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Atop the Rameumptom

Allen Wyatt

Abstract: *Holy stands come in all shapes and sizes. We need to be careful that we don't unknowingly fashion a Rameumptom that blinds us to the ways in which God works with imperfect people of all eras.*

Alma 31 recounts an interesting story, one with which we are all, no doubt, familiar. Alma and his missionary companions are going to preach to some people in the land of Antionum. The people who gathered in this land are followers of a leader named Zoram, so they dissent from the Nephites and call themselves *Zoramites*. Alma has "received tidings that the Zoramites were perverting the ways of the Lord" (Alma 31:1)[1] and had "fallen into great errors" (Alma 31:9). To compound the problem, "the Nephites greatly feared that the Zoramites would enter into a correspondence with the Lamanites" (Alma 31:4). Clearly, something needed to be done.

Alma knew where such straying from God's laws could (and inevitably does) lead. So, he assembled a missionary team, rushed to the area, and started poking about. To his "astonishment," Alma found that the Zoramites had built meeting places ("synagogues") and that they gathered once a week to worship in a way that had never been seen before (Alma 31:12). In the middle of their meeting places, they had built a high tower that would only hold a single person at a time. One by

1. The Zoramites also had part in the death of Korihor (Alma 30:59). It is possible that the "tidings" received by Alma were conveyed by those who bore news of Korihor's death in the land of Antionum. See Godfrey J. Ellis, "The Rise and Fall of Korihor, a Zoramite: A New Look at the Failed Mission of an Agent of Zoram," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 48 (2021): 74–77, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-rise-and-fall-of-korihor-a-zoramite-a-new-look-at-the-failed-mission-of-an-agent-of-zoram.

one, people would climb to the top of the tower and each offer the exact same prayer, in a loud voice:

> Holy, holy God; we believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and that thou wast a spirit, and that thou art a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit forever.
>
> Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren; and we do not believe in the tradition of our brethren, which was handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers; but we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and also thou hast made it known unto us that there shall be no Christ.
>
> But thou art the same yesterday, today, and forever; and thou hast elected us that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell; for the which holiness, O God, we thank thee; and we also thank thee that thou hast elected us, that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren, which doth bind them down to a belief of Christ, which doth lead their hearts to wander far from thee, our God.
>
> And again we thank thee, O God, that we are a chosen and a holy people. Amen. (Alma 31:15–18)

This tower on which the prayer was offered was called by the people *Rameumptom*, meaning *holy stand* (Alma 31:21).[2] Alma saw the prayer as evidence of one thing: pride (see Alma 31:24–25). In fact, the Zoramite incident has been used when teaching people about the perils of pride.[3]

Pride is, of course, a common vice — so common, in fact, that it is considered one of the seven deadly sins, sometimes under the synonym *hubris*. Many also consider it the deadliest of sins, as voiced by C. S. Lewis:

> The essential vice, the utmost evil, is pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites

2. For the Hebrew roots of the term *Rameumptom*, see the *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. Rameumptom, onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php?title=RAMEUMPTOM.
3. See, for example, Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Pride and the Priesthood," *Ensign* (November 2010), 55–58. "Pride is the great sin of self-elevation. It is for so many a personal Rameumptom, a holy stand that justifies envy, greed, and vanity" (p. 56).

> in comparison. It was through pride that the devil became the devil. Pride leads to every other vice; it is the complete anti-God state of mind.[4]

When it comes to pride, Alma's story about the Zoramites is instructive because we, as humans, also have a tendency to unthinkingly climb upon our own Rameumptoms. We may not believe that we do; we attend Church, we help the poor, we organize the PTA bake sale. We even watch numerous *Come, Follow Me* videos and endless hours of *Music and the Spoken Word*. We are, in a word, good people.

We certainly don't look down upon the people we see around us from a lofty perch on a tower as did the Zoramites. We know that to do so could be seen as uncharitable, lacking empathy, or intolerant. We do, however, easily and freely look down upon those who are no longer with us.

The Rameumtom of which I speak is temporal in nature. From our position at the apex of time, we look back upon people in bygone generations and thank God that we are not like them. We see ourselves as enlightened, as somehow smarter and "better off" than those who came before.

There are any number of subjects that cause us to climb our temporal Rameumptoms and claim our "election" as God's "holy children" because we "do not believe in the traditions . . . handed down" by the "childishness of [our] fathers" (see Alma 31:16). Subjects such as racism, sexism, imperialism, ageism, materialism, and classism are sample touchstones for making the climb and proclaiming our own prayer of thanks in a loud voice.

Judgments made from our Rameumptoms cause us to condemn those in the past to lives of error and wrong. We are grateful that we are not "led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren . . . which doth lead their hearts to wander far from thee, our God" (Alma 31:17). The assumption, of course, is that "our God" would never allow such thinking among his people — and especially his leaders — as what is exemplified in the words or acts of previous generations.

I can understand having difficulties when statements made by those in past generations don't fare well when measured against the standards of today. Plenty (as in tens of thousands) of such statements

4. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 94, punctuation normalized, archive.org/details/merechristianity0000unse_q8b8/page/94/mode/2up.

could be found. They can be found penned in letters, preached over the pulpit, codified in official pronouncements, uttered in the Church, pontificated in the halls of Congress, and proclaimed by kings. They were ubiquitous. We damn people whom we've never met for having the temerity to make such statements and believe such things. From our temporal Rameumptoms, we thank God that we are better than that.

I often think of one of my grandfathers, born in 1903. He was raised far back in the hills of Tennessee but, by the time he was twenty, went north to find work. He died when I was forty-four years old, and I had many years to be with him, listen to him, learn of him, and learn from him. I knew of the world in which he was reared because he took the time to explain it to me. I walked with him in his old childhood haunts. I knew that in his Tennessee county, the northern portion sided with the Union during the Civil War and the southern portion sided with the Confederacy. (One of my ancestors with the surname Flynn, alive and active during the Civil War, even named a son, born in 1862, Abraham Lincoln Flynn. This was a gutsy and dangerous act in Tennessee during that period.) In other words, I know the background of my grandfather and his family.

I knew that my grandfather would, at times, refer to Blacks using the same language that his Tennessee contemporaries would use. I also knew that he didn't have any animosity in the least toward Blacks. His words were just "how it was done at the time." (This was driven home to me when I would visit Tennessee with him and observe the interaction between him, his siblings and cousins, and the other townspeople.)

Of course, it isn't done that way anymore. I knew that well before he died. No doubt many today would judge him a racist because of his past word choices. But I knew him, and he wasn't racist — except by the standards of a later day.

Don't get me wrong: I'm not justifying the words of my grandfather or any other historical person. To justify them would be the flip side of the coin played by those on their temporal Rameumptoms. The words spoken by those of earlier days need neither justification nor condemnation, for to do either is to judge. To judge accurately — dare I say, "to judge righteously" — we must come down from our Rameumptoms and use the standards of *those* days, not the standards of today.

It seems that, perhaps, a teaching of Jesus may be appropriate to mention here:

> Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment

> you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. (ESV Matthew 7:1–2)

This teaching doesn't forbid all judgments at all times. One must make judgments, for instance, on when it is safe to cross the street, which apartment to rent, what food to eat, what career to pursue, or to whom we should trust our children. We should, however, not judge the motives or intents of others when we cannot see their hearts. This is doubly true when we claim the approbation of God for ourselves and deny that approbation to others — we judge that we are worthy of God's favor, but those who lived before us were not. Jesus teaches that we will be judged for such judgments and the measure we used in our judging will be used to judge us.

In scholarly terms, we don't use the term *Rameumptom* to describe this human tendency to justify our enlightenment and harshly judge those of earlier times. Instead, the name that is most often affixed is *presentism* — the tendency to judge those of different eras by the standards of our day. We mistakenly assume that people of all eras should be judged by the standards by which we have chosen to live. Lynn Hunt, past president of the American Historical Association, makes the point:

> Presentism, at its worst, encourages a kind of moral complacency and self-congratulation. Interpreting the past in terms of present concerns usually leads us to find ourselves morally superior. . . . Our forbears constantly fail to measure up to our present-day standards.[5]

Hunt's words were directed toward those who sought to evaluate the past, toward actual and aspiring historians. But presentism is something that can afflict anyone, professional or not. There is no credential check when climbing our temporal Rameumptoms. We can easily believe that anything that went before is of lower value and the result of ignorance or "wrong thinking." We believe that the standards we now follow are self-evident, singularly virtuous, and blessed by God because, in the mis-applied logic of the Zoramites, he "is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

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5. Lynn Hunt, "Against Presentism," *Perspectives* 40, no. 5 (May 2002): 8, historians.org/perspectives-article/against-presentism-may-2002/. See also Paul Bartow, "The Growing Threat of Historical Presentism," American Enterprise Institute, 10 December 2015, aei.org/society-and-culture/the-growing-threat-of-historical-presentism/.

In other words, we climb our individual and collective temporal Rameumptoms and thank God we now know better and we aren't like those poor, benighted souls in times gone by. We sit atop our throne at the summit of human progress, smugly complacent in the knowledge that we are better than all who came before.

Except we aren't.

We are still human and, therefore, prone to human weaknesses. In time, we will climb our Rameumptom for the last time and eventually be replaced by someone of a future generation. Those who replace us, from their own finely fashioned holy stand, will likely judge us with the same harsh judgment we currently mete out — "with the measure you use it will be measured to you."

In climbing the tower, we jettison charity and, consciously or not, cloak ourselves in pride. Our own temporal Rameumptoms are symptomatic of destructive personal pride just as surely as the physical Rameumptoms were for the Zoramites. To return to the words of C. S. Lewis, consider this, with only slight revision from the original:

> How is it that people who are quite obviously eaten up with pride can say they believe in God and appear to themselves very religious? I am afraid it means they are worshiping an imaginary God. They theoretically admit themselves to be nothing in the presence of this phantom God, but they are really all the time imagining how He approves of them and thinks them far better than [those who came before]. That is, they pay a pennyworth of imaginary humility to Him and get out of it a pound's worth of pride towards [those of bygone eras].[6]

Lewis would have agreed with Alma's evaluation of the spiritual condition of the Zoramites. We are not better than others and, to the point, we are not better than those of the past.

I have no doubt that some who are reading this may not believe in the historicity of the Book of Mormon and thereby can easily dismiss the Alma 31 story of the Rameumptom. Alma never lived, the tower never existed, and the Zoramites and Nephites were never real people. Case closed, move on, there is nothing to see here. If that occurs, then the reader is missing the point. Presentism — whether

6. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 96, punctuation normalized. The "slight revision" is to alter the focus from contemporaries of the prideful to the forbears of the prideful.

practiced on a Rameumptom, behind a keyboard, or around a dinner table — is a human condition. It is part and parcel of the human experience, regardless of our religious affiliation or non-affiliation. Even if one believes that the Zoramites were never human, the believer of that belief *is* human and, thus, subject to human conditions.

As you study the scriptures — any of them, up to and including the Doctrine and Covenants — remember that they are a record of God's dealings with people of the past, and those past people should not be judged by our current sensibilities. When a friend tries to educate you on the "obvious moral turpitude" of early Church leaders, don't let pride and umbrage blind you to the fact that God has, without fail, worked with nothing but imperfect humans. When you run across an article from the *Journal of Discourses* that doesn't seem to stand up well to the harsh light of today's presumed moral superiority, step back and apply a little charity.

The past, after all, is a foreign country.[7] Isn't it time we climb down from our temporal Rameumptoms and enjoy that country on its own terms?



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7. "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there." L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), 3, archive.org/details/gobetween00hart/page/n13/mode/2up.

"Inspired by a Better Cause": The Function of Alma 43:44–45 in Mormon's Account of the Monarchic Wars against the Nephites

Matthew L. Bowen

Abstract: *In Alma 43:44–45, as part of the narration of the war between Amalekite- (Amlicite-) and Zoramite-led Lamanites and the Nephites, Mormon juxtaposes the cause of the Amlicite/Amalekite-motivated "fighting for monarchy" with the Nephites' "better cause" of fighting for wives, children, and religious freedom. In using this terminology, Mormon gives the conflict an onomastic framing: kingship or "monarchy" and Amlicites/Amalekites deriving from the Semitic root* mlk *versus Nephi/Nephites deriving from Egyptian* nfr*, "good," "goodly," etc. Mormon's wordplay illuminates the shift from ethnically defined identity to identity based on our response to the invitation of the true King, Jesus Christ, to become his followers.*

The themes of kingship and identity swirl turbulently through the books of Mosiah and Alma. Mormon weaves onomastic wordplay into Alma 43:44–45 to connect the earlier monarchic Amlicite/Amalekite wars with the later Nephite wars against Amalickiah and the king-men, while simultaneously offering a starkly contrasting vision of a priestly king in Alma 13 (including the use of wordplay on *mlk* there). Mormon's wordplay additionally underlines the normative differences between Nephite and Lamanite groups who are becoming ever less ethnically defined. To this end, Mormon uses wordplay on *mlk* and on the traditional Nephite association with "good" from Egyptian *nfr* to broadly characterize the participants in these conflicts: on the one hand Amlici, Amalickiah, Amlicite/Amalekites (and Zoramites),

king-men, and the unconverted Lamanites led by these apostate individuals and groups, and on the other hand, the Nephites, especially the faithful, now joined with the converted Lamanites or the people of Ammon. Mormon introduces the designations, originally adopted by their enemies, of this latter group as "Christians" and their cause as "the cause of Christians." The onomastic argument is that those who choose earthly monarchy and dominion, with all that Mosiah II taught it would entail (see Mosiah 29), stand against those who choose the "good" or "better cause" and whose cause Mormon ultimately aligns with those he designates as Christians, followers of the true King. Alma 43:45 stands out as another example of an ancient author using the rhetorical tools of wordplay and allusion to enhance and create meaning within an ancient text.

Demographics, Identities, and Characterizing Causes

The book of Alma presents the reader with a highly complicated demographic picture, and Mormon's subtext, highlighted by onomastic wordplay, underlines questions of identity. Mormon's abridged historical narrative covering this period acknowledges numerous migrations and shifting political and religious allegiances. The Amlicites/Amalekites attempt to reestablish Nephite-Mulekite (hereafter Mulochite)[1] kingship and subsequently ally themselves with the Lamanites. The people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi join the Nephites. The Zoramites likewise leave the Nephites to ally themselves with the Lamanites, and the Nephite "king-men" come out in support of the "Lamanite" monarchic aims spearheaded by Amalickiah and, later, his brother. Thus, when Mormon differentiates between Nephites and Lamanites and between Nephites and Amlicites/Amalekites along with the Zoramites, it is not clear that he is doing so based on the traditional ethnic categories presumed by the reader. Here, passages like Alma 43:45 have a potentially unique function that, if recognized, can be helpful for the modern reader: the Nephites, as a religious-political social affinity, become defined in terms of their "better cause" rather than any ethnicity, and the Lamanites, who are already categorized in terms of their "unbelief" in Nephite religious traditions, are further

1. The printer's manuscript has the spelling Muloch in Mosiah 25:2. See *Royal Skousen, Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Three: Mosiah 17–Alma 40* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Apologetic Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2006), 1464–70. The use of "Mulochite" here is intended to reflect that spelling.

defined by their pursuit of "monarchy" under Amalickiah and their Amlicite/Amalekite and Zoramite leadership.

Mormon's abridged book of Alma is also a study in contrasts. In a deeper presentation of competing religious traditions, Mormon contrasts Melchizedek and priesthood leadership "after the order of [God's] Son" with Nehor and religion after "the order of Nehor,"[2] Korihor, and "the iniquity after the manner of Korihor."[3] Similarly, Mormon contrasts the Christlike, self-abnegating political leadership of Alma and his sons, Ammon and the sons of Mosiah, Moroni, and even certain Lamanite kings, with the monarchic self-seeking of Amlici, Amalickiah, Ammoron the brother of Amalickiah, and the king-men. Mormon's account of wars, troop movements, and military maneuvers also draws a contrast between the age-old issue of the right to rule — so central to Lamanite grievances[4] against the Nephites and taken up as a cause in their own ways by Amlici, the Amlicites/Amalekites, Zerahemnah, Amalickiah, and Ammoron — and the Nephite desire to preserve family and religious freedom.

In Alma 43, Mormon directly contrasts the Zoramite- and Amlicite/Amalekite-motivated Lamanite cause with the Nephite cause, describing the latter as "a better cause":

> And they were inspired by the Zoramites and the **Amalekites**, who were their chief captains and leaders, and by Zerahemnah, who was their chief captain, or their chief leader and commander; yea, they did fight like dragons, and many of the Nephites were slain by their hands, yea, for they did smite in two many of their head-plates, and they did pierce many of their breastplates, and they did smite off many of their arms; and thus the Lamanites did smite in their fierce anger. Nevertheless, **the Nephites** were inspired by a **better cause**, for they were not fighting for **monarchy** nor power but they were fighting for **their homes and their**

2. See, for example, Alma 24:29.
3. Alma 30:58. For an in-depth treatment of Nephite notions of kingship and priesthood as manifest in the book of Alma and elsewhere, see Avram R. Shannon, "After Whose Order? Kingship and Priesthood in the Book of After Whose Order? Kingship and Priesthood in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2021): 75–91, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol60/iss4/6/.
4. On the issue of the right to rule as an exploitable Lamanite grievance across time, see Noel B. Reynolds, "The Political Dimension in Nephi's Small Plates," *BYU Studies* 27, no. 4 (1987): 15–37, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol27/iss4/3/.

> **liberties, their wives and their children**, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church. (Alma 43:44–45)

The Hebrew and Egyptian languages — the two Old World languages that must have had far-and-away the greatest influence on what became the Nephite language (see "A Note on Nephite Language," below) — both lacked comparative adjectives[5] in the way that we typically use them in English. Hebrew and Egyptian created a two-member comparative construction using a regular adjective with a preposition (*m–* or *min* in Hebrew, *r* in Egyptian).[6] In other words, in expressing the idea of "better than" in Egyptian one would literally say "good to" (*nfr r*) or in Hebrew one would say "good from" (*ṭôb mi-*). As Gardiner's definitive study notes, "The Egyptian adjective has no special forms to indicate the degrees of comparison. Comparison is effected by means of the preposition . . . *r,* which . . . signifies 'more than,' literally perhaps 'relatively to.'"[7] For example, the phrase *nfr r ḫt nbt* denoted "better than everything."[8] Janet Johnson notes that in Demotic, the stage of the Egyptian language that began during Lehi's time, "the comparative form of the adjective was formed using the preposition *r*,"[9] as in earlier stages of the language, citing the example *pꜣ ꜥꜣ r- ỉr=k* ("the [man] greater than you").[10]

Forms of biblical Hebrew *ṭôb mi-* show up in significant passages like 1 Samuel 15:18, which describes David as "better than" Saul [*haṭṭôb mimmekā*, "better than thou"] and Proverbs 8:11, "wisdom is better than rubies [*ṭôbâ ḥokmâ mippĕnînîm*]." Some contexts demand that "good" (*ṭôb*) be understood as "better." For example, the children of Israel complained to Moses, "Were it not **better** [*ṭôb*] for us to return into Egypt?" (Numbers 14:3). The people who supported David during

5. Comparative adjectives are adjectives that are used to make comparisons. For example, *better* and *worse* are comparative adjectives of quality. In English, comparative adjectives are typically, but not always, created by the addition of the *-er* suffix (e.g., richer, poorer). In English, superlative adjectives include words like *best* and *worst*. Superlative adjectives are typically formed by the addition of the *-est* suffix (e.g., *fastest*, *slowest*).
6. See Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. T. Muraoka (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2005), 2:522–23; Alan Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd ed. rev. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1957), 47 (§50).
7. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 47 (§50).
8. James B. Allen, *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs*, 2nd rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 87.
9. Janet Johnson, *Thus Wrote ʿOnchsheshonqy: An Introductory Grammar of Demotic*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2000), 46n2 (§57).
10. Johnson, *Thus Wrote ʿOnchsheshonqy*, 46 (§57).

Absalom's rebellion urged him not to go forth to battle: "Therefore now it is **better** [*ṭôb*] that thou succour us out of the city [or, send us help from the city]" (2 Samuel 18:3). Thus, there is a strong possibility that in describing the Nephites' cause as "a better cause," Mormon is using the expression "**good** cause" *understood* as a comparative. In any case, his description of the Nephite cause as "a **better** cause" alludes to the meaning of Nephi (as a form of Egyptian *nfr*,[11] denoting "good," "goodly," or "fair)"[12] in a way that updates for his readership the earlier ethnic associations of Nephites with "good" and "fair" to reflect more contemporary socio-political and religious realities. Mormon similarly updates the identifier "Nephites" in terms of "fair" in 3 Nephi 2:14–16 and 4 Nephi 1:10 (compare Mormon 6:17–19).

In this study, we will see that in Alma 43:44–45, while depicting Zerahemnah's Zoramite- and Amlicite/Amalekite-led war, Mormon juxtaposes the two onomastic associations to create an effective narrative transition that epitomizes and contrasts the respective causes of the Zoramite- and Amlicite/Amalekite-led Lamanites — soon to be led by Amalickiah — and the Nephites. He does so in terms that graphically and aurally reflect the meaning of Nephi and the Semitic *mlk*-associations suggested by the names Amlici and Amalickiah as well as their gentilic derivatives: Nephites, Amlicites/Amalekites, and Amalickiahites (and also "king-men").

Table 1. The *good* cause versus the *monarchic* cause.

lexical source	Egyptian *nfr* (*nfi*)	Semitic/Hebrew *mlk*
meaning	good, goodly, fair, fine	king, kingship (monarchy), to reign (as king)
name	Nephi	Melchizedek, Amlici, Amalickiah
gentilic association	Nephites	Amlicites/Amalekites, Amalickiahites, king-men

11. John Gee, "A Note on the Name Nephi," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (1992): 189–91, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol1/iss1/12/; John Gee, "Four Suggestions on the Origin of the Name Nephi," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2009), 1–5, scripturecentral.org/archive/books/book/pressing-forward-book-mormon-farms-updates-1990s.
12. Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian (Oxford: Griffith Institute*, 1999), 131–32. See also Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971), 2:252–63.

This juxtaposition enhances Mormon's transition between the monarchic wars of the Amlicites/Amalekites in the first part of the book of Alma (Alma 2–28) and the monarchic wars instigated by Amalickiah, Ammoron, and the king-men in the latter part (Alma 46–62). Mormon associates the Amlicites/Amalekites with the pursuit of kingship or "fighting for monarchy." The gentilic name Amlicites/Amalekites and terminology denoting "kingship" or "monarchy" both constitute likely derivations from the Semitic/Hebrew triliteral root *mlk* (hereafter √*mlk*) in Semitic languages. Mormon juxtaposes this monarchism against his association of the Nephites with the "good" or "better cause," echoing the Egyptian meaning of the name Nephi ("good," "goodly," "fair," "beautiful"). Mormon's editorial work here is consistent both with his narratological association elsewhere of Amlici, Amalickiah, and the king-men with √*mlk*-associated terminology, and also with the etymological and popular association of Nephi and Nephites with "good" ("better") or "fair" (i.e., *nfr*-terminology).

Mormon tells us that the Nephite cause is the *better* moral cause. So what practical, additional function does the wordplay serve? By linking this argument to "Nephites" as a gentilic name, Mormon underlines the extent to which *choosing* the *better* cause (a religious cause), rather than any other factor, is becoming the defining characteristic of Nephite identity. In doing so, Mormon's account in the book of Alma is remarkably consistent with what Noel Reynolds identified as Nephi's thesis statement for his small plates record: "But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance" (1 Nephi 1:20).[13] Thus, in this study we will also see in Alma 43:45 yet another example of how ancient authors used rhetorical tools such as wordplay and allusion to emphasize, enhance, and create meaning within ancient texts.

A Note on Nephite Language

As one born and raised in or near Jerusalem in the seventh century BCE, Nephi's primary language was inevitably Hebrew. Nephi, however, asserts that he had also been "taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" including "the language of [his] father, which consist[ed] of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians"

13. Noel B. Reynolds, "Nephi's Outline," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 20, no.2 (1980): 1–2, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol20/iss2/2/.

(1 Nephi 1:1–2). Nephi stated that he made a record in this "language" (1 Nephi 1:2). There is no current Latter-day Saint scholarly consensus on whether this refers to the (then) contemporary Egyptian language or to one of the various scripts (e.g., hieroglyphs, hieratic, carved hieratic, abnormal hieratic, or demotic)[14] in which Egyptian was then being written and which were sometimes used to write other languages.

The best evidence suggests Lehi was a trained Manassite scribe and that he passed his training on to his son Nephi.[15] Lehi and Nephi would certainly have been able to read Hebrew written in the contemporary paleo-Hebrew script (as distinct from the later and more familiar Aramean block script commonly used to write and copy Hebrew texts after the exile and up to the present day). If Lehi was indeed a scribe who could read and write Hebrew written in an Egyptian script, it is also probable that he would have known at least some of the Egyptian language itself.[16] Ancient scribal activities frequently required the administrative use of multiple languages. Even a basic knowledge of Egyptian would explain Lehi giving Nephi an Egyptian name and Nephi's knowledge of the meaning of his name (Egyptian *nfr*;[17] one of the commonest Egyptian words of all of the stages of that language), not to mention the wordplay on this meaning that recurs throughout his record.[18] In addition to the association of the derived gentilic term "Nephites" with being "good" or "fair,"[19] it would also explain

14. See discussion in William Hamblin, "Reformed Egyptian," *FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007): 31–35, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1694&context=msr.
15. See Noel B. Reynolds, "Lehi and Nephi as Trained Manassite Scribes," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 50 (2022): 161–216, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/lehi-and-nephi-as-trained-manassite-scribes; See also Brant A. Gardner, "Nephi as Scribe," *Mormon Studies Review* 23, no. 1 (2011): 45–55, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1831&context=msr. Neal Rappleye, "Learning Nephi's Language: Creating a Context for 1 Nephi 1:2," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 16 (2015): 151–59, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/learning-nephis-language-creating-a-context-for-1-nephi-12.
16. This is to say, Nephi probably knew more of the Egyptian language than just the sounds of the Egyptian letters and how to represent Hebrew in an Egyptian text.
17. Gee, "A Note on the Name Nephi," 189–91; Gee, "Four Suggestions on the Origin of the Name Nephi," 1–5.
18. See Matthew L. Bowen, "Nephi's Good Inclusio" *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 181–95, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/nephis-good-inclusio.
19. Matthew L. Bowen, "'O Ye Fair Ones': An Additional Note on the Meaning

other Egyptianisms that occur in Nephi's small plates writing (e.g., the "rod" as "word" reflecting Egyptian *mdw* (later *md.t./mt.t*)[20] and the "love of God" being "most desirable above all things," as playing on Egyptian *mr(i)* ("love, desire, wish") and echoing the name Miriam/Mary.[21] Egyptian based wordplay in Nephi's small plates would be perfectly consistent with the influence of Egypt in Judah before and during Lehi's time. Even in the northern kingdom, from which Lehi's immediate forebearers were likely refugees, Egyptian influence would presumably go back to Joseph's own sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) speaking Egyptian from their birth. Indeed, Noel B. Reynolds avers that "Joseph's descendants were clearly accorded elite status and would have had access to advanced scribal education in Egypt."[22] The Manassite scribal school to which Lehi and Nephi belonged, as proposed by Reynolds, would have furnished a very practical, if not perfect, vehicle for the perpetuation of the use of Egyptian language and script in the production of religious and non-religious documents in Israel and, later, in Judah. As a member of such a school, Nephi would thus be expected to have Egyptianisms in his writing.

In any case, the two languages (or writing systems) that Nephi's final successor Moroni said his people knew and used throughout the

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of the Name Nephi," *Insights* 23, no. 6 (2003): 2–3, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1308&context=insights; Matthew L. Bowen, "Not Partaking of the Fruit: Its Generational Consequences and Its Remedy," in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, Stanley A. Johnson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University [BYU], 2011), 240–63, rsc.byu.edu/things-which-my-father-saw/not-partaking-fruit-its-generational-consequences-its-remedy. Matthew L. Bowen, "'O Ye Fair Ones'—Revisited," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 20 (2016): 315–44, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/o-ye-fair-ones-revisited; Matthew L. Bowen, "Laman and Nephi as Key Words: An Etymological, Narratological, and Rhetorical Approach to Understanding Lamanites and Nephites as Religious, Political, and Cultural Descriptors" (FAIR Conference Presentation, Provo, UT, August 7–9, 2019), fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference_home/august-2019-old/laman-and-nephi-as-key-words.

20. Matthew L. Bowen, "What Meaneth the Rod of Iron?" *Insights* 25, no. 2 (2005): 2–3, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/insights/vol25/iss2/3/.
21. Matthew L. Bowen, "'Most Desirable Above All Things': Onomastic Play on Mary and Mormon in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 13 (2015): 27–61, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/most-desirable-above-all-things-onomastic-play-on-mary-and-mormon-in-the-book-of-mormon.
22. Reynolds, "Lehi and Nephi as Trained Manassite Scribes," 187.

duration of their roughly one-thousand-year history were Egyptian and Hebrew, though the use of these languages/scripts evolved overtime by Moroni's own account. He writes, "And now, behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record" (Mormon 9:32–33). In this study, I will proceed on the assumption that the Nephites linguistic inventory remained heavily Hebrew and included some Egyptian, an assumption corroborated by the abundance of Hebrew and Egyptian names in the Nephite onomasticon and by the witness of Moroni, the last Nephite writer, who said they used both languages even during his own time.

Melchizedek and Melchizedek Priesthood: A Righteous Foil to the Monarchism of Amlici, the Amlicites/Amalekites, Amalickiah, and the King-men

One strong indication that the Nephite language remained essentially Hebrew during the time of $Alma_2$ is the wordplay on Melchizedek that Alma uses. His speech contrasts priesthood "after [God's] holy order, which was after the order of his Son"[23] with the claims of the people of Ammonihah, many of whom were "after the faith and order of Nehor" or "of the profession of Nehor" (Alma 14:16, 18). Notably, Alma's wordplay on Melchizedek and Salem does not involve the use of explanatory glossing ("being by interpretation," "which is"). In contrast, the New Testament letter to the Hebrews' explanation of Melchizedek and Salem *does* gloss these Semitic names for its Greek-speaking Jewish audience of Christians (Hebrews 7:2). Alma's speech assumes his apparently Hebrew-speaking (or at least Hebrew-knowledgeable) audience will make the connections between the names and the relevant Semitic terminology from which those names are built. Although salient within the immediate context of the Ammonihah narrative and $Alma_2$'s goal of bringing the Nehorite apostates of Ammonihah to repentance, Alma's wordplay on Melchizedek and Salem is even more significant in the broader context of the book of Alma, where monarchic assertion or reassertion is the dominant political issue.

23. Alma 13:1–2. See also Alma 13:6–11, 14, 16, 18.

Alma's Melchizedek wordplay begins in earnest with an emphasis on the *ṣedeq* or *ṣĕdāqâ*—the "righteousness"—practiced by those who "became high priests of God" after his "holy order." Alma states, "Now, as I said concerning the holy order, or this high priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God; and it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their **righteousness** [*ṣedeq/ṣĕdāqâ*] before God, they choosing to repent and work **righteousness** [*ṣedeq/ṣĕdāqâ*] rather than to perish; therefore they were called after this holy order" (Alma 13:10–11). Alma frames the "repentance" and "righteousness" of the "many" who became "high priests" after the same "order" as Melchizedek as "choosing" to live the doctrine of Christ ("their exceeding faith and repentance"). This doctrine provides a consistently defining aspect of Nephite religion over the span of Nephite history[24] and could not be more opposite to the tenets of "the profession of Nehor," whose adherents "did not believe in the repentance of their sins" (Alma 15:15). At this point it is worth considering whether the marriage of Nehorism and Amlicite (possibly Mulochite) monarchism included the religious concept that they were entitled to become "kings" (i.e., they were would-be priest-kings) or, more likely, that that they were kings by birth and had divine rights over priesthood, such as we see king Josiah and, later, king Noah specifically exercise.[25] Either way, they seemed to have assumed royal and priestly prerogatives absent the doctrinal principle of repentance, perhaps as a perversion of the Davidic enthronement liturgy of Psalm 110:4: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Hence Alma's emphasis on repentance in his speech.) Mormon later says the following of the monarchist Nephite (probably Mulochite) "king-men": "Now **those who were in favor of *kings*** [*mĕlākîm*] **were those of**

24. See, e.g., Noel B. Reynolds, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ as Taught by the Nephite Prophets," *BYU Studies* 31 (Summer 1991): 31–50, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol31/iss3/3/; Noel B. Reynolds, "The True Points of My Doctrine," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5, no. 2 (1996): 26–56, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/1492/; Noel B. Reynolds, "The Gospel According to Mormon," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68, no. 2 (2015): 218–34, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/1479/.

25. See Matthew L. Bowen, "Putting Down the Priests: A Note on Royal Evaluations, (*wĕ*)*hišbîṯ*, and Priestly Purges in 2 Kings 23:5 and Mosiah 11:5," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 51 (2022): 105–14, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/putting-down-the-priests-a-note-on-royal-evaluations-wehisbit-and-priestly-purges-in-2-kings-235-and-mosiah-115.

high birth, and they sought to be *kings* [*mĕlākîm*]; and they were supported by those who sought power and authority over the people" (Alma 51:8).

Nehorite monarchists, especially those of Mulochite descent, likely believed that they were reviving and preserving a more ancient way of life. For them, Nephite kingship and Nephite religion (including the "good"[26] of Nephi's doctrine of Christ) had evidently been a disappointment, and they regarded the dissolution of kingship in Zarahemla as altogether unacceptable. This would be particularly true if the king were the central religious authority in their religion as in monarchic Judah under the descendants of David (the Mulochites were descendants of David through Zedekiah).[27] Alma needed to call upon an even earlier royal religious authority — one preceding Zarahemla, Muloch, Zedekiah, Nephi, or even king David, one to whom even Abraham, the great patriarch of the covenant, was subordinate — in order to persuade the Nehorites of Ammonihah to repentance. That figure was Melchizedek.

For Alma, who, as chief judge, passed the death sentence on Nehor[28] and survived mortal combat with the Nehorite pretender to kingship, Amlici,[29] the issue remained extremely personal and pressing. Alma continues his discussion of Melchizedek priesthood with even more direct wordplay on Melchizedek and Salem:

> Now this **Melchizedek** [*malkî-ṣedeq*, king-of-righteousness] was a king [*melek*] over the land of **Salem** [*šālēm*]; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of **wickedness** [*rāʿâ*, or less commonly *rešaʿ*, the diametric antonyms of *ṣedeq* and *ṣĕdāqâ*, "righteousness"]. But **Melchizedek** [*malkî-ṣedeq*, king-of-righteousness] having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and **Melchizedek** [*malkî-ṣedeq*] did establish **peace** [*šālôm*] in the land in his days; therefore he was called **the prince of peace** [*śar-šālôm*; cf. Isaiah 9:6], for he was **the**

26. See Matthew L. Bowen, "Nephi's Good Inclusio," 181–95.
27. See especially Omni 1:14–18; Mosiah 25:2; Helaman 8:21.
28. Alma 1:10–16.
29. Alma 2:29–31.

> **king of Salem** [*melek šālēm*; cf. Genesis 14:18]; **and he did reign** [*wayyimlōk*] under his father [*ʾābîw*]. (Alma 13:17–18)

Using a Hebrew/Semitic wordplay thoroughly perceptible to his audience, Alma highlights Melchizedek as the "king of righteousness," "king of Salem," and "prince of peace" who brings about the repentance of his people and establishes "righteousness"[30] and "peace" in "Salem," the land of "peace" during his "reign." Thus, using Melchizedek as a Christological type (compare Isaiah 9:6; 2 Nephi 19:6), Alma establishes the anteriority of Melchizedek's priesthood and the type of kingship he personified vis-à-vis the violent monarchism of the Amlicites and violent priestcraft of the Nehorite religion. His discussion also provides a narrative foil or contrast to the later violent monarchism of the Amlicite/Amalekite- and Zoramite-led Lamanites and the even later monarchic rule of Amalickiah and his brother Ammaron. Alma, hewing closely to Nephi's presentation, establishes the validity of the doctrine of Christ broadly—and the doctrine of repentance in particular—over a religion that rejected Christ and the doctrine of repentance. Alma's message to the Nehorites of Ammonihah was that by repenting and embracing the practice of working "righteousness" and priesthood "after the order of the Son of God" as typified by Melchizedek, they could avoid perishing and instead "enter into the rest of the Lord" (Alma 12:34–37; 13:6, 12–13, 16, 29, citing Psalm 95:7–11).

"That They Might Establish a Kingdom unto Themselves over the Land": The Amlicites (Amalekites) and the Attempt to Reestablish Kingship

In Alma 43, Moroni repeatedly contrasts and highlights the differences in the respective motivations of the Nephites and the Zoramite- and Amalekite/Amlicite-led Lamanites. He begins by describing the family-centric "design" of Nephite self-defensive military measures: "And now the design of the Nephites was to support their lands, and their houses, and their wives, and their children, that they might preserve them from the hands of their enemies; and also that they might preserve their rights and their privileges, yea, and also their liberty,

30. Alma's wordplay in Alma 13:10–11, 17–18 on Melchizedek and Salem reflects the same ancient tradition also reflected in JST Genesis 14:36: "And this Melchizedek [*malkî-ṣedeq*], having thus established **righteousness** [*ṣĕdāqâ*], was called **the king of heaven** [*melek šāmayim*] by his people, or, in other words, **the King of peace** [*melek šālôm* or *melek šālēm*]."

that they might worship God according to their desires" (Alma 43:9). The fourfold family-centric motivation of "lands," "houses," "wives," and "children" is reinforced by the fourfold political and religious motivations of "rights," "privileges," "liberty" and "worship[ing] God according to their desires."

Mormon then describes Lamanite motivations and intentions explicitly in terms of establishing a "Lamanite" monarchy (kingship) "over all the land" under the military leadership of their chief captain,[31] Zerahemnah and his Amlicite/Amalekite and Zoramite leadership substrata: "And now, as Moroni knew the intention of the Lamanites, that it was their intention to destroy their brethren, or to subject them and bring them into bondage **that they might establish a kingdom unto themselves over all the land**; and he also knowing that it was the only desire of the Nephites to preserve their lands, and their liberty, and their church, therefore he thought it no sin that he should defend them by stratagem" (Alma 43:29–30). The Hebrew term — and thus possibly the original Nephite term — for "kingdom" is *mamlākâ* ("dominion," "kingdom," "kingship," "royal sovereignty").[32] This term signals a narrative return to issue of kingship raised by Amlici's attempt to reestablish kingship among the Nephites in Alma 2: "Now this Amlici had, by his cunning, drawn away much people after him; even so much that they began to be very powerful; and they began to endeavor to establish **Amlici to be a king** [*lĕmelek*] over the people" (Alma 2:2).

I have previously argued that Mormon's narrative engages in a thematic wordplay or paronomasia on the names Amlici and Amalickiah in the Book of Alma in terms of the Hebrew verb *mālak*[33] ("to be king,

31. Alma 43:4–6 strongly suggests that Zerahemnah was either an Amlicite/Amalekite or a Zoramite: "For behold, it came to pass that the Zoramites became Lamanites; therefore, in the commencement of the eighteenth year the people of the Nephites saw that the Lamanites were coming upon them; therefore they made preparations for war; yea, they gathered together their armies in the land of Jershon. And it came to pass that the Lamanites came with their thousands; and they came into the land of Antionum, which is the land of the Zoramites; and a man by the name of Zerahemnah was their leader. And now, as the Amalekites were of a more wicked and murderous disposition than the Lamanites were, in and of themselves, therefore, Zerahemnah appointed chief captains over the Lamanites, and they were all Amalekites and Zoramites" (Alma 43:4–6).
32. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2001), 545. Hereafter cited as *HALOT*.
33. Matthew L. Bowen, "The Faithfulness of Ammon," *Religious Educator* 15,

rule"; "install as someone as king,"[34] "be, or become king, or queen, reign"[35]). More recently, Lyle H. Hamblin has argued that all √*mlk*-adjacent names (including names like Amulek) should be viewed in terms of this Semitic root.[36]

Amlici's attempt to reestablish the kingship ended by Mosiah$_2$, with himself as the renewed king in Zarahemla, was quickly recognized as a threat to religious freedom: "Now this was alarming to the people of the church, and also to all those who had not been drawn away after the persuasions of Amlici" (Alma 2:3).

> And it came to pass that the voice of the people came against **Amlici**, that **he was not made king** over the people. Now this did cause much joy in the hearts of those who were against him; but Amlici did stir up those who were in his favor to anger against those who were not in his favor. And it came to pass that they gathered themselves together, and did consecrate **Amlici to be their king**. Now **when Amlici was made king** over them he commanded them that they should take up arms against their brethren; and this he did that he might subject them to him. Now **the people of Amlici** were distinguished by the name of **Amlici**, being called **Amlicites**; and the remainder were called **Nephites, or the people of God**. (Alma 2:7–11)

Mormon's statement here defines "Nephites" not in ethnic terms, but in terms of religious and political opposition to Amlici and a return to monarchy. In making this contrast, Mormon is training us to recognize what he means by "the people of God" later on. Not only are they called by his name as his covenant people, but they oppose human monarchy. Mormon's use of the term "remainder" suggests that, although the opponents of Amlici's monarchism prevailed politically,

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no. 2 (2014): 69.

34. *HALOT*, 590–91.
35. Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 573–74.
36. 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/journal/proper-names-and-political-claims-semitic-echoes-as-foundations-for-claims-to-the-nephite-throne.

religious Nephites themselves may have constituted a minority faction within their broader society and state.

Amlici's and the Amlicites' insurrection aimed at monarchic renewal is only the first in a series of such attempts to reimpose kingship in Zarahemla, as chronicled in Mormon's abridged book of Alma. This part of Mormon's narrative (Alma 43–44) also helps to frame this ongoing issue as a political and religious rather than an ethnic one, with the Nephites being defined as "the people of God" or "people of the Lord" vis-à-vis those seeking kingship. Mormon's wordplay will continue to weave this theme of identity through the history of these struggles and ultimately offer an enriched and powerful definition of what it now means to be a Nephite.

"Behold, Are Not This People as Good as Thy People"? The Amlicites/Amalekites as Former Nephites

The best evidence, as Royal Skousen has shown, suggests that the Amlicites and the Amalekites Mormon describes are the same people(s),[37] having the same Mulochite origin and the same goal of monarchy. Mormon's replete wordplay on Amlici/Amlicites/Amalekites, Amalickiah, and king-men in terms of √*mlk* monarchic terminology throughout the book of Alma recommends monarchic usurpation as a dominant concern of the entire book.[38] Apart from the events of Alma 2, their identity as apostate Nephites is further suggested in Alma 21:2–3: "Now the Lamanites and the Amalekites and the people of Amulon had built a great city, which was called Jerusalem. Now the Lamanites of themselves were sufficiently hardened, but the Amalekites and the Amulonites were still harder; therefore they did cause the Lamanites that they should harden their hearts, that they should wax strong in wickedness and their abominations." Mormon definitively confirms their identity as apostates in Alma 43:13: "The Nephites were compelled, alone, to withstand against the Lamanites, who were a compound of Laman and Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael, and all those

37. Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon Part Three: Mosiah 17– Alma 20* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2006), 1605–9. For a contrary view, see Benjamin McMurtry, "The Amlicites and Amalekites: Are They the Same People?" *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 25 (2017): 269–81, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-amlicites-and-amalekites-are-they-the-same-people.

38. See, e.g., Alma 46:4–5; 47:1–35; 49:10, 25; 51:5–21 (cf. 60:16–17); 52:3; 54:16; 55:5; 62:6–9.

who had dissented from the Nephites, **who were Amalekites** and Zoramites, and the descendants of the priests of Noah." This makes the identity of the Amalekites as Amlicites even more likely.

It is no small narrative detail that Aaron, $Mosiah_2$'s presumptive heir and heir to the Nephite throne, would be the one to go to the eponymous city of "Jerusalem" to attempt to evangelize Lamanites and Nephite dissenters who felt the most antagonistic toward the Nephites over the issue of kingship and the right to rule: "Therefore, as Aaron entered into one of their synagogues to preach unto the people, and as he was speaking unto them, behold there arose an Amalekite [Amlicite] and began to contend with him, saying: What is that thou hast testified? Hast thou seen an angel? Why do not angels appear unto us? Behold are not this people **as good** as thy people?" (Alma 21:5). Another way of understanding the force of the Amalekite's question within the Amlicite-Nephite cultural context is "Aren't we as good as you?" or even "Aren't we, like you, also Nephites?"[39]

The Amalekite expects that the answer to the last question is "yes," while the audience knows that the answer to this question, at least from a moral perspective, is "no." However, the Amlicite/Amalekite's expectation is based on the historical reality that his people had been Nephites and apparently still worshiped the same deity.[40] The contentious Amlicite/Amalekite's challenge is best understood against the backdrop of Nephite self-perceptions. The name Nephi, as a derivation of Egyptian *nfr*, was understood to mean "good" or "fair." The Gentilic derivative, Nephites, came to connote the "good" or "fair ones" amongst the Nephites themselves (see, e.g., 3 Nephi 9:2; 4 Nephi 1:10 and especially Mormon 6:17–19).[41]

Jacob's Critique: Can the Nephites Claim the "Better Cause"?

Behind the Lamanites' and Nephites' respective motivations stood *motivators.* Behind the one, monarchy and the right to rule, behind the other, family, family preservation, and religious liberty — especially

39. I thank Rebecca Reynolds Lambert for this insightful and helpful suggestion on the framing of the Amalekite's question. Rebecca Reynolds Lambert, personal communication to author, 19 November 2024.
40. See especially Alma 22:7.
41. Matthew L. Bowen, "'O Ye Fair Ones': An Additional Note on the Meaning of the Name Nephi," *Insights* 23, no. 6 (2003): 2–3, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/insights/vol23/iss6/2/; Bowen, "'O Ye Fair Ones'—Revisited," 315–45.

the right to practice traditional Israelite religion. The Nephite practice of Israelite religion was, of course, informed by a knowledge that Jehovah, the true "king of heaven" or "heavenly king,"[42] would come among his people in mortality and atone for their sins and bring to pass the resurrection of the dead.

Love of family and family preservation had not always been the province of "Nephite" culture, however. Jacob, Nephi's brother—still alive, writing, and functioning as a prophet-priest in the third generation of Nephite society—levied some pointed criticism against the growing Nephite belief that greed was good and perhaps an implicit corollary, that wealth made one more "Nephite."[43] He declared, "And because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are **better** [literally, good] than they" (Jacob 2:13). Jacob recognized the potential problems of the Nephites thinking of and characterizing themselves in worldly terms of "good" or "fair" and thus uses the same wordplay, later applied so differently by Mormon, to puncture Nephite pride and question their goodness.

Jacob reserved even more pointed criticism for the Nephite men vis-à-vis the Lamanites, who demonstrated a higher cultural commitment to family love and integrity: "Behold, [the Lamanite] husbands love their wives, and their wives love their husbands; and their husbands and their wives love their children; and **their unbelief** and their hatred towards you is because of the iniquity of their fathers; wherefore, how much **better** [literally, good] are you than they, in the sight of your great Creator?" (Jacob 3:7). As with Alma 43:45, Jacob's statement is best viewed against the backdrop of Nephite self-perceptions as the "good" or "fair ones" and their negative perceptions of the Lamanites as those who "dwindle in unbelief" (1 Nephi 12:23–24; cf. *lōʾ-ʾēmun*, Deuteronomy 32:20).[44] The Lord, through Jacob, further

42. See, e.g., 2 Nephi 10:14; Mosiah 2:19; Alma 5:50.
43. In other words, this attitude perhaps represents an early Nephite version of the "prosperity gospel."
44. See Matthew L. Bowen, "Not Partaking of the Fruit: Its Generational Consequences and Its Remedy," in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision* (40th Annual Sperry Symposium), ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 242–45, rsc.byu.edu/things-which-my-father-saw/not-partaking-fruit-its-generational

alluded to this self-perception in condemning the immorality of the Nephite husbands: "And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Hosts, that the cries of **the fair daughters** of this people, which I have led out of the land of Jerusalem, shall come up unto me against the men of my people, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Jacob 2:32; compare Mosiah 19:13; 3 Nephi 8:5; Mormon 6:17–19). Indeed, the power of Jacob's rhetorical point in Jacob 3:7 — perhaps echoing the oracle in Jacob 2:32 — is that Lamanite fidelity to their families potentially made them more "Nephite" — *better* or, literally, "good" — than the Nephites themselves.

Whether the Nephites' "second king"[45] was Nephi's immediate successor or his successor's successor,[46] Jacob records that "the peo-

-consequences-its-remedy; see also Matthew L. Bowen, "Laman and Nephi as Key-Words: An Etymological, Narratological, and Rhetorical Approach to Understanding Lamanites and Nephites as Religious, Political, and Cultural Descriptors," (presentation, FairMormon Conference, Provo, UT, August 2019), fairlatterdaysaints.org/conference_home/august-2019-old/laman-and-nephi-as-key-words.

45. This seems to be the gist of Jacob's statement in Jacob 1:11: "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." Apparently, Jacob lived to see the Nephites' third or fourth king.

46. Nephi, by his own account, was hesitant to call himself a king: "And it came to pass 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). Some evidence points to Nephi being a king, on which see John W. Welch, "The Temple in the Book of Mormon," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994), 328, 334–36. On the other hand, it is not clear that Nephi considered himself a king. See Noel B. Reynolds, "Nephite Kingship Reconsidered," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 151–89. Taylor Halverson has recently made the case that regarding his legacy, Nephi wanted to be seen more like Moses and less like King David. See Taylor Halverson, "Nephi Wanted to Be a Prophet Like Moses, Not a King Like David," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 59 (2023): 281–92, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/nephi-wanted-to-be-a-prophet-like-moses-not-a-king-like-david. For his own part, Jacob seems to have had antimonarchic leanings or at least ambivalence: "And **this land shall be a land of liberty** unto the Gentiles, and **there shall be no kings upon the land**, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles. And I will fortify this land against all other nations. And he that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God. For **he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish**, **for I, the Lord, the king of heaven, will be their king**, and I will be a light unto them forever, that hear my words" (2 Nephi 10:11–14).

ple of Nephi, under the reign of the second king, began to grow hard in their hearts, and indulge themselves somewhat in wicked practices, such as like unto David of old desiring many wives and concubines, and also Solomon, his son" (Jacob 1:15). Jacob explicitly says that the Nephite men had sought to justify their sexual immorality using the monarchic behavior of David and Solomon as detailed in scripture: "[They] seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon his son" (Jacob 2:23).

Deuteronomy 17:14–20 constitutes what is sometimes called the Deuteronomic Law of Kingship. Jacob's criticism of the Nephites pointedly refers to two key parts of this law that they have broken. First, this law specifically mandates that the king not "multiply wives": "Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away" (Deuteronomy 17:17). This was not a law against polygamy per se, but against monarchic excess. The Deuteronomist writer(s) evaluated the kings of Israel and Judah in terms of their observance of the book of Deuteronomy, including the Law of Kingship.[47] The Deuteronomistic narrator of 2 Samuel 3 lists numerous sons born to David through six wives and recounts David seizing back his former wife Michal from her then-current husband Phaltiel (see 2 Samuel 3:15).[48] The same narrator later tells the story of David's indulgent "taking" of Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah in order to cover up the resultant pregnancy and of David's subsequent marriage to Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11–12). This is followed by the mention of at least ten concubines, left behind to manage the palace when David flees, that David's son, Absalom, later takes and publicly rapes (2 Samuel 16:21–22; cf. 2 Samuel 15:16). The (likely) same Deuteronomistic writer later reports even grander promiscuity by Solomon, David's son and heir (by Bathsheba). The astounding numbers are almost certainly symbolic, emphasizing the totality of Solomon's apostasy:

> But king Solomon loved many strange [foreign] women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of

47. See Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 15 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981). German original: Martin Noth, *Uberlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1943).

48. 1 Samuel 25:44 records, "But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which was of Gallim." Phalti is a hypocoristic form of the name Phaltiel.

> the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: **and his wives turned away his heart**. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that **his wives turned away his heart after other gods**: and **his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God**, as was the heart of David his father. (1 Kings 11:1–4)

In the Deuteronomistic view, David and Solomon had both been guilty of multiplying wives, and David guilty of murder, but only in the case of Solomon did his wives "turn away his heart" from Jehovah as Deuteronomy 17:17 warned against. In other words, the Nephite men, in "indulging themselves" sexually in desire or deed with "many wives and concubines" were engaging in bad "monarchic" behavior and having *their* hearts turned away from the Lord.

In a second offense, the Nephite men also "began to search much gold and silver, and began to be lifted up somewhat in pride" (Jacob 1:18). In the same Deuteronomic statute that forbids the king from "multiply[ing] wives," we read, "Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold" (Deuteronomy 17:17). It is worth noting here that when Amalickiah murdered the Lamanite king through subterfuge (Alma 47:20–31) and then married the widowed Lamanite queen, he was also engaging in the prototypical bad "monarchic" behavior.[49]

Centuries after Jacob's time, traditional hatred persisted between the Nephites and the Lamanites. By Moroni$_1$'s time the composition of these groups had been shuffled and reshuffled to the extent that the Nephites included many converted Lamanites — while the unconverted Lamanites, who had always included various numbers of Nephite apostates and dissenters,[50] now specifically included the

49. See, e.g., Alma 47:35: "And it came to pass that Amalickiah sought the favor of the queen, and took her unto him to wife; and thus by his fraud, and by the assistance of his cunning servants, he obtained the kingdom; yea, he was acknowledged king throughout all the land, among all the people of the Lamanites, who were composed of the Lamanites and the Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites, and all the dissenters of the Nephites, from the reign of Nephi down to the present time." The type of monarchic "cunning" represented by Amlici (Alma 2:1–2) and Amalickiah (Alma 46:10; 47:35; 51:27) met its match in the "stratagem[s]" of Moroni (see Alma 43:30; compare especially Alma 44:9).

50. See, e.g., Alma 47:35: "And it came to pass that Amalickiah sought the

Amalekites, Zoramites, and Amulonites. In Alma 43, Mormon, as we have noted, details the respective motivations of the Lamanites and Nephites generally as opposing groups. He specifically notes that the Lamanites sought kingship — a kingdom — over all the peoples concerned, while the Nephites primarily sought protection of family and religious freedom.

The dominant Hebrew term for "kingship" and "kingdom" as a political institution was *mamlākâ* ("dominion, kingdom"; "kingship, royal sovereignty"),[51] a derivation of Semitic √*mlk*. It takes little imagination to hear the aural similarity of *mamlākâ* to Amlicites/Amalekites, and as I will note later, to Amalickiah. Mormon is underlining these connections in ways we cannot miss. In the Hebrew and Egyptian languages there are few other words that sound remotely like these names. One exception is Hebrew *malʾāk* ("messenger," "angel"), but this term is so similar in sound to *melek* ("king"), that the two were sometimes confused (e.g., 2 Samuel 11:1)[52] or even made the object of wordplay (see, e.g., 2 Samuel 14:17; 19:27). From an aural perspective, the Biblical national name Amalek (*ʿāmālēq*) and Amalekites (*hāʿămālēqî*) might seem promising. However, all of the evidence of the Hebrew Bible suggests that ancient Israelites held these names and the people they designated in extreme contempt.[53] In other words, it is not likely that any Israelite (or Nephite) adopted the name of this longstanding national enemy as a personal name. The Semitic/Hebrew candidate as the origin of these names remains √*mlk*, and forcefully imposed kingship, wielded by literal king-men, highlights the moral nature of the Nephite alternative.

Behind the Lamanites' and Nephites' respective motivations stood inspiring *motivators.* According to Mormon, among the unconverted Lamanites' motivators were charismatic Nephite apostates, Zoramites

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favor of the queen, and took her unto him to wife; and thus by his fraud, and by the assistance of his cunning servants, he obtained the kingdom; yea, he was acknowledged king throughout all the land, among all the people of the Lamanites, who were composed of the Lamanites and the Lemuelites and the Ishmaelites, and all the dissenters of the Nephites, from the reign of Nephi down to the present time."

51. *HALOT*, 595.
52. The consonantal Hebrew text of 2 Samuel 11:1 has "kings" written *mlʾkym* which makes it morphologically identical to "messengers" (*mlʾkym*) as written in 2 Samuel 11:4. Many have argued that this is a deliberate wordplay.
53. See, for example, Paul Y. Hoskisson's comments in *The Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. "Amalickiah," onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php?title=AMALICKIAH.

and Amlicites/Amalekites: "**They were inspired by the Zoramites and the Amalekites**, who were their chief captains and leaders, and by Zerahemnah, who was their chief captain, or their chief leader and commander; yea, they did fight like dragons, and many of the Nephites were slain by their hands, yea, for they did smite in two many of their head-plates, and they did pierce many of their breastplates, and they did smite off many of their arms; and thus the Lamanites did smite in their fierce anger" (Alma 43:44).

Mormon observes that among the Nephites' motivators were also *people*. No one can deny the enduring charisma of Captain Moroni. More importantly, however, "**The *Nephites*** were inspired by **a *better* cause**, for they were not fighting for **monarchy** nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church" (Alma 43:45). What made the Lamanites arguably "better" than the Nephites during Jacob's time, i.e., their loyalty to their wives and children despite their learned hatred for the Nephites (see again Jacob 3:7), is a commitment Mormon now identifies with the Nephites.

The Nephites' motivators focused on everything that made for quality of life. Their aspiration was also emphatically religious: "And **they were doing that which they felt was the duty which they owed to their God**; for the Lord had said unto them, and also unto their fathers, that: Inasmuch as ye are not guilty of the first offense, neither the second, ye shall not suffer yourselves to be slain by the hands of your enemies" (Alma 43:46). At the moment of greatest difficulty, Moroni wisely and strategically appealed to these motivations:

> And it came to pass that when the men of Moroni saw the fierceness and the anger of the Lamanites, they were about to shrink and flee from them. And Moroni, perceiving their intent, sent forth and **inspired their hearts with these thoughts—yea, the thoughts of their lands, their liberty, yea, their freedom from bondage**. And it came to pass that they turned upon the Lamanites, and **they cried with one voice unto the Lord their God, for their liberty and their freedom from bondage**. And they began to stand against the Lamanites with power; and in that self-same hour that they cried unto the Lord for their freedom, the Lamanites began to flee before them; and they fled even to the waters of Sidon. (Alma 43:48–50)

The Nephites' "better cause" made it easier for Moroni to inspire his men. Because it was God's cause, it allowed them to prevail over the unconverted Lamanites, despite their inferior numbers.

"The People of God" and "the Cause of Christians"

Some later narrative remarks help us to see how the Nephites' "better cause" relates to their faith in Jesus Christ as Jehovah during the period described within the book of Alma. Over time, the gentilic term "Nephites" seems to have become a political and often a specifically religious designation. In Alma 2:11, Mormon glosses "Nephites" with a religious description: "Now the people of Amlici were distinguished by the name of Amlici, being called Amlicites; and the remainder were called Nephites, or the people of God" (Alma 2:11). The Israelites used the designation "people of God" (*ʿam ʾĕlōhîm or ʿam hāʾĕlōhîm*) at least occasionally with reference to themselves (see 2 Samuel 14:13 and Judges 20:2).[54] They also self-referentially used the expression "people of the Lord" (i.e., people of Yahweh) with some frequency.[55] The Book of Mormon also attests the collocations "people of the Lord"[56] and "covenant people of the Lord."[57]

The expression "people of God" first occurs in the Book of Mormon when Mormon states that the church in Zarahemla led by Alma the Elder was called by this name: "And **they were called the people of God**. And the Lord did pour out his Spirit upon them, and they were blessed, and prospered in the land" (Mosiah 25:24). This seems to have been done in fulfillment of the baptismal covenant first administered at the waters of Mormon: "as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and **to be called his people**" (Mosiah 18:8). Just as significantly, it reiterated the effort that king Benjamin made in his sermon to unite the people of Nephi and the people of Muloch by "giv[ing] this people a name, that thereby they may be distinguished above all the people which the Lord God hath brought out of the land of Jerusalem . . . a name that never shall be blotted out, except it be through transgression" (Mosiah 1:11–12). King Benjamin, was a "just man"[58] who as

54. Cf. *laos tou theou* in Hebrews 4:9; 11:25; or *laos theou* in 1 Peter 2:10.
55. See, e.g., Numbers 16:41; Deuteronomy 27:9; Judge 5:11; 2 Samuel 1:12; 6:21; 2 Nephi 9:6; Ezekiel 36:20; and Zephaniah 2:10.
56. 1 Nephi 22:14; 2 Nephi 1:19; 6:13; Mosiah 1:13; 18:34; 19:1; 27:10; Alma 9:20; 24:29; 27:5, 14, 30; 54:8; Helaman 16:23; 3 Nephi 6:29.
57. 1 Nephi 14:14; 15:14; 2 Nephi 6:13; 30:2; Mormon 8:15, 21.
58. Omni 1:24; Mosiah 2:4.

king pointed his people to their "heavenly King."[59] He asked them to take the name of that king and then put them formally under covenant to take Christ's name upon them, and while using a clever wordplay on his own name ("son of the right hand")[60] as typological of Christ:

> And now, because of the covenant which **ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters** [Hebrew *bānâw ûbĕnôtâw*; compare Hebrew *bin/bēn*, "son"]**; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you** [quoting Psalm 2:7]; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, **ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters** [*bānâw ûbĕnôtâw*; compare 2 Samuel 7:14]. And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. **There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives**. And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be **found at the right hand** [*yāmîn*] **of God**, for **he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ**. And now it shall come to pass, that **whosoever shall not take upon him the name of Christ must be called by some other name; therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God**. And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression; therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts. **I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts, that ye are not found on the left hand of God, but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you**. (Mosiah 5:7–12)

59. Mosiah 2:19.
60. See Matthew L. Bowen, "Becoming Sons and Daughters at God's Right Hand: King Benjamin's Rhetorical Wordplay on His Own Name," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 21, no. 2 (2012): 2–13, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol21/iss2/2/.

The covenantal nature of the designation "people of God" and the close variant "people of the Lord" appears to ultimately hark back to King Benjamin's sermon and it remains consistent throughout the narratives of the books of Mosiah and Alma.

In Mosiah 26, Mormon uses the designation "people of God" to distinguish between faithful Nephites and those who embraced other religious ways: "And now in the reign of Mosiah they [the unbelievers] were not half so numerous as the people of God; but because of the dissensions among the brethren they became more numerous" (Mosiah 26:5). Just before the Amlici/Amlicite crisis, Mormon uses this phrase again to distinguish the faithful Nephites from other Nephites: "For the hearts of many were hardened, and their names were blotted out, that they were remembered no more among **the people of God**. And also many withdrew themselves from among them" (Alma 1:24).

In Alma 19:14, Mormon again uses "people of God" as the equivalent of the term Nephites: "Now Ammon seeing the Spirit of the Lord poured out according to his prayers upon the Lamanites, his brethren, who had been the cause of so much mourning **among the Nephites, or among all the people of God** because of their iniquities and their traditions, he fell upon his knees, and began to pour out his soul in prayer and thanksgiving to God for what he had done for his brethren." However, in this instance he does so just prior to what appears to be an expansive redefinition of this expression.

After the seismic numbers of conversions, Mormon extends his use of the expression "people of God" three times in a way that clearly includes the converted Lamanites. In the first instance he uses it to describe the converted Lamanites in contradistinction to the unconverted Lamanites, which retains its negative connotations: "And the king [Anti-Nephi-Lehi's and Lamoni's father] died in that selfsame year that the Lamanites began to make preparations for war against **the people of God**" (Alma 24:4). The second instance is similar. Here "the people of God" has clear reference to the converted Lamanites, also known as the Anti-Nephi-Lehis or the people of Ammon: "And it came to pass that **the people of God** were joined that day by more than the number who had been slain; and those who had been slain were righteous people, therefore we have no reason to doubt but what they were saved" (Alma 24:26). In the third instance, Mormon uses the term with reference to the converted Lamanites vis-à-vis both the unconverted Lamanites and Nephites: "And it came to pass that when the Lamanites saw that they could not overpower the Nephites they

returned again to their own land; and many of them came over to dwell in the land of Ishmael and the land of Nephi, and did join themselves to **the people of God**, who were the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi" (Alma 25:13). The final instance of this term in the Book of Mormon seems to have little or no reference to the traditional designations like Nephites or Lamanites: "And it came to pass that two hundred and forty and four years had passed away, and thus were the affairs of the people. And the more wicked part of the people did wax strong, and became exceedingly more numerous than were the people of God" (4 Nephi 1:40). Mormon also uses the expression "people of Jesus" twice in 4 Nephi 1:34.

During the Lamanite conversion narratives, Mormon expands the concept of "people of the Lord" not only to include the Lamanite converts, but also to include the idea of divine approbation "highly favored" (compare Nephi's self-description in 1 Nephi 1:1). The ultimate result of this expansion is that the identifying characteristic of "Nephites" now clearly becomes their choice to enter into and remain in a covenant relationship with the Lord and live faithfully in that covenant, as well as the Lord's responsive approval and protection of his people. Alma refers to the Nephites as "such a highly favored people of the Lord" (Alma 9:20). In Alma 24:29, "the people of the Lord" are explicitly the converted Lamanites who are joined by additional converted Lamanites. Mormon records that Ammon described the converted Lamanites as "this people of the Lord" (Alma 27:5) and refers to them as "the people of the Lord" himself in Alma 27:14. Shortly afterward, in Alma 27:30, Mormon describes the converted Lamanites with the very words Alma used to describe the Nephites: "And thus they were a zealous and beloved people, **a highly favored people of the Lord**." Later, Moroni$_1$ describes his own people, Nephites and converted Lamanites, as "the people of the Lord" in Alma 54:8.

Following his expansion of the concept of "the people of God" or "people of the Lord" earlier in the book of Alma, Mormon makes another significant terminological shift in his account of the Lamanite-Nephite wars later in the book. Mormon states that Moroni, the Nephite military general, "prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren, so long as there should **a band of Christians** remain to possess the land" (Alma 46:13). The term translated "Christians," used for the first time here, is unknown. The Nephite word for "Christ" is likely to have been Hebrew *māšîaḥ* (Messiah, "anointed

one") or some derivation of it.[61] Perhaps "Christians" was something like **mĕšîḥîm* ("Messiahites"), but this must remain conjectural.

Mormon subsequently links the following characterization of the "Christians" with "those who did belong to the church": "And those who did belong to the church were **faithful**; yea, all those who **were true believers** in Christ took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ, **or Christians as they were called, because of their belief in Christ who should come**. And therefore, at this time, Moroni prayed that **the cause of the Christians**, and the freedom of the land might be favored" (Alma 46:15–16). Mormon uses Hebraistic √*ʾmn*-terminology—"faithful" (*neʾĕmānîm*), "true believers," (**maʾămînîm neʾĕmānîm*) "their belief" (*ʾĕmûnātām*, their faithfulness)—to describe the members of the Church. The church, by this time included many of the people of Ammon (former Lamanites). This statement recalls an earlier characterization of the people of Ammon by Mormon: "And they were called by the Nephites the people of **Ammon**; therefore they were distinguished by that name ever after. And they were among the people of Nephi, and also **numbered among the people who were of the church of God**. And they were also distinguished for their zeal towards God, and also towards men; for they were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and **they were firm in the faith of Christ**, even unto the end" (Alma 27:26–27; cf. Alma 23:6). Mormon will compare Moroni to Ammon using this √*ʾmn*-terminology in Alma 48:7–18.[62] Importantly, Mormon's clarification here that the people of Ammon were among the Nephites "*and also*" numbered among those of Christ's church, helps us to see that not all "Nephites" were Christians or "the people who of the church of God." He had also earlier explained that the generation after King Benjamin's sermon who did not "understand" the speech "did not believe in the traditions of their fathers" and thus "did not believe what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, neither did they believe concerning the coming of Christ" (Mosiah 26:1–2). Because of this "unbelief"—a

61. The term Messiah is used in 1 Nephi 1:19; 10:4–5, 7, 9–11, 14, 17; 12:18; 15:13; 2 Nephi 1:10; 2:6, 8; 2:26; 6:13–14; 2 Nephi 25:14, 16, 18–19; 26:3; Jarom 1:11; Mosiah 13:33; Helaman 8:13. This term occurs by far the most frequently in the translation of Nephi's writings.

62. Matthew L. Bowen, "'Behold, He Was a Man Like unto Ammon': Mormon's Use of *ʾmn*-related Terminology in Praise of Moroni in Alma 48," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 58 (2023): 223–42, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/behold-he-was-a-man-like-unto-ammon-mormons-use-of-ʾmn-related-terminology-in-praise-of-moroni-in-alma-48.

term ordinarily and traditionally associated with the Lamanites — they became "a separate people as to their faith, and remained so ever after" (Mosiah 26:3–4).

Alma 46:16 is also the first time that Mormon uses the phrase "the cause of Christians." Later, Mormon reveals that this expression not only describes the Nephites' "better cause," but that their kingship-seeking adversaries had coined this expression: "And thus he was **preparing to support their liberty, their lands, their wives, and their children**, and their peace, and that they might live unto the Lord their God, and that they might maintain **that which was called by their enemies the cause of Christians**" (Alma 48:10).

The "support" of liberty, lands, wives, and children as "the cause of Christians" in Alma 48:18 is a refinement of the "better cause" and is further defined as "fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church" in Alma 43:45. Indeed, Mormon has transformed the definition of what it means to be a Nephite, and we can now align "the cause of Christians" with the Nephites' "better cause." Doing so brings Mormon's allusive play on Nephi and Nephites into sharper focus:

- Nephites (+ converted Lamanites) ≅ people of God/people of the Lord
- "better cause" ≅ "cause of Christians"

Bridging to the Amalickiah-Ammoron-Kingmen Saga

In terms of its narrative function within his abridged book of Alma, Mormon's description of the Nephites' "better cause" vis-à-vis "fighting for monarchy" helps to succinctly bridge the earlier narratives in Alma that revolve around the issue of monarchy with the later narratives that revolve around the same issue. These earlier monarchy-centric narratives include Amlici's and the Amlicites' insurrection (Alma 2) and the Lamanite conversion narratives (Alma 17–27) that culminate in the conversion of the Lamanite king and his family and a massive conflict between them and the unconverted Lamanites, Amlicites/Amalickites, and Amulonites (Alma 24:1; 24:27–28; 27:2, 12; 28:1–3). The later monarchy-centric narratives include the Lamanite war spurred on by the Amalekite and Zoramite leaders under Zerahemnah (Alma 43–44),[63]

63. See especially Alma 43:6: "And now, as the Amalekites [Skousen Amlicites] were of a more wicked and murderous disposition than the Lamanites were, in and of themselves, therefore, Zerahemnah appointed chief captains over the

and the great Lamanite-Nephite war precipitated by Amalickiah (Alma 46–62) and the "king-men" crisis that transpired in its midst (Alma 51:2–21; 60–62). Mormon's description of the king-men in Alma 51:8 is a fair summary of the motivations of Amalickiah, his brother Ammoron, and the king-men: "Now those who were in favor of kings were those of high birth, **and they sought to be kings** [compare Hebrew *mĕlākîm*] and they were supported by those who sought power and authority over the people" (compare Alma 46:6: "And **Amalickiah** was desirous **to be a king** [compare Hebrew *melek*]").

Thus, the statements that "the Nephites were inspired by a better cause" and that the Amlicite/Amalekite-led Lamanites were "fighting for monarchy" reinforce the values associated with the Nephite and the Amlicite gentilic designations respectively. The "good" (liberty, lands, wives, children) was better than kingship (power and control over people):

- Nephites + converted Lamanites ≅ people of God/people of the Lord
- "better cause" ≅ "cause of Christians"
- Amlicite/Amalekites, Zoramites + unconverted Lamanites ≅ Amalickiah, king-men
- "fighting for monarchy" = "they sought to be kings"

This narrative strategy also enables Mormon to more firmly link Amlici and the earlier monarchic aspirants, Amlicites/Amalekites, with later monarchists Amalickiah, Amalickiah's brother Ammoron, and the traitorous "king-men."

Conclusion

When Mormon states in Alma 43:45 that "the **Nephites** were inspired by a **better** cause" he is apparently playing on longstanding association with the name Nephi, and its gentilic derivative Nephites, with "good" and related concepts originating in the Egyptian lexeme *nfr* while simultaneously updating them for the contemporary socio-political and religious realities, which included interweaving migration

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Lamanites, and they were all Amalekites [Amlicites] and Zoramites. Now this he did that he might preserve their hatred towards the Nephites, that he might bring them into subjection to the accomplishment of his designs. For behold, his designs were to stir up the Lamanites to anger against the Nephites; this he did that he might usurp great power over them, and also that he might gain power over the Nephites by bringing them into bondage."

and assimilations ("dissensions") from the Nephites to the Lamanites, and assimilations from the Lamanites to the Nephites through religious conversion. Many generations earlier, Nephi's brother, Jacob, on errand from the Lord, who had heard "the cries of the fair daughters" (Jacob 2:32) of the Nephites, had leveled a strongly worded prophetic critique against the Nephite men that may have turned on the same linguistic association. Jacob averred and asked, "Behold, [the Lamanite] husbands love their wives, and their wives love their husbands; and their husbands and their wives love their children; and their unbelief and their hatred towards you is because of the iniquity of their fathers; wherefore, how much **better** are you than they, in the sight of your great Creator?" (Jacob 3:7). During Moroni's time, the Nephites' "better cause" included a much stronger "Nephite" commitment to their "wives and children" The "Nephites" of this time included many who were Lamanites by descent. This commitment "wives and children" was rooted in their covenant faithfulness to Jesus Christ. The Nephites' "better cause," now also adopted by converted Lamanites, became known, in Mormon's narrative, as the "cause of Christians" (Alma 48:10).

In stating that the Nephites "were not fighting for **monarchy** nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church" (Alma 43:45), Mormon verbally recalls the inferior cause of Nephite apostates and monarchist dissenters like the Amlicites/Amalekites, Amalickiah, and the king-men — names that all revolve around Semitic √*mlk*, to "reign as king." He contrasts the cause of these unrighteous individuals and their adherents with the exemplary repentance and "work[ing] righteousness" of the people of Salem ("peace") under the priest-king Melchizedek ("king of righteousness") who was the Christ-typological "king of peace" or "prince of peace" (see Alma 13:10–19). Mormon underscores how Alma, Ammon and the other sons of Mosiah, Moroni, and some Lamanite kings (e.g., Lamoni, Anti-Nephi-Lehi, and their father) followed the Melchizedek pattern of leadership.

The monarchists attempted to use Nephite dissidents and the unconverted Lamanites to achieve their unrighteous goals. In the process, they shed the blood of many Lamanites and Nephites, including many innocents. After powerful chapters detailing missionary work and dramatic conversion (Alma 17–27), Alma 43:45 provides a functional bridge between the bloody monarchic wars detailed in the

earlier chapters of Alma (e.g., Alma 2–28) and the protracted monarchic war chronicled in Alma 43–62. Mormon's Lamanite conversion narratives of Alma 17–27 laid the groundwork for his refined definition of Nephites and showed that Lamanite kings and commoners who accept the message of Christ are his people. Thus, Alma 43:45 links not only the monarchic wars from both parts of Alma, but also the stories of those who choose Christ, the true king, with the stories of the Nephites, the "good" or "fair ones."

We have seen in this study how, even in terms of the names of their respective peoples, the "good" or "better cause" befits the Nephites, whereas "fighting for monarchy" befits the Amlicites/Amalekites and the monarchic aspirants that followed their legacy, Amalickiah, Amalickiah's brother Ammoron, and the "king-men." Perhaps the bigger-picture story here is that the designations of "Nephites," "Lamanites," "Amlicites" (or "Amalekites") are designations that contrast with each other in Mormon's history, but ultimately prove more fragile than "Christians," "people of God," or "people of the Lord." Mormon, writing in the fourth century CE, knew that Christ, the true king would come. The coming of Jesus Christ to the temple in Bountiful and the aftermath of his ministry there shows how fragile such gentilic designations *should* be. For almost two centuries, "there were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God" (4 Nephi 1:17).

For Nephi and all his successors, including Mormon and Moroni, a person's most important identifier would be to take upon oneself the name of Christ, and thus become "children of Christ" (see also Mosiah 5:7). We often speak of ways in which the Book of Mormon is oriented towards our time. Could anything be more relevant than questions of identity? Today, our prophets emphasize that the most important identifier we have remains "child of God" or "children of God" (cf. 4 Nephi 1:39). President Russell M. Nelson has recently taught, "If any label replaces your most important identifiers, the results can be spiritually suffocating."[64] Mormon showed that this was demonstrably true during the monarchic wars recorded in the book of Alma. Mormon and Moroni both lived to see how tragically true this was for

64. See Mary Richards, "President Nelson Posts About Labels and True Identity," *The Church News*, 21 July 2022, newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/president-nelson-posts-about-labels-and-true-identity.

the Lamanites and Nephites of their time. Can we expect it would be any different for us?



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Epiphanies and Reasonings: Compatibility between Evolutionary Biology and Divine Creation

David M. Belnap

Review of Samuel T. Wilkinson, Purpose: What Evolution and Human Nature Imply About the Meaning of Our Existence *(New York: Pegasus Books, 2024). 338 pages. $29.95 (hardback).*

Abstract: *Many believers in God are troubled by assertions that the theory of evolution means life on earth is accidental and has no purpose. Additionally, some people worry that the theory's implied selfishness and "survival of the fittest" mantra have terrible implications for human society. Samuel T. Wilkinson's book* Purpose *is a thoughtful addition to the literature corroborating compatibility between creation by God and the theory of evolution. Evolution has a random component, but the critical selection step is non-random. Moreover, the process is iterative. As evidence for non-randomness, Wilkinson cites convergent evolution (where similar traits emerged in divergent organisms). Numerous examples suggest that natural selection has limited choices, not infinite or random possibilities as was once thought. Wilkinson discusses how human behavior and evolution imply that life has purpose. These purposes are compatible with teachings embraced by diverse believers in God. Behavioral studies strongly suggest human beings evolved to have both good and evil natures and to have ultimate happiness in loving family relationships. Such relationships build good lives and societies. Facilitating all of this, natural selection appears to occur at individual, kin, and group levels. When combined with the observation that we can freely choose, our dual nature suggests that this life is a test. For Wilkinson and others,*

harmony between faith in God and evolutionary theory came through epiphanies and by reasoning. These experiences increased their faith in God. Amid difficulties, persisting with faith is rewarded.

Many believers in God worry that academic scholarship will degrade their faith. Many academics are not God-fearing, and examples abound of believers in God who became scholars and then turned from their faith. A preeminent issue is strife between the biological theory of evolution and the biblical account of Creation.[1]

Unhelpfully, the evolution-creation controversy, like so many other issues of our day, often becomes a contest between polarizing extremes. On one side, some assert that evolution means life is an accident, our lives have no divine purpose, and Genesis is a fable. On the other extreme, some insist that Genesis's ancient descriptions are literally true (as we understand those words today), that the earth and life thereon came to be in one week (as we measure time), and that humans and dinosaurs coinhabited the earth. Ironically, both sides argue that if evolution is true, faith in God cannot be, and if the scriptures are true, evolution and modern science cannot be.[2] The clamor of these strong convictions suggests one must choose between science and faith in God.[3]

Many in the middle both accept science and believe in God but struggle with the controversy. The record of nature and scientific reasonings are compelling. Likewise, scriptural records and spiritual impressions are credible. Samuel T. Wilkinson, a Yale School of Medicine psychiatrist and Latter-day Saint, struggled to harmonize a meaningless, selfish existence as advocated in some evolution circles and a divine creation and purpose as taught in scripture.

Wilkinson had an epiphany in which he found a way to reconcile his faith in God and the science he also found true. *Purpose: What Evolution and Human Nature Imply About the Meaning of Our*

1. The theory of evolution as first described by Alfred Russel Wallace and Charles Robert Darwin, and the accounts of Creation as described in the books of Genesis, Moses, and Abraham.
2. My friend and colleague, Adam Zlotnick (Indiana University), was the first to point out to me that people, adherent to the extremes of the evolution-creation debate, ironically interpret scripture and scientific data in the same way.
3. On both extremes, people contort data to fit their views and take science or scripture beyond their bounds. Science is used to make theological conclusions, and scripture is employed as scientific documentation

Existence[4] is the result of his epiphany and of many years of thoughtful study.[5] The book makes a compelling case that considerable scientific evidence is consistent with the religious principle that our lives have a purpose — because that purpose was facilitated by evolution. Wilkinson's epiphany and subsequent work are particularly pertinent to believers in God who face questions or difficulties. His and others' experiences show that inspired answers have come.

A Good Book

I highly recommend *Purpose*. Points in the book are well-reasoned. Numerous studies are referenced, and footnotes and 61 pages of notes add additional helpful insights. The book is well-written and interesting. Points are clearly explained at an appropriate level for a general (non-scientist) audience. I was edified and uplifted.[6]

Wisely, Wilkinson does not delve into theology, but he does delve into science. He simply assumes believers in God share a few basic beliefs. These include belief in a higher power or being (God) who created us, is benevolent, loves everyone, and desires our happiness. Additional common beliefs are that life has a purpose and similar practical ways to live morally.[7] This strategy was wise for a book written for a general, worldwide audience. Too often, some consider theological particulars silliness, and that could lead them to easily dismiss his compelling arguments. Focusing the book as he has should help all readers contemplate the scientific evidence and his thesis that evolution facilitated basic principles taught by most of the world's religions.

Another wise approach was Wilkinson's undogmatic stance. Evidence he includes is used to show his proposals as plausible, not as proof. In contrast, the dogmatism of many atheistic and creationistic creation-evolution arguments has added enmity to the science-religion conflict. Wilkinson's prose is soothing balm. His non-rigid

4. Samuel T. Wilkinson, *Purpose: What Evolution and Human Nature Imply About the Meaning of Our Existence* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2024).
5. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, xi–xii, 235.
6. A minor problem in the printed book was the small size of the asterisks referring to footnotes. These symbols were often easy to miss or difficult to find. More visible asterisks in the next printing would be helpful to readers like me, who like to read every note.
7. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, xii–xiii, 6, 17.

arguments remind us that faith is still needed — whether that be faith in God or faith in atheism.[8]

In the next four sections, I review Wilkinson's dilemmas and evidence for compatibility between divine principles and evolution. Then, I end where resolution of Wilkinson's dilemmas began — with epiphanies.

Dilemmas of Evolution

Wilkinson had struggled with two "central dilemmas:" (1) evolution's haphazardness or randomness and (2) its implied selfishness. If from random origins, our lives appear accidental and meaningless. Increased "deaths of despair" (including suicides) and rampant cynicism in our current world are, at least in part, attributable to views springing from implications that we humans are random accidents without any purpose to our existence. If each person is a selfish creature seeking only his or her own benefit, humans have a bleak future. Additionally, many appalling policies have been proposed or implemented under the guise of improving the human race through artificial selection. For example, needy people have been ignored because they are "weak" and deserve "thinning." Such policies and attitudes are often called "Social Darwinism."[9]

Unhesitatingly, Wilkinson states that randomness and selfishness "do not pose the challenge to orthodox religion that I once assumed they did." In summary, he proposes the following: (i) evolution is not random; (ii) evolution gave us competing dispositions, free will is a key feature of human nature, and life is a test; and (iii) strong family relationships were facilitated by evolution and are key to a good life and society.[10]

Randomness and Non-randomness

Evolution's random component influences some to think that the results are also random, but Wilkinson questions that conclusion. "Evolution . . . had a direction and was guided by natural principles,"

8. Examples of Wilkinson's undogmatic manner: *Purpose*, 19–20, 160–61, 168, 194. Please note that my citations to Wilkinson's book are not necessarily comprehensive and may be only examples. Justifiably, Wilkinson repeatedly mentions ideas.
9. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 4–12, 48–49, 162–66.
10. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 6, 12–16.

he writes. Convergent evolution, now known to be a common phenomenon, suggests that higher-order, but currently unknown, principles have led to similar attributes emerging independently in distinct organisms. Examples of this include flight in birds, bats, and butterflies; body shape in sharks and dolphins; echolocation in bats, toothed whales, dolphins, birds, and shrews; silken thread in twenty-three different types of animals; eyes at least forty times; and body coloration in dolphins and fish. Natural selection appears to be constrained to only certain solutions, not a plethora of possibilities. Randomness is not the whole process because selection is not arbitrary.[11] He asks rhetorically, "If biological life is merely the result of the blind forces of nature, then why are we — as products of a random biological process — so driven to find meaning and purpose?"[12]

To add to Wilkinson's discussion, randomness followed by nonrandom selection (a fitness test) is a powerful way to solve complex problems. Potential solutions are generated randomly, and then a selection mechanism chooses from those solutions. For example, our bodies have no idea what new pathogens we may encounter today or in coming days. To solve this difficult problem, each person's immune system produces millions of randomly different antibody types each day. Those that interact with pathogens are saved. Those that do not are discarded. Randomness followed by selection is even more powerful when executed iteratively. Complex mathematical problems can be solved this way. Engineers can use this to design complex devices.[13]

11. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, xi, 12–13, 19–40. *Convergent evolution* is defined as distantly related organisms developing a common characteristic. This contrasts with *divergent evolution* in which closely related species or a common-ancestor species developed divergent characteristics.
12. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 9. A corollary is, why do we feel so fulfilled when we find a purpose for our lives?
13. David M. Belnap, "The Theory of Evolution is Compatible with Both Belief and Unbelief in a Supreme Being" *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 16 (2015): 261–81, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-theory-of-evolution-is-compatible-with-both-belief-and-unbelief-in-a-supreme-being/. A slightly improved version (minus the abstract) was published as David M. Belnap, "The Theory of Evolution is Compatible with Both Belief and Unbelief in a Supreme Being" in *Science and Mormonism 1: Cosmos, Earth, and Man* ed. David H. Bailey, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, John S. Lewis, Gregory L. Smith, and Michael R. Stark (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2016) 369–92, interpreterfoundation.org/reprint-sm1-14-the-theory-of-evolution-is-compatible-with-both-belief-and-unbelief-in-a-supreme-being/.

Likewise, evolution — the cumulative result of random (or nonrandom) possibilities coupled to selection — is a powerful way to make and maintain living organisms that interact with each other and their environment.[14] From intricate biochemical processes in every cell to complex interactions among all living things, life on earth is the most complicated entity we know. Evolution enabled life to develop in a methodical way and allows living things to respond to environmental changes and to other organisms.

Evolution is not comparable to "an explosion in a printing shop producing a dictionary." The U.S. National Academy of Sciences and Institute of Medicine says the following:

> Contrary to a widespread public impression, biological evolution is not random, even though the biological changes that provide the raw material for evolution are not directed toward predetermined, specific goals. When DNA is being copied, mistakes in the copying process generate novel DNA sequences. These new sequences act as evolutionary "experiments." Most mutations do not change traits or fitness. But some mutations give organisms traits that enhance their ability to survive and reproduce, while other mutations reduce the reproductive fitness of an organism.[15]

14. Wilkinson states that not all mutations may be random, and randomness is not thought to be necessary (Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 28–29, 275–76n25). Nevertheless, the selection mechanism is the critical step, and this is not random. Wilkinson quotes notable atheist and evolutionist Richard Dawkins: "Evolution . . . is '*not* a theory of random chance. It is a theory of random mutation plus *nonrandom* cumulative natural selection'" (p. 32). Whether or not the mutations or initial choices are randomly given or intelligently chosen is irrelevant. In either case, the new solution must pass the fitness test.

15. National Academy of Sciences and Institute of Medicine, *Science, Evolution, and Creationism* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2008), 50, nationalacademies.org/read/11876/chapter/6#50. The 2001 documentary *Evolution*, produced by the U.S. Public Broadcasting Service, states the following in answer to the question, "Is evolution a random process?"

    > Evolution is not a random process. The genetic variation on which natural selection acts may occur randomly, but natural selection itself is not random at all. The survival and reproductive success of an individual is directly related to the ways its inherited traits function in the context of its local environment. Whether or not an individual survives and reproduces depends on whether it has genes that produce traits that are well adapted to its environment.

Evolution is compatible with life on earth being created by God.[16] Wilkinson states, "my overall thesis is that evolution was the means by which a Divine Being created all life, including us."[17] "Randomness is *part* of the process, but it seems to have played a much smaller role than many originally assumed. . . . On a higher level, when we take a step back, biological evolution is constrained."[18]

Human Evolution and Choices

Wilkinson beautifully extends evolution (variation, selection, and iteration) to human characteristics beyond physical traits—to our inner desires and interactions with others.[19] He argues that evolution has created us with characteristics compatible with religious teachings that an important purpose of our existence is to make choices.

Evolution gave us dual, competing characteristics. We have tendencies to be selfish and altruistic, aggressive and cooperative, promiscuous and monogamous, with altruism, cooperation, and committed love delivering the most benefit to our species.[20] These dual tendencies appear to result from multi-level natural selection; for example, selfishness favors individuals, whereas altruism favors kin or groups.[21] Although "clearly genes play some role in our behavior," human behavior is more complex than just a gene for kindness or selfishness.[22]

"Frequently Asked Questions About Evolution" *Evolution* (website), Public Broadcasting Service, pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/faq/cat01.html.

16. Belnap, "Theory of Evolution Is Compatible." See also David M. Belnap, "Questions and Comments about Evolution" in *Science and Mormonism 1: Cosmos, Earth, and Man* ed. David H. Bailey, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, John S. Lewis, Gregory L. Smith, and Michael R. Stark (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2016) 393–409, interpreterfoundation.org/reprint-sm1-15-questions-and-comments-about-evolution/.
17. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 12; see also pp. 39–40.
18. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 34–37; see also pp. 230–31.
19. Any inheritable trait, or any attribute connected to an inheritable trait, is evolutionarily related.
20. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 10–12, 66–94 ("Selfishness and Altruism"), 95–122 ("Aggression and Cooperation"), 123–37 ("Lust and Love").
21. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 63–65, 168. "Groups comprised of unselfish individuals will outcompete groups comprised of selfish individuals, and the power of a cohesive and cooperative group is always superior to the power of an individual" (p. 69). Wilkinson illustrates this with stories of two shipwrecks in the Auckland Islands. All survived where people were cooperative but only 16% survived where people were not (pp. 71–79).
22. In humans, single-gene traits "are incredibly rare," even for things like eye

Human behavior makes most sense when we view humans as free and responsible agents and not the result of deterministic forces. Deterministic processes, such as biochemical reactions in our brains, are involved in decision-making, but this does not mean the higher-level actions of our mind — where the choice is made — are deterministic. Even the behavior of fruit flies and roundworms was observed to be indeterministic. From trivial decisions, such as what to eat for lunch, to major decisions, like whom to marry, humans have alternatives. Conscious thoughts, like mental practice and imagining successfully completing a task, affect behavior. As further evidence of our free will, people put in similarly difficult situations act differently. Some act selfishly, and some act kindly. With some exceptions due to mental illness or other conditions, people generally have control over their decisions and therefore have free will.[23]

The God-centered view says we are placed in a world where we are influenced by good and evil — and we must choose; Wilkinson shows that view is consistent with the world around us. He writes, "Evolution seems to have shaped us in such a way that we are pulled in different directions."[24] Tying this directly to the idea that earth is a proving-ground,[25] he says:

> We are pulled in different directions: selfishness and altruism, aggression and cooperation, lust and love. When we

color (Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 51–53).

23. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 71–79, 138–78. Referencing Jonathan Haidt, Wilkinson gives the example of a person riding and guiding an elephant (pp. 175–77). "The elephant represents our automatic, intuitive, or emotional behaviors that we cannot (easily) control. The rider represents the rational and deliberate parts of our behavior that we can control." We hold the reins and can direct the elephant, but not if the elephant has desires of its own. "Our free will is perhaps not as free as we think. But we do have some control. The trick is to lead our elephant to places where he will be influenced to be on his best behavior. At the very least, we should avoid leading him to places that bring out the very worst in our natures" (pp. 175–76).
24. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 177. Wilkinson noted that positive and negative behaviors may have co-evolved (pp. 110–15). "Altruism and cooperation might not have evolved independently without the tendency to become aggressive, competitive, and even warlike. With respect to some of the ways in which evolution has shaped human nature, it seems that opposition was required. In other words, our capacity for good might not have developed without our capacity for evil" (p. 115).
25. Abraham 3:24–25. This beautiful passage is consistent with Wilkinson's idea that evolution was part of God's creation mechanism to make the world where we could be tested.

> couple this with the finding that we possess a measure of free will, all this strongly implies that there is a purpose to our existence. This purpose, at least one of them, is to choose between the good and evil impulses that nature has created within us.

Therefore, "this life is a test," as many religions teach.[26]

Human Evolution, Families, and Society

Through analyzing studies of human bodies and behavior, Wilkinson extends evolution further into divine purposes. Joy is found in families. This strengthens individuals and human society.

A most enlightening discussion is the proposed evolutionary connection between brain size, monogamy, and family happiness. When our humanoid ancestors became bipedal instead of quadrupedal, they could use their forelimbs for things besides walking (such as the use of tools in different and creative ways). As intelligence increased, the most intelligent had advantage. Bigger brains gave more intelligence and were, therefore, favored. However, big brains would not pass through the birth canal of a bipedal woman. This problem was solved by keeping brains small at birth but allowing brains to continue development after birth. This meant that humans, unlike other animals, were completely helpless at birth and dependent on their mothers for many years. A mother could not care for such a dependent child on her own. After the mother, the person with the most at stake was the biological father. Natural selection favored children whose fathers assisted their mothers. "A man's reproductive success could no longer be measured simply by the number of females he impregnated. Instead, it became important for him to see his own children reach sexual maturity." The father's help involved more than bringing food to the child. The child needed to be taught. With both father and mother working together, their children had an evolutionary advantage. This, in turn, gave long-term, monogamous relationships an advantage. Love for one's children was also advantageous. "Evolution favored deep relationships among human kin — partly because of the extremely long maturation period of infants and their utter helplessness at birth. . . . As parents, we are biologically primed to love and care for our children."[27]

Evolutionarily, natural selection appears also to have applied to

26. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 231; see also pp. 13–15, 166–67.
27. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 89–90, 92–93, 127–33, 186–87.

multiple individuals of a species, not just to individuals. Groups of related humans (families) who had good relationships among themselves had advantage. This is *kin selection*, and it appears to be crucial for the success of human beings as a species. Cooperation between different families gave the collaborators evolutionary advantage. This is *group selection*. Wilkinson explains that group selection is controversial, but he suggests that it does occur.[28] Additionally, the tendency of small and large groups to cooperate has given humans significant advantage. For example, technological and artistic advances, which have greatly improved and prolonged human life, are possible only because many people are involved in development or support.[29]

Our relationships with others, especially our family, are most rewarding and meaningful; all of this was facilitated by evolution, Wilkinson notes. Caring, deep, and committed relationships are strong predictors of human health, happiness, and well-being (more so than wealth, social status, education, and other factors). Giving to others is more rewarding than receiving. We benefit emotionally from being altruistic and cooperative to our families and others. Human infants need attention and love, and we are biologically primed (by evolution) to feel deep affection for our children and to enjoy taking care of them. Yes, parenting is difficult, but we are evolutionarily equipped to feel joy and purpose as parents. Evolution made strong social connections important because for our ancestors, those with such bonds were more likely to survive. Therefore, deep relationships became very satisfying. This includes strong friendships with non-kin.[30] Wilkinson states,

> A great body of evidence demonstrates that our relationships are the most important factor in our happiness and well-being. If evolution is responsible for this, as it seems to be, then the closest of our relationships — our family relationships — should have the most bearing, for better

28. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 53–65, 81–82, 89–90, 167n, 213, 281n51, 281n53, 295n70.
29. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 96, 119–20. From duets to large technical projects, two to thousands may be directly involved. However, even if a single person makes a discovery, writes a book, paints a picture, or performs a solo, many people (often thousands to millions) willingly support science, humanities, the arts, community gatherings, and technical projects through patronage, encouragement, volunteering, taxes, or donations. This form of cooperation has greatly helped our species.
30. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 15, 65, 87–94, 179–205, 231–33; see also pp. 81–82, 120–22.

> or worse, on our mental health and happiness. This is the way we have been psychologically and evolutionarily engineered. This is the way we were created.[31]

He concludes, "God created us through evolution, and did so in such a way that we are to find life's most profound joys in our family relationships."[32]

"Family life, in essence, is nature's most powerful way of helping us choose our better natures,"[33] and strong families improve human society. Mothers are naturally drawn to their children because of their immense biological investment. The mother-infant relationship is important for the child's development. Over time, this attachment may have facilitated romantic relationships between mothers and fathers that were monogamous and long-term. Nevertheless, marriage helps fathers be more committed to their children, and fatherhood is best when linked with motherhood and marriage. Caring, engaged fathers significantly improve their children's lives. Men are responsible for most societal problems, and fatherhood makes men less aggressive, less selfish, and more socially responsible. Therefore, society is better. The biological ties between parents and their children are an important part of this, and those ties came to be because of evolution.[34]

Epiphanies

As a scientist and a believing Latter-day Saint who also struggled with evolution, I found Samuel Wilkinson's mention of an epiphany heartening. He struggled to reconcile his belief in God with evolution.

> After wrestling with this issue for many months, I experienced a sort of epiphany that shifted my understanding. Principles from many different disciplines seemed to suddenly come together in my mind in a beautiful and harmonious way. Evolution wasn't a totally random process; it had a direction and was guided by natural principles. Furthermore, the way that evolution shaped human nature produced the strongest forms of love and affection within family relationships.

31. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 193–94.
32. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 233.
33. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 213.
34. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 16, 82, 127–36, 187, 206–29, 231; see also pp. 93–94.

> Parents have a deep capacity to love their children because they evolