowment ceremony. The home is the anti-temple: the movement from room to room; specific words and phrases; the instructions at the doors; the visual aids; the altar. The location of the cuts the two sister missionaries receive. . . .
>
> If you don't know the temple symbolism, you cannot fully understand the film's message. Yes, it is a secular critique of religion (sometimes quite powerful and sometimes quite silly). But it does so from a place so deeply embedded in Mormonism that it is not just a superficial trotting out of embarrassing facts or logical problems, but one that turns its symbolic universe upside down. Painfully so.[277]

The film is, it would seem, yet another form of queering. It helps to invoke the temple, which he knows no believing member is going to debate in public (p. 74). The non-member audience will be inclined to think this is great — *how could* his *claims be unfair to Mormons? He* does *know about the temple* — and no member will gainsay him. He is the ultimate outsider-insider, with neither group inclined or positioned to challenge him.

As always in these cases, it is the dominant group who are the good guys. Petrey reproves Church members for not appreciating what the gracious outsiders offer them: "It's written for *them* and many missed it." How ungrateful and shortsighted of us! The Hollywood horror-film writers tried to reach across the aisle and enlighten us, and we were too ill-informed or blind to plunk down our money at the Odeon. Even if we grant the film enough sophistication to do what Petrey claims, it is telling that he thinks we should respond positively to the twisted recapitulation of our most sacred rites ("painfully so") in a horror movie that is, at times, a "quite powerful" secular critique of religion.

In fact, repurposing sacred rites for a horror film would be an excellent — if overwrought — symbolic take on colonialism in general. A fiction that used it would probably be seen as inadequately subtle, but it is all real in this case.[278] Note that my point is not the movie's merits or lack thereof. Instead, what's revealing is the stereotypical tactics and reaction.

There remains a faint undercurrent of fear in Petrey's *pro forma* disavowals of polygamy, the over-the-top enthusiasm for a horror movie, all the calling-out of racism and patriarchy, and the zealous queering of the tradition. That fear is, I warrant, fully justified.[279] After all, how long would Petrey last in academic queer theory and gender studies if he

was even mistakenly thought guilty of *Wrongthink*? There might even be a tendency to overcompensate to avoid risking that "hard-fought respectability."[280] These departments and worldviews are not bastions of irenic tolerance, whatever they may claim.

Furthermore, his employer (Kalamazoo College) receives a great deal of funding from The Arcus Foundation — $66 million as of 2018.[281] The Foundation's CEO and founder is gay billionaire Jon Stryker.[282] Arcus has not hesitated to use funding to target attitudes in conservative religious groups:

> The Arcus Foundation dispenses millions of dollars in grants every year to support LGBT activism. Its 2014 grants included $120,000 to the Religion Newswriters Foundation, the owner of the widely syndicated Religion News Service.
>
> The Arcus Foundation's grant listing said the one year of support was intended "to recruit and equip LGBT supportive leaders and advocates to counter rejection and antagonism within traditionally conservative Christian churches."[283]

Massive amounts of money from ideological allies of queer theory are thus poured in. One need not receive any money directly to be affected. Are we to believe that this has no influence on university pressures and policies? No impact on chances for professional advancement? Do the risks of power that Petrey is so keen to highlight and interrogate in others somehow vanish when he is involved? Would not *conservative* billionaires leveraging their money for power attract his ire?[284] Why hasn't he gone on the offensive to deconstruct a mega-rich donor's largely unaccountable concentration of power on his home turf? Admittedly, that would be dangerous to perceived power.

Postmodernism is right when it reminds us that none of us are without biases and blind-spots — and what could be more tyrannical than to be professionally at risk on these terms? I'm certainly *not* saying that Petrey is insincere or mercenary in what he says or does, but one would hope there would be more self-awareness of the power imbalance and risks. Fanon's colonized native intellectuals were also totally sincere and still useful tools of oppression.

Queering seems like a textbook case of "intraethnic othering" — a process

> whereby an individual singles out and discriminates against other individuals of the same . . . group who are less

> assimilated to American [i.e., academic, secular, left, queer] culture . . . [to] create distance from the stigma created by Asian [Mormon] stereotypes of inferiority as well as a way to gain acceptance from White [dominant] acquaintances.[285]

In the postmodern colonialist view, problematic heteronormative Mormon theology can be transformed through the magic of deconstruction and some historical legerdemain into a social and professional asset instead of a grave liability. As a bonus, he who helps pay the bills will not be displeased.

At this remove, the colonizing pattern fits remarkably well. Whether it matches reality, only the author could tell us. And the postmodernisms would caution that even he may not know.

A safe sort of bravery

Queer theory flatters itself that it is edgy and daring, subverting oppressive structures, and cutting the oppressor down to size.[286] As Martha Nussbaum warned more than a quarter century ago:

> You will quickly find that subversion takes many forms, not all of them congenial to [Critical Theory]. As a perceptive libertarian student said to me, Why can't I use these ideas to resist the tax structure, or the antidiscrimination laws, or perhaps even to join the militias? Others, less fond of liberty, might engage in the subversive performances of making fun of feminist remarks in class, or ripping down the posters of the lesbian and gay law students' association. These things happen. They are parodic and subversive. Why, then, aren't they daring and good?[287]

Would it be legitimate to queer the Talmud in support of National Socialism? Why not turn Bantu mythology into a call for imperialism? Couldn't we put Amish literature on its head to support a jingoistic militarism? Couldn't we take Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" and rework its cosmos in defense of Jim Crow, apartheid, and the Ku Klux Klan? Couldn't the writings of suffragettes help repeal the Nineteenth Amendment?

Any of these would be far more daring and transgressive than anything *Queering* does, and certainly the voices of fascists, imperialists, white supremacists, or those who oppose women's voting are marginalized in the academy and society far more than homosexuals or the genderqueer. But how would that "hard-fought respectability" fare?

Doubtless all these *could* be done. But would we regard those who did so as admirable or insightful? Or even possessed of a modicum of good taste or scholastic ability? It requires no particular gifts besides shamelessness and a sort of low cunning. We can imagine the results before they are done, and they will probably be more tedious than we imagine. Such an undertaking would be at best a vapid academic — I cannot bring myself to say *intellectual* — game, played for a small self-congratulatory coterie of one's peers.

It is risible to think any of this, or *Queering*'s parallel tactics, could somehow make the world a better place.

Avoiding intellectual colonialism

How, then, can we disagree without historical misrepresentation and manipulative intellectual colonization? I think the foundation is honesty.[288] I personally have no problem if the Church's history, leaders, scriptures, or doctrines are critiqued or analyzed. It doesn't even particularly trouble me if someone's verdict is negative. I could not care less if someone is enamored of queer theory, astrology, geocentrism, or even phlogiston.

What I have a problem with is the evident conviction that the author can distort the record and trust that either no one will check or no one who matters will care. I am weary of the severe misrepresentation, significant falsehoods, sloppy work, sophistry, banal logical lapses, special pleading, and double standards. More bluntly — *don't lie to me or about me.*

As one author noted perceptively (in terms that resonate with Doctrine and Covenants 93:30–32):

> Immanuel Kant . . . gives us one quite stringent rule: 'It is always wrong to lie under any circumstances.' . . .
>
> Because when you lie to somebody, you are robbing them of all of the information they need to make autonomous decisions. And if you rob somebody of their autonomy, you're not only doing them a disservice, but you're also reducing their humanity. Because for Kant, a human is defined by our ability to choose. We are defined by freedom.
>
> But when you lie to somebody, you are treating them as a puppet, dancing to your plans and not their own. . . . For Kant, we should never infantilise [sic] people. We should never lie to them. We should treat them with the dignity that their human autonomy deserves.[289]

Religious matters can reflect "deep differences"—worldviews that cannot be reconciled, where neither party is likely to convince the other. Philosopher David Hancock asked:

> Under what circumstances if any is it reasonable for someone engaged in an argumentative exchange . . . to decide that the two of them have a deep disagreement . . . [and] to abandon the use of argument and resort to non-argumentative means of persuasion—means that do not involve an appeal to reasons—in an effort to get the other person to adopt their position on the issue? . . . To put the question another way, is it legitimate (morally, epistemically, politically) in discussion with someone who approaches a question from within a different form of life to abandon appeal to reasons altogether and, instead, seek to persuade them exclusively by means that do not appeal to reason?[290]

This is precisely the situation in which queer studies finds itself vis-à-vis the Church of Jesus Christ. Our views are incommensurable, the exertions of a few to pretend otherwise notwithstanding.[291] *Queering,* at its base, is an attempt to alter how either members or non-members of the Church see its scripture, leaders, and doctrine.

Queering does not do this via a reasoned appeal to evidence, and it misrepresents such evidence as it uses to a degree that can only be called calculated and willful. It is an attempt at unreasoning manipulation. It is propaganda.

Hancock answered his own question of whether such tactics are ever proper:

> My answer is: No, this is intellectual colonialism, which should be condemned in the same way and for the same reasons as forcible colonial domination of indigenous populations. Persuasion without the use of reasons colonizes the interlocutor's mind, displacing strongly held commitments without the "free, informed and prior consent" of the sort required for legislative and administrative measures that may affect indigenous peoples.
>
> Someone who approaches an issue from within a different form of life should be respected in interpersonal discussion by being given reasons rather than being manipulated, and by being listened to when they give their reasons.[292]

Clearly, Latter-day Saint thinkers are not "listened to" by *Queering*

and *Tabernacles*. The views of those such as Blake Ostler, Valerie Hudson Cassler, Erastus Snow, and Spencer W. Kimball are instead warped via a parody of scholarly practice to further the manipulation. That effort ends either in these Saints' further marginalization, or the assimilation of their community's beliefs into the worldview of the postmodern secular academic left.

Mormon Studies

All of this points to a broader malaise at the heart of too much of Mormon Studies.[293] Most fields of study would at least have the moral courage to defend their subject from misrepresentation or patently unjust historical treatment. They might even see that as their mandate.

If, for political reasons, an anthropologist misrepresented another culture's view of divine things by describing them in terms suggestive of homosexual parent-child incest — a violation of one of the most universal human taboos — he or she would likely never recover professionally. But when this procedure is applied to "Mormons," you get tenure and book awards.

Thus, for Mormon Studies, the tactics employed in Petrey's books demonstrate that the community does not police itself well — members of the guild evidently have few fears that historic or philosophic malpractice will be called out, much less that they will thereby suffer any adverse career consequences. (It is hard to imagine what whoppers won't be tolerated in the proper ideological context if *Tabernacles* is getting awards for *history*.[294])

Accountability to non-complicit peer review — which used to be the definitive control on all scholarly activity, and the best solution we've ever found for the biases that postmodernity highlights — is sorely lacking. At the same time, there seems to be a great deal of informal policing for "proper" opinions and social attitudes. These factors get you exactly what you'd expect, and exactly what you don't want in genuine thought — ideological conformity based on fear and a tolerance or encouragement of shoddy work if it conforms ideologically.

Petrey notes, somewhat condescendingly:

> Here is a secret for outsiders: the humanist ex-Mormon vs fundamentalist apologist Mormon dynamic that attracts so much online attention and massive amounts of money is a side show in the actual practice of Mormon studies scholarship. Almost everyone is friendly to one another.[295]

Cordiality is a virtue, to be sure. Differences about ideas should not become personality clashes.[296] But, in the spirit of a postmodern interrogation of this text — is it not just possible that everyone "is friendly" to each other in part because no one dares or bothers to correct even the most egregious errors? Could it not be that the editor of *Dialogue* has some implied (or explicit, if he has used it before) power over those who might otherwise differ with his nonsense? And why the note of resentment that creeps in over the alleged "massive amounts of money" that "fundamentalist apologist[s]" somehow attract?

More discourse, more power plays.

The cluster of perverse incentives that thus infects the field has led to a proliferation of a certain unfortunate subspecies of Mormon Studies scholar whose work is both predictable and pedestrian despite the assurances of fellow scholars.[297] These scholars settle for dull thrills when it is their turn to *epater les bourgeois*, procuring an ink-stained fifteen minutes of fame when the *Salt Lake Tribune* anoints them as the expert *du jour* on anything remotely connected to the Church. Such scholars enjoy self-satisfying bursts of moral grandstanding on social media and, if they are lucky, a sinecure at a third-rate college.

Sycophantic, over-the-top reviews (which the scholars will be expected to reciprocate) round out the deal. Petrey provides specimens of exactly what is wanted:

- "So grateful for the first review by theologian Bea-Ryan Ward . . . 'Fundamentally transformative potential.' 'Had me awestruck and grinning.' 'Patient and generous.' What dream reviews are of made of."[298] (Highlighted screenshots are available in case any should doubt the praise.)
- "So grateful for this in depth interview with the great Caroline Kline . . . she says 'It will be one of the most important books in Mormon studies.'"[299]
- "Very honored by this thoughtful and sanguine review of my [book] by the amazing scholar John Turner. Worth reading the whole thing."[300]

There is no sign, incidentally, that *these* texts are to be deconstructed so that what sounds like fulsome praise is really condemnation.

As with *Heretic*, we see again the gushing superlatives at every opportunity: "*very* honored," "*amazing* scholar," "*so* grateful," "the *great* Caroline Kline," "one of the *most important* books in Mormon studies,"

"fundamentally transformative potential," "awestruck." Everyone is declared stellar, and everything they produce is greeted as the most brilliant or pathbreaking work yet — even the book reviews. The field goes from strength to strength, apparently.

Yet there's an insecure, forced, fixed-grin quality to all this back-slapping bonhomie and mutual admiration — it doesn't sound healthy or candid. Someone even has to chime in on Petrey's take on *Heretic*: "This is a *very smart* take. Thanks Taylor."[301] If only it were sometimes said, "This is a *really bad* take. Do better Taylor." But perhaps it is too much to assume that one academic can see how another uses or, more properly, misuses sources. It *is* much easier to go along with the in-crowd and give shallow kudos and cheap praise.

Given what we have seen of the book, is it not possible that this praise is a tad excessive? And should such a deceptive and manipulative attempt at intellectual colonization be lauded? Do the enthusiastic reviewers know the facts and do not care? Or are they too ignorant to know?

Maybe the dog can't really play basketball after all.

Conclusion

In the end, the surprise is not that some will give over honesty, rigor, and fairness for assimilation, self-preservation, or power — if queer theory is to be believed, that is all there is, in the end. But it is astonishing what trivial gains are accounted worth that price and how many play along via silence. At least Richard Rich got Wales and a shiny chain of office.[302]

Petrey can, of course, continue to write and say and do whatever he likes, and doubtless will. Others can continue to gush and fawn at whatever they please, and doubtless will. I would not have it otherwise. I just hope the latter are doing so out of honesty and genuine conviction. Is it too much to ask that our history and texts not be misrepresented, and that our leaders be quoted and characterized accurately? *Queering* and its predecessor volume fail this minimum standard in ways that are both indisputable and inexcusable.

There *are* some in Mormon Studies — safe from the legitimate fears that others have of speaking up — that could disincentivize such behavior, had they the will. The American Historical Association even says it's their duty.[303]

In any case, we neither asked for, nor want, the strip mining of our

theology for the queer-industrial complex. You can put down your "White Man's Burden."

We've seen this movie before. We already have enough installments of *Air Bud*.

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Notes

1. Taylor G. Petrey, *Queering Kinship in the Mormon Cosmos* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2024).
2. Taylor G. Petrey, *Tabernacles of Clay: Sexuality and Gender in Modern Mormonism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).
3. Gregory L. Smith, "Feet of Clay: Queer Theory and the Church of Jesus Christ," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 43 (2021): 107–278, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/feet-of-clay-queer-theory-and-the-church-of-jesus-christ/.
4. *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "queer, (adj.[1], sense 3.a)," doi.org/10.1093/OED/1749304289.
5. *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "queer, (adj.[1], sense 3.b,)," doi.org/10.1093/OED/1749304289. See discussion in Lorenzo Bernini, *Queer Theories: An Introduction, From Mario Mieli to the Antisocial Turn*, trans. Michela Baldo and Elena Basile (New York: Routledge, 2021), 100–11.
6. "Both feminist and queer theories…exist in the plural, and constitute a vast field of political and academic debate, which only by way of extreme distortions can be compressed into a unitary ideology." Bernini, *Queer Theories*, 98.
7. For discussion of Petrey's use of queer theory in *Queering*'s sister volume, *Tabernacles of Clay*, see Smith, "Feet of Clay," 109–10.
8. "Sex" in the sense of reproductive identity as male and female dates to at least the 1380s. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "sex, (n.[1])," doi.org/10.1093/OED/6273469846. "Gender" was used in this way by 1474, *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "gender, (n., sense 3.a)," doi.org/10.1093/OED/7839815540.

9. *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "gender, (n., sense 3.a)." One sees this euphemistic dynamic at work in the Church's reiteration of its core doctrines in "The Family: A Proclamation to the World." Released in 1995 by the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Proclamation states that "All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. . . . Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose," churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world.

   Gender as *biological sex*—male and female—is the clear meaning in context. President Dallin H. Oaks confirmed that "the intended meaning of gender in the family proclamation and as used in Church statements and publications since that time is biological sex at birth." "General Conference Leadership Meetings Begin," Church Newsroom, 2 October 2019, newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/october-2019-general-conference-first-presidency-leadership-session.

   Various translations of the Proclamation make this tension apparent. For example, the Brazilian Portuguese translation uses *sex*: "O **sexo** (masculino ou feminino) é uma característica essencial da identidade" churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world?lang=por, emphasis added, while European Portuguese uses a cognate of gender: "O **género** é uma característica essencial da identidade," churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world?lang=ept, emphasis added.

   The decision by late twentieth-century apostles to reach for the more euphemistic *gender* can be contrasted with James E. Talmage's treatment of these ideas in 1922: "We affirm as reasonable, scriptural, and true, the *eternity of sex* among the children of God. The distinction between male and female is no condition peculiar to the relatively brief period of mortal life." "The Eternity of Sex," *Millennial Star* 84, no. 34 (24 August 1922): 539, emphasis added, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/bc02d406-b283-411c-926e-3f0f9d55ba09/0/0. The Proclamation's audience would probably hear talk of an "eternity of sex" in a more prurient sense than Talmage's audience.

10. Hannah McCann and Whitney Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now: From Foundations to Futures* (London: Red Globe Press, 2020), 55–60, 120–21; Selina Todd, "Sex and Gender in Second-Wave Feminism," in *Sex and Gender: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Alice Sullivan and Selina Todd (New York: Routledge, 2024), 86–103.

11. Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society* (Aldershot, UK: Gower, 1985), 18–48.

12. Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society*, 158–88. *Gender identity* was first used in the 1960s to describe internal subjective experience—"an individual's personal sense of being or belonging to a particular gender or genders, or of not having a gender." *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "gender identity, (n.)," doi.org/10.1093/OED/6273469846.

13. See, for example, Judith Butler who "does not ask us to consider gender as

cultural versus sex as biological/natural." Instead, sex "is just 'as culturally constructed as gender' . . . gender is the discursive and cultural means by which sex is produced," and "not . . . an . . . essence to gender identity. . . . Gender does not refer to a singular, coherent or stable identity category." Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), as quoted in McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now,* 123–25. Furthermore, "For Butler this means challenging the very notion of an original 'sex' underlying gender," 127.

14. Proponents of Critical Theory seem to almost revel in deliberate obscurity, jargon, and a pretentious language and style. It can be difficult to find a concise account of what is actually being claimed. Readers who want an accessible introduction in plain language (albeit one that is philosophically opposed to Critical Theory) should see Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay, *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity—and Why This Harms Everybody* (Durham, NC: Pitchstone, 2020). A relatively accessible account by proponents is McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now.*

15. "Queer theory first entered the academy during the so-called 'postmodern turn,' a period marked by an emphasis on language, deconstruction, difference, fragmentation, multiple truths, discourse and rethinking old grand narratives and ideas of how power is structured." David Walton, *Doing Cultural Theory* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2012), 186–87, as quoted in McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*, 7–8.

16. Bernini, *Queer Theories*, 32–34, 48; Riki Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer* (Los Angeles: Altson, 2004), 63, archive.org/details/queertheorygende0000wilc.

17. Postmodernism "sometimes appears circular and without a point, since it is not making its own claims about what really is but rather providing tools for dismantling other people's claims about what really is. . . . The frustration many people experience when confronting postmodernism . . . is not a sign of failure; it's the point of the exercise." Wilchins, *Queer Theory*, 98. "Without an objective view of the world, without an idea of what is true, how can we be sure if we are thinking and acting rightly? . . . The answer is not relativism but pluralism—making room for others." Wilchins, *Queer Theory*, 102.

    This requires us to decide "Which others?" Presumably sexists, Nazis, pedophiles, and the Westboro Baptists are not wanted—so some idea or standard of justice is going to be smuggled in the back door in any case, whether the postmodernists want to admit it or not. If that claim troubles them, they are invited to simply make room for my addition as one of many pluralistic points of view on the matter.

18. "Meaning is never considered single, authentic, pure, closed and homogeneous—and guaranteed by the author's authority and originality; instead it is plural, hybrid, shifting, open and heterogeneous—and thus inviting collaboration with the reader . . . again, both inward-looking and outward-looking." Linda Hutcheon, "Postmodernism," in *The Routledge Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory,* ed. Simon Malpas and Paul Wake, 2nd ed. (New York:

Routledge, 2013), learning.oreilly.com/library/view/the-routledge-companion/9780415668293/020_9781134123346_chapter11.html.

19. "Whereas I had once agreed . . . on the need to control interpretation lest it overwhelm and obscure texts, facts, authors, and intentions, I now believe that interpretation is the source of texts, facts, authors, and intentions." Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text In this Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 16. Fish further writes, "Interpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing. Interpreters do not decode poems; they make them," 327. See also Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, e-book (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 131–32; J. Goldingay, "Hermeneutics," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 398–400.
20. Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 86; cited also in John R. Searle's review of *On Deconstruction*, "The Word Turned Upside Down," *The New York Review of Books* (27 October 1983), nybooks.com/articles/1983/10/27/the-word-turned-upside-down/.
21. Jack Reynolds, "Jacques Derrida," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, iep.utm.edu/jacques-derrida/#H3. See also Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 45–46.
22. Searle, "Word Turned."
23. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 34. See further discussion at 50–52.
24. There is yet more irony here, since even prominent queer theorists have been criticized by others for creating their own set of dualities: "David Ruffolo's book *Postqueer Politics* . . . critiques queer theory for valorising a dualism between queer and heteronormativity." McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*, 17. Unfortunately for such theorists and their worries about logocentrism, thinking via dualities is probably inescapable—it is a human cultural universal, as is the concept of the male/female binary and the belief that men and women are "naturally different." Logic compatible with the western, Aristotelian tradition is also omnipresent in human culture. Derrida notwithstanding, these are not habits unique to the west. Even "*thinking with dualities* versus *thinking without dualities"* is a duality; see Christoph Antweiler, "Universals: Examples from Several Realms," in *Our Common Denominator: Human Universals Revisited* (Berghahn Books, 2016), 129–32, 151.
25. Culler, *On Deconstruction*, as quoted in Searle, "Word Turned."
26. Taylor Petrey (@TaylorPetrey), post on X.com, 30 June 2024, x.com/TaylorPetrey/status/1807518208880263533.
27. Annamarie Jagose, "Feminism's Queer Theory," *Feminism & Psychology* 19, no. 2 (2009), as quoted in McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*, 17.
28. Whitney Monaghan, *Queer Girls, Temporality and Screen Media: Not 'Just a Phase'* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), as quoted in McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*, 1.

29. Donald E. Hall, "Gender and Queer Theory," in *Routledge Companion to Critical and Cultural Theory*, learning.oreilly.com/library/view/the-routledge-companion/9780415668293/019_9781134123346_chapter10.html.

30. "We can describe queer theories as critical political philosophies that deploy the perspectives of sexual minorities and denounce as arbitrary, illegal, and intolerable the very regime that produces them as minoritarian in the first place." Bernini, *Queer Theories*, 48.

31. Petrey, *Tabernacles of Clay*, 10, and Smith, "Feet of Clay," 108–9. Such a claim is indefensible from the standpoint of human biology. For a scientifically succinct but devastating rebuttal of this ideological stance, see Emma Hilton and Colin Wright, "Two Sexes," in *Sex and Gender: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Alice Sullivan and Selina Todd (New York: Routledge, 2024), 16–34. Ann Oakley, a sociologist who in 1972 was among the first to distinguish gender and sex (see notes 11 and 12 herein) wrote in 2024 that "societies invent gender, but sex is an immutable biological fact," frontispiece of *Sex and Gender: A Contemporary Reader*.

32. "A core tenet of [Judith] Butler's work is the suggestion that if identity categories are not innate, if they are always in the process of formation, then they can be refused, resisted and subverted." McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now,* 129. See also Bernini, *Queer Theories*, 114–22.

    One of the many ironies of queer theory is that at times it asks us to reify *gender identity* (one's psychological self-sense as man, woman, or otherwise) and treat it as an indisputable truth that cannot be gainsaid. Yet, this subjective interior sense of gender is far less concrete and verifiable than the iron realities of biological sex. Queer theory joins the postmodernisms in telling us that notwithstanding any evidence we might offer, all claims to knowledge are subjective and ruled by bias, and thus not to be trusted as a route to truth. In the next breath, we are then urged to accept the reality and truth of gender identity–something that is nothing *but* subjective, and not amenable to any proof or testing whatever. Given such inconsistency, it is not surprising that postmodernism wishes to undercut the West's devotion to logic via its critique of "logocentrism."

33. McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*, 11.

34. Hall, "Gender and Queer Theory."

35. McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*, 7, figure 1.1.

36. McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*, 9, emphasis added.

37. This economical and exquisitely descriptive term is discussed in detail in Stephen O. Smoot, "Air Bud Doctrine: How Ambiguity Becomes Strategy—and Undermines Faith," *Public Square Magazine,* 12 May 2025, publicsquaremag.org/faith/gospel-fare/doctrinal-ambiguity-loophole. Part II of the article is "Air Bud Theology Meets Queer Theory: Loopholes in Latter-day Saint Doctrine," 14 May 2025, publicsquaremag.org/faith/gospel-fare/doctrinal-ambiguity-vs-queer-theory-revisionism.

38. *Air Bud*, Walt Disney Pictures, 1997. A clip of the relevant scene is available at youtube.com/watch?v=Jvf0WWxrYRM.

39. Hugh Nibley, *The World and the Prophets*, 3rd ed., ed. John W. Welch, Gary P. Gillum, and Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS],1987), especially 26–43, 71–97, 268–83, archive.org/details/worldprophets0000nibl. In a phrase worthy of the present case, Nibley wrote that "disdain for evidence and passion for method guaranteed that the philosophers never got anywhere" (p. 42).
40. For multiple examples, see "Quote Mining: Jerald and Sandra Tanner," *FAIR Answers Wiki*, fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Quote_mining/Jerald_and_Sandra_Tanner.
41. Petrey, *Tabernacles of Clay*, 71.
42. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), 78–79, emphasis added.
43. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 46; see Exodus 31:14, 15, which required the death penalty for breaking the Sabbath.
44. For more details on the misrepresentation of Kimball and his administration, see Smith, "Feet of Clay," 192–250.
45. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 79, emphasis added.
46. The American Historical Association (AHA) is blunt regarding such behavior:

    > By practicing their craft with integrity, historians acquire a reputation for trustworthiness that is arguably their single most precious professional asset. The trust and respect both of one's peers and of the public at large are among the greatest and most hard-won achievements that any historian can attain. It is foolish indeed to put them at risk. . . . Historians pride themselves on the accuracy with which they use and document sources. The sloppier their apparatus, the harder it is for other historians to trust their work. . . . They should oppose false or erroneous use of evidence, along with any efforts to ignore or conceal such false or erroneous use.

    "Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct," 7 January 2023, 2, historians.org/resource/statement-on-standards-of-professional-conduct.
47. "All historians believe in honoring the **integrity of the historical record**. They do not fabricate evidence. . . . Those who invent, *alter*, ignore, remove, or destroy evidence of any kind make it difficult for any serious historian ever wholly to trust their work again." AHA, "Standards of Professional Conduct," bold in original, emphasis added.
48. *Queering*, p. 181n48, provides the source for this quote as, "'There is a God—Communion with Him an Inherent Craving of the Human Heart—Man in His Image—Male and Female Created He them—Spirit and Flesh—Mortal and Immortal,' March 3, 1878, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:269."
49. Erastus Snow, "There is a God," in *Journal of Discourses* 19:268–69 (3 March 1878),contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/875.
50. Snow, "There is a God," 19:269.
51. *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* s.v. "genderqueer, (adj., sensa a)," This term

"designat[es] a person who does not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions, but identifies with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders."

52. Snow, "There is a God," 19:269, emphasis added.
53. Snow, "There is a God," 19:269, emphasis added.
54. Snow, "There is a God," 19:274.
55. Snow, "There is a God," 19:271, emphasis added. A typographical error in the original source identifies the page in the top-right corner as 371.
56. Snow, "There is a God," 19:270.
57. Snow, "There is a God," 19:270, emphasis added.
58. Snow, "There is a God," 19:272–73.
59. Snow, "There is a God," 19:274, emphasis added.
60. Snow, "There is a God," 19:277, all emphasis added.
61. Snow, "There is a God," 19:278–79.
62. "Good teaching entails **accuracy and rigor** in communicating factual information, and strives always to place such information in context to convey its larger significance. Integrity in teaching means presenting competing interpretations with fairness and intellectual honesty." AHA, "Standards of Professional Conduct," 8, emphasis in original.
63. Erastus Snow, "The Creation, Male and Female," in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:214 (31 May 1885), emphasis added, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/9314/rec/27.
64. Snow, "The Creation," 26:214, emphasis added.
65. Erastus Snow, "Origin of Man and Attributes of Deity," in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:323, 325 (20 January 1878), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/821.
66. *Queering* argues that "we" in Genesis 1 is likely the Father and the Son (p. 80). That cannot be the entirety of Snow's view: he has God speaking to plural *associates*, which requires more than one other person.
67. Snow, "Origin of Man," 19:325.
68. Snow, "Origin of Man," 19:322–23.
69. *Queering*'s reading also relies upon fine details of pronouns and plurals. It is well-known that the *Journal of Discourses* often does not report verbatim what was said. It is in precisely the small details and nuances that we may be most easily misled. See LaJean Purcell Carruth, "'His Accuracy was not What it Ought': Comparing George D. Watt's Original Shorthand Record to his Published Transcripts in the Journal of Discourses" (FAIR Conference, Provo, UT, 3 August 2023), fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference/august-2023/02carruth.
70. AHA, "Standards of Professional Conduct," 9.

71. On Butler, see Bernini, *Queer Theories*, 127–32 and McCann and Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now*, 119–36.
72. Martha C. Nussbaum, "The Professor of Parody," *The New Republic* (22 February 1999), newrepublic.com/article/150687/professor-parody.
73. Hall, "Gender and Queer Theory," emphasis omitted. See further Bernini, *Queer Theories*, 51n15, in which the use of a male pronoun in referring to Kant was justified because Kant was understood as *male*.
74. Vince Brewton, "Literary Theory," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, iep.utm.edu/literary/#H8.
75. Hutcheon, "Postmodernism," emphasis omitted.
76. See note 25.
77. AHA, "Standards of Professional Conduct," 2–3.
78. "Each chapter examines a different element of Mormon cosmology as a place to think through these problems" (p. 6); "religion may be seen as a tool for thinking through these problems" (p. 21); "Thinking with Mormon theology can be vexing" (p. 21); "The analysis in the current volume . . . does allow a Mormon cosmos to be accessed and found meaningful by those who may view its metaphysical claims as otherwise nonsensical or irrelevant" (p. 24).
79. This is hardly unique to the Latter-day Saint view. Ephesians 5:22–33 explicitly uses male-female marriage to explicate Christ's relationship to the Church: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (p. 32). The "mystery" is not male-female marriage; marriage is the given and serves as the metaphor's interpretive key that explicates the oneness of Christ and the Church.
80. "We believe Jesus Christ is the literal Son of God and a distinct member of the Godhead along with God the Father and the Holy Spirit." "Jesus Christ Is Your Savior," Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (website), churchofjesuschrist.org/welcome/savior-jesus-christ.
81. Jonathan H. Turner and Alexandra Maryanski, *Incest: Origins of the Taboo* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 53, 59, 63. See also Antweiler, "Universals," 32–33, 202.
82. For the Ostler quote, see Blake T. Ostler, *Exploring Mormon Thought: Of God and Gods* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2008), 257.
83. Ostler, *Of God and Gods*, 261, emphasis added. This Ostler quote is cited twice in *Queering* (pp. 33, 169).
84. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 140.
85. Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 40, also cited in Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 248nn50, 51.
86. "To use texts rather than to receive them is to read in bad faith. Users take the text as a pretext for some activity of their own. Users resist what the text, as a specific literary act, can do for them. A text that is merely used rather than

received, however, prevents one from ever getting beyond oneself. The User is condemned to the narcissistic hermeneutics of Socrates: *read thyself*." Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 331.

87. Ostler, *Of God and Gods*, 260, emphasis in original.
88. Ronald Hendel, *Genesis 1–11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2024), 135–36; 131–32, and sources therein. See also extensive discussion in Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 89–93.
89. Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, ed. John Bright, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 58–59; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, ed. R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., e-book (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 23, 153; Phyllis A. Bird, "'Male and Female He Created Them': Genesis 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation," in *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 142, 160, e-book; Andrew J. Schmutzer, "The Creation Mandate to 'Be Fruitful and Multiply': A Crux of Thematic Repetition in Genesis 1–11" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2005), 329–30.
90. John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 32. One could debate whether conceiving of God as formless spirit is truly an advance or evidence of more sophistication. Nicene orthodoxy combined with the era's reflexive tendency to evolutionary schemas makes the idea almost inevitable.
91. von Rad, *Genesis*, 59.
92. David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 17–18.
93. Carr, *Erotic Word*, 21.
94. Carr, *Erotic Word*, 23–24.
95. Carr, *Erotic Word*, 25.
96. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 75, archive.org/details/doctrinesofsalva01smit/page/74/mode/2up.
97. See discussion in Alonzo L. Gaskill, "Chapter 2: You and I As Adam and Eve," in *The Savior and the Serpent: Unlocking the Doctrine of the Fall* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), e-book.
98. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World."
99. See an extended and typical example in Gaskill, "Chapter 4: Textual Insights into the Doctrine of the Fall," in *Savior and the Serpent*.
100. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 73.
101. See discussion in John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Zondervan, 1999), 2.2.1.4, and Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 296–307.

102. *Hermeneutics* is the study or practice of textual interpretation.

103. J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis*, vol. 12, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), viii.

104. Bruce C. Birch et al., *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed., digital (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 44, emphasis in original.

105. William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Dower's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 62*,* e-book.

106. Carr, *Erotic Word*, 29.

107. Alma P. Burton, "Endowment," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:454–56, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/EoM/id/5707.

108. Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. Leo G. Perdue, vol. 1 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 231.

109. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 356. This reading does not preclude the existence of a literal Adam and Eve. For example, Gaskill writes, "While I have no doubts as to the existence of Adam and Eve as historical figures and as to the historicity of the event we refer to as the Fall, nevertheless I had never supposed that one attending the temple would take as entirely literal every detail of the story told therein. In other words, I had always assumed that the fact that the temple and scriptural accounts of the Fall were laden with symbols went without saying." Gaskill, "Chapter 2: You and I As Adam and Eve."

110. L. D. Hawk, "Literary/Narrative Criticism," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 539–40.

111. John Barton, "Introduction to the Old Testament," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6–7; Birch et al., *Theological Introduction*, 42–43*,* e-book; Richard S. Hess, *The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 64–67*,* e-book; R. W. L. Moberly, *The Theology of the Book of Genesis*, ed. Brent A. Strawn and Patrick D. Miller, *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xxi, 48–50; von Rad, *Genesis*, 18, 24–31; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 1–2, 187–97.

112. In what follows, I will typically refer to the first account as "Genesis 1" and the second as "Genesis 2," even though the first extends from Genesis 1–2:4a. I will also refer to the "author" of Genesis as shorthand for "whatever person(s) put Genesis into the form in which we now have it, by whatever process."

113. One of the foundational claims of Old Testament criticism was that the Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy) was composed of four textual layers or traditions. Of these, only three are relevant for Genesis: [1] "P" (priestly); [2] "J" (Yahwist); [3] "E" (Elohist). See note 111 for discussions.

114. Schmutzer, "Creation Mandate," 6.

115. Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, ed. Patrick D. Miller Jr., *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 40.
116. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis*, 7.
117. Birch et al., *Theological Introduction*, 48, emphasis added.
118. Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 113.
119. Barton, "Introduction to the Old Testament," 7.
120. "Many interpreters have conflated the two creation stories in an attempt to resolve this problem," says *Queering* (p. 79)—but this does not speak to what is claimed here. The issue is not that the stories can be plausibly conflated to avoid contradiction or in some way harmonized. The point is that the Genesis author did not see them in contradiction or in need of conflation or harmonization.
121. Jeremy Cohen, *"Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It": The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 46–47.
122. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 133, as quoted in Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 664n75.
123. "*It is highly misleading to charge the text with obscurity when in fact the unclarity resides in the psychology of the human knower.*" Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 278, emphasis in original.
124. Schmutzer, "Creation Mandate," 28.
125. Schmutzer, "Creation Mandate," 35.
126. For others, see Isaac M. Kikawada and Arthur Quinn, *Before Abraham Was: The Unity of Genesis 1–11* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985); Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 133, as quoted in Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 664–65n75; Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 127.
127. Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 46–47.
128. James McKeown, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), section 2:4b–7, e-book.
129. Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, vol. 1, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 16 (section 2:4–3:24), e-book.
130. R. N. Whybray, "Genesis," in *Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 43.
131. Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 29.
132. Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), x.
133. Arnold, *Genesis NCBC*, 55.

134. Iain Provan, *Discovering Genesis: Content, Interpretation, Reception* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 60, e-book.

135. Hendel, *Genesis 1–11*, 156.

136. Childs, *Biblical Theology*, 113.

137. Bird, "Genesis 1–3 as a Source for a Contemporary Theology of Sexuality," *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identifies: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 166–67.

138. "The essentialist conception holds that there are two binary categories of 'man' and 'woman' and that each of these categories has certain properties which precede its definition." Alex Harris, "Non-Binary Gender Concepts and the Evolving Legal Treatment of UK Transsexed Individuals: A Practical Consideration of the Possibilities of Butler," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 13, no. 6 (2012): 58, vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol13/iss6/6/.

139. There is probably no passage of the Hebrew bible that has occasioned more comment and uncertainty than "likeness and image." "The history of modern exegesis demonstrates convincingly how a consensus regarding its meaning only momentarily emerges which is then shortly dissolved into newer forms of dissension." Childs, *Biblical Theology*, 567. "The amount of scholarly literature on this expression is enormous." Arnold, *Genesis NCBC*, 44.

140. Sources are all identified in *Queering* (p. 180) and as appropriate in this review.

141. For source #1, *Queering* uses Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkely: University of California Press, 1993), 35–46.

142. For source #2, *Queering* relies on Mieke Bal, "Sexuality, Sin and Sorrow: The Emergence of the Female Character (A Reading of Genesis 1–3)," *Poetics Today* 6, no. 1/2 "The Female Body in Western Culture: Semiotic Perspectives" (1985) 21–42, 28–29, doi.org/10.2307/1772119.

143. Two queer-theory sources are used for source #3: Ken Stone, "The Garden of Eden and the Heterosexual Contract," in *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, ed. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 48–70; and Michael Carden, "Genesis/Bereshit," in *The Queer Bible Commentary*, ed. Deryn Guest et al. (London: SCM Press, 2006), 23–30.

144. For source #4, *Queering* uses David J. A. Clines, "אדם, the Hebrew for 'Human, Humanity': A Response to James Barr," *Vetus Testamentum* 53, no. 3 (2003): 297–310.

145. For source #5, *Queering* uses Heinz-Josef Fabry, "צלע sela,'" *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 2002) 12:400–5.

146. *Queering* uses Genesis 1:26, NRSV, for source #6, altering "he created them" to "he created him," because "the final pronoun here is the third-person masculine single 'him'. I have adopted this more accurate translation" (p. 248n38).

147. Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 80–140, as quoted in Bal, "Sexuality, Sin and Sorrow." On Bal's dependence

on Trible, see Susan S. Lanser, "(Feminist) Criticism in the Garden: Inferring Genesis 2–3," *Semeia* 41 (31 December 1988): 68.

148. "Trible's literary approach is distinguished from my own in that *she is not interested in the intentionality of the author*, while my concern is precisely to recover the author's intention, to whatever extent this is possible using literary-historical methods." Bird, "Genesis 1–3 as a Source," 159n9, emphasis added.

149. A non-exhaustive list includes: Birch et al, *Theological Introduction*, 51; Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue*, 138; Carr, *Erotic Word*, 184n5; Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 69n43; Hendel, *Genesis 1–11*, 130, 203; Ed Noort, "The Creation of Man and Woman in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Traditions," in *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian traditions*, ed. Gerald P. Luttikhuizen (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2000), 11; Schmutzer, "Creation Mandate," 323–24n128; Beverly J. Stratton, *Out of Eden: Reading, Rhetoric, and Ideology in Genesis 2–3*, ed. David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 102–4.

150. Lanser, "Criticism in the Garden," 73–74.

151. Clines, "אדם, the Hebrew for 'Human, Humanity,'" 297–310.

152. Clines, "Response to James Barr," 304, emphasis in original. I have replaced the Hebrew characters with the transliteration for ease of reading.

153. Schmutzer, "Creation Mandate," 323–24n128.

154. Skinner, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 33.

155. von Rad, *Genesis*, 60.

156. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 160.

157. Sarna, *Genesis: JPS*, 1:12.

158. Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 156, emphasis added.

159. Bird, "Genesis 1–3 as a Source," 168, emphasis in original.

160. Bird, "Male and Female," 149, 152, 153, emphasis added.

161. Noort, "Creation of Man and Woman," 8.

162. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue*, 138.

163. Carr, *Erotic Word*, 184n5.

164. Schmutzer, "Creation Mandate," 323n128.

165. Genesis 1:27n55, *NET Bible—New English Translation*, netbible.org/bible/Genesis+1.

166. Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: Torah*, vol. 1, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019), e-book, notes to Genesis 1:26–27, emphasis added.

167. Stone, "Garden of Eden," 51, 53.

168. Stone, "Garden of Eden," 51–52.

169. Stone, "Garden of Eden," 53.

170. As noted previously, *Queering*'s source (Bal) relies on Trible for the relevant portions of her argument, and the two were reviewed and rebutted together decades ago—see note 148.
171. Hendel, *Genesis 1–11*, 160, citations omitted, emphasis in original, bold added.
172. See note 153.
173. Skinner, *Commentary on Genesis*, 68.
174. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, ed. John D. W. Watts, vol. 1 (Dallas: Word Books, 2014), 33.
175. Lanser, "Criticism in the Garden," 72, 74, emphasis in original.
176. Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 194.
177. Stratton, *Out of Eden*, 102–4.
178. Bird, "Male and Female," 152.
179. Provan, *Discovering Genesis*, 71.
180. Bird, "Genesis 1–3 as a Source," 164.
181. Stone, "Garden of Eden," 55–56.
182. Stone, "Garden of Eden," 56–57.
183. Stone, "Garden of Eden," 57.
184. See Case #2, "Genesis and genre."
185. Stone, "Garden of Eden," 59.
186. "Eilberg-Schwartz works with intensely body-focused constructions of both gender and sexual relations, which are at home in his initial Freudian framework but somewhat alien to the Biblical context." Carr, *Erotic Word*, 186n10. See also Childs, *Old Testament Theology*, 40, as quoted in Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 248n50–251:

    > [As for] the heavy-handed interpretation of H. Eilberg-Schwartz, . . . the question would be whether the homoeroticism belongs to the text or this author. There is no biblical evidence for the subordinate clause in the following claim: "these men [Moses and the patriarchs] love, in ways that are imagined as erotically and sensually, a male deity" . . . Eilberg-Schwartz also writes wrongly of Israelite religion as "imagining men as wives of God." The logic for the claim is flawed: because Israel is imagined as God's lover and men are part of Israel (including ones who author such images), it is assumed that men then imagined themselves as lovers. This logic indeed manifests "the worst kind of literalism."

    On the role of psychoanalysis in Judith Butler's thought, see McCann and Whitney, *Queer Theory Now*, 125–26. On the prominence of Freud and other psychoanalytic thought in some recent iterations of queer theory, see Bernini, *Queer Theories*, 134–42.
187. As *Queering*'s second queer-theory source (#3b), Carden paces over the same ground with more brevity and contains no real argument beyond assertion.

It describes Eilberg-Schwartz as "raising . . . valid questions" though avoids talk of the believers' supposed homoerotic relation with the deity. Carden, "Genesis/Bereshit," 26.

188. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 91.

189. On Freud's familiarity with Feuerbach's formulation and his adaptation of it, see Adolf Grünbaum, "Sigmund Freud," in *Nineteenth-Century Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Graham Robert Oppy and Nick Trakakis, The History of Western Philosophy of Religion, vol. 4 (Durham, UK: Acumen, 2009), 331–32.

190. Mustafa Kinağ, "God as the Implication of Alienation: A Criticism of Religion in Ludwig Feuerbach's Anthropological Atheism," *Kilis 7 December University Journal of Theology* 9, no. 2 (30 December 2022): 417–40, doi.org/10.46353/k7auifd.1181030; Van A. Harvey, "Ludwig Feuerbach," in *Nineteenth-Century Philosophy of Religion*, 172; Jon Stewart, "Feuerbach's Doctrine of the Humanity of the Divine in *The Essence of Christianity*," in *Hegel's Century: Alienation and Recognition in a Time of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 89–117, cambridge.org/core/product/D9B216F799D00D38B4515B994664C6EC.

191. See Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 60. On Marx and Feuerbach, see Bernard E. Harcourt, "Introduction to Marx 1/13: On Marx's Theses on Feuerbach and Ernst Bloch," The 13/13/ Essays, *Columbia Center for Contemporary Critical Thought*, 21 October 2024, the1313.law.columbia.edu/2024/10/14/bernard-e-harcourt-marxs-theses-on-feuerbach-introduction-to-marx-1-13/.

192. *Queering* includes a disclaimer that "Feuerbach's reductionism is insufficient for a complete analysis" (p. 24). While this may deserve an award for understatement of the year, *Queering* nevertheless repeatedly invokes Feuerbach as if he explains anything: "In the theological mode of anthropomorphic Feuerbachian projection and imitation, the queer love and queer masculinity of the Godhead in the LDS tradition opens up the possibility for new kinds of relationships in theological representation" (p. 49); "Her argument begins from Ludwig Feuerbach's notion that religion is a projection of human ideals" (p. 53); "A Feuerbachian hermeneutic indeed. This has implications far beyond parochial LDS interests. The goal is not to condemn the historical contingency of LDS interpretations but to point out that historical contingency is a feature of any interpretation" (p. 105).

It is not clear what these invocations of Feuerbach add to the analysis. I suspect this type of linguistic genuflection is a shibboleth in Critical Theory circles, harking back to its Marxist roots. It is this sort of pretentious vaguely allusive, often jargon-ridden prose that makes much of queer theory feel particularly tiresome.

Some have argued that Feuerbach has many affinities with Critical Theory. See Jean-Philippe Deranty, "Feuerbach and the Philosophy of Critical Theory," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 22, no. 66 (2014): 1217–18. Too, Feuerbach has a deep quasi-religious approach to political matters. Copleston quoted him as saying "politics must become our religion," and then commented "though, paradoxically, atheism is a condition of this." Frederick

Copleston, *Modern Philosophy: From the Post-Kantian Idealists to Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche* (New York: Image Books, 1994), 7:299.

Feuerbach's flaws are echoed by a great deal of postmodernist writing: "[His] thought is scarcely a model of rigorous and conclusive philosophical analysis. In general its mode of expression is literary rather than strictly philosophical, relying often on the illuminating aphorism instead of detailed critical argument." Patrick Masterson, "Feuerbach and the Apotheosis of Man," in *Atheism and Alienation: A Study of the Philosophical Sources of Contemporary Atheism* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1971), 63–78, as quoted in "Ludwig Feuerbach," ed. Marie C. Toft and Russel Whitaker, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism: Excerpts from Criticism of the Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights, Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers Who Died between 1800 and 1900, from the First Published Critical Appraisals to Current Evaluations* (Detroit: Gale, 2004), 139:264.

"His sentences are often fragmentary and aphoristic. His excessive hyperbole and his inversion of sentences obscure rather than clarify." Francis Schuessler Fiorenza, "Feuerbach's Interpretation of Religion and Christianity," *Philosophical Forum* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1979–80): 161–81, as quoted in Toft and Whitaker, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism,* 316.

"A historical argument . . . is in principle incapable of establishing the thesis Feuerbach needs to establish." Says another, "We are struck by the number of crucial premises which, while being highly problematic, appear as mere assertions." Peter Preuss, "Feuerbach on Man and God," *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review* 11, no. 2 (1972): 204–23, as quoted in Toft and Whitaker, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism,* 276–77.

Friedrich Engels complained of his "resort" to "etymological tricks." "Feuerbach's Philosophy of Religion and Ethics," in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, ed. C. P. Dutt (New York: International Publishers, 1935), 43–51, as quoted in Toft and Whitaker, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* 238. Others bemoaned "his use of certain conveniently ambiguous terms." Charles A. Bennett, "Symbolical Theories: Feuerbach," in *The Dilemma of Religious Knowledge*, ed. William Ernest Hocking (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1931), 27–48, as quoted in Toft and Whitaker, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* 249. "The confusions," wrote another, "are as incredible as they are clever." "Feuerbach begins," says the same author, "by a very bad but clever allusion (it is scarcely an analysis)." Charles N. R. McCoy, "Ludwig Feuerbach and the Humanist Critique of Philosophy," in *The Structure of Political Thought: A Study in the History of Political Ideas* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 269–90, as quoted in Toft and Whitaker, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism,* 254, 252.

These concerns thus prefigure issues that bedevil many postmodern approaches to texts. The double standards and self-contradiction that so often grip Critical Theory are also manifest: "Feuerbach did not understand how projection worked regarding himself. As an atheist, Feuerbach projected his own unbelief into his methodology." Bradley C. Jenson, "Christology through the Fires of Feuerbach," *Lutheran Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (Autumn 2020): 307. "Regarded from a purely theoretical standpoint," wrote one historian,

"Feuerbach's philosophy is certainly not outstanding. . . . His attempt to dispose of theism by an account of the genesis of the idea of God is superficial." Copleston, *Modern Philosophy,* 299–300. "He is already adopting the standpoint to be achieved. . . . This circumstance introduces a vicious circularity into his philosophical enterprise insofar as it already presupposes what must first be demonstrated. (277) . . . [Feuerbach's work is] the ruins of an attempt, by a vastly inferior mind, to surpass the Hegelian philosophy" (281). Preuss, "Feuerbach on Man and God," as quoted in Toft and Whitaker, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism,* 277, 281.

"If we are looking for penetrating and consistent formulations, then Feuerbach will disappoint us." Charles Taylor, "Feuerbach and the Roots of Materialism," *Political Studies* 26, no. 3 (September 1978): 417–21, as quoted in Toft and Whitaker, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism,* 313.

As it turns out, these many complaints against Feuerbach could easily be adapted to *Queering*.

193. Karl Popper, "Replies to My Critics," in *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974), 2:985, archive.org/details/philosophyofkarl0014unse/page/984/mode/2up.

194. Noort, "Creation of Man and Woman," 3:11.

195. Noort, "Creation of Man and Woman," 3:7–8.

196. Provan, *Discovering Genesis*, 66–72.

197. We recall that these approaches are not, however, terribly consistent with a Latter-day Saint reading, which sees a harmony rather than a discontinuity between Genesis 1 and 2.

198. Provan, *Discovering Genesis*, 66.

199. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate*, Kindle ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2009), loc. 469.

200. Petrey insists that both sex (presumably biological) and gender "are historical and ideological, not natural and fixed." Petrey, *Tabernacles of Clay*, 10, and Smith, "Feet of Clay," 108–9. Despite this misplaced certainty, there is not much that is *more* natural and fixed than biological sex. See Kevin Lee Teather, *The Evolution of Sex: Strategies of Males and Females* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024). See also any first-year textbook in anatomy, animal husbandry, botany, cell biology, ecology, ethology, endocrinology, evolutionary biology, embryology, genetics, histology, medicine, mitochondrial biochemistry, obstetrics, paleontology, physiology, teratology, veterinary studies, or zoology.

201. "Just Our Types: A Short Guide to Type Specimens," *American Museum of Natural History* (website), 26 February 2015, amnh.org/explore/news-blogs/type-specimens-guide.

202. The reader is reassured that no animals, including Air Bud himself, were harmed in the writing of this essay.

203. "Just Our Types."

204. von Rad, *Genesis*, 75, emphasis in original.

205. Though the English translation does not use the exact phrase, in a post-modern context this concept was given its canonical formulation by Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 32–37, archive.org /details/freudphilosophye0000ricu.

206. As Hannah Arendt reminds us, "No philosophy, no analysis, no aphorism, be it ever so profound, can compare in intensity and richness of meaning with a properly narrated story." "On Humanity in Dark Times: Thoughts About Lessing," trans. Clara Winston and Richard Winston, in *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 22.

207. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 189.

208. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 189.

209. Bird, "Genesis 1–3 as a Source," 163.

210. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 230.

211. Similar desperate efforts to find space in Church history or doctrine for a non-sexed premortal state likewise caused a great deal of the decontextualization and distortion of texts that mar *Tabernacles.* Smith, "Feet of Clay," 152–81. Other quixotic misadventures tried to claim some post-mortal states as non-sexed. Smith, "Feet of Clay," 181–86.

212. Bird, "Genesis 1–3 as a Source," 170–71; Herbert Chanan Brichto, *The Names of God: Poetic Readings in Biblical Beginnings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 76–77; Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 156; Hendel, *Genesis 1–11*, 172; Sarna, *Genesis: JPS*, 22–23; Andreas Schuele, "Uniquely Human: The Ethics of the Imago Dei in Genesis 1–11," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 10–12, doi.org/10.3138/tjt.27.1.5; Schmutzer, "Creation Mandate," 363–65; von Rad, *Genesis*, 60–61; Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 160–61.

213. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 21–22; Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 196; Hendel, *Genesis 1–11*, 130, 203; Schuele, "Uniquely Human," 10.

214. "Derrida's mistake is to conclude that, because there are no certain foundations for determining the author's intention, there is neither knowledge nor meaning. In other words, Derrida asks us to choose between the alternative of absolute certainty and utter skepticism. . . . Our knowledge of text acts may not be founded on metaphysical certainties, but that does not mean that it has no basis at all." Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 185.

"It is a logical mistake to confuse the impossibility of certainty in understanding with the impossibility of understanding." ED Hirsch Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 17, as quoted by Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 248. "It is one thing to say that all interpretation is theory-laden, quite another to say that all textual evidence in literary criticism is 'totally determined by the reader's perspective, theory, or prejudices.'" Paisley Livingstone, *Literary Knowledge: Humanistic Inquiry and the Philosophy of Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988], 82, as quoted in Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 283.

215. These sorts of problems are admitted, if not solved, in Wilchins, *Queer Theory*, 107–9. The answer is said to be yet more deconstruction: "This will only be remedied as writers step forward to wield deconstruction in ways that take [various] dimensions into account, particularly race." Theorists seem, at the least, to have founded a system that mandates their employment (and publishing opportunities en route to tenure) for the foreseeable future.

216. Taylor Petrey, @TaylorPetrey x.com, "Malpractice,"19 February 2025, x.com/TaylorPetrey/status/1892233157727887709.

217. Taylor Petrey (@TaylorPetrey), "Incredibly tortured," x.com, 8 May 2023, x.com/TaylorPetrey/status/1655778665320292353.

218. Taylor Petrey (@TaylorPetrey), "Justify authoritarianism," x.com, 20 February 2025, x.com/TaylorPetrey/status/1892567015082045852.

219. Terryl L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths and the Construction of Heresy*, updated ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Patrick Q. Mason, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); *Contingent Citizens: Shifting Perceptions of Latter-day Saints in American Political Culture*, ed. Spencer W. McBride, Brent M. Rogers, and Keith A. Erekson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020).

220. For a long list of modern anti-Mormon works, see "Analysis of Books Critical of Mormonism," FAIR Answers Wiki, fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Criticism_of_Mormonism/Books.

221. For one example among many, see Richard Abanes, *One Nation Under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church* (New York: Basic Books: 2002), 378.

222. David T. Smith, "The Mormon dilemma: How old and new religious divides hurt Mormon candidates in the United States," *Electoral Studies* 35 (September 2014): 283, dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2014.02.006.

223. Justin McCarthy, "In U.S, Socialist Presidential Candidates Least Appealing," *Gallup News* (website), (22 June 2015), news.gallup.com/poll/183713/socialist-presidential-candidates-least-appealing.aspx.

224. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "'We have work to do'—Latter-day Saint Image Takes Another Hit in New Poll," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 15 March 2023, sltrib.com/religion/2023/03/15/we-have-work-do-latter-day-saint/.

225. Smith, "Mormon Dilemma," 284.

226. Smith, "Mormon Dilemma," 284.

227. Kelsey Dallas, "How Americans Feel about Latter-day Saints and Other Faith Groups, According to a New Pew Survey," *Deseret News,* 15 March 2023, deseret.com/faith/2023/3/15/23638040/how-americans-view-latter-day-saints-mormons-pew-mormons/. The article cites a Pew survey from 13–18 September 2022, with error ± 1.5 percent.

228. "Moral Stance Towards Gay or Lesbian Relations in the United States 2022," Statista Research Department, Statista (website), 3 March 2025, statista.com/statistics/225968/americans-moral-stance-towards-gay-or-lesbian-relations/.

229. "The Book of Mormon. Musical Theater. Missionary Style," The Eugene O'Neil Theatre, New York, bookofmormonbroadway.com/#tickets.

230. "Fact-Checking *American Primeval*: What's Real and What's Fiction?," FAIR, fairlatterdaysaints.org/home-page/current-events/fact-check-american-primeval.

231. "Heretic – Financial Information," *The Numbers* (website), the-numbers.com/movie/Heretic-(2024)#tab=summary.

232. "*Heretic,*" from *Rotten Tomatoes* and *Fandango Media*), as quoted by Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heretic_(film)#cite_note-Rotten_Tomatoes-24.

233. Lauren Willardson, "Heretic in Real Life: A Missionary's True Story of Survival and Faith," *Public Square Magazine*, 7 February 2025, publicsquaremag.org/media-education/heretic-movie-vs-reality-survivor-speaks/.

234. Givens, *Viper on the Hearth*, 181. See also Terryl Givens, "How Mormons Became American," *ARC Magazine*, 14 November 2012, arcmag.org/how-mormons-became-american/.

235. Terryl Givens writes of "the paradox of Mormon quasi-ethnicity" (*Viper on the Hearth*, 139) and describes how various commentators have seen them as an "indigenously developed ethnic minority," a "subculture," a "global tribe," and "a religion that became a people." 5, citations omitted.

236. E. J. R. David, ed., "Preface," in *Internalized Oppression: The Psychology of Marginalized Groups* (New York: Springer, 2014), xix.

237. E. J. R. David and Annie O. Derthick, "What Is Internalized Oppression, and So What?," in *Internalized Oppression*, 2.

238. David and Derthick, "What Is Internalized Oppression?," 3.

239. "Past awards," Mormon History Association (website), mormonhistoryassociation.org/awards/past-awards/.

240. Tamarra Kemsley, "Why Latter-day Saints Should be Skeptical about Using Adam and Eve to Define Marriage and Gender," *Salt Lake Tribune,* 1 October 2024, sltrib.com/religion/local/2024/10/01/what-lds-accounts-adam-eve-may/. See other examples at taylorgpetrey.com/news.

241. Smoot, "Air Bud Theology," also discusses this idea, though I wrote this review before encountering it.

242. Fred J. Hanna, William B. Talley, and Mary H. Guindon, "The Power of Perception: Toward a Model of Cultural Oppression and Liberation," *Journal of Counseling and Development* 78, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 430–41, as quoted by David and Derthick, "What Is Internalized Oppression?," 3–4.

243. David and Derthick, "What Is Internalized Oppression?," 4.

244. E. J. R. David, "Afterward," in *Internalized Oppression*, 284.

245. David and Derthick, "What Is Internalized Oppression?," 12.

246. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* [Les damnés de la terre], trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 249–89.

247. Except where indicated, quotes about the phases in the following sections are

from the treatment in David and Derthick, "What Is Internalized Oppression?," 7–8.

248. It's worth remembering that Church members are not all white Americans. The global south is an area of thriving membership and explosive missionary work. This is not merely a case of one privileged white male destabilizing the beliefs of other privileged white males. Cultural views in Africa, for example, about the morality of same-sex behavior are just as much in the crosshairs.

249. Taylor Petrey (@TaylorPetrey), "non-KJV texts," x.com, 1 March 2025, x.com/TaylorPetrey/status/1895870930867667378. The list is John Hilton III, "Is It Okay to Use Bibles Besides the King James?" johnhiltoniii.com/is-it-okay-to-use-bibles-besides-the-king-james/.

250. "Virtually every latter-day church president has spoken or written against homosexual behavior." Gregory L. Smith and Cassandra Hedelius, "It's Not Loving to Mislead People About Reality," *Public Square Magazine*, 14 October 2022, publicsquaremag.org/sexuality-family/its-not-loving-to-mislead-people-about-reality/.

251. Fanon, *Wretched*, 236–37.

252. Fanon, *Wretched*, 218–19.

253. David and Derthick, "What Is Internalized Oppression?," 8, emphasis added.

254. As for the ontological turn, which holds that "anthropological analysis ought to mirror the conceptual apparatus of those under study," what *Queering* is offering seems the exact opposite of this attitude, since it seeks to undermine and problematize the Saints' "conceptual apparatus," not faithfully reflect it. Citation from Paolo Heywood, "Ontological turn, the" in *The Open Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, edited by Felix Stein. Facsimile of the first edition in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (2017/2023). Online: doi.org/10.29164/17ontology.

255. Patrick Colm Hogan, *What is Colonialism?* (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2024), 134.

256. David and Derthick, "What Is Internalized Oppression?," 8.

257. In fact, Hudson Cassler complains about Petrey's refusal to see it otherwise: "The idea that women could be simultaneously indispensable but not dehumanized as instruments does not appear as an alternative in Petrey's [earlier] essay." . . . "Motherhood is," she argues "no simple physical act, no mere instrumentality, but rather the deepest incarnation of all that is meant by love, an embodied ordinance of the greatest meaning and the greatest power." Of his failure on this front, Cassler quotes French philosopher Sylviane Agacinski: "You'd have to have no experience of maternity, and no imagination, to reduce childbearing to [its] biological aspects." Valerie Hudson Cassler, "Plato's Son, Augustine's Heir: 'A Post-Heterosexual Mormon Theology'?," *SquareTwo* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2012), squaretwo.org/Sq2ArticleCasslerPlatosSon.html. *Queering*'s claim that "indispensability must be rooted in bodies" sounds a lot like "reducing childbearing to its biological aspects."

258. Cassler, "Plato's Son." Note particularly the exchange between Cassler and Petrey in the comments.
259. Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," 1899, kiplingsociety.co.uk/poem/poems_burden.htm.
260. Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* [L'An Cinq de la Révolution Algérienne], trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 38, 40–41.
261. Taylor Petrey (@TaylorPetrey), "Post secular Mormonism," x.com, 15 November 2024.
262. Petrey, "Post secular Mormonism."
263. Petrey, "Post secular Mormonism."
264. Petrey, "Post secular Mormonism."
265. Fanon, *Wretched*, as quoted in David and Derthick, "What Is Internalized Oppression?," 8.
266. James B. Millan and Alvin N. Alvarez, "Asian Americans and Internalized Oppression: Do We Deserve This?," in *Internalized Oppression*, 179.
267. David and Derthick, "What Is Internalized Oppression?," 8, relying on Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970).
268. John Gonzalez et al., "The Internalized Oppression of North American Indigenous Peoples," in *Internalized Oppression*, 32.
269. Givens observes, "It is now because Mormons occupy *what used* to be the center that they fall into contempt. Their embrace of ultraconservative values, not their flagrant rejection, is now construed as the source of Mormon perfidy. . . . The culprit in this case is not sexual deviance but rather its opposite: sanctimonious sexual piety. . . . We have reached a point in contemporary culture where the politics of the periphery have devalued the center." Givens, *Viper on the Hearth*, 178–79, emphasis added.
270. "California Proposition 8: Post Election Events," *FAIR Answers Wiki*, fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Mormonism_and_politics/California_Proposition_8/Post-Election_Events. FAIR cites San Francisco supervisor Bevan Dufty: "The Mormon church has had to rely on our tolerance in the past, to be able to express their beliefs. . . . This is a huge mistake for them. It looks like they've forgotten some lessons."
271. Millan and Alvarez, "Asian Americans," 177.
272. David and Derthick, "What Is Internalized Oppression?," 9–10.
273. Gonzalez et al., "North American Indigenous," 42.
274. Gonzalez et al., "North American Indigenous," 43.
275. Taylor Petrey (@TaylorPetrey), "As a scholar of religion," x.com, 15 November 2024.
276. Fanon calls attention to the tendency of native intellectuals to use similar language:

    > It will be also quite normal to hear certain natives declare, "I speak as

> a Senegalese and as a Frenchman . . .I speak as an Algerian and as a Frenchman . . ." The intellectual who is Arab and French, or Nigerian and English, when he comes up against the need to take on two nationalities, chooses, if he wants to remain true to himself, the negation of one of these determinations.

Fanon, *Wretched*, 218, ellipses in original. One identity or the other will always dominate when the two come into conflict. This is akin to Neal A. Maxwell's admonition: "The orthodox Latter-day Saint scholar should remember that his citizenship is in the Kingdom and that his professional passport takes him abroad into his specialty. It is not the other way around. That fact is true not only for the professor but also for the plumber in his relationships with his union." Neal A. Maxwell, *Deposition of a Disciple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 15.

277. Taylor Petrey (@TaylorPetrey), "The entire film is an inversion," x.com, 15 November 2024, x.com/TaylorPetrey/status/1857630252077322409.

278. One cannot but sympathize with Roman Catholics, who have seen their imagery and ceremonies repeatedly appropriated for pot-boilers, horror, and other purposes for many decades.

279. We recall Fanon, who characterized native intellectuals' denigration of their own culture and their ravenous appetite for the west as due ultimately to fearful insecurity: "Like adopted children who only stop investigating the new family framework at the moment when a minimum nucleus of security crystallizes in their psyche." Fanon, *Wretched*, 218.

280. Sociologically, we could see the manifest historical and textual distortions of *Queering* and *Tabernacles* as a *costly signal* of group membership. Contrary to popular wisdom, most people are not generally deceived or convinced by the propaganda targeting them. Instead,

> Most people exercise a considerable degree of what is known as *epistemic vigilance*; they are not blind followers of ideology but rather evaluate information by relying on cues of trustworthiness, informational likelihood, and theory of mind. Along these lines, most audiences recognize inflammatory speech, blatant misinformation, and absurd conspiracies, but remarkably they often support it anyway because it strengthens their coalitions . . . by increasing group commitments around inflammatory content that functions as a signal, around which like-minded individuals can convey their allegiances. In other words, the conspicuously outrageous claims of a propagandist can serve as badges for an ingroup to communicate their group commitments and trustworthiness to one another; that is, as a hard-to-fake signal.

Jordan Kiper, "Religious Hate Propaganda: Dangerous Accusations and the Meaning of Religious Persecution in Light of the Cognitive Science of Religion. *Religions* 23, no. 14 (2023): 6, emphasis in original, doi.org/10.3390/rel14020185.

281. Andy Brown, "Kalamazoo College Alumnus Jon Stryker Commits $20 Million in Student Scholarships," *kzoo.edu,* 15 June 2018, kzoo.edu/news/stryker-scholarships/.

282. "Interview with Jon Stryker: A Journey to Inclusive Philanthropy," *synergos*.org (2008),synergos.org/news-and-insights/2008/interview-jon-stryker-journey-inclusive-philanthropy.

283. Kevin J. Jones, "An Arcus News Service? RNS Denies LGBT Money Influences Religion Coverage," *Catholic News Agency,* 1 April 2015, emphasis added, catholicnewsagency.com/news/31788/an-arcus-news-service-rns-denies-lgbt-money-influences-religion-coverage.

284. In Elon Musk's case, it does: Taylor Petrey (@TaylorPetrey), "I will say that," x.com, 11 February 2025.

285. Millan and Alvarez, "Asian Americans," 174.

286. Hutcheon, "Postmodernism."

287. Nussbaum, "Professor of Parody."

288. "One should never be too casual, therefore, in claiming understanding. When it comes to interpreting texts, honesty forbids certainty. Human knowing, of books and of the Book of Nature, is mediate and approximate. Here Christians can agree with chastened postmoderns." Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning?*, 181.

289. Jonny Thomson (philosophyminis), "About 200 years ago," Instagram, 12 March 2025. While extreme edge cases might properly temper Kant somewhat, at the very least his argument gives us a sense of the moral burden we take on when we knowingly resort to lies.

290. David Hitchcock, "Deep Disagreement as Intellectual Colonialism," (paper presented at the Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation (OSSA), 12th annual Conference, University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada, 3 June 2020), 3, uwindsor.scholaris.ca/items/56e31b0b-ca56-40cd-98d2-759baf356280/full.

291. Smith and Hedelius, "It's Not Loving."

292. Hitchock, "Deep Disagreement," 3–4.

293. Similar issues and their potential causes are discussed in John Gee, "Wither Mormon Studies?," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 93–130, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/whither-mormon-studies/.

294. Though beyond the scope of this review, the entire dynamic is worth thinking about as a case in which academics (especially in the humanities) suffer increased competition, political pressure, and societal distrust, and so respond to shore up their positions individually and collectively. Such behavior is more common for groups that suffer "economic downturns," those that are "perceiving a loss of social capital, prestige, rank, or extinction," and those with a combative ethos that "incentivize[s] . . . intergroup competition for resources." Kiper, "Religious Hate Propaganda," 10.

    While traditional societies launch attacks against out-groups via formal ritual events, modern ones tend to rely on "sacred spaces, political platforms, or *publications that are trusted by the community*, by which the audience commits to the apparent importance of the information. In these situations, the audience presumes that because accusations against a targeted other are overseen by *trusted cultural authorities*, they . . . are socially accepted *because of the*

process and *role* of the authority. This does not mean the audience believes that the information is necessarily true, but rather that it is *a social* fact, which the audience should accept and to which they should collectively commit." Kiper, "Religious Hate Propaganda," 9–10, emphasis added. Postmodernists should get it.

In this case, the Mormon Studies scholar can commit to the social facts by giving awards to work that outwardly honors the forms and tropes of the scholarly process and role, even while remaining well aware of its grave factual errors. Kiper, "Religious Hate Propaganda," 11–12, including discussion of attacks that use "counterintuitive content that is often difficult even for the ingroup to rationalize, yet adherents accept it anyway."

295. Taylor Petrey (@TaylorPetrey), "Here is a secret," x.com, 26 January 2025, x.com/TaylorPetrey/status/1883617549176459348.

296. Historians "believe in vigorous debate, but they also believe in civility. They rely on their own perspectives as they probe the past for meaning, but they also subject those perspectives to critical scrutiny by testing them against the views of others. Historians celebrate intellectual communities governed by **mutual respect and constructive criticism.**" AHA, "Standards of Professional Conduct," 4, emphasis in original.

297. Carl Trueman has identified an evangelical species of the same genus: "the familiar and tiresome figure of the social climbing evangelical academic who never misses a chance to trash anybody who happens to stand just to his right theologically . . . [but] always finds something of value in, and even fawns over, those to his left." Carl R. Trueman, *The Real Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Chicago: Moody, 2011), 4, e-book.

298. Taylor Petrey (@TaylorPetrey), "First review," x.com, 27 October 2024, x.com/TaylorPetrey/status/1850620309906317725.

299. Taylor Petrey (@TaylorPetrey), "So grateful," x.com, 13 January 2025, x.com/TaylorPetrey/status/1878801843998113922.

300. Taylor Petrey (@TaylorPetrey), "Very honored," x.com, 27 January 2025, x.com/TaylorPetrey/status/1857630255516721454.

301. Patrick Q. Mason (@patrickqmason), "Smart take," x.com, 30 November 2024, x.com/patrickqmason/status/1863110166662770967.

302. In Bolt's play, Sir Thomas More ironically compliments Richard Rich's chain of office marking him Attorney-General of Wales, his reward for perjury against More. More pities Rich, saying famously, "Why, Richard, it profits a man nothing to give his soul for the whole world. . . . But for Wales!" Robert Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons: A Play of Sir Thomas More,* Kindle ed. (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2013), loc. 1923–39.

303. "All historians share responsibility for defending high standards of intellectual integrity. When appraising manuscripts for publication, reviewing books, or evaluating peers for placement, promotion, and tenure, scholars must evaluate the honesty and reliability with which the historian uses primary and secondary source materials." AHA, "Standards of Professional Conduct," 7.

"Upon All the Nations": The *gôyim* in Nephi's Rendition of Isaiah 2 (2 Nephi 12) in Literary Context

Matthew L. Bowen

Abstract: *One of the most notable features of Nephi's small plates rendition of Isaiah chapter 2 (2 Nephi 12) is the prominent expansion of the* nations *theme with two additional clauses with the word* nations *(Hebrew* gôyim*) that are not found in the Masoretic text (from which the KJV has been translated). Nephi's text preserves the use of* nations *from Isaiah 2:2, 4 in 2 Nephi 12:2, 4, but also attests significant additional references to the* nations *in 2 Nephi 12:12, 14: "For the day of the Lord of Hosts soon cometh upon all nations, yea, upon every one . . . and upon all the nations which are lifted up, and upon every people." These variants are consistent with—and may even be explained by—Nephi's declaration of intent in 2 Nephi 25:3: "Wherefore, I write unto my people, unto all those that shall receive hereafter these things, which I write, that they may know the judgments of God, that they come upon all nations, according to the word which he hath spoken" (2 Nephi 25:3). This purpose in writing might explain additional textual variants in 2 Nephi 12–24 that pertain to coming judgments upon the nations, which is a dominant theme of the writings of Isaiah, which Nephi incorporated into this part of his record.*

After the Isaiah-based portion of the Savior's "covenant people"[1] sermon (3 Nephi 16, 20–22), which concludes with a quotation of Isaiah 54 in its entirety (3 Nephi 22), the resurrected Lord declared:

1. Victor L. Ludlow, "The Father's Covenant People Sermon: 3 Nephi 20:10–23:5," in *Third Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture*, ed. Andrew C. Skinner and Gaye

> And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah. For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; therefore it must needs be that **he must speak also to the Gentiles**. And all things that he spake have been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake. (3 Nephi 23:1–3)

Too often, modern readers think of the message of Isaiah merely as words directed to the Lord's people in which the faithful may "delight" as Nephi does (see, for example, 2 Nephi 11:2). Here, however, the Lord suggests that much of Isaiah's prophetic message is specifically written to and concerning the *Gentiles* or *nations*. In Hebrew, these two terms are identical: the lexeme *gôyim* or *haggôyim* is almost always translated *nations*, *Gentiles*, or *heathen*.[2] Indeed, the English term *Gentiles* is simply a borrowing of the Latin word *gentilis*, which is used in ancient Latin translations of the Greek scriptures to render the Greek term (*ta*) *ethnē* (*nations* or, more specifically, "people groups foreign to a specific people group"[3]), which in turn translates the term *gôyim* from the original Hebrew scriptural texts.

Nephi recognized the importance of Isaiah's message for *the nations* or *Gentiles*. He further recognized that a key aspect of the Abrahamic covenant was that Abraham not only would become father of a covenant people through Isaac (through whose lineage the Messiah would also descend), but also a "father of many nations" or "father of many Gentiles" (*'ab hamôn gôyim*, see Genesis 17:4–5; see

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Strathearn (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2012), 147–74.

2. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2001), 182–83. Hereafter cited as *HALOT*.
3. Walter Bauer, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG), 3rd ed., ed., Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 276–77. They define the singular noun *ethnos*, *-ou*, *to* as "a body of persons united by kinship culture and common traditions," and thus, "nation, people." By the time of Jesus, (*ta*) *ethnē*, as a Hellenistic Jewish term, denoted "those who do not belong to groups professing faith in the God of Israel"—i.e., "the nations, gentiles, unbelievers (in effect = 'polytheists'"). By the time the books of the New Testament were composed, this term also denoted "non-Israelites Christians" or "gentiles of Christian congregations composed of more than one nationality and not limited to the people of Israel."

also Romans 4:17–18; Abraham 1:2). Indeed, the enlargement of the name Abram to Abraham with the addition of the letter *he* for *hāmôn* (construct form *hamôn*, "multitude") is tied to this specific promise.[4] After demonstrating total and unwavering faithfulness to the Lord through his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham received a final and full confirmation of the promise "in thy seed shall **all the nations** [*kol gôyê*] of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18; see also Genesis 12:3; 18:18).[5]

The canonical text of Isaiah first mentions *nations* in Isaiah 2:2 ("and all nations shall flow unto it [i.e., the latter-day temple, discussed below])" and 2:4 ("and he shall judge among the nations"). One of the most notable features of Nephi's text for Isaiah chapter 2 is the prominent expansion of the *nations* theme with two additional instances of *nations* that are not found in the Masoretic text from which the King James text has been translated. In other words, Nephi's text preserves the use of *nations* from Isaiah 2:2 and 2:4 in 2 Nephi 12:2 and 12:4, but attests to significant additional references to the *nations* in 2 Nephi 12:12 ("For the day of the Lord of Hosts soon cometh upon all nations, yea, upon every one") and 12:14 ("and upon all the nations which are lifted up, and upon every people").

On one hand, it is possible that these universalizing additions in Nephi's text reflect a more complete text available to him on the brass

4. Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: [Bĕrēʾšît] Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 124. Sarna writes, "'I will make your name great,' that is, your name Abram will be enlarged by the addition of a syllable. The anomalous grammatical formulation supports the midrashic nature of the interpretation. It is possible that, by means of word play, the consonants *ABRHM* were interpreted as shorthand (called notarikon in postbiblical Hebrew) for *ABiR* ('mighty one') and *Hamon* ('multitude') + *goyiM* ('nations'), as Ibn Ezra suggests." For the significance of the foregoing in Nephi's discussion of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant in 1 Nephi 22, see 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): 55–61, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-lord-god-will-proceed-nephis-wordplay-in-1-nephi-228-12-and-the-abrahamic-covenant/.

5. At the Lord began to establish a covenant relationship, he promised, "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." In Genesis 18:17–18, the Lord asks,"Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"

plates. On the other hand, it is also possible that these two additional references to the *nations* constitute Nephi's own prophetic additions to Isaiah's text consistent with his recognition of the importance of Isaiah's message for the nations or Gentiles. In either case, the textual variants in 2 Nephi 12 emphasize the centrality of the *nations* in Isaiah's and Nephi's understandings of the Abrahamic covenant and how the Lord intends to completely fulfill that covenant.

Nephi thoroughly understood the necessity of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ in bringing to pass the promises in that covenant (see 2 Nephi 25:11–20). Nephi also understood that the eschatological "day of the Lord of Hosts [that] soon cometh upon all **nations**" (2 Nephi 12:12), or the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, would be preceded by the Lord "proceed[ing] [*yôsip*] to do a marvelous work among **the Gentiles**" (paraphrasing Isaiah 29:14) through which the house of Israel would be "nursed by **the Gentiles** [*haggôyim*, **nations**]"[6] (1 Nephi 22:8, following Skousen; alluding to Isaiah 49:22–23). Nephi knew that this work would be "of worth unto **the Gentiles** [*haggôyim*, **nations**]" and "unto all the house of Israel," because it would fulfill the Abrahamic covenantal promise that "in thy seed shall **all the kindreds** [all the *kōl gōyê*, **all the nations**] of the earth be blessed" (1 Nephi 22:9, quoting Genesis 22:18). This is a promise that would require the Lord "proceed[ing] [*yôsip*] to make bare his arm in the eyes of **the nations** [*haggôyim*]" (1 Nephi 22:18; blend-quoting Isaiah 29:14 and Isaiah 52:10).[7] As noted above, the word for *nations* and *Gentiles* in Hebrew is the same: *gôyim*.

Nephi's overarching purpose in quoting Isaiah 2–14 is best summarized in the final verse of 2 Nephi 11:8:

> And now I write some of the words of Isaiah, that whoso of my people shall see these words **may lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men**. Now these are the words, and **ye may liken them unto you and unto all men**.

In other words, the message of this block of Isaiah text is ultimately about both Jew and Gentile ("all men") and ultimately one of potential hope for all. In this study, I will endeavor to show how the four instances of "nations" (Hebrew *goyim*) work together in Nephi's rendition of Isaiah as one of the most significant prophetic messages in the Book

6. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022), 69.
7. See Bowen, "Lord God Will Proceed," 51–70.

of Mormon. I will also attempt to demonstrate that Nephi restates the essential substance of that message at the conclusion of his largest block of quoted Isaiah text:

> Wherefore, I write unto my people, unto all those that shall receive hereafter these things which I write, that they may know the judgments of God, that they come upon all nations, according to the word which he hath spoken. (2 Nephi 25:3)

Perhaps even more than his frontend statement in 2 Nephi 11:8, this backend statement not only summarizes much of the content of 2 Nephi 12–24, but it potentially explains several significant textual variants within this block. In the end, Nephi's inclusion of Isaiah's prophecies about "the judgments of God" — positive and negative — coming upon "all nations" helps his readers see how the Lord intends to save the Gentiles, together with his people, Israel. Nephi's soul "delight[ed] in proving . . . that save Christ should come all men must perish" (2 Nephi 11:6).

"And All the Nations Shall Flow unto It": Isaiah's Temple Prophecy

Nephi's longest block of quoted text from Isaiah (and the longest in the entire Book of Mormon) begins with Isaiah's prophecy of Gentiles "flow[ing] unto" the latter-day temple:

Table 1. Isaiah's latter-day temple prophecy

Isaiah 2:1–3	**2 Nephi 12:1–3**
The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; **and all nations** [*kol-haggôyim*] **shall flow unto it**. And **many people** shall go and say, Come ye, and let us ago up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.	The word that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: and it shall come to pass in the last days, ***when*** the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, **and all nations** [*kol-haggôyim*] **shall flow unto it**. And **many people** shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Gentile inclusion,[8] even in the Israelite-Judahite temple cult,[9] is a major theme in the canonical book of Isaiah. Isaiah 2:1–3 is one of the earliest manifestations of that theme. The prophet Isaiah envisions *kol-haggôyim*, "all the nations" or "all the Gentiles" as possible participants in temple worship. The nations/Gentiles acknowledge Israel's God—Yahweh, "the God of Jacob"—as their own God. Nephi clearly understood that Yahweh (or Jehovah) was Jesus Christ,[10] and he would have viewed the temple worship described by Isaiah as Christ-centered temple worship (see, for example, 2 Nephi 25:29).

Isaiah's use of the phrases *kol-haggôyim* ("all the nations/Gentiles") and "many peoples" (*ʿammîm rabbîm*) in his prophecy has implications for the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, as Nephi clearly discerned (1 Nephi 22:6–12). When the Lord reiterated his covenant with Abram and when Abraham received the token of circumcision and the new name Abraham, the Lord promised him that he would become a "father of many nations" and that the name *Abraham* would be a sign of this promise:

> As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be [become] **a father of many nations** [*ʾab hamôn gôyim*]. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for **a father of many nations** [*ʾab hamôn gôyim*] have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and **I will make nations of thee** [*ûnĕtattîkā lĕgôyim*], and **kings shall come out of thee**. (Genesis 17:4–6)

For Nephi, the implications of this temple prophecy for the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant are that the participation or inclusion of the nations/Gentiles in the latter-day temple and its ritual system would enable them to be "numbered among the house of Israel" (1 Nephi 14:2; 2 Nephi 10:18–19). The temple that Nephi built in the land of Nephi appears to have offered this precise function for the inclusion of Gentile "others" among his people during his own time.[11]

8. See, e.g., Isaiah 2:1–3; 19:24–25; 49:6, 22–23; 56:1–8; 60:1–22; 65:1; 66:18–22.
9. See, e.g., Isaiah 2:1–3; 56:1–8; 66:18–22.
10. See, e.g., 1 Nephi 19:14–15; 20:17 (quoting Isaiah); 22:5, 21; 2 Nephi 1:10 (quoting Lehi); 6:9–10; 9:11–12, 15, 18, 23–26, 40–41, 51 (quoting Jacob), 15;19, 24; 20:20; 22:6; 25:29; 27:30 (quoting Isaiah); 30:2; 31:13.
11. On the inclusion of Gentile "others" among the Nephites, see Brant Gardner, "A Social History of the Early Nephites" (paper, FairMormon Conference, Provo, UT, 2001), fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference/august-2001/a-social-history

Regarding Nephi's inclusion of the Gentile "others" they encountered in the promised land into the nascent Nephite state, Brant Gardner writes,

> Several parts of Isaiah 2 were applicable to the situation of the early Nephites. Verses 2–5 discuss the building of a temple as a gathering place for the people of Yahweh. Nephi's people had built a temple, and "others" had come to it and joined with Nephi's people.[12]

Nephi's Isaiah text has a textual variant that also constitutes a significant Hebraism. Paul Y. Hoskisson observes that the use of *when* in the translation of 2 Nephi 12:2, is followed by two *and* clauses. The second of those can be read as *then*.[13] Thus, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, **when** the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains . . . **then** all the nations/gentiles shall flow unto it." Hoskisson's insight helps us to understand how the establishment of the latter-day temple is another inflection point for the fulfillment of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant that, in Jacob's words, would enable "the Gentiles [to] be blessed and numbered among the house of Israel" (2 Nephi 10:18).

Isaiah's use of the verb *nāhar* (*flow*, *stream*,[14] *stream towards*[15]), from the same root that the Hebrew noun for *river* is also derived, creates the jarring image of a river of people flowing uphill.[16] The nations/Gentiles

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-of-the-early-nephites; On how the writings of Isaiah specifically facilitated Gentile inclusion among the people of Nephi, see John Gee and Matthew Roper, "'I Did Liken All Scriptures unto Us': Early Nephite Understandings of Isaiah and Implications for 'Others' in the Land," in *The Fulness of the Gospel: Foundational Teachings from the Book of Mormon*, ed. Camille Fronk Olson et al. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2003), 51–65.

12. Brant Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Textual Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume Two: Second Nephi Through Jacob* (Salt Lake City: Kofford, 2007), 2:217.
13. Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Was Joseph Smith Smarter Than the Average Fourth Year Hebrew Student? Finding a Restoration-Significant Hebraism in Book of Mormon Isaiah," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 151–58, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/was-joseph-smith-smarter-than-the-average-fourth-year-hebrew-student-finding-a-restoration-significant-hebraism-in-book-of-mormon-isaiah/.
14. Francis Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 625.
15. *HALOT*, 676.
16. This image was suggested to me by my Religion 304 (Writings of Isaiah)

will flow like an uphill river through the latter-day temple to become the seed of Abraham and heirs to all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The righteous among the nations/Gentiles who are taught the Lord's "ways" (including the doctrine of Christ) and "walk in his paths" will be prepared for the divine judgment that will follow.

One could interpret *nāhar* as the morphologically identical verb *nāhar* (II), "shine, be radiant,"[17] a verb that apparently derives from the Semitic/Hebrew root *nwr* (whence also comes *nēr*, "light,"[18] "lamp"). If read that way, then "all nations shall flow unto it" could also be understood literally as "and all the nations shall shine on it," or more lucidly in English, "and all the nations shall gaze on it with joy," as the NJPS[19] translation renders it. The prophecy of Isaiah 60:5, which more clearly uses *nāhar* (II), is probably better understood in this sense:

> Then thou shalt see, and flow together [or, radiate joy], and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. (KJV)
>
> Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you; the wealth of the nations shall come to you. (NRSVUE)
>
> As you behold, you will glow; your heart will throb and thrill — for the wealth of the sea shall pass on to you, the riches of nations shall flow to you. (NJPS)

Nephi knew that the accessibility of the latter-day temple to all the nations or Gentiles ("And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted," Isaiah 49:11; 1 Nephi 21:11) has the potential to have a transformative effect upon the world. It had been revealed to Nephi that the Lord would not "suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in in that state of awful wickedness that they are in" (1 Nephi 13:32, following Skousen).[20] Nephi's message of hope to the Gentiles

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student Heather Manette Walker (personal communication, Winter Semester 2023).

17. *HALOT*, 676.
18. *HALOT*, 723.
19. New Jewish Publication Society. The language of Isaiah 60:5 seems to have influenced the translators' decision to render *nāhar* idiomatically as "gaze . . . with joy."
20. Skousen, *Earliest Text*, 36.

was and remains urgent, precisely because divine judgment is coming with the day of the Lord.

"And He Shall Judge Among the Nations": Divine Judgment and Millennial Peace Among the Nations

The people of the same nations who "flow" riverlike to the latter-day temple in Isaiah 2:2–3/2 Nephi 13:2–3 are the focus of divine judgment in Isaiah 2:4/2 Nephi 2:4:

Table 2. Isaiah's prophecy of divine adjudication of the nations

Isaiah 2:4–5, KJV	**2 Nephi 12:4–5**
And **he shall judge** [*wĕšāpaṭ*] **among** [*bēn,* between] **the nations** [*haggôyim*], and shall rebuke [*wĕhôkîaḥ*] adjudicate (for)] **many people** [*lĕʿammîm rabbîm*]: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: **nation shall not lift up sword against nation**, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.	And **he shall judge** [*wĕšāpat*] **among** [*bēn,* between] **the nations** [*haggôyim*], and shall rebuke [*wĕhôkîaḥ,* adjudicate (for)] **many people** [*lĕʿammîm rabbîm*]: and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks — **nation shall not lift up sword against nation**, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord; ***yea, come, for ye have all gone astray, every one to his wicked ways***.

Theodore J. Lewis notes that the phrase "judge among the nations" (*wĕšāpaṭ bēn haggôyim*)

> can connote military action, as the root *špṭ* is indeed used in battle contexts, most notably in the book of Judges (for example, Judges 2:16). Blending with Yahweh the ultimate warrior whose might brings a disarmed surrender is Yahweh the ultimate teacher-judge.[21]

In other words, in "the day of the Lord," the Lord will act as Divine Warrior, in a military capacity, if necessary, to bring about peace between all nations. Lewis further notes that

> The disarmament of the nations is predicated on Yahweh's "judging" via the teaching of his law (*tôrâ*) and practice

21. Theodore J. Lewis, *The Origin and Character of God: Ancient Israelite Religion Through the Lens of Divinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 530.

(*dĕrākāyw*//*ʾōrḥōtāyw*) as well as arbitration on an international scale (*wĕhôkîaḥ lĕʿammîm rabbîm*; Isa 2:4; cf. *wĕhôkîaḥ lĕgôyim ʿăṣumîm ʿad-rāhôq*; Mic 4:3).[22]

Nephi knew that the Lord would manifest himself in person to do this work of "judging" and "adjudicating" as is further suggested by his inclusion of Isaiah's prophecy of the Davidic ruler and the Messianic age (the Millennium) from Isaiah 11 in 2 Nephi 21. One of the key texts of that prophecy uses the same two initial verbs in the same verbal forms in Isaiah 2:4/2 Nephi 12:4, namely *šāpaṭ* and *yākaḥ*: "But with righteousness shall he judge [*wĕšāpaṭ*] the poor, and reprove [*wĕhôkîaḥ*, adjudicate] with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" (Isaiah 1:4/2 Nephi 21:4). Nephi knew that this Davidic ruler would be Jesus Christ, himself.

A lengthy textual variant in 2 Nephi 12:5 further establishes the connection between the prophecy of Isaiah 2 and Jesus Christ. Nephi's text contains the additional invitation and declaration: "yea, come, for ye have all gone astray, every one to his wicked ways." This additional sentence constitutes a startling intertextual link to the Suffering Servant Song of Isaiah 53, Isaiah's great poem on the Messiah's atonement: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Sin and apostasy are so universal among the nations that they require an atonement that is also universal or "infinite and eternal" (see Alma 34:10, 14). The common solution for "all" humankind is to repent and come unto Jesus Christ.

The twofold invitation to the house of Jacob to "come [ye]" and "walk" in the light of Yahweh (2 Nephi 12:5) is an invitation to come unto Christ consistent with Nephi's stated purpose in writing in 1 Nephi 6:4: "For the fulness of mine intent is that I may persuade men to come unto the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and be saved."

"The Day of the Lord Soon Cometh upon all Nations": The Messiah's Second Coming

From Amos to Malachi, prophecies about "the day of the Lord" (or the Day of Yahweh) occur frequently and conspicuously in ancient Judahite prophecy.[23] The present canonical position of Malachi's

22. Lewis, *Origin and Character of God*, 530.

23. Amos 5:18 (2 x), 20; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Isaiah 2:12; 13:6, 9; 34:8; Jeremiah

"great and dreadful day of the Lord"[24] prophecy at the end of biblical Hebrew prophecy and the western Christian Old Testament, accords it prominence and gravity. As becomes evident in 2 Nephi 25, Nephi understood ancient Judahite prophecies of "the day of the Lord," including those made by Isaiah, to refer to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Nephi's text makes clear that "the day of the Lord" would not simply come upon the proud, but that it would come upon "all nations"/"Gentiles," and even upon *everyone*, particularly the proud:

Table 3. Isaiah's prophecy of a universal day of the Lord (I).

Isaiah 2:12–13	2 Nephi 12:12–13
For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,	**For the day of the Lord of Hosts *soon cometh upon all nations, yea*, upon every one; yea, upon** the proud and lofty, and upon every one who is lifted up, and he shall be brought low. ***Yea***, and ***the day of the Lord shall come*** upon all the cedars of Lebanon, ***for they*** are high and lifted up; and upon all the oaks of Bashan;

Nephi's text differs from the Masoretic text (and the King James text) of Isaiah 2:12 with the preservation or inclusion of the qualifying phrases "soon cometh upon all nations" and "the day of the Lord shall come" fronted by the intensifying particle, "Yea." These additions in Nephi's text underscore both the temporal immediacy of the day of the Lord and the urgency of Nephi's message to the Gentiles. The day of the Lord will come upon all the "nations" or "Gentiles," some of whom are repentant and "flowing" to the latter-day temple in Isaiah 2:2/2 Nephi 12:2 and those who choose to remain in their awful state of wickedness and are thus the recipients of divine severity in judgment in Isaiah 2:4/2 Nephi 12:4. Nephi's text further stresses the foregoing through the word *Yea*, which could represent any of one of the Hebrew words *ʾap, wĕ/û-, gam, kî*, as well as through the use of the more usual formulation "day of the Lord" (*yôm yhwh*): "Yea, . . . the day of the Lord shall come."

46:10 (cf. Lamentations 2:22); Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Zephaniah 1:14 (see also 1:7–8, 18; 2:2–3); Obadiah 1:15; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5.

24. On the meaning of the expression "great and dreadful day of the Lord," see Dana M. Pike, "'The Great and Dreadful Day of the Lord': The Anatomy of an Expression," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (2002): 149–60, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol41/iss2/14/.

"Upon All the Nations Which Are Lifted Up": The Pride of the Nations in the Latter Days

Hebrew terms that denote *highness* or *elevation* are also the terms that denote *pride* in that language. For example, *rām* (*rûm*, "to be high above," "to reach high," "to be exalted," "to rise, go up"; "to lift oneself up proudly"),[25] *niśśāʾ* (from *nāśāʾ*, "to carry," "to lift, lift up," "to lift up the head, hold the head high"[26]), *gēʾâ* (from *gāʾâ*, "to be high, to grow tall"; "to be arrogant"),[27] *gābēah* (*gabāh*, "to be high," "to be exalted," "to be haughty).[28] In later Nephite-Lamanite history, Mormon describes the Zoramites and their "high" Rameumpton (Hebrew *rām*)[29] as a type of the elevation and pride that would characterize the latter-day nations/Gentiles who would also be lifted up.

Table 4. Isaiah's prophecy of a universal day of the Lord (II).

Isaiah 2:14–17	**2 Nephi 12:14–17**
And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that **are lifted up**, And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.	And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills, ***and upon all the nations which* are lifted up**, ***and upon every people***; And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall; ***And upon all the ships of the sea***, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

Nephi's Isaiah text at once emphasizes and clarifies who is lifted

25. On *rûm* with its cognates, e.g., *rām*, *rāmâ*, *rûm/rum*, *rôm*, *rômām*, see *HALOT*, 1202–6, 1238–43.
26. On *nāśāʾ* with its cognates, see *HALOT*, 639–40, 724–28.
27. On *gāʾâ* and its cognates, e.g., *gēʾâ*, *gēʾeh*, *gaʾăwâ*, *gāʾôn*, *gēʾût*, see *HALOT*, 168–69.
28. On *gabāh* and its cognates, e.g., *gābēah*, *gābōah*, *gōbāh*, *gabĕhût*, see *HALOT*, 170–71.
29. See Matthew L. Bowen, "'See That Ye Are Not Lifted Up': The Name Zoram and Its Paronomastic Pejoration," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 19 (2016): 109–43, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/see-that-ye-are-not-lifted-up-the-name-zoram-and-its-paronomastic-pejoration/; Matthew L. Bowen, "He Knows My Affliction: The Hill Onidah as Narrative Counterpart to the Rameumptom," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-Day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 34 (2020):195–220, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/he-knows-my-affliction-the-hill-onidah-as-narrative-counterpart-to-the-rameumptom/.

up, particularizing the metaphor: "the nations" are "lifted up"—that is, guilty of pride—and that they will not escape "the day of the Lord." While "high mountains" and "hills that are lifted" can easily be metonymous for proud people, as in Isaiah's text, pride is a particular sin of "all the nations." Brant Gardner suggests that "The Book of Mormon is here more specific and less symbolic than KJV Isaiah about Yahweh's conquering all people who are lifted up."[30]

The Masoretic text of Isaiah 2:14 is a simple bicolon, or figure of speech, consisting of parallel phrases. Nephi's text in 2 Nephi 12:14 can be viewed as either a quadricolon or two bicola. The additional bicolon in this verse does not disrupt the flow evident in the Masoretic text.

Both the Masoretic text of Isaiah 2:15 and Nephi's rendition in 2 Nephi 12:15 constitute a bicolon. The bigger issue arises in 2 Nephi 12:16, in which the Masoretic text of Isaiah 2:16 is also a bicolon. Nephi's text is a tricolon. The colon "And upon all the ships of the sea" is not present in the Masoretic text, although something very close to it appears in the Septuagint*: kai epi pan ploion thalassēs* ("and upon every ship of the sea").

Dana M. Pike and David Rolph Seely have wisely cautioned against simply defaulting to the assumption that this tricolon represents a more original text and have discussed the more complex textual critical issues surrounding this verse.[31] Gardner sees "upon all the ships of the sea" as Joseph Smith's "addition to clarify the KJV passage."[32] One problem with this solution, however, is that clarifying glosses are almost always added after, and not before, the material they are intended to clarify.

The phrase "upon all the ships of the sea" may well represent an ancient variant preserved on the brass plates. The Septuagint variant *kai epi pan ploion thalassēs* ("and upon every ship of the sea") alone makes this highly plausible. Another possible solution—and still better than casting about for a modern source—is that the phrase "upon all the ships of the sea" is Nephi's own universalizing addition to the text, which also appears to be true of the addition of the clauses in 2 Nephi 12:14, "and upon all the nations which are lifted up, and upon

30. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 2:214.
31. Dana M. Pike and David Rolph Seely, "'Upon all the Ships of the Sea, and Upon All the Ships of Tarshish': Revisiting 2 Nephi 12:16 and Isaiah 2:16," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14/2 (2005): 12–25, 67–71, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol14/iss2/4/.
32. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 2:216.

every people." The clause, "upon all the ships of the sea," like these other clauses, emphasizes the universality of the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord will come upon all the ships of the sea, including those of Tarshish. If Nephi was writing, as he says, "that they [his people and all who would receive his record] may know the judgments of God, that they come upon all nations, according to the word which he hath spoken" (2 Nephi 25:3), such additions would closely align with one of Nephi's most significant stated purposes in writing. In sum, "upon all the ships of the sea" could have been on the brass plates, but it is also possible that it, along with the other textual additions in 2 Nephi 12–24, originates with Nephi himself.

The Masoretic text of Isaiah 2:17 and Nephi's text in 2 Nephi 12:17 are both structured as a tricolon: "And the loftiness of man [*ʾādām*] shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men [*ʾănāšîm*] shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." This presence of the tricolon here means that it need not be regarded as irregular elsewhere in this text. The use of the matching terms *ʾādām* ("man") and *ʾănāšîm* ("men"), as in the Masoretic text, again stresses the universality of the coming day of the Lord and contrasts the reduction of human self-importance with the Lord's glory. In terms of Nephi's message, these are the same "men" for whom he said that his people might "rejoice" and to whom they might liken Isaiah's words (2 Nephi 11:8).

"That They May Know the Judgments of God, That They Come upon All Nations": Nephi's Purpose in Writing

The greatest concentrations of nations/Gentiles in Nephi's Isaiah text are in 2 Nephi 12 (four times), at the beginning of Nephi's long quotation of Isaiah, and in 2 Nephi 23–24 (six times, seven if one counts the pluralizing of the singular *gôy*), the end of his long Isaiah quotation. These concentrations in the prophecy of the latter-day temple and day of the Lord on the front end and in the burdens of Babylon and Philistia on the back end help form a kind of literary bracketing around Nephi's quotation of Isaiah 2–14, as shown in the table 5.

Table 5. Nations/Gentiles in 2 Nephi 12–24.

Nations/Gentiles in 2 Nephi 12–24	**Verses**	**# of instances**
Bookend #1 (Isaiah 12) Latter-day "temple" "day of the Lord" prophecy	2 Nephi 12:2, 4, 12, 14	Four

Nations/Gentiles in 2 Nephi 12–24	Verses	# of instances
Judgment against Israel	2 Nephi 15:26	One
"Galilee of the Nations"	2 Nephi 19:1	One
Assyria punish "nations"	2 Nephi 20:7	One
Gathering of Israel through the agency of the Gentiles/ nations	2 Nephi 21:10, 12	Two
Bookend #2 (Isaiah 13–14) The Burdens of Babylon, Philistia	2 Nephi 23:4; 24:6, 9, 12, 18, 26, 32	Six, plus one instance (v. 32, singular *gôy* often rendered plural in translation)

The opening bookend describes a "vision" that would "come to pass in the last days, when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and **all nations shall flow unto it**." Regarding this temple, "many **people[s]** shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his path" because "**out of Zion** shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (2 Nephi 12:1–3). The bookend closes with very similar notes: "What shall then answer the messengers of the **nation**[s]? That **the Lord hath founded Zion**, and the poor of **his people shall trust in it**" (2 Nephi 24:32). As Sheri L. Klouda notes: "First and foremost, . . . Zion denotes the location of Yahweh's dwelling place and immediate presence, symbolizing a place of security or safety (Psalms 45:4–6; 76:2–3),"[33] This makes Nephi's framing at Isaiah 2:1–3 and 14:32 particularly appropriate (more on this below).

In the chapters between these bookends, Nephi's text quotes some intriguing Isaianic references to the nations/Gentiles that bear on, and contribute to, his overall message regarding the nations: 2 Nephi 15:26; 19:1; 20:7; 21:10, 12. In what follows, I will briefly examine these passages, but will not do so sequentially.

"By the way of the Red Sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations"

Isaiah 9:1 and 2 Nephi 19:1 preserve a geographical reference to "Galilee of the nations" or "Galilee of the Gentiles" (as rendered in

33. Sheri L. Klouda, s.v. "Zion," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings: A Compendium*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 936.

the King James version of Matthew 4:15, which quotes Isaiah 9:1; see below). Nephi's text reads thus:

> Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict **by the way of the Red Sea** beyond Jordan **in Galilee of the nations**.

Believing Latter-day Saint scholars have sometimes noted that the variant reading "Red Sea" (instead of "sea") in Nephi's text may represent an "error" in the Book of Mormon text.[34] Non-believing scholars and critics have dismissed it as evidence of Joseph Smith's ignorance. However, this textual variant may actually constitute yet another example of an "error" that really is not an error at all. E. Jan Wilson argues that the rare geographic term *sûpă* might underlie "Red Sea" (normally *yam sûp*), as the King James translators render it in Numbers 21:14.[35] He further suggests that "Galilee of the nations" (*gĕlîl haggôyim*) in the Masoretic text and probably on the brass plates really denotes "district of the nations."[36] Whether Wilson's solution or D. Charles Pyle's suggestion regarding the King's Highway as the "way of the Red Sea"[37] is to be accepted, Nephi's text appears to move the location of the eschatological re-fulfillment of this text eastward into the territory of "the nations."

By Nephi's time, the Assyrian invasion had long since brought the Northern Kingdom to a complete end (721 BCE). Isaiah had mentioned that "it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few" (Isaiah 10:7; 2 Nephi 20:7). The king of Assyria would be the instrument of divine judgment, but then also its object. Nevertheless, for Nephi, who saw "the course of the Lord [as] one eternal round" (1 Nephi 10:19),

34. For a summary of the perceived problem and proposed solutions, see FAIR, "Question: Why does 2 Nephi 19:1 change the word 'sea' in Isaiah 9 to 'Red Sea'?" fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Question:_Why_does_2_Nephi_19:1_change_the_word_%22sea%22_in_Isaiah_9_to_%22Red_Sea%22%3F.
35. E. Jan Wilson, "Joseph Smith and the 'Red Sea,' in 2 Nephi 19:1," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 60 (2024): 192–95, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/joseph-smith-and-the-red-sea-in-2-nephi-191/.
36. Wilson, "Joseph Smith and the 'Red Sea' in 2 Nephi 19:1," 190.
37. See the personal correspondence of D. Charles Pyle to Jeffrey D. Lindsay in Jeffrey D. Lindsay, "Feeling Blue About the Red Sea in the Book of Mormon?" *Arise from the Dust* (blog), October 18, 2019. arisefromthedust.com/feeling-blue-about-red-sea-in-book-of/.

the historical events recorded within the prophecies of Isaiah could have multiple fulfillments, like the prophecies themselves. Nephi was aware of the historical fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1 [MT 8:23], but he could also have seen it as having an eschatological one. It is worth considering the relationship between "Red Sea" in Nephi's text and a latter-day or eschatological fulfillment of Nephi's prophecy.

When foreign armies — the armies of "the nations," like Assyria and Babylonia — invaded Israel and Judah, they typically came from the northeast. It was much more difficult to invade by crossing the deserts from the eastern direction. These armies came from the northeast from the direction of the King's Highway, which subsequently becomes "the way of the Red Sea" in the land "beyond Jordan" (see figure 1). For Nephi, the phrase "the way of the Red Sea" seems to have located the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 9 in the vicinity of where Moses raised up the brazen serpent: "And they journeyed from mount Hor **by the way of the Red sea**, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way" (Numbers 21:4). Did Nephi identify the location where Moses lifted a serpent-seraph upon a *nēs* (Numbers 21:5–9) as the first place where

Figure 1. The King's Highway runs out of Mesopotamia to Damascus and then south-southwest through the Transjordanian territories to the Elat and the Gulf of Aqaba where it turns west toward Egypt. upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ed/Ancient_Levant_routes.png.

the Lord "lift[ed] up" an "ensign" (*nēs*) to "the nations?" A comparison between 2 Nephi 25:20 and Isaiah 11:10, 12 suggests that Nephi saw a conceptual relationship between these texts, especially given his idiosyncratic use of *nations* to describe the tribes of Israel in 2 Nephi 25:20.[38] Jesus's own disciples saw his Galilean ministry as a fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 9 (see Matthew 4:14–16). For Nephi, the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6–7/2 Nephi 19:6–7 would be in the "day of the Lord":

> For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of government and peace there is no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.

The prophetic promises in verse 7 particularly require conditions that will be brought about by the day of the Lord upon the nations.

"An ensign to the nations," "to him shall the Gentiles seek"

In Isaiah 2–14/2 Nephi 12–24, Isaiah three times uses similar language to describe the "lifting up" or "raising" of an "ensign," "standard," or "banner" (Hebrew *nēs*) as a signal to "the nations." In the first instance, the *nēs* summons foreign or gentile armies to attack and scatter Israel: "he will lift up an ensign to the nations [*wĕnāśāʾ-nēs laggôyim*] from far" (Isaiah 5:26; 2 Nephi 15:26). In this case, the "nations," particularly the Assyrians, are the instrument of the Lord's judgment upon Israel and Judah.

In the second instance, the ensign is lifted up for expressly the opposite reason: "And he shall set up an ensign [*wĕnāśāʾ nēs laggôyim*] for the nations, **and shall assemble** [*wĕʾāsap*] the outcasts of Israel, and **gather together** [*yĕqabbēṣ*] the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isaiah 11:12; 2 Nephi 22:12).

A very similar concept gained currency with Nephi and his successors:

38. We might also note here that Nephi would have seen Isaiah's statement, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy" (2 Nephi 9:3; vis-à-vis "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy," Isaiah 9:3) as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

> Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to **the Gentiles** [*gôyim*, nations], and set up **my standard** [*nissî*, **my ensign**] to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. (Isaiah 49:22)

This is a text quoted or alluded to in 1 Nephi 21:22; 22:6–8 and in 2 Nephi 6:6; 29:2. Nephi understood that, historically and in the future (including the eschatological future), the "nations" or "Gentiles" (*hag-gôyim*) were the divine means of scattering and gathering Israel as they had been in times past (for example, Assyria) and would also be the instrument and object of divine judgment.

The figure of "a root of Jesse," foretold in Isaiah 11:10/2 Nephi 21:10, would be one from whom the Gentiles responsible for this gathering would "seek" or "inquire of": "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for **an ensign** [*nēs*] of the people; to it [him] shall **the Gentiles** [*gôyim*] seek: and his rest shall be glorious." Nephi would have understood this prophecy, unmistakably of a Davidic figure, as a prophecy about the Second Coming of the Messiah in glory (see, for example, 2 Nephi 25:16–18).

Another instance of the lifting of an ensign as a signal to "the nations" in these chapters occurs in Isaiah 13:2/2 Nephi 23:2: "**Lift ye up a banner** [*śĕʾû-nēs*] upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles." This signal to the Lord's "sanctified ones" and "mighty ones" (Isaiah 13:3; 2 Nephi 23:3) culminates in "a tumultuous noise of **the kingdoms of nations** [*mamlĕkôt gôyim*] gathered together" against Babylon (Isaiah 13:4).

Nephi saw history and prophecy as cyclical. Some of Isaiah's prophecies had been fulfilled before his time. Others would be fulfilled during his time and still others long afterward, some of them more than once (see also Isaiah 7:14; 2 Nephi 17:14; Matthew 1:21–23).[39] The "nations," having played a crucial role in the destruction of the Babylon of Nephi's own time, will also play a crucial role in the eschatological destruction of spiritual Babylon. But the latter-day Gentiles, like the nations of Nephi's time, would need to repent in order to avert divine

39. See, for example, Matthew L. Bowen, "'He Is God; and He Is with Them': Helaman 8:21–23 and Isaiah's Immanuel Prophecy as a Thematic Scriptural Concept," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 62, no.1 (2023): 135–68, byustudies.byu.edu/article/he-is-god-and-he-is-with-them/.

judgments (the story of Nineveh in the book of Jonah furnishes an excellent example of what such Gentile repentance might look like).

"Thou . . . which didst weaken the nations": The fall of the king of Babylon as the defeat of Satan

Nephi's large Isaiah block concludes with "the burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see" (Isaiah 13:1–14:27/2 Nephi 23:1–24:27) and "the burden" that came "in the year king Ahaz died" (Isaiah 14:28–32/2 Nephi 24:28–32). Both belong to the same literary unit. The latter constitutes something of an epilogue or appendix of the former. Numerous other "burdens" of the nations follow in the canonical book of Isaiah as currently ordered, but Nephi shows concern only for the contents of the "burden of Babylon" and the short burden that follows.

Isaiah uses a *māšāl* — a parable (literally, a *likening*, a *comparison*), or as some scholars have described it, a "taunt song" — to compare the king of Babylon to a figure designated *hêlēl ben-šāḥar* in the Hebrew text. That figure's name was rendered "Lucifer, son of the morning" by the King James translators (following the Latin Vulgate and other earlier English translations) and in the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 24:12). Isaiah vividly describes the motivations and ultimate fall of this figure: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, **which didst weaken the nations** [*ḥôlēš ʿal-gôyim*]!" (Isaiah 14:12; 2 Nephi 24:12). Isaiah describes him as "he that ruled [*rōdeh*] **the nations** [*gôyim*] in anger [*bāʾap*]" (Isaiah 14:6), meaning he exercised dominion over the Gentiles using oppression, persecution, destructive violence, and incarceration as means of maintaining his power and control.

After the fall of the king of Babylon, Isaiah says of the former's arrival among the denizens of the spirit world, "it [Sheol] hath raised up from their thrones **all the kings of the nations** [*kol malkê gôyim*]" (Isaiah 14:9). Every one of the kings of the nations/Gentiles receive some measure of glory in their burial and afterlife, but not the king of Babylon: "**All the kings of the nations** [*kol malkê gôyim*], yea, all of them, lie in glory, every one of them in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch . . ." (Isaiah 14:18–19; 2 Nephi 24:18–19).

Nephi saw the eschatological fall of spiritual Babylon and Satan as its founder (see also 1 Nephi 14:12–17). He explains how, in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, this being would be deprived of his power:

> And he [the Lord] gathereth his children from the four

> quarters of the earth; 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. And because of the righteousness of his people, Satan has no power; wherefore, he cannot be loosed for the space of many years; for he hath no power over the hearts of the people, for they dwell in righteousness, and the Holy One of Israel reigneth. (1 Nephi 22:25–26; compare Revelation 21:1–10)

At the day of the Lord, the very "nations" who had been "weaken[ed]" and "rule[d]" by this being will eventually become completely safe from his influence: "But, behold, all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people shall dwell safely in the Holy One of Israel if it so be that they will repent" (1 Nephi 22:28).

"The hand that is stretched out upon all nations"

What happened to Babylon and its king will happen to the other nations that oppose the Lord in the day of the Lord. In another shorter oracle against the Assyrians who, historically speaking, would lose their power to the Babylonians, Isaiah declares: "This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and this is **the hand that is stretched out upon all nations** [*wĕzōṯ hayyād hannĕṭûyâ ʿal-kol-haggôyim*]" (Isaiah 14:26/2 Nephi 24:26). J. Blake Couey writes,

> In this couplet, Isaiah describes the far-reaching control that Yhwh exercises over all nations. The conspicuous length of the two lines creates a sense of expansiveness appropriate for the grand theological claim.[40]

The image of the outstretched hand,[41] in this case stretched out against all the nations/Gentiles beginning with Assyria and subsequently Babylon, is clearly an image of divine judgment. The Lord's eternal "purpose" (*ʿēṣâ*) or "plan"—as shown, for example, to Lehi in 1 Nephi 1:13–14—was "roll[ing] on." Moroni later testified of this in Mormon 8:22–23, "For the eternal purposes [*ʿēṣôt*] of the Lord shall

40. J. Blake Couey, *Reading the Poetry of First Isaiah: The Most Perfect Model of the Prophetic Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 49.

41. On the image of the outstretched hand as an image and metaphor of divine judgment in Isaiah, see John Gee, "A Different Way of Seeing the Hand of the Lord," *Religious Educator* 16, no. 2 (2015): 112–27, rsc.byu.edu/vol-16-no-2-2015/different-way-seeing-hand-lord.

roll on, until all his promises shall be fulfilled. Search the prophecies of Isaiah." For Nephi and his successors, past and present judgments upon the nations were proof of his future fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant and all its promises.

At the end of Isaiah 14/2 Nephi 24 there is a short "burden" or oracle against Philistia. Nephi chooses the question and answer that conclude this oracle as the conclusion for his long quotation of Isaiah: "What shall then answer **the messengers of the nations** [*malʾăkê-gôy*, messengers of a nation]? That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust [*yeḥĕsû*, take refuge] in it." [42] This final declaration — the message to any inquiring nation — is that the poor among the Lord's people — the economically poor and the poor in spirit — can take refuge (*yeḥĕsû*) in Zion and its king, Yahweh. In view of the clear tabernacle-temple imagery characterizing Mount Zion as a "a place of refuge" (*maḥseh*) in Isaiah 4:5–6 and 2 Nephi 14:5–6 and the temple as the place par excellence of "taking refuge" under the Lord's "wings,"[43] perhaps symbolized by the seraphim (compare 2 Nephi 16:2–7 with 2 Nephi 25:20). Nephi is ending his Isaiah block where he began: with the temple and the nations.

Part of Nephi's message of hope is this: the nations/Gentiles can come unto Christ and embrace his gospel and be numbered with his covenant people or remain under the power of the king of Babylon/Lucifer who "rules" the unconverted nations. It they do the latter, they will be subject to the severity of the divine judgments upon the wicked that accompany "the day of the Lord" that is coming upon all the nations.

Upon concluding this lengthiest of his Isaianic quotations, Nephi gives what Isaiah scholar Donald W. Parry has described as "five keys"

42. For more on the significance of this text, see Matthew L. Bowen, ""The Lord Hath Founded Zion, and the Poor of His People Shall Trust in it" Covenant Economics, Atonement, and the Meaning of Zion," in *Covenant of Compassion Caring for the Marginalized and Disadvantaged in the Old Testament* (50th BYU Sperry Symposium), ed. Avram R. Shannon et al. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2021), 237–64.

43. See Matthew L. Bowen, "'Encircled About Eternally in the Arms of His Love': The Divine Embrace as a Thematic Symbol of Jesus Christ and His Atonement in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 59 (2023): 109–34, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/encircled-about-eternally-in-the-arms-of-his-love-the-divine-embrace-as-a-thematic-symbol-of-jesus-christ-and-his-atonement-in-the-book-of-mormon/.

for understanding the writings of Isaiah.[44] Nephi asserts regarding the ancient inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah that "their works were works of darkness, and their doings were doings of abominations" (2 Nephi 25:2). Parry interprets this as the second "key" to understanding Isaiah words: "Do not do 'works of darkness' or 'doings of abominations.'"[45] Ancient Judahites, however, had no monopoly on such practices. In his midrash of 2 Nephi 29, Nephi later writes "**all the nations of the Gentiles** and also the Jews . . . will be drunken with iniquity and all manner of abominations" (2 Nephi 27:1). Here the collocation "nations of the Gentiles" could be represented by a single underlying term, *gôyim*. Alternatively, it could also idiomatically render a phrase like "kingdoms of [the] nations/Gentiles" in Isaiah 13:4.

Immediately after his implicit warning against the "works of darkness" and "doings of abominations," Nephi with the sum and substance of "the nations" theme in 2 Nephi 12, and perhaps 2 Nephi 12–24 as a whole, warns in 2 Nephi 25:3, "Wherefore, I write unto my people, unto all those that shall receive hereafter these things which I write, **that they may know the judgments of God, that they come upon all nations**, according to the word which he hath spoken."

As noted earlier, Nephi knew well the role of the "nations" in "scattering" and in their eventually gathering as a part of the eschatological gathering of Israel:

> Wherefore, the Jews shall be **scattered among all nations**; yea, and also Babylon shall be destroyed; wherefore, **the Jews shall be scattered by other nations**. And after they have been scattered, and the Lord God **hath scourged them by other nations** for the space of many generations,

44. Donald W. Parry, "Nephi's Keys for Understanding Isaiah (2 Nephi 25:1–8)," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormo*n, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Foundation for Apologetic Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1998), 47–65.

45. Parry, "Nephi's Keys," 47, 55–56. Parry (pp. 55–56) writes, "'Works of darkness' and 'doings of abominations' (2 Nephi 25:2) conceal the meaning of prophetic speech from the one committing evil acts. When Laman and Lemuel complained that Lehi had taught things that were 'hard to be understood' (1 Nephi 15:3), Nephi asked them, 'Have ye inquired of the Lord?' (1 Nephi 15:8). He then provided a formula for understanding the prophetic word, including Isaiah's teachings: 'If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask [the Lord] in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping [his] commandments, surely these things shall be known unto you' (1 Nephi 15:11). Those who are involved in works of darkness and who break the commandments never understand the revelations of God or the things of the prophets."

> yea, even down from generation to generation until they shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement, which is infinite for all mankind — and when that day shall come that they shall believe in Christ, and worship the Father in his name, with pure hearts and clean hands, and look not forward any more for another Messiah, then, at that time, the day will come that it must needs be expedient that they should believe these things. (2 Nephi 25:15–16)

Iterative, restorative, divine action would necessarily precede any large-scale Jewish belief in Jesus as the Messiah and in his Atonement:

> The Lord **will set** his hand **again** [*yôsîp*] the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state [quoting Isaiah 11:11]. Wherefore, **he will proceed** [*yôsip*/*yôsīp*] to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men [quoting Isaiah 29:14]. (2 Nephi 25:17)[46]

These Isaianic prophecies will be fulfilled through the writings of Nephi and his successors in order that "the promise may be fulfilled unto **Joseph** [*yôsēp*], that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand" (2 Nephi 25:21; see also 2 Nephi 2:3–4; 16; 23–24). They would also come in fulfillment of promises made to Nephi himself (see 2 Nephi 29:1–2).

This brings us to easily the most interesting, if not the most significant, use of *nations* in Nephi's Isaiah-adjacent commentary:

> And now, my brethren, I have spoken plainly that ye cannot err. And as the Lord God liveth that brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, and gave unto Moses power that **he should heal the nations** after they had been bitten by the poisonous serpents, if they would cast their eyes unto **the serpent which he did raise up before them**, and also gave him power that he should smite the rock and the water should come forth; yea, behold I say unto you, that as these things are true, and as the Lord God liveth, there is none other name given under heaven save it be this Jesus Christ, of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved. (2 Nephi 25:20)

46. 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, no. 2 (2010): 2–4, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/insights/vol30/iss2/3/.

Nephi's description of ancient Israel in the wilderness as "the nations" — Hebrew *haggôyim* — is highly unusual in that this term is normally used to describe non-Israelites and non-Jews. However, the description of Israel as "the nations" is not entirely without precedent. Hebrew lexicographers Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner cite Genesis 18:18, Isaiah 60:22, Ezekiel 35:10, and Psalm 106:5 as examples where Israel itself is conceived of as a *gôy*.[47] this occurs mostly in connection with the Abrahamic Covenant. The oracle of divine judgment against Seir-Edom in Ezekiel 35:10 describes Israel and Judah as "these two nations," literally, "two of the nations" (*šĕnê haggôyim*).

What's more, Nephi's description of the "rais[ing] up" of the serpent that "heal[s] the nations" may have oblique reference to the servant song of Isaiah 52:13–15, and its image of the Servant who would "be exalted and extolled, and be very high" and would "sprinkle [*yazzeh*] many nations" — or, as the Joseph Smith Translation renders it, "gather many nations."

Margaret Barker has described the Levitical "atonement" rite of *kpr* performed in the tabernacle, and later the Jerusalem temple, as "the ritual of healing and restoration."[48] Barker further notes the use of the verb *yazzeh*, "sprinkle" (from the root *nzy/nzh*), as constituting an essential part of the Levitical "atonement" rite (see, for example, Leviticus 16) in Isaiah 52:15.[49] Thus, "heal the nations" in 2 Nephi 25 could be more precisely understood in the sense "perform the rite of atonement on many nations." Nephi himself clearly understood the bronze serpent of Numbers 21 as a type of the Messiah's sacrifice (see John 3).[50] Understanding the phrase "healing the nations" as "atoning the nations" also accords nicely with the rendering of Isaiah 52:15 in the Joseph Smith Translation: "he shall gather many nations." The possibility also exists that Nephi is identifying the *nēs* ("pole") of Numbers 21 with Isaiah's *nēs* — the "ensign," "banner," or "standard" of Isaiah 11:12, 49:22, and elsewhere — used to "gather" Israel by means of "the nations"/"Gentiles."

47. *HALOT*, 182–83.
48. Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 49.
49. Barker, *Great High Priest*, 53.
50. See discussion in Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Matthew L. Bowen, "'By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified': The Symbolic, Salvific, Interrelated, Additive, Retrospective, and Anticipatory Nature of the Ordinances of Spiritual Rebirth in John 3 and Moses 6," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 24 (2017): 123–316, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/interpreter/vol24/iss1/8/.

The Lord provided the following statement regarding Isaiah's message in 3 Nephi 23:2: "For surely [Isaiah] spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; therefore it must needs be that he must speak also **to the Gentiles** [nations]." One unmistakable instance in which Isaiah speaks directly to the Gentiles or the nations occurs in Isaiah 34:1–2:

> Come near, **ye nations** [*gôyim*], to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is **upon all nations** [*ʿal-kol-haggôyim*], and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter.

Nephi recognized that Isaiah 2 (2 Nephi 12) delivered a similar message: "he shall judge among the nations" (2 Nephi 12:4):

> Wherefore, these things [Nephi's writings, including his quotations of Isaiah's writings] shall go from generation to generation as long as the earth shall stand; and they shall go according to the will and pleasure of God; **and the nations who shall possess them shall be judged of them according to the words which are written**. (2 Nephi 25:22)

Isaiah's and Nephi's writings have lost none of their relevance for the Lord's people or for "the nations" (Gentiles).

Summary and Conclusions

On the title page of the Book of Mormon, Moroni describes Jesus Christ as "the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations." Moroni knew, like his predecessors, Isaiah and Nephi, that the day of the Lord would one day come "upon all nations" (2 Nephi 12:12), even "upon all the nations which are lifted up" (2 Nephi 12:14).

In one of Nephi's most significant stated purposes in writing, he declares, "Wherefore, I write unto my people, unto all those that shall receive hereafter these things which I write, that they may know the judgments of God, that they come upon all nations, according to the word which he hath spoken" (2 Nephi 25:3).

This statement is not only consistent with the variant readings in Nephi's rendition of Isaiah 2 in 2 Nephi 12, but it credibly explains them. Nephi's knowledge of — and emphasis on — the universality of the day of the Lord and the coming judgments "upon all nations" also

potentially explains variants that have drawn significant attention, like the tricolon in 2 Nephi 12:16, which begins with the additional phrase "upon all the ships of the sea." Nephi's view that historical events and prophecy could recur, such as the divine judgments upon the nations mentioned in 2 Nephi 19:1 ("and [the Lord] did more grievously afflict by the way of the **Red** Sea beyond Jordan in Galilee [or the district of] the nations") might also explain that variation as an event transpiring in Gentile territory.

Jesus Christ himself warned that the latter-day "Gentiles" in Lehi's promised land would

> sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and **shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations**, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations. (3 Nephi 16:10)

He further declared, "If they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them" (3 Nephi 16:10). The gospel would go forth from these Gentiles to the remnant of the house of Israel throughout the world. They would themselves have the opportunity to repent and join themselves to the house of Israel: "But if the Gentiles will repent and return unto me, saith the Father, behold they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel" (3 Nephi 16:13; see also 3 Nephi 21:22).

> But if they will not turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, I will suffer them, yea, I will suffer my people, O house of Israel, that they shall go through among them, and shall tread them down, and they shall be as salt that hath lost its savor, which is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of my people, O house of Israel. (3 Nephi 16:15)

Nephi knew well the peril that awaited the unrepentant among "all the nations" or Gentiles and hoped to help them avert it. His selection of Isaiah 2–14 for wholesale inclusion in 2 Nephi 12– 24, especially 2 Nephi 12 with its universalizing and clarifying emphases on the day of the Lord coming upon "all nations" points exactly in this direction. It is conclusively declared in 2 Nephi 25:3.

Modern revelation further confirms that the Lord will not "stay [his] hand in judgment upon the nations" (Doctrine and Covenants 39:16). Indeed, "the arm of the Lord shall fall upon the nations" (Doctrine and Covenants 45:47). He has promised, "and they shall know mine arm and mine indignation, in the day of visitation and of wrath upon the nations" and averred, "I . . . have laid my hands upon the nations, to scourge them for their wickedness." Nevertheless, the Lord has also demonstrated his power to "heal the nations." Isaiah and Nephi foretold the time when the Lord "shall judge among the nations . . . and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares and their spears into pruning-hooks — nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (2 Nephi 12:4). At that time, the Lord's promise to Abraham that he would become a "father of **many nations**" (Genesis 17:4–5) and that "in thy seed shall **all the nations** [*kōl gōyê*] of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18) shall stand completely fulfilled.

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Irregular Kings and Precious Things: Viewing Nephi and Joseph Smith through the Lens of Ancient Near Eastern Kingship

Noel Hudson

Abstract: *Political legitimacy is a key concept related to the exercise of political power. Legitimacy was especially critical for "irregular kings," so named because they were not automatically legitimated by the existing political structure. There are many examples of apologetics from the literature of the Ancient Near East that sought to bolster the legitimacy of irregular kings. The Book of Mormon uses similar apologetics to legitimate its own irregular rulers. The most striking example is seen in the case of Nephi (son of Lehi). Nephi provides dozens of arguments that strengthen his status as a divinely sanctioned king within an Ancient Near Eastern framework. Startlingly, Nephi and other Book of Mormon prophets also seem to have viewed Joseph Smith, the future seer who would bring their words to light, in similar terms. Joseph appears to have been presented as the legitimate heir of the Nephite royal line. The prophecies of the Book of Mormon and Joseph's receipt of the royal artifacts serve to bolster this claim.*

Many articles have been written about the nature of kingship in the Book of Mormon. Topics range from those that contrast monarchy with the more democratic reign of the judges,[1] those asserting adherence to ancient codes of kingship,[2] and those that suggest

1. Gregory Steven Dundas, "Kingship, Democracy, and the Message of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (2017): 7–58, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol56/iss2/3.
2. Todd R. Kerr, "Ancient Aspects of Nephite Kingship in the Book of Mormon,"

scriptural rubrics by which to judge a king's performance.[3] A critical aspect of kingship, which has been mentioned by Noel Reynolds,[4] Val Larsen,[5] Godfrey Ellis,[6] and Jeff Lindsay,[7] is the question of legitimacy. Legitimacy is a key attribute, highly discussed in the field of political science, to which ancient monarchs tended to be critically attuned. In other fields of study, examining monarchs of the Ancient Near East relative to the question of legitimacy has proven to be a useful way of understanding the actions of many kings.

What Constitutes Legitimacy?

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy states that *legitimacy* may be defined as the basis or authority on which a political leader exercises power. One standard definition of political legitimacy proposes that there are:

> Three main sources of legitimacy — understood as the acceptance both of authority and of the need to obey its commands. People may have faith in a particular political or social order because it has been there for a long time (tradition), because they have faith in the rulers (charisma), or

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Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, no. 1 (1992): 85–118, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol1/iss1/6.

3. Taylor Halverson, "Deuteronomy 17:14–20 as Criteria for Book of Mormon Kingship," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 24 (2017): 1–10, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/deuteronomy-1714-20-as-criteria-for-book-of-mormon-kingship/.
4. Noel B. Reynolds, "The Political Dimension in Nephi's Small Plates," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (1987): 15–37, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol27/iss4/3.
5. Val Larsen, "Killing Laban: The Birth of Sovereignty in the Nephite Constitutional Order," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16, no. 1 (2007): 26–41, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1416&context=jbms.
6. Godfrey J. Ellis, "What Happened to Nephi at the Camp of the Broken Bow? A Book of Mormon Mystery," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 63 (2025): 203–56, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/what-happened-to-nephi-at-the-camp-of-the-broken-bow-a-book-of-mormon-mystery/.
7. Jeff Lindsay, "'Arise from the Dust': Insights from Dust-Related Themes in the Book of Mormon (Part 2: Enthronement, Resurrection, and Other Ancient Motifs from the 'Voice from the Dust')," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016): 233–77, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/arise-from-the-dust-insights-from-dust-related-themes-in-the-book-of-mormon-part-2-enthronement-resurrection-and-other-ancient-motifs-from-the-voice-from-the-dust/.

> because they trust its legality — specifically the rationality of the rule of law.[8]

According to Allen Buchanan, "an entity has political legitimacy if and only if it is morally justified in wielding political power."[9] The concept of moral justification varies according to time and culture, but in the ancient world, rulers who came to power outside of the established channels of dynastic primogeniture almost always justified their rise to power on the basis of their predecessor's loss of legitimacy. Arguments in favor of deposing a ruler because he had "lost the mandate of heaven" or for the "well-being of the people"[10] have the concept of political legitimacy at their core. Rulers who enjoy a high degree of legitimacy reap many benefits including greater social stability and reduced internal conflict,[11] increased military power and effectiveness,[12] and greater social cohesion and economic prosperity.[13]

Royal legitimacy comes into question during any transition of leadership; however, transitions of leadership are much more likely to result in civil unrest when the ruling dynasty is overthrown. It is when new rulers seek to establish themselves as king or queen that questions of legitimacy must be addressed with great urgency.[14] The ending of one dynasty and the founding of a new one inevitably bring up thorny questions about the new ruler's right to ascend the throne. An Ancient Near Eastern ruler generally achieved legitimacy in the eyes of the

8. Fabienne Peter, "Political Legitimacy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (Stanford, CA: Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2023), plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/legitimacy/
9. Allen Buchanan, "Political Legitimacy and Democracy," *Ethics* 112, no. 4 (2002): 689–719, doi.org/10.1086/340313.
10. A. T. Nuyen, "The Mandate of Heaven: Mencius and the Divine Command Theory of Political Legitimacy," *Philosophy East and West* 63, no. 2 (2013): 113–26, jstor.org/stable/43285816.
11. Amanda R Greene, "Is Political Legitimacy Worth Promoting?" *Nomos* 61 (2019): 78–80, jstor.org/stable/26786312.
12. Henrique M. de Sant Anna, "Domination and Legitimacy in Early Hellenistic Basileia: The Rise of Self-Proclaimed Kings," *CHS Research Bulletin* 1, no. 2 (2013): nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hlnc.essay:ModanezdeSantAnnaH.Domination_and_Legitimacy_in_Early_Hellenistic_Basileia.2013.
13. Sebastian Dellepiane-Avellaneda, "Good Governance, Institutions and Economic Development: Beyond the Conventional Wisdom," *British Journal of Political Science* 40, no. 1 (2010): 195–203, jstor.org/stable/40649429.
14. Andrej Kokkonen and Anders Sundell, "Delivering Stability—Primogeniture and Autocratic Survival in European Monarchies 1000–1800," *The American Political Science Review* 108, no. 2 (2014): 438–40, jstor.org/stable/43654382.

people if he or she could produce three things: 1) a convincing story as to why his or her ascension was legitimate, 2) possession of the royal artifacts, which were seen as conferring almost mystical power, and 3) a close association with divine powers, whether by demonstrating that power directly or through close association with a temple.

As an ancient record that contains accounts of political succession, the Book of Mormon provides several examples of rulers who had to deal with questions of legitimacy. Nephi, the first author in the book, stands as the prime example of how monarchs from the Ancient Near East viewed royal legitimacy. Noel Reynolds notes that:

> Several factors indicate that Nephi carefully structured his writings to convince his own and later generations that the Lord had selected him over his elder brothers to be Lehi's political and spiritual successor. Thus, the writings of Nephi can be read in part as a political tract or a "lineage history," written to document the legitimacy of Neph's rule and religious teachings.[15]

Reynolds enumerates several examples of how Nephi approached the question of legitimacy. This present article examines the question of legitimacy in terms of the apologetics of Near Eastern kings who rose to power outside of established political channels. The shared historical and cultural context of such kings led them to address questions of legitimacy in a few consistent ways that would likely influence their subjects to regard the kings' rule as legitimate. Examining Nephi through this lens, it is clear that as a leader who came to reign outside of the established political channels — whether viewed from the point of view of the Jewish nation or even within his own family — Nephi was a leader who assumed political authority in an irregular fashion. Despite his unwillingness to take up the title of *king* (discussed below), Nephi was, in practice, an irregular king who had to establish his legitimacy within the culture and tradition of the Ancient Near East. Nephi's approach to legitimizing his rule fits perfectly into the Ancient Near Eastern framework.

This article examines the way in which Ancient Near Eastern monarchs established an apologetic story, made use of powerful artifacts, and claimed to associate themselves with divinity, in order to legitimize their reign. It then shows how Nephi may have made use of these

15. Reynolds, "The Political Dimension," 15.

same techniques to establish the legitimacy of his rule. It ends with a discussion of Joseph Smith.

Legitimacy for Ancient Near Eastern Monarchs: The Story

For thousands of years, *monarchy* has been a common answer to the question of how to structure and organize a society. While a single ruling family might hold power for hundreds of years, inevitably every dynasty eventually comes to an end. In the eyes of the people who must validate any change in dynasty, the critical question about the legitimacy of the new rulers arises during such transitions. If those who replaced the previous ruling family are not able to present a story to convince the people that in some fashion their line represented a legitimate continuation of royal investiture, then civil unrest ensues, resulting in an eruption of revolts and, in the worst case, civil war.

Legitimizing the rule of someone who has no obvious claim to the throne is a problem that has been faced by many different monarchs over time. Based on their shared cultural attributes, kings in the Ancient Near East produced a common set of justifications in their attempts to legitimize their rule. Sometimes these justifications worked quite well. However, aspirants whose stories seemed to stretch credulity too far found themselves enmeshed in political intrigue and even war.

The story developed by kings to legitimate their rule is termed an *apologetic*. Andrew Knapp defines an *apologetic* in the context discussed here as "propaganda produced as defense against attacks upon a person's character or conduct." Knapp explains that:

> Apologists from all parts of the Ancient Near East faced many of the same quandaries of how to legitimate a candidate with no obvious natural claim to the throne. It should not surprise, therefore, that many of the same themes appear in multiple apologies.[16]

What makes one a king in the Ancient Near East?

In order to discuss political legitimacy within the framework of kingship, we must first define who qualifies as a king from the Ancient Near Eastern point of view. Bradley Parker notes that, at its core, kingship consists of the exercise of supreme power by a single individual.

16. Andrew Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 45, doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt18z4h1f.

Whether a king rules over hundreds or over millions, the defining characteristic of that king is the ability to make a final decision in creating laws and governing or enforcing obedience, usually without approval from others. After noting the difficulty of defining an institution that is used in myriad ways across many cultures, Parker discusses the degree to which the perception of his subjects is a critical attribute a king must address. He notes: "Kings are not inherently different from other people, they only wield 'great personal power' because they are perceived by others as belonging to a superstratum of human society." In the Ancient Near Eastern conception specifically, Parker states that "ideas of royal legitimacy very much hinged on the perception that there was a 'true king' who was both uniquely qualified and divinely chosen."[17]

Thus, in an Ancient Near Eastern view, a king is a leader who exercises supreme, governing power by right of having been chosen by a god to lead. This view of kingship, which often combines the attributes of a priest or prophet with those of a royal leader, was reinforced by John van Seters, who states that:

> It is really the theme of the divine election of the king, which is the most significant ideological principle by which the actions of the king are justified. This election is first and foremost for the service of the gods, the building and maintenance of the shrines and the cult.[18]

The king was generally seen in the Ancient Near East as an agent of the gods, entrusted with the custodianship of the structures built to house the deity. This close association with deity resulted, in many cases, in the king himself being viewed as divine, the son of the god of the city. H. F. Lutz notes: "The early Semitic kings introduced the view that with sonship also divinity was conferred, and Sargon and Naram-Sin accordingly prefixed their names with the determinative of god." He also states, "Kingship and priestship are in fact synonymous terms in Assyria."[19]

17. Bradley J. Parker, "The Construction and Performance of Kingship in the New-Assyrian Empire," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 67, no. 3 (2011): 365, jstor.org/stable/41303323.
18. John van Seters, "Sacral and Not-so-Sacral Kingship in the Ancient Neat East," in *Kingship in Asia and Early America: 30, International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa*, ed. A. L. Basham (Pedregal de Santa Teresa, MX: El Colegio de Mexico, 1981), 19, doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvcwp01n.6.
19. H. F. Lutz, "Kingship in Babylonia, Assyria, and Egypt," *American Anthropologist*

In addition to the key role that the king played as the first servant of the god of the state, van Seters adds that the king had a critical role to play in the protection of the weak, intervention in the economy, management of the military, and control of relationships with adjacent states.[20] In the culture of the Ancient Near East, the "true king" was chosen by god or the gods to direct the affairs of the people, maintain the temple, create and enforce laws, direct military operations and manage relationships with neighboring peoples.

Regular kings and irregular kings in the Ancient Near East

While civil disturbances, disease, military reversals, ambitious family members, and the direct action of adjacent states could all intervene to disrupt the regular flow of dynastic succession, there was an expectation that, in the regular course of events, a kingdom would be passed from the reigning king to his eldest son. This expectation likely stemmed from the custom of primogeniture, which regulated the transfer of responsibility from father to eldest son within the family setting. Ironically, in the Bible this expectation is often conveyed differently. Jacob, Joseph, David, and others are shown overturning the clearly established expectation for the eldest son to lead. For example, Joseph, a younger son who had come to displace ten older brothers in taking the leadership of his family, still objected when Joseph's father, Israel, preferred his younger grandchild over the elder:

> And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. (Genesis 48:18–19)

Again, the clear expectation of leadership falling upon the eldest son was strongly embedded in the family setting in the Ancient Near East.[21] As the pattern of monarchy was likely originally derived from familial relationships, the same expectation held true for dynastic succession. The primary reason for this rule in both the family and

26, no. 4 (1924): 443, 445, jstor.org/stable/661391.

20. Van Seters, "Sacral and not-so Sacral," 19–20.

21. Laiu Fachhai, "Primogeniture in the Old Testament," *Towards a Theological-Ethical Understanding of Patriarchy in Ancient Israel* University of Stellenbosch (2007): 57, scholar.sun.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/28590d21-f868-42d7-ad70-abb459c43995/content.

the royal setting was it provided a means to prevent strife.[22] George Charles Brodrick says that "it was as necessary for the family as for the lord that it should have one acknowledged head to govern it, one standard round which all its members and dependents could rally, one judgment seat to which all disputes could be referred."[23] Avoiding strife and maintaining continuity by way of primogeniture inheritance was even more important in dynasties with a long history of inheritance than in newly established monarchies.[24]

Of course, the exceptions in historical dynasties are nearly as numerous as the instances of the "ideal" being followed. Andrew Knapp notes: "Although the eldest son often succeeded [the previous king], this was far from a given."[25] Liau Facchai similarly states: "Primogeniture was a common custom for royal succession in all the regions of the Ancient Near East (Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Syro-Palestine) . . . [but] the custom was often not followed."[26]

The apologetics of irregular kings in the Ancient Near East

In the Ancient Near East, whenever a king came to power in a manner different than the expected order of things, an explanation seems to have been required. The greater the irregularity in the royal succession, the greater the explanation required regarding the discrepancy. A relatively simple explanation might suffice when a younger brother was selected to rule, despite the existence of an elder male heir. Thus, Assurbanipal did not appear overly concerned with justification when he explained his selection for the rulership of Assyria over his elder brother, based on either his greater wisdom, skill, and piety, or his election by a god.[27] However, when Darius seized control of the Achaemenid throne and killed the previous ruler, the occasion seems to have required an intensive propaganda campaign, including a massive inscription 22 feet high and 60 feet wide written in three

22. Fachhai, "Primogeniture in the Old Testament," 86–87.
23. George Charles Brodrick, *The Law and Custom of Primogeniture* (UK: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1872), 9, google.com/books/edition/The_Law_and_Custom_of_Primogeniture/r480AAAAIAAJ?hl=en.
24. Fachhai, "Primogeniture in the Old Testament," 65.
25. Andrew Knapp, "The Conflict Between Adonijah and Solomon in Light of Succession Practices Near and Far," *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 20 (2020): 22, doi.org/10.5508/jhs29557.
26. Fachhai, "Primogeniture in the Old Testament," 88.
27. Knapp, *Royal Apologetic*, 62.

languages on a limestone cliff on Mount Behistun, near the frequently traveled royal road.[28]

Knapp carried out a study of the apologetics used by irregular kings in the Ancient Near East. He found that certain arguments recur over and over, despite large distances in time and space between the various irregular kings who made these apologetics. The fact that many of the same apologetics are used in so many different situations indicates that a common culture created a shared sense of which justifications could best aid the rulers in achieving legitimacy. This was needed in the eyes of both the common people and the elites, whose support was critical in establishing solid rulership. Knapp identifies three primary approaches employed by Ancient Near Eastern kings. They make up a common motif, which he calls "the triad of legitimacy":[29]

1. **Divine Election**: Any Ancient Near Eastern monarch, however regular his succession to the throne may have been, owed his power to the god(s). The perception of divine approbation empowered rulers and the dissipation of this perception could erode a ruler's support.
2. **Royal Prerogative or Affiliation**: A second means of establishing the legitimacy of a candidate for the throne (who was not the eldest son of the preceding king) was to appeal to the will of the predecessor. The basic notion is that the outgoing reigning king had the right to override customs in certain circumstances. As one would expect, younger sons frequently employed this approach.
3. **Popular Acclamation**: Though not as determinative as the prior two grounds for establishing legitimacy, the idea of popular acclamation is frequently employed in apologetic writings. The voice of the people may not have been equivalent to a divine election in the Ancient Near East, but it was worth something.

To these three, Knapp adds a fourth approach that is nearly as common as the first three:

4. **Military Success**: A king's ability to lead (or in some cases, send) his troops to victory in battle was considered

28. Jennifer Finn, "Gods, Kings, Men: Trilingual Inscriptions and Symbolic Visualizations in the Achaemenid Empire," *Ars Orientalis* 41 (2011): 221–22, jstor.org/stable/23075965.
29. Knapp, *Royal Apologetic*, 46–53.

a confirmation of his divine approbation; conversely, defeat signaled divine disapprobation.

Additional themes mentioned by Knapp, which come up less frequently than the main four, include:

5. **The Unworthy Predecessor**: This theme finds expression in the besmirching of the previous king, usually by demonstrating how he forfeited divine favor through impious acts.
6. **The Unworthy Rival**: This does not appear in cases of overt usurpation, but in situations of unstable transitions of power. The basic concept is that the person who ends up achieving rulership paints his rivals as less worthy than himself.
7. **Passivity**: This refers to the tactic, common in the apologetics used by usurpers, that the new king did not intend to seize the throne, but he became swept up in events that placed him in power for the good of the people or at the behest of a god. The kings who employ this justification tend to portray themselves as victims of circumstance or as pawns in a game much greater than themselves. In other words, they were manipulated by gods and/or humans into redressing the injustices of the land.
8. **Transcendent Non-Retaliation**: This theme, which often goes hand in hand with the passivity strategy, refers to the new king who states that he was provoked by his enemy yet still refused to take action against him. This is similar to the tactic of the merciful victor.
9. **The Merciful Victor**: This refers to the king who has just come to power and intends to display his beneficence by pardoning his enemies. Drawing attention to the king's merciful nature is meant to garner popular support.
10. **The Youngest Brother**: It appears that there was also a maneuver that circulated in the Ancient Near East wherein the *youngest* brother was elevated to power.

Legitimacy was such a critical concept in ancient kingship that rulers would take great pains to validate their rule in the eyes of the nobles and the common people of their realms, as illustrated by the case of Darius mentioned above. In addition to his massive apologetic inscription, Darius also created inscriptions at the archives in Persepolis, on

royal seals, and in many other documents. His apologetics employed each of the first four of Knapp's most common themes listed above, as well as some of the less common themes.[30]

Legitimacy for Ancient Near Eastern Monarchs: The Artifacts

While publicizing their claims was an important method of proclaiming royal legitimacy, it was certainly not the only means. Displays of royal power could also be interpreted as a way of expressing legitimacy. Thus, Egyptian pharaohs built monumental works, such as pyramids and temples, as a way of affirming their legitimacy.[31] Possession of, or association with, an important sacral location could also serve to strengthen claims of legitimacy.[32] In addition to sacred locations, physical objects often played an important role in establishing and maintaining legitimacy. To this end, kings used elaborate displays of sacred objects and other political symbols. Fred M. Hayward and Ahmed R. Dumbuya wrote:

> Sacred symbols, myths, dogmas, and rituals were all employed to endow various systems with mystical values on the basis of which the social order and the authority of rulers were accepted.[33]

Whether it be the crook and flail of Egypt,[34] or the crown jewels of England,[35] royal artifacts were required to be impressive to gaze upon as they played an important role in conveying legitimacy during state occasions. Indeed, in certain ancient myths, the possession of the symbols of royal authority alone constituted sufficient justification to proclaim the possessor as the legitimate ruler of the country.[36]

30. Finn, "Gods, Kings, Men," 219–75.
31. Lisa Sabbahy, *Kingship, Power, and Legitimacy in Ancient Egypt: From the Old Kingdom to the Middle Kingdom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 1–2.
32. Sabbahy, *Kingship, Power, and Legitimacy,* 720.
33. Fred M. Hayward and Ahmed R. Dumbuya, "Political Legitimacy, Political Symbols, and National Leadership in West Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 21, no. 4 (1983): 649, jstor.org/stable/160585.
34. Percy E. Newberry, "The Shepherd's Crook and the So-Called 'Flail' or 'Scourge' of Osiris," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 15, no. 1/2 (1929): 84–94, doi.org/10.2307/3854018.
35. Charles M. Skinner, "The Crown Jewels of England," *The Decorator and Furnisher* 14, no. 2 (1889): 43–44, doi.org/10.2307/25585798.
36. Roberta Davidson, "The 'Reel' Arthur: Politics and Truth Claims in 'Camelot,

In many cultures throughout the world, the royal emblems of authority were endowed with such awe that they were regarded with the same level of reverence as holy religious artifacts. Akira Akiyama notes that the archbishop of Cologne said of the royal relics of the Holy Roman Empire that "whoever holds the imperial relics should be the king, and no one should call the one without them king."[37]

The royal regalia of the emperors of Japan were likewise the objects of great veneration. These relics consist of a mirror, a sword, and a long necklace. While in early times these objects were required to be present at the enthronement ceremony of the emperors, the mirror gradually became so esteemed an object that moving it became unthinkable. For that reason, at the enthronement ceremony, only the sword and jewels were brought to the imperial throne and set beside the emperor. The emperors of the fourteenth century BC regarded these royal objects so highly that they viewed the entire fate of their country as being bound up with the possession of these artifacts.[38]

Like their Japanese and European counterparts, the monarchs of the Ancient Near East adorned themselves with artifacts. They exhibited the kings' status and power, due to the artifacts' associated history. A Neo-Babylonian inscription, known as the inscription of Neriglissar, illustrates the close association of royal power with the regalia worn by the king and declared legitimate by the god Marduk:

> He (Marduk) looked upon me and declared (my) gracious name to be king in the land. In order to shepherd his people for eternity, for my kingship, he indeed gave me a just scepter (ḫaṭṭu) that widens the land; for (my) lordship, he indeed entrusted me with a legitimate rod (ušparu) that protects the people, let my hands grasp a staff (šibirru) that subdues enemies, made me wear a legitimate tiara (agû), and he did not bring about rivals or intimidators for my kingship.[39]

Excalibur, and King Arthur,'" *Arthuriana* 17, no. 2 (2007): 62–84, jstor.org/stable/27870837.

37. Akira Akiyama, "Relic or Icon? The Place and Function of Imperial Regalia," in *The Nomadic Object: The Challenge of World for Early Modern Religious Art*, ed. Christine, Göttler and Mia M Mochizuki (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2018), 431, doi.org/10.1163/9789004354500_016.
38. Akiyama, "Relic or Icon," 435.
39. Louise Quillien, "Royal Dress and the Expression of Power in Babylonia, First Millennium BCE," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History*, 11 no. 2: (2024): 329, doi.org/10.1515/janeh-2024-0007.

Toby Wilkinson goes so far as to state: "The role of the creation and promulgation of the institution of kingship, a concept so resonant that it survived for three thousand years, must rank as the supreme accomplishment of Egypt's early rulers." He goes on to explain how the iconography, art, and architecture used by the early rulers of Egypt were bulwarks of royal power for millennia.[40]

Legitimacy for Ancient Near Eastern Monarchs: The Divine Power

Legitimacy is a cultural construct that flows naturally from the shared beliefs and attributes of a given society, and the methods of proclaiming legitimacy could be linked to many attributes of the culture. As discussed above, the collective identity was often associated with physical objects. They were also associated with locations, such as a temple, a holy mountain, or a shrine. Indeed, in the context of Knapp's theme of "Divine Election," building or refurbishing temples was the most ubiquitous way of establishing legitimacy in the Ancient Near East. John M. Lundquist gives an example from Sumeria that may be seen as the archetype for establishing legitimacy among Ancient Near Eastern kings:

> Here we have the ultimate "legitimizing" connection, bringing together all the main factors that I believe were involved in the establishment of the "divine charter" ideology in ancient Near Eastern state polities: the god in his temple, which temple was built by divine instruction by the king of the city after it was duly authorized and approved by Enki of the "Temple of the Abyss" in Erida; then the king, the "good shepherd," was handed a scepter of perpetual rule, guaranteeing the authority and legitimacy of his throne; all of this carried out, of course, in the temple itself (which of course, as mentioned above, underscores the priestly functions of the king).[41]

For this reason, the first act of any Ancient Near Eastern king was

40. Toby A. H. Wilkinson, "What a King Is This: Narmer and the Concept of the Ruler," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 86 (2000): 23–32, doi.org/10.2307/3822303.

41. John M. Lundquist, "The Legitimizing Role of the Temple in the Origin of the State," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute Publications, 1994), 210–11, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/76/.

inevitably the building or the refurbishing of temples for the housing of his patron deity. Since the temple was such a powerful legitimizing symbol, great care had to be taken with its treatment. If a temple was lost through military defeat, the effect on the legitimacy of the ruler was absolutely disastrous. Lundquist says: "The destruction or loss of the temple is seen as calamitous and fatal to the community in which the temple stood. The destruction is viewed as the result of social and moral decadence and disobedience to God's word."[42]

The Ancient Near Eastern rulers became so closely associated with their roles as priestly kings that their genealogy often included divine or partially divine beings. Well-established dynasties generally did not find it necessary to emphasize this relationship, but irregular Ancient Near Eastern kings, especially those with no credible claim to any past royal line, often made claims of relationship directly to a god as a means of bolstering their legitimacy in the eyes of the people. Also, in Rome, where irregular kingship became something of a rule rather than an exception, the emperors claimed descendancy from Venus, Neptune, Jupiter, Vulcan, or some other members of the expansive pantheon.[43]

Nephi as an Irregular King in the Book of Mormon

Now that the importance of the story, the artifacts, and the divine power has been demonstrated in the case of Ancient Near Eastern monarchs, we can examine how these elements can be seen in the case of Nephi in the Book of Mormon.

The story: Nephi's writings are consistent with Ancient Near Eastern legitimization tropes

Noel Reynolds recognized that throughout the Book of Mormon there is a persistent question of legitimacy that is raised over and over again, not just between Nephites and Lamanites, but within the Nephite polity itself. Reynolds says:

42. Lundquist, "The Legitimizing Role of the Temple in the Origin of the State," 186.
43. Olivier Hekster, "Descendants of Gods: Legendary Genealogies in the Roman Empire," In *The Impact of Imperial Rome on Religions, Ritual and Religious Life in the Roman Empire: Proceedings from the Fifth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Roman Empire, 200 B.C. - A.D. 476),* ed. Lukas de Blois, Peter Funke, and Johannes Hahn (Brill, Münster, 2006), 24–35, jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv2gjwt45.6.

> The great political question among Book of Mormon peoples was "Who has the right to rule?" Did Nephi's descendants and those who followed them have a legitimate right to rule? Or should the right have belonged to Lehi's oldest son Laman and his descendants? This quarrel is the cause of centuries of political and military struggle. But this was not the only problem. Even within Nephite society, an endless number of dissenters challenged the government. . . . By paying close attention to how this struggle was waged, we can see one of the reasons the Book of Mormon was written. Of course, it is a witness for Christ and his teachings. But in addition, it provides reasons why we should believe that the tradition of the Nephites was just and correct. The two messages of the book are tied together in such a way that whoever accepts the teachings of Christ accepts that Nephi was a legitimate ruler, and vice versa.[44]

The recognition that the question of legitimacy is a key theme treated throughout the Book of Mormon can prompt the reader to recognize the many ways in which this question was addressed. There is a great deal of evidence that the many wars narrated in the book of Alma stemmed from a crisis of legitimacy intensified by the introduction of the Nephites' reign of the judges. The end of the line of kings who descended from Nephi (son of Lehi) offered an opportunity for a competing line, that of Zedekiah, to attempt to retake control of the government.[45] For centuries, the line of King Zedekiah (the last king of the Old Testament's southern kingdom) had ruled the Book of Mormon's people of Zarahemla (often referred to as the *Mulekites*). Then came the fusion of the Nephites and Mulekites, and some descendants of that line began various attempts to overthrow the judges in order to install once again a Mulekite king on the throne.[46]

44. Noel B, Reynolds, "Nephi's Political Testament," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon: Insights that You May Have Missed Before*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute Publications, 1991), 121–25, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/65.
45. Note that before the merging of the Nephites and Mulekites, the kings of Zarahemla's line would presumably have all been able to trace their ancestry back to Zedekiah, who was a Davidic Hebrew king.
46. Lyle H. Hamblin, "Proper Names and Political Claims: Semitic Echoes as Foundations for Claims to the Nephite Throne," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 60 (2024): 409–44, interpreterfoundation.org/

While it is beyond the scope of the current article, the record indicates that after the Nephite-Mulekite fusion, steps were taken by each of the Nephite leaders to legitimize their reigns in the eyes of their more restive Mulekite subjects.

Early in the Book of Mormon it is clear that Nephi was aware of, and took pains to address, the question of his irregular rise to kingship, amidst the counterclaims of his older brothers, Laman and Lemuel.[47] Note that the prevalence of these legitimating claims, inscribed on the small plates of Nephi (which were to focus more on spiritual matters, rather than political; see 1 Nephi 9:4), gives some indication of the critical importance to Nephi of the issue of legitimacy. This is apparent in the subtitle for The First Book of Nephi, which is *His Reign and Ministry.* These efforts fit perfectly into the motif described by Knapp, with Nephi's narrative covering the "triad of legitimacy" as well as the other themes of the legitimacy motif. Nephi begins by building an interlocking set of convincing stories that work together to legitimate his claims:

Divine election

Early in his account, Nephi records the promise made to him by God: "And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren" (1 Nephi 2:22). Nephi repeats this divine promise several times, most notably in the context of his justification of the legitimacy of his kingship:

> And behold, the words of the Lord had been fulfilled unto my brethren, which he spake concerning them, that I should be their ruler and their teacher. Wherefore, I had been their ruler and their teacher, according to the commandments of the Lord, until the time they sought to take away my life. (2 Nephi 5:19)

Royal prerogative or affiliation

Lehi, the first leader of the group, is shown legitimating Nephi's leadership when he tells his eldest sons, Laman and Lemuel: "Rebel no more against your brother, whose views have been glorious, and who hath kept the commandments from the time that we left Jerusalem; and

journal/proper-names-and-political-claims-semitic-echoes-as-foundations-for-claims-to-the-nephite-throne/.

47. Noel B. Reynolds, "Nephite Kingship Reconsidered," *Faculty Publications* 1488 (1997): scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/1488.

who hath been an instrument in the hands of God, in bringing us forth into the land of promise" (2 Nephi 1:24).

Popular acclamation

Nephi himself suggests that he was pushed by the people to be their king (2 Nephi 5:18). And Nephi's younger brother Jacob tells us:

> The people having loved Nephi exceedingly, he having been a great protector for them, having wielded the sword of Laban in their defence, and having labored in all his days for their welfare — Wherefore, the people were desirous to retain in remembrance his name. And whoso should reign in his stead were called by the people, second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth, according to the reigns of the kings; and thus, they were called by the people, let them be of whatever name they would. (Jacob 1:10–11)

Military success

Nephi identifies his role as both military leader and protector in the same sentence in which he notes his possession of the sword of Laban (2 Nephi 5:14). And, in addition to Jacob's affirmation above, he also spoke of Nephi in these words: "my brother Nephi, unto whom ye look as a king or a protector, and on whom ye depend for safety" (2 Nephi 6:2). Thus, in a clear show of legitimizing imagery, Nephi is depicted as achieving military success by wielding one of the royal artifacts.

The unworthy predecessor

The unworthy predecessor is not directly invoked, although there are hints that Zedekiah (back in Jerusalem) was an unworthy predecessor. For example, Nephi wrote that "in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah . . . there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed" (1 Nephi 1:4). The issue of whether or not Zedekiah was a worthy predecessor when compared to Nephi became a matter of critical importance hundreds of years later in the context of a series of rebellions led by Mulekites, presumably within the context of their claims to the throne based on membership in the royal line of David.[48] Much could be written about the crisis

48. Hamblin, "Proper Names and Political Claims," 416–17.

of legitimacy that occurred when the system of judges replaced the monarchy (initiated in Mosiah 29). Also, there may have been additional complications due to differences in perceptions of legitimacy based on the influence of other peoples and cultures in the New World, such as the remnants of the Jaredites. However, these concerns are beyond the scope of this paper. I will restrict the comments here to note that, while later political considerations may have painted Zedekiah and his descendants as unworthy predecessors, Nephi's account pays scant attention to Zedekiah.

The unworthy rival

Nephi disparages Laman and Lemuel in many ways; for their stiff-neckedness and murmuring (1 Nephi 2:11), their murderous disposition (1 Nephi 2:13), their rebellion (1 Nephi 2:21; 7:6), the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds (1 Nephi 7:8), and their failure to hearken to the word of the Lord (1 Nephi 7:9), among other examples. The details Nephi gives about their failings certainly seem to depict Laman and Lemuel as "unworthy rivals."

Passivity

Nephi does not place great emphasis on this theme, but there are at least two examples of justification that seem to be based on passivity when he says that, "my people would that we should call the name of the place Nephi; wherefore, we did call it Nephi. And all those who were with me did take upon them to call themselves the people of Nephi" (2 Nephi 5:8–9). Additionally, he states that "they would that I should be their king. But I, Nephi, was desirous that they should have no king; nevertheless, I did for them according to that which was in my power" (2 Nephi 5:18). These passages suggest that Nephi did not seek power but rather accepted it somewhat hesitantly when it was urged upon him.

Transcendent non-retaliation

This theme is on display when Laman and Lemuel seek to kill Nephi for attempting to dissuade them from returning to Jerusalem. Despite their attempted murder, Nephi "did frankly forgive them all that they had done, and I did exhort them that they would pray unto the Lord their God for forgiveness" (1 Nephi 7:21).

The merciful victor

This theme is apparent in the story of the building of the ship, after Laman and Lemuel had been confounded and rebuked:

> And now, they said: We know of a surety that the Lord is with thee, for we know that it is the power of the Lord that has shaken us. And they fell down before me, and were about to worship me, but I would not suffer them, saying: I am thy brother, yea, even thy younger brother; wherefore, worship the Lord thy God, and honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God shall give thee. (1 Nephi 17:55)

The younger brother

Knapp refers to this theme as the *youngest* brother. I refer to it as the *younger* brother because the logic behind the apologetic applies to any younger brother who would not inherit under the law of primogeniture. To me, calling this theme "the youngest brother" seems too restrictive.

Nephi portrays himself as the archetypal younger brother who ends up ruling from almost the beginning of his record. He notes,

> I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore, I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers. . . . But, behold, Laman and Lemuel would not hearken unto my words; and being grieved because of the hardness of their hearts I cried unto the Lord for them. (1 Nephi 2:16, 18)

More importantly, Nephi declares that the Lord specifically told him, "And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren" (v. 22). Godfrey Ellis connects the themes of the Younger Brother motif and that of the Royal Affiliation motif when he notes that the story of Nephi and his brothers on the return journey from their visit to Ishmael "echoes another set of older brothers who left another younger brother, Joseph, to die."[49]

49. Ellis, "What Happened to Nephi?" 203–56. See also Larsen, "Killing Laban," 26–41.

Literary themes establishing legitimacy

Outside of these Ancient Near Eastern themes that legitimize Nephi's rule, there are unique literary themes Nephi uses to further establish his legitimacy. These make sense only within a Hebrew context. Jeff Lindsay has written a series of articles that explore the imagery of dust and its association with kingship in the Book of Mormon. Several instances of this imagery come from Isaiah 52, and in his paper, Lindsay summarizes the position of David Bokovoy:

> The issue of Nephite leadership and authority and the use of Isaiah 52:1–2 [is] especially meaningful in light of a scholar's work that establishes a connection between "rising from the dust" and kingship, enthronement, and authority.[50]

In his own paper, Bokovoy notes that Lehi's poem in 2 Nephi chapter 1 "clearly draws its inspiration from Isaiah 52, a poetic text that seeks to reverse the sufferings experienced by the exilic community through a promise of royal restoration." He explains "The passage in Isaiah is a reversal. Captive Judah will arise from the dust and sit down upon a royal throne. In contrast, her oppressor, Babylon, will undergo the exact opposite experience."[51]

Lehi and Nephi both appear to seize upon the notion of royal enthronement in Isaiah 52, and expand upon it to address ideas of political legitimacy. Lindsay expounds upon this notion, saying that:

> The political aspects of the dust-related content in Lehi's speech and Nephi's writings, coupled with other signs of Nephi's having been commissioned as prophet and leader, gave legitimacy to the reign of Nephi and his descendants and would be important for many generations thereafter. Nephi's legitimacy as Lehi's successor, established in these opening chapters of 2 Nephi, may have intentional parallels to Lehi's divine commission and his role as leader at the beginning of 1 Nephi.[52]

The fact that Nephi created scripture accounts that legitimized his rule, both within the broader Ancient Near Eastern context as well as

50. Lindsay, "Arise from the Dust," 238.
51. David Bokovoy, "Deutero-Isaiah In The Book Of Mormon: A Literary Analysis (Pt. 1)," *When Gods Were Men* (blog), 27 May 2014, patheos.com/blogs/davidbokovoy/2014/04/deutero-isaiah-in-the-book-of-mormon-a-literary-analysis-pt-1/.
52. Lindsay, "Arise From the Dust," 238–41.

within the uniquely Hebrew context, indicates that he was aware to some degree of how issues of legitimacy would change, based on the different audiences for whom he was writing. Nephi's heightened sensitivity to issues of legitimacy also explains why he seems to have considered legitimacy even for people of the far distant future that he saw in vision, as will be discussed below.

The artifacts: Nephi possesses royal treasures which legitimize his kingship

In addition to declaring his legitimacy within the standard Ancient Near Eastern framework identified by Knapp, Nephi also could declare his legitimate rule through the possession of royal artifacts. These include the plates of brass, the ball or compass which becomes known as the Liahona (2 Nephi 5:12), the sword of Laban (v. 14), and both the large plates and small plates of Nephi. As in the case with King Neriglissar mentioned above, each of these artifacts plays a specific role in the service of royal legitimacy.

Brett Holbrook discusses the specific use of swords as symbols of royal power:

> As a symbol of power in war, the sword came to be part of the regalia (royal objects) owned by kings that justified their kingship and rule. The sword was passed on to the heir as a transfer of authority, and the giving of a sword to the new king was a widespread feature of coronation ceremonies.[53]

He then goes on to note that the sword of Laban held a similar symbolic place as part of the royal regalia of the Nephites:

> Held by the Nephite kings and leaders, the people saw the sword of Laban as a religious symbol and a sign of the leader's kingship and power.[54]

Holbrook also notes that David kept the sword of Goliath as a token of his royal legitimacy, and that it was after David retained the sword that the priest Abiathar brought the holy ephod and joined David, thus further increasing his legitimacy.[55] Nephi's use of the sword of Laban mirrors David's use of the sword of Goliath.

53. Brett L. Holbrook, "The Sword of Laban as a Symbol of Divine Authority and Kingship," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 1(1993): 42, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol2/iss1/4.
54. Holbrook, "The Sword of Laban," 54.
55. Holbrook, "The Sword of Laban," 52.

The sword of Laban is also specifically mentioned by both Nephi and his brother, Jacob, in the context of Nephi's military prowess. Gordon C. Thomasson adds to the sword of Laban the Liahona, the plates of brass, and the large plates and small plates of Nephi as the royal treasures of the Nephites. He also draws particular attention to the genealogy of Joseph of Egypt (found on the plates of brass) as providing legitimacy by descent.[56] Likewise, in an in-depth discussion of the point at which Nephi assumed the leadership of the family of Lehi, Ellis discusses the royal Nephite artifacts and shows that the possession of a specific artifact or artifacts was often seen as a metaphor for leadership and royal authority.[57]

The plates of brass were an important artifact that was both functional (in terms of transmitting cultural and religious information) as well as symbolic. As the plates of brass were obtained by Nephi at Lehi's behest, one can perceive possible narrative choices made by Nephi that highlight the Divine Election, Royal Prerogative, and Unworthy Rival motifs. Lehi said to Nephi:

> And now, behold thy brothers murmur, saying it is a hard thing which I have required of them; but behold I have not required it of them, but it is a commandment of the Lord. Therefore go, my son, and thou shalt be favored of the Lord, because thou hast not murmured. (1 Nephi 3:5–6)

From their initial murmuring to their willingness to give up after the first failure to obtain the plates, Laman and Lemuel show themselves to be unworthy rivals. The appearance of an angel who berates Laman and Lemuel cements the idea of Nephi's superior worthiness in the eyes of God. The angel's rhetorical question to Laman and Lemuel: "Know ye not that the Lord hath chosen him to be a ruler over you, and this because of your iniquities?" (1 Nephi 3:29). This makes Nephi's Divine Election clear.

The narration of the scene in which Nephi slays Laban in a way that could be considered to echo David's rise to power is a strong demonstration of Nephi's early claim to divinely sanctioned leadership.[58]

56. Gordon C. Thomasson, "Mosiah: The Complex Symbolism and Symbolic Complex of Kingship in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 2, no. 1 (1993): 25–26, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol2/iss1/3.
57. Ellis, "What Happened to Nephi?" 223–26.
58. Ben McGuire, "Nephi and Goliath: A Case Study of Literary Allusion in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 18, no. 1 (2009): 15, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol18/iss1/12.

(Note, as well, that David was also a younger son and irregular king.) Val Larsen suggests that Nephi's behavior in the case of Laban was meant to demonstrate that Nephi acted as a legitimate monarch executing justice. He identifies six layers in the story of Nephi executing Laban that contribute to the notion that Nephi was a dutiful sovereign performing a divinely sanctioned duty.[59] In this story, Nephi obtains the sword of Laban and the plates of brass, both of which became royal treasures that conveyed great legitimacy on their bearers. (For example, see Omni 1:14 and Mosiah 10:16.)

Another story associated with a royal relic, which also bolsters Nephi's claim to divinely sanctioned leadership, is that of the Liahona ("the round ball of curious workmanship"; 1 Nephi 16:10) and the broken bow. In this story, Nephi demonstrates not only the tangible results of his greater favor with the Lord, he also appears to show greater faith during this event than his father, Lehi (see 1 Nephi 16:25). Godfrey Ellis sees the story of the broken bow as the transition point wherein Nephi takes over the lead of the expedition.[60] In this story it is Nephi who follows the directions on the Liahona to go and obtain food for the party (1 Nephi 16:30). When Nephi's brothers rebel, the voice of Lord chastens them, once again confirming Nephi's divinely sanctioned leadership over them (v. 39).

The legitimacy of Nephi's leadership is made even more apparent in the story of the rebellion of his brothers at sea. On the ocean voyage to the new land of promise, the Liahona "did cease to work" (1 Nephi 18:12). After his brothers reluctantly freed Nephi, "the compass worked only for him."[61] The fact that a key royal artifact would function only when in the hands of the rightful, divinely appointed ruler is a point that is apparent in this story. This attribute is a part of the Ancient Near Eastern conception of the one true king who possesses qualities that pretenders cannot imitate.

The large plates and the small plates of Nephi, both of which were written under direct instruction from God (see 1 Nephi 9), constitute yet another clear indication of divine election. Thus, all the royal artifacts of

59. Larsen, "Killing Laban," 26–41, 84–85.
60. Ellis, "What Happened to Nephi?" 213–20.
61. Timothy Gervais and John L. Joyce, "'By Small Means': Rethinking the Liahona," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 30 (2018): 223, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/by-small-means-rethinking-the-liahona/.

the Nephites serve as powerful reminders of royal legitimacy through their association with the foundational stories of the Nephite nation.

The divine powers: Nephi's kingship is legitimized by his royal line and his priestly role

Shortly after the death of Lehi, and the final rupture between Nephi and his brothers, Nephi asserts his divinely sanctioned kingship through the construction of the critical sacral and monumental building, the temple (see 2 Nephi 5:16). In addition to the essential act of temple building, Nephi's status as prophet and religious leader is reinforced by his constant communication with the Lord (2 Nephi 5:1), by consecrating priests, and by recording his prophecies and visions (2 Nephi 5:26, 29).

Not only is Nephi endowed with the role of prophet and priest, but he also records his royal affiliation by citing his descendancy from Joseph in Egypt (see 1 Nephi 5:14; 2 Nephi 3:4). This was an important and widely venerated ancestor who had become next in power to Pharaoh himself (see Genesis 41:40). Nephi's leadership is also compared to Moses (see 1 Nephi 4:2; 17:23–32) who was the epitome of the divinely sanctioned lawgiver.[62] These actions position Nephi securely within the Ancient Near Eastern concept of kingship in which the king acts as the agent of his patron deity, holds both priestly and political power, and exercises power from both roles in the construction of a temple.

Nephi's relationship to Joseph of Egypt also seems to have set an additional criterion for kingship among the Nephites. Just as Joseph became a mighty prophet and seer (see 2 Nephi 3), it seems that the royal line of Nephi was to possess the gifts of seership and prophecy (see Omni 1:13; Words of Mormon 1:17; Mosiah 8:13). A king who could prophesy and see the future could therefore demonstrate his legitimacy by possessing the gifts of the line of Joseph.

The outcome of Nephi's legitimizing efforts

Nephi's efforts to legitimate his rule were remarkably successful in establishing the Nephite sovereignty, which lasted for four-hundred years. His efforts were so successful that it seems that many Nephites, as exemplified by Zeniff, found it difficult to leave behind the land and temple that were closely associated with Nephi.[63] Zeniff indirectly

62. Reynolds, "Nephite Kingship Reconsidered," 9–24.

63. Val Larsen, "Prophet or Loss: $Mosiah_1$/Zeniff, Benjamin/Noah, $Mosiah_2$/

points out Nephi's success in establishing his kingship based on the Ancient Near Eastern pattern when the counterclaims of the Lamanites, which Zeniff cites, are made on the same established patterns of legitimacy as Nephi's. Thus, the Lamanites were "wroth" because of Nephi's claims of divine sanction (see Mosiah 10:12–14), also wroth because of his violation of the custom of primogeniture (v. 15), and wroth because he "robbed them" of royal relics (v. 16).[64] Significantly, they claimed he had "taken the ruling of the people out of their hands" (v. 15).

Challenges to the primacy of Nephite domination of the government reached a critical point hundreds of years later when the link between the reign of the Nephite kings and rulership of the people was severed upon the death of King Mosiah, son of King Benjamin (see Mosiah 29). These challenges are unsurprising when viewing the political situation through the lens of legitimacy. Val Larsen proposes a model that explains the Amlicite rebellion as a direct reaction to the perceived illegitimacy of the newly developed reign of the judges (in contrast to the legitimacy of the rulership of Nephi that the judgeship replaced; see Alma 2–3).[65]

Nephi's efforts at legitimizing his rule built the foundation of a four-hundred year political and spiritual kingdom, which ended not because of a successful internal rebellion, but because the final ruler, Mosiah, willingly chose to end the rule of Nephi's line.[66]

Who may have served as model irregular kings for Nephi's legitimizing efforts?

The concept of political legitimacy in the Ancient Near East would have, at least to some degree, been a part of Nephi's cultural milieu.

Limhi and the Emergence of the Almas," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 60 (2024): 371, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/prophet-or-loss-mosiah1-zeniff-benjamin-noah-mosiah2-limhi-and-the-emergence-of-the-almas/.

64. A. Keith Thompson, "Who Was Sherem?" *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 14 (2015): 7n45, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/who-was-sherem/.
65. Val Larsen, "In His Footsteps: $Ammon_1$ and $Ammon_2$," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 3 (2013): 85–113, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/in-his-footsteps-ammon-and-ammon/.
66. It is unclear in the record whether or not Mosiah I and his descendants (Benjamin and Mosiah II) were continuous with the dynasty established by Nephi. It may be that Mosiah I was only made king after fleeing the city of Nephi, in which case Nephi's successful dynasty would have been shorter by three generations.

He was surely exposed to concrete examples of how an Ancient Near Eastern king could go about legitimizing his rule. Ben McGuire has commented on how Nephi employed motifs associated with King David as a means of communicating his political legitimacy to his subjects.[67] Similarly, Andrew Knapp uses David as an example of several of the various types of apologetics for irregular kings.[68] Indeed, David's dynasty is an excellent illustration of the difficulties irregular kings face when their legitimacy is in question, for David's reign and that of his descendants were riven with revolt and succession crises. The instability of the regime is illustrated by the stories of Absalom, Sheba the Benjamite, Adonijah, Solomon, and Jeroboam.

While the details of each of these stories are sparse in the Bible, there are a few examples that make it clear that these kings and would-be kings were attuned to the requirements of political legitimacy. Adonijah, for example, attempted to force the issue of succession based on his primogeniture and public acclaim, including the support of many of the court officials and nearly all of his brothers. Solomon, on the other hand, made use of the apologetic elements of Divine Election, Royal Prerogative, and Younger Son. When Adonijah apparently tried to burnish his claim to royal affiliation by marrying David's young wife, Abishag, Solomon had him killed (see 1 Kings 2:16–25). Knapp suggests that other biblical kings also employed the apologetics of irregular kings, discussing Jehu in the context of Divine Election and the Unworthy Predecessor, and also Joash in the context of the Unworthy Predecessor.

There are other Ancient Near Eastern kings who employed the motifs discussed by Knapp, and whose proximity, impact, and regnal years were likely of significant interest to the Hebrews of Nephi's day. They may have been sufficiently important for Nephi to be aware of their stories, including kings such as Esarhaddon, Assurbanipal, and Nabopolassar. A brief summary of each may illustrate their legitimization, which Nephi may have witnessed (or at least been aware of).

Esarhaddon was a younger brother who outfought his older brothers to win the kingdom of Assyria. He had an extensive apologetic written providing justifications that fit well within the themes of Divine Election, Military Victor, and Royal Prerogative. For example, he claimed that his father designated him as the heir despite the claims of his older brothers on the custom of primogeniture. This royal chronicle

67. McGuire, "Nephi and Goliath," 16–31.
68. Knapp, *Royal Apologetic*, 49–55.

is a part of what Knapp calls "Esarhaddon's legitimacy propaganda campaign."[69]

Like his father Esarhaddon, Assurbanipal was a younger brother who was proclaimed king over his elder brother. Assurbanipal had multiple legitimation texts written in which he claims favor with the goddess, Ishtar. He also claimed to fulfill prophecy in his actions as an agent of the gods. Unlike Assurbanipal, the elder brother, Šamaš-šuma-ukīn, is shown as having overthrown the traditions of his fathers in order to adopt Babylonian practices instead. Shana Zaia notes that Šamaš-šuma-ukīn constructed his political identity in a way which "was not congruent with the ruler's ethnic, familial, or cultural background."[70] His fascination with and adoption of Babylonian culture is depicted as having resulted in his corruption, resulting in Šamaš-šuma-ukīn breaking off the previously warm relationship with his brother and making common cause with many of Assyria's enemies, including the Elamites and the Arabians.

In his confrontation with Šamaš-šuma-ukīn, Assurbanipal used several of the irregular king apologetics, including, Divine Election, Royal Affiliation, Popular Acclaim, Military Success, the Unworthy Rival, the Younger Brother, and Passivity. Assurbanipal characterized his brother as a traitor and heretic who betrayed his family and identity and, by so doing, provoked the wrath of the gods. While Assurbanipal could have boasted about defeating his brother in battle, the chronicle instead tells of:

> Ambiguity as to whether he was executed, committed suicide, died accidentally, or was killed in some other way; the texts say only that it was a "cruel death" and that the gods "consigned him to a fire and destroyed his life" with one inscription stating that the gods "made the fire-god grasp his hands (and) had his body burned."[71]

Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon in the time just prior to Lehi's flight to the new world, was likely infamous in Jerusalem. The expansion of the Babylonian Empire was one of the chief political concerns

69. Andrew Knapp, "The Sitz Im Leben of Esarhaddon's Apology," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 68 (2016): 181–95, doi.org/10.5615/jcunestud.68.2016.0181.
70. Shana Zaia, "Going Native: Šamaš-šuma-ukīn, Assyrian King of Babylon," *Iraq* 81 (2019): 247, jstor.org/stable/26888063.
71. Shana Zaia, "My Brother's Keeper: Assurbanipal versus Šamaš-šuma-ukīn," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* 6, no. 1, (2019): 19–52, doi.org/10.1515/janeh-2018-2001.

in Jerusalem in Lehi's day, and the kings of Judah played a dangerous game of shifting alliances between the declining Egyptian Empire (which installed Jehoiakim as the king of Judah, but only as an Egyptian vassal) and the waxing power of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.[72]

Nabopolassar was portrayed as a champion of the people, who rebelled against the corrupt and oppressive Assyrian overlords. He was the avenger of Akkad, a prophesied liberator, and a restorer of order, while his Assyrian foes were depicted as unworthy predecessors who committed all manner of unspeakable crimes against both gods and men, serving chaos and destroying the land. The god Marduk was said to have aided Nabopolassar in defeating his enemies and restoring order to the land, thus granting military and administrative prowess.[73] Nabopolassar displayed both great piety and humility, attributing his successes to Marduk and denigrating himself. Knapp stresses how Nabopolassar utilized the motifs of the Unworthy Predecessor and Divine Election in his inscriptions. Interestingly, Nabopolassar broke with the Royal Affiliation motif. Instead, he called himself "the servant who was anonymous among the people" prior to his successful leadership of the revolt.

The above-mentioned kings may have influenced Nephi's understanding of acceptable apologetics for irregular kings. Their usage of common motifs contributed to the cultural milieu in Jerusalem, which defined what constituted political legitimacy for a monarch of that time and region.

Joseph Smith: The Once and Future King

The importance of a leader demonstrating his legitimacy may be as mandatory in modern times as it was anciently. The inability to do so may lead to contention and dissension. This critical point was understood very well by Nephi, a prophet who spent so much effort engraving upon the plates his visions of the latter days that he is called by one scholar a "prophet of the restoration."[74] Nephi's high level of sen-

72. Knapp, *Royal Apologetic*, 62–63.
73. Rocio Da Riva, "The Figure of Nabopolassar in Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Historiographic Tradition: BM 34793 and CUA 90," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 76, no. 1 (2017): 75–92, jstor.org/stable/26557692.
74. S. Brent Farley, "Nephi, Isaiah, and the Latter-day Restoration," in *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 227–39.

sitivity to questions of legitimacy was not restricted to his own irregular kingship. With miraculous and prophetic foresight, he realized that a latter-day prophet, Joseph Smith, would face similar difficulties establishing his legitimacy in the face of incredulity and opposition. Accordingly, and perhaps surprisingly to many readers, Nephi and other Book of Mormon prophets appear to have taken steps to help establish the legitimacy of the prophet of the far-distant future who would bring their words to light. They appear to have done this by extending to Joseph Smith the same Ancient Near Eastern framework of royal legitimacy that they applied to themselves.

Joseph Smith as the inheritor of the legacies of Moses and Joseph of Egypt

The extensive prophecy attributed to Joseph of Egypt in 2 Nephi 3, given in the context of Lehi's words to his son Joseph, can be viewed as an apologetic meant to bolster the legitimacy of Joseph Smith. In a sense, Joseph Smith can be understood as an irregular "king" who faced many of the same challenges that Nephi faced. In fact, Nephi's prophecy of a future Joseph appears to use the triad of legitimacy to bolster the young prophet as a leader. This included Divine Election, Royal Affiliation, and Popular Acclaim. What is more, as discussed below, a mystery is resolved by viewing Joseph Smith as the chosen inheritor of the tradition of sacred Nephite kingship.

As it relates to Joseph Smith, the prophecy of the future revelator of the Hebrew tradition opens with Divine Election, in which the ancient prophet, Joseph of Egypt, sees a future prophet whom the Lord would raise up from among his descendants (see 2 Nephi 3:6). This future prophet is depicted as receiving his direction directly from God (v. 7). In fact, God himself says that he would "make him great in mine eyes" (v. 8). The message that this is a Divinely Elected prophet is reinforced by comparing Joseph Smith to the great prophet and lawgiver, Moses (v. 9) and by the statement that God would give him "power to bring forth my word" (v. 11). In these and a few subsequent passages (vv. 12–15, 18), Joseph Smith's divine election is abundantly clear.

The Royal Affiliation of Joseph Smith, the future seer, is also made clear in the prophecy linking him directly to Joseph of Egypt, the great Hebrew prophet and seer. As with the Divine Election noted above, Joseph Smith is also associated here with Moses, the eventual founder of the nation. Joseph of Egypt notes that the the Lord told him that the future latter-day prophet was to come "out of the fruit of thy

loins" (2 Nephi 3:7). We are then told that this prophet "shall be great like unto Moses" (v. 9). The work that Joseph Smith is to perform—bringing salvation to Israel—is shown to be similar to the work of both Joseph of Egypt and Moses. That Royal Affiliation is again highlighted when Joseph of Egypt draws a direct comparison to himself, saying:

> And his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father. And he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation. (2 Nephi 3:15)

The Popular Acclaim of the future prophet is somewhat muted in this passage in comparison to the other two elements of the triad. In the Book of Mormon there is only a brief note that the latter-day seer "shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins" (2 Nephi 3:7). However, there are other related prophecies. First, the "great worth" of the work he would do for his brethren is mentioned (v. 7). Then it is noted that his work would convince his brethren of other words of God and confound false doctrines, dismiss contentions, establish peace among the descendancy of Joseph of Egypt, and bring them to a knowledge of their fathers (vv. 11–12). A stronger mention of popular acclaim would have to await a prophecy from another Book of Mormon prophet, Moroni. The resurrected Moroni told Joseph Smith in 1823 that his "name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people" (Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

One scholar specializing on the life of Joseph Smith, Richard Bushman, has indicated that Joseph Smith's legitimacy hinged primarily on his Divine Election, as shown by his ability to exercise divinely delegated power.[75] Bushman notes that the legitimacy of Joseph's leadership was challenged on many different bases, but the strongest was always a question of whether or not he actually received divine communication and keys of authority.

Of course, Joseph Smith was not a king, but his unique role in the leadership of the restored Church required him to exercise many of the prerogatives of Ancient Near Eastern kings. He acted as the divine agent of his patron God, exercised sovereign authority over the

75. Richard Lyman Bushman, "Joseph Smith and Power," in *A Firm Foundation: Church Organization and Administration*, ed. David J. Whittaker and Arnold K. Garr (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 1–13.

Church, established a new code of laws, cared for the poor, founded cities, made decisions designed to promote the economic welfare of his people, and built temples. All of these actions indicate that Joseph Smith may indeed be understood as a king from the standpoint of Ancient Near Eastern culture, though such a role was distasteful to the sentiments of his detractors.[76] Bushman writes:

> Joseph Smith was accused of authoritarian control. In 1834 he complained that the cry of his critics was "Tyrant! Pope!! King!!!" And from the point of view of American democracy, the charges were justified. Charismatic leadership almost inevitably involves unchecked power. Because authority originates in the leader's gifts, who can restrain him? The very nature of charismatic governance rules out any criticism of the leader's powers. Neither his followers nor his lieutenants can challenge the charismatic leader's will without undermining the movement. To imply that his gifts have failed and the leader has erred destroys the foundation on which the entire enterprise rests. Everyone must yield to the leader's will because his power supports everything else.[77]

This is not merely theoretical. Many of the most prominent dissenters from the Latter-day Saint movement left because of what they perceived as Joseph Smith's despotic abuse of power.[78] The arguments of Joseph's detractors, both from within and without the Church, were inevitably arguments of legitimacy that essentially stated that Joseph had "lost the mandate of Heaven." A critical point to note here is that the Church, with its essentially authoritarian and top-down structure, depends entirely on the morally correct actions of its leaders to maintain its legitimacy. Bushman observes that:

> Paradoxically, the very factor that seems to underlie

76. A. Keith Thompson, "The Habeas Corpus Protection of Joseph Smith from Missouri Arrest Requisitions." *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 29 (2018): 274, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-habeas-corpus-protection-of-joseph-smith-from-missouri-arrest-requisitions/.
77. Bushman, "Joseph Smith and Power," 7.
78. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, "'There's the Boy I Can Trust': Dennison Lott Harris' First-Person Account of the Conspiracy of Nauvoo and Events Surrounding Joseph Smith's 'Last Charge' to the Twelve Apostles," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 21 (2016): 23–117, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/theres-the-boy-i-can-trust-dennison-lott-harris-first-person-account-of-the-conspiracy-of-nauvoo-and-events-surrounding-joseph-smiths-last-charge/.

> authoritarianism in the Church is also the chief restraint on power. Church leaders at every level from top to bottom are believed to act on behalf of God. In the minds of the people, that is the source of their legitimacy. They are not elected to office, nor do they inherit their positions; they receive a call from the heavens. Their authority, therefore, is essentially godly.[79]

Bushman's view that Joseph Smith and those who follow him in the prophetic office are essentially charismatic monarchs seems to agree with the view of Nephi and other Book of Mormon authors. Indeed, those authors appear to have understood the future prophet within the context of Nephite monarchy. For Nephi and later prophets, Joseph Smith's legitimacy as the future leader of God's kingdom rests on the same pillars as the legitimacy of Nephi and many subsequent Book of Mormon leaders. Thus, prophecies about Joseph Smith, such as that given by Moroni in Mormon 8, address legitimacy in Nephite terms, stating that only Divine Election, combined with an eye single to God's glory, can empower a worthy prophet to bring to light the Nephite record (see Mormon 8:14–16).

It is unlikely that the Book of Mormon prophets would have known the details of how the assaults on Joseph's legitimacy would occur. However, some of the prophecies of Lehi, Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni could be interpreted as providing support to shore up the foundation of Joseph's legitimacy. If this is correct, they did so to such a degree that Joseph's legitimacy is inextricably tied to the Book of Mormon as the authentic product of an ancient civilization.

Joseph Smith and the restoration of the temple

As already noted, Ancient Near Eastern kings associated themselves closely with a temple as a means of legitimizing their rule. Irregular kings, in particular, frequently either built new temples or renovated existing temples as a way of associating themselves with the legitimizing influence of the divine. In the latter-day kingdom of God, it is notable that the building of temples and the participation of Church members in temple rituals and ordinances were absolutely essential to Joseph Smith's theology, as revealed to him by the Lord. Joseph taught: "The Church is not fully organized, in its proper order, and cannot be, until the Temple is completed, where places will be provided for

79. Bushman, "Joseph Smith and Power," 9.

the administration of the ordinances of the Priesthood."[80] Additionally, he explained that the purpose of gathering the people of God in any dispensation is primarily in order to build temples. He said:

> What was the object of gathering the . . . people of God in any age of the world? . . . The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose.[81]

In this focus on the importance of building temples, Joseph Smith more closely resembled Ancient Near Eastern kings than did any of his Christian contemporaries. In a study of ancient temples, John M. Lundquist pointed out: "The temple is the central, organizing, unifying institution in ancient Near Eastern society. The temple is associated with abundance and prosperity; indeed, it is perceived as the giver of these."[82] Despite the extreme poverty of Church members early in the Restoration, as soon as there was a body of Saints sufficiently large to undertake the endeavor, albeit at great sacrifice on their part, a beautiful temple was built in Kirtland, Ohio. Steven C. Harper writes that:

> Joseph worked hard to get the Saints to see the importance of the momentous revelation and to understand the temple and ultimate blessings. Like Moses, he wanted to usher his sometimes-shortsighted people into the presence of the Lord (see Doctrine and Covenants 84). The temple revelations preoccupied Joseph's attention. He wanted their promised blessings, and he worked to explain them to the Saints. Joseph was driven by section 88's command to build a temple and by the promise that the Lord would honor them with his presence (see Doctrine and Covenants

80. "The House of the Lord," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2025, history.churchofjesuschrist.org/content/the-house-of-the-lord.
81. "The House of the Lord," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
82. John M. Lundquist, "The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East," in *The Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1984), 53–76.

> 88:68). He urged the Saints forward, at enormous sacrifice, to build the house of the Lord in Kirtland.[83]

In his drive to build a temple and restore the ancient ordinances associated therewith, Joseph Smith was similar to the ancient Hebrew prophet-kings David, Solomon, and Nephi. There is perhaps no greater support for Joseph's Divine Election than the tremendous outpouring of spiritual power following the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. Many of the early Saints of the Restoration testified that they had experienced something akin to the day of Pentecost as described in the New Testament (see Acts 2). One eyewitness recorded:

> [S]ome have seen the heavens opened & seen the savior others have seen angels on the four corners of the house of the Lord with drawn swords & also stood thick on the ridge Elisha with his chariot of Fire, Peter John & James, & the highway cast up the ten tribes returning in chariots as far as the eye could extend some saw the Redemtion of Zion.[84]

Surely one would be hard pressed to find any clearer indication of the imprimatur of divine favor than what was experienced by these early Saints. This event may have been when Joseph Smith's divinely elected leadership appeared at its zenith.

The mystery of the sword of Laban and the Liahona

A mystery that has intrigued some members of the Church is the fact that, in addition to the plates that he was to translate and the Urim and Thummim he would use to aid in the translation, Joseph Smith was also given the breastplate, the sword of Laban, and the Liahona. Why were these artifacts, of no apparent value to Joseph's translation work, included with the plates and interpreters?

Brett Holbrook suggests that the sword of Laban was given to Joseph not only as a symbol of divine power and authority, but also as a symbol of kingship and royal power. He indicates that early members of the Church, including Brigham Young, found Joseph's possession

83. Steven C. Harper, "Joseph Smith and the Kirtland Temple, 1836," in *Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 239, rsc.byu.edu/sites/default/files/pub_content/pdf/09%20Harper.pdf.

84. Steven C. Harper, "Pentecost Continued: A Contemporaneous Account of the Kirtland Temple Dedication," *BYU Studies* 42, no. 2. (2003): 17, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol42/iss2/10.

of the sword to be an important confirmation of his leadership and authority in the kingdom of God.[85]

These royal artifacts seem to have been such an important part of establishing Joseph Smith's legitimacy that they were shown to the three men who were subsequently commanded to bear witness that Joseph possessed not only the plates and interpreters, but all of the Nephite royal relics that are mentioned in the Book of Mormon (see Doctrine and Covenants 17:1–5). That these things were given to Joseph by God and by Moroni (the rightful heir of the treasures) suggests that one purpose of their inclusion was for the bestowal of legitimacy, establishing thereby both Divine Election and Royal Prerogative.

Joseph Smith and popular acclamation

To complete the triad of legitimacy, the fact of Joseph's Popular Acclaim is perhaps best seen in the epitaph given for him in Doctrine and Covenants 135:3, which contains several references to the criteria of legitimacy:

> Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. In the short space of twenty years, he has brought forth the Book of Mormon, which he translated by the gift and power of God, and has been the means of publishing it on two continents; has sent the fulness of the everlasting gospel, which it contained, to the four quarters of the earth; has brought forth the revelations and commandments which compose this book of Doctrine and Covenants, and many other wise documents and instructions for the benefit of the children of men; gathered many thousands of the Latter-day Saints, founded a great city, and left a fame and name that cannot be slain. He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood.

85. Brett L. Holbrook, "The Sword of Laban as a Symbol of Divine Authority and Kingship," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 1 (1993): 39–72, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol2/iss1/4.

Summary and Conclusions

This study has examined the matter of political and prophetic legitimacy as it pertains to ancient and modern figures, focusing on the ways in which Nephi and Joseph Smith can both be understood as "irregular kings" whose authority required theological, narrative, and symbolic validation beyond hereditary succession. Drawing upon comparative material from the Ancient Near East, this article identifies a shared cultural logic underlying ancient apologetics of kingship. It argues that the Book of Mormon intentionally adopts this framework in its portrayal of Nephi — and, by prophetic extension, of Joseph Smith — both having been divinely sanctioned leaders.

Within the Ancient Near East, kingship was sustained by a recognizable triad of legitimacy — Divine Election, Royal Affiliation, and Popular Acclamation — often supplemented by further motifs such as the Unworthy Predecessor, Passivity, Merciful Victor, or Younger Brother. These legitimizing strategies formed a common rhetorical repertoire through which "irregular" rulers — those who came to power outside normal dynastic channels — could justify their right to rule. As this study demonstrates, the Book of Mormon record displays these same patterns with remarkable consistency. It explicitly emphasizes Nephi's divine appointment as both leader and prophet: "thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren" (1 Nephi 2:22); his father Lehi's acknowledgment of his leadership (2 Nephi 1:24); and the love and loyalty of his people (Jacob 1:10–11). Nephi's account further aligns with Ancient Near Eastern royal ideology through the possession of sacred regalia — the sword of Laban, the plates of brass, the Liahona, and the large and small plates of Nephi — each functioning as an emblem of covenantal authority and divine favor. Additionally, Nephi's construction of a temple and his assumption of both priestly and prophetic roles complete the pattern by which Ancient Near Eastern monarchs affirmed their divine legitimacy through sacral service and monumental building.

The article extends this analysis to Joseph Smith, suggesting that Book of Mormon prophets foresaw and, if my theory is correct, intentionally situated the future prophet of the Restoration within this same legitimating paradigm. The prophecy of 2 Nephi 3 presents Joseph Smith as the divinely elected seer of the latter days — descended from Joseph of Egypt (Royal Affiliation), commissioned by God to bring forth sacred scripture and authority (Divine Election), and ultimately recognized and revered among his people (Popular Acclamation). In

addition to these textual parallels, Joseph's reception of the Nephite royal relics — the plates, interpreters, breastplate, sword of Laban, and Liahona — constitutes a symbolic transference of sacral leadership from the Nephite era to the dispensation of the Restoration. Joseph's theology of temple building and his exercise of charismatic, prophetic authority align him not with democratic models of leadership, but with the Ancient Near Eastern conception of a king as a divine agent who was responsible for building the temple, revealing divine law, and maintaining cosmic order.

Viewed through this comparative lens, Nephi and Joseph Smith emerge as participants in a single theological tradition of irregular kingship — leaders raised up by divine mandate rather than by inheritance or popular election. Both employ the legitimating instruments of ancient monarchs: authoritative narrative, possession of sacred relics, and association with the temple as the nexus of divine power. In both cases, legitimacy is not conferred by human convention, but derived from divine election, revelation, and covenantal stewardship.

Those who sought to assault Joseph Smith's legitimacy in the early years of the Church, as well as those who do so today, may intuitively recognize that Joseph's credibility rests on the accuracy of the apologetics discussed herein. Like those who challenged the right to rule of Ancient Near Eastern kings, Joseph's detractors target his legitimacy. Some may attack the story of his ascension by bringing into question the accuracy of the First Vision. Others may insist that his exercise of divine powers such as prophecy and revelation was fraudulent. Still others may dismiss the stories of gold plates delivered by a divine messenger as fantasy. And perhaps most of all, they fail to recognize that, ultimately, the strongest evidence of Joseph's prophetic calling is the Book of Mormon itself.

This study proposes that the Book of Mormon deliberately situates both its founding prophet and its latter-day translator within an ancient apologetic framework of kingship, one that reconciles the irregular rise of divinely appointed leaders with the enduring requirement of legitimacy. Nephi's successful establishment of a dynastic kingship lasted more than four centuries and Joseph Smith's restoration of prophetic authority through sacred artifacts and temple ordinances has lasted two centuries and counting. Both attest to a shared theology: that true rule — whether ancient or modern — is legitimate only insofar as it is sanctioned by God. Through their respective narratives, both figures reaffirm the enduring Near Eastern conviction that sovereignty is

sacred, that leadership is covenantal, and that divine election remains the ultimate foundation of legitimacy.

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Christmas Stars: Inviting Us to Come to Christ

Shirley S. Ricks

Abstract: *The Christmas season evokes tender feelings within us as we contemplate the newborn Christ child, whose life and mission would change the world forever. Many retellings of the nativity story include the unusual—the awkward boy/innkeeper who impulsively offers his own room to Mary and Joseph or the Herdman kids who unwittingly impart a realistic view of the Christ child's birth. The Christmas star of Bethlehem, leading the wise men to the newborn baby, symbolically invites us to come unto Christ as we celebrate the season through memorable stories and Christmas songs.*

What is it about the Christmas season that tends to evoke tender feelings within us? Naturally, we think of the newborn Christ child, whose life and mission would alter the course of the world forever. We think of his earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, and the challenges that were yet in their future. We think of those who followed a star in order to worship the young child and of those who professed a desire, though stemming from ulterior motives, to find the babe and worship him.

Often, our hearts are touched by the stories of love, compassion, and kindness that seem to abound at this time of year—stories that perhaps have a different twist from the usual retelling of those first Christmas events.

Unlikely Stars in the Christmas Pageant

I think, for example, of the *Guideposts* story, "Trouble at the Inn," by Dina Donohue, which I read in 1966.[1] Wallace Purling, a nine-year-old, was larger than his second-grade classmates. He should have been in the fourth grade, but he was held back because he was a bit slow in body and mind. Wally was nevertheless well-liked and relished the thought that he might be a shepherd in the annual Christmas pageant. Because of his size, though, Miss Lumbard assigned him instead to fill the role of the innkeeper. She assumed that Wally, as the innkeeper, would be successful in learning and reciting his few lines.

All proceeded according to script as Joseph tenderly guided Mary to the door of the inn. When Joseph knocked on the door, Wally, the innkeeper, swung open the door and asked, "What do you want?" Joseph's reply, "We seek lodging," brought forth a stern response from Wally, "Seek it elsewhere; the inn is filled." Joseph pleaded again because of their weariness, but Wally properly answered, "There is no room in this inn for you." Once more declaring their weariness, Joseph explained that his wife was heavy with child and just needed a small corner. After a long pause and some prompting, Wally dutifully recited his line, "No! Begone!" The couple wearily started to leave while Wally stood in the doorway, his eyes filling with tears. And suddenly, Wally found a better solution. "Don't go, Joseph," he called out. "Bring Mary back." And smiling, Wally offered, "You can have my room." Those in attendance would never forget that remarkable Christmas pageant as the innkeeper became the star of the show.

Many of us are also familiar with Barbara Robinson's fictional story of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*,[2] a novel made into a movie about the six Herdman siblings who are known as "the worst kids in the world." Though the Herdmans really have no inkling of what the Christmas story is about, the children hijack the town's annual Christmas pageant and demand the most important roles, mainly because food and treats are involved. Since everyone fears the Herdmans, these incorrigible children are allowed to take on the roles of Mary, Joseph, the three wise men, and the angel of the Lord. Slowly, these unruly, irreverent children start to learn about Christ and his birth. Imogene, the oldest Herdman,

1. Dina Donohue, "Trouble at the Inn," *Guideposts*, December 1966, guideposts.org/inspiring-stories/people-helping-people/trouble-at-the-inn/.
2. Barbara Robinson, *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972). Movie adaptations include a 1983 version directed by George Shaefer and a 2024 version directed by Dallas Jenkins.

who commandeers the role of Mary, ultimately dresses as a genuine refugee might have, thumps the back of the baby Jesus vigorously to burp him, and ultimately comes to recognize, with tears streaming down her face, the crucial role that Mary played in bringing forth Jesus, the Son of God. These unusual stars in the nativity play brought new meaning and reflection to the first act of the greatest story ever told.

The Christmas I Remember Best

Such stories often tug at our heartstrings. As I was growing up in Utah, one of the Christmas features published during December by the *Deseret News* was a series entitled "The Christmas I Remember Best." I was always eager to read every account that was shared during the Christmas season. Heartfelt and often poignant stories were related as individuals recalled a special Christmas in their lives.

In his 2010 Christmas devotional address entitled "A Bright Shining Star," President Thomas S. Monson, the consummate storyteller, retold in his own words one such story written by John B. Matheson Jr. In December 1945, Matheson was serving in the army of occupation in Frankfurt, Germany. Wanting to give a gift to the frail, elderly woman who cleaned their quarters, Matheson gathered up some extra candy bars, soap, and cans of fruit juice and left them for the woman. He thought smugly that his generous gift, though not given in compassion but in pity, was the best of all.

Not expecting to receive anything in return, he was surprised and humbled to see her simple gift to him.

> On that dimly lit table, along with her painstakingly written "Merry Christmas," were 10 old and dog-eared picture postcard scenes of Frankfurt as it had appeared before the war had so devastated it. The housekeeper had placed each card on edge and fastened them together so that every 2 cards formed a point and all 10 together formed the Christmas star.

She gave all she had, and Matheson reported that the little housekeeper's Christmas star shone brightly throughout his life, reminding him of the true meaning of love and giving.[3]

For me personally, the Christmas I remember best occurred when

3. See Thomas S. Monson, "A Bright Shining Star," 2010 Christmas Devotional, 6 December 2010, Conference Center, Salt Lake City, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/broadcasts/article/christmas-devotional/2010/12/a-bright-shining-star.

we, as a small student family, were living in Jerusalem. Our planned year of study for my husband had stretched into its second year, and we found ourselves expecting our third child around Christmas. The students in the Jerusalem program had returned home to spend the holidays with their families. Those few members and families who lived more permanently in Jerusalem gathered at our so-called Shepherd's Field near Bethlehem for a branch party two days before Christmas.

Away from the city lights, the stars were shining brightly, and we could imagine the shepherds being struck with awe at the pronouncement of the visiting angel:

> Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (Luke 2:10–12)

The words of the children's song "Stars Were Gleaming" echoed in my mind:

> Stars were gleaming, shepherds dreaming;
> And the night was dark and chill.
> Angels' story rang with glory;
> Shepherds heard it on the hill.
> Ah, that singing! Hear it ringing,
> Earthward winging, Christmas bringing!
> Hearken! We can hear it still![4]

Of course, the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem to find Mary, Joseph, and the newborn baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. The shepherds then broadcast the great news to anyone who would listen.

Our branch program that starry night featured readings (surely of the nativity story), music, and stories, after which we ate a delicious and plentiful feast—sloppy joes, hot chocolate with marshmallows (a favorite with our young daughter), potato chips, apple cider, cookies, and brownies. (This menu, I assure you, was not our usual fare while we lived in Jerusalem.) After the festivities, our family drove into Bethlehem to visit the Church of the Nativity and ponder Christ's birth.

4. Nancy Byrd Turner, "Stars Were Gleaming," in *Children's Songbook* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 37, verse 1, churchofjesuschrist.org/media/music/songs/stars-were-gleaming.

We wanted to beat the crowds who would be flocking there the next day on Christmas Eve.

It was a good thing we went into Bethlehem a day early, for during that night it became apparent that our own baby was eager to make its appearance. Not wanting to bother anyone too early to stay with our two older children, we busied ourselves decorating our small tree (a live tree left over from the U.S. Consulate, where a ward member worked) with strands of popcorn and whatever else we could find.

Stephen, my husband, finally called a ward member to come to our apartment to stay with the children. By then, my labor had advanced, and I was barely able to climb into the back seat of our Volkswagen van. Stephen, totally oblivious to any fading stars in the early morning sky, raced on the nearly deserted road to Ramallah in search of the Jerusalem Maternity Hospital, where we were headed. Once the lighted sign of the hospital appeared, my husband careened into the parking lot, jumped out, and urgently rang the bell and pounded on the locked door. A nurse clattered down the stairs to let us in, and Stephen, energized with adrenaline, carried me up the stairs to the delivery room. Just moments later, our second son entered the world, quite unaware of the fuss he had caused.

Oh, the miracle of birth — a sweet, new, dark-haired son had joined our family. Truly, we rejoiced in his birth, as did Mary and Joseph at the birth of Jesus. Yes, this was the Christmas I remember best.

The Nativity Story

My favorite film version of the nativity is an eighteen-minute video released by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 2019 for their Light the World campaign.[5] *The Christ Child: A Nativity Story* weaves a believable tale of a couple seeking refuge in Bethlehem and of the wonder of the child's birth, even treating us to an unscripted mother's tender lullaby. Hearing the angel's good tidings of a Savior born in Bethlehem, the shepherds respond in haste to see this miracle.

The other players in this drama, the wise men from the east, see a star in the heavens that ultimately leads them to the Holy Family in Bethlehem. But time has elapsed since the child's birth, and Jesus is now a toddler. As the wise men rejoice that they have finally found the one they have come to worship, they glimpse the child shyly peeking around a corner. The wise men kneel in wonder, awe, and adoration

5. View *The Christ Child: A Nativity Story* at youtube.com/watch?v=yXWoKi5x3lw.

at the feet of the young child. With tears in his eyes, one of the wise men presents the gifts they have brought — gold, frankincense, and myrrh — to the child. This poignant scene, in which the wise man shows genuine love and reverence as he approaches the Christ child, never fails to bring tears to my own eyes.

> See the clearness and the nearness
> Of the blessed Christmas star,
> Leading, guiding; wise men riding
> Through the desert dark and far.
> Lovely showing, shining, growing,
> Onward going, gleaming, glowing,
> Leading still, our Christmas star![6]

"Star Bright"

Permit me to share one other personal memory of my only Christmas in southern Germany as a young missionary. I was serving in a threesome in Karlsruhe in both the American and German units. One of my companions was going home soon, and we learned that we other two sisters were going to be transferred right before Christmas. As a Christmas farewell gift to the American branch, we sisters sang "Star Bright,"[7] first in English and then in German. We had found this beautiful song in a Relief Society cultural refinement lesson.

I'm not sure if I fully realized it at that time, but this song, which will appear in our upcoming new hymnal, was written from the viewpoint of the faithful Book of Mormon saints who were awaiting Samuel's prophesied signs of the Savior's birth — a new star and a day and a night and a day with no darkness (see Helaman 14:3–5).

> The heavens with light o'erflowing
> A story of love will tell.

6. Turner, "Stars Were Gleaming," 37, verse 2.
7. Loren F. Wheelwright, "Star Bright," at churchofjesuschrist.org/media/music/songs/star-bright. The words originally appeared in English and Spanish in the October 1959 issue of *The Instructor*. In this publication, Wheelwright encouraged all to "search [their] own hearts and the heavens for a sign of that great day when Christ will again return to the earth and in all His glory rescue mankind." "Star Bright [Estrella de Luz]," *The Instructor*, October 1959, 323, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/04db593c-a451-4e99-b81c-b5f1cde947f7/0/0. Our ward Relief Society sisters always sing this beautiful hymn at our annual Christmas lunch and program.

A new star will shine in glory
When Jesus comes on earth to dwell.

O star bright, the world is pining
For you to turn night into the day.
O star bright in heaven shining,
Come, glow within me on Christmas Day.

The persecutors of those faithful ones who awaited the prophesied signs mocked the saints and assured them the signs would not appear within the five-year period. They set a day when the believers would be put to death if the signs didn't appear in the heavens. However, those very tormentors were struck with fear because of their iniquity and unbelief when the new star *did* appear in the sky and the day, night, and day of no darkness came to pass (see 3 Nephi 1:9, 18).

The previous night, in response to the prophet Nephi's extended, fervent prayer, the Savior appeared to comfort and bless him: "Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfil all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets" (3 Nephi 1:13).

Be joyful with eyes upturning,
Beholding the time at hand.
The night sign will soon be burning;
He's coming to our promised land.

The final verse of "Star Bright" beautifully captures the universal yearning for peace, mercy, and everlasting life. These are the very things that the babe of Bethlehem, grown to manhood, offers us through his great atoning sacrifice.

Our Father with love is sending
The Christ child to conquer strife.
His mercy to all extending,
He's bringing everlasting life.

The star of Bethlehem led the ancients in both the New and Old Worlds to the Savior, and today the star beckons us symbolically to personally come unto Christ and accept his gifts of everlasting life and of mercy based on our repentance. We can indeed rejoice in the appearance of the star and the promised Savior and echo with the heavenly host, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

O star bright, the world is pining
For you to turn night into the day.
O star bright in heaven shining,
Come, glow within me on Christmas Day.

Shirley S. Ricks *earned three degrees from Brigham Young University—her PhD was in family studies. She put that education to work in raising three daughters and three sons. She received on-the-job training at the BYU Press, working as a proofreader during her undergraduate years. Since 1988, Shirley worked as an editor at the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, and finally at the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University before she retired in 2021. She produced many books and periodicals and has written articles and reviews. As a part-time senior service missionary, she currently serves as a blog editor/publisher at FamilySearch. She and her husband, Stephen D. Ricks, have attended all the temples in the United States and Canada and enjoy traveling, especially to visit their children and twenty grandchildren.*

Parallels between the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon, Part 1: Details of Their Distribution and Relationships to the JST

Jeffrey D. Lindsay

Abstract: *In previous work, unexpected textual relationships between the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses that seem consistent with a brass-plates version of Genesis with similarities to the modern Book of Moses were explored. However, there is a need for further research to examine the nature of the distribution of the parallels in the Book of Mormon to the Book of Moses to assess, for example, whether the connections are scattered randomly across the text or show any meaningful patterns. There is also a need to consider the relationship of the Book of Mormon to the rest of the Joseph Smith Translation to determine if the Book of Mormon's relationship with the Book of Moses (the first portion of the JST) is somehow unique or is consistent with the rest of Joseph's work with the translation of the Bible. Data related to both topics are treated here, showing that the Book of Mormon's relationship with the Book of Moses appears to be unique and consistent with an ancient brass-plates version of Genesis that influenced Book of Mormon personalities such as Lehi$_1$, Nephi$_1$, Jacob, and Alma$_2$. Later portions of the JST lack numerous parallels with the Book of Mormon, except for a few sections that appear to have been imported from the Book of Mormon into the JST. Further, the distribution of parallels at the book level and the chapter level is consistent with a meaningful application of material from a brass-plates version of Genesis by authors or speakers familiar with the brass plates.*

One of the most puzzling aspects of the Book of Mormon is the way it seems to draw upon specific language in the Book of Moses. A total of 146 such parallels have been found and are listed in a companion paper, Part 2 of this two-part series.[1] The parallels often involve specific common language that cannot be readily explained by the language of the King James Bible. Noel Reynolds opened this field of investigation with a 1990 paper in which computer-aided searching found thirty-three parallels.[2] Some reflected a one-way direction of influence, as if Book of Mormon writers were alluding to, quoting from, or building upon concepts and stories in the Book of Moses, or rather, a hypothetical version of Genesis on the brass plates that is similar to the Book of Moses, as Noel Reynolds has proposed.

Moreover, the translation of the Book of Abraham has a different character, largely free of such connections. This suggests that the deep intertextuality between the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon is not simply a natural result of Joseph's vocabulary and his familiarity with the Book of Mormon. Something unexpected is going on.

Reynolds and I further explored these unexpected connections in a 2021 joint paper.[3] There we identified a total of ninety-seven proposed

1. The total stands at 146. The complete list with a number of recently found parallels is provided in Jeff Lindsay, "Parallels Between the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon, Part 2: The Updated List of 146 Parallels and Their Implications on the Translation Process," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 67 (2026), forthcoming.
2. Noel B. Reynolds, "The Brass Plates Version of Genesis," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 34 (2020): 63–96, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-brass-plates-version-of-genesis/. Previously published as "The Brass Plates Version of Genesis," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday, 27 March 1990*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS]; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 2:136–73.
3. 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, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/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/. Also see the earlier work, Jeff Lindsay, "'Arise from the Dust': Insights from Dust-Related Themes in the Book of Mormon (Part 1: Tracks from the Book of Moses)," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016): 179–232, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/arise-from-the-dust

parallels between the two texts. At that time, we thought we had exhausted all possible parallels. In a process marked by many surprises, several more parallels seemed to present themselves without being sought, stirring a need to publish further finds in a 2024 update that brought the number to 133,[4] far higher than we ever expected. Such a density of parallels between the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon is remarkable, especially given that roughly half of the Book of Moses is simply quoting the King James Bible. This makes only a fraction eligible for consideration as non-KJV Bible parallels with the Book of Mormon.

During peer review of the 2021 and 2024 papers and in responses from readers, several excellent questions pointed to a need for further work in several areas that are addressed in this paper:

- What can be learned from the distribution of the parallels to the Book of Moses found in the Book of Mormon? Is it largely random? Is it uniform? Does it suggest some authors were more likely to allude to Book of Moses material than others? Or does it show a steady increase over time during the translation of the Book of Mormon as if Joseph were mentally preparing the language and themes of the future Book of Moses project?
- Given that the Book of Moses is simply the first part of Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible (the Joseph Smith Translation or JST) that ends at Genesis 6:13, are there similar connections with the rest of the JST? For example, did Joseph gradually increase the presence of Book of Mormon language in the JST over time, as if he were increasingly drawing upon the Book of Mormon, or was the incorporation of Book of Mormon language a relatively steady phenomenon? Is there something unique about the relationship between the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses versus the rest of the JST?
- Since the recognition of parallels has been largely based

-insights-from-dust-related-themes-in-the-book-of-mormon-part-1-tracks-from-the-book-of-moses/.

4. Jeff Lindsay, "Further Evidence from the Book of Mormon for a Book of Moses-Like Text on the Brass Plates," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 61 (2024): 415–94, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/further-evidence-from-the-book-of-mormon-for-a-book-of-moses-like-text-on-the-brass-plates/.

on precise common language in two translated texts, when there seems to be no *a priori* expectation that the translation process should yield the same language, what does this tell us about the translation process? Could some of the apparent parallels be artifacts of the translation process rather than remnants of ancient connections to the Book of Moses?

- Isn't it risky to focus on parallels to another text? Aren't such parallels also used to attack the Book of Mormon?

The answers to such questions may be valuable in considering the significance and meaning, if any, of the proposed parallels.

In the following sections, I address the above questions, first considering data on the distribution of the parallels in the Book of Mormon. Then, I consider the question of other parallels in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible after the Book of Moses translation. Further, I discuss the relationship between the wording choices made in the translation to English for the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon and the significance of translator intent in making many of these parallels readily identifiable. Finally, I examine why the treatment of parallels in this study is quite different than the common use of parallels by Book of Mormon critics. In this analysis, I rely on the current set of 146 proposed parallels, which are listed and supplemented with discussion related to recent new finds and updates, in Part 2 of this series.[5]

What is Gained by Considering the Findings of This Project?

The following findings presented in prior publications are important for several reasons which are reinforced by the present paper:

- an apparent awareness that Book of Mormon writers seem to have had a text related to our modern Book of Moses, implies that they may have made deliberate allusions to Book of Moses stories, concepts, and specific phrases;
- intertextuality with the Book of Moses may be a useful tool for better understanding once-overlooked allusions in the Book of Mormon or backstories that enhance the text;
- and numerous allusions or echoes in the dictated 1829 Book

5. Lindsay, "Parallels Between the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon, Part 2."

> of Mormon text pointing to material in the later-produced Book of Moses may be meaningful evidence for the antiquity and authenticity of both sacred texts.

The present paper adds further reasons to consider the hypothesis of a brass-plates version of Genesis related to the Book of Moses, including:

- the distribution of parallels with the Book of Moses in the Book of Mormon suggests that Book of Mormon writers most familiar with the brass plates provided the most parallels to the Book of Moses, yielding further insights into the work of Book of Mormon authors;
- consideration of the rest of the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible after the Book of Moses material shows unique features of the Book of Moses that are not typical of the later material in the JST but which may be consistent with the existence of a text provided through a unique revelatory process on the brass plates and closely related to the Book of Moses; and
- useful information that the data may provide on the translation process related to both texts. The many common phrases and words shared by the two translated texts (but typically not with the KJV Bible) suggest a consistency in the translation of the two texts that may point to an agenda of whoever provided the English translations for the Book of Mormon and for the Book of Moses, as discussed later.

In sum, these factors can enhance our understanding of the Book of Mormon, of Joseph's translation process, of the significance of intertextuality in Latter-day scriptures, and of the translation methods involved. They also can provide stand-alone evidence for the ancient origins and authenticity of both the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses.

The Distribution of Parallels in the Book of Mormon

For the first thirty-three parallels that Reynolds uncovered, he observed that the writers of the small plates, whom we might expect would be particularly well schooled in the brass plates, are responsible for most of the Book of Moses's influence that he had identified:

> It is also impressive that most of the influence from the Book

> of Moses in the Book of Mormon shows up early in the small plates and the writings of the first generation of Book of Mormon prophets — significantly, those who had custody and long-term, firsthand access to the brass plates. Many of the later passages that use Book of Moses terminology and concepts tend to repeat earlier Nephite adaptations of the original materials.[6]

In our subsequent works, similar observations were made.[7] The small plates authors and $Alma_2$, also expressly a student of the brass plates, seemed to be the sources for a disproportionate number of parallels, but details of the distribution were not examined. It's time to examine the distribution in more detail. Is the distribution among the chapters of the Book of Mormon roughly uniform, independent of authors or topics, as though the parallels might best be explained as coincidence arising from Joseph's language? Or does it show other characteristics? Let's look at the data.

Determining the Distribution of Parallels

A spreadsheet was prepared that considered the number of distinct parallels in each Book of Mormon chapter and the number of distinct verses in each chapter that were involved in parallels. Ratios could then be computed such as the number of parallels or distinct verses involved in parallels per chapter, per book, per 1000 words in each book, etc. For such ratios, chapters that were essentially a direct quotation from the KJV were excluded though in two cases, one or two introductory verses before the direct quotation were not excluded. Thus, 3 Nephi 12 was listed as having two verses and 3 Nephi 24 was listed as having one verse. In 2 Nephi 27, where $Nephi_1$ is working with Isaiah 29, but with extensive changes, no verses were excluded. Short quotations throughout the Book of Mormon were not excluded. The effect on overall statistics would have been minor had that been done but would have slightly increased the calculated density of parallels.

Some parallels relate to passages in the Book of Mormon with multiple verses. In those cases, the overall passage might be listed, followed by a note on the specific verses that have language directly linking them to a Book of Moses passage, such as: "Helaman 10:4–10

6. Reynolds, "The Brass Plates Version of Genesis," 72.
7. Lindsay and Reynolds, "Strong Like unto Moses," 87–88.

(specifically vv. 5, 9)" for Parallel 139. In such cases, only the more specific verses were used in the analysis.

The distinct number of parallels present in each chapter was calculated. Those parallels per chapter can then be summed up to give a total number per book (the sum of the number of parallels in each chapter of a book). That sum may include duplicate parallels among the chapters. The repeated use of parallels in different sections of a book may be meaningful, but the total number of distinct parallels per book may be more desirable for some comparisons (i.e., not counting duplicate occurrences of a parallel), and thus was also calculated. Table 1 lists the books, the number of qualified chapters per book (excluding chapters that are entirely a quotation from the KJV), the sum of parallels in each chapter per book (the distinct parallels per book free of duplicates), and the average number of distinct parallels per qualified chapter (column 4 divided by column 2).

Table 1. Basic results for parallels in each book of the Book of Mormon.

Book	Qualified chapters (Q)	Sum of parallels in each chapter per book (S)	Average parallels per qualified chapter (S/Q)	Distinct parallels per book
1 Nephi	20	58	2.90	33
2 Nephi	18	66	3.67	46
Jacob	7	18	2.57	16
Enos	1	1	1.00	1
Jarom	1	2	2.00	2
Omni	1	1	1.00	1
W. of M.	1	1	1.00	1
Mosiah	28	38	1.36	30
Alma	63	120	1.90	56
Helaman	16	48	3.00	29
3 Nephi	26	36	1.38	18
4 Nephi	1	3	3.00	3
Mormon	9	8	0.89	8
Ether	15	37	2.47	26
Moroni	10	12	1.20	12

The density of parallels across the books of the Book of Mormon

can also be considered in terms of the number of verses involved in the parallels. Table 2 shows the number of qualified verses for each book, after excluded chapters from the KJV have been removed. The cumulative verses involved (column 3) is the sum across all parallels of relevant verses in each book. Here a single verse might be involved in more than one parallel. The next column removes such duplicates and only lists the number of unique verses from each book that are involved in at least one parallel. The final column is the ratio R1, the number of unique verses involved in parallels divided by the number of qualified verses.

Table 2. The verse-level density of the parallels.

Book	Qualified verses	Cumulative verses involved	Unique verses involved	Unique/ qualified verses (R1)
1 Nephi	570	93	84	0.147
2 Nephi	468	113	77	0.165
Jacob	203	31	27	0.133
Enos	27	1	1	0.037
Jarom	15	2	2	0.133
Omni	30	2	2	0.067
W. of M.	18	1	1	0.056
Mosiah	773	58	54	0.070
Alma	1975	187	144	0.073
Helaman	497	72	59	0.119
3 Nephi	638	57	48	0.075
4 Nephi	49	4	3	0.061
Mormon	227	9	7	0.031
Ether	433	68	42	0.097
Moroni	163	15	9	0.055

In 1 Nephi, for example, out of 570 verses after excluding Isaiah chapters, eighty-four verses are part of at least one parallel (as seen in table 1, there are thirty-three distinct parallels involved with 1 Nephi). The R1 value of 0.147 indicates that nearly 15% of the qualified verses in 1 Nephi have allusions to Book of Moses material beyond what can be readily explained by an appeal to the KJV. That's a surprisingly high

level. 2 Nephi's R1 value is even higher, 0.164, or over 16%, over twice the levels seen in Mosiah, Alma, 3 Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni. As this study began, I never would have guessed that such a high proportion of the verses Nephi_1 penned would include links to the Book of Moses. The column chart of figure 1 compares R1 between the books of the Book of Mormon to make it easier to visualize this parameter:

Figure 2 compares two averaging approaches for the parallels per chapter. The first series shown is the average of the parallels per chapter (the sum divided by the number of qualified chapters), while the second series is the parallels per chapter per 1000 words (the sum of the parallels per chapter in each book divided by the number of words in the qualified chapters). The error bars (95% confidence intervals) shown for the two series are based on the variance for each book, excluding single-chapter books.

When duplicate parallels are eliminated by only counting distinct parallels for each book, the results are lower but follow similar trends, as shown in figure 3.

Again, single-chapter books are expected to have high variability because of the small sample size of text being considered, so conclusions based on them must be made cautiously.

Overlooking the high average in the single-chapter book of Jarom, both averages of both charts show 2 Nephi as the highest source of

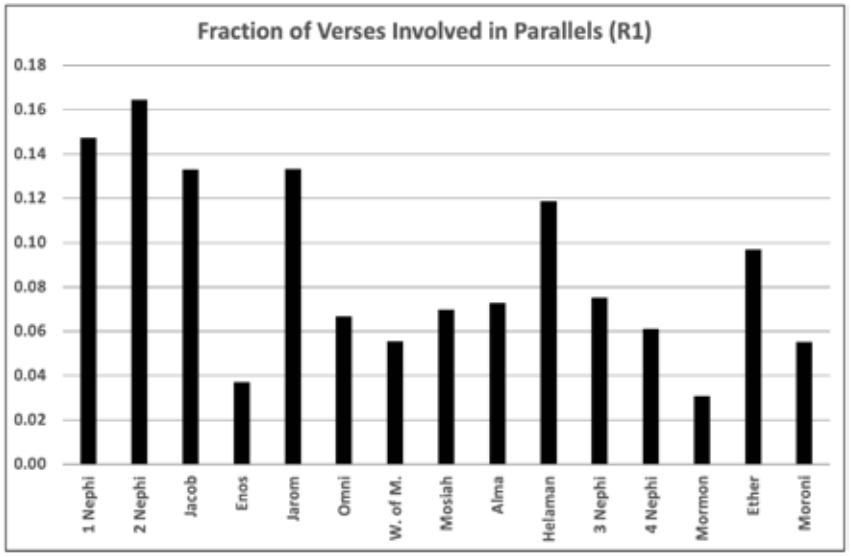

Figure 1. R1 values, or the fraction of unique verses in each book that are involved in the 146 parallels with the Book of Moses.

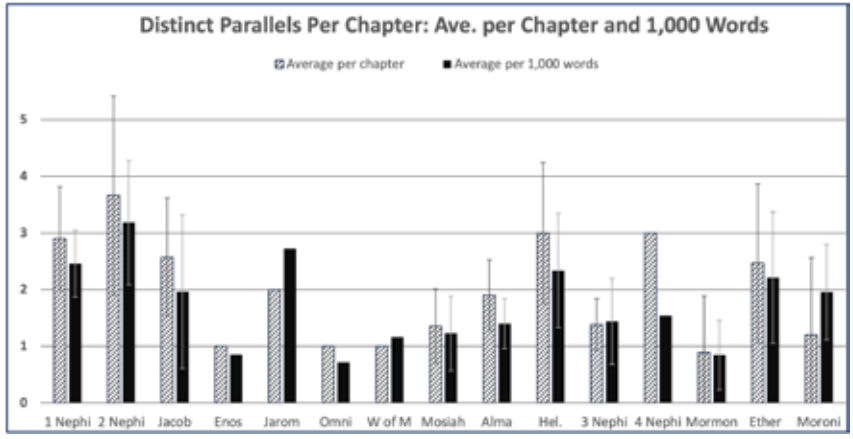

Figure 2. Average distinct parallels per chapter, averaged per qualified chapter and per 1,000 words. Error bars (95% confidence intervals) are shown using variance for each book with more than one chapter.

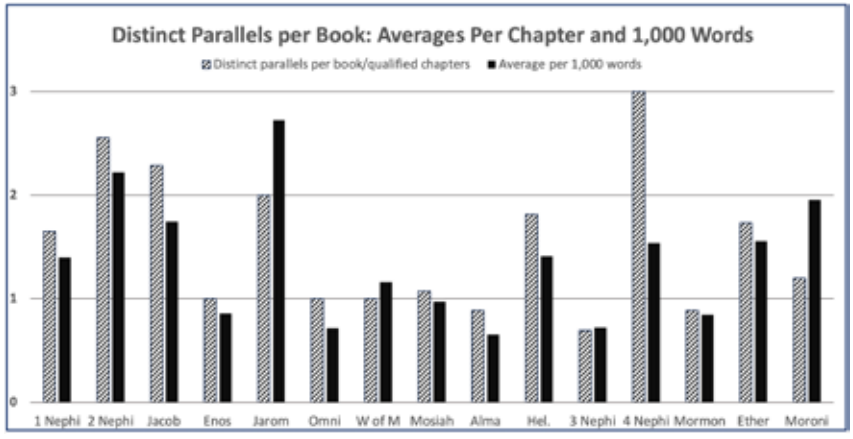

Figure 3. Average distinct parallels per book, averaged per qualified chapter and per 1,000 words.

parallels to the Book of Moses, with Jacob and 1 Nephi also having high levels of parallels. Other lengthy books such as Mosiah, Alma, and 3 Nephi have significantly lower averages. Helaman has a high average in part because of its extensive content on secret combinations; however, it has a wide range of topics having parallels to the Book of Moses.

The distribution may be judged considering what can be inferred about Book of Mormon authors and their apparent familiarity with the brass plates. $Nephi_1$ and Jacob, like their father $Lehi_1$, who is quoted

several times by $Nephi_1$, had obviously become familiar with the brass plates after $Nephi_1$ retrieved them from Jerusalem. This commenced a period of intense study by $Lehi_1$ who then taught his family from the brass plates. How well that instruction permeated the lives of his descendants may vary. Enos, for example, does not come across as a lifelong student of the scriptures as he begins his hunt. Most of the various authors in Omni also seem to have lapsed in their devotion to the word. While it is risky to rely on conclusions drawn from single-chapter books given the small sample size, Jarom's relatively high use of parallels may deserve to be taken seriously in light of Jarom also being one of the richest examples of extensive chiasmus, indicating that he took the Hebrew scriptures seriously and had studied them carefully.[8] Enos, though, also has evidence of possible chiasmus.[9]

It is interesting that the books of Mormon, Mosiah, and 3 Nephi have such low numbers of parallels. When we look at the distribution of parallels per chapter, the low average for Mosiah will make sense. In 3 Nephi, it may be that the Messiah, the giver of the Law, was more focused on introducing a new dispensation and the themes of the New Testament to the Nephites than in alluding to scripture that the Nephites already possessed (but see the discussion of parallels per chapter in Mosiah hereafter, which offers further reasons for the low parallels in that book). As for Mormon, he may have been familiar with the brass-plates version of Genesis, though possibly a reformed Egyptian version from his day. However, the focus of his personal writings as military leader of a doomed nation might not have moved him to allude frequently to that text the way earlier scribes and prophets did.

In any case, there appear to be notable differences in the levels of parallels across the books without evidence of merely random distribution and no clear temporal trend with respect to the translation of the Book of Mormon that would, for example, show a steady increase from Mosiah until the final pages of the small plates of $Nephi_1$.

8. Stephen Kent Ehat, "Chiasmus in the Book of Jarom," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*, 64 (2025): 301–44, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/chiasmus-in-the-book-of-jarom/.
9. Stephen Kent Ehat, "Centered on Christ: The Book of Enos Possibly Structured Chiastically," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 58 (2023): 243–306, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/centered-on-christ-the-book-of-enos-possibly-structured-chiastically/.

Familiarity with the brass plates by individual authors or speakers may be an important factor.

To somewhat reduce the influence of multiple parallels involving secret combinations, figures 4 and 5 are versions of figures 2 and 3, respectively, but with Parallels 38–42 and 103 removed.

Overall, the effort to slightly downplay secret combinations does not significantly change the basic features of the distribution of parallels per chapter or per book.

The distribution at the chapter level may be even more valuable to consider. Figure 6 shows the chapter-level distribution of parallels

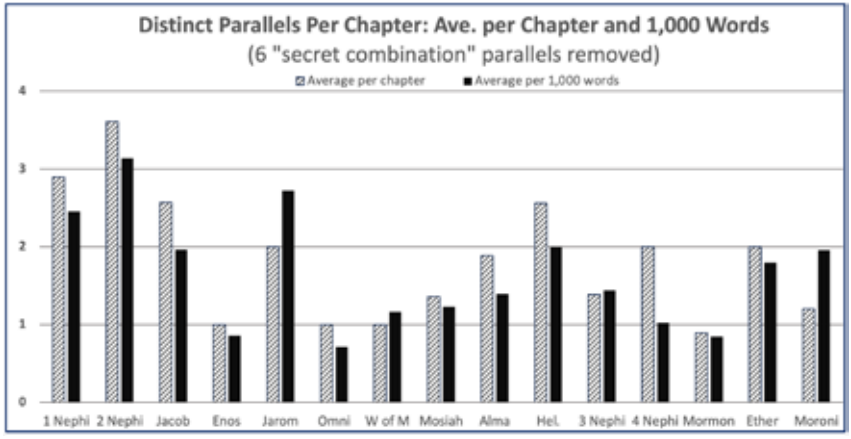

Figure 4. Average distinct parallels per chapter, after removal of six secret combination-related parallels.

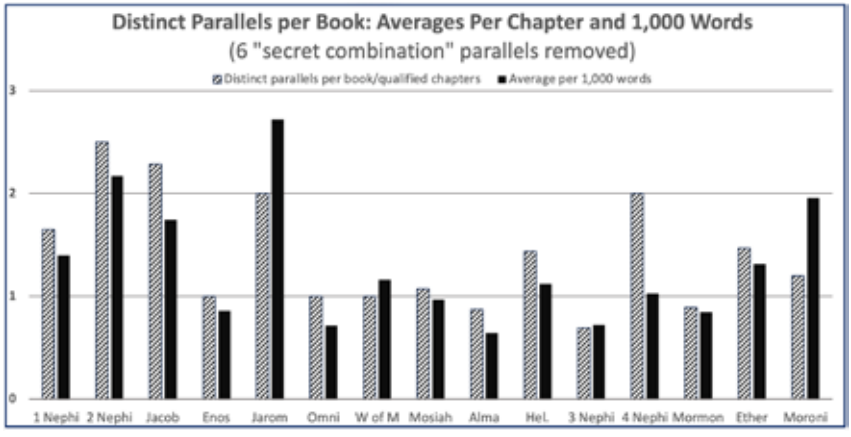

Figure 5. Average distinct parallels per book, after removal of six secret combination-related parallels.

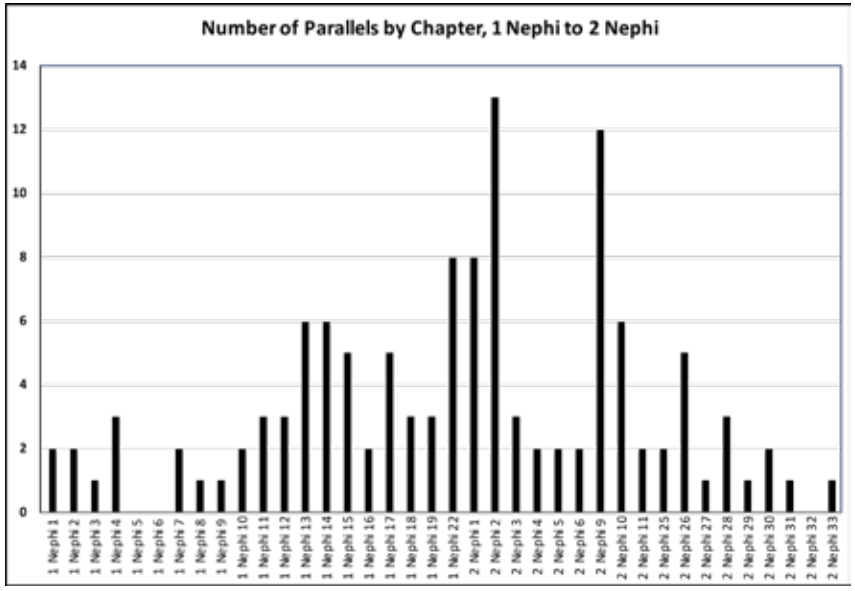

Figure 6. Chapter-level distribution of parallels in 1 Nephi to 2 Nephi.

in 1 and 2 Nephi. Note that the peak of thirteen parallels occurs in 2 Nephi 2, part of the farewell sermon of that great student and expositor of the brass plates, the prophet Lehi_1. The beginning of this sermon in 2 Nephi 1 also has a high score. Second Nephi 9 with eleven parallels also stands out. This is a sermon rich in temple themes from Jacob with many opportunities for allusions to the brass-plates version of Genesis, also rich in temple themes (treating it as related to the Book of Moses, of course). Also, relatively high rates persist during Nephi_1's apocalyptic vision of the Gentiles and the last days in 1 Nephi 13–15. The local distribution within 1 and 2 Nephi tends to make sense considering the context of specific chapters, and it also does not appear to be consistent with a relatively uniform distribution based upon Joseph's word choices in dictation.

Figure 7 is like figure 6 but reports parallels per 1000 words per chapter.

Considering parallels per 1000 words is a useful measure, but generally, it offers few surprises compared to simply looking at the raw number of parallels per chapter. Therefore, the following distribution plots for other sections of the Book of Mormon will be based simply on parallels per chapter.

Figure 8 examines chapter-level parallels in Jacob through Mosiah. The distribution in Mosiah, a book produced following the loss of the

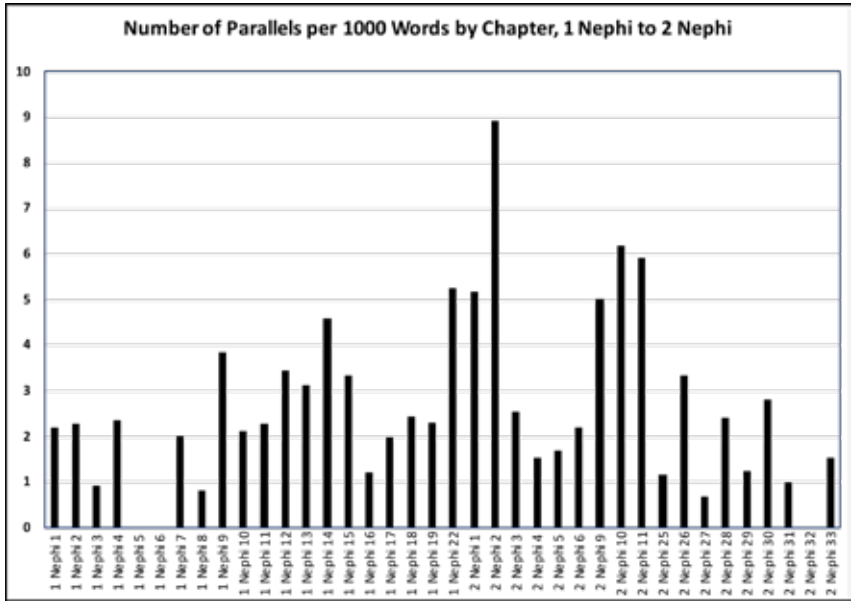

Figure 7. Chapter-level distribution of parallels per 1000 words in 1 Nephi to 2 Nephi.

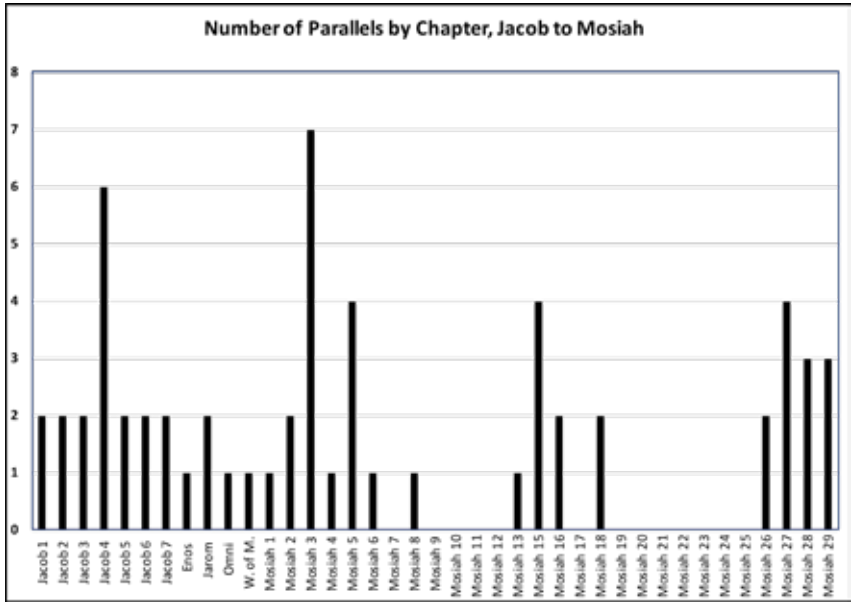

Figure 8. Parallels by chapter in Jacob to Mosiah.

116 pages of the early Book of Mormon manuscript, is much different than seen in Jacob or 1 or 2 Nephi due to Mosiah's large gaps free of parallels to the Book of Moses. These gaps may be meaningful. The first gap or chapter free of parallels is Mosiah 7, a historical chapter describing the mission of $Ammon_1$, a descendant of Zarahemla (Mosiah 7:3), with his brothers, back to the land of Lehi-Nephi, where they meet King Limhi, son of the wicked King Noah. Neither $Ammon_1$ nor King Limhi are likely to have been serious students of the brass plates, and despite some strongly religious passages, it's reasonable that no connections to the Book of Moses are apparent in Mosiah 7. The gap in Mosiah 7 follows King Benjamin's speech and covenant-making ceremony in Mosiah 1–6 that abounds in revelation and in preaching the doctrine of Christ—issues that naturally fit with the Book of Moses. The peak in figure 8 occurs with the seven parallels of Mosiah 3, which covers topics such as the salvation of children, eternal life, the ministry of Christ, and other topics linked to the Book of Moses.

The next gap begins with the record of Zeniff in Mosiah 9 and 10. Zeniff describes the history of his people's arrival in the land of Lehi-Nephi, battles with the Lamanites, and naming one of his sons (wicked King Noah) to be the next king. Zeniff does not appear to be a student of the scriptures, though he slightly imitates 1 Nephi 1:1 in his opening words. Chapter 11 introduces King Noah and then Abinadi. The gap continues in Mosiah 12 as Abinadi condemns Noah for his wickedness and is questioned by the wicked priests of Noah. Parallels begin in Mosiah 13 as Abinadi is preserved from being attacked as his face "shone with exceeding luster" like Moses on Mount Sinai (v. 5) and can begin his message on salvation through Christ. The parallels from Abinadi peak in Mosiah 15 as he preaches the plan of salvation, including the salvation of little children (v. 25) and other themes related to the Book of Moses. Further parallels follow in Abinadi's impassioned words on salvation through Christ in Mosiah 16.

After the prophet $Alma_1$ gives a couple more parallels in his preaching in Mosiah 18 and flees from the community of King Noah, we encounter the longest gap in the Book of Mormon as we return to the prophet-less captive people of King Noah in Mosiah 19. There and in subsequent chapters we learn more of their wickedness and cowardice. We return full circle to the arrival of $Ammon_1$ and his brethren in Mosiah 20 and learn the history of the discovery of the plates of Ether. In chapter 22, there are successful plans made to escape from the

Lamanites. The gap continues in Mosiah 23 and 24, which contains the history of $Alma_1$ and his people's settling the land of Helam, going into captivity, and being delivered and returning to Zarahemla. The gap continues with Mosiah 25 as it shares the history of King $Mosiah_2$'s pronouncement to his people about the convergence of great events including the arrival of $Alma_1$ and his people, the arrival of Limhi and his people, and the discovery of ancient Jaredite records. Throughout the historical material of Mosiah 19–25, there is not a single identified parallel to the Book of Moses. This changes in Mosiah 26 as a prophet of God seeks and receives revelation; we then gain more revelatory insights from the angelic visit to $Alma_2$ and the sons of $Mosiah_2$. Revelation and preaching on the plan of salvation in the last four chapters of Mosiah bring more parallels. Gaps and parallels thus seem to fall where they should.

Figure 9 shows the distribution of parallels in the book of Alma. Here, there is high variability, with some sections rich in parallels (such as the preaching of Alma and Amulek in Alma 12 and 13) with a total of twenty-two parallels between the two chapters. This is one of the richest concentrations of parallels in the entire Book of Mormon, and yet there are many multi-chapter gaps having no parallels. The war chapters at the end of the book show significant gaps. Historical material, unlike revelation or spiritual discourse, often has little connection to

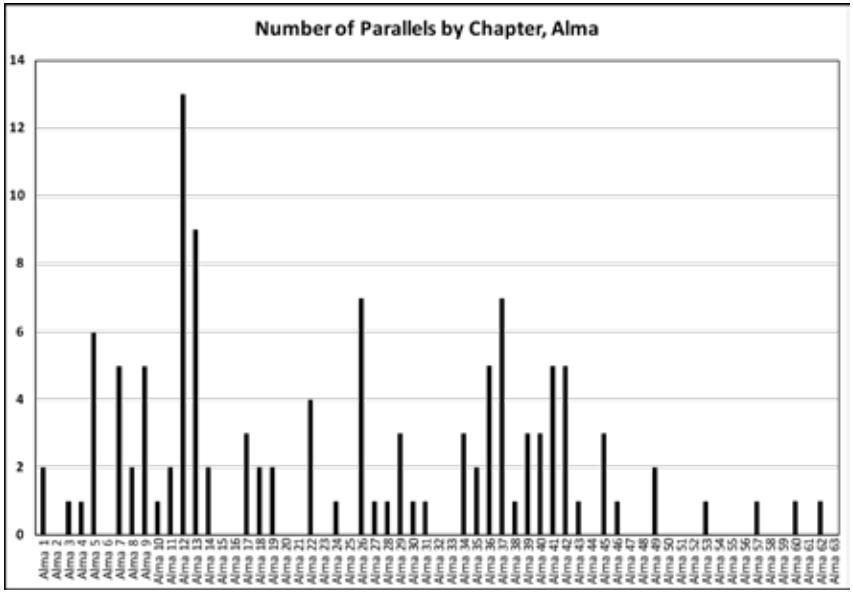

Figure 9. Parallels by chapter in Alma.

the language of the Book of Moses even though it also describes wars and historical events.

Figure 10 shows the distribution of parallels among the chapters of Helaman through 4 Nephi. Third Nephi has a generally low level of parallels, despite a concentration on the Son of God which is given so much attention in the Book of Moses. Levels are higher in Helaman, with a peak in Helaman 6 that gives many details on the operations of secret combinations.

Figure 11 shows the distribution for Mormon through Moroni. Interestingly, the values for Mormon's chapters are quite low, with over half of the parallels for his book being found in one chapter (Mormon 8) where he discusses several aspects of secret combinations and some other Book of Moses themes. Moroni also has a relatively low level of parallels though he seems to have made many allusions to the brass-plates version of Genesis in his work in the Book of Ether. Here he was particularly concerned about the theme of secret combinations, especially in Ether 8, with a peak at eleven parallels. In general, the parallels in the book of Ether may largely reflect Moroni's paraphrasing of the Jaredite record and his added commentary, though the Jaredites had their own ancient records that described the rise of what Moroni and Moses called a "secret combination," as the daughter of Jared noted:

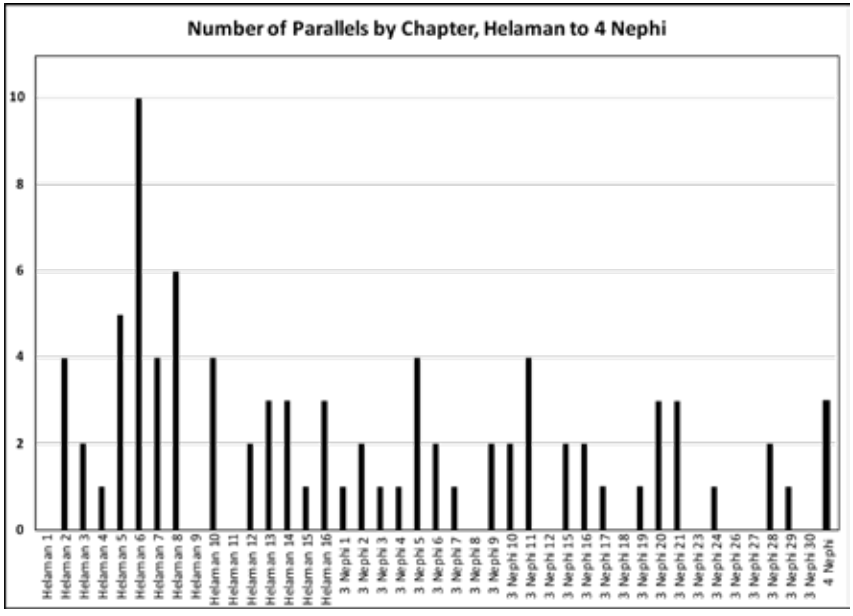

Figure 10. Parallels by chapter for Helaman to 4 Nephi.

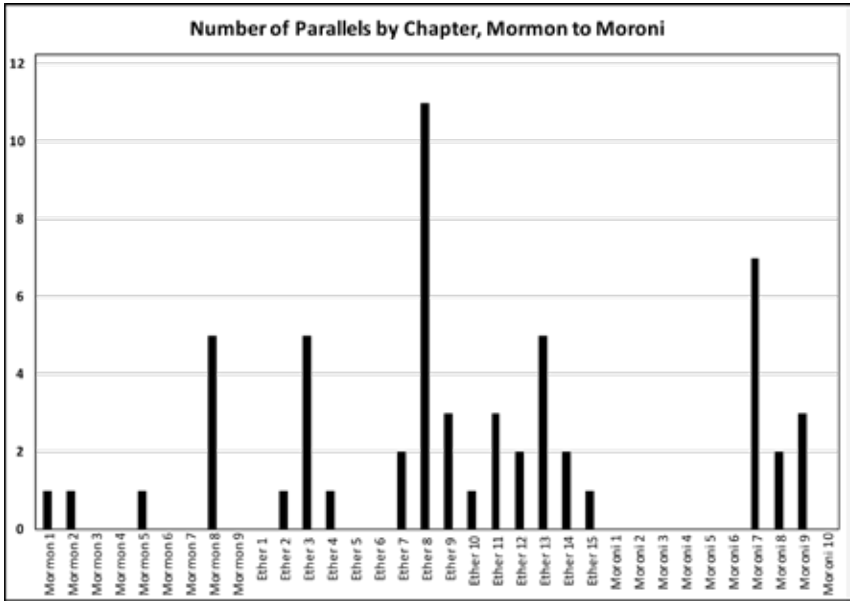

Figure 11. Parallels by chapter for Mormon to Moroni.

> Whereby hath my father so much sorrow? Hath he not read the record which our fathers brought across the great deep? Behold, is there not an account concerning them of old, that they by their secret plans did obtain kingdoms and great glory? (Ether 8:9)

That Jaredite record, though, would have predated the era of Moses and may have used different terminology such as "secret plans" instead of "secret combination." The term "secret plans" used in the quotation from the daughter of Jared is also used several times in the Book of Mormon *after* being introduced by $Alma_2$ in Alma 37:29, 32. Here, in his counsel to $Helaman_1$, he refers to the already translated record of Ether. One may infer that the term *secret plans* is based on a concept taken from the Jaredite record, while Moroni preferred to speak of *secret combinations*, a term also used by $Nephi_1$ and the Book of Moses.

Not all the parallels in the Book of Ether necessarily date to Moroni's work. For example, allusions related to the flood in the Book of Ether, used in some parallels, could have been original to the Jaredite record but could later have been crafted by Moroni or a translator to make an allusion to the Book of Moses.

In general, the distribution of parallels in the Book of Mormon

neither reflect a random distribution nor a uniform distribution, but it is consistent with the nature of the content (e.g., historical information vs. sermons or revelation) and some specific topics. There are also apparent individual differences with speakers or authors like $Lehi_1$, $Nephi_1$, Jacob, and $Alma_2$. These show elevated tendencies to apply brass-plates material when appropriate — as in the preaching of $Alma_2$ and Amulek in Alma 12 and 13 or $Alma_2$'s discourse in Alma 37 on the brass plates. The details of the distribution of parallels at various levels, among verses, chapters, and books, point to a reasonable, logical distribution consistent with unique authors drawing upon ancient material on the brass plates in plausible ways, with the Book of Moses having a strong textual connection to the proposed brass-plates material. In other words, the distribution data enhance the case for the basic proposals in the studies reported so far regarding the intertextuality of the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon, adding to the evidence that the data is not merely the result of coincidence nor of Joseph's using common language in random ways when creating both texts. The relationships are too sophisticated and nuanced for one modern translator or author to have crafted them while dictating text to his scribes.

Finally, table 3 shows the top forty chapters with the highest number of parallels per 1,000 words, for chapters having at least 500 words. This excludes, passages such as 3 Nephi 24, where one qualified verse with fifty-nine words remained after removing the quotation of Micah 3, for which one parallel resulted in nearly seventeen parallels per 1,000 words. $Lehi_1$'s familiarity with the brass plates is reflected in the inclusion of his farewell discourse in 2 Nephi 1 (ranked #14) and 2 Nephi 2 (ranked #2). Five chapters written or spoken by Jacob appear in the top forty: Jacob 4 as #7, 2 Nephi 10 as #9, 2 Nephi 9 as #16, Jacob 6 as #27, and Jacob 3 as #38 (his short 2 Nephi 11 would have been #10 were it not for imposing a 500-word minimum). Given the small number of chapters from Jacob, it is impressive that such a high fraction of his chapters are in table 3. Interestingly, only five of $Nephi_1$'s own chapters also are listed (excluding two chapters quoting $Lehi_1$ and two chapters quoting Jacob), beginning with 1 Nephi 22 at #13, a chapter that begins with a reference to the plates of brass (v. 1). Then follow 1 Nephi 14 at #17, 1 Nephi 12 at #32, 2 Nephi 26 at #35, and 1 Nephi 15 at #36. Jacob's words seem to have a higher density on average of parallels to the Book of Moses than $Nephi_1$'s words. (To be fair, two highly ranked chapters of $Nephi_1$ were excluded for having

less than 500 words: 1 Nephi 9 and 2 Nephi 11, while 2 Nephi 13 just missed the list, ranking at #41.) $Alma_1$'s writings and sermons from the book of Alma appear in twelve of the top forty chapters, showing a strong connection to brass plates.

Table 3. Top forty chapters with the most parallels/1000 words (and >500 words per chapter).

No.	Chapter	Verses cited	Unique verses	Distinct parallels	Words	P/1000 words
1	Ether 8	34	14	11	1232	8.93
2	2 Nephi 2	22	15	13	1457	8.92
3	Alma 41	5	3	5	705	7.09
4	Alma 12	27	18	13	1859	6.99
5	Alma 13	15	12	9	1353	6.65
6	Helaman 2	4	2	4	605	6.61
7	Jacob 4	9	5	6	928	6.47
8	Mosiah 3	11	10	7	1119	6.26
9	2 Nephi 10	6	2	6	968	6.20
10	Helaman 10	5	4	4	722	5.54
11	Helaman 6	14	10	10	1808	5.53
12	Mosiah 5	4	2	4	739	5.41
13	1 Nephi 22	9	7	8	1517	5.27
14	2 Nephi 1	10	7	8	1546	5.17
15	2 Nephi 9	23	12	12	2393	5.01
16	Helaman 8	8	6	6	1210	4.96
17	1 Nephi 14	7	6	6	1304	4.60
18	3 Nephi 5	7	5	4	936	4.27
19	Alma 29	3	3	3	713	4.21
20	Alma 26	10	6	7	1666	4.20
21	Ether 13	10	7	5	1229	4.07
22	Alma 42	15	13	5	1231	4.06
23	Alma 36	7	4	5	1242	4.03
24	Ether 3	7	4	5	1263	3.96
25	Ether 11	3	3	3	765	3.92
26	Jacob 6	2	2	2	516	3.88
27	Mosiah 15	6	6	4	1062	3.77
28	Alma 39	3	3	3	802	3.74

No.	Chapter	Verses cited	Unique verses	Distinct parallels	Words	P/1000 words
29	Mosiah 28	6	6	3	817	3.67
30	Moroni 7	8	3	7	1929	3.63
31	Mosiah 16	2	2	2	560	3.57
32	1 Nephi 12	4	4	3	866	3.46
33	Alma 37	22	11	7	2029	3.45
34	Alma 7	5	5	5	1464	3.42
35	2 Nephi 26	7	5	5	1492	3.35
36	1 Nephi 15	7	7	5	1495	3.34
37	Helaman 7	6	5	4	1199	3.34
38	Jacob 3	2	2	2	620	3.23
39	Alma 9	5	4	5	1563	3.20
40	Alma 45	3	3	3	941	3.19

With this background on the distribution of parallels in the Book of Mormon, we now consider the relationship of the rest of the JST to the Book of Mormon before turning to the question of the translation process and its impact on the proposed parallels.

Connections to the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible

The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible is one of the least understood aspects of Joseph Smith's work as a seer and translator. Many have been confused over its status and importance. I recommend Kent P. Jackson's *Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible* as a key source covering the history of the project, including its timelines, the scribes involved, the related manuscripts, and its significance for Latter-day Saints.[10] For examining changes in the JST, I have relied on Kenneth and Lyndell Lutes's *Joseph Smith Translation: Every Revision in the Old and New Testaments*.[11]

As Jackson shows in his detailed timeline for Joseph Smith's work on the JST, the "Visions of Moses," now Moses 1, began to be translated in June 1830, with the subsequent material in our Book

10. Kent P. Jackson, *Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2022).
11. Kenneth and Lyndell Lutes, ed., *Joseph Smith Translation: Every Revision in the Old and New Testaments*, revised 3rd ed. (Brigham City, UT: Brigham Distributing, 2019).

of Moses being completed by February or March 1831, as show in table 4 (based on Jackson).[12] After the translation of the Old Testament reached Genesis 24:41, Joseph Smith turned to the New Testament and only returned to the Old Testament between July 1832 to 2 July 1833, spanning Genesis 24:41–Malachi. There is no evidence of any further work on the translation after 2 July 1833, when Frederick G. Williams, the JST scribe at the time, wrote "Finished on the 2d day of July 1833" on the last line of the Old Testament manuscript.[13] Many have heard that the JST was never finished, but Jackson makes it clear that Joseph did in fact complete the translation.[14]

Table 4. Timeline for the Book of Moses translation.

Section of the Book of Moses	Translation Dates	Corresponding Genesis Material
Moses 1	Begun June 1830	
Moses 2:1–5:43	Completed by 21 October 1830	Genesis 1:1–4:18
Moses 5:43–6:28	Completed by 30 November 1830	Genesis 4:18–5:11
Moses 6:19–52	Emma as scribe, 1 December 1830	Genesis 5:12–21
Moses 6:52–7:1	1–7 December 1830	Genesis 5:22
Moses 7:2–8:12	Completed by 10 December 1830	Genesis 5:23–32
Moses 8:13–30	4 February–7 March 1831	Genesis 6:1–13*

* The material translated from 4 February–7 March 1831 also included the translation of Genesis 6:14–24:41, not part of the Book of Moses, so the translation of Moses 8:13–30 may have been completed in February 1831.

Does the completion of the JST mean that the finished work was of one cloth, from beginning to end, in terms of its revelatory nature and origins? There is obviously a wide diversity in the nature of the edits that Joseph made. Numerous changes appear to be minor ones that clarify a confusing or troubling word choice or add a minor detail, and other passages such as the Visions of Moses (Moses 1) and the Enoch material read like grand, epic revelations restoring ancient visions and texts. What is one to make of the diverse material in the JST? Jackson notes the diversity in Joseph's approach and the sources that seem to have influenced his work:

12. Jackson, *Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible*, 3–5.
13. Jackson, *Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible*, 26.
14. Jackson, *Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible*, 26–29.

> As the Gospel writers had sources for their writing and revising, what were the sources Joseph Smith used to accomplish his task? From what we can see in the New Translation, it appears that his sources included, in varying degrees, revelation, other scriptural texts, his prophetic instincts, and his common sense.[15]

Jackson then shares a variety of examples that seem like Joseph was applying common sense, other sources, or his own understanding to make modifications. Then Jackson contrasts those with passage having significant insertions of text (e.g., the words of Enoch) that "show all the hallmarks of revelation that Latter-day saints are accustomed to seeing in other revealed sources such as the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants."[16] Even then, he points out that "as with all our ancient scriptures, we do not know to what degree the JST summarizes, paraphrases, or generalizes."[17] In short, the JST is a complicated text resulting from a mix of approaches and sources, including but not necessarily limited to divine revelation. The possibility of Joseph's using different methods to produce the JST may be important in explaining the relationships that can be identified with the Book of Mormon.

Likewise, Royal Skousen proposes a complex and nuanced JST, with a diverse mix of divine revelation coupled with Joseph's personal work of revision. This perspective was supported in detail in a 2005 paper.[18] Further comparison of Bible quotations in the Book of Mormon with the JST are considered in his 2019 volume, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon*, Part Five, *The King James Quotations in the Book of Mormon*.[19]

If the Book of Moses, the first portion of Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible (JST) and a canonized text within the Pearl of Great Price, shows such strong connections with the Book of Mormon, should we not expect something similar for the rest of the JST? If the entire JST was a similar revelatory product restoring ancient text that might have

15. Jackson, *Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible*, 250.
16. Jackson, *Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible*, 250–52.
17. Jackson, *Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible*, 252.
18. Royal Skousen, "The Earliest Textual Sources for Joseph Smith's 'New Translation' of the King James Bible," *FARMS Review* 17, no. 2 (2005): 451–70, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol17/iss2/13/.
19. Royal Skousen, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon, Part Five, The King James Quotations in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU Studies, 2019), 132–40.

been present on the brass plates, then perhaps we should hope to find similar pervasive parallels. But considering the diverse nature of the JST, as shown in the analysis of scholars such as Jackson and Skousen, such expectations must be tempered.

This question was briefly addressed in the 2024 paper, "Further Evidence from the Book of Mormon for a Book of Moses-Like Text on the Brass Plates":

> We have focused on the Book of Moses and its connections to the Book of Mormon, but what about the rest of the added or modified text that Joseph gave us in his work of translating the Bible after producing the text that became our Book of Moses? In other words, after revealing the visions of Moses in Moses 1 and then translating Genesis up to Genesis 6:13, where the Book of Moses suddenly ends, what about the rest of the new material from the translation work that continued as Joseph worked with numerous portions of the rest of the KJV Bible? Does it also have the connections we have found to the Book of Mormon? Based on an examination of the remaining text of the Joseph Smith translation of the Bible, the answer in general appears to be no, though JST Genesis 50 does provide text closely aligned with 2 Nephi 3, as we might expect, and some changes in Isaiah align with those previously given in the Book of Mormon. A detailed report is in preparation, but it seems that the intricate textural relationships with the Book of Mormon seen in Moses 4 and other portions of the Book of Moses do not persist in the later parts of Joseph's translation of the Bible.[20]

More detailed study of the JST has only strengthened the prior impression that the Book of Moses is a unique part of the JST with respect to the Book of Mormon.

In my examination of potential Book of Mormon connections to the JST, the relationship to the initial canonized portion of the JST, the Book of Moses, seems extensive and pervasive, while later passages in the JST seem generally unrelated except for several large passages that have the feel of being adapted largely verbatim from the existing Book of Mormon text. These passages include:

20. Lindsay, "Further Evidence," 418–19.

- JST Genesis 50, which seems to draw upon 2 Nephi 3 and the vision of Joseph of Egypt of a future Joseph;
- JST Isaiah 29:6, 8–34, which follows 2 Nephi 27:2–34 almost verbatim, but skips v. 7.

Before examining these passages, the relationship between JST Isaiah 50 and 2 Nephi 7 should be considered. There are several minor differences, but an important story emerges from the textual data. These relationships were considered by Skousen in his 2005 paper where he raised JST Isaiah 50 as an example of Joseph copying from the Book of Mormon in creating related passages in the JST. He did this in the first of several concerns he raises about the assumption of the entire JST being a revealed text:

> In my mind, there are some serious difficulties in accepting the totality of the JST as a revealed text from the Lord. In many instances, the JST appears to represent Joseph Smith's commentary and explication of difficult readings in the Bible. Instead of simply declaring that the entire JST is inspired, it would be better, I believe, to have a more open discussion of some of the difficulties that the JST presents to the researcher, especially when comparing the JST with other LDS canonized works.
>
> Besides the difficulties in determining the actual text of the JST, there are more substantial problems that must be resolved before fully accepting the JST in its entirety as a revealed text from the Lord. Here I list some of these problems:
>
> 1. The first part of the JST looks like a word-for-word revealed text, in particular the vision of Moses and that first part of Genesis that has been canonized as the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price. The manuscript OT1 [Old Testament 1, the initial scribal document recording Joseph's translation of the OT], in many respects, looks much like the manuscripts for the Book of Mormon. But in switching to the New Testament and then in returning eventually to the Old Testament, **Joseph Smith seems to have switched from providing a word-for-word revelation (much like the Book of Mormon) to making minor changes and relatively small additions to difficult readings in the Bible.** It is not surprising that the more significant doctrinal items in

> the JST have, for the most part, already been canonized in the Pearl of Great Price (or indirectly accepted through various revelations found in the Doctrine and Covenants). Near the end of his work on the JST, Joseph resorted to marking up his Bible and having the scribes write only the changes in the associated manuscript. Even more secondary was **his decision for the JST version of Isaiah 50 to have the text directly copied from the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon**, thus leaving the corresponding page of his Bible totally unmarked for this chapter of Isaiah (pp. 820–23). And for that part of the JST, the text from the 1830 edition is slavishly copied, including all of the errors that had entered the Book of Mormon text during its earlier transmission:
>
> **when I come** instead of **when I came**
> **their river** instead of **the river**
> **they die** instead of **they dieth**
> **waketh** instead of **wakeneth** (two times)
> **appointed mine ear** instead of **opened mine ear**
>
> The original manuscript of the Book of Mormon is extant for each of these cases and reads according to the King James Bible. It is obvious that, as the work on the JST progressed, the revealed nature of the text was not sustained at the same level.[21]

The availability of the Original Manuscript for 2 Nephi 7 allowed Skousen to confirm that JST Isaiah 50 was simply copied from the 1830 Book of Mormon. It is possible that $Nephi_1$ had access to a version of Isaiah 50 closer to the version in 2 Nephi 7 and JST Isaiah 50 than the KJV, but in terms of textual influence, the Book of Mormon was the source for JST Isaiah 50.

Turning now to JST Genesis 50 and its relationship to 2 Nephi 3, this relationship is complex. It is easy to conclude that the added material in JST Genesis 50 has been copied from the Book of Mormon, but what may have been copied also shows signs of periodically being thoughtfully edited or slightly reworked along the way. Not all of $Lehi_1$'s words are found in JST Genesis 50, and not all the added material in JST Genesis 50 is present in 2 Nephi 3. In general, though, JST Genesis 50:24–35 largely corresponds with 2 Nephi 3: 5–18. The

21. Skousen, "Earliest Textual Sources," 460–62. Emphasis original for the Book of Mormon phrases, otherwise emphasis added.

extensive level of verbatim overlap is unlike the intertextuality seen across the Book of Mormon with respect to the Book of Moses, where short phrases and terms are employed in many paraphrases and allusions rather than extensive verbatim quotes. While I lean toward proposing that a reworking of 2 Nephi 3 may account for JST Genesis 50, Kent Jackson's proposal is also reasonable:

> Perhaps the best conclusion for understanding the relationship between JST Genesis and 2 Nephi 3 is that both the plates of brass and a proto-Genesis text (or some other ancient document) contained records of the prophecy of ancient Joseph. The version Lehi quoted was apparently longer, because it continues after the JST version comes to an end. When revising the Old Testament, Joseph Smith may have drawn from the words in the Book of Mormon when the two accounts were close enough to the same, but even that is speculation.[22]

We now consider JST Isaiah 29:6, 8–34, which closely follows 2 Nephi 27:2–34. $Nephi_1$ appears to be reworking Isaiah as he adds his own prophecies regarding the latter days and the Book of Mormon. Again, this looks like extensive overlap consistent with largely importing the Book of Mormon into the JST. Jackson notes that the Book of Mormon text here was copied onto the JST manuscript, where the 1830 version of 2 Nephi 27:3–35 is reproduced "including all the 1830 paragraph breaks but one."[23]

Apart from these examples, there is little evidence of other meaningful connections between the Book of Mormon and the JST with any of the characteristics seen in parallels with the Book of Moses. One possibility that can be considered is that JST Genesis 14:25–40, a passage that deals with Melchizedek, shows a slight resonance with Alma 13:14–19. Melchizedek is said to have been ordained a high priest "after the order of the covenant" that God made with Enoch (JST Genesis 14:27). Likewise, Alma 13:14 indicates that Melchizedek was a high priest, a detail not explicitly stated in the KJV Bible, though the term "high priest" is associated with his name several times: "an high priest after the order of Melchisedec" (Hebrews 5:10), and "an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Hebrews 6:20, 7:21; cf. Psalm 110:4). Related language pertaining to priesthood is found in

22. Jackson, *Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible*, 152.
23. Jackson, *Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible*, 154n11.

Parallel 2, "order-days-years-eternity" based on Moses 6:67 and Alma 13:7, and in Parallel 52, "ordained … after the order" of the Son of God or of God, based on Moses 8:19 (cf. 6:67–68), 2 Nephi 6:2, and Alma 13:1, 2 (cf. Alma 13: 6–10, 14, and several other verses). The concept of men being ordained as high priests is also found in the KJV (Hebrews 5:1, 8:3). In short, JST Genesis 14 does not seem to offer a compelling source for the language already considered in Alma 13, but it is interesting.

A few other minor elements were also interesting but not that notable. For example, JST Isaiah 65:2 adds "their works are evil" which is like part of Alma 41:4: "And if **their works are evil** they shall be restored unto them for evil." While that phrase does not occur in the KJV, closely related language includes "the works thereof are evil" (John 7:7), "his own works were evil" (1 John 3:12), "every evil work" (2 Timothy 4:18), etc. Thus, JST Isaiah 65:2 does not appear to provide a meaningful parallel to the Book of Mormon.

The Sermon at the Temple, as John Welch has appropriately called the version of the Sermon on the Mount that Christ taught to the Nephites at the Temple in Bountiful,[24] has several differences relative to the King James Bible. Many, but not all, of these differences were imported into the JST versions of the Sermon on the Mount, especially in Matthew 5–7, corresponding to 3 Nephi 12–14. For example, added material in JST Matthew 5:3–4 speaks of the blessing to come to others who will hear the apostles preach and believe in their words, especially those who are baptized. They will be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost, roughly following a similar message to the New World disciples in 3 Nephi 12:1. The words that follow in 3 Nephi 12:2 are almost identical to those in JST Matthew 5:4:

> Yea, blessed are they who shall believe on your words, and come down into the depth of humility and be baptized in my name, for they shall be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.

Also, the Book of Mormon's well-known addition of "who come unto me" in the Beatitudes is also imported into the JST: "Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit, who come unto me, for there is the kingdom of heaven" (JST Matthew 5:5; cf. 3 Nephi 12:3). As Skousen notes, while

24. John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple & the Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), scripturecentral.org/archive/books/book/illuminating-sermon-temple-sermon-mount.

much of the Sermon on the Mount is adapted to follow the Book of Mormon's Sermon at the Temple, there are also instances where the KJV instead of the Book of Mormon is followed and instances where the JST has unique material.[25] There is a heavy but not a slavish reliance on the Book of Mormon. Jackson, for example, in discussing the Sermon on the Mount chapters, notes that "the Prophet made many revisions in [Matthew 6 and 7] but did so without consulting the Book of Mormon," apart from a revision in Matthew 6:30 that may have been influenced by 3 Nephi 13:30.[26]

As interesting as the differences are, they are moot for our purposes here since the Book of Mormon material derives directly from the ministry of Christ and the recorded wording is not likely to have drawn upon New Testament manuscripts that presumably were never available to the Nephites apart from the words of Christ. Thus, the Book of Mormon is likely to have been the source for some changes in the JST versions of the Sermon of Mount but almost certainly not the other way around.

Apart from some passages in the JST that may have been imported from the Book of Mormon, the JST after the Book of Moses simply does not show the kind of relationships to the Book of Mormon that have been the focus of this study. An outpouring of newly revealed ancient material appears to have occurred during the translation of the Book of Moses, yielding material that improbably seems to have influenced the earlier Book of Mormon, possibly through a link to the brass plates. This makes the Book of Moses unique with respect to the Book of Mormon, with a large body of parallels that are difficult to explain as the work of naturalistic forces during Joseph Smith's translation of the two texts.

While the Book of Moses that was canonized in 1880 might seem like it was rather arbitrarily selected from the JST of the Bible up to Genesis 6:13, it seems to have captured revealed material with a surprisingly large number of textural parallels to the Book of Mormon, including textual parallels suggestive of a one-way direction of influence from the Book of Moses to the Book of Mormon.

Surely, for these textual parallels to exist, there must have been some common factor in the translation process that allowed connections between the Book of Mormon and the later Book of Moses to

25. Skousen, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon*, Part Five, *The King James Quotations in the Book of Mormon*, 136–38.

26. Jackson, *Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible*, 149.

remain visible and meaningful. Here we must make some observations on the obvious importance of the translation method.

Did the Translation Method Preserve or Create the Parallels?

Do the observations about related language in the Book of Moses and Book of Mormon tell us something about the origins of the two texts? Or do such findings more likely tell us about the work and intentions of the translator(s)? Could translation artifacts or other factors account for the parallels without the need for common material on the brass plates? A related and noteworthy question has been raised by David Calabro:

> The evidence brought forward by Lindsay and Reynolds is of great significance. It certainly demonstrates that there are intertextual connections between some of the contents of the plates of brass and the restored portions of the Book of Moses. However, the precise relationship between these texts cannot be adequately described without a systematic comparison of the language of the Book of Mormon, the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis, and the New Testament. Such a comparison is beyond the scope of this paper, but some preliminary observations may be offered here.
>
> One observation is that the use of New Testament-like language in the Book of Mormon involves a number of unique factors. The foundational revelation given to Nephi in 1 Nephi 11–14, which is explicitly linked to the Revelation of John (see 1 Nephi 14:18–27), may have proleptically introduced similar language into Nephite discourse. Further, most of the historical narrative in the Book of Mormon is an abridgment by Mormon and Moroni, who lived long after the ministry of Christ among the Nephites. During his ministry, Christ "did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in his glory" (3 Nephi 26:3). The greater part of this discourse, which may have included material similar to the Book of Moses, was recorded on the large plates of Nephi (3 Nephi 26:7). It is therefore possible that the abridged account is influenced by the language of Christ's teachings. Even quotations from the plates of

> brass found on the large plates may have been rendered into Christian language in the process of creating the edited text — after all, it is reasonable to imagine Mormon needing to translate the language of the nearly one-thousand-year-old plates of brass into his own written idiom. Finally, the possibility of influence from native American languages and sources is a large unknown factor. It is not out of the question that native American expressions with no direct relationship to the New Testament were nevertheless close enough in meaning that they were translated into English using New Testament language. Thus, the parallel New Testament-like language in the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses may be explained in various ways; it is not always necessary to conclude that one is derived from the other.[27]

Calabro's question suggests that we might better understand the significance of related language in the Book of Moses if we also examine the Joseph Smith Translation more thoroughly. That examination points to something unique about the Book of Moses not found systematically in other parts of the JST. More generally, Calabro raises the complex issue that multiple factors having the potential to influence the final translation without necessarily requiring that the brass plates were a vehicle for textual influence into the Book of Mormon.

Here the issue of the distribution of parallels provides useful data. If the various factors that led to the incorporation of New Testament language into the Book of Mormon, such as Mormon's and Moroni's Christian vocabulary and their language preferences in translating old records into their vernacular, are key causes for apparent links to the Book of Moses, then we might find that the Book of Moses parallels occur rather uniformly throughout the Book of Mormon. If anything, we might expect the words of post-New Testament era prophets, such as Mormon and Moroni, to represent the zenith of the distribution while the small plates writers would have relatively less Book of Moses material (especially since Mormon and Moroni apparently did not rework or translate that material.[28] This, however, is the opposite of

27. David Calabro, "An Early Christian Context for the Book of Moses," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 47 (2021): 195–96, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/an-early-christian-context-for-the-book-of-moses/.

28. John S. Thompson argues that the Charles Anthon incident and associated reports support the notion that the Book of Mormon contained two differing scripts, an Egyptian script from the small plates and the much later Reformed

what we see. There is not a uniform distribution, and indeed, Mormon's writings have some of the lowest concentrations observed, with the book of Moroni only slightly higher. It is the ancient small plates, apparently untranslated by Mormon but simply added to the gold plates, that contains the richest concentration of parallels in the words of $Lehi_1$, $Nephi_1$, and Jacob. Those most familiar with the brass plates tend to give us the most allusions to the Book of Moses, including subtle one-way allusions that add explanatory power to the text in ways that could not be reasonably achieved by Joseph's mind. The distribution data suggests that something else besides random incorporation of New Testament language is the mechanism for the parallels.

There is still certainly the possibility that some of the parallels were not intended by the original Book of Mormon authors or speakers and could have been introduced in the modern translation either by accident or by design to call attention to a meaningful connection that readers might well consider.

Indeed, the translation mechanism demands more attention, for the nature of the parallels observed in our studies suggests that translator intent or at least translator cooperation may have been required in many cases to make the parallels clear. Such intent seems to have been at play for both the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses. A looser more functional translation for either volume could have obscured many of the results. This raises the controversial issue of just how the translation was done. A few thoughts will be offered, while first observing that the findings reported here do not require any one model of translation apart from translation through the power of God. But some models seem more consistent with our data than others.

The details of exactly how Joseph translated the Book of Mormon remain relatively unclear apart from using revelatory tools such as the Nephite interpreters or a single seer stone, though even that is the source of much controversy and misunderstanding.[29] By the time the

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Egyptian script used by Mormon and Moroni. See John S. Thompson, "Looking Again at the Anthon Transcript(s)," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 63 (2025): 353–66, journal.interpreterfoundation.org/looking-again-at-the-anthon-transcripts/.

29. See "Book of Mormon Translation," *Gospel Topics Essays*, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/book-of-mormon-translation. For an example of controversies related to the Church's acknowledgement of the use of a seer stone in part of the translation of the Book of Mormon in that Gospel Topics essay, see the book review, Jeff Lindsay, "Through a Glass Darkly: Restoring Translation to the Restoration?," *Interpreter: A Journal*

Book of Moses was translated, there is no evidence that such tools continued to be used. Jackson notes that none of the many scribes Joseph used during the JST work ever mentioned the use of revelatory aids, and no other information from contemporary sources points to their use.[30] Indeed, a statement from Orson Pratt may explain why they were not used:

> Elder Pratt said he was present when this revelation was given. No great noise or physical manifestation was made; Joseph was as calm as the morning sun. But he noticed a change in his countenance that he had never noticed before, when a revelation was given to him. Joseph's face was exceedingly white, and seemed to shine. The speaker had been present many times when he was translating the New Testament, and wondered why he did not use the Urim and Thummim, as in translating the Book of Mormon. While this thought passed through the speaker's mind, Joseph, as if he read his thoughts, looked up and explained that the Lord gave him the Urim and Thummim when he was inexperienced in the Spirit of inspiration. But now he had advanced so far that he understood the operations of that Spirit, and did not need the assistance of that instrument.[31]

Joseph never explained what process occurred either in his mind or before his eyes as he translated. It is commonly proposed that Joseph translated the Book of Mormon by looking at a portion of the text to be translated, perhaps through the transparent seer stones of the Nephite interpreters, sometimes called a Urim and Thummim, and "studied out" in his mind a proposed translation, perhaps responding to spiritual impressions. This "first draft" of Joseph's composed translation was then taken to the Lord in prayer to see if it could be confirmed with a burning in the bosom. Otherwise, there would be a stupor of thought requiring revision until a proposed translation of the unknown language in an unknown script would finally be accepted, at which point it could be dictated, and then the process would continue

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of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship 63 (2025): 169–202, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/through-a-glass-darkly-restoring-translation-to-the-restoration/.

30. Jackson, *Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible*, 15.
31. Orson Pratt, "Two Days' Meeting at Brigham City, June 27 and 28, 1874," *Millennial Star* 36 (11 August 1874): 498–99, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/MStar/id/13925.

for the next few characters. Such a model for the translation is based on what I consider a popular misreading of Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–9, which many believe is a revelation about how Book of Mormon translation was done. On closer inspection, this may be incorrect. In a paper on this famous passage of the Doctrine and Covenants, Stan Spencer provided detailed analysis giving an important conclusion:

> Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–9 is conventionally interpreted as the Lord's description of the method by which the Book of Mormon was translated. A close reading of the entire revelation, however, suggests that the Lord was not telling Oliver Cowdery how to translate but rather how to know whether it was right for him to translate and how to obtain the faith necessary to do so.[32]

The analysis includes consideration of what the "it" must be in "study it out." Spencer determines that the most reasonable interpretation is that the issue is not *how* to translate, but whether it was the Lord's will for Oliver to translate. Spencer concludes that "Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–9 teaches us how to obtain a spiritual confirmation of a righteous desire."[33] Or as my wife, Kendra Lindsay, put it, we might summarize the "it" of Doctrine and Covenants 9:8 as the question, "Am I right before God and ready to translate?" or, "Is the time right and the translator ready?"[34]

In any case, the laborious iterative composition process implied by a popular reading of Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–9 for the task of translating an unknown language and script cannot reasonably fit the data on the extreme speed of the translation process,[35] or on the remarkable consistency and intertextuality of the resulting English.

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32. Stan Spencer, "The Faith to See: Burning in the Bosom and Translating the Book of Mormon in Doctrine and Covenants 9," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 219, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-faith-to-see-burning-in-the-bosom-and-translating-the-book-of-mormon-in-doctrine-and-covenants-9/.
33. Spencer, "The Faith to See," 232.
34. Kendra Lindsay, personal communication with author, 17 January 2025, discussed in Jeff Lindsay, "Honorable Intentions with an Unreliable Methodology: Lucas's Response Underscores the Problems," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 64 (2025): 115–16, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/honorable-intentions-with-an-unreliable-methodology-lucass-response-underscores-the-problems/.
35. See discussion in Lindsay, "Honorable Intentions with an Unreliable Methodology," 114–18.

Extensive data from various witnesses to the translation and also from analysis of the dictated text points to the translation work as associated with the role of a *seer* who somehow saw the translated text and was able to then provide it to the scribes, though later adjustments to the text for clarity were certainly possible for Joseph.[36] It seems that his work as a seer in translating an unknown script was not one of gradually getting impressions for Reformed Egyptian characters to pray about but one of seeing the translated text and reading it aloud to scribes. This is also consistent with $Nephi_1$'s prophecies of the forthcoming of the Book of Mormon in 2 Nephi 27: 20, 22, 24, which three times says that Joseph Smith would "read the words" of the Book of Mormon, something that "the learned" was not able to do.

One of several excellent papers applying linguistic data to support the notion that Joseph *saw* translation that he read to his scribes is a work of Stanford Carmack with the fitting title, "Joseph Smith Read the Words."[37] Indeed, there is a sizable body of work from both Skousen[38] and Carmack[39] indicating that the language Joseph employed in his dictation of the Book of Mormon was generally tightly controlled, suggesting that it was not being composed by Joseph Smith in his

36. See discussion in Lindsay, "Through a Glass Darkly: Restoring Translation to the Restoration?"

37. Stanford Carmack, "Joseph Smith Read the Words," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 41–64, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/joseph-smith-read-the-words/.

38. Royal Skousen, "The Language of the Original Text of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2018): 81–110, byustudies.byu.edu/article/the-language-of-the-original-text-of-the-book-of-mormon. Also see Royal Skousen, "How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, no. 1 (1998), 22–31, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1186&context=jbms.

39. Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 11 (2014): 209–62, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/a-look-at-some-nonstandard-book-of-mormon-grammar/; Stanford Carmack, "The Book of Mormon's Complex Finite Cause Syntax," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 49 (2021): 113–36, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-book-of-mormons-complex-finite-cause-syntax/; Stanford Carmack, "The More Part of the Book of Mormon Is Early Modern English," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 18 (2016): 33–40, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-more-part-of-the-book-of-mormon-is-early-modern-english/; and Stanford Carmack, "What Command Syntax Tells Us About Book of Mormon Authorship," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 13 (2015): 175–217, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/what-command-syntax-tells-us-about-book-of-mormon-authorship/.

own words on the fly but that the English translation was given to him. The English given to him was not his own dialect but contained many archaic elements from Early Modern English, including many that reflect influence from before the time when the KJV Bible was translated. We don't yet understand why there should be a strong influence of non-KJV Early Modern English in the dictated translation, but the data is there and remains compelling.[40] While counterarguments can be made, the phenomenon of extensive intertextuality with the Book of Moses seems consistent with the work and conclusions of Skousen and Carmack and may add an additional dimension to their proposals.

In our studies to date on connections between the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon, the outcomes that have been reported are largely based on the use of common words or expressions that make the connection apparent. Had the translation of either the Book of Mormon or the Book of Moses been simply expressed in Joseph's own language with the semantic variability that can easily occur when one is doing the "heavy lifting" of expressing meaning in one's own choice of words, many and perhaps most of the parallels might not have been detected. Further, as Rebecca Lambert observed, a more uniform distribution across chapters edited by Mormon might be expected if Mormon were responsible for most of these parallels.[41]

Reynolds's initial paper was based on computer matches of specific words, and many other parallels were found by searching for specific words and phrases as well. In many ways, it seems that tight control was applied for at least some of the language in both the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon. Or in other words, at least the translator(s) may have wanted the parallel to be noticed.

Such reasoning does not necessarily mean that Nephi_1 deliberately chose words that alluded to a brass-plates version of Genesis, but intent on his part still seems likely. Intent looks especially likely in the high levels of allusions found in his work and in the subtly meaningful applications of those allusions. One example is Laman's implicit characterization of Nephi_1 as Satanic in 1 Nephi 16:38 by his subtle reference to Moses 4:4 on the characteristics of Satan (Parallel 11). This

40. For an overview, see Stanford Carmack, "A Plain Exposition of Book of Mormon English by Means of Short Questions and Informed Answers," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 63 (2025): 107–20, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/a-plain-exposition-of-book-of-mormon-english-by-means-of-short-questions-and-informed-answers/.

41. Rebecca Lambert, personal correspondence with author, 27 May 2025.

parallel with its explanatory power only makes sense when understood as having a one-way direction of influence on 1 Nephi, and it makes the most sense if $Nephi_1$ was fully aware of the implications and the extreme irony of the charges.

Interestingly, Laman's charges against $Nephi_1$ involved with Parallel 11 echo across the centuries of Lamanite culture. We know of lasting Lamanite hatred of the Nephites from Mosiah 10:11–17, based on the anger of Laman and Lemuel, who said that $Nephi_1$ robbed them. This hatred is expressed much later during the ministry of the sons of Mosiah to the Lamanites, when $Ammon_2$ is journeying with his regal convert, King Lamoni, and meets King Lamoni's father on the road. King Lamoni speaks up for $Ammon_2$ as a servant of God and friend to the Lamanites, but the father shocks the son with his outrage:

> And now when Lamoni had rehearsed unto him all these things, behold, to his astonishment, his father was angry with him, and said: Lamoni, thou art going to deliver these Nephites, who **are sons of a liar**. Behold, he robbed our fathers; and now his children are also come amongst us that they may, by **their cunning and their lyings**, **deceive us**, that they again may rob us of our property. (Alma 20:13)

With these words, King Lamoni's father is not just reciting general charges of Nephite oppression, but he is also regurgitating a specific ancient charge of his forefathers. His words call our attention to Laman's condemnation of their brother, which in turn alludes to the Book of Moses. Consider these verses related to Parallel 11:

> And he became Satan, yea, even the devil**, the father of all lies**, to **deceive** and to **blind** men, and to **lead them captive** at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice. (Moses 4:4)

> Now, he says that the Lord has talked with him, and also that angels have ministered unto him. But behold, we know that **he lies unto us**; and he tells us these things, and he worketh many things by his **cunning arts**, that he **may deceive our eyes**, thinking, perhaps, that he may **lead us away** into some strange wilderness; and after he has led us away, he has thought to make himself a king and a ruler over us, that he may do with us according to his will and pleasure. And after this manner did my brother Laman stir up their hearts to anger. (1 Nephi 16:38)

Just as Laman alludes to Moses 4:4 to suggest that $Nephi_1$ was following the father of all lies, lying to his brethren to deceive them and blind them, to lead them away as captives with his cunning (subtle) arts, so King Lamoni's father describes $Ammon_2$, the Nephite, as the son of a liar, whose alleged miracles are due to his satanic cunning arts, again trying to deceive the Lamanites in order to exploit them. The ancient words of Father Laman still reverberate strongly in the mind of the great Lamanite king, words that must be understood as a meaningful and ironic allusion to Moses 4:4, though King Lamoni's father may have had no knowledge of that verse, just the ancient accusation. Words like *lyings*, *liar*, *deceive*, and *cunning* help establish the echo of Laman's charge in 1 Nephi 16:38 and thus its connection to Moses 4:4. This scene in one verse of Alma 20 still has unexpected resonance with a much older allusion to the brass-plates version of Genesis apparently made by Laman centuries earlier. Such finds, minor as they may be, point to the richness of the intertextuality of the Book of Mormon and the blessing to us provided by the careful wording of the English translations of both the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon that help us learn from these features.

Whether one believes that Joseph Smith had to do the heavy lifting of studying out the translation of the gold plates in his own mind or not, the translation process ultimately was revelatory and has given us an English text with meaningful ancient echoes often pointing to an influence on Book of Mormon figures by a proposed brass-plates version of Genesis akin to our Book of Moses. Some of the parallels could be due to chance and others might not have been intended by an early Book of Mormon writer but may have been provided or amplified either by later editorial work by Mormon or in translation work by whoever crafted the English translation, whether that was a heavenly being or a young Joseph Smith acting under inspiration. In any case, the diverse results seem to require divine aid rather than the human work of a clever composer named Joseph Smith.

The mysterious details of the divine translation work of Joseph Smith play an important role here. The strong similarity in language that characterizes most of the parallels between the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses would seem to require a relatively tightly controlled translation process, apparently tailored to make the relationships clear or detectable. For the Book of Mormon, the translated parallels may have involved speakers of Hebrew, Aramaic, or later descendant languages who read a presumably Egyptian version of

Genesis, translated it to their spoken language at least for the sermons and dialogs of the Book of Mormon, and then transcribed that onto the gold plates in "reformed Egyptian," which in turn was finally translated to English.

Meanwhile, the Book of Moses could have been translated from an unknown Egyptian document by or attributed to Moses, or from a document in Hebrew or some other language related to a document originally from Moses, or perhaps it was translated directly into English from a brass-plates version of Genesis. In any case, the linguistic family tree of the English Book of Mormon is different than that of the Book of Moses, so obtaining such extensive intertextuality in the final products would seem to require deliberate choices made in the final translation. Given that this intertextuality involves the later translated Book of Moses's serving as a rich mother lode for allusions and references in the Book of Mormon, it is unlikely that Joseph was the source of the wording. Translator intent or translator cooperation seems to be required for at least portions of both the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses.

The proposal of translator intent or cooperation playing a significant role in preserving parallels or making them noticeable to English readers raises the issue of how the English syntax of the Book of Moses compares to the Book of Mormon. Does it also show a strong influence of Early Modern English and a disconnection with Joseph's own dialect? If the English verbiage of the Book of Moses had been adjusted to maintain linguistic connections with the Book of Mormon, then it would seem reasonable that the style and syntax of the Book of Moses overall might be like that of the Book of Mormon. This is indeed what the data appear to show.[42] Stanford Carmack's 2021 paper, "The Original English of the Book of Moses and What It Indicates About the Book's Authorship," examined thirty different linguistic categories and compared their traits across the Book of Moses, the Book of Mormon, the KJV Bible, Joseph's early writings, and a pseudo-archaic corpus

42. Stanford Carmack, "The Original English of the Book of Moses and What It Indicates About the Book's Authorship" in *Tracing Ancient Threads in the Book of Moses*, vol. 2, *Inspired Origins, Temple Contexts, and Literary Qualities*, ed. Jeffrey Bradshaw et al. (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2021), 631–702, interpreterfoundation.org/conference-talks-the-original-english-of-the-book-of-moses-and-what-it-indicates-about-the-books-authorship/.

of texts that tried to imitate archaic biblical syntax. Carmack's findings are significant:

> Joseph Smith's native usage can explain 30 percent of Book of Moses usage, pseudo-archaism 44 percent, and King James usage 37 percent. The Book of Mormon, however, is able to account for most of the patterns and forms investigated: 86 percent of them, by this count. (It is possible, of course, to include other features, which would change the percentages somewhat.) But the Book of Mormon falls short of being able to explain a few of the linguistic features mentioned in table 2, most notably the past-tense usage. The few usage issues it cannot explain occur in the early modern period. Indeed, broader early modern usage (most of the time not Joseph Smith's modern usage) accounts for all the linguistic features. Thus the simplest explanation of the Book of Moses's English usage would be to adopt an early modern perspective—in other words, that a text showing true early modern sensibility in language use was revealed to Joseph Smith in 1830.[43]

The English language of the Book of Moses as dictated by Joseph Smith is by far closest to the Book of Mormon, but it has some notable differences that can be accounted for as a slightly different form of Early Modern English influence on the translation than is present in the Book of Mormon.

Of course, naturalistic explanations for Joseph's work of translation would also suggest that the two texts should be similar since they ought to reflect his own language. But the data from linguistic analysis of the Book of Moses shows that it is not simply the same as the Book of Mormon, and importantly, does not closely follow Joseph's syntax, just as the language of the Book of Mormon cannot be explained as Joseph's syntax or as his effort to imitate the King James Bible. Carmack's analysis is consistent with an English translation intended to preserve linguistic connections with the Book of Mormon.

43. Carmack, "The Original English of the Book of Moses," 634–35.

These Parallels are Different in Nature to Those Employed by Critics

A recently posed question involves the potential downside of emphasizing parallels to another text. After all, aren't such parallels also used to attack the Book of Mormon?

The parallels in this study are of a different nature than those often employed by critics of the Book of Mormon. Various pre-1829 texts have been proposed as sources that Joseph plagiarized or drew upon, based on words, similar names, phrases, or sometimes themes. Upon further investigation, many such parallels reflect common phrases in the English language, KJV language, or perhaps random chance, especially when the matches are based on common words whose shared usage seems trivial and random. Some attacks are based on similar sounding names occurring in unrelated contexts. Such parallels generally lack substance or explanatory power. For examples of treatments of the flaws and lack of significance in some popular "smoking guns" for Book of Mormon origins, see Benjamin L. McGuire, "The Late War Against the Book of Mormon" [44]; the FAIR Latter-day Saints answer to "Was the beginning of the Book of Mormon derived from The First Book of Napoleon?";[45] and Benjamin McGuire's "Finding Parallels: Some Cautions and Criticisms, Part One"[46] and "Part Two."[47]

44. Benjamin L. McGuire, "The Late War Against the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 7 (2013): 323–55, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-late-war-against-the-book-of-mormon/; responding to a presentation by Chris and Duane Johnson, "How the Book of Mormon Destroyed Mormonism," 19 October 2013, in Salt Lake City, which claimed that the statistical analysis identified a key Book of Mormon source in John Lewis Thomson, *Historical sketches of the late war between the United States and Great Britain* (G. J. Hunt: New York, 1816), archive.org/details/historicalsketch00inthom/page/n11/mode/2up.
45. "Was the beginning of the Book of Mormon derived from The First Book of Napoleon?," FAIR Latter-day Saints, fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Question:_Was_the_beginning_of_the_Book_of_Mormon_derived_from_%27%27The_First_Book_of_Napoleon%27%27%3F. This deals with popular allegations based on Michael Linning, *The First Book of Napoleon, The Tyrant of the Earth* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, & Orme, 1809), scripturecentral.org/archive/books/book/first-book-napoleon-tyrant-earth.
46. Benjamin L. McGuire, "Finding Parallels: Some Cautions and Criticisms, Part One," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 5 (2013): 1–59, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/finding-parallels-some-cautions-and-criticisms-part-one/.
47. Benjamin L. McGuire, "Finding Parallels: Some Cautions and Criticisms, Part Two," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 5 (2013): 61–104, interpreter

Also see my response to suggestions that the place name Nahom in the Book of Mormon is easily explained based on its alleged ubiquity around the world.[48]

On the other hand, the parallels in the Book of Mormon discussed here are parallels to an English volume that had not been produced and frequently add meaning or depth to the Book of Mormon text, as we expect when one text makes an intentional allusion to another document. Some of them may be due to chance, as we have repeatedly noted, but many fit the context or add meaning in ways indicative of intent and even point to a Book of Moses-related text that provides a backstory or context for the allusion. As a body, they have explanatory power that helps us recognize meaningful relationships. As such, they weaken rather than strengthen claims of modern plagiarism by Joseph.

This project began with a quest for answers, not a search for parallels to support a preconceived argument. It began with my puzzling over 1 Nephi 4:2, where $Nephi_1$ tries to motivate his brethren by saying, "Let us be strong like unto Moses, for he truly spake unto the waters of the Red Sea and they divided hither and thither." I wanted to know what $Nephi_1$ was alluding to, for I could find nothing in the Old Testament calling Moses strong. That's when I learned of Noel Reynolds's paper pointing to thirty-three connections between the Book of Mormon and Book of Moses. Intrigued, I began examining the Book of Moses and quickly found a clear connection that helped to explain what $Nephi_1$ might have been referring to: "blessed art thou, Moses, for I, the Almighty, have chosen thee, and *thou shalt be made stronger than many waters*; for they shall obey thy command as if thou wert God" (Moses 1:25). It was the perfect candidate for a source describing Moses as strong in the context of crossing the Red Sea as the waters obeyed his command, as in 1 Nephi 4:2. This was not a random parallel with a couple of similar words being used but one that offered a specific common context and had explanatory power. That find offered a satisfying answer to a legitimate question and added relevant background to a Book of Mormon passage. Many of the subsequently

foundation.org/journal/finding-parallels-some-cautions-and-criticisms-part-two/.

48. Jeff Lindsay, "Noham, That's Not History (Nor Geography, Cartography, or Logic): More on the Recent Attacks on NHM," *Arise from the Dust* (blog), 22 December 2013, arisefromthedust.com/noham-thats-not-history-nor-geography/.

discovered parallels likewise answer questions and add richness to the Book of Mormon text. This goes beyond parallelomania.

Conclusion

In the process of addressing reasonable questions about the connections between the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses, several further discoveries have been made which seem to strengthen the case for meaningful ancient relationships. The patterns in the distribution of the parallels show non-random results in which those writers most familiar with the brass plates are most likely to allude to material related to the Book of Moses. Intriguing insights can be obtained by looking at the level of individual books, chapters within books, and verses themselves. The density of parallels in some sections, such as the words of $Lehi_1$, is noteworthy, but we can also learn much from the "gaps" where one or more chapters are free of parallels.

Exploring the Joseph Smith Translation also shows that something unique occurred for the initial portion of the JST that became our canonized Book of Moses. Perhaps a revelatory outpouring rooted in ancient texts occurred in that initial work, followed by continuing revelation but in ways less directly related to the Book of Mormon. The pervasive and often meaningful connections between the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon are not found in the remaining JST, just as they are not found with the Book of Abraham. This contributes to the wonder and uniqueness of the Book of Moses connections and undermines theories that the connections can be explained by Joseph Smith simply reusing familiar Book of Mormon language in his subsequent translation work. The Book of Abraham and the latter portions of the JST are evidence against such naturalistic hypotheses, as are the details of the distribution of the parallels.

The hypothesis Reynolds originally proposed was that a text that could have influenced Book of Mormon writers was something like our Book of Moses that might have existed on the brass plates. For the first thirty-three parallels that Reynolds uncovered, he observed that the writers of the small plates, whom we might expect would be particularly well schooled in the brass plates, are responsible for most of the Book of Moses's influence that he had identified:

> It is also impressive that most of the influence from the Book of Moses in the Book of Mormon shows up early in the small plates and the writings of the first generation of Book of

> Mormon prophets — significantly, those who had custody and long-term, firsthand access to the brass plates. Many of the later passages that use Book of Moses terminology and concepts tend to repeat earlier Nephite adaptations of the original materials.[49]

Over time, his hypothesis, based on only thirty-three parallels, has held up well, and now over 140 parallels have been identified. It is still the case that several small plates authors or speakers have particularly high levels of parallels, though we can also appreciate many more important parallels across many books.

The surprisingly high level of intertextuality between the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon presents a series of challenges to those who claim Joseph Smith was the author of both. I propose that a study of these parallels, their characteristics, and the insights they provide can help us better appreciate the ancient origins of *both* texts.

Such investigation can also help us appreciate the marvel of the divine translation processes that gave us the English, especially when we consider the chronology of the translation work. For example, consider Parallel 11, "lies-lead-will-deceive-eyes" from Moses 4:4 with relationships to 1 Nephi 16:38, with a newly added cross-reference to Alma 20:13, as discussed above (also included in the updates listed in Part 2 of this series[50]).

The words of King Lamoni's father in Alma 20:13 were dictated shortly after the Book of Mosiah, but long before the dictation turned to the small plates. Having the recrimination against "the son of a liar" worded to allude to Laman's ancient accusation — before that story was even translated and written in English — is a remarkable thing for a text dictated on the fly without notes at a high rate of speed and without major revisions. If the Book of Mormon were a modern composition, how does the author of Alma 20 subtly allude to a backstory in 1 Nephi that hasn't been written yet, with the precisely worded backstory to be filled in weeks later near the end of the translation process when 1 Nephi 16:38 is reached? And then how does one craft that verse to allude to yet another backstory, the characterization of Satan that came later in Moses 4:4 — not dictated until well over another year would pass? Joseph as the author of such subtle, forward-looking allusion seems unlikely.

49. Reynolds, "The Brass Plates Version of Genesis," 72.
50. Lindsay, "Parallels, Part 2."

Many such questions abound in the utterly unexpected connections between the Book of Mormon and the later-translated text of the Book of Moses, which improbably seems to provide the backstory to and key terminology for many aspects of the earlier Book of Mormon. This all makes little sense, especially considering Joseph's education and the translation process observed by many witnesses, unless one can entertain the possibility of real ancient texts with real ancient authors, where one ancient text could influence the other, and where both were produced "in the wrong order" in modern times by a prophet translating with the power of God. It's a surprising story backed by surprising and unexpected data. Alternate hypotheses and new questions are welcome as we explore the implications of the data, but for now, the connections between the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon strike me as important evidence for the divinity, authenticity, and antiquity of *both* texts, and for their miraculous translation into English.

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Parallels between the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon, Part 2: The Updated List of 146 Parallels

Jeffrey D. Lindsay

Abstract: *In exploring the connections between the texts of the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses, several updates to previously published parallels need to be made, including the discovery of even more apparent parallels. The total number of proposed parallels that cannot readily be explained by the language of the King James Bible now stands at 146. In this article I present the current list and the updates. Of particular importance may be the expanded findings related to Samuel the Lamanite and connections to the account of Enoch in the Book of Moses in updated Parallel 86.*

Numerous parallels between the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses have been identified that are consistent with Noel Reynolds's original 1990 proposal that a version of Genesis on the brass plates may have contained some of the non-King James Version language and concepts found in the Book of Moses.[1] These parallels

1. Noel B. Reynolds, "The Brass Plates Version of Genesis," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday, 27 March 1990*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS]; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 2:136–73. This was republished as Noel B. Reynolds, "The Brass Plates Version of Genesis," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 34 (2020): 63–96, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-brass-plates-version-of-genesis/.

   For the recent work that has discovered many more parallels beyond the thirty-three found by Reynolds, see Jeff Lindsay and Noel B. Reynolds, "'Strong Like unto Moses': The Case for Ancient Roots in the Book of Moses

generally exclude those that can be readily explained as mere incorporation of King James Version language. In many cases, they cannot be explained as Joseph simply borrowing Book of Mormon language and concepts to compose the Book of Moses. Some of the parallels reflect a one-way direction of influence from the Book of Moses to the Book of Mormon, as if Book of Mormon authors were often alluding to a backstory or to well-developed concepts that the Book of Moses provides. Examples of how these new-found parallels enrich our appreciation of familiar accounts will be offered below.

Given that the Book of Moses translation began well after the Book of Mormon translation was complete, these parallels may cast doubt on common assumptions about how Joseph produced the Book of Moses. Indeed, they can be viewed as evidence that both books have ancient origins, with something like the Book of Moses possibly having been on the brass plates, where it could have influenced Book of Mormon authors — especially those most familiar with the brass plates. Indeed, a recently published companion article, Part 1 of this two-part series, examines the distribution of the parallels in the Book of Mormon, arguing that the hypothesis of brass plates influence on ancient Book of Mormon authors has significant explanatory power with respect to the details of the distribution and reduces the likelihood that the distribution arises from random word choices by Joseph.[2]

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, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/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/; and Jeff Lindsay, "Further Evidence from the Book of Mormon for a Book of Moses-Like Text on the Brass Plates," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 61 (2024): 415–94, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/further-evidence-from-the-book-of-mormon-for-a-book-of-moses-like-text-on-the-brass-plates/. The count in the latter publication was 133. Also see the earlier work, Jeff Lindsay, "'Arise from the Dust': Insights from Dust-Related Themes in the Book of Mormon (Part 1: Tracks from the Book of Moses)," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016): 179–232, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/arise-from-the-dust-insights-from-dust-related-themes-in-the-book-of-mormon-part-1-tracks-from-the-book-of-moses/.

2. Jeff Lindsay, "Parallels Between the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon, Part 1: Details of Their Distribution and Relationships to the JST," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 67 (2026): 275–320, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/parallels-between-the-book-of-moses-and-the-book-of-mormon-part-1-details-of-their-distribution-and-relationships-to-the-jst/.

Summary of All Proposed Parallels

It is helpful to view the proposed parallels grouped according to when they were discovered. Accordingly, I have organized them into five groups, in tables 1 through 5. In total, there are 146 proposed parallels.

Tables 1 and 2 form the original thirty-three parallels identified by Reynolds.

Table 1. Concepts not directly found together in the KJV Bible.

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
1	transgression-fall, fall-death	Moses 6:59	2 Nephi 9:6
2	order-days-years-eternity	Moses 6:67	Alma 13:7
3	Lord-from all eternity-to	Moses 7:29	Mosiah 3:5, 8:18
4	God-gave-man-agency	Moses 7:32	2 Nephi 2:16
5	Lord's Spirit-withdraws-from-man	Moses 1:15	Alma 34:35; Helaman 4:24, 6:35, 13:8, Mosiah 2:36
6	children-whole-from foundation	Moses 6:54	Moroni 8:8, 12
7	"Only name" "whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men," coupled with explanation on the salvation of children (*revised from Reynolds's original*)	Moses 6:52	Mosiah 3:16–18
8	devil-father-of all lies	Moses 4:4	2 Nephi 2:18, 9:9; Ether 8:25
9	devil-lead-captive-his will	Moses 4:4	2 Nephi 2:27; Alma 12:11, 40:13;
10	devil-deceive-blind-lead	Moses 4:4	3 Nephi 2:2
11	lies-lead-will-deceive-eyes	Moses 4:4	1 Nephi 16:38 (cf. Alma 20:13)

Table 2. Concepts that also have KJV connections.

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
12	earth-groans; rocks-rend	Moses 7:56	1 Nephi 12:4, 19:12; 3 Nephi 10:9
13	plan of salvation	Moses 6:62	Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14, 34:16, 42:5

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
14	eternal life	Moses 1:39	2 Nephi 2:27, 28, 10:23, 31:18, 20; Jacob 6:11; Enos 1:3; Mosiah 5:15, 15:23–25, 18:9, 13, 26:20, 28:7; Alma 1:4, 5:28, 7:16, 11:40, 13:29, 22:15; Helaman 5:8; 3 Nephi 9:14, 15:9; Moroni 9:25
15	unclean-dwell-presence-God	Moses 6:57	1 Nephi 10:21, 15:34; Alma 7:21
16	call on-all men-to repent	Moses 6:23	2 Nephi 2:21, 26:27; Alma 12:33; 3 Nephi 11:32; Moroni 7:31
17	nowise-inherit-kingdom of God	Moses 6:57	Mosiah 27:26; Alma 5:51, 9:12, 39:9; 3 Nephi 11:38
18	things-temporal-spiritual	Moses 6:63	1 Nephi 15:32, 22:3; 2 Nephi 9:11–12; Mosiah 2:41; Alma 7:23, 12:16, 37:43; Helaman 14:16
19	people-dwell-in righteousness	Moses 7:16	1 Nephi 22:26
20	mine Only Begotten Son	Moses 6:52 (cf. Moses 1:33)	Jacob 4:5, 11; Alma 12:33
21	works of darkness	Moses 5:55	2 Nephi 9:9, 10:15, 25:2, 26:10, 22; Alma 37:21, 23, 45:12; Helaman 6:28, 30, 8:4, 10:3; Mormon 8:27
22	secret combination(s)	Moses 5:51	2 Nephi 26:22; Alma 37:30, 31; Helaman 2:8, 3:23, 6:38; 3 Nephi 4:29, 5:6, 7:6, 9, 9:9; 4 Nephi 1:42; Mormon 8:27, Ether 8:18, 19, 22, 24, 27, 9:1, 11:15, 13:18, 14:8, 10
23	wars and bloodshed	Moses 6:15	Jacob 7:24; Omni 1:3, 24; Alma 35:15, 62:35, 39; Mosiah 29:36, Alma 45:11, Alma 60:16, Helaman 6:17, Mormon 8:8, Ether 14:21
24	shut out-from presence-God	Moses 6:49	2 Nephi 9:9

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
25	murder-get gain	Moses 5:31	Helaman 2:8, 7:21; Ether 8:16
26	seeking for power	Moses 6:15	Alma 46:4
27	carnal, sensual, devilish	Moses 5:13	Mosiah 16:3; Alma 41:13, 42:10
28	hearts-wax-hard	Moses 6:27	Alma 35:15
29	lifted up-imagination-his heart	Moses 8:22	Alma 1:6
30	natural man	Moses 1:14	Mosiah 3:19; Alma 26:21
31	Omner	Moses 7:9	Mosiah 27:34
32	Shum	Moses 7:5	Alma 11:5
33	and thus-it was (is)-Amen	Moses 5:59	1 Nephi 9:6, 14:30, 22:31; Alma 13:9; Helaman 12:26

Table 3 shows the sixty-four additional parallels discussed in the 2023 "Strong Like Unto Moses" paper.[3] These parallels include and build on fifteen finds from the 2016 "Arise from the Dust, Part 1" paper.[4]

Table 3. Finds from the 2023 "Strong Like Unto Moses" paper.

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
34	The strength of Moses	Moses 1:20–21, 25	1 Nephi 4:2
35	Chains of darkness, chains of hell, chains of the devil	Moses 7:26, 57	2 Nephi 1:13, 23, 9:45, 28:19, 22; Alma 5:7, 9, 10, 12:6, 11, 17, 13:30, 26:14–15, 36:18
36	Veil of darkness	Moses 7:26, 61	Alma 19:6 (cf. Ether 4:15)
37	Song of redeeming love/ everlasting joy, contrasted with chains of darkness/hell	Moses 7:53–57	Alma 5:7, 9, 26, 26:13–15, 36:18, 22
38	The use of satanic oaths and covenants in forming secret combinations	Moses 5:29, 49–52; 6:28–29	Alma 37:27, 29; Helaman 6:21, 25, 26; 4 Nephi 1:42; Ether 8:15, 16, 20
39	The great antiquity of secret combinations and satanic covenants	Moses 5:28–31, 49; 6:15	2 Nephi 26:22; Helaman 6:27; Ether 8:9, 9:26, 10:33

3. Lindsay and Reynolds, "Strong Like unto Moses."
4. Lindsay, "'Arise from the Dust' (Part 1)."

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
40	Cain's involvement in a secret combination to keep Abel's murder secret	Moses 5:29	Helaman 6:27
41	The persistence of Satan's secret combination not only with Cain, but with other followers (with mechanisms for enforcement)	Moses 5:25, 29, 51–52 (or see 25–52)	Helaman 6:27; Ether 8:20–26 (on the enforcement system, see Helaman 6:24)
42	Knowing/distinguishing brothers in secret satanic covenants/ combinations	Moses 5:51	Helaman 6:22
43	Shaking, trembling of heavens, earth, Satan, and the wicked / shaking off Satan's chains, bands, and sin	Moses 1:21, 6:47–49, 7:41, 61	2 Nephi 1:13, 23, 9:44–45, 28:18–19
44	Misery (either for Satan or his followers)	Moses 7:37, 41	2 Nephi 2:5, 11, 13, 18, 23, 27, 9:9, 46; Mosiah 3:25; Alma 3:26, 9:11, 26:20, 40:15, 17, 21, 41:4, 42:1, 26; Helaman 3:29, 5:12, 7:16, 12:26; Mormon 8:38
45	Misery and woe	Moses 6:48	2 Nephi 1:13; Alma 9:11; Helaman 5:12, 7:16
46	The infinite nature of God's love and the Atonement (Enoch's "heart swelled wide as eternity" and his "bowels yearned" in tasting the grief of human wickedness / Christ's "bowels of mercy" and infinite atonement)	Moses 7:28–41, particularly 41	Bowels of mercy: Mosiah 15:9; Alma 7:12, 26:37, 34:15 Infinite atonement: 2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:10, 14 (cf. Alma 26:37)
47	Rage and Satan's dominion over the hearts of men	Moses 6:15	1 Nephi 12:17, 13:27, 29, 14:7, 22:15, 26, 30:18; Mosiah 3:6, Alma 8:9, 10:24, 25, 12:11, 27:12; Helaman 6:21, 16:22, 23; 3 Nephi 1:22, 2:2–3, 6:15–16, 11:29; 4 Nephi 28, 31; Ether 8:15–26, 15:19; Moroni 9:3–4
48	Administering death	Moses 6:15	Alma 57:19 (cf. Alma 47:18, 55:30, 32)

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
49	Word returning "void," in context of the Garden of Eden and the Fall	Moses 4:30	Alma 12:22–23, 26, 42:2–5
50	"Esteeming" scripture as a thing of "naught"	Moses 1:40–41	1 Nephi 19:6–9; 2 Nephi 33:2–3
51	"Raising up" a prophet to restore ancient scripture	Moses 1:41	2 Nephi 3:6, 7, 12, 24
52	The workmanship of God's hands	Moses 1:4; 7:32, 36, 37, 40	Jacob 4:9
53	(Men) ordained . . . after the order (of the Son of God or of God)	Moses 8:19 (cf. 6:67–68)	2 Nephi 6:2; Alma 13:1, 2 (cf. Alma 4:20, 5:44, 6:1, 13:6–10, 14, 43:2, 49:30; Helaman 8:18)
54	Natural (man, eye, frame) vs. spiritual/spirit/spirits	Moses 1:10, 11 (cf. v. 14), 3:5, 9, 6:36	Mosiah 3:19; Alma 19:6, 26:21, 41:4 (cf. 42:9–10)
55	The roles of a seer	Moses 6:35–36; also Moses 6 and 7 generally	Mosiah 8:13–17, 28:10–16; Alma 37:22–26
56	Perished in their sins	Moses 7:1	Mosiah 15:26 (cf. Mosiah 13:28)
57	Sins/cursing answered upon the heads of parents/children	Moses 6:54, 7:37	2 Nephi 4:6; Jacob 1:19, 3:10; Mosiah 29:30–31 (cf. 1 Nephi 22:13, Alma 60:10; Mormon 8:40; Moroni 7:32)
58	The glory of God and its relationship to eternal life	Moses 1:39; Moses 6:59, 61	2 Nephi 1:25; Jacob 4:4, 11, 5:54; Alma 14:11, 22:14, 29:9, 36:28; Helaman 5:44; Moroni 9:25
59	Weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth (all three)	Moses 1:22	Mosiah 16:2; Alma 40:13
60	Satan laughs and his angels rejoice	Moses 7:26	3 Nephi 9:2
61	The God/Lord who weeps/grieves for those who are lost	Moses 7:28–40	Jacob 5:7, 11, 13, 32, 46, 47, 51, 66
62	"All things" bear witness of the Creator (including things on or in and above the earth)	Moses 6:63	Alma 30:41, 44; Helaman 8:23–24
63	Power, wisdom, mercy, and justice	Moses 6:61–62	2 Nephi 2:12, 11:5; Jacob 4:10; Mosiah 5:15

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
64	Commanding the earth and the power of the word	Moses 7:13	1 Nephi 17:29; 2 Nephi 1:26; Jacob 4:6, 9; Words of Mormon 1:17; Alma 17:4, 17, 26:13, 31:5, 53:10
65	Spreading abominations and works (of darkness)	Moses 5:52	Helaman 6:28 (cf. Ether 8:19–22)
66	"Powers of heaven" and heavenly ascent and descent	Moses 7:27	3 Nephi 20:22, 21:23–25; 28:7–8
67	Salvation or damnation by "a firm decree"	Moses 5:15 (cf. 6:29–30)	Alma 9:24, 29:4
68	Angels bearing testimony	Moses 7:27	Moroni 7:31
69	Residue of men/the people + angels bearing testimony	Moses 7:27–28 (cf. vv. 20, 22)	Moroni 7:31–32
70	Prepared from the foundation of the world	Moses 5:57	1 Nephi 10:18; Mosiah 4:6–7, 15:19, 18:13; Alma 12:30, 18:39, 22:13, 42:26; Ether 3:14, 4:19
71	Gathered from the four quarters of the earth	Moses 7:62	1 Nephi 19:16, 22:25; 3 Nephi 5:24, 26, 16:5; Ether 13:11
72	Counsel + "ye yourselves"	Moses 6:43	Jacob 4:10
73	Fearful looking for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them	Moses 7:1 (cf. 7:34)	Alma 40:14
74	Numerous upon . . . the face of the land	Moses 6:15	Jarom 1:6, Mosiah 27:6, Mormon 1:7; Ether 7:11 (cf. Jarom 1:8; Alma 16:16; Helaman 6:28, 11:32, 16:22–23)
75	Record + baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost	Moses 6:66	3 Nephi 11:35, 19:14
76	Caught up/away to an exceedingly high mountain	Moses 1:1	1 Nephi 11:1
77	Compound parallel 1: (A) the captivity of Satan, (B) the concept of "eternal life," (C) the combination of "temporal" and "spiritual," describing God's creations, (D) hardness of hearts, and (E) blindness	(A): Moses 4:4, (B): Moses 1:39, (C): Moses 6:63, (D): Moses 6:15, 27, (E): Moses 4:4, 6:27	1 Nephi 14:7

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
78	Compound parallel 2: (A) Devil as father of lies, (B) shut out from the presence of God, (C) secret combinations, (D) works of darkness, and (E) misery for the wicked	(A): Moses 4:4, (B): Moses 5:4, 41, 6:49, (C): Moses 5:51, (D): Moses 5:51, 55, (E) Moses 7:37, 41	2 Nephi 9:9
79	Compound parallel 3: (A) Satan's fall and his angels, (B) plan of salvation / merciful plan of God, (C) temporal vs. spiritual, and (D) clothed with glory/purity/robe of righteousness	(A): Moses 4:3–4, 7:26, (B): Moses 6:62, (C): Moses 6:63, (D): Moses 7:3	2 Nephi 9:6–14 (A) vv. 8–9, (B) vv. 6, 13, cf. v. 28, (C) vv. 10–12, (D) v. 14
80	Compound parallel 4: (A) Satan will "rage in the hearts" of men, (B) chains of hell/destruction, and (C) Satan leading men into captivity	(A): Moses 6:15, (B): Moses 7:26, 57, (C): Moses 4:4	2 Nephi 28:18–23
81	Compound parallel 5: (A) the workmanship of God's hands and (B) counsel	(A)+(B): Moses 1:4, 7:32–40	Jacob 4:9–10
82	Compound parallel 6: (A) Creation of "all things" and (B) wisdom, power, justice, mercy	Moses 6:61	Mosiah 5:15 (cf. 4:9)
83	Compound parallel 7: (A) after the order (of the Son), (B) without beginning of days or end of years, (C) Only Begotten of the Father, (D) full of grace and truth, and (E) "Thus it is. Amen."	(A)+(B): Moses 6:67, (C)+(D): Moses 5:7 (cf. Moses 1:6, 32, 6:52, 7:11), (E): Moses 5:59	Alma 13:9
84	Compound parallel 8: (A) New Jerusalem, (B) gathered from four quarters of the earth, (C) cleansed through blood of the Lamb, and (D) fulfilled covenants	(A)+(B): Moses 7:62, (C): Moses 6:59, (D): Moses 8:2	Ether 13:10–11
85	Compound parallel 9: (A) call men to repentance, (B) fulfill covenants, (C) angels declare, and (D) bear testimony	(A): Moses 6:23, (B): Moses 8:2, (C): Moses 5:58, (D): Moses 7:27, 62	Moroni 7:31
86	Compound parallel 10: the account of Samuel the Lamanite echoes Enoch's call and early ministry	Moses 6:26–41 (esp. vv. 26–29, 32, 37)	Helaman 13–16 (specifically Helaman 13:2–6, 8–10, 14–17, 29; 15:5, 8; 16:2)

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
87	Declared by angels	Moses 5:58	Mosiah 3:2–4; Alma 9:25, 13:22–25, 38:7, 39:19; Helaman 5:11, 13:7, 16:14; Moroni 7:31
88	"For mine own purpose"	Moses 1:3, 33	Jacob 5:36, 53, 55
89	Fulfilling covenants	Moses 8:2	1 Nephi 14:17, 15:18, 2 Nephi 6:12, 10:15; 3 Nephi 5:25, 10:7, 15:8, 20:12, 22, 27, 46, 21:4, 7, 29:1, 9; Mormon 5:14; Ether 13:11; Moroni 7:31
90	Peaceable things of immortal glory/Heaven	Moses 6:59	Moroni 7:3
91	For the space of many hours	Moses 1:10	1 Nephi 8:8; Helaman 14:21, 26
92	Joy through the fall of man	Moses 5:10	2 Nephi 2:22–25
93	Dwell in safety forever	Moses 7:20	2 Nephi 1:9
94	Visions on the mount + "look"	Moses 7:3–4	1 Nephi 11:1, 8, 12, 19, 24, 26, 30–32; 12:1, 11; 13:1; 14:9, 18; 18:3
95	Pierced by God's eye	Moses 7:36	Jacob 2:15
96	Combinations with "full of grace and truth"	Moses 7:11	2 Nephi 2:6
97	The Lord preserving his people (during or from final tribulations)	Moses 7:61	1 Nephi 22:17 (also see 1 Nephi 22:16–18, Jacob 5:77)

Table 4 shows the thirty-six further finds reported in the 2024 "Further Evidence" paper.[5] Note that Parallel 101 is new, replacing the previous Parallel 101 presented in the 2024 paper. This replacement was made because the previous Parallel 101 was determined to be largely the same as Parallel 41. (See table 3.) To avoid any confusion that might be introduced by renumbering Parallels 102 through 133, a newly discovered parallel replaces the previous Parallel 101.

Table 4. Finds from the 2024 "Further Evidence" paper.

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
98	"All things prepared," including fruit	Moses 3:9	1 Nephi 17:5, 18:6

5. Lindsay, "Further Evidence."

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
99	More fruit: Covenanting with a prophet regarding a future prophet among his descendants	Moses 8:2	2 Nephi 3:4–7
100	A "sore curse"	Moses 5:56, 8:4	1 Nephi 2:23; 2 Nephi 1:22, 5:21; Jacob 2:33, 3:3
101	"Secret works" (discussed in Reynolds's "Brass Plates Version of Genesis" but not treated as a distinct parallel — this replaces a previous version of Parallel 101 that was redundant with respect to Parallel 41)	Moses 6:15	Alone: Alma 37:21, 23, 25; 3 Nephi 3:7. With "of darkness" (cf. Parallel 21): 2 Nephi 9:9, 10:15; Helaman 8:4, 10:3. Singular: Helaman 2:4
102	A record in the language of an ancestor	Moses 6:5–6	1 Nephi 1:2, 3:19; Mosiah 1:2
103	Secret combinations and getting gain, seeking power	Moses 5:31, 50	Helaman 2:8; 7:4, 5, 25; Ether 8:16, 22–23, 11:15–16 (see also Alma 46:4, 51:1–8, 60:17; Helaman 2:8; Ether 9:11)
104	"For the space of many generations"	Moses 7:4	2 Nephi 1:18, 25:16
105	Hell/prison "prepared" for the wicked. (This replaces the previous version of #105 that was redundant with #19.)	Moses 6:29, 7:38	1 Nephi 15:29, 34–35; 2 Nephi 9:16, 28:23; Mosiah 26:27; Helaman 3:29
106	The order of God/Son of God	Moses 6:67, 8:19	Alma 7:22, 8:4, 13:1, 6, 18, 43:2, 49:30; Helaman 8:18; Ether 12:10
107	"After the order" + preach/declare/teach the gospel + repentance	Moses 8:19–20	Alma 5:48–49, 13:18, 49:30
108	Bearing testimony	Moses 7:27, 62	2 Nephi 27:13; Alma 4:19
109	Carried away/caught up (by the Spirit of the Lord)	Moses 6:64 (cf. 1:1)	1 Nephi 11:1
110	Enoch and the Three Nephites "caught up into heaven" and able to behold the things of God	Moses 6:35–36, 7:27, 69	3 Nephi 28:13, 15, 36
111	"Angels descending out of heaven"	Moses 7:27	3 Nephi 17:24 (cf. 1 Nephi 11:7, 12:6; 3 Nephi 11:8)

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
112	"Drawn away" after him (Satan)	Moses 4:5–6	Mosiah 29:7, Ether 7:4, 9:11
113	"All things manifest" by the Spirit/ Holy Ghost	Moses 8:24	1 Nephi 22:2; Mosiah 5:13 (cf. Mosiah 8:17; Ether 4:7)
114	"The power of the Lord was upon him"	Moses 8:18	1 Nephi 13:16–18, 14:14, 17:48, 49; Jacob 7:15, 21; Alma 14:25, 17:17, 36; Helaman 10:16 (see also Alma 18:1–2, 22–24)
115	"Seeking to take away life"	Moses 8:18 (or Moses 8:17 –18)	1 Nephi 1:20, 2:1, 4:11, 28, 7:14, 16, 17:44; 2 Nephi 1:24, 5:2, 4, 19
116	Left to oneself, weak	Moses 1:9–10	Mormon 2:26 (see also 1 Nephi 1:7, Jacob 7:21, Mosiah 4:1, 27:18; Alma 36:7, 10, 11; 3 Nephi 1:17, 17:18)
117	Crowned at the right hand of God	Moses 7:56–57	Mosiah 26:23–24; Alma 5:57–58; Alma 28:11–12
118	"Write the words" of spoken scripture	Moses 2:1	2 Nephi 29:11; Alma 45:9; 3 Nephi 24:1
119	"As many as will"	Moses 5:9	2 Nephi 25:13, 14; Jacob 6:4
120	Covenant + remnant of the seed	Moses 7:52, 53	1 Nephi 13:30–33, 38, 39 (see also 1 Nephi 15:14; 3 Nephi 21:4)
121	Remnant of the seed + the rock	Moses 7:52, 53	1 Nephi 13:36–37, 15:13–15
122	Gathering of scattered remnants with modern scripture	Moses 7:62	2 Nephi 30:3–8
123	"Remnant of the seed" + "gather in from the four quarters of the earth"	Moses 7:52, 62	3 Nephi 5:23–24, 26, 16:4, 5, 20:12–13
124	Gathered remnants and the New Jerusalem	Moses 7:51–53, 62	3 Nephi 21:4, 22–24, 26; Ether 13:6–10
125	Agents unto themselves	Moses 4:3, 6:56	2 Nephi 2:26, 10:23; Alma 12:13; Helaman 14:30
126	The rock + "blessed are they"	Moses 7:53	1 Nephi 13:36–37

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
127	Swallowed up in water (related variant: "floods" that "come" and "swallow up" people)	Moses 7:43	1 Nephi 18:10, 15, 20; 2 Nephi 1:2; Alma 36:28; Helaman 8:11; Ether 2:25 (related variant: Ether 2:25)
128	The threat of withering in the divine presence + being left without strength	Moses 1:9–11	1 Nephi 16:47–48, 52
129	A servant of God "receiving strength" to defeat an opponent	Moses 1:20–21	1 Nephi 4:31, 7:16, 17, 15:6
130	A servant of God "receiving strength" after a divine encounter	Moses 1:10	Mosiah 27:22–23; Alma 36:22–23
131	Repent + "this is the plan of salvation/redemption" + Only Begotten Son	Moses 6:23, 50–52, 61–62.	Alma 12:33
132	God "conversed" with man	Moses 6:22	Alma 12:30 (see also Alma 9:21, 12:29, 19:34, and Helaman 5:39)
133	A tool of Satan (the serpent or Zeezrom), seeking to destroy with lies and deception	Moses 4:3–6	Alma 12:1–7

Table 5 includes the latest new finds detailed later in this paper.

Table 5. Most recent finds. Also see Parallels 101 and 105 in table 4.

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
134	"The Lord could not withhold"	Moses 7:51	Ether 3:25–26, 12:21
135	God showing a vision of "all things" + "even unto the end/ends of the world/earth"	Moses 7:67 (cf. Moses 1:8, 27–28, 7:21)	Ether 3:25–26 (cf. 1 Nephi 14:26; Ether 12:19–21)
136	A prophet is shown "all the inhabitants of the earth" over broad periods of time	Moses 1:8, 27–28, 7:21, 67	Ether 3:25
137	Satan + beguile Eve/first parents + destroy the world	Moses 4:6	Ether 8:25
138	Secret combinations + blood of victims cries from the ground	Moses 5:29–35	Mormon 8:27, 40; Ether 8:22 (cf. 2 Nephi 26:3, 28:10)
139	The Lord promises to justify or enact a prophet's words, including moving mountains	Moses 6:32–34 (cf. Moses 7:13)	Helaman 10:4–10 (specifically vv. 5, 9)

No.	Concept	Book of Moses	Book of Mormon
140	"Secret works" or works of secret combinations described as "abominations" (cf. Parallel 65)	Moses 5:25, 51–52; 6:15, 28–29	2 Nephi 10:15; Alma 37:21–23, 25–27, 29; Ether 11:25; Mormon 8:40 (cf. Helaman 6:28)
141	A seer that sees spirits or a spirit body	Moses 6:35–36	Ether 3:16
142	God raises up a seer	Moses 6:48	2 Nephi 3:6, 7, 11
143	Adam and Eve could have had neither children nor joy before the Fall	Moses 5:10–11	2 Nephi 2:23
144	Adam fell that men/we might be	Moses 6:48	2 Nephi 2:25
145	Shaking upon pondering the misery/torment of the wicked	Moses 7:41 (but see 28–41)	Mosiah 28:3
146	The wicked wish to "lay hands" on a prophet but dare not because of fear due to the Lord's power or protection	Moses 6:39	Helaman 5:22–26 (specifically vv. 23, 25–26), 8:4–10 (specifically vv. 4, 10); 1 Nephi 17:48, 52; Mosiah 13:2–3, 5

Updates to Existing Parallels

In the following sections I discuss additions and other changes to the parallels presented in earlier papers.

Revised Parallel 7: "Only name" "whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men" and the salvation of children

Parallel 7 in Reynolds's "Brass Plates Version of Genesis" was listed as "only name-given-salvation" based on Moses 6:52 and Mosiah 3:17; also it was provided with a note indicating that it was linked to Parallel 6, "children-whole-from foundation" based on Moses 6:54 and Moroni 8:8, 12. Upon review, Parallel 7 may be more significant than previously recognized and merits further discussion.

Acts 4:12 has a well-known declaration of Paul: "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." This seems quite close to the words of King Benjamin in Mosiah 3:17:

> And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be **no other name** given nor any other way nor means **whereby salvation can come unto the children of men**, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.

However, Moses 6:52 offers a stronger parallel:

> And he also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, **the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men,** ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you.

Interestingly, Moses 6:52 is even closer to Acts 4:12 than Mosiah 3:17 in that both refer to a "name given under heaven" or "under heaven given." This may suggest that the English translation of Moses 6:52 was styled after Acts 4:12. However, "whereby we must be saved" in Acts 4:12 is replaced in both Moses 6:52 and Mosiah 3:17 with a nearly identical nine-word phrase that strongly links the two verses: "whereby salvation can/shall come unto the children of men." This may suggest that the translation process was crafted to include this wording in both passages, bringing out what may have been an intentional emphasis on *children* in both texts, perhaps reflecting a concept from the brass plates.

The proposal that salvation coming "unto the children of men" is an intentional parallel in wording is especially supported by the context of both verses where the salvation of children is raised. Moses 6:52 is followed by these verses:

> And our father Adam spake unto the Lord, and said: Why is it that men must repent and be baptized in water? And the Lord said unto Adam: Behold I have forgiven thee thy transgression in the Garden of Eden.
>
> Hence came the saying abroad among the people, that the Son of God hath atoned for original guilt, wherein the sins of the parents cannot be answered upon the heads of the children, for they are whole from the foundation of the world.
>
> And the Lord spake unto Adam, saying: Inasmuch as thy **children** are conceived in sin, even so when they begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good.
>
> And it is given unto them to know good from evil; wherefore

> they are agents unto themselves, and I have given unto you another law and commandment.
>
> Wherefore **teach it unto your children**, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time.
>
> Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to **teach these things freely unto your children**. . . . (Moses 6:53–58)

Note the similar doctrine relating to the salvation of children that surrounds Mosiah 3:17:

> And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins.
>
> And moreover, I say unto you, that there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.
>
> For behold he judgeth, and his judgment is just; and the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; but men drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves and **become as little children**, and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.
>
> For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and **becometh as a child**, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 3:16–19)

That salvation only comes through Jesus Christ is a core doctrine of the scripture, but the specific expressions used in the English translations of Mosiah 3:17 and Moses 6:52 give emphasis to the word

"children" in a way that rhetorically links to a precious doctrine of the Restoration and to ancient scripture: the salvation of little children. This theme coupled with the "only name" for the salvation of "the children of men" concept suggests not just common language but also common rhetorical intent for a pair of concepts that add meaning and depth.

Update to Parallel 11: King Lamoni's father echoes Father Laman's complaint

In preparing a note on the impact of the translation method on the parallels, an example was cited involving King Lamoni's father who criticized $Ammon_2$ in words like Laman's charge against $Nephi_1$ in 1 Nephi 16:38, which alludes to Moses 4:4. It was then obvious that Alma 20:13 added another dimension to that parallel that should be considered. The deep irony and the implications of this parallel were discussed in part 1 of this series of papers in the section, "Did the Translation Method Preserve or Create the Parallels?" [6]

Update to Parallel 62: More specific than previously noted

Parallel 62 involves connections to a concept in Moses 6:63, previously summarized as "'All things' bear witness of the Creator," as reflected in Alma 30:41, 44 and Helaman 8:23–24. But the connections in those passages are stronger than previously noted. Moses 6:63 specifies that "all things" include those that are *on* the earth, *in* or *beneath* the earth, as well as *above* the earth:

> And behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; **things which are in the heavens above,** and **things which are on the earth**, and **things which are in the earth**, and **things which are under the earth**, **both above and beneath: all things bear record of me.**

Similarly, in Helaman 8:24, as $Nephi_3$ testifies to the Nephites from his tower, he speaks of the "many evidences which ye have received; yea, even ye have received **all things, both things in heaven, and all things which are in the earth,** as a witness that they are true."

In Alma 30:44, as $Alma_2$ testifies to the Zoramites of basic truths in their scriptures (certainly including the brass plates), his cited evidence

6. Lindsay, "Parallels, Part 1."

includes things on the earth and the motion of the planets, which are obviously things that are above the earth:

> The scriptures are laid before thee, yea, and **all things** denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and **all things** that are **upon the face of it**, yea, and its motion, yea, and **also all the planets which move in their regular form** do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.

As a result, the description of Parallel 62, as listed in table 3, now adds "including things on or in and above the earth."

Update to Parallel 86: Samuel the Lamanite's sermon echoes Enoch's call and early ministry

Parallel 86 previously listed six elements common to Samuel the Lamanite's sermon and the calling and early ministry of Enoch. Six more common elements have been noted. Further, a useful observation from Hugh Nibley on Samuel the Lamanite's apparent use of a phrase from the Book of Enoch was found. The revised explanation for Parallel 86 follows below.

Samuel the Lamanite came to the wicked Nephites as an outsider both with a message from the Lord and in need of protection from the Lord to deliver that message, much like Enoch preached to a wicked people as "a strange thing in the land . . . a wild man" that had come among them (Moses 6:38) after receiving his weighty call from the Lord. As Hugh Nibley wrote of the "Enoch figure," the mysterious preacher exhibiting "independence, intelligence, compassion and power" from God, his attributes can be seen in numerous other prophets.[7]

The possibility of Samuel the Lamanite being aware of ancient accounts of Enoch was raised by Nibley given that Samuel was apparently employing a passage from the Book of Enoch in his famous sermon on the walls of Zarahemla. Nibley writes:

> Incidentally, the book of Enoch is quoted at least 128 times in the New Testament and very often in other places. Since the apocryphal manuscripts were discovered, we've recognized that Enoch is quoted all over the Bible and also frequently in the Book of Mormon. That is very interesting,

7. Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1986), 19–23.

> since the Enoch literature has been discovered long since 1830.
>
> A quotation from an Enoch text occurs in the thirteenth chapter of Helaman. "Ye have trusted in your riches," Enoch tells the people. "Ye have not remembered the Lord in the day he gave you your riches." (Cf. Helaman 13:33 [also see vv. 20–23, 31–32].) This is also Samuel the Lamanite speaking, an expert in the scriptures; he knew all about these things. He had access to the plates of brass and other records. And here Enoch speaks in a writing not discovered until 1888: "Ye have not remembered the Lord in the days he gave you your riches; ye have gone astray that your riches shall not remain, because you have done evil in everything. Cursed are you and cursed are your riches."[8]

The wording given by R. H. Charles is

> Woe to you, ye rich, for ye have trusted in your riches,
> And from your riches shall ye depart,
> Because ye have not remembered the Most High in the days of your riches.[9]

Nibley's remark resonates with other evidence that Samuel the Lamanite was deeply familiar with the Nephite scriptures, such as Matthew Bowen's observation of a clever Hebrew wordplay in Samuel's prophecies that draws upon Isaiah and Jeremiah.[10] Another example includes Donald R. Parry's observation that Samuel employs six known prophetic speech forms — the "Messenger Formula," the "Proclamation Formula," the "Oath Formula," the "Woe Oracle," the "Announcement Formula," and the "Revelation Formula"[11] — indicating a keen familiarity with the Nephite scriptures.

Building on the possibility that Samuel the Lamanite may have

8. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, 8.
9. *Book of Enoch*, 94:8, in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, *Pseudepigrapha*, ed. R. H. Charles (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1913), 266, archive.org/details/Charles_The-Apocrypha-of-the-Old-Testament-vol-2_1913/page/266/mode/2up.
10. Matthew Bowen, "Smooth Words and Slippery Things: Samuel the Lamanite's Prophetic Use of Hebrew *ḥlq*," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*, forthcoming (2025).
11. Donald W. Parry, "'Thus Saith the Lord': Prophetic Language in Samuel's Speech," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (1992): 181–83, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009&context=jbms.

been familiar with ancient material on Enoch such as something like our Book of Moses on the brass plates, some of the apparent connections in the story of Samuel the Lamanite to the calling and initial ministry of Enoch in the Book of Moses may be meaningful. Allusions to an account of Enoch may have been intended for Nephite listeners or future readers to notice. However, it is also possible that these parallels are a string of coincidences, some of which reflect some common patterns in the Lord's work through other Enoch figures in general.

Consider the following connections between Samuel and Enoch:

- **Called to preach during a journey.** As Samuel was about to go back to his people after being rejected by the Nephites as he "preached repentance unto the people" (Helaman 13:2), he was called by the voice of the Lord to return to the Nephites and preach (vv. 2–3), similar to what $Alma_2$ experienced with respect to the people of Ammonihah (Alma 8:13–16). Likewise, as "Enoch journeyed in the land, among the people" (Moses 6:26), "he heard a voice from heaven" calling him to preach repentance to the people (v. 27).
- **The Lord would give utterance.** Helaman 13 emphasizes that Samuel was told to prophesy "whatsoever things should come into his heart" from the Lord (v. 3) and did so (vv. 4–5). Likewise, the Lord told Enoch, "Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled, and I will give thee utterance" (Moses 6:32). He also assured him that "all thy words will I justify" (v. 34). See also Parallel 139.
- **The Lord's "fierce anger" has been kindled.** The Lord told Samuel, "I will visit them in my fierce anger" (Helaman 13:10). Samuel later stated that "the anger of the Lord is already kindled against you" (v. 30). When Enoch was called, the Lord first declared that "my fierce anger is kindled against" the people (Moses 6:27; cf. 7:34).
- **The wicked face justice and doom unless they repent.** Samuel said, "the sword of justice hangeth over this people; and four hundred years pass not away save the sword of justice falleth upon this people" (Helaman 13:5) and "heavy destruction awaiteth this people" unless they repent (v. 6). Quoting the Lord, he warned that if they persist in wickedness, "I will turn the hearts of their brethren against them" (v. 8), suggesting war with Lamanites that will lead to their destruction four generations later (vv. 9–10). In the Book

of Moses, because of the wickedness and secret combinations of the people, the Lord told Enoch that "they have brought upon themselves death; and a hell I have prepared for them, if they repent not" (Moses 6:29).

- **Preaching from high places.** Famously, Samuel climbed the city wall of Zarahemla and preached from there (Helaman 13:4). Similarly, "Enoch went forth in the land, among the people, standing upon the hills and the high places" as he testified against the people (Moses 6:37). This is given added emphasis in the next verse: "And they came forth to hear him, upon the high places" (v. 38).
- **Reference to the righteous heritage of the prophet.** In Helaman 15:4–10, Samuel referred to his people, the converted Lamanites, and spoke of their righteousness. He said that "the more part of them are in the path of their duty, and they do walk circumspectly before God, and they do observe to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments according to the law of Moses" (v. 5) and once converted, they "are firm and steadfast in the faith" (v. 8). Likewise, Enoch said, "I came out from the land of Cainan, the land of my fathers, a land of righteousness unto this day" (Moses 6:41).
- **Hardness of hearts.** The word of the Lord to Samuel condemned "the **hardness of the hearts of the people** of the Nephites," expressing anger for this problem: "except they repent . . . I will suffer them no longer, and I will turn the hearts of their brethren against them" (Helaman 13:8) Through Enoch, the Lord said, "I am angry with this people, and my fierce anger is kindled against them; for **their hearts have waxed hard**, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes cannot see afar off" (Moses 6:27).
- **Hardened and blind.** Samuel called the Nephites "ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people" and asked "how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and **blind guides**? Yea, how long will ye **choose darkness rather than light**?" (Helaman 13:29). After telling his people that "their hearts have waxed hard," Enoch said that "their eyes cannot see afar off" (Moses 6:27).
- **"Abominations" among the people are condemned.** Samuel called out "the wickedness and abominations which

are in [Zarahemla]" (Helaman 13:14), "the wickedness and abominations which are in [Gideon]" (v. 15), and "the wickedness and abominations which are in [all the Nephite cities in the land round about]" (v. 16). Speaking of the Nephite people in general, he also condemned "their wickedness and their abominations" (v. 17). Enoch spoke of abominations as well, linking them to secret combinations: "and have sought their own counsels in the dark; and in their own abominations have they devised murder" (Moses 6:28). The works of Satanic secret combinations are denounced elsewhere as "abominations" in the Book of Moses (e.g., Moses 5:52) and in the Book of Mormon (Mormon 8:40) — see Parallel 140 for more details.

- **The earth to quake and mountains to be moved.** This is related to Parallel 139 which deals with the Lord's promises to justify a prophet's words, including moving *mountains*, (see Helaman 10:4–10). Samuel prophesied that at the death of Christ, "the earth shall shake and tremble" (Helaman 14:21) and that "there shall be many mountains laid low, like unto a valley, and there shall be many places which are now called valleys which shall become mountains, whose height is great" (v. 23). This was later fulfilled (3 Nephi 8:5–14). Similarly, the Lord told Enoch that "the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course" (Moses 6:34). Rivers changing course, incidentally, is the natural result of valleys being turned into mountains, which may be part of the proposed connection with Samuel's prophecy. The fulfillment of the Lord's statement is recorded in Moses 7:13, which reports that through Enoch's faith, "the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command" (Moses 7:13). Both the trembling of the earth and the moving of mountains connects Enoch and Samuel.
- **The people are angry and reject the prophet.** While some believed Samuel and repented, the others are angry and sought to harm him, even to the point of casting stones and arrows at him (Helaman 16:2). Of Enoch, we read that "all men were offended because of him" (Moses 6:37).
- **Protected from violence.** Samuel was miraculously protected from the stones and arrows of his many enemies: "the Spirit of the Lord was with him, insomuch that they

> could not hit him with their stones neither with their arrows" (Helaman 16:2). Enoch was also protected from the wrath of the offended: "when they heard him, no man laid hands on him; for fear came on all them that heard him; for he walked with God" (Moses 6:39). The promise that "no man shall pierce thee" (Moses 6:32) was fulfilled. (See also the related Parallel 138.)

This multifaceted conceptual parallel between Enoch and Samuel the Lamanite might be consistent with Samuel's awareness of the Enoch account in a proposed brass-plates version of Genesis. The textual clues are not as obvious as they might have been if a translator had been actively working to draw our attention to the two stories. For example, the translator could have said that the Nephites could not pierce Samuel with their arrows as he stood on the high places around the city, or that the Nephites were offended by Samuel to better highlight the connections.

A further connection to the Book of Moses, but not involving Enoch, may be found in Samuel's statement in Helaman 14:10:

> And now, because I am a Lamanite, and have spoken unto you the words which the Lord hath commanded me, and because it was hard against you, ye are angry with me and **do seek to destroy me**, and have **cast me out** from among you.

This may allude to the description of Satan in Moses 4:

> Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and **sought to destroy** the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be **cast down**; . . . And Satan put it into the heart of the serpent, (for he had drawn away many after him,) and he sought also to beguile Eve, for he knew not the mind of God, wherefore **he sought to destroy** the world. (Moses 4:3, 6)

Perhaps with irony, Samuel might have been insinuating that the Nephites were like Satan in seeking to destroy him but were casting him out as if he were Satan.

If any of the seemingly large number of connections involving Samuel the Lamanite are not random coincidences, they may reflect

actual allusions to the brass plates made by Samuel. After his words were conveyed by Mormon or $Helaman_3$ or both into Reformed Egyptian, those words may not have been obviously connected to the Book of Moses in the eyes of whatever agent or agents assisted with the translation into English, leaving us with relatively more conceptual rather than linguistic cues to recognize. It may be reasonable to accept some intentional allusions to the brass plates were not given clear linguistic markers in the final translation; however, others may have been made easier to recognize with common English phrasing. Of course, one must also entertain the possibility that Joseph's own language may have been at play, giving some linguistic connections that were not really intended by Book of Mormon writers.

Replacement of Parallel 101: "Secret Works" (a previously unlisted find from Reynolds)

Formerly, Parallel 101 was "Cain's followers and the persistence of his secret combination," but this was recently noted to be largely redundant with Parallel 41. Parallel 101 is now replaced by Noel Reynolds's prior discovery in his original work that was not given the separate listing it merits. This parallel is "secret works," found in Moses 6:15, a verse that is featured in 10 other parallels (Parallels 23, 26, 39, 47, 56, 82, 77, 80, 101, 140):

> And the children of men were numerous upon all the face of the land. And in those days Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man's hand was against his own brother, in administering death, because of **secret works**, seeking for power.

Reynolds discussed *secret works* with respect to Parallel 21, *works of darkness*, based on Moses 5:55.[12] *Secret works* is part of *secret works of darkness*, found four times in the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 9:9, 10:15; Helaman 8:4 and 10:3). However, *secret works* occurs alone (without *of darkness*) in Alma 37:21, 23, 25; and 3 Nephi 3:7, and as the singular *secret work* in Helaman 2:4. Further, the Book of Moses connection in Moses 6:15 is distinct from the connection for *works of darkness* in Moses 5:55. Thus, a separate listing appears warranted.

Neither *secret works* nor *secret work* occurs in the KJV Bible.

12. Reynolds, "The Brass Plates Version of Genesis," 78.

New Parallel 105: Hell/prison "prepared" for the wicked (replacing the former 105)

The former Parallel 105 was redundant with one of the early finds of Noel Reynolds, Parallel 19. That has been replaced with a significant new find by Scripture Central based on hell or (spirit) prison being "prepared" by the Lord.[13] The unnamed authors do more than establish an interesting connection between books dictated by Joseph Smith; they also show that the concept involved has connections to the ancient Book of Enoch, adding to the intrigue of this parallel.

The parallel involves a Book of Moses concept in two related verses in the Lord's discourse with Enoch:

> Wherefore, they have foresworn themselves, and, by their oaths, they have brought upon themselves death; and **a hell I have prepared for them**, if they repent not. (Moses 6:29).
>
> But behold, these which thine eyes are upon shall perish in the floods; and behold, I will shut them up; **a prison have I prepared for them**. (Moses 7:38)

This concept is found in multiple Book of Mormon verses: 1 Nephi 15:29, 34–35 ("awful hell" + "prepared" for the wicked); 2 Nephi 9:16 ("the devil and his angels . . . shall go away into everlasting fire; prepared for them"), 28:23; Mosiah 26:26; and Helaman 3:29.

Other concepts near Moses 7:38 are found in several Book of Mormon verses that speak of hell being "prepared" by the Lord. The preceding verse, Moses 7:37, speaks of "misery" being the doom of Satan's followers (see Parallel 44), while Helaman 3:29 describes hell as "that everlasting gulf of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked." The "fire of mine indignation" of Moses 7:34 is related to the "everlasting fire" and "fire and brimstone" of 2 Nephi 9:16 (cf. Parallel 73), and that verse's mention of "the devil and his angels" is related to Satan's angels in Moses 7:26 (cf. Parallel 60). Similar language occurs in Mosiah 26:27. Right after Moses 7:39, we read of the "torment" of the wicked (Moses 7:40, cf. Parallel 145), a concept also found in 2 Nephi 28:23, which speaks of "the place prepared for them, even a lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment."

The Book of Mormon's use of other terms near Moses 7:39

13. Scripture Central Staff, "Book of Moses Evidence: Hell Was 'Prepared,'" Evidence 510, 3 September 2025, scripturecentral.org/evidence/hell-was-prepared.

increases the sense that the broader context of Moses 7:39 may have influenced Book of Mormon authors when they alluded to that passage.

Four parallels Involving the Voyage of the Jaredites (Ether 2 and 3)

Students of the Book of Mormon have long noted that the Jaredites' voyage across the ocean to the New World in eight barges, as described in the book of Ether, has parallels to Noah's ark and the story of the Flood.[14] Indeed, Moroni$_2$ overtly pointed to the connection when writing that the Jaredite vessels "were tight like unto the ark of Noah" (Ether 6:7). However, there are other signals in the text that connect the story of the voyage of the Jaredites to information likely on the brass plates. This includes allusions related to the Flood, including the Book of Moses account of Enoch's vision of the coming Flood and his sweeping vision of the future. These new finds include a new variant to Parallel 127 and three apparently stronger new parallels to the similarly grand vision of Moses in Moses 1.

This forms a cluster of parallels linking the brother of Jared's experience in preparing for the Jaredites' journey to Noah's ark and Enoch's vision. This cluster may strengthen the case for deliberate allusions connecting the brother of Jared with the contents of a proposed brass-plates version of Genesis.

New Variant of Parallel 127

Previously introduced Parallel 127 involves humans "swallowed up" by water, an apparent parallel between Moses 7:43 and several Book of Mormon passages where water literally swallowed up or threatened to swallow up humans. A closely related variant of this may deserve attention. Moses 7:43 has the more specific concept of "the floods [that] came and swallowed them up," which has close affinity to

14. Hugh Nibley, "Strange Ships and Shining Stones," in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1988), 340–58, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?filename=28&article=1011&context=mi&type=additional; Thomas R. Valletta, "Jared and His Brother," in *The Book of Mormon: Fourth Nephi Through Moroni, From Zion to Destruction*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1995), 303–22, rsc.byu.edu/book-mormon-fourth-nephi-through-moroni-zion-destruction/jared-his-brother; and "Book of Mormon Evidence: Flood Stories," *Scripture Central*, 15 December 2020, scripturecentral.org/evidence/book-of-mormon-evidence-flood-stories.

language in Ether 2:25. Here the Lord warned the brother of Jared of the difficult condition of their upcoming ocean voyage:

> And behold, I prepare you against these things; for ye cannot cross this great deep save I prepare you against the waves of the sea, and the winds which have gone forth, and **the floods which shall come.** Therefore what will ye that I should prepare for you that ye may have light when ye are **swallowed up** in the depths of the sea?

Swallowed up occurs several times in the KJV Bible, but the only connections to a flood are metaphorical. The closest comes from the Psalms:

> Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. (Psalm 69:15)

Another metaphorical instance is found in Revelation 12:16, where it is a flood that is being swallowed:

> And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. (Revelation 12:16)

Psalm 69:15 weakens the parallel but, perhaps, not enough to suggest the KJV Bible as a likely source for the language of Ether 2:25. Both the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses discuss a literal flood that will "come" threatening to "swallow up" multiple people (the Jaredite voyagers in Ether 2 or the wicked in Moses 7). The language in Ether 2:25 is directly related to that of Ether 7:43 both in concepts and specific wording. Thus, there is a possible case that Ether 2:25 is alluding to another flood-related passage in the Book of Moses.

Parallels 134–136: The brother of Jared and a vision of Enoch

In **Parallel 134**, the specific phrase, "the Lord could not withhold," is found in both Moses 7:51 and Ether 3:25–26, with a context related to great floods. Parallels 135 and 136 come on the heels of Parallel 134 when the Lord further showed both Enoch and the brother of Jared "all things, even unto the end/ends of the world/earth" (Moses 7:67, Ether 3:25–26; cf. Ether 12:19–21).

These parallels involve a sacred event in which the Lord either did not or could not withhold a blessing from a prophet due to the prophet's faith. The Lord then goes on to show a vision of "all things." In the

Book of Moses, the prophet is the seer Enoch, who sees the forthcoming Flood and asks the Lord to not repeat that catastrophe. After we are told how great Enoch's faith was in Moses 7:13 and hear him refer to his redemption through faith in v. 47, we encounter the Lord's reaction to a request from Enoch:

> And it came to pass that Enoch continued his cry unto the Lord, saying: I ask thee, O Lord, in the name of thine Only Begotten, even Jesus Christ, that thou wilt have mercy upon Noah and his seed, that the earth might never more be covered by **the floods**. And **the Lord could not withhold**; and he covenanted with Enoch, and sware unto him with an oath, that **he would stay the floods**; that he would call upon the children of Noah. (Moses 7:50–51)

Compare this to the experience of the brother of Jared when he encountered the Lord after he sought divine help for his people's journey across the great waters. At this point, the Lord had just used the terms *flood* and *floods* to describe what the Jaredites will face on their journey (Ether 2:20, 24, 25) as he warns of the great dangers they face. In response, the brother of Jared came to the Lord with a request for assistance to face the floods:

> O Lord, thou hast said that we must be **encompassed about by the floods**. Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee; for we know that thou art holy and dwellest in the heavens, and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires. (Ether 3:2)

This is the beginning of his faithful prayer to the Lord that resulted in his receiving glowing stones to provide light for the journey and in his receiving the gift of seership (including two special stones from the Lord that were called "interpreters.") After receiving these interpreters, the brother of Jared was given a remarkable vision:

> And when the Lord had said these words, he showed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also **all that would be**; and **he withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth**. For

> he had said unto him in times before, that if he would believe in him **that he could show unto him all things**—it should be shown unto him; therefore **the Lord could not withhold anything from him,** for he knew that the Lord could **show him all things**. (Ether 3:25–26)

Similar language occurs later in Ether 12:21 as $Moroni_2$ recapped the brother of Jared's experience:

> And after the brother of Jared had beheld the finger of the Lord, because of the promise which the brother of Jared had obtained by faith, **the Lord could not withhold** anything from his sight; wherefore **he showed him all things**, for he could no longer be kept without the veil.

Parallel 134 (with a shared specific phrase in the context of floods to be faced) strengthens the connections between Noah's ark and the voyage of the Jaredites. "The Lord could not withhold" is not found in the KJV Bible, though related uses of *withhold* occur in the Psalms: "Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD" (Psalm 40:11) and ". . . the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11). A longer specific phrase with a related context makes it clear that an allusion is being made. In this case, while the Jaredite voyage in barges is clearly being likened to Noah's ark and the Flood, there is a further allusion to the great seer Enoch who foresaw the Flood and from whom "the Lord could not withhold" when he made a request related to the Flood.

In **Parallel 135**, God showed a prophet a vision of "all things" plus "even unto the end/ends of the world/earth." This links to Moses 7:67, where "the Lord showed Enoch all things, even unto the end of the world." This is close to Ether 3:25–26, as quoted and discussed above in Parallel 134, here abbreviated: **"he showed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be** . . . , **even unto the ends of the earth**" and "he could **show unto him all things** . . . for he knew that the Lord could **show him all things**."

Other Book of Mormon verses involving showing a prophet all things (only a part of this parallel) include

- 1 Nephi 14:26: "And also others [besides the Apostle John] who have been, to them hath he **shown all things** . . ."
- Ether 12:21: "And after the brother of Jared had beheld the finger of the Lord, because of the promise which the brother

> of Jared had obtained by faith, the Lord could not withhold anything from his sight; wherefore **he showed him all things**, for he could no longer be kept without the veil."

God's showing a prophet "all things," seems like something that might occur in the Bible, but there is not a direct match. However, John 5:20 is relatively close: "For the Father loveth the Son, and **sheweth him all things** that himself doeth." The term *all things* has been limited to showing the Son what the Father does and so is not the same as showing a mortal prophet a vision of all things. However, it is close enough to worry that a parallel based only on God's showing all things to a prophet is too similar to John 5:20.

Some other KJV passages with similar language include:

- John 16:15: "**All things** that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and **shall shew it unto you**." [Here "it" is not the "all things" that began the passage.]
- Acts 20:35: "I have **shewed you all things**, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." [This does not refer to a divine vision.]

The combination of God's showing "all things" to a prophet with "even unto the end/ends of the world/earth" seems needed to strengthen the proposed parallel.

The KJV Bible does have multiple occurrences of *end/ends* of the *world/earth* but not in association with a vision of *all things* or with a sweeping vision by a prophet.

Moses 1:8 may also be considered:

> And it came to pass that Moses looked, and beheld the world upon which he was created; and Moses beheld **the world and the ends thereof,** and **all the children of men which are, and which were created;** of the same he greatly marveled and wondered. (Moses 1:8)

While "children of men" rather than Ether 3:25's "inhabitants" is used, Moses 1:8 also has ties to the "end of the world/earth" with its "the world and the ends thereof." Moses 1:8 can be treated as part of this parallel though the language in Moses 7 more precisely echoes Ether 3.

Parallel 136, showing a prophet "all the inhabitants of the earth" over broad periods of time, also involves Ether 3:25, where the Lord

"showed unto the brother of Jared **all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be**." Similar language occurs in the description of Enoch's vision in Moses 7:21, "And it came to pass that the Lord showed unto Enoch **all the inhabitants of the earth**." This vision did not just involve people living in Enoch's day but spanned many centuries. He saw Zion's being taken up into heaven "in process of time" (v. 21), and he then saw "generation upon generation" (v. 24), the future Flood (vv. 34, 42, 43), "all the families of the earth" descended from Noah (v. 45), and the ministry of Christ and his atoning sacrifice (vv. 47, 55). After this, he saw the future wickedness of the earth (v. 48) and prayed that the seed of Noah might not be destroyed again by "the floods" (vv. 49–50). He also saw the last days and the Second Coming of the Lord (vv. 65–66).

While Ether 3:25 and Moses 7 both involve a vision of "all the inhabitants of the earth" over broad periods of time, the parallel may seem weak because the phrase "all the inhabitants of the earth" occurs four times in the KJV Bible (Psalm 33:14; Jeremiah 25:29, 30; Daniel 4:35). However, these passages do not involve showing all the inhabitants of the earth to a prophet over broad periods of time in an expansive vision but offer prophecies or statements involving all mankind.

In addition to Moses 7, related language is found in the great vision of Moses in the opening verses of the Book of Moses, especially Moses 1:8:

> And it came to pass that Moses looked, and beheld the world upon which he was created; and Moses beheld **the world and the ends thereof,** and **all the children of men which are, and which were created;** of the same he greatly marveled and wondered. (Moses 1:8)
>
> And it came to pass, as the voice was still speaking, Moses cast his eyes and **beheld the earth**, yea, **even all of it**; and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the Spirit of God. And **he beheld also the inhabitants thereof**, and there was **not a soul which he beheld not**; and he discerned them by the Spirit of God; and their numbers were great, even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore. (vv. 27–28; cf. v. 29)
>
> But only an account of **this earth, and the inhabitants** thereof, give I unto you . . . And it came to pass that Moses spake unto the Lord, saying: Be merciful unto thy servant,

> O God, and tell me concerning **this earth, and the inhabitants thereof** . . . (vv. 35–36)

The two wordings used to express a broad temporal scope in the phrase "all the children of men which are, and which were created" of Moses 1:8 are similar to Ether 3:25's "all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be." Enoch, Moses, and the brother of Jared are all linked with similar language and concepts in Parallel 136.

It may be reasonable for the Jaredite record to have allusions to their ancient records about Noah and Enoch, but they would not have a record of the visions of the future Moses. Perhaps either Mosiah_2 (as Nephite translator/redactor) or Moroni_2 (as Nephite redactor) may have preserved or strengthened existing allusions in Ether's record based on their knowledge of the brass plates, while also choosing wording to allude to the vision of Moses as well. Or perhaps some of these allusions were introduced or strengthened in the process of creating the English translation, occurring either in translations given to Joseph Smith (for both the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses) or by Joseph Smith in making choices for the wording.

In these allusions, the book of Ether in general appears to be alluding to a backstory found in the Book of Moses, a text that would not be produced until well after the Book of Mormon translation was finished. The use of similar specific phrases in the English translation with subtle intertextuality may imply some level of tight control in the translations of both the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses.

In the three parallels involving Ether 3 that are considered here, it seems that our English book of Ether makes multiple subtle allusions to the later-translated Book of Moses. While Ether 3 points to some related concepts and language from the vision of Moses, the more related context of Enoch's vision of the future Flood and vision of all things unto the ends of the earth has language that is even more precisely echoed in the Book of Mormon. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the carefully crafted allusions are intentional, doing more than vaguely indicating a relationship to Noah's story.

The use of multiple parallels in Moroni's relating of the vision of the brother of Jared may suggest intentional allusions to the Book of Moses or to a related text on the brass plates.

Parallel 137: Satan/the Devil, beguiling Eve/first parents, destroying the world

Previous Parallel 133 included several concepts from Moses 4:3–6, including Satan's desire to destroy the world in Moses 4:6. But there is another combination including Moses 4:6 that serves as a distinct parallel. This is the combination of the terms *Satan* and the verb *beguile* with respect to Eve (or our "first parents") plus the concept of destroying the world:

> And **Satan** put it into the heart of the serpent, (for he had drawn away many after him,) and he sought also **to beguile Eve**, for he knew not the mind of God, wherefore **he sought to destroy the world.** (Moses 4:6)

This language may have influenced Ether 8:25, which refers to a great secret combination in the last days that will imperil the freedom of many lands:

> For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up [a secret combination in the last days] seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass **the destruction of all people**, for it is built up by **the devil**, who is the father of all lies; even that same liar who **beguiled our first parents**, yea, even that same liar who hath caused man to commit murder from the beginning; who hath hardened the hearts of men that they have murdered the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out from the beginning. (Ether 8:25)

This is just one of many variants on the Book of Moses's information on the work of Satan. It is possible, though not certain, that the Book of Moses passage influenced that language of Moroni's dire prophecy in Ether 8.

The serpent (not explicitly Satan) beguiles Eve in Genesis 3:13, and this is mentioned again in 2 Corinthians 11:3, but neither *destruction* nor *destroying* are mentioned.

As in many other parallels, this is a case where a Book of Moses account is closely related to KJV Genesis material but with added details. To find those details mentioned or alluded to in the earlier-produced (i.e., earlier-translated) Book of Mormon may suggest that the Book of Mormon was referring to an early brass-plates version of Genesis with details that were not preserved in the Bible.

Parallel 138: Secret combinations, blood of victims crying from the ground

Yet another potential parallel involving secret combinations involves the concept of the blood of victims crying from the ground. Genesis 4:10 reports that the Lord told Cain that "the voice of thy brother's **blood crieth unto me from the ground**." The Book of Moses, especially Moses 5, supplies vital missing information about the role of Cain's secret combination that was involved in this murder. Cain made an oath with Satan, who instructed Cain to "swear thy brethren by their heads" in a secret combination that he might kill Abel without Adam's knowing of it (vv. 29–30). Cain then became "Mahan, the master of this great secret, that I may murder and get gain" (v. 31). Then he murdered his brother (v. 32). Then the Lord, following Genesis 4:10, said, "The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me from the ground" (v. 35). Thus, innocent Abel was slain by Cain as the result of a secret and Satanic combination, and then that innocent blood cried from the ground unto the Lord.

With that background, consider these Book of Mormon passages:

> And it shall come in a day when **the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations** and the works of darkness. . . . Yea, why do ye build up your **secret abominations to get gain**, and cause that widows should mourn before the Lord, and also orphans to mourn before the Lord, and also **the blood of their fathers and their husbands to cry unto the Lord from the ground**, for vengeance upon your heads? (Mormon 8:27, 40)

> And whatsoever nation shall uphold such **secret combinations**, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed; for the Lord will not suffer that the **blood of his saints, which shall be shed by them, shall always cry unto him from the ground** for vengeance upon them and yet he avenge them not. . . . Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this **secret combination** which shall be among you; or wo be unto it, because of **the blood of them who have been slain; for they cry from the dust** for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who built it up. (Ether 8:22, 24)

The Book of Mormon seems to follow Moses 5 in describing the blood of victims of secret combinations as crying to the Lord.

Parallel 139: The Lord promises to justify a prophet's words, including moving mountains

After the Lord calls the inexperienced and fearful Enoch to be a prophet and preach to a violent people that hates him (Moses 6:32), the Lord assures him with a promise:

> Behold my Spirit is upon you, wherefore **all thy words will I justify**; and **the mountains shall flee before you**, and the rivers shall turn from their course; and thou shalt abide in me, and I in you; therefore walk with me. (Moses 6:34).

The fulfillment of this promise is given in Moses 7:13:

> And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and **the rivers of water were turned out of their course**; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, **so powerful was the word of Enoch**, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.

This power to move mountains was attributed to the great power of the word and the language which God gave him. Similar power over the elements through the power of the word was promised to $Nephi_2$ in Helaman 10:4–10 when the Lord blessed him for his unwearying service and faithfulness. He blessed him to be "mighty in word and in deed, . . . yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will" (v. 5). Three examples are given showing how the Lord will fulfill $Nephi_2$'s word:

> And thus, if ye shall say unto this temple it shall be rent in twain, it shall be done. And if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou cast down and become smooth, it shall be done. And behold, if ye shall say that God shall smite this people, it shall come to pass. (Helaman 10:8–10)

While flattening a mountain is not as broad a power as moving one,

it is closely related and an example of how the Lord will justify or fulfill the prophet's word.

Parallel 140: Secret combinations as *abominations*

Abomination is often used in the Book of Mormon to describe the works of secret combinations. See Moses 5:25, 51–52; 6:15, 28–29.

$Nephi_1$ repeatedly uses the word *abominable* to describe a great and wicked church that kills the Saints, and he repeatedly explains that the devil is the founder of it:

> And it came to pass that I beheld this great and abominable church; and I saw the devil that he was the founder of it. (1 Nephi 13:6)
>
> . . . that great and abominable church, which was founded by the devil and his children, that he might lead away the souls of men down to hell . . . (1 Nephi 14:3)
>
> . . . that great and abominable church, which is the mother of abominations, whose founder is the devil. (1 Nephi 14:9)
>
> . . . the great and abominable church of all the earth, whose founder is the devil . . . (1 Nephi 14:17)

After these declarations about the devil being the founder of the "great and abominable church," $Nephi_1$ later spoke of "secret combinations, even as in times of old, according to the combinations of the **devil**, for **he is the founder of all these things**; yea, the founder of murder, and works of darkness" (2 Nephi 26:22). The latter-day impact of the "great and abominable church" which, like secret combinations, has Satan as its founder and is a murderous organization, far exceeds that of any actual modern-day church but seems more like a political entity with international power and the ability to wage war, for $Nephi_1$ sees it, "the great mother of abominations . . . gather together multitudes upon the face of all the earth, among all the nations of the Gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God" (1 Nephi 14:13). The wrath of God poured out upon it then results in "wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds of the earth" (v. 15). It has global military teeth.

Also in 1 Nephi 13, we read that the great and abominable church "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" (v. 5) and "for the praise of the world do they destroy the

saints of God, and bring them down into captivity" (v. 9), again indicative of great political power. $Nephi_1$ also directly links *abominations* to *secret combinations* or to *works of darkness*:

> Wherefore, for this cause, that my covenants may be fulfilled which I have made unto the children of men, that I will do unto them while they are in the flesh, I must needs destroy **the secret works of darkness, and of murders, and of abominations**. (2 Nephi 10:15)

> For I, Nephi, have not taught them many things concerning the manner of the Jews; for their **works were works of darkness, and their doings were doings of abominations**. (2 Nephi 25:2)

Overall, when $Nephi_1$ speaks against the "great and abominable church" (e.g., 1 Nephi 13 and 14), it seems likely that he is not speaking against any recognizable religious denomination of our day but against the abomination of corrupt secret combinations that gain the political power (and perhaps religious influence as well) to do the evil works $Nephi_1$ opposes. His "great and abominable church" may closely overlap with "this secret combination which shall be among you" (Ether 8:24) that $Moroni_2$ warned of, urging the Gentiles of our day to understand that "whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries" (v. 25).

This connection between *abomination* or *abominable* and *secret combinations* is further strengthened by $Alma_2$ in Alma 37, a chapter that discusses the brass plates. He speaks of the secret combinations recorded on the plates of Ether which discuss the Jaredites' "mysteries and the works of darkness, and their secret works, or the secret works of those people who have been destroyed . . . ; yea, all their murders, and robbings, and their plunderings, and all their **wickedness and abominations**" (v. 21). He goes on to write about "secret murders and abominations" (v. 22), of "secret works, . . . works of darkness, and . . . wickedness and abominations" (v. 23), of "secrets and abominations" (v. 25), "secret abominations" (vv. 26–27), and finally makes a clear connection between abominations and the oaths and murders of secret combinations:

> Therefore ye shall keep these **secret plans of their oaths and their covenants** from this people, and only their **wickedness and their murders and their abominations** shall ye make known unto them; and ye shall teach them to abhor

> such **wickedness and abominations and murders**; and ye shall also teach them that **these people were destroyed on account of their wickedness and abominations and their murders**. (v. 29)

Moroni$_2$ later identifies secret combinations as the cause of the destruction of the Jaredites in Ether 8:21, consistent with Alma 37:29. A few verses earlier, Moroni$_2$ described the secret combination formed by Akish: "which combination is most **abominable and wicked** above all, in the sight of God" (Ether 8:18).

The Book of Mormon also uses *abomination* or *abominable and wicked* in contexts that don't clearly invoke the extreme wickedness of secret combinations. For example, in Jacob 2, Jacob chastises the Nephites for their immorality, calling that "wickedness and abominations" (vv. 10 and 31). In 1 Nephi 1, Lehi$_1$ preached to the Jews in Jerusalem and "testified of their wickedness and their abominations" (v. 19), which sounds fairly general. The response of his audience, though, suggests that murderous secret combinations were afoot: "they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out, and stoned, and slain; and they also sought his life, that they might take it away" (v. 20).

Christ's words to the Nephites also illustrate the use of *wickedness and abominations* to indicate or include secret combinations. In the closing words of 3 Nephi, when the Lord spoke to modern Gentiles, calling us to come unto him, it is not just a message of cheer and comfort. He first commands us to repent of the sinister things the Book of Mormon so often warns against:

> Turn, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways; and repent of your evil doings, of your lyings and deceivings, and of your whoredoms, and of your **secret abominations**, and your idolatries, and of **your murders**, and your priestcrafts, and your envyings, and your strifes, and from all your **wickedness and abominations**, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, that ye may be numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel. (3 Nephi 30:2)

Secret abominations and murders as well as language suggestive of secret combinations seem to at least be a recognized subset of *wickedness and abominations*.

Other connections are found in Helaman 6:24, which describes how Gadianton's secret combination enforced the oath of secrecy for anyone in their band who "should reveal unto the world of **their wickedness and their abominations**." Verse 28 then refers to "the works of darkness and abomination" of that group. In Ether 11:25, $Moroni_2$ pointed out the adverse religious influence of secret societies, noting that the Jaredites "did reject all the words of the prophets, because of their secret society and **wicked abominations**."

The association of *abomination* with secret combinations is a theme found in the Book of Moses and the Book of Mormon in ways that are consistent with the hypothesis of influence on the Book of Mormon from a brass-plates version of Genesis akin to the Book of Moses.

Parallel 141: A seer that sees spirits or a spirit body (a conceptual parallel)

Enoch became a seer after the Lord had him anoint his eyes with clay and then wash them (Moses 6:35), after which "he beheld the spirits that God had created; and he beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eye" (v. 36). This is echoed in Ether 3, when the brother of Jared had an encounter with the Lord on Mount Shelem in which he was given the privilege of seeing the spirit body of the Lord. Interestingly, this is also the scene where the Lord gave the brother of Jared two seer stones or "interpreters," which were directly related to the role of a seer, as explained elsewhere in the Book of Mormon:

> 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. (Mosiah 8:13)
>
> And now he [$Mosiah_2$] translated them [the plates of Ether] by the means of those two stones which were fastened into the two rims of a bow. (Mosiah 28:13)

The relevant passage in Ether 3 begins when the brother of Jared saw the finger of the Lord:

> And it came to pass that when the brother of Jared had said

> these words, behold, the Lord stretched forth his hand and touched the stones one by one with his finger. And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was as the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood; and the brother of Jared fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear. (Ether 3:6)

The brother of Jared was astonished and fell to the earth, not knowing that the Lord "had flesh and blood" (v. 8). The divine experience progressed and the Lord, in response to the brother of Jared's faith, showed Himself:

> And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you.
>
> Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters.
>
> And never have I showed myself unto man whom I have created, for never has man believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image.
>
> Behold**, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit**; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh.
>
> And now, as I, Moroni, said I could not make a full account of these things which are written, therefore it sufficeth me to say that **Jesus showed himself unto this man in the spirit**, even after the manner and in the likeness of the same body even as he showed himself unto the Nephites. (Ether 3:13–17)

Thus, a seer, the brother of Jared, had "the veil . . . taken from off the eyes" (v. 6), analogous to Enoch's washing the clay from his eyes (Moses 6:35). The brother of Jared was then able to behold the spirit body of the Lord, analogous to Enoch being able to see "things which

were not visible to the natural eye," including "the spirits that God had created" (v. 36).

This conceptual parallel here is not accompanied with specific phrases shared between the two texts, but it may reflect patterns in the Lord's operations rather than deliberate allusions to Enoch's story made by Book of Mormon writers. Nevertheless, it is a meaningful parallel that may be worth consideration.

Related KJV passages could include Saul's request that the witch of Endor bring up the deceased prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 28:7–14). The witch apparently saw Samuel, but it is doubtful that she saw him or any other spirit. Of course, there are numerous events where prophets see angels or other divine manifestations but not explicitly spirits or spirit bodies. Among such divine encounters, Moses's experience on Mount Sinai where "the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a mean speaketh unto his friend" (Exodus 33:11) and where Moses and many elders of Israel "saw the God of Israel; and there were under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone" (Exodus 24:10) stand out. Such hints of an anthropomorphic God in the Bible do not explicitly tell us about the ability to see a spirit body. Further, Moses is not said to be a seer.

Parallel 142: God raises up a seer

Enoch became a seer after the Lord had him anoint his eyes with clay and then wash them, enabling him to see spirits and things not visible to the natural eye (Moses 6:35–36). Moses 6:36 then states that "from thenceforth came the saying abroad in the land: **A seer hath the Lord raised up** unto his people." Likewise, 2 Nephi 3 has this concept three times:

> For Joseph truly testified, saying: **A seer shall the Lord my God raise up**, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins.
>
> Yea, Joseph truly said: Thus saith the Lord unto me: **A choice seer will I raise up** out of the fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins. And unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren, which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers. (2 Nephi 3:6–7)

> But **a seer will I raise up** out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins — and not to the bringing forth my word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them. (2 Nephi 3:11)

Instances of the Lord's "raising up" somebody or something occur multiple times in the KJV (e.g., "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee," Deuteronomy 18:15) but not with respect to a seer. The concept of raising up a seer is akin to raising up a prophet, so it is not a strikingly unusual concept but, nevertheless, one that seems linguistically distinct and worthy of consideration.

Parallel 143: Neither children nor joy before the fall

After Adam and Eve fall and learn of their redemption through Christ, they rejoice and acknowledge the great blessings that have come to them:

> And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.
>
> And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient. (Moses 5:10–11)

This enlightened understanding of the Fall as a path leading to joy, including the joy of children, is also found in Lehi$_1$'s famous discourse in 2 Nephi 2:

> And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. **Adam fell** that men

> might be; and men are, that **they might have joy**. (2 Nephi 2:22–25)

That last and very famous verse by itself is proposed below as another parallel.

Parallel 144: Adam fell that we might be

One of the best-known passages in the Book of Mormon, "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25), has a connection to the Book of Moses:

> And he said unto them: **Because that Adam fell, we are**; and by his fall came death; and we are made partakers of misery and woe. (Moses 6:48)

If $Lehi_1$ was adapting Enoch's statement for his oration on the plan of salvation, it would be fitting to change the "misery and woe" of mortality in Enoch's statement to a focus on the joy that Adam discovered through our redemption, as mentioned in Moses 5:10.

It is possible that $Lehi_1$'s words were in part adapted from a brass-plates text related to the Book of Moses.

Parallel 145: Shaking/quaking over torment of the wicked

When the penitent sons of $Mosiah_2$ considered the pains of the wicked, they did quake in empathy for them:

> for they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless **torment** did cause them to **quake and tremble**. (Mosiah 28:3.)

Quake and *tremble* are also used to describe $Lehi_1$'s reaction to a vision he saw in the opening verses of the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 1:6), which likely involved the abominations of Jerusalem and the destruction and captivity of the wicked that he saw in vision shortly after that (v. 13). The same phrase is applied to the wicked's reaction when they are faced with their doom (1 Nephi 22:23; Mosiah 27:31).

The term *torment* in relation to the condition of the wicked is found in the KJV New Testament (Matthew 8:29 and Luke 16:28) but not the Old Testament. Both the concept of torment of the wicked and the concept of quaking or shaking because of their pain is found in Moses 7 as Enoch was startled to see God weep over the wicked and asked how it was possible that God should weep (Moses 7:28–31).

God then gave a detailed explanation recalling his creation of man and of his granting them their agency, only to see them reject him, be "without affection," and "hate their own blood" (vv. 32–33), resulting in his "fierce anger" (v. 34) for such great wickedness that exceeds the wickedness encountered among any of his creations (vv. 35–36). The result of such sin is a terrible doom that will cause them to suffer in torment in hell until the day that they repent (a possibility made possible by the suffering of Christ for their sins):

> But behold, their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers; Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them, even all the workmanship of mine hands; **wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?**
>
> But behold, these which thine eyes are upon shall perish in the floods; and behold, I will shut them up; a prison have I prepared for them.
>
> And that which I have chosen hath pled before my face. Wherefore, he suffereth for their sins; inasmuch as they will repent in the day that my Chosen shall return unto me, and until that day **they shall be in torment**;
>
> Wherefore, for this shall the heavens weep, yea, and all the workmanship of mine hands.
>
> And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Enoch, and told Enoch all the doings of the children of men; wherefore Enoch knew, and looked upon their wickedness, and their misery, and wept and stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity; and his bowels yearned; and **all eternity shook**. (Moses 7:37–41)

This grief is not just the Lord's and not just shared with Enoch but "the heavens . . . and all the workmanship of [God's] hands" (v. 40) weep over the torment of the wicked and presumably shake as well since all eternity shook (v. 41), showing the intense empathy and yearning of the heavens for those who suffer for their sins. It is a yearning and quaking that was shared by the sons of Mosiah_2, expressed in language that seems to allude to Enoch's divine experience in understanding our merciful God who weeps for us and knows our pain.

Parallel 146: The wicked do not "lay hands" on a prophet due to fear of the Lord's power or protection

When Enoch preached to a wicked people, they were offended and likely would have attacked him. But Moses 6:39 explains that fear of Enoch's godly power or status held them in abeyance:

> And it came to pass when they heard him, no man laid hands on him; for fear came on all them that heard him; for he walked with God.

When $Lehi_4$ and $Nephi_2$, sons of $Helaman_3$, preached to Lamanites, they were cast into prison where they suffered for a prolonged time. However, a miraculous experience resulted in the sparing of their lives and the conversion of large numbers of Lamanites. When a group of Lamanites with at least one Nephite dissenter came to slay them, fear prevented harm being done:

> And after they had been cast into prison many days without food, behold, they went forth into the prison to take them that they might slay them.
>
> And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi were **encircled about as if by fire, even insomuch that they durst not lay their hands upon them for fear lest they should be burned**. Nevertheless, Nephi and Lehi were not burned; and they were as standing in the midst of fire and were not burned.
>
> And when they saw that they were encircled about with a pillar of fire, and that it burned them not, their hearts did take courage.
>
> For they saw that the Lamanites durst not lay their hands upon them; neither durst they come near unto them, but stood as if they were struck dumb with amazement.
>
> And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi did stand forth and began to speak unto them, saying: Fear not, for behold, it is **God that has shown unto you this marvelous thing, in the which is shown unto you that ye cannot lay your hands on us to slay us**. (Helaman 5:22–26)

In another example, after $Nephi_2$ prayed upon his tower and gained the attention of a crowd including corrupt judges, fear prevented them from laying their hands upon him:

> And those judges were angry with him because he spake

> plainly unto them concerning their secret works of darkness; nevertheless, **they durst not lay their own hands upon him, for they feared the people** lest they should cry out against them. . . .
>
> And it came to past that **those people who sought to destroy Nephi were compelled because of their fear, that they did not lay their hands on him**; therefore he began again to speak unto them, seeing that he had gained favor in the eyes of some, insomuch that **the remainder of them did fear**. (Helaman 8:4, 10)

This fear was implicitly related to the power of God, for he had obtained support from some of the people based on evidence of his prophetic calling and ministry.

$Nephi_1$ experiences similar divine protection when his angry brothers were about to kill him at Bountiful:

> And now it came to pass that when I had spoken these words, they were angry with me, and were desirous to throw me into the depths of the sea; and **as they came forth to lay their hands** upon me I spake unto them, saying: In the name of the Almighty God, I command you that ye **touch me not, for I am filled with the power of God**, even unto the consuming of my flesh; and whoso shall lay his hands upon me shall wither **even as a dried reed**; and he shall be as naught before the power of God, for **God shall smite him**.
>
> And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said many things unto my brethren, insomuch that they were confounded and could not contend against me; **neither durst they lay their hands upon me** nor touch me with their fingers, even for the space of many days. Now they **durst not do this lest they should wither before me, so powerful was the Spirit of God**; and thus it had wrought upon them. (1 Nephi 17:48, 52)

Abinadi experiences a similar scene when threatened by the wicked priests of King Noah:

> And now when the king had heard these words, he said unto his priests: Away with this fellow, and **slay him**; for what have we to do with him, for he is mad.
>
> And they stood forth and **attempted to lay their hands on him**; but he withstood them, and said unto them:
>
> Touch me not, for **God shall smite you if ye lay your**

> **hands upon me**, for I have not delivered the message which the Lord sent me to deliver; neither have I told you that which ye requested that I should tell; therefore, God will not suffer that I shall be destroyed at this time.
>
> Now it came to pass after Abinadi had spoken these words that the people of king Noah durst not lay their hands on him, for the Spirit of the Lord was upon him; and his face shone with exceeding luster, even as Moses' did while in the mount of Sinai, while speaking with the Lord. (Mosiah 13:1–3, 5)

It may be that Enoch's story was alluded to in some of these other miraculous cases of preservation.

There is a relatively closely related passage in Matthew:

> And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.
>
> But when they sought to lay hands on him, **they feared the multitude**, because they took him for a prophet. (Matthew 21:45–46).

This is not presented, however, as a miraculous fear of a prophet's power or divine protection but of his popularity.

A related event is told in Luke 20:19:

> And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour **sought to lay hands on him**; and **they feared the people**: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

Parallel 146 still has enough to retain it as a possible parallel, though related language does occur in the KJV.

Conclusion

The new and updated parallels presented here were part of the data used in examination of the distribution of parallels in a recently published companion article,[15] Part 1 of this series. That article also examined the issue of translator intent in preserving or highlighting potential parallels. Findings were consistent with a generally "tight" translation of the Book of Mormon, with translator intent or cooperation spanning both the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses, with the result that parallels could be detected largely on the basis of common language.

15. Lindsay, "Parallels, Part 1."

The details of the distribution, the multiple parallels pointing to a one-way direction of influence from the Book of Moses or something like it to the Book of Mormon, the explanatory power (including enhanced meaning offered by considering the Book of Moses as a source of influence), and the general absence of similar phenomena involving the Book of Abraham suggest that there may be something besides obsessive parallelomania behind the findings of this study. Indeed, there may be something highly unexpected and unique about the Book of Moses and its relationship to the Book of Mormon. Though some of the parallels are admittedly weak and could be due to chance or other textual influences, the cumulative effect of the evidence both reinforces the surprising findings first reported by Reynolds in 1990 and suggests that a noteworthy phenomenon may be found in the data presented here. An argument can be made that the relationship is best explained by both the Book of Mormon's and the Book of Moses's roots in ancient texts that were translated with apparent translator intent (recognizing that multiple translators may have been involved) to make allusions and connections readily discoverable for modern readers.

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Early Anti-Mormonism in Great Britain, 1837–1842

Robin Douglas

Abstract: *This article seeks to shed light on an under-researched subject: the more negative public responses to the first five years of the Latter-day Saint mission in Britain, from 1837 to 1842. Sufficient research attention has not been given, to date, to the full range of responses of the British people to the arrival of the new Church on their shores. These responses were often—although by no means exclusively—unfavorable. In short, what we have here is the story of what happens when strangers arrive bearing a message of a newly restored gospel to an insular society that has both a rigid class system and incumbent churches that regard themselves as the only legitimate forms of Christianity. It is a story that offers some lessons for modern times.*

From 1837 onwards, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been sending missionaries to Britain — messengers carrying a new gospel to an old land. There are a number of helpful works available on the history of the Church in Britain.[1] There has also

1. See V. Ben Bloxham, James R. Moss, and Larry C. Porter, eds., *Truth Will Prevail: The Rise of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, 1873–1987* (Solihull, UK: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1987); James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men with a Mission: 1837–1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992); Bruce A. Van Orden, *Building Zion: The Latter-day Saints in Europe* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), archive.org/details/buildingzionlatt0000vano; Cynthia Doxey et al., eds., *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: The British Isles* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2007); Matthew Lyman Rasmussen, *Mormonism and the Making of a British Zion* (Salt Lake City:

been a considerable amount of material published on early Latter-day Saint missionary activity more generally. This material, quite naturally, tends to be written from the viewpoint of those who were sent on missions and those who were converted. However, an examination of the perspective of those who rejected and opposed the missionary message may provide other useful insights. Drawing for the most part on primary sources such as newspaper articles, this paper explores the more negative aspects of the responses of some British people to the Latter-day Saint mission in its earliest years.

This is a story of anti-Mormonism, which is perhaps an unpleasant subject. Yet the story that this article tells may have some relevance for the modern reader as well as some lessons to learn. In summary, this investigation sheds light on what happens when strangers arrive bearing a message of a newly restored gospel to an insular, hierarchical society whose incumbent churches are sensitive to any challenge to their position. It is a story that has yet to be fully told. Notably, it is not sufficiently told in the principal existing works on the history of anti-Mormonism.[2] Some of the ground was covered in an interesting and well-researched 2002 study by Craig Foster, although that study focused on pamphleteering in Britian specifically and it was not, for the most part, directed to the time period covered in this paper.[3]

My chosen timeframe is the period of five years beginning with the arrival of the first missionaries in July 1837. After this period, the parameters of British responses to the Church changed significantly when the first reports of plural marriage reached Britain by early 1843 and Joseph Smith was assassinated in June 1844.

University of Utah Press, 2016); and Carol Wilkinson and Cynthia Doxey Green, *The Field Is White: Harvest in the Three Counties of England* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2017).

2. See Terryl L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); and J. Spencer Fluhman, *"A Peculiar People": Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), archive.org/details/peculiarpeoplean0000fluh/mode/2up.
3. Craig L. Foster, *Penny Tracts and Polemics: A Critical Analysis of Anti-Mormon Pamphleteering in Great Britain (1837-1860)* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2002).

The Mission

The basic facts relating to the early Latter-day Saint mission to Britain are well-established. There were, in broad summary, two waves of missionaries who came to the country from the United States in the period under consideration.

The first wave came in 1837, when the Saints were based in Kirtland, Ohio. On 4 June 1837, Joseph Smith set apart Heber C. Kimball to lead a mission to Britain, with Orson Hyde to assist him. A third elder, Willard Richards, was set apart a few days later, on 12 June.[4] These men formed the nucleus of a missionary party of seven American and Canadian Saints.[5]

The second wave began in 1839. From 1839 to 1841, nine apostles of the Church — which was by now based in Nauvoo — preached the gospel in Britain, assisted by other missionaries. In addition to Apostles Kimball, Hyde, and Richards, the missionary Apostles included Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and George A. Smith.[6]

The first party of missionaries set sail from New York on 1 July 1837. They arrived in Liverpool on 19 July. The elders set out almost immediately for the cotton manufacturing town of Preston (population approximately 45,000), which was located thirty-five miles to the north. The first British branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized in that town in August 1837. Preston remains a significant Latter-day Saint center today. Notably, it is the location of one of the two British temples. Not long after their arrival in Preston, the missionaries began looking for new areas in which to work. These included nearby villages such as Downham and Chatburn but also the towns of Alston further north and Bedford, which was many miles away in eastern England. Figure 1 shows the locations of some of those early destinations. By the end of the period under consideration

4. See Larry C. Porter, "Beginnings of the Restoration: Canada, An 'Effectual Door' to the British Isles" in *Truth Will Prevail*, 34–37.
5. The remaining four missionaries were Joseph Fielding, John Goodson, Isaac Russell, and John Snyder.
6. See generally James B. Allen and Malcom R. Thorp, "The Mission of the Twelve to England, 1840–41: Mormon Apostles and the Working Classes," *BYU Studies* 15, no. 4 (1975): 499–526, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol15/iss4/11/; V. Ben Bloxham, "The Call of the Apostles to the British Isles," in *Truth Will Prevail*, 104–20; Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission*, 67–83; and Arnold K. Garr, "George A. Smith's Mission with the Twelve in England, 1839–41" in Doxey et al., *Regional Studies*, 24–25.

Figure 1. Some of the early missionary destinations in Britain.

the elders had reached — very broadly speaking — locations in most areas of the country.[7]

The missionaries had none of the preparation or resources that modern Latter-day Saint missionaries benefit from. They attended no Mission Training Center; they had no mission home. Even copies of the Book of Mormon were scarce; no British edition was printed until 1841.[8] Nevertheless, the elders had some success in advocating for

7. Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Wilford Woodruff visited and preached in London in 1840. See Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 96.
8. See generally Clyde J. Williams, "'More Value . . . Than All the Gold and Silver

the restored Church. The early missionaries to Britain were strongly encouraged to focus primarily on gospel fundamentals. One example of this comes from a lucid exposition of the main principles of the Latter-day Saint message, which an Elder Curtis put forward in a debate before an unsympathetic audience in 1841:

> We believe that when Christ first sent forth his Apostles, they did preach the Gospel, but that there was afterwards a great falling away in this respect; this falling off in fact came on even before the death of the Apostles, and this is spoken of in the Scriptures. Paul, in his epistle to the Thessalonians, and in his epistle to Timothy, speaks of the falling away. When St. John was banished to the Isle of Patmos, his letters to the Seven Churches of Asia speak of it. This falling off not only commenced then, but it has continued up to the present period. We do not wish it to be understood but that there are good people in all sects; if people worship God according to the best of their belief and are sincere in that worship, it is all that God requires of them. We believe that the Gospel has not for a long time been preached in its fulness, but the time has now arrived when it will be preached in its fulness. The Gospel may be divided into four parts: first faith, second repentance, third baptism, and fourth the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. These four things constitute the Gospel. Now some believe in the three first but not in the last, and some also who believe in the last reject the three first. One society turns it one way, and another society turns it another. My firm opinion is that the Gospel will be preached in its fulness before the second advent of our Saviour, but I call upon my opponent to prove that it is so in England at the present time — that it has been so, even as it was in the Apostles' days, for the last 1700 years. If he can prove that, I shall feel satisfied.[9]

It appears that there was more of an eschatological emphasis in the missionary message than would be usual today (although the purpose of missionary work has always been, then and now, to prepare

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of England': The Book of Mormon in Britain, 1837–52" in Doxey et al., *Regional Studies*, 79–107.

9. "The Latter-day Saints and Mr. Cluer," *Cheltenham Journal and Stroud Herald*, 24 May 1841, 1. The quote has been modified to restore direct speech.

converts for the Second Coming).[10] For example, we are told that, in public meetings in Cheltenham: "The main topics were — the literal fulfilment of all scripture prophecies — the personal reign of Christ on the earth — 'the land of promise' in America."[11] That said, sometimes tactical discretion was required. Joseph Smith himself counseled the missionaries to emphasize the "first principles of the Gospel," which corresponded to the four subjects referred to in the quotation above.[12] So it was that, for example, at a debate in Gloucester with a Protestant minister, the missionaries opted to confine themselves to the issue of baptism, declining to get drawn into a discussion of the Book of Mormon or other specifically Latter-day Saint doctrines.[13]

Responses to the missionaries fell along the whole spectrum from warmly favorable to bitterly hostile. This article concentrates on responses in the latter category, but the former must not be forgotten. It must also be remembered that many British people who declined to join the Church nevertheless did not descend into anti-Mormonism. They accepted that their fellow citizens had the right to follow the faith of their choosing and did not develop any bigotry against them.

The surviving figures attest to the progress made by the early missionaries. On Christmas Day 1837, over 300 people assembled at the Church's first General Conference in Britain.[14] By May 1838, the Church had around 1,000 members.[15] Apostle Wilford Woodruff recorded in April 1840 that there were 1,671 Saints, thirty-four elders, fifty-two priests, thirty-eight teachers, and eight deacons.[16] As to the total number of people baptized during my period of interest, it is difficult to come to reliable figures because of the imperfect state of the records.[17] Two articles published in 1987 and 1992 gave the figures of 6,729 and 5,500 respectively for the number of converts baptized by 1841,[18] but

10. See Allen and Thorp, "Mission of the Twelve," 517–19.
11. "Latter Day Saints," *Cheltenham Examiner*, 3 November 1840, 2.
12. See Rasmussen, *Making of a British Zion*, 54.
13. "The Mormonites," *Hereford Journal*, 10 November 1841, 3.
14. Wilkinson and Green, *Field Is White*, 11.
15. Wilkinson and Green, *Field Is White*, 16.
16. "Journal (January 1, 1840–December 31, 1840)," 16 April 1840, *Wilford Woodruff Papers* (website), documents.wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/documents/4a002fc3-f279-4989-a07c-2c49a0ad2775/page/e4f52618-2d55-4da2-87c8-a04679cccf14.
17. On some of the difficulties here, see Wilkinson and Green, *Field Is White*, Chapter 5.
18. Malcolm R. Thorp, "The Setting for the Restoration in Britain: Political, Social, and Economic Conditions," in *Truth Will Prevail*, 69; and David J. Whittaker and

these numbers are open to revision in the light on ongoing research. In any event, behind the raw figures lie thousands of personal stories — testimonies of individual Britons who felt drawn to embrace the restored gospel. It is worth noting that conversions usually happened on an individual basis, although one Methodist group known as the United Brethren converted *en masse*.[19]

The record provides evidence of real success achieved by a small group of elders who had arrived in Britain from a foreign country with a new and unfamiliar message. The last word here may be given to Brigham Young, reflecting on the fortunes of the early mission:

> We landed in the spring of 1840, as strangers in a strange land, and penniless, but through the mercy of God we have gained many friends, established churches in almost every noted town and city in the Kingdom of Great Britain, baptized between seven and eight thousand, printed 5000 Books of Mormon, 3000 Hymn Books, 2500 volumes of the Millennial Star, and 50,000 tracts, and emigrated to Zion 1000 souls, established a permanent shipping agency, which will be a great blessing to the Saints, and have left sown in the hearts of many thousands the seeds of eternal truth, which will bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of God, and yet we have lacked nothing to eat, drink or wear: in all these things I acknowledge the hand of God.[20]

The British Context

Great Britain in this time period was still, literally and metaphorically, an insular society.[21] While the country was the metropole of an international empire, its culture remained parochial in many respects. As to

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James R. Moss, "Missions of the Twelve to the British Isles," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* Daniel H. Ludlow, ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/EoM/id/3939.

19. See Howard Collett, "1840 Baptisms," *Wilford Woodruff Papers*, 8 June 2021, wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/media/articles/1840-baptisms.
20. "History of Brigham Young," *Deseret News*, 10 March 1858, 1, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/desnews1/id/178727. Quoted in Arrington, *American Moses*, 96.
21. The scope of this paper is limited to the island of Great Britain, which comprises the countries of England, Scotland, and Wales. The history of the Church in Ireland—and in the Isle of Man, an island located between Great Britain and Ireland—falls to be considered separately.

religion, Britain was deeply and normatively Protestant; indeed, British culture was defined to a large extent against that of its Catholic neighbor, France.[22]

The ecclesiastical landscape was dominated by the *Established* churches: those that enjoyed the sponsorship of the British state. These were the Church of England (also known as the Anglican Church) and the Church of Scotland (which had a different theology from its southern counterpart, based on Presbyterianism).[23] Alongside these large, wealthy, and prestigious bodies, there existed a number of other Protestant denominations, known as the *Nonconformist* or *Dissenting* churches. These included the Methodist, Baptist, and Congregationalist communions. Nonconformism posed a significant challenge to the hegemony of the state churches, even though the latter were ultimately too resilient to be displaced. Besides the Dissenting denominations, Britain had a very small Roman Catholic population. It also had an even smaller Jewish community and a tiny number of adherents of other non-Christian religions.

The privileged position of the Established churches had been somewhat eroded in the years prior to the arrival of the Latter-day Saints. In fact, the Nonconformist churches had made inroads into the Church of England's constituency from the late seventeenth century onwards. In particular, they appear to have expanded for several decades from around 1790 to 1800, although this period of growth may have run into difficulties in the 1840s. North of the border, the Church of Scotland's position was eroded even more seriously by Presbyterian dissent.[24] At the end of the 1820s, most of the legislation imposing statutory religious tests had been repealed, throwing public offices open first to Nonconformists and then to Roman Catholics.[25] Such changes were helpful to a new movement like the Latter-day

22. On British identity in general in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837*, revised ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).
23. Strictly speaking, the Church of England during this period was part of the United Church of England and Ireland.
24. See Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Macmillan 1984), 18, 30–32 and Clive D. Field, *Periodizing Secularization: Religious Allegiance and Attendance in Britain, 1880–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 24–27.
25. In the Sacramental Test Act 1828 and the Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829. Other legislation of the era that undermined the Anglican establishment included the Places of Religious Worship Act 1812 and the Marriage Act 1836.

Saints. There was a growing ethic of religious freedom, one that to some extent tempered even anti-Mormon writers.[26] Nevertheless, state-sponsored religion was a reality in Britain in a way for which there was no parallel in America.[27] When the first missionaries arrived, it was still technically necessary for non-Anglican ministers to obtain a license from the civil authorities, although this requirement was often disregarded.[28]

In this article, I refer to the pre-1837 British churches collectively as the "incumbent" or "existing" churches. These terms include both the Established churches and the Nonconformists. The reactions of the incumbent churches to the Church of Jesus Christ tended to be uniformly hostile. The Established churches, which were already in competition with Nonconformism and outright irreligion, were badly disposed toward what they saw as another illegitimate sectarian body that was very successfully challenging their privileged position. The Nonconformist churches did not hold a privileged position, but they had achieved a certain size and stability, and they were sensitive to a disruptor appearing and drawing away their members. Both the Established and the Nonconformist churches were committed to the truth of Protestant theology in a way that is not always easy to grasp today. They saw what they considered to be theological error as genuinely dangerous to souls.

There are some difficulties in assessing the religious climate in Britain at the start of the Latter-day Saint mission. The first broadly reliable national figures for religious observance do not become available until 1851, when an official census of places of worship was taken. Trends in churchgoing and church membership in the years leading up to the census are not easy to discern. One view is that 1851 amounted to something of a peak in observance, "following increases stemming from the Evangelical Revival and intense competition between established Churches and Dissent, as a religious marketplace opened up."

26. See Malcolm R. Thorp, "The Field is White Already to Harvest," Appendix A in Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission*, 341.
27. The last state to have an established church, Massachusetts, severed its ties with the Congregationalist Church in 1833. By that time, state religion was already an anachronism in America.
28. See Peter Fagg, "Preston—License to Preach," *Discovering LDS Britain* (website), 13 February 2015, ldsbritain.blogspot.com/2015/02/preston-license-to-preach.html; Peter Fagg, "Minister's License," *Discovering LDS Britain*, 4 August 2016, ldsbritain.blogspot.com/2016/08/upon-isles-of-sea-ministers-license.html.

At present, however, it is "not yet possible to determine" the accuracy of this thesis.[29] What we *can* say is that the churches were acutely aware that they could not take their congregations for granted. The Anglican monopoly had been broken, and Anglican priests knew it. For their part, the Nonconformists were equally desirous of maintaining and increasing their membership rolls. In this context, it is worth noting that Methodist clergy seem to have been particularly hostile to the Saints.[30]

More broadly, whatever the actual trends in observance were, clergymen in nineteenth-century Britain *feared* that Christianity was losing its grip on the nation. This was particularly so in relation to urban areas in the wake of industrialization. Clerical fears in this regard have been described using the phrase "the myth of the unholy city."[31] The threat of losing urban workers to what seemed to be a rising tide of godlessness was a sore point for the incumbent churches.

So it was that the Latter-day Saint missionaries stepped into an unsettled world in which any new Christian body was apt to be perceived as unwelcome competition by the existing churches, whose position in British society had fallen into question and was felt to be declining. From a Latter-day Saint perspective, the field was ripe for the harvest. Changing patterns of religious allegiance and practice had created a receptive audience for new ways of being Christian that departed from Anglican orthodoxy. It is significant that the first British converts to the Church of Jesus Christ were mostly people who were already disaffected from the Church of England. Only 20.7% of converts were Anglicans, and the largest category comprised Nonconformists (primarily Methodists, at 25.0%).[32]

The incumbent churches did not take much notice of the Latter-day Saints before the arrival of the first missionaries in 1837. The Church had little public profile in Britain in its earliest years. It received scant attention in the press in the first half of the 1830s. Indeed, the earliest

29. Field, *Periodizing Secularization*, 43.
30. See Allen and Thorp, "Mission of the Twelve," 522.
31. Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularization 1800–2000*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), 18–30. The phrase is an ironic play on the biblical term "the holy city" (referring to Jerusalem).
32. Thorp, "Setting for the Restoration," 60. See further in general Malcolm R. Thorp, "The Religious Backgrounds of Mormon Converts in Britain, 1837–52," *Journal of Mormon History* 4 (1977): 51–66, digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=mormonhistory.

coverage simply recycled content from American papers.[33] Even after the missionaries arrived, there were sometimes difficulties in appreciating that this was a fundamentally new religious endeavor. It was not just another reform movement, but an attempt to restore the original Church of Jesus Christ. The arrival of American missionaries in Britain was nothing new, so it was perhaps predictable that the Latter-day Saints were initially assumed to be just another set of Evangelical Protestants.[34]

British observers also attempted to understand the new Church through the lens of earlier British prophetic movements. In my period of interest, at least three figures were prominent in the public memory as having led such movements in the more or less recent past: Joanna Southcott (1750–1814), Edward Irving (1792–1834) and John Thom (1799–1838). Contemporaries reached readily for these figures and others as comparators for Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints.[35] Whether such comparisons were accurate is another question. Southcott was a prolific author who claimed to be the biblical "Woman of the Apocalypse" but never quite founded a church; Irving was a Scottish Presbyterian minister who veered off into experimentations with Pentecostal phenomena; and Thom was a political revolutionary with mental problems. A couple of writers even compared the Latter-day Saints to the Puseyites — the Catholic revival movement in the Church of England, which really had very little in common with the restored gospel.[36] In addition, comparisons were made, perhaps inevitably, to Muhammad and the Qur'an.[37] British critics were evidently

33. See "Fanaticism," *Morning Advertiser* (London), 10 March 1831, 4, reprinted from the *Painesville Gazette* (OH); "The Mormonites," *Morning Advertiser*, 27 October 1831, 3, reprinted from the *Painesville Gazette* which, in turn, was republishing from the *Missouri Republican*; "The Mormonites," *Morning Advertiser*, 8 November 1831, 1, reprinted from the *Jacksonville Patriot* (IL), 13 September 1931; "Mormonism," *Morning Advertiser*, 21 January 1832, 1, reprinted from the *Salem Gazette* (MA), 16 November 1831.
34. See Thorp, "Setting for the Restoration," 44, 59.
35. *Church of England Quarterly Review* 3 (1838): 509; "The Latter-Day Saints," *The Sun* (London), 5 November 1840, 1; "The Mormonites," *Gloucester Journal*, 21 November 1840, 2, which mentions "Swedenbergians" and "Southcotonians"; "The Mormonite Impostures," *Stockport Advertiser and Guardian*, 4 February 1842, 4, compares the Anabaptist movement.
36. D. L. St. Clair, letter to the editor, in "Latter Day Saints," *Gloucester Journal*, 20 November 1840, 2; "The Mormonites—A New Sect of Impostors & Ignorant Enthusiasts," *Kendal Mercury*, 10 April 1841, 4.
37. "The Book of Mormon and the Mormonites," *The Athenaeum* 701 (3 April 1841),251,archive.org/details/sim_athenaeum-uk_1841-04-03_701/page/250

trying to understand the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by framing it in familiar ways. But they were not necessarily trying to understand the Church on its own terms.

Criticism of the Missionaries

From the perspective of the existing churches, the missionaries were in error. It was always possible to see them as erring in good faith, but in many cases that was not the view that was taken. The missionaries were often not given the benefit of the doubt. In large part, this was undoubtedly due to a sincere belief that they were leading people to hell. But more worldly motives may also have been in play, since the institutional and financial interests of the churches and their clergy were threatened.

There seems to have been a widespread view that the missionaries had not been innocently misled. Rather, they were seen as engaging in a conscious deception of "artful, crafty, and designing men."[38] It was said that they were "as much rogues as fools";[39] and that they "probably combine as much of the knave as the fanatic in their composition."[40]

If the missionaries were deceivers, what was the purpose of their deceit? Critics came up with essentially two answers to this question.

First, it was widely believed that the young Church was a money-making scheme. Time and again, accusations were made that it was a financial fraud.[41] One commentator, for example, concluded from the practice of encouraging converts to emigrate to Zion that "a genuine American trick, of selling uninhabitable land, is at the bottom of the whole matter."[42] One Scotsman even composed a satirical

/mode/2up; "The Book of Mormon," *The Argus*, 6 November 1841, 709–10, which also included a parody of the Book of Mormon.

38. "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge," *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 11 March 1841, 4.
39. "The Mormonites," *Hereford Journal*, 5 May 1841, 3.
40. "The Mormonites," *Hereford Journal*, 14 April 1841, 3.
41. See "Latter-Day Saints," *The Sun*, 1; "The 'Mormonite' Fanatics," *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, 19 December 1840, 4; "Mormonites—A New Sect," *Kendal Mercury*, 4; "Latter Day Saints," *Manchester Times*, 10 April 1841, 4; "Mormonites," *Hereford Journal*, 5 May 1841, 3; "Latter-day Saints and Mr. Cluer," 1; "The Mormonites Again," *Westmorland Gazette*, 28 August 1841, 2; "Mormonism," *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 22 January 1842, 5.
42. "The Mormonites," *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 8 January 1842, 7.

poem about the alleged mercenary nature of the missionaries.[43] All this seems to have flowed from a knee-jerk assumption that the missionaries *must* be confidence tricksters. In many cases, the accusations of fraud were advanced with generality and vagueness, without particulars being provided to enable readers to make their own assessments. Modern historians, including those coming from a critical perspective, would probably reject the allegations. Whatever view is taken of the Restoration, the missionaries who came to Britain to preach the restored gospel appear to have been personally sincere. In other cases, British writers repeated secondhand claims of financial malpractice that they had found in American sources. This happened, notably, with Richard Livesey's pamphlet, which will be discussed later.

The allegation that the missionaries were financial fraudsters was a risky one for critics to make. The elders went out "without purse or scrip," and they largely depended on material support from members. They also sold printed material for money. But they were not alone in this regard. The accusation that religion was being used to make money — in other words, *priestcraft* — could easily be turned against the incumbent churches. The churches operating in Britain at this time, and the Church of England in particular, were major economic actors who did not hesitate to make financial demands on the public. The payment of Anglican tithes remained a matter of legal obligation until 1936; the widespread system of "pew rents" made worshippers pay to sit in church; even today the Church of England is the thirteenth largest landowner in the country. Money and religion are not always easy to disentangle. The new converts who joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were not naïve about such things.[44]

The second accusation of critics was that the missionaries were political revolutionaries. Captain St. Clair, an anti-Mormon writer discussed in the next section, claimed that "the main object of these persons is to engender a bitter fanatical feeling, and by alienating the lower order from the sympathies of the wealthy, to extirpate *true* Christianity as a preliminary to revolution."[45] Another observer wrote of the Church, "In one locality it professes to be actuated by an extraordinary degree of disinterested piety; at another, there is all the morbid

43. "New Sect—Mormonism," *Fife Herald and Kinross, Stathearn, and Clackmanan Advertiser*, 9 September 1841, 115.
44. See Thorp, "Setting for the Restoration," 63.
45. "Latter Day Saints," *Gloucester Journal*, 20 November 1840, 2, emphasis in original.

spirit of a revolutionist."[46] This suspicion of subversion may also have been why the Latter-day Saint mission caught the hostile attention of an anti-socialist political campaigner by the name of John Brindley.[47]

Such fears were wholly groundless, but they made sense to a certain degree in the British political context of the time. The industrial revolution had created serious social problems — as the missionaries realized.[48] The period with which this paper is concerned was one of poverty and discontent, and the threat of political unrest was real. The infamous case of the Tolpuddle martyrs (a group of early trade unionists) occurred in 1834. The start of the Church's mission in 1837 coincided with the onset of a period of economic hardship that led into the "hungry forties." The year 1838 saw the birth of Chartism — a radical, if mostly peaceful, reform movement that campaigned for universal male suffrage and other political rights. One group of Chartists launched an insurrection in Newport, Wales, in 1839. We hear of a British Latter-day Saint speaker described as "a chartist named Smith," who preached at the "Democratic meeting-room" in Gloucester.[49] But people like that appear to have been the exception. "In general . . . in accounts of their lives written by Latter-day Saint converts from this period, what stands out as a common thread in all is their apparent lack of concern about politics."[50] While the missionaries were willing to denounce social injustices, their practical program was not political revolution but the building of Zion in America.[51] It is also worth noting that actual revolutionaries could be scornful of the Latter-day Saints. A radical paper declared that the advance of the Church "prove[s] conclusively the duty of substituting knowledge for ignorance, and common sense for priestcraft."[52]

Criticism of the Converts

The key point to bear in mind when looking at perceptions of the early Latter-day Saint converts is the morbid British preoccupation with

46. "Mormonism," *Preston Chronicle*, 30 June 1838, 3.
47. See, for example, "Mr. Brindley's Lectures," *Liverpool Standard and General Commercial Advertiser*, 30 November 1841, 7.
48. See generally Thorp, "Setting for the Restoration"; Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission*,10–19.
49. "Mormonites," *Hereford Journal*, 10 November 1841, 3.
50. Thorp, "Setting for the Restoration," 56. See also Thorp, Appendix A in *Men with a Mission*.
51. Thorp, Appendix A in *Men with a Mission*.
52. "A New Bible," *The Radical*, 3 April 1836, 5.

class. The complex hierarchy of (mostly inherited) status and wealth known as the "class system" was the single most important mechanism for identifying a person's place in society and the related norms that determined what behavior and entitlements were appropriate to them. As a principle for structuring social roles, class had — and to some extent still has — a salience in Britain that is unequaled elsewhere in the English-speaking world.

We have already referred to the fears that existed among clerics that the churches were losing the allegiance of the urban working classes — the discourse of the "unholy city." These fears were somewhat exaggerated. Quite a number of working-class people were seekers after gospel truths and were looking for a religion that corresponded to the Church established by Jesus Christ. Many such people ended up as members of movements such as Methodism and (later) the Salvation Army. Yet the fears of the clerics were not without foundation. Being an observant member of the Established churches often correlated with being a member of the "respectable" classes of society; and, to a significant and increasing extent, the same was true of the Nonconformist churches. Contemporary perceptions that religion was disproportionately a middle-class affair seem in general to be borne out by the available data.[53]

The endeavors of the Latter-day Saint missionaries went against this trend. There was a tendency for the early converts to the Church to be working-class.[54] Moreover, around 75% of the new Saints were from urban areas (although many had migrated there from the countryside).[55] It has well been said that "the Mormons were one of the few successful religious bodies among the working classes."[56] The Church of Jesus Christ had evidently managed to evangelize a demographic that the incumbent churches had lost or were finding hard to reach. Those churches did not respond to this well. There was a reluctance to admit that the Latter-day Saint message might have been persuasive on its merits. One commentator observed that the Book of Mormon "is not without evidence of considerable but

53. See generally Hugh McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1974), 23–41.
54. Thorp, "Setting for the Restoration," 57–58 and Appendix A in *Men with a Mission*. See also Thorp, "Religious Backgrounds," 66.
55. Thorp, "Setting for the Restoration," 58.
56. Allen and Thorp, "Mission of the Twelve," 514. See also Thorp, "Religious Backgrounds," 52: "one of the few denominations to experience success among the working classes."

perverted ingenuity and talent. The scriptural style is well sustained, and the doctrinal points and injunctions are made to accord in a very plausible manner with those in the authentic bible."[57] But this kind of perspective was not typical. In general, an assumption was made that the Church was clearly false; and this in turn made it necessary to explain the mystery of why people converted to it.

The main answer that commentators came up with to this question was that the new converts were stupid and poor; the two things were presumed to go together. Conversions were attributed to "the credulity of the uneducated classes."[58] The converts were described as "the ignorant multitude,"[59] "ignorant and silly-minded,"[60] "deluded" "unfortunate dupes,"[61] "most lamentably ignorant,"[62] "the ignorant portion of the manufacturing community,"[63] or people "whose reasoning powers go no deeper than the surface of things." They were thought to consist of "the astonished natives of rural villages and the weak-minded and wavering classes of larger towns."[64] A Church of England journal called them "credulous."[65] One Anglican cleric, Reverend W. J. Morrish, discussed below as an early anti-Mormon writer, was prepared to tell his flock directly that they were "simple-minded Christians," "unstable and wavering," who were being "led astray."[66]

This kind of attitude was not entirely universal. The *Athenaeum*, a literary journal, reported that converts came not from what it called the "lowest ranks," but from what were considered to be morally upright artisans and tradesmen.[67] One observer was even willing to recognize that converts included "persons of substance as well as the labouring classes."[68] Indeed, an attempt was made at one point to convert

57. "Mormonites," *Gloucester Journal*, 21 November 1840, 2.
58. "'Mormonite' Fanatics," *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, 4.
59. "Latter-Day Saints," *The Sun*, 1.
60. "New Sect—Mormonism," *Fife Herald*, 115.
61. "The Mormonites," *Gloucester Journal*, 7 August 1841, 3.
62. D. L. St. Clair, letter to the editor, in "Mormonism," *Chester Courant*, 23 November 1841, 4.
63. "Mormonism in America," *Welshman*, 2 November 1838, 4.
64. Letter to the editor, *Preston Chronicle*, 7 April 1838, 3.
65. "Mormonites—A New American Sect," *Church of England Quarterly Review* 3 (1838): 503, books.google.com/books?id=iw4EAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA503&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false.
66. "Latter-Day Saints," *The Sun*, 1.
67. "The Book of Mormon and the Mormonites," 252.
68. "The Mormonite or 'Latter-Day Saint' Swindle," *Stockport Advertiser and Guardian*, 8 October 1841, 4.

Queen Victoria; Brigham Young arranged for her to be presented with a handsomely-bound Book of Mormon through the hands of Lorenzo Snow.[69] It would be fascinating to know whether the monarch read the volume and, if she did, what she made of it.

Nevertheless, social and clerical snobbery recurred repeatedly in the reports about the early mission. The Latter-day Saint elders did not fit the conventional stereotype of ministers: educated men who emerged from the affluent classes of society and received recognized ordinations after years of theological study.[70] There is an obvious parallel to be drawn with Christ and his original Apostles who had been uncredentialled peasants. All received a frosty reception from the religious authorities of their day. The polemic that we see in the sources on this subject is difficult — impossible, even — to reconcile with Biblical ideas about the poor and God's dealings with the underprivileged.

One critic in Gloucester, who ironically labeled himself as a "silent observer" nonetheless broke his silence long enough to send a long letter to the editor about what he considered "the folly and gross absurdity of the Mormonites."[71] He expressed his judgement that the ordinances of the gospel were "ill-fitting the hands of a country cooper and his apprentice, who, till some three or four years since, had lived any thing but a religious life." The conversion of a sinner was less important than the priesthood being conferred on a mere artisan. The pioneering anti-Mormon writer Captain St. Clair was similarly outraged that the Latter-day Saints had "ordained persons, who can neither read nor write, priests after the order of Aaron." He was particularly scandalized that one of the ordained Saints had called a property-owner to repentance. He wrote, "One of these priests had the folly and presumption to tell a farmer, an acquaintance of my own, that, if he and his family did not receive baptism from him, they must all be damned."[72] St. Clair claimed, more generally, that the advance of the Latter-day Saints was attributable to "the misery and frightful ignorance of our rural population." The solution was that "the lower

69. See Parry D. Sorensen, "Through a Century of History," 29; *Millennial Star* (22 July 1937): 470, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/dac0128d-987a-40de-86fd-883ff39acf1d/0/0.

70. Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission*, 4–10.

71. "Latter-Day Saints," *Gloucester Journal*, 14 November 1840, 4. The writer also claimed that the cooper in question had mental illness in his family.

72. "Latter-Day Saints," *The Sun*, 1.

classes must be taught the common principles of Christianity, *which at present they do not know*."[73]

Criticism of the Existing Churches

Blaming the missionaries for being crooks and the converts for being fools was not enough. Some of the more perceptive critics of the new Church realized that the missionaries would not have been able to attract members if the existing churches had been functioning adequately and had succeeded in securing people's adherence. It was not sufficient to attribute the appeal of the restored gospel to what the *Athenaeum* dismissively called "a vast extent of popular ignorance."[74] Such a claim of ignorance demanded an explanation. It is not that assertions of this sort were entirely *wrong*. Willard Richards and Brigham Young observed of the British people that "their priests have taught them but little."[75] The point is that, when advanced by critics of the Church, they amounted to an admission of serious failure on the part of British Christianity. If anti-Mormons were right that the people were "fearfully deficient in religious knowledge," whose fault was that?[76]

In the first instance, it was the fault of the Established churches, which were officially assigned the role of disseminating Christian knowledge in the country. The Church of England in particular was not lacking in funding or personnel, and there was a sense that its clergy were failing to do the job for which they were being paid. One paper in Leeds asked, "How is it that the well-disciplined and well-paid spiritual army of the English Church, suffer its flocks to be led away by such gross delusions?"[77] When the missionaries came to the city of Gloucester, a newspaper writer suggested that the Bishop of Gloucester was not earning his keep: "Has this Bishop, so well paid for attending to the flock, done anything to abate this ignorance?"[78]

73. "Latter Day Saints," *Gloucester Journal*, 2, emphasis in original.
74. "The Book of Mormon and the Mormonites," 253.
75. Letter from Brigham Young and Willard Richards to the First Presidency, 5 September 1840, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-brigham-young-and-willard-richards-5-september-1840/10#full-transcript, quoted in Thorp, "Setting for the Restoration," 68. Young and Richards also commented, "Neither have the priests much more information than the people." See also Allen and Thorp, "Mission of the Twelve," 514.
76. "Mormonites—A New Sect," *Kendal Mercury*, 4.
77. "The Book of Mormon, the Latter-Day Saints," *Leeds Times*, 10 April 1841, 6.
78. "Latter-Day Saints," *The Sun*, 1. This seems to be the article that is referred

One priest, addressing fellow Anglicans at a public meeting, noted that there was a challenge here to which they needed to rise: "If Churchmen would not educate youth, others would, and thus instead of Church principles, wrong views would gain ground."[79]

In some quarters, there was an explicit recognition that the bigotry of the established clergy and their neglect of the poor had created an opening for alternative ministers, such as Latter-day Saint elders, who lacked Anglican clerical prejudices. As one person put it, "The temporary success of the Mormonites, and the many other delusions in religion which have sprung up, has been entirely owing to the poor being personally visited by the inventors and disciples of these strange systems."[80] There was even a rumor that Anglican clerics wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury asking him to use his influence to ban the Latter-day Saints from Britain, and that he had replied that "if they had the worth of souls at heart as much as they had the [hunting] ground where hares, foxes, and hounds ran, they would not lose so many of their flock."[81] (Hunting in Britain is a stereotypically upper-class pastime.) This was probably a myth, but it spoke to a certain truth. The cliché of the wealthy, uncaring parson was often unfair, but it was not without foundation. I mentioned earlier the anti-Mormon pamphleteer, Rev. John Symons. When he died in 1866, he was lampooned for the contrast between his zeal against the Saints and his un-pastoral neglect of his parishioners.[82]

The Beginnings of British Anti-Mormon Discourse

Active opposition to the Latter-day Saint mission from the incumbent churches was quick to arise. Lectures from local clergy aimed at opposing the missionaries' endeavors are reported as early as January 1838.[83] Public debates were also held between the missionar-

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to in *History of the Church*, 4:236, archive.org/details/historyofchurcho04robe/page/252/mode/2up.

79. "Huddersfield Branch of the Diocesan Board of Education," *Leeds Intelligencer*, 26 February 1842, 7.
80. "Gloucester City Mission," *Gloucester Journal*, 28 November 1840, 3.
81. This rumor is preserved in Wilford Woodruff's autobiography. *Wilford Woodruff Papers* (website), wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/documents/8b2aa80a-b208-418b-81eb-43a596287c6f/page/aa279a5a-7f01-48dc-9da8-1f86ff2f32d0.
82. Thorp, Appendix A, *Men with a Mission*.
83. See "Lecture," *Preston Chronicle*, 20 January 1838, 3 (lectures by a Baptist minister in Preston, William Giles). See also "Mormonism," *Blackburn Standard*,

ies and their critics. At least some of these were reported in the press. One such debate, for example, was held in Bedford, with George J. Adams as the Latter-day Saint representative.[84] Another took place in Cheltenham.[85] This paper has already referred to a debate that took place in Gloucester.

While most engagement between the missionaries and their critics would have taken place verbally, there was also much engagement through the written word. Some sensational stories were reported in the press. A murder trial was convened in Preston as a result of the first death of an English convert, Alice Hodgson, in 1838. Alice died as a result of complications arising from childbirth. It was alleged that Latter-day Saints had deprived her of medical treatment and had insisted on her using folk remedies and faith healing based on Willard Richards' walking stick. The counter from the Latter-day Saint side was that Sister Hodgson herself had chosen to decline medical treatment and that the proceedings had been brought not by genuinely aggrieved relatives but by anti-Mormon outsiders. The defendants were released by the court without needing to mount a defense.[86] Elsewhere, we find a press report that an "aged and infirm" female had suffered as a result of the "rough handling and danger of death from drowning" in the baptism ceremony. "The old woman, as might have been expected, became worse after this rough and highly censurable usage, and in a few weeks died."[87] There were also moral insinuations about elders and their "indelicate approach to the bed-chamber of females in order to anoint the diseased with 'holy oil,' [which] have

8 August 1838, 3 (anti-Mormon meeting in Preston addressed by a minister of the Primitive Episcopal Church, James Fielding). H. Stevenson, *A Lecture on Mormonism* (Newcastle: J. Blackwell, 1839) was originally delivered as a lecture in a Methodist chapel in Alston near Preston on 7 December 1838, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/BOMP/id/1984. James Fielding was the brother of Joseph Fielding and had originally allowed the Saints to preach in his chapel. Reverends Giles and Fielding seem to have been associates of each other, and Giles also gave pulpit space to an apostate Saint, Thomas Webster, whom I will discuss below. See Peter Fagg, "Preston—Reverend Giles," *Discovering LDS Britain*, 27 February 2015, ldsbritain.blogspot.com/2015/02/preston-reverend-giles.html. Fielding further supported Richard Livesey, whom we are about to meet; see Foster, *Penny Tracts and Polemics*, 51–52.

84. "The Latter-day Saints," *Cambridge Independent Press*, 15 May 1841, 3.
85. "Latter-Day Saints and Mr. Cluer," 1.
86. "Serious Charge Against a Mormonite Priest," *Blackburn Standard*, 10 October 1838, 3; Bloxham, "Call of the Apostles," 115–16.
87. "New Sect—Mormonism," *Fife Herald*, 115.

excited some alarm, if not suspicion, of persons whose moral character they are entirely strangers to!"[88] The inference that the Saints were sexual predators later gained currency in connection with the practice of plural marriage, but it was evidently older in origin.

This kind of domestic sensationalism was combined with the importation of American anti-Mormon material. It is striking how quickly such material found its way across the Atlantic Ocean, and how similar it was to modern critical discourse. As early as June 1838, we find a critic telling a local newspaper that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon using a stone in a hat.[89] By November of the same year, a Welsh paper was printing a garbled account of how the "idiot" Smith had translated twelve golden plates with the help of twelve scribes. This account included a grossly inaccurate version of the episode of the lost 116 pages — in this telling, "sixteen pages" — in which the printer ended up printing the original lost pages in order to show the differences with the replacement ones.[90]

The first native British anti-Mormon tract to be published was Richard Livesey's *An Exposure of Mormonism*.[91] This work was dated 24 July 1838, and it probably appeared at the end of that month or at the beginning of August. The author was a Methodist preacher from Lancashire who had come back to Britain for a time after spending several years in America. He was surprised to find that the "Mormonites" had reached his native country, and he felt compelled to act to check them. Livesey explicitly stated that his work was based on earlier American material; he expressly referenced Eber D. Howe's *Mormonism Unvailed*.[92]

As it happens, Livesey's pamphlet serves as a reminder that the

88. "Latter-Day Saints," *Gloucester Journal*, 14 November 1840, 4. See also Foster, *Penny Tracts and Polemics*, 57, on this insinuation in Thomas Webster's tract, which is mentioned below.
89. "Mormonism," *Preston Chronicle*, 30 June 1838.
90. "Mormonism in America," *Welshman*, 2 November 1838, 4.
91. Richard Livesey, *An Exposure of Mormonism, being a Statement of Fact Relating to the Self-Styled "Latter Day Saints" and the Origin of the Book of Mormon* (Preston, UK: J. Livesey, 1838), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/BOMP/id/1731. It was republished in the late twentieth century as a historical document. See also Foster, *Penny Tracts and Polemics*, 51–52.
92. E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed* (Painesville, OH: 1834), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/BOMP/id/804. Livesey also referred to "Mormonism Exposed and Refuted," *Universalist Union* (New York) 3, no. 26 (5 May 1838): 205, which had been published in New York, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/BOMP/id/1865.

written word can have physical consequences. In August 1838, an anti-Mormon tract, which was very probably his, was introduced into a Latter-day Saint meeting in Preston. This resulted in "uproarious scenes." "Angry words, threatenings, and uproar, were nearly succeeded by blows, and the whole spectacle was one of confusion and spite."[93] Livesey himself appears to have also been engaged in preaching his anti-Mormon message in live addresses in Lancashire at around this time.[94]

Mormonism Unvailed seems to have served as a source for several early British anti-Mormons. Livesey aside, these included three other tract-writing clergymen: Reverend Christopher Bush of Cheshire[95] and Reverends W. J. Morrish and John Symons of Herefordshire.[96] The use of Howe's book had one particular consequence: it ensured that the "Spalding theory"—the idea that the Book of Mormon had been plagiarized from a novel by one Solomon Spalding—became established in British anti-Mormon discourse at an early stage. The Spalding theory has been rejected by most historians today, but it was taken seriously in nineteenth-century Britain. It appeared, notably, in the first major hostile examination of the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants, as well as of Joseph Smith, which appeared in 1841.[97] It is mentioned and implied to be true in the official report of the 1851 religious census referred to above.[98]

The influence of American sources on early British anti-Mormonism should not be understated. An article published in an Anglican journal in 1838 drew on critical content taken from an American book.[99]

93. "Mormonism," *Preston Chronicle*, 18 August 1838.
94. Peter Fagg, "Ribble—Opposition in Downham," *Discovering LDS Britain*, 16 March 2015, ldsbritain.blogspot.com/2015/03/ribble-opposition-in-downham.html.
95. C. S. Bush, *Plain Facts, Shewing the Falsehood and Folly of the Mormonites, or Latter-day Saints* (Macclesfield, UK: J. Swinnerton, 1840), archive.org/details/plainfactsshewin00bush. For further on Bush, see Foster, *Penny Tracts and Polemics*, 67, 71.
96. See "'Mormonite' Fanatics," *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, 4; "Latter-day Saints and Mr. Cluer," 1. Additional information on these writers is found in Foster, *Penny Tracts and Polemics*, 58–61.
97. "The Book of Mormon and the Mormonites," 251–53.
98. *Census of Great Britain, 1851: Religious Worship in England and Wales* (London: George Routledge, 1854), 48, archive.org/details/censusgreatbrit00manngoog/page/n67/mode/2up.
99. "Mormonites—A New American Sect," 503–9. The book was John Hayward, *The Religious Creeds and Statistics of every Christian Denomination*

Another journal article in 1839 quoted a book on American Christianity, which an English-born priest based in North America had published in London.[100] A piece printed in the Free Church of Scotland's newspaper in 1841 quoted a letter from Charles Anthon, which was taken from "an American paper."[101] The following year, a newspaper in northern England quoted from the *Montreal Herald*.[102] It may be tempting to assume that the dissemination of both correct and incorrect material about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints across international borders is a novelty of the internet age; but some of the same information that appears in modern critical writings was already being imported into Britain from North America in the earliest years of the British mission.

In this context, it is unsurprising that the Latter-day Saints sought to find their own voice. The *Millennial Star* journal began publication in May 1840 and a British edition of the Book of Mormon was available by 1841. Also available were a hymn book and up to 60,000 copies of tracts and pamphlets, including Orson Pratt's *A[n] Interesting Account Of Several Remarkable Visions*, which contained the earliest version of the First Vision to appear in a Church publication.[103] Another tract that was circulated and debated publicly was Parley P. Pratt's *A Voice of Warning*, which has been described by the Church as "the most important of all Mormon missionary tracts of the 19th century."[104] (Later, in 1851, the now-canonized *Pearl of Great Price* was assembled as a pamphlet in Liverpool by Elder Franklin D. Richards.)

The work of clergymen like Livesey, Bush, Morrish, and Symons accounts for some of the early anti-Mormon pamphleteering in Britain, but not all of it. In 1839–40, there appeared several tracts written by Methodists who may not have been ordained ministers. Those

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in the United States and British Provinces (Boston: John Hayward, 1836), archive.org/details/religiouscreedss00hayw.

100. "The American Church," *The British Critic* 26 (1839): 299, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101064462011&seq=319. The book was Henry Caswall, *America and the American Church* (London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1839), books.google.com/books?id=7uRHW87L04gC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.
101. "The Mormonites," *Witness*, 31 July 1841, 4.
102. "The Mormonite Impostures," *Stockport Advertiser*, 4.
103. See Allen and Thorp, "Mission of the Twelve," 500–1n3; also, more generally, Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission*, 236–66.
104. "Latter-day Saints and Mr. Cluer," 1. For a description of Pratt's tract, see history.churchofjesuschrist.org/content/library/a-voice-of-warning.

included J. Stevenson, Thomas Taylor, and William Hewitt.[105] One notable pamphleteer of this time was definitely a layman — Captain D. L. St. Clair, mentioned earlier. He was a Gloucester magistrate who was a proponent of the allegation that the missionaries were engaging in financial fraud.[106] He claimed that he had become involved in anti-Mormon advocacy because there was no resident clergyman in his parish. He further claimed that he had subsequently received "letters . . . from clergymen in every part of England."[107] If so, the established priesthood was clearly worried.

The early years of the mission also saw the first British examples of what would become an established genre: the exposé of "Mormonism" from disillusioned insiders. One Thomas Webster may have published an exposé of the Doctrine and Covenants as early as December 1838. He had become convinced that the Church was a money-making scam.[108] By the latter part of 1841, the first British insider exposé of the Church in America had appeared. This came from a Mr. and Mrs. Margretts from The Leigh in Cheltenham. After joining the Church, the Margretts had emigrated to the United States, where Mr. Margretts had ended up talking to some disaffected residents in Nauvoo. As a result, he and his wife left after only three weeks. The Margretts were of the view that Joseph Smith was a financial fraudster. They believed that he was too sharp in business and money matters to be a prophet; and Mr. Margretts was skeptical of proposals that he had made regarding land and business deals. These suspicions fall some distance short of proving the charge of fraud.[109] Nevertheless, one must be respectful

105. Stevenson, *Lecture on Mormonism*. On Taylor and Hewitt, see Foster, *Penny Tracts and Polemics*, 67–68. Pratt's refutations of some of these tracts are freely available: Parley P. Pratt, *A Reply to Mr. Thomas Taylor's "Complete Failure," &c. and Mr. Richard Livesey's "Mormonism Exposed"* (Manchester: W. R. Thomas, 1840), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/BOMP/id/2356; and Parley P. Pratt, *An Answer to Mr. William Hewitt's Tract against the Latter-day Saints* (Manchester: W. R. Thomas, 1840), jstor.org/stable/community.35248720?seq=1.
106. "Latter-Day Saints," *The Sun*, 1. For further information on St. Clair, see Foster, *Penny Tracts and Polemics*, 57–58.
107. "Mormonism," *Chester Courant*, 23 November 1841, 4.
108. See Allen, Esplin, and Whittaker, *Men with a Mission*, 241; Foster, *Penny Tracts and Polemics*, 57, 68.
109. The Margretts also implied that Joseph had threatened that they would be harmed if they left Nauvoo; but they did not hear this from him personally, and it is not clear what was actually said. For their account, see "The 'Latter-Day Saint' Swindle," *Cheltenham Journal*, 23 August 1841, 2. The narrative

of the hardships that the couple plainly suffered. Perhaps the most salient feature of their account lies not in any religious claims but in the grim picture that it presents of the material privations of a nineteenth-century American frontier settlement.

Anti-Mormon literature became a real problem for the young British Church in a surprisingly short space of time. It was sufficiently prevalent by December 1841 that Parley P. Pratt could write to Joseph Smith:

> Discussions, Contentions, Lectures, Sermons, play cards, tracts, Books, Papers pamphlets, etc. etc. are flooding the Country in Great number, all contaning Little else than Lies and foolishness of the Grossest kind aganst the Cause of truth.[110]

Physical Opposition

Opposition to the Saints was not confined to the written and spoken word. They were also confronted physically by opponents. Threats and acts of violence were perpetrated against both missionaries and converts.[111] When the elders preached in public, the audience was sometimes on their side, but on other occasions it was not.

> Theodore Turley reported that he was accosted by a mob who threatened to horsewhip him and then throw him into a coal pit. At Bridgen, Wilford Woodruff was attacked with rotten eggs, one of which hit him but failed to break until it hit the ground. Another hostile crowd pelted him with stones as he baptized five people. On still another occasion he reported that Mr. John Symons, the rector at Dymock, was responsible for
>
> > stirring up mobs against the Saints which had disturbed the meetings of the Saints in sevral instances, & on this occasion as we began to gather together, the beat of drums, pails, pans & sticks was herd through the Street & the mob soon collected a Parraded in the Streets in front of the hous we closed

was also carried in other papers (and see "Mormonism," *Chester Courant*, 23 November 1841, 4, for a secondhand version of it).

110. See David H. Pratt, "Oh! Brother Joseph," Historian's Corner, *BYU Studies* 27, no. 1 (1987): 130, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol27/iss1/12/.

111. On one occasion, with perhaps fatal consequences, see Thorp, Appendix A, in *Men with a Mission*.

> the window shetters & doors in the room whare we are, & I opened meeting by singing & Prayer & no sooner had we commenced than the mob armed themselves with eggs, Bricks, rocks & evry thing els they could lay their hands upon & began to throw they upon the house like a shower of hail stones for nearly an hour they dashed in the windows scattered Stones, Brick, & glass, through the rooms broke the tile on the roof & continued such depredations untill the close of the meeting.[112]

I previously mentioned Rev. Symons as an anti-Mormon pamphleteer; we have here another illustration of the relationship between the written word and physical actions.

There was some tolerance for physical anti-Mormon behavior, even in ostensibly respectable circles. One newspaper chose to blame the victims: "Much as we dislike everything like violence, it is greatly to be regretted that persons should by their absurdities, not to say impieties, actually invite such treatment."[113]

Sometimes people intervened to help the missionaries. At Presteign, Wales, it was reported, "On one occasion they would have been used very roughly but for the kind interference of a respectable inhabitant." Another episode in the same town ended less happily: "some young men" disrupted a meeting and several people were hit with whips or dunked in a vat of water.[114] Elsewhere in Wales, in the town of Monmouth, a Methodist minister (Reverend James) was physically ejected by the crowd when he challenged Elder James Palmer at a public meeting in January 1841.[115]

Serious violence was the exception rather than the rule, but the cumulative effect of even minor physical hostility must have been debilitating. Research for this article has uncovered that the town of Cheltenham was the scene of a continuing series of disturbances in the latter part of 1841, resulting in a series of court cases. The first two

112. Allen and Thorp, "Mission of the Twelve," 522–23, including a quote from Wilford Woodruff's journal entry of 16 September 1840.
113. "The Mormonites," *Hereford Journal*, 17 March 1841, 3.
114. "The Latter-Day Saints, or Mormonites," *Hereford Journal*, 17 November 1841, 3.
115. Diary of James Palmer, 25 January 1841, *Welsh Mormon History* (website),web.archive.org/web/20051223020159/http://welshmormonhistory.org/resourcelist.php?&resourcetypeid=1&resourcetypeid=1&offset=60&resourcetypeid=1#pager.

cases were brought in September 1841. In the first, a Latter-day Saint brought two men before the magistrates for disturbing a meeting held at the Mechanics' Institute in the town; the men were acquitted. In the second, several people living near the Institute complained about the noise made by protesters inside and outside the building. It seems that the protesters jostled local Saints as they assembled for meetings. The magistrates seem to have been unfriendly to the Church, but nevertheless they ordered the police "to clear the streets of any concourse of persons which should obstruct the highway in future."[116]

Later in the same month, an anti-Mormon meeting was held in the town, the attendees of which included a clergyman, Reverend L. J. Wake. A Latter-day Saint elder, probably George A. Smith, attended as well. He engaged in a peaceful exchange with a critic and ended up being physically ejected:

> Mr. Wilson [a phrenologist], in the opening of his address, was giving a description of Mormonism, not altogether in accordance with the priest's taste, upon which the latter got up and said, "I disown that name — I belong to the Latter Day Saints." Mr. Wilson replied, "I protest against thus using the name 'saint,' by people who are as far from being saints as the devil is from being an angel of light. So let us understand terms at once: I call these people by the name which is plastered throughout the book of Mormon." *(Great laughter.)* When Smith rose to reply, the audience granted him a patient hearing for a few minutes; but the absurd nonsense which he was talking of soon exhausted their patience, they rushed towards the platform, and drew the "priest" down, who, after being severely jostled, was glad to make his exit, followed by a concourse of persons in full chase.[117]

The harassment did not stop there. In October, a Latter-day Saint, Samuel Clutterbuck, took two men, Charles Hobbs and William Hayes, to court for disturbing a meeting at the same Mechanics' Institute:

> Clutterbuck stated that on Sunday afternoon between three and four o'clock, Hobbs came into the room while the sacrament was being administered, [and] said, let me have a penn'orth, on being told he must be quiet or he would be put out of the room, he said it would take four or five of them

116. "The Mormonite Nuisance," *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 8 September 1841, 3.
117. "Anti-Mormonite Meeting," *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 29 September 1841, 3.

> to put him out. He then pulled a cigar out of his pocket and lighted it with a match and began smoking as if he were in a public house. A disturbance ensued. Hayes was cracking walnuts and stamping on the shells: he then got up on a form and wanted to ask a question, but was told that no discussion was allowed.

Hayes was cautioned by the court. Hobbs was required to find two sureties for £100 pending appearance at the Sessions (a higher court in the English system).[118]

Not long afterwards, in December 1841, the Saints had to go to court again over problems at the Institute: "There is a great company comes up there every Sunday evening stamping and hallooing." One John Hatch was charged with maliciously damaging a door; it had apparently been broken open several times. Hatch was fined seven shillings and sixpence and made to pay three shillings for the damage. One of the magistrates observed that "a parcel of young fellows" were responsible for the disturbances.[119]

There was yet another court hearing that took place in November 1841 in the nearby town of Gloucester. The local police court was told that a person had rented a set of rooms to the Saints but that, as a result of hostile action, "the windows had been broken and some of the furniture destroyed." Nobody seems to have been convicted for the damage, but the mayor was reported as declaring that the police would intervene if there was a breach of the peace in the future.[120] Policemen were not necessarily friendly, but they could at least sometimes provide protection. As Wilford Woodruff wrote while in Gloucestershire, "We closed our meeting without any disturbance from the mob who were present and was kept quiet by the police who were present, but dressed in disguise."[121]

The chain of events presented above seems not to have been especially unusual. Early missionaries to Britain might end up facing a pattern of tedious, low-level harassment that was grim even if

118. "Mormonites Again," *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 13 October 1841, 3. One website equates £100 in 1840 to £13,018 today, in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1840?amount=100; another converts £100 to USD $13,253, uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm.
119. "The Mormonites Again," *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 15 December 1841, 3.
120. "City Police Court," *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, 27 November 1841, 2.
121. The meeting took place on 15 February 1841. See Peter Fagg, "Gloucestershire—Fond Farewells," *Discovering LDS Britain*, 29 June 2015, ldsbritain.blogspot.com/2015/06/gloucestershire-fond-farewells.html.

it did not quite break out into full mob violence. Such conduct seems to have been mostly the work of thugs who were inclined to amuse themselves by targeting groups who were distinctive or different. In addition, some responsibility for incitement may be assigned to clerics who feared losing their congregants.

It is apparent that in some instances the authorities offered protection to the Saints. We have mentioned above the role of the police in this regard. There was no real state persecution, as was encountered back in America and is still experienced in some countries today. One missionary mentioned earlier in this section, Theodore Turley, had the misfortune to end up in jail. Elder Turley was an Englishman who had emigrated to Canada and eventually came to settle in Nauvoo. He was jailed for several weeks in 1840 on his return to England. His imprisonment was ordered on the secular grounds of non-payment of an old debt. However, religious persecution seems to have been a background motivating element in the case.[122] Nevertheless, the legal system in Britain did provide an avenue of recourse for the elders, and anti-Mormons did not seem to have as much success in using the courts to target Latter-day Saints as they did in the United States. Attempts at involving state authorities in anti-Mormon activism could even backfire. In Herefordshire, a local Anglican cleric sent a constable to arrest Wilford Woodruff, but the constable ended up getting baptized.[123]

Summary and Conclusions

"Mormonism carries within it the seeds of its own destruction, and ere long it must fail to rise no more."[124] So one commentator wrote confidently in 1841. This prophecy has not aged well. The Church has survived for 188 years so far in Great Britain, and it will surely last for many years more.

In some ways, the experiences of the first missionaries were quite different from those of their modern counterparts, but there are elements of the familiar too. The flowing tides of pro- and anti-Mormon publications did not begin with the internet age but go back to the early Victorian period and the first introduction of the restored gospel into Britain. The reception given to the early Latter-day Saint missionaries

122. See Garr, "George A. Smith's Mission," 30.
123. See Collett, "1840 Baptisms."
124. "Anti-Mormonite Meeting," *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 3.

was often cold or even hostile. They were widely regarded as fraudsters and their converts as ignorant riff-raff. But these attitudes are best understood not as reflections on the Saints themselves but as expressions of the weaknesses of contemporary British society. Those weaknesses included anxieties about the faltering influence of the Church of England and other incumbent churches, combined with endemic class prejudice, a general cultural parochialism, and the consequences of an ongoing failure to engage working people in Christian faith and practice. In this regard, one compelling lesson from the experiences of the early Victorian missionaries is that anti-Mormon bigotry, like religious bigotry in general, is often really about the bigots themselves.

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From Wilderness to Covenant Threshold: Land, Literacy, and Religious Readiness in the Book of Mormon

John E. Cochran II and Joseph D. Cochran

Abstract: *Using a case study from the Book of Mormon, this article explores how divine preparation can create the conditions for covenantal receptivity. Focusing on the Lamanite transformation during the mission of the sons of Mosiah, we propose that their readiness to receive the gospel reflects a "covenant threshold." This is defined as a moment when spiritual soil, shaped by both divine and social forces, becomes capable of receiving a covenant. Drawing on Alma 13:24, which describes angels preparing hearts ahead of the gospel's arrival, we examine how developments in land use, record-keeping, and communal organization are portrayed as signs of gospel readiness. Developments such as the spread of literacy and the influence of Nephite religious frameworks are treated here not as prerequisites for faith, but as signs of a broader readiness, cultivated over time. We do not claim these elements are universally necessary for covenantal engagement; instead we observe how the Book of Mormon links spiritual receptivity to changing conditions in this particular scenario. Our interdisciplinary approach draws from Mesoamerican anthropology, covenant theology, and narrative analysis—deferring to the scriptural text as primary. In framing societal transformation as one mode of divine cultivation, we offer a model for interpreting how God prepares peoples, communities, and individuals to receive him.*

The Book of Mormon traces a remarkable transformation wherein the Lamanites, over several centuries, evolved from resisting Nephite missionaries (circa 550–400 BC; see Jacob 7:24; Enos 1:14)

to embracing the gospel during the mission of the sons of Mosiah (circa 90 BC; see Mosiah 28:7; Alma 17–26). While spiritual factors such as missionary zeal and divine intervention remain central, evolving societal conditions also played a meaningful role. One moment in that transformation may reflect a "covenant threshold": a divinely prepared convergence of spiritual readiness and social context that helped enable a covenantal response.

In their earliest depictions, the Lamanites lived a nomadic, conquest-driven life, avoiding urban centers such as the city of Nephi:

> They [the Lamanites] became wild, and ferocious, . . . dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness with a short skin girdle about their loins and their heads shaven; . . . [while] the people of Nephi did till the land, and raise all manner of grain, and of fruit, and flocks of herds. (Enos 1:20–21)

This pattern reflected more than mere geographic mobility–it embodied resistance to Nephite religious structures, including fixed worship sites, written law, and covenantal memory. Note that missionary efforts in the days of Jacob, Enos, and others found limited success amidst this misalignment (Jacob 7:24; Enos 1:14–20). Yet, by 90 BC the Lamanite world had changed. Literacy and sociopolitical cohesion, possibly influenced by reforms under Amulon, had begun to reshape a cultural landscape into which the gospel could be planted (Mosiah 24:4–7, 9:12). These shifts, while not sufficient alone, may help explain the unprecedented success of Ammon and his brethren in teaching and baptizing entire Lamanite communities.

We propose that patterns of land stewardship, Nephite literacy reforms, and the Lamanite adoption of written practices during this period reflect a local instance of covenant readiness — a moment of divinely prepared receptivity. These patterns mirror scriptural precedents found in Eden (Genesis 2:15; Moses 3:15), in ancient Israel (Leviticus 25), and in early Nephite society (1 Nephi 18:24), wherein divine covenants are often preceded by both spiritual and structural shifts. While faith remains the ultimate catalyst, we propose that in this Lamanite case, the ability to receive the gospel was supported by societal developments, including the rise of literacy and community governance. We draw on textual, anthropological, and theological tools to explore how evolving conditions in this context may have made covenantal engagement possible.

Covenant Theology and Stewardship

Scripture consistently ties land care to covenantal faithfulness. In the Garden of Eden, God commanded Adam "to dress it, and to keep it" (Moses 3:15). This framed *labor* not as punishment, but as a sacred trust. Joseph Spencer expands on this theme, interpreting covenantal labor as hope made manifest. It is an embodied act of trust in divine promises.[1] Across the scriptural record, communal stewardship often accompanies covenantal flourishing. This can be seen in Israel's laws of sabbath and jubilee, and in Nephite patterns of agriculture and worship. These practices not only support physical life but also foster the social and spiritual conditions necessary for sacred communal life.

This continuity persists across major covenant communities. Ancient Israel's relationship with God was rooted in their care for the land, regulated by sabbath cycles that ensured rest for both people and the earth (Leviticus 25:1–7). When these laws were neglected, exile followed, and only then did the land "enjoy her sabbaths" (2 Chronicles 36:21). Among the Jaredites, the text links agricultural abundance with political unity (Ether 10:12). Nephite society likewise followed this pattern. Upon arriving in the promised land, both Nephites and early Lamanites tilled the earth and planted seeds (1 Nephi 18:24). Later, Nephite settlement in the land of Nephi included temple-building and organized worship (2 Nephi 5:16). In Alma's day, righteousness and prosperity coincided: "there never was a happier time" than when the people lived according to divine law (Alma 50:23). In each of these examples, land stewardship reflected a people's spiritual alignment with divine order.[2] This shift can be seen among the Lamanites throughout the hundreds of years following the original split between Nephi and Laman (in 2 Nephi 5:5). This accelerated at the time of Amulon, a former priest of King Noah:

> And it came to pass that Amulon did gain favor in the eyes of the king of the Lamanites; therefore, the king of the Lamanites granted unto him and his brethren that they should be

1. Joseph M. Spencer, *For Zion: A Mormon Theology of Hope* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014).
2. This stewardship pattern extends to secular contexts, such as ancient Egypt, where agricultural surplus enabled temple construction during times of plenty, fostering societal stability and administrative literacy, much like Lamanite literacy prepared communities for covenantal engagement; see Toby Wilkinson, *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt: The History of a Civilization from 3000 BC to Cleopatra*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 76–78.

> appointed teachers over his people. . . . For the Lamanites had taken possession of all these lands; therefore, the king of the Lamanites had appointed kings over all these lands. . . . and he appointed teachers of the brethren of Amulon in every land which was possessed by his people; and thus the language of Nephi began to be taught among all the people of the Lamanites. And they were a people friendly one with another. . . . [And] they taught them that they should keep their record, and that they might write one to another. And thus the Lamanites began to increase in riches, and began to trade one with another and wax great, and began to be a cunning and a wise people. (Mosiah 24:1–2, 4–7)

In this light, the emergence of literacy and stability among the Lamanites in Mosiah 24:4 may be viewed as indicators — not causes — of spiritual readiness. Their shift from nomadic conflict to structured community life helped remove earlier barriers to covenantal engagement.

Before going back to the early Lamanite condition, it is important to clarify the potential misconception that nomadic life and covenantal faith are inherently incompatible. Scriptural history offers counterexamples, such as Abraham, Moses, and Lehi — each of whom was mobile during key covenantal phases. Yet each operated as a carrier of preexisting covenantal structures. Abraham departed from an advanced urban culture in Ur; Moses bore prophetic authority and transmitted law during Israel's wilderness years; and Lehi brought sacred records and priesthood authority from Jerusalem. These were not preliterate nor structureless peoples. What distinguishes these covenantal nomads from the early Lamanites is not mobility itself, but what was preserved and what was abandoned. Lehi's descendants had access to written law, scriptural tradition, and prophetic leadership. The Nephites embraced these institutions, while the early Lamanites rejected them. Thus, it was not nomadism that precluded covenantal life — rather, it was the absence of covenantal scaffolding.

Lamanite nomadism and resistance

From approximately 550 to 400 BC, the Lamanites' nomadic and conquest-oriented lifestyle limited the emergence of covenantal institutions. Dwelling in tents, relying on hunting and gathering, and rejecting written records (Enos 1:20), they lacked the stability and resources typically associated with temples, preserved scripture, or communal

worship. This was in contrast to the Nephites, who developed through settled labor in "wood and iron" and constructed both cities and temples (2 Nephi 5:15–17). The Lamanites' mobile, militarized existence did not easily support the agricultural base or social cohesion often required for sustained sacred life.

Beyond structural conditions, the sustained hostility of the Lamanites toward Nephite religious traditions — particularly record-keeping and literacy — posed further obstacles to covenantal alignment. This generational estrangement cut them off from foundations, such as prophetic continuity and access to divine law.

A useful comparison appears in the account of "the people of Zarahemla" (the Mulekites), who, lacking sacred records, had lost their language and knowledge of God, underscoring the importance of preserved written tradition in maintaining spiritual identity:

> Behold, he [Mosiah$_1$] being warned of the Lord that he should flee out of the land of Nephi. . . . and they were led by the power of his arm, through the wilderness until they came down into the land which is called the land of Zarahemla. And they discovered a people, who were called the people of Zarahemla . . . [who] were brought by the hand of the Lord across the great waters, into the land where Mosiah discovered them; and they had dwelt there from that time forth. . . . Nevertheless, . . . their language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator; and Mosiah, nor the people of Mosiah, could understand them. (Omni 1:12–14, 16–17)

By contrast, King Mosiah later taught that the Nephite records had been divinely preserved, "that we might read and understand of his mysteries, and have his commandments always before our eyes" (Mosiah 1:5). Meanwhile, without that textual infrastructure, the Lamanites (as with the Mulekites in Zarahemla) lacked the organizing memory that had helped shape Nephite religious life.

As mentioned above, Enos vividly describes the Lamanite condition during this period:

> Their hatred was fixed, and they were led by their evil nature . . . a blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness; feeding upon beasts of prey; dwelling in tents . . . and their skill was in the bow, and in the cimeter, and the ax. (Enos 1:20)

This hunting-based economy limited the generation of resource

surplus, which in covenant theology supports sabbath observance, temple construction, and community care (Alma 50:23). The Lamanites' religious worldview, centered on idolatry and tribal warfare, also diverged significantly from Nephite covenantal frameworks. As John Sorenson observes, "Institutions we take for granted, like bureaucracy . . . codified laws, [and] courts . . . did not exist as such. . . . Limitations of technology prevented the production of enough surplus goods to support a large apparatus of specialists."[3] In this context, the Lamanite sociocultural model offered few supports for formal religious life.

Closely tied to this economic precarity was the absence of urban development. In contrast to Nephite efforts to build temples, synagogues, and cities (2 Nephi 5:15–17), the Lamanites appear largely dispersed and militarized. Jarom observes that "they were exceedingly more numerous than were they of the Nephites; and they loved murder and would drink the blood of beasts" (Jarom 1:6). This description seems to reflect both cultural hostility and social fragmentation.

A separate but related question concerns the consistent portrayal of Lamanites as more numerous than the Nephites (for example, see Jarom 1:6; Mosiah 9:1). Population growth on this scale might seem at odds with a subsistence-based society, but scholars widely acknowledge that both Lamanite and Nephite lineages likely incorporated indigenous peoples upon arriving in the promised land.[4] These assimilated groups may have practiced mixed subsistence strategies, combining agriculture with foraging, and exhibited regional variation in resource availability. The textual emphasis in Enos and Jarom reflects a specific cultural subset—one defined by mobility, violent conquest, and resistance to Nephite institutions. This study focuses not

3. John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 100–1.
4. Scripture Central Staff, "Did Others Influence Book of Mormon Peoples?" KnoWhy 138, 21 August 2019, scripturecentral.org/knowhy/did-others-influence-book-of-mormon-peoples. Additionally, it is worth noting that Jacob clarified what determined whether a person was considered Nephite or Lamanite. When less than a full generation had passed from the separation of the two groups, and familial lineage was no longer the determining characteristic, Jacob wrote, "I shall call them Lamanites that seek to destroy the people of Nephi, and those who are friendly to Nephi I shall call Nephites" (Jacob 1:14). This opens the door to any group that was opposed to the Nephites as being delineated as Lamanite.

on numbers, but on the conditions that enable covenantal receptivity: surplus, governance, and shared sacred memory.

Lamanite governance appears to be decentralized at this time, likely consisting of kin-based settlements held together by shifting alliances and tribute systems, rather than stable institutions. Sorenson, interpreting these patterns within a Mesoamerican context, suggests that the Lamanites during this period may have resembled pre-archaic societies. By this, he means cultures that existed before the development of cities, formal governments, or written records.[5] Such societies depended on oral tradition and subsistence hunting, rather than structured agriculture or civic institutions.[6]

Archaeological context: religion and pre-archaic societies

Archaeological studies consistently show that organized religion often develops in tandem with key structural shifts, notably food surplus, settled living, and social hierarchy. Pre-archaic societies — defined as small, mobile groups without permanent settlements or writing systems — typically practiced animism or ancestor veneration in informal, kin-based settings, according to anthropological models. The early mobile lifestyle of the Lamanites, as described in Enos and Jarom, reflects similar features: small-scale subsistence, kin-based governance, and cultural resistance to Nephite religious institutions.

We propose that the interpretive concept of "temples follow granaries" is a general pattern. Thus, agricultural surplus and social organization frequently enable the emergence of civic and sacred institutions.[7] In other words, religion that expands beyond household or clan

5. Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*, 100.
6. This study does not depend on a fixed geographic or historical placement of the lands of the Book of Mormon. While it draws upon Mesoamerican anthropological categories—such as surplus, kin-based governance, and literacy—these are used typologically to illuminate the text's internal theological structure, not to make historical or archaeological claims. The analysis treats the Book of Mormon as a coherent work, in narrative and theology, with depictions of societal transformation that remains meaningful, independent of any historical geography.
7. The phrase *temples follow granaries* is not a historical claim, but a literary and theological lens derived from both scripture and anthropology. It reflects a pattern seen in scripture, in which surplus and social organization often precede communal worship (Leviticus 25; Alma 50:18–23), and it highlights how the Book of Mormon links material preparation with spiritual readiness. Again, this framework is intended to illuminate narrative meaning—not to reconstruct ancient history or geography.

settings often relies on broader institutional support. This model does not prescribe how covenants can form, but helps illuminate why certain religious patterns — like temple worship or scriptural tradition — appear when and where they do.[8]

This pattern holds in Mesoamerican prehistory as well. Early Olmec and Zapotec archaeological sites demonstrate that formal religious architecture and iconography emerge after the establishment of agricultural villages and centralized governance.[9] These findings suggest that religious expression in public space tends to follow, rather than precede, communal stability.

In this light, the early Lamanite resistance to sacred structures was not solely a spiritual rejection of Nephi and his people; it also came about by social and material context. Only with the emergence of more stable settlements (Mosiah 9:8) and the introduction of written tradition (as cited previously in Mosiah's account of Amulon's reforms), could the conditions needed for covenantal engagement begin to take form.

Zeniff and the witness of structural instability

Zeniff's firsthand account offers the most detailed description of Lamanite society before its transformation. Lehi-Nephi, the city he sought, had served as the Nephite capital and a center of temple worship and record-keeping. Around 200 BC, Mosiah I, following divine instruction, led the righteous Nephites from "the land of Nephi" to Zarahemla (Omni 1:12–13), leaving everything behind rather than resisting rising tensions. The Lamanites subsequently occupied the territory, but did not rebuild nor sustain it (Mosiah 9:6–8). When Zeniff returned, the Lamanite king, whom Zeniff describes as practicing "cunning and craftiness" (Mosiah 9:10), ceded the lands of Lehi-Nephi and Shilom, revealing a lack of stewardship or sacred attachment to the city. Zeniff found Lehi-Nephi in collapse: "We began to build buildings, and to repair the walls of the city, yea, even the walls of the city of Lehi-Nephi, and the city of Shilom" (Mosiah 9:8). Broken walls and absent

8. Jacques Cauvin argues that the Neolithic shift to agriculture and sedentism enabled symbolic and religious developments, with surplus and social complexity fostering cultic structures. Jacques Cauvin, *The Birth of the Gods and the Origins of Agriculture,* trans. Trevor Watkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 22–28.
9. Richard A. Diehl, *The Olmecs: America's First Civilization* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 29.

infrastructure indicate not mere neglect, but the erosion of urban continuity. This reflects a period of institutional unpreparedness that, in time, would be reshaped through divine and historical processes.

In addition to infrastructural decay, Zeniff records a revealing economic dynamic about the Lamanites: "Now they were a lazy and an idolatrous people; therefore they were desirous to bring us into bondage, that they might glut themselves with the labors of our hands; yea, that they might feast themselves upon the flocks of our fields" (Mosiah 9:12). The king's intent was not collaborative but exploitative, permitting Nephite cultivation in order to later seize its fruits. A few generations later, another Lamanite king achieved this goal when he subjected Limhi's people and caused "that his people should pay tribute unto him, even one half of all they possessed" (Mosiah 19:26). In covenant theology, stewardship entails accountable labor before God and mutual responsibility within a consecrated community (Genesis 2:15; Mosiah 2:12–18). The Lamanite model at this point exhibits neither stewardship nor reciprocity. It highlights a deeper spiritual unreadiness for sacred community; not only as a moral failing, but also as a condition awaiting divine cultivation through both reform and grace.

Lehi taught that the promised land is "consecrated unto him whom [the Lord] shall bring . . . if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given" (2 Nephi 1:7). He also warned that disobedience would lead to their loss of the land and eventual removal (2 Nephi 1:9–11). The Lord had earlier affirmed this principle to the brother of Jared, declaring that this "choice land" would be preserved only for those who "serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ" (Ether 2:12). In both teachings, land is not merely a geographic possession; it is a sacred trust, sustained by righteousness and by the community structures that uphold divine law.

The same narrative reveals the fragility of Lamanite governance. The king's authority, marked by cunning, appears fragile and transactional. Lamanite attacks stem from sudden raids, not official decrees. "Therefore it came to pass that king Laman began to stir up his people that they should contend with my people; therefore there began to be wars and contentions in the land" (Mosiah 9:13). The king's influence relied on emotional manipulation, not structured administration. Unlike the Nephite model—where kingship was tied to law, records, and temple worship—Lamanite leadership was reactive, coercive, and lacking transparency. Brant Gardner notes that such patterns reflect

"segmentary tribalism," in which power is distributed through kin networks and short-term alliances, not centralized statecraft.[10]

Ultimately, Zeniff's account gives credence to what earlier depictions only implied: that Lamanite society during this era lacked the necessary scaffolding for sustainable religious life. Anthropologically, their world aligns with previously described non-centralized societies. It was made up of small, kin-based communities without cities, written records, or stable governance. Spiritually, they had no temples, no priesthood, no system of sacred labor, and no scriptural memory. This does not imply that the Lamanites were outside God's concern, but rather that their preparation, both spiritual and institutional, had not yet reached the level required for lasting covenant belonging. This was not merely a material limitation: It represented a broader departure from the sacred order exemplified by Nephite society. The land may have been inhabited, but it was not yet sanctified in covenantal terms. Without the rhythms of surplus, communal worship, and written law, covenant identity could not take root. What they lacked was not just belief, but the integrated structures — social, spiritual, and sacramental — that sustain consecrated life. In time, these would emerge among the Lamanites, allowing the covenant to flourish.

Societal Stability and the Covenant Threshold

The century following Zeniff's account witnessed a gradual but profound transformation in Lamanite society. Through migration, conflict, and intermittent Nephite influence, what had once been a fragmented, subsistence-level culture began to coalesce into something more stable, literate, and urbanized. This trajectory unfolded over time, but was significantly accelerated under the influence of Amulon. His secular reforms in language instruction, record-keeping, and administrative structure quickened existing shifts and brought Lamanite society to a pivotal juncture (Mosiah 24:4–7). It is in this context that the Lamanites approached what this study terms a *covenant threshold* — the societal tipping point at which covenantal religion becomes sustainable by means of surplus, literacy, governance, and social cohesion. While not a standard term in Book of Mormon scholarship, *covenant threshold* draws conceptually from Spencer's theology of covenantal hope and

10. Brant A. Gardner, *Traditions of the Fathers: The Book of Mormon as History* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), 273–80.

Brant A. Gardner's analysis of sociopolitical development in Nephite and Lamanite contexts.[11]

Crossing a covenant threshold requires more than personal conviction. It depends on the emergence of societal structures that can carry covenantal identity across generations. It requires surplus to support worship, literacy to preserve doctrine, governance to administer justice, and social cohesion to sustain moral community. Spiritual awakenings can happen anywhere, but covenant belonging as a people requires more than belief. It requires a foundation. Between roughly 150 and 120 BC, the Lamanites crossed that threshold (Mosiah 24:1–); Alma 18–19, 23:1–3, 24:17–18). Through contact with Nephite systems, they adopted written law, administrative order, and stewardship of land and labor. These were not cosmetic borrowings, but deep structural changes. For the first time in their recorded history, they were capable of receiving and preserving the covenant, not as scattered individuals but as a prepared people. The mass conversions that followed were not spontaneous miracles. They were the harvest of deliberate preparation, both divine and societal.

Nephite reforms brought by Amulon to the Lamanites

Into this landscape of emerging stability entered Amulon, a Nephite dissenter whose influence was as paradoxical as it was pivotal. As previously noted, Amulon rose to power among the Lamanites through political alliance (Mosiah 23:31–39). He was granted authority not only to rule but also to restructure: "And he appointed teachers of the brethren of Amulon in every land which was possessed by his people; and thus the language of Nephi began to be taught among all the people of the Lamanites" (Mosiah 24:4). This "language of Nephi" refers not only to spoken dialect but to the Nephite system of writing, record-keeping, and legal instruction (Mosiah 24:4–7). For a people who had once rejected Nephite records and language (Enos 1:14–20), its formal introduction represented a profound cultural and religious shift. Marked by exploitation, forced labor, and religious suppression, the regime of Amulon was harsh, but his reforms directly addressed the societal deficiencies seen in Zeniff's generation. Three of the most significant reforms are identified below.

11. This framing draws conceptually from Joseph M. Spencer's theology of covenantal hope (*For Zion*, 147) and Brant A. Gardner's analysis of sociopolitical development in Nephite and Lamanite contexts (*Traditions of the Fathers*).

Amulon's first reform

The new administration reintroduced formal instruction and record-keeping, thus reversing generations of cultural rejection. Enos had described the Lamanites' desire to destroy Nephite records (Enos 1:14), yet under Amulon's influence, they were taught to read and write in the Nephite tongue. While coercively implemented, this initiative laid a foundation for theological dialogue and covenantal instruction, as later reflected in Lamoni's ability to comprehend Ammon's teachings on the Creation, Fall, and Redemption (Alma 18:36–39). In this case, education did not immediately result in spiritual transformation, but it enabled the interpretive capacity necessary for it. By fostering written communication and systematic learning, Amulon's policies inadvertently contributed to the social and religious stability that would support covenant life in following generations.

While widespread literacy was rare in ancient societies, and the Book of Mormon likely reflects an elite scribal tradition consistent with broader historical patterns, Amulon's introduction of Nephite-language instruction nonetheless marked a significant structural shift. Even limited written education, especially when standardized, can extend theological vocabulary, enable memory preservation, and foster institutional stability. As Gardner explains, such elite literacy "serves as a keystone for social organization and religious continuity in oral-dominant cultures."[12] This framework helps explain why Amulon's reforms, though coercive, laid groundwork for later religious engagement.

Amulon's second reform

Amulon implemented economic coordination and labor specialization. Although his methods were oppressive, they moved Lamanite society beyond subsistence hunting toward organized agriculture and infrastructure. Zeniff's earlier account underscores the contrast: "we began to build buildings, and to repair the walls" (Mosiah 9:8), implying prior neglect of land and settlement. Amulon's administration mobilized human capital on a broader scale, reversing this indifference and

12. For background on oral-literate dynamics in the Book of Mormon, see Brant A. Gardner, "Literacy and Orality in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 9 (2014): 29–85, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/literacy-and-orality-in-the-book-of-mormon/. See also William G. Eggington "'Our Weakness in Writing:' Oral and Literate Culture in the Book of Mormon," *FARMS Reprint* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992).

establishing patterns of productivity. While Mosiah 24 emphasizes the suffering of Alma's people, it also reflects a larger shift toward structured economic development within Lamanite society. That development was likely necessary to sustain widespread exploitation. What began as coerced labor ultimately became a framework that could support religious transformation.

This is not the only example in the Book of Mormon where a political or economic system outlived its originator and enabled covenantal progress. Shortly after Amulon's reforms, King Mosiah II instituted a major shift in Nephite governance, dissolving the monarchy in favor of a system of judges (Mosiah 29). That system would endure for over a century. Both reforms — one born of oppression, the other of prophetic foresight — created space for broader individual involvement and long-term covenantal stability. Structure, even when introduced under duress, can become fertile ground for spiritual readiness.

Amulon's third reform

Amulon contributed to political centralization in two ways. First, Amulon "did gain favor in the eyes of the king of the Lamanites," leading the king to grant unto Amulon and his brethren "that they should be appointed teachers over his people" (Mosiah 24:1). Also, the king "appointed teachers of the brethren of Amulon in every land which was possessed by his people" (v. 4). Second, Amulon contributed to political centralization by forging administrative hierarchies. In this sense, his influence addressed the earlier political disarray of the Lamanites and facilitated the emergence of urban governance and regional coordination among them.

Critics may argue that Amulon's legacy was spiritually barren or even counterproductive, given his persecution of Alma and his converts and suppression of religious freedom (Mosiah 24:9–11). That critique, while morally sound, risks overlooking the structural dimension of divine preparation. Amulon was no spiritual reformer, yet it is precisely this paradox that invites theological reflection. His policies, though unrighteous in intent, established frameworks which included literacy, governance, and economic coordination. All these factors would later enable genuine spiritual transformation.

In this light, Amulon becomes a scriptural type of what Paul calls a "vessel unto dishonour" (Romans 9:21); an instrument used in divine preparation, despite moral failure. This study does not argue that civilization equals righteousness. Rather, it affirms that God can, and often

does, use unrighteous systems to prepare the way for sacred outcomes. The covenantal conversions that ultimately flourished among the Lamanites were not the fruit of Amulon's regime. They were God's redemption of the scaffolding that Amulon inadvertently left behind.

Covenant readiness during the mission of the sons of Mosiah

By the time that Ammon and his brothers undertook their mission among the Lamanites (circa 90 BC), the society they encountered had been quietly but profoundly reshaped from the era of Zeniff. Though spiritual resistance and political volatility remained, the foundational supports necessary for sustained sacred life, including literacy, governance, surplus, and social cohesion, had now emerged. As a result, their ministry bore unprecedented fruit: mass conversions, royal decrees, and coordinated religious reformation. These episodes mark the moment when large Lamanite communities crossed what this study terms a *covenant threshold* — a point of convergence between divine initiative and societal readiness.

In the land of Ishmael, King Lamoni illustrates a pivotal shift in Lamanite leadership ideology. When Ammon defended the royal flocks, Lamoni interpreted the act not merely through tribal or dynastic frameworks, but as a sign of divine power and profound allegiance: "Surely, this is more than a man" (Alma 18:2). His recognition reveals a leader prepared not only for political discernment but also for spiritual transformation. By elevating Ammon, Lamoni rejected conquest-based prestige in favor of service, hospitality, and revelatory openness (Alma 17:14).

Lamoni's capacity to engage deeply with Ammon's theological teaching — covering the Creation, the Fall, and the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ (Alma 18:36–39) — may suggest more than spiritual curiosity; it potentially implies a readiness shaped by prior exposure. Such exposure likely contributed to the conditions necessary for communal religious transformation as seen in Lamoni's conversion and the mass response it inspired (Alma 19:31–36). Yet structural readiness alone was insufficient. The catalyst was divine intervention, met by the prophetic voice of Ammon's humility, along with a king ready to learn and repent. Lamoni's willingness to listen, to ask sincere questions, and ultimately to believe in a God he had not known (Alma 18:24–40) illustrates the spiritual openness required for covenant transformation. It was this convergence of divine power, prophetic teaching, and

genuine receptivity that ignited lasting change. Preparation may cultivate the soil; but only grace and human willingness bear the fruit.

The structural change becomes even more apparent in the actions of Lamoni's father, the high king. After his conversion under Aaron's preaching, he issued a proclamation of religious freedom across seven Lamanite territories: "he sent a proclamation . . . that the word of God might have no obstruction" (Alma 23:1, 3). This decree signaled a new stage of societal maturity in which sacred identity could be publicly supported, preserved, and shared. It required centralized governance, some degree of scribal infrastructure, and bureaucratic tools for communication. These were capacities that earlier generations, as described by Zeniff and Enos, had not yet developed.

As Spencer observes, covenantal hope emerges not only from divine promises, but also from the social conditions that allow it to be practiced and remembered. He emphasizes that covenantal identity depends on more than individual belief. According to Spencer, it "sets out a kind of life — the common life — the Saints are to embrace, a kind of life that has unmistakably economic implications (especially for the rich and poor!), but one that means to produce the joy of the Saints more than merely the satisfaction of needs."[13] Such a life depends, in part, on shared systems of worship, mutual accountability, and social memory — none of which can thrive in total structural instability.

In this light, the high king's decree reflects more than personal conviction. It marks a society approaching the threshold of religious sustainability. It demonstrates that faith has found not only individual expression but also institutional support. Still, it was the preaching of Aaron, the humility of the king, and divine grace — not bureaucracy — that brought this transformation to fruition.

This maturation reaches a high point in the community of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies, whose decision to bury their weapons of war was a collective act of repentance and covenantal belonging: "they took their swords . . . and they did bury them up deep in the earth" (Alma 24:17). This public ritual required mass coordination and cross-tribal trust. It marked a turning point in covenant theology by operating on communal rather than merely individual terms. Their unified commitment to peace and their later willingness to relocate as refugees to Jershon (Alma 27:22–24) demonstrated the capacity to act as a cohesive

13. Spencer, *For Zion*, 105.

covenantal body — one made possible by a literate and structurally prepared society capable of sustaining sacred life together.

Equally significant was the willingness of the Nephites to receive the Anti-Nephi-Lehies. The agreement was not merely charitable, but covenantal: "on condition that they will give us a portion of their substance to assist us that we may maintain our armies" (Alma 27:24). This reciprocal arrangement marked the formal integration of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies into Nephite covenant society. Like their new hosts, they would soon be tested — first through shared sacrifice, then through the collective trauma of warfare. The ensuing conflict was, in Mormon's words, "a tremendous battle; yea, even such an one as never had been known among all the people in the land from the time Lehi left Jerusalem" (Alma 28:2). Through this mutual alliance, a new covenantal people emerged — one capable of enduring not only external trials but generations of shared worship, spiritual resilience, and communal trust.

The missionary success of the sons of Mosiah is best understood through the dual lens of spiritual preparation and structural transformation. Their personal readiness, which was marked by fasting and prayer to receive the Spirit (Alma 17:9), underscores the fact that divine power remains the catalyst. In the theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, sacred space and spiritual flourishing are often co-constituted: worship depends on the conditions that allow it. As the Lord declared, "inasmuch as my people build a house unto me . . . and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it" (Doctrine and Covenants 97:15). This principle — that consecration requires readiness — echoes throughout scripture and finds rich illustration in this Lamanite transformation.

The extraordinary fruit of this mission was royal conversions, societal repentance, and enduring community identity. This fruit was not a contradiction of prior missionary failure among the Lamanites, but its resolution. What had once been impossible had become divinely opportune. Through slow and sometimes paradoxical preparation, including Amulon's introduction of Nephite language instruction, a society that had resisted covenantal worship became capable of embracing it. A sacred threshold had been crossed.

Counterarguments and Responses

The thesis of a covenant threshold reframes traditional readings of the Lamanite conversions by emphasizing the societal preconditions

necessary for covenantal engagement. In doing so, it challenges a range of interpretive assumptions — particularly those rooted in spiritual exceptionalism, individual agency, or a linear view of civilizational progress. The sections below address four possible critiques to this thesis and our response to each of them.

Divine power alone accounts for conversion

Argument: Some may contend that the transformative missionary success of the sons of Mosiah in Alma 17–26 can be wholly attributed to divine initiative and prophetic faith, rather than to any underlying societal readiness. Ammon and his brothers are described as having "waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth" through diligent scripture study, prayer, and fasting (Alma 17:2–3). The dramatic nature of the conversions, complete with trances and profound spiritual experiences, seems to affirm this view (Alma 18:42; 22:17–18).

Response: The scriptural record complicates such a reading. Earlier missionaries like Jacob and Enos preached with equal fervor and conviction, but saw little to no response from the Lamanites (Jacob 7:24; Enos 1:14–20). If divine power alone were sufficient, why the disparity between generations? The Spirit can descend at any moment, but this does not always take root. As the text affirms in the case of the converts of the sons of Mosiah, "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 his word" (Alma 16:16). This spiritual preparation was not abstract; it emerged within concrete societal transformation — literacy, governance, surplus, and openness to dialogue.

The contrast between Enos's frustration and Ammon's success suggests that faith is not diminished by structural readiness, but magnified through it. Grace is always divine, but its fruitfulness often depends on the ground it falls upon. Covenant transformation does not bypass community conditions; it matures within them.

Lamanite readiness was not inevitable—it was catalyzed

Argument: Some may suggest that a Lamanite social development was inevitable in that, given time, all societies stabilize, adopt writing, and centralize governance.

Response: The assumption of inevitable civilizational progress is neither supported by scripture nor by anthropology. Many cultures

plateau, fragment, or regress, without sustained internal development or catalytic external forces. The Book of Mormon does not portray Lamanite transformation as automatic. It portrays it as intentional, editorially emphasized, and theologically charged.

Mormon's inclusion of episodes like Zeniff's reconstruction efforts (Mosiah 9:8–9), Lamoni's father's administrative decree (Alma 23:1–3), and most prominently, Amulon's literacy and labor reforms (Mosiah 24:4), are not incidental. They are narrative signals. Despite limited engraving space (as expressed in Words of Mormon 1:5; 3 Nephi 5:10), Mormon appears to preserve these secular developments in order to underscore divine orchestration through structural preparation. He is teaching that God works not only in hearts, but also in systems.

Amulon's paradoxical role, as an unrighteous figure whose oppressive policies catalyzed societal transformation, occupies the center of this arc. He is not one of many minor contributors, but rather the hinge between Zeniff's observation of chaos and Ammon's encounter with order.

In this light, Mormon is not merely chronicling historical episodes; he is shaping a theological arc. He foreshadows the Lamanites' redemptive destiny (Mormon 7:1–10) and teaches that covenant readiness requires more than individual belief — it also requires a society capable of sustaining that belief. Through a series of divinely preserved transformations, the covenant threshold was not reached passively–it was crossed decisively.

The Lamanite conversions that followed were not inevitable fruits of gradual maturation. They were the result of providential convergence–spiritual openness meeting structural capacity. Without such a convergence, covenantal change might occur, but it would remain miraculous rather than reproducible. With this convergence, a people can be transformed.

Emphasizing structure undermines individual agency

Argument: A third criticism might center on agency. If covenant readiness depends on social conditions, does that diminish personal choice or spiritual accountability?

Response: This study contends otherwise, affirming that individual agency is essential to all covenantal transformation, but also insists that agency is most fruitfully exercised within societies that enable individuals to encounter, understand, and act upon divine truth.

Structure does not override agency; it creates the space for its fullest expression.

This principle is embedded in the Savior's own teachings. In the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3–8, 18–23; Mark 4:3–8, 14–20), Christ identifies the seed as the word of God. The seed is constant across every field. What varies is the capacity of the ground to receive, nurture, and sustain that seed. Some ground is stony, some is choked with thorns, some lies by the wayside, and some is good — described as those who "hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit" (Mark 4:20). This parable affirms human choice, because the hearer must respond, but it also acknowledges that conditions affect how freely and fruitfully that choice can be made.

This parabolic metaphor directly illuminates the Lamanite transformation. Early in the Book of Mormon, Lamanite society resembles stony ground or the wayside: mobile, reactive, violent, and without scriptural memory. The seed was present but could not take root. Over time, through the unintended legacy of Amulon and the emergence of stability, literacy, and surplus, the soil changed. By the time the sons of Mosiah arrived, many Lamanite communities had become fertile ground. The seed remained the same, but when sown, it bore fruit "an hundredfold" (Matthew 13:23; see also Alma 19:35).

Spencer affirms this principle, arguing that covenantal hope must be practiced and sustained within the shared memory and mechanisms of a consecrated people. The kings Lamoni and Anti-Nephi-Lehi and their people chose to follow Christ, but they did so within a social framework that supported instruction, preserved memory, and made public acts of faith logistically and politically viable. Agency remained intact, with the difference that now conditions allowed agency to flourish.

Spiritual readiness is independent of social conditions

Argument: A related theological objection might hold that spiritual readiness is solely an inward disposition, unrelated to economic or civic life.

Response: Scripture consistently portrays spiritual growth as both inward and communal. True worship depends on rhythm, sacred space, and shared resources. As discussed earlier in the Covenant Readiness section, divine presence is tied to communal sanctification: "inasmuch as my people build a house unto me . . . and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall

rest upon it" (Doctrine and Covenants 97:15; see also verses 16–17). Without order, rhythm, and shared commitment, sacred space cannot flourish.

While ancient Israelite covenant theology — especially in its pre-exilic desert context — relied heavily on kinship and oral tradition, the Book of Mormon presents a covenantal culture extended and intensified through literacy. As Noel Reynolds notes, Nephite civilization preserved kinship-based covenantal ideas while adapting them into a Christ-centered, literate framework that supported new forms of sacred memory and public discipleship.[14] On the other hand, the disorganization of early Lamanite society — fragmented, nomadic, and violent — undermined religious memory and made sustained covenant practice nearly impossible.

Covenant identity in the Book of Mormon emerges not solely from belief, but also from collective ritual and public belonging. The Nephites gathered at the temple to hear King Benjamin's sermon, renew their covenant with God, and become one people (Mosiah 2–5). This illustrates how spiritual transformation was anchored in shared sacred space and coordinated effort. Alma's specific instruction that those being baptized "mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:9) illustrates the importance of covenantal community care. Later, Mormon demonstrates that the leaders of Alma's group "did watch over their people, and did nourish them with things pertaining to righteousness" (Mosiah 23:18).

Perhaps the Lamanite converts offer the most striking example. The Anti-Nephi-Lehies unified as one people, burying their weapons in a coordinated, covenantal act of renunciation (Alma 24). They chose martyrdom over apostasy. This choice only makes sense within a society capable of mutual trust, sustained stability, and collective sacrifice. Their spiritual readiness was real, and it was enabled by years of structural change that made such readiness actionable.

That structural change, we propose, was not simply the result of slow evolution, but was catalyzed by Amulon's regime. His reforms, though unrighteous, introduced literacy, labor organization, and political centralization. The threshold moment is not distributed across a dozen figures or events; rather, it was Amulon's disruptive legacy that shifted Lamanite society from fragmentation to structure.

14. See Noel B. Reynolds, "Covenant Language in Biblical Religions and the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2022): 139–76, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol61/iss2/8.

Figures like Lamoni and the Anti-Nephi-Lehies did not create the threshold—they crossed it. The Book of Mormon thus affirms that spiritual transformation is not disconnected from society. It is often sustained, and sometimes even made possible, by structural conditions that enable public discipleship, preserve memory, and support covenant rhythms. In the Lamanite story, readiness was not inevitable; it was prepared. And Amulon, despite his intentions, was the catalyst.

Covenant readiness and cultural diversity

While this article explores multiple instances of covenant readiness as depicted in the Book of Mormon, we do not suggest that covenantal life must always emerge through literacy, economic surplus, or centralized governance. Throughout sacred history, covenant communities have flourished in oral, migratory, tribal, and kinship-based settings—often without formal institutions. While this paper focuses specifically on one model, our intent is not to provide this model as a spiritual "silver bullet" for creating a covenant community. Rather, we interpret how the Book of Mormon portrays the transformation of a people in a distinct historical and narrative context.

As Nephi declared, the Lord "speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding" (2 Nephi 31:3). We affirm that God works through diverse societies and sacred traditions, meeting his children where they are and calling them into his covenant through many forms.

Structural Readiness, Modern Discipleship, and the Work of the Lord

The covenant threshold is not just an ancient pattern—it is a living one. Today, as in Book of Mormon times, the Lord prepares people and societies for covenantal belonging. The preparation includes spiritual invitations, prophetic warnings, and individual transformations. But it also includes external conditions: education, stability, memory, and trust. These are not replacements for grace, but scaffolding for discipleship. Alma taught: "the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have" (Alma 29:8). The Lord also works within their existing institutions, economies, and cultures to prepare them to receive the fulness of His covenant.

Amulon's reforms, however unrighteous, tilled the soil for divine

truth. His oppressive policies — imposing literacy, organizing labor, and centralizing governance — unwittingly created a framework wherein covenantal faith could flourish. The Book of Mormon's narrative signals this shift: Enos prayed for a people too disorganized to receive the word (Enos 1:13–14) and Zeniff noted their warlike chaos (Mosiah 9:2); yet by Ammon's arrival, the Lamanites possessed the societal tools to hear, retain, and act on divine teachings (Alma 23:1–3). This echoes the Savior's parable of the sower: the seed of the gospel is constant, but its yield depends on prepared soil (Matthew 13:3–9). Amulon, an unlikely instrument, helped make the ground fertile.

President Ezra Taft Benson's insight illuminates a version of this dynamic: "The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. . . . Christ changes men, who then change their environment."[15] Through his post–World War II relief efforts of distributing aid and otherwise helping to rebuild Europe, President Benson's own life illustrates how God can work through external means to prepare receptive conditions. The Church's welfare system today also reflects this balance, fostering self-reliance while providing temporary aid to stabilize lives.[16] It could be said that Amulon's role fits this pattern: his structural changes, however coercive, aligned with God's providence to enable the Anti-Nephi-Lehies' covenantal rise. Christ transforms hearts and he also tills the soil of history, sometimes through figures like Amulon, enabling such hearts to bear lasting fruit.

This interaction between internal transformation and external preparation is not merely theological, it reflects a broader principle of communal life. In philosophy, this is known as *collective intentionality*. It consists of the shared beliefs, goals, and assumptions that allow groups to create social realities — nations, schools, religious communities, and so forth.[17] When individuals act together with mutual awareness and purpose, they generate the very structures that shape their

15. Ezra Taft Benson, "Born of God," Ensign (November 1985), 6, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/9787fb37-f69d-49b6-a2af-0fc322e2ff1a/0/9.
16. As of this writing, guidelines relating to the Church's welfare system are contained in "Providing for Temporal Needs and Building Self-Reliance," *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2025), chapter 22, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/general-handbook/22-providing-for-temporal-needs.
17. See David P. Schweikard and Hans Bernhard Schmid, "Collective Intentionality," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, plato.stanford.edu/entries/collective-intentionality/.

spiritual and civic lives. Covenant readiness, in this light, is not just a matter of personal desire, but also a function of collective will, made possible by shared trust, memory, and structure.

This pattern carries profound implications for how members of the Church approach missionary work, community development, and welfare. It means that preparing people to receive the gospel includes preparing the ground: cultivating education, economic stability, and relational trust. It means that social uplift is not just humanitarian, it is covenantal. And it means that we should recognize that God works in ways we do not always understand, sometimes even through individuals and systems not aligned with His commandments.

Summary and Conclusions

Mormon's editorial focus on Amulon is purposeful. It was under Amulon's oppressive hand that literacy was imposed, labor centralized, and order established. Though he acted with unrighteous dominion, his reforms catalyzed the transformation that later enabled spiritual renewal. The Lamanites' covenantal awakening was not spontaneous — it was the fruit of long-prepared ground. Record-keeping, political order, and stewardship, introduced through both righteous and unrighteous actors, tilled the soil for covenantal belonging. Their decision to bury weapons, once unthinkable in their fragmented and subsistence-bound past, testifies to a people who had crossed a covenant threshold.

This model can reframe how we read the Book of Mormon. Amulon is not a cautionary tale only — he is a theological hinge. His legacy, however unintended, reveals how divine providence sometimes operates through flawed agents to shape covenant outcomes. The gospel seed, ever constant, could not flourish among the early Lamanites because the ground was not yet ready. But by the time divinely inspired messengers arrived, the structures were in place for covenant life to take root and endure.

Practically, the covenant threshold model invites modern readers to consider how readiness can manifest today: through land stewardship, digital record-keeping, community trust, and intergenerational teaching. Just as ancient societies were prepared through otherwise mundane reforms for sacred outcomes, today's covenant people are shaped by both spiritual and structural forces.

This message is both cautionary and hopeful. Covenant identity is not merely inherited; it is cultivated and sustained. Societies and souls

become ready through patterns of labor, trust, and order. The idea of a covenant threshold invites scholars and Saints alike to discern divine fingerprints in unlikely places, including urban reform, educational access, and peaceable surplus.

The Book of Mormon reveals not only God's message, but also his method. He prepares soil before he sows. Amulon's shadow looms large, not because he bore light, but because his hand, unwittingly, cleared the way for it. God's purposes are not thwarted by oppression—they often unfold through it. And in almost every age, the Lord prepares his people through unlikely reformers, unfolding conditions, and merciful timing for covenant life with him.

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"They Did Multiply and Prosper Exceedingly in the Land of Helam": Naming and Narrative Irony in Mosiah 23

Matthew L. Bowen

Abstract: *The name* Helam*, attested as a place name in the Bible is also attested as a personal and place name in the Book of Mormon. Evidence suggests that this name is derived from the Hebrew noun* ḥayil/ḥêl*, which has a wide range of meaning, including "wealth," "abundance," "power," and even "army" (including Pharaoh's "army" or "host"). The form of Helam suggests the meaning, "[God is] their wealth," "[God is] their abundance," "[God is] their power," and even "[God is] their army." Although the promise latent in the name* Helam *is celebrated in their exceeding prosperity and abundance, Alma$_1$'s people also meet with a dramatic and ironic (apparent) reversal of this abundance and prosperity, when an army of the Lamanites occupies Helam and brings them into bondage. Mormon draws multiple lessons from this event, and he draws substantively from the language of Alma$_2$'s conversion accounts to narrate this event and its meaning.*

The Book of Mormon attests the name *Helam* as a place name (land and city), eponymous with one of Alma$_1$'s "first" converts (see Mosiah 18:12–14) to the religious movement he started that became a church of Christ. Mormon's narrative gives the name *Helam* special emphasis through concentrated repetitions in Mosiah 23, where it occurs no less than eleven times[1] in this single chapter and only twice afterward in the remainder Book of Mormon.[2] The sheer repetition

1. Mosiah 23:19–20 (three times), 25–26 (three times), 29, 35, 37–39 (three times).
2. Mosiah 27:16; Alma 24:1.

alone in this chapter suggests the name's narrative importance and invites us to consider how its integration into the narrative and its meaning impact or shape the narrative as Mormon has presented it.

In the Hebrew Bible, the name Helam is also attested as a place name in the Transjordan. 2 Samuel 10:16–17 mentions Helam as the site of David's defeat of Shobach, the military captain of the Syrian king Hadadezer (Hadarezer) and his invading army. This dramatic victory broke Syrian power in the region and marked the height of David's military power. Its twofold mention in the biblical text at this point thus seems significant.

In this study, I will follow up on previous suggestions that the aural components of Helam suggest a connection with the Hebrew noun *ḥayil*, construct form *hêl*, which can mean both "wealth" and "army" among other things, and the plural possessive suffix *-ām*, "their" — suggesting the basic meaning "their wealth," "their abundance," or something similar. Understood as a possible theophoric hypocoristicon,[3] the name suggests the meaning "[God is] their wealth," "[God is] their abundance," "[God is] their power," or even "[God is] their army." I will further propose that Mormon (or his source text) created a sophisticated and ironic wordplay on the name Helam. This wordplay begins as a play on the meaning of Helam in terms of the tremendous prosperity (compare "their wealth" or "their abundance") that Alma's people experienced in fulfillment of the Lord's covenant with Lehi and his righteous descendants, when Alma's people first settled in the land of Helam. However, this wordplay becomes polysemous (playing on multiple meanings of the same word) as "their army" with the appearance of a Lamanite "army" — a more ominous meaning for *ḥayil/hêl* in the context of the narrative — thus marking a sudden and dramatic reversal of Alma's people's temporal prosperity. An "army" of the Lamanites arrives in the land of Helam amid Alma' s people's prosperity and abundance, and they are brought into bondage in fulfillment of the prophetic curse of Abinadi. For $Alma_1$ and his people, only the "the Lord their God, yea, even the God of Abraham and Isaac and of

3. A *hypocoristicon* is a shortened form of a name. A *theophoric hypocoristicon* is a shortened name in which the theophoric, or the element referring to divinity, is largely or entirely missing, but implied. For example, the name *Nathan*, Hebrew *nātān*, means "he [the Lord] has given" or "he [God] has given," but the divine element has been left out. It may be short for Nathaniel or Nethaniah (cf. Netanyahu) or something similar.

Jacob"—as "their army" or "their power"—"could deliver them" from the Lamanite "army" that brought them into bondage.

The polysemic wordplay involving Hebrew *ḥayil/hêl* and Helam (*ḥêlām*), "their abundance" and the coming of the Lamanite "army," as part of the broader narrative of Mosiah 23, highlights how divine blessings and divine judgments are sometimes interwoven. Covenant obedience can contribute to "wealth," "abundance," or "prosperity," but it cannot nullify divine judgment or exempt one from the trials of mortality. Ultimately, only Jehovah has the "power" or means (*ḥayil/hêl*) to "deliver" or "redeem." The Lord Jesus Christ, the dispenser of both divine blessings and divine judgments, fulfills the Abrahamic Covenant and all related covenants (such as the covenant he made with Lehi) while also allowing the fulfillment of the words of Abinadi that he had pronounced against king Noah's people, of whom Alma's people had constituted part.

The Meaning of Helam

As noted above, Helam is attested as a toponym (place name) in the Hebrew Bible. Henry O. Thompson identifies Helam as a "town in Transjordan ca. 40 miles E of the Sea of Galilee."[4] Regarding the attestation of Helam in 2 Samuel 10:16–17, P. Kyle McCarter Jr. writes:

> [Otto] Thenius understood MT [Masoretic Text] *ḥylm* as 'their army' (cf. Vulg.); but LXX [the Septuagint], Syr[iac Peshitta], and Targ[ums] take it as a proper noun identical to *ḥlʾmḥ* in v. 17, and this is evidently correct.[5]

Although there is no current scholarly consensus, the form of Helam (*ḥêlām*) suggests several possible etymologies. One of the more plausible of these, as Paul Y. Hoskisson notes in the entry for "Helam" in the Book of Mormon onomasticon, is Helam derives from the Semitic/Hebrew root *ḥlm*, "[to be] healthy, to become strong, to be strong."[6] Derivations from roots like *hll*, *hlm*, and *ḥll* are less likely.

The phonemic elements of Helam, however, suggest another plausible Hebrew etymology and meaning, one that has indirect support

4. Henry O. Thompson, "Helam," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:116–17.
5. P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 269.
6. Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Helam," *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/HELAMAN.

of the biblical text and, as I hope to show later, the direct support of the Book of Mormon text. The first phoneme in the name Helam suggests a possible derivation from the noun *ḥayil*, which takes the form *ḥêl* in its construct (genitive) and suffixed (possessive) forms. The noun *ḥayil/ḥêl* has a broad range of meaning that includes "faculty, power" and "wealth, property,"[7] but also "army."[8] The second phoneme would then be the possessive plural suffix *-ām*, "their." As a personal name, Helam or *ḥêlām* would then denote "their wealth" or "their abundance" — the suffix pronoun "their," in this instance, referring to the parents or family of the one so named.

Helam as meaning "their wealth" or "their abundance" becomes more plausible on analogy with Solomon, Hebrew *šĕlōmô*, meaning "his replacement" — the suffix pronoun *-ô* [*ōh*] "his," in the latter instance, referring to the deceased first child from David and Bathsheba's illicit union or to her late husband Uriah.[9] Nathan had given this subsequent son the name Jedidiah,[10] which meant "Beloved of Yahweh," or "Yahweh is beloved," a name akin in origin and meaning to *David*: *dāwid*, "Beloved." For Bathsheba, the bereaved mother, Solomon was a "replacement" or "recompence" for the son she had lost. The name Malachi, attested as a personal name in the seventh century BCE in the form *mlʾky* on a jar handle among the Arad ostraca[11] and as the name of the fifth century BCE prophet, means "my messenger" or "my angel." It is possibly a theophoric hypocoristicon

7. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2001), 311.
8. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 311.
9. For example, see McCarter, *II Samuel*, 303.
10. 2 Samuel 12:24–25: "And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and **the Lord loved him** [*wayhwâ ʾăhēbô*]. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name **Jedidiah** [*yĕdîdyāh*], **because of the Lord**."
11. Yohanan Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981), 109, archive.org/details/arad-inscriptions/page/n59/mode/2up. Aharoni describes the engraving of *mlʾky* thus:

> The engraving is crude and the form of most of the letters is distorted. Thus it would seem that this inscription was incised by a man not used to writing, as in several inscriptions from Beer-Sheba, and perhaps . . . two horizontal strokes are written in the wrong direction. We would therefore have the name Malachi or perhaps Malachi[yahu]. This name appears in the Bible only as the name of one of the prophets. Even though the reading of this inscription is not entirely certain, it supports the theory that Malachi is the name of the prophet, and not his title.

denoting "Yahweh is my messenger" or "Yahweh is my angel."[12] On analogy, the name Helam as a theophoric hypocoristicon would mean "[God is] their wealth," "[God is] their abundance," "[God is] their power," or even "[God is] their army." The name as having a double reference to a child with grateful parents—"[he/she is] their wealth" or "[he/she is] their abundance"—is also not a strained etymology. Understood as a derivation from *ḥayil/hêl* with a possessive suffix and as a theophoric hypocoristicon, Helam works well as a personal or place name.

The biblical text itself hints at a derivation—real or midrashic—from the combination of *ḥêl* and *-ām*:

> And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together. And Hadarezer sent, and brought out the Syrians that *were* beyond the river: and they came to **Helam** [*ḥêlām*]; and Shobach the captain of the host of Hadarezer [Hadadezer] *went* before them. And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and passed over Jordan, and came **to Helam** [*ḥēlāʾmâ*]. And the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him. (2 Samuel 10:15–17)

Regarding the appearance of the name Helam in this passage, consistent with McCarter's reading of Helam as "their army,"[13] Moshe Garsiel writes:

> The name appears twice, the second version probably reflecting the original spelling *ḥlʾm*. . . . It is changed in the antecedent verse to "Helam" . . . to indicate its derivation from *ḥyl* (חיל), "an army"; *ḥylm* . . . means "their troops." This MND

See also G. I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 36, 423. Davies understands *mlʾky* in the Arad ostracon inscription as a proper name. See further Joel S. Burnett, "Divine Silence or Divine Absence? Converging Metaphors in Family Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant" in *Reflections on the Silence of God: A Discussion with Marjo Korpel and Joannes de Moor*, ed. Bob Becking (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2013), 52, archive.org/details/reflectionsonsil0000unse/page/52/mode/2up.

12. See Matthew L. Bowen, "Messengers of the Covenant: Mormon's Doctrinal Use of Malachi 3:1 in Moroni 7:29–32," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 31 (2019): 111–38, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/messengers-of-the-covenant-mormons-doctrinal-use-of-malachi-31-in-moroni-729–32.
13. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 269.

> [midrashic name derivation] establishes a link between the place and its history, since it is there that both David and Hadarezer gather their troops to fight each other.[14]

In consideration of the relationship of this toponym to the Book of Mormon personal and place name Helam, Hoskisson further notes the relevance of Stephen K. Ehat's observation (like McCarter's) that the Latin Vulgate's rendering of Hebrew *ḥêlām* in the first instance is as *exercitum eorum*, meaning "their army," rather than as the toponym (place name) Helam.[15] The Vulgate's rendering of *ḥêl(ʾ)ām* as the toponym Helam, in the second instance, suggests that translator (Jerome or otherwise) saw the first instance as a wordplay on the second.[16] It should be further noted here that "their army" as a plausible

14. Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gal, IL: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 126.
15. Hoskisson, "Helam," *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*. The Latin Vulgate text of 2 Samuel 10:15–17 reads,

    > videntes igitur Syri quoniam corruissent coram Israel congregati sunt pariter | misitque Adadezer et eduxit Syros qui erant trans Fluvium et adduxit **exercitum eorum** | Sobach autem magister militiae Adadezer erat princeps eorum quod cum nuniatum esset David contraxit omnem Israhelem et transivit Iordanem venitque in **Helema** et direxerunt aciem Syri ex adverso David et pugnaverunt contra eum

    biblegateway.com/passage/?search=II%20Samuelis%2010%3A15-17%2C2%20Samuel%2010%3A15-17&version=VULGATE. The KJV rendering of the Hebrew Masoretic Text of the same passage reads,

    > And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together. And Hadarezer sent, and brought out the Syrians that were beyond the river: and they came to **Helam**; and Shobach the captain of the host of Hadarezer went before them. And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and passed over Jordan, and came to **Helam**. And the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him.

    The first Hebrew phrase is translated here "and they came to Helam." In the Masoretic Text the verb is plural *wyb'w* ("and they came"). Some manuscripts, however, have a singular form of the verb here: *wyb'*, which creates confusion about the verb's subject. This verb is treated as a singular causative form of the verb *bw'* by the Vulgate (or its *Vorlage* [predecessor text]), which also treats *ḥêlām* as the noun phrase "their army" (in the first instance) rather than a proper name: "et adduxit exercitum eorum" (= "and he [Hadadezer] brought up their army" or "and he lead up their army").
16. This notion perhaps finds further support with additional wordplay (paronomasia) involving the verb *lḥm* ("fight") in 2 Samuel 10:13 and 10:18.

etymology and meaning for Helam is less important than the fact that this is one attested way in which the name was understood by ancient readers and interpreters and that the phonemes of this name (*ḥêlām*) are exactly *heard* in "their army" (*ḥêlām*), as the Vulgate rendering conclusively shows.

Support for Helam as "their wealth" or "their abundance," as well as the ironic, polysemic inversion "their army," emerges in Mosiah 23:19–30, with Alma's people multiplying and prospering exceedingly (vv. 19–20), but then coming into bondage to the Lamanites and King Noah's former priests with the appearance of an "army" that occupies the land of Helam. Mormon's account of this prosperity and its sudden dramatic reversal invites readers to consider the various aspects of "prospering" and to reconsider the notion that "prosperity" is always synonymous with wealth, protection, and immunity from life's challenges.

A Text Critical Note

When writing out the Printer's Manuscript, Oliver Cowdery originally wrote *Helaman* for *Helam* but then corrected it to *Helam* in all instances. Royal Skousen maintains that

> the original manuscript read Helam in Mosiah 23 but . . . Oliver [Cowdery] initially decided that Helam was a mistake for Helaman. He later decided to accept the name as written in [the] O[riginal manuscript] and thus corrected all 11 instances of Helaman to Helam.[17]

The writing of *Helem* for *Helam* in Mosiah 27:16 strongly suggests that Skousen's hypothesis is correct. In other words, we can be confident that the name is *Helam*, and that it is very near or identical to the biblical name Helam.

"They Began to Prosper in the Land and They Called the Land Helam": The Naming of the Land Helam and the Fulfillment of the Lehitic Covenant

The first mentions of the name Helam occur in a threefold repetition in Mormon's description of Alma's baptizing in the waters of Mormon:

17. Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Three: Mosiah 17–Alma 20* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2006), 1447.

> And now it came to pass that Alma took **Helam**, he being one of the first, and went and stood forth in the water, and cried, saying: O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart. And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he said: **Helam**, I baptize thee, having authority from the Almighty God, as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him until you are dead as to the mortal body; and may the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon you; and may he grant unto you eternal life, through the redemption of Christ, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world. And after Alma had said these words, both Alma and **Helam** were buried in the water; and they arose and came forth out of the water rejoicing, being filled with the Spirit. (Mosiah 18:12–14)

Mormon's mention of Helam as "one of the first" of Alma's converts, and evidently the first of those he baptized, probably indicates that he was one of the leaders of this new church and community. Brant Gardner writes,

> That the land should be named Helam suggests his importance among Alma's people, probably a status that he had in Lehi-Nephi. Even though Alma's society reduced economic differentiations, it could not have eliminated manifestations of social respect.[18]

Gardner further notes, "Probably the same reasons that led Alma to baptize Helam first led to naming the land for him."[19] Helam's name ("their wealth," "their abundance") became even more meaningful in a context of receiving covenant blessings, which became covenant "prospering" (see below). For Mormon, the naming of the land as Helam and the people's experiences there constituted a moment of narrative opportunism, which helped him place emphasis on this story within his larger account as the parallel to the story of the exodus[20]

18. Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume 3: Enos–Mosiah* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 395.
19. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 3:395.
20. Sara Riley, "'Even as Moses Did': The Use of the Exodus Narrative in Mosiah 11–18," (lecture, FairMormon Conference, Provo, UT, 2 August 2018), fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference/august-2018_fair_conference/even-as-moses-did.

and the continuing story of Israel's salvation history. It is not unlikely that Helam himself was exemplary in helping the new church and community "look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another" (Mosiah 18:21; compare Mosiah 18:8–10), and was thus one beloved among his people.

In the same pericope in which he first mentions Helam, Mormon gives the reader a sense of just how much this community loved the waters of Mormon and their environs (the prophet-editor's namesake)[21] in the hymnic sixfold clustered repetition of this name:

> And now it came to pass that all this was done in **Mormon**, yea, by the waters of **Mormon**, in the forest that was near the waters of **Mormon**; yea, the place of **Mormon**, the waters of **Mormon**, the forest of **Mormon**, how beautiful are they to the eyes of them who there came to the knowledge of their Redeemer; yea, and how blessed are they, for they shall sing to his praise forever. (Mosiah 18:30)

The naming of the land and city in which they settled after their relocation from Mormon would thus reflect the community's love for Helam as a leader. Notably too, the land of Helam is characterized as "a very beautiful and pleasant land, a land of pure water" (Mosiah 23:4), recalling the "fountain of pure water" in the land of Mormon where the community was first baptized and formed into a church.

Did the naming of this "very beautiful and pleasant land" as "Helam" (*ḥêlām*) have the meaning of "their wealth" or "their abundance" in view? Mormon's repetition of Helam in a clustered repetition that emphasizes the people's prosperity points in this direction:

> And it came to pass that **they began to prosper exceedingly in the land**; and they called the land **Helam**. And it came to pass that **they did multiply and prosper** exceedingly **in the land** of **Helam**; and they built a city, which they called the city of **Helam**. (Mosiah 23:19–20)

Mormon also gives double emphasis to Alma's people "prosper[ing] exceedingly in the land" of "Helam"; that is, "prosper[ing] exceedingly in the land of their wealth/abundance."

Mormon's statement that "they began to prosper exceedingly in the land" specifically alludes to the fulfillment of what Joseph Spencer

21. See especially 3 Nephi 5:12; cf. Mormon 1:5.

has called "the Lehitic Covenant."[22] Nephi first mentions this covenant in 1 Nephi 2:20–21:

> And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands. And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.

Lehi reiterates this covenant to his children in 2 Nephi 1:20: "And he hath said that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence." In his description of Helam, Mormon invokes the Lehitic covenant he later quotes in full, probably from the record of Lehi,[23] in Alma 50:20. There he records that the Lord declared to Lehi,

> Blessed art thou and thy children; and they shall be blessed, inasmuch as they shall keep my commandments they shall prosper in the land. But remember, inasmuch as they will not keep my commandments they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord.[24]

Mormon's addition of the verbal construction "they did multiply" ("they did multiply and prosper exceedingly in the land of Helam") helps the reader see the fulfillment of the Lehitic covenant among Alma's people as, more broadly, a fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.

22. On the designation "Lehitic Covenant," see Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for ReligiousScholarship,2016),84–90,scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=mi; Kimberly M. Berkey, "'Retain All Their Oaths': Lehitic Covenant and Secret Combinations in Alma 37," in *Give Ear to My Words: Text and Context of Alma 36–42*, ed. Kerry M. Hull, Nicholas J. Frederick, and Hank R. Smith (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University [BYU]; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2019), 411–32, rsc.byu.edu/sites/default/files/pub_content/pdf/19%20Berkey%20%285-2-19%29-19.pdf.
23. Joseph Smith's translation of the book of Lehi, from the plates of Mormon, is famously lost or no longer extant.
24. The Book of Mormon attests many other references to the "Lehitic" covenant. See, for example, 2 Nephi 4:4; 5:11, 13; Jarom 1:9; Omni 1:6; Mosiah 1:7; 2:22, 31; 9:9; 10:5; 12:15; 21:16; 23:20; 27:7; Alma 1:31; 9:13; 36:1, 30; 37:13; 38:1; 48:15, 25; 50:18, 20; 62:48, 51; Helaman 3:20; 4:13, 15; 12:1–2; 3 Nephi 6:4; and 4 Nephi 1:18. Compare 1 Nephi 13:15, 20; Ether 6:28; 7:26; 9:16; 10:16.

Thus, Alma's community reappropriating the personal name *ḥêlām*—"[God is] their wealth," [God is] "their abundance"—as the name for their new land could hardly be more appropriate given their circumstances as they came into the land to possess it.

Deuteronomy 8 illustrates how the noun *ḥayil/hêl* functions within the context of inheriting or possessing new land in the land of promise and experiencing prosperity in the land of promise in fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. This legislation included several "commandments" that Israel was to "observe to do, that ye **may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land** which the Lord sware unto your fathers" (Deuteronomy 8:1). This legislation specifically warned against the pride that prosperity in the land would bring: "And *when* thy herds and thy flocks **multiply**, and thy silver and thy gold is **multiplied**, and all that thou hast is **multiplied**; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deuteronomy 8:13–14). The temptation then, as now, is to believe that prosperity in "lands of promise"[25] and Abrahamic multiplication proceed from one's own industry and work ethic rather than God:

> My power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this **wealth** [*haḥayil*]. But **thou shalt remember the Lord thy God**: for *it is* he that giveth thee power **to get wealth** [*laʿăśôt ḥayil*] that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as *it is* this day. (Deuteronomy 8:17–18)

Psalm 49, one of the "hymns of the [Jerusalem] temple"[26] familiar to ancient Judahites and Israelites, offers similar cautions:

> They that trust in **their wealth** [*ḥêlām*], and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none *of them* can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him . . . For he seeth *that* wise men die, likewise the fool and

25. Jacob and his brother Nephi use the plural form of this expression in 2 Nephi 9:2; 24:2. The latter occurs as part of Nephi's small plates rendition of Isaiah 14 and in the context of the gathering of Israel.

26. Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1991), 45. See further Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Psalms as Hymns in the Jerusalem Temple," in *Jesus and Temple: Textual and Archaeological Explorations*, ed. James A. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 95–122, jewishstudies.rutgers.edu/images/documents/faculty/Rendsburg/psalms-hymns-temple.pdf.

> the brutish person perish, and leave **their wealth** [*ḥêlām*] to others. (Psalm 49:6–7, 10)

The Hebrew expression *ḥêlām* ("their wealth") exactly matches the form of Helam in 2 Samuel 10:16.

By all indications, $Alma_1$'s people had not failed to "remember the Lord [their] God" with respect to their abundance or wealth (*ḥêlām*). Indeed, they had been blessed and prospered by him because of their covenant obedience. "Nevertheless," Mormon interjects, "the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith" (Mosiah 23:21). Mormon adds one of his major theses of this account: "For behold, I will show unto you that they were brought into bondage, and none could deliver them but the Lord their God, yea, even the God of Abraham and Isaac and of Jacob" (Mosiah 23:23). Thus, at least one of the purposes of Mormon's inclusion of this account is to show that even covenant obedience that results in prosperity and wealth does not exempt people from divine chastening and trials, and that obedience, prosperity, and wealth do not nullify divine prophecy, especially when the prophet has "sealed the truth of his words by his death" (Mosiah 17:20). Only Jehovah himself can deliver or redeem the righteous or the wicked and he will not redeem any in their sins (see Helaman 5:9–10; compare Alma 11:34–37, 40).[27] The lessons of Alma's people in Helam are thus consonant with the truism of Psalm 49:6–7: "They that trust in their wealth [*ḥêlām*] . . . none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."

"While They Were in the Land of Helam . . . Behold, an Army of the Lamanites": The Polysemy of *ḥayil*/*hêl* as Marking a Reversal of Fortunes

It is not clear just how long $Alma_1$ and his people "did multiply and prosper exceedingly in the land of Helam." As Gardner observes, "There is no way to know how much time elapsed, but it strongly suggests a minimum of two years, although it could easily have been more."[28] The word "multiply" probably suggests a much longer time. At some point toward the end of this period of prosperity and

27. Compare further Matthew 1:21. See also 2 Nephi 9:38; Mosiah 15:26; Moroni 10:26; Doctrine and Covenants 138:21; Moses 7:1.
28. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 3:395.

Abrahamic multiplication, a Lamanite "army"[29] was sent to recapture Limhi's people who had escaped captivity in the lands of Lehi-Nephi and Shilom. This army ended up lost in the wilderness (Mosiah 22:16). This army then happened upon $Alma_1$ and his faithful community in the land of Helam. They must have hoped that the army would simply pass on through, but the army did not.

Mormon reports the coming of these Lamanites with a second clustered repetition of the name Helam, interposed with the mention of the Lamanite "army" (Hebrew *ḥayil/ḥêl*):

> For behold, it came to pass that while they were in the land of **Helam** [*ḥêlām*], yea, in the city of **Helam** [*ḥêlām*], while tilling the land round about, behold **an army** [*ḥêl*] of the Lamanites was in the borders of the land. Now it came to pass that the brethren of Alma fled from their fields, and gathered themselves together in the city of **Helam** [*ḥêlām*]; and they were much frightened because of the appearance of the Lamanites. (Mosiah 23:25–26)

The term *army* — Hebrew *ḥêl* echoes the sound and meaning latent in the name *Helam* — no longer as "their wealth," now in terms of "army." We recall the meaning "their army" that Garsiel believes is midrashically assumed in 2 Samuel 10:16, and which is also rendered with this meaning in the Latin Vulgate (*exercitum eorum/their army*) instead of translating as a place name. $Alma_1$'s people had been "multiplying" and "prospering in the land" precisely because they had been keeping the commandments as the Lord had stipulated in the Lehitic covenant.

It should be noted here the noun *ḥayil/ḥêl* is the term used to describe the "host" or "army" of the Pharaoh in the Exodus account of Jehovah delivering Israel out of Egyptian bondage: "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all **his host** [*ḥêlô*]; that the Egyptians may know that I *am* the Lord" (Exodus 14:4); "But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses *and* chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, **and his army** [*wĕḥêlô*], and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon" (Exodus 14:9); "And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all **his host** [*ḥêlô*], upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen" (Exodus 14:17); "And the

29. This army is first mentioned in Mosiah 22:15: "[the Lamanites] sent an army into the wilderness to pursue them."

waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, *and* all **the host** [*ḥêl*] of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them" (Exodus 14:28); "Pharaoh's chariots **and his host** [*wĕḥêlô*] hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea" (Exodus 15:4).

Mormon evidently draws a narrative parallel between the army of Pharaoh and the army of the Lamanites. In Mosiah 24, Mormon will explicitly frame the bondage of $Alma_1$'s people in Helam in terms of Israel's bondage in Egypt with Amulon's "taskmasters" who caused Alma's people to "cry mightily to God" (Mosiah 24:9–10, 19; see Exodus 1:11; 3:7; 5:6–14) and from whom God, "knowing" their hearts and affliction, delivered them (Mosiah 24:12–13, 21; see Exodus 3:7). God intervenes against the Lamanites in the valley of Alma as he did against the Egyptians at the Red Sea (see Mosiah 24:23; Exodus 14–15).

The name *Helam*, understood as "[God is] their army" or "[God] is their power," sets up a striking juxtaposition between the Lamanite army and the Lord, whom Mormon shows to be the decisive means of deliverance or redemption from an Egyptian-like bondage to Amulon and the Lamanites.

The "Armies" of the Lamanites Take Possession of the Land of "Helam": The Irony of Captivity

The Lamanite army, of course, did not pass on. They occupied the land and city of Helam but did not destroy Alma's people:

> And it came to pass that the Lord did soften the hearts of the Lamanites. And Alma and his brethren went forth and delivered themselves up into their hands; and the Lamanites took possession of the land of **Helam**. Now **the armies** of the Lamanites, which had followed after the people of king Limhi, had been lost in the wilderness for many days. (Mosiah 23:29–30)

The text here juxtaposes Helam with "armies," switching from the singular to the plural (compare *ḥăyālîm/ḥăyalê*), which more clearly illuminates the pun. This is the second apparent wordplay on *Helam* in terms of *ḥayil/ḥêl* or its meaning, "army."

Moreover, this wordplay amplifies the irony of $Alma_1$'s and his people's circumstances. They had been living faithful to the covenant and had accordingly "prospered exceedingly in the land of Helam," the land of their wealth or abundance, but now had the Lamanite army (cf.

ḥayil/ḥêl) or armies (compare *ḥăyālîm/ḥăyalê*) taking control of their community and settling with them.

The Lord allowing these circumstances fulfilled Abinadi's prophetic promise that Noah's people, of which Alma's people were at that time a part, would be "brought into bondage" (Mosiah 11:21, 23; 12:2). Mormon specifically mentions the fulfillment of this very prophecy in Mosiah 23:23: "For behold, I will show unto you that they were brought into bondage, and none could deliver them but the Lord their God, yea, even the God of Abraham and Isaac and of Jacob." This interpretation of events is shared by Mosiah_2, who saw the bondage of both Limhi's and Alma_1's peoples as fulfilling the prophetic word of Abinadi (see Mosiah 29:18–20).

"And Thus the Lamanites Began to Increase in Riches": Helam and the Irony of the Lamanites' Wealth

The coming of the Lamanite army and subsequently Amulon and the other former priests of Noah to the land of Helam resulted in the end of temporal prosperity for Alma_1 and his people. Mormon writes that the presence of Amulon and the other priests of Noah in the land of Helam results in an increase in the Lamanites wealth:

> And now the name of the king of the Lamanites was Laman, being called after the name of his father; and therefore he was called king Laman. And he was king over a numerous people. And he appointed teachers of the brethren of Amulon in every land which was possessed by his people; and thus the language of Nephi began to be taught among all the people of the Lamanites. And they were a people friendly one with another; nevertheless **they knew not God**; neither did the brethren of Amulon teach them anything concerning the Lord their God, neither the law of Moses; nor did they teach them the words of Abinadi; but they taught them that they should keep their record, and that they might write one to another. And thus **the Lamanites began to increase in riches**, and began to trade one with another and wax great, and began to be a cunning and a wise people, as to the wisdom of the world, yea, a very cunning people, delighting in all manner of wickedness and plunder, except it were among their own brethren. (Mosiah 24:3–7)

Mormon saw Amulon and the priests of Noah as major catalysts

in the Lamanite transition from a primarily oral culture to a culture of writing and record-keeping during this period. While this resulted in an immense "increase in riches," Mormon avoids ever saying that these Lamanites "prospered" or "prosper[ed] exceedingly in the land."

Mormon also appears to have recognized that this antagonistic group was unwittingly laying the groundwork for the future evangelizing of the Lamanites by Ammon and his brothers. As Mormon understood it, "the brethren of Amulon" helped establish a level of familiarity with Nephite language and writing among the Lamanites (see Mosiah 24:6). A generation later, Ammon and his brothers then introduced the Nephite scriptures among the Lamanites. It seems likely that they did not just hear them taught (for example, Ammon "rehearsed and **laid before him** the records and the holy scriptures of the people," Alma 18:36), but could read and teach them to their children. Several generations later, Samuel the Lamanite demonstrates a superior knowledge of Hebrew prophetic speech forms.[30] He almost certainly gained this knowledge through a copious reading of scripture, and this probably constitutes some evidence of a robust culture of scripture literacy among the families of converted Lamanites.[31]

"Remember the Captivity of Thy Fathers in the Land of Helam": The Importance of Remembering Divine Deliverance for Spiritual Prosperity

Gardner notes that the heading to the story of $Alma_1$'s people ("An account of Alma and the people of the Lord, who were driven into the wilderness by the people of King Noah") is intended to cover what was originally Mosiah chapter 11 in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon: "That single chapter is now represented by Mosiah 23–27, inclusive. The text in the 1981 edition indicating that this introduction covers only our chapters 23 and 24 is a misreading of Mormon's intent."[32] A similar note has been perpetuated in the 2013 edition. Thus, the content of Mosiah 27 and the conversion of $Alma_2$ and the sons of Mosiah actually completes the narrative circuit of the pericope begun in Mosiah 23, as suggested by the larger text structure evident in the Printer's Manuscript and the 1830 edition. This datum is helpful

30. Donald W. Parry, "Thus Saith the Lord: Prophetic Language in Samuel," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (1992): 181–183, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol1/iss1/10/.
31. This topic cannot be further explored here.
32. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 3:387.

in explaining, as I will show, why Mormon drew on $Alma_2$'s personal accounts in crafting his Helam narrative.

The angel who appeared to $Alma_2$ as "he did go about secretly with the sons of Mosiah seeking to destroy the church" (Mosiah 27:10–11; see also Alma 36:6)[33] gave Alma some pointed counsel that included a charge to remember his family's bondage in the land of Helam:

> Now I say unto thee: Go, and **remember the captivity of thy fathers in the land of Helam**, and in the land of Nephi; **and remember how great things he has done for them**; for they were in bondage, and he has delivered them. And now I say unto thee, Alma, go thy way, and seek to destroy the church no more, that their prayers may be answered, and this even if thou wilt of thyself be cast off. (Mosiah 27:16)

Alma's reminiscence of this event given shortly after his conversion, as Mormon has included from his source here in Mosiah 27, and Alma's more reflective account given to his son Helaman (in Alma 36), appear to have influenced the way Mormon presents his account of $Alma_1$ and his people's experience in Helam in Mosiah 23.

If we recognize this as one literary unit, we see that $Alma_2$'s immediate mandate to remember Helam, though Mormon places it later, would focus Mormon's editorial instincts on the significance of the place, the name, and the symbolism of Helam in his own retelling of the initial story in Mosiah 23. (Mormon's own name was given in remembrance of their previous location, as he states in 3 Nephi 5:12.) John W.

33. On the significance of $Alma_2$ "go[ing] about secretly" to destroy the church established by his father, $Alma_1$, who "went about privately among the people" teaching the words of Abinadi (Mosiah 18:1) and establishing a church, see Matthew L. Bowen, "'He Did Go About Secretly': Additional Thoughts on the Literary Use of Alma's Name" *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 27 (2017): 197–212, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/he-did-go-about-secretly-additional-thoughts-on-the-literary-use-of-almas-name.

Welch,[34] John A. Tvedtnes[35] and S. Kent Brown[36] have drawn attention to the language of the personal accounts of $Alma_2$'s conversion and the intricate ways in which that language finds expression in other texts (e.g., Alma 29). Mormon's incorporation of language and themes from these accounts is similarly intricate and even extends into his narration of events a generation before $Alma_2$'s conversion.

In making and publicizing what is arguably the most significant textual discovery within the Book of Mormon, namely the chiastic structure comprising Alma 36, Welch[37] has powerfully illustrated the structural importance of the material at both the beginning and the end relating to the Lehitic covenant and the redemption of Alma's people. At the center of this chiastic structure, and upon which the entire structure hinges, is Alma's remembrance of Jesus Christ and his cry for salvation.[38] That structure has been reproduced below, in part, to highlight the prominence of the covenant material, the importance of divine deliverance, and centrality of Jesus Christ to Alma's conversion and redemption:

> The commandments of Alma to his son Helaman.
> A My son, give ear to my words;
> B for I swear unto you, that inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God **ye shall prosper in the land**.

34. John W. Welch, "Three Accounts of Alma's Conversion," chart at Scripture Central, scripturecentral.org/archive/media/chart/three-accounts-almas-conversion. Also in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: A Decade of New Research*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), 150–53, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/66/.
35. John A. Tvedtnes, "The Voice of an Angel," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1997), 311–21, archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/sites/default/files/archive-files/pdf/tvedtnes/2019-12-30/12_john_a._tvedtnes_the_voice_of_an_angel_311-321.pdf.
36. S. Kent Brown, "Alma's Conversion: Reminiscences in His Sermons," in *From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1998), 113–27, scripturecentral.org/archive/books/book/jerusalem-zarahemla-literary-and-historical-studies-book-mormon.
37. John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 10, no. 1 (1969): 69–84. See also Welch, "A Masterpiece: Alma 36," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1991), 114–31, scripturecentral.org/archive/books/book-chapter/masterpiece-alma-36.
38. Matthew L. Bowen, "Alma's Cry for Salvation," *Religious Educator* 24, no. 2 (2023): 40–49.

C I would that ye should do as I have done,
D **in remembering the captivity of our fathers**; for they were in bondage,
E **and none could deliver them except it was the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and he surely did deliver them in their afflictions.** (Alma 36:1–2)

. . .

Q behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one **Jesus Christ**, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.
Q' Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, **I cried** within my heart: **O Jesus, thou Son of God**, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death. (Alma 36:17–18)

. . .

E' **God has delivered me from prison, and from bonds, and from death; yea, and I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me. . . .**
D' yea, and I will praise him forever, for he has brought our fathers out of Egypt, and he has swallowed up the Egyptians in the Red Sea; and he led them by his power into the promised land; yea, and he has delivered them out of bondage and captivity from time to time. Yea, **and he has also brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem; and he has also, by his everlasting power, delivered them out of bondage and captivity**, from time to time even down to the present day; **and I have always retained in remembrance their captivity; yea, and ye also ought to retain in remembrance, as I have done, their captivity**.
C' But behold, my son, this is not all; for ye ought to know as I do know,
B' that **inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land**; and ye ought to know also, that inasmuch as ye will not keep the commandments of God ye shall be cut off from his presence.
A' Now this is according to his word. (Alma 36:27–30)

Mormon's abridged account of $Alma_1$'s people in the land of Helam also links prosperity, bondage, and the ultimate promise of not being

cut off, but of being welcomed into God's presence. It draws almost verbatim in some instances from $Alma_2$'s words in his initial account of his conversion and his account to his son Helaman:

$Alma_2$'s personal accounts — the sources for the language of Mormon's narration	**Mormon's narration**
"Now I say unto thee: Go, and remember **the captivity of thy fathers in the land of Helam**, and in the land of Nephi; and remember how great things he has done for them; **for they were in bondage, and he has delivered them**" (Mosiah 27:16)	"Yea, and in the valley of Alma they poured out their thanks to God because he had been merciful unto them, and eased their burdens, **and had delivered them out of bondage; for they were in bondage, and none could deliver them except it were the Lord their God**" (Mosiah 24:21)
"I swear unto you, that inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God **ye shall prosper in the land**" (Alma 36:1)	"And it came to pass that **they began to prosper exceedingly in the land**; and they called the land **Helam**. And it came to pass that **they did multiply and prosper exceedingly in the land of Helam**; and they built a city, which they called the city of **Helam**. Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith" (Mosiah 23:19–21)
"I would that ye should do as I have done, in remembering the captivity of our fathers; **for they were in bondage**, and **none could deliver them except it was the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob**; and **he surely did deliver them in their afflictions**" (Alma 36:2)	"Nevertheless — **whosoever putteth his trust in him the same shall be lifted up at the last day**" (Mosiah 23:22a)
"And now, O my son Helaman, behold, thou art in thy youth, and therefore, I beseech of thee that thou wilt hear my words and learn of me; for I do know that **whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day**" (Alma 36:3).	"Yea, and thus it was with this people. For behold, I will show unto you that **they were brought into bondage**, **and none could deliver them but the Lord their God, yea, even the God of Abraham and Isaac and of Jacob**" (Mosiah 23:22b-23)

Note how Mormon's narration in Mosiah 23:19–23 inverts the order of $Alma_2$'s statements in Alma 36:1–3. Donald W. Parry has identified several examples of inverted quotations in the Bible and the Book

of Mormon.[39] Mormon's explicit citation of Alma's words to Helaman (Alma 36:2–3) in Mosiah 23:22–23 constitutes another example of this practice. Mormon inverts the order of Alma's statements: "for they were in bondage, and none could deliver them except it was the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"; "whosoever shall put their trust in God shall be supported in their trials, and their troubles, and their afflictions, and shall be lifted up at the last day" in laying out one of his major reasons for including the story of prosperity and bondage in Helam and divine deliverance: "whosoever putteth his trust in him the same shall be lifted up at the last day"; "they were brought into bondage, and none could deliver them but the Lord their God, yea, even the God of Abraham and Isaac and of Jacob."

Mormon's double emphasis on the fulfillment of the Lehitic covenant in Helam ("they began to prosper exceedingly in the land; and they called the land Helam"; "that they did multiply and prosper exceedingly in the land of Helam") in the text of Mosiah 23:19–20 appears to have been prompted or reinforced by at least two things. First, the angel's charge for $Alma_2$ to "remember the captivity of thy fathers in the land of **Helam**" called to mind both the prosperity and abundance of $Alma_1$'s people in Helam as well as the Egypt-evoking "army" that enslaved them. Second, Alma's twofold invocation of the Lehitic covenant in the chiasmus of Alma 36:1, 30 directed to Helaman ("inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land" [two times]). Recognizing $Alma_2$'s conversion story and the charge given in Mosiah 27:16 as the culmination of the entire Helam episode (Mosiah 24–27) helps us see the logic in Mormon's use of the language of $Alma_2$'s conversion accounts in his own account of the $Alma_1$'s people's prosperity, abundance, captivity in — and finally deliverance from — Helam.

Conclusion

Textual evidence suggests that the name Helam — attested as place name in the Hebrew Bible (2 Samuel 10:16–17) as well as a personal name (Mosiah 18:12–14) and a place name (Mosiah 23:19–20, 25–26, 29, 35, 37–39, 27:16; Alma 24:1) in the Book of Mormon — means something like "[God is] their wealth," "[God is] their abundance,"

39. Donald W. Perry, "Inverted Quotations," in *Preserved in Translation: Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book), 89–92.

"[God is] their power" or even "[God is] their army." The Latin Vulgate, which renders Helam as *exercitum eorum*, confirms that at least some ancient tradents saw and heard the name as *ḥêlām*, not as a proper noun but simply as directly meaning "their army."

While this meaning of Helam fits the context of armies gathering for battle in the account of David's and the Israelite army's victory over the Syrian army in 2 Samuel 10:15–17, as the Vulgate rendering affirms, it *better* fits within the narrative of Mosiah 23, especially as the rich polysemy (range of multiple meanings) of the Hebrew noun *ḥayil/hêl* is considered. Hebrew *ḥayil*, *hêl* in its construct (genitive) form, denotes "wealth, abundance," as well as "army." The repeated emphasis on Alma's people's abundance in Helam[40] demonstrates that covenant faithfulness leads to the fulfillment of the Lehitic covenant and the Abrahamic covenant in this aptly named place. It links this story to the covenant salvation offered to ancient Israel and to Lehi's descendants. However, the name Helam becomes ironic with the coming of the Lamanite "army" (*ḥayil/ḥêl*) that brings Alma's people into bondage, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Abinadi. Mormon draws parallels to the Lamanite army and the Lamanite presence in Helam in Mosiah 23–24 with the "taskmasters" of Egypt and the "army" or "host" of the Pharoah in Exodus 14–15, which is always characterized with the Hebrew noun form *ḥêl*.

Mormon's narrative in Mosiah 23 draws heavily (sometimes verbatim) on $Alma_2$'s accounts of his own conversion as preserved in Mosiah 27:16 and Alma 36:1–3, 27–30 and the angel's charge to "remember the captivity of [his] fathers in the land of Helam." In doing so, his editorial work exhibits sophistication and skill. Through an artful use of polysemy, irony, and intertextuality involving the name *Helam*, Mormon demonstrates that even covenant righteousness does not exempt one from all of life's trials, troubles, or afflictions. Nor does it nullify the words of a prophet whose prophetic testimony has been sealed with his own blood. Mormon demonstrates on the one hand that covenant obedience eventuates in prosperity and multiplication in fulfillment of divine covenants, but on the other hand that the Lord enables decreed consequences to come to fruition, even as he mitigates their effects. Mormon clearly illustrates that only Jesus Christ—the God

40. And it came to pass that they began to prosper exceedingly in the land; and they called the land Helam . . . they did multiply and prosper exceedingly in the land of Helam; and they built a city, which they called the city of Helam. (Mosiah 23:19–20)

of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — can ultimately deliver from bondage. Mormon also causes us to rethink the very nature of prosperity, wealth, or abundance, which can certainly be material, but in the end is much, much more than that.

The Lord separately charged Oliver Cowdery and Hyrum Smith in our own dispensation,

> Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich. (Doctrine and Covenants 6:7; 11:7)

The Lord further promised the early Saints of this dispensation:

> And if ye seek the riches which it is the will of the Father to give unto you, ye shall be the richest of all people, for ye shall have the riches of eternity; and it must needs be that the riches of the earth are mine to give; but beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old. (Doctrine and Covenants 38:39)

From time to time, we need the Lord's reminder, as did they: "Behold and lo, mine eyes are upon you, and the heavens and the earth are in mine hands, and the riches of eternity are mine to give" (Doctrine and Covenants 67:2). Sometimes, even more than those forebearers, we forget that prosperity, wealth, or abundance also includes our family relationships:

> Now, I, the Lord, am not well pleased with the inhabitants of Zion, for there are idlers among them; and their children are also growing up in wickedness; they also seek not earnestly the riches of eternity, but their eyes are full of greediness. (Doctrine and Covenants 68:31)

As he was patient with and understanding of their weakness, the Lord is patient with and understanding of ours. The Lord desires that his children truly prosper in all regards.

> And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours. (Doctrine and Covenants 78:18)

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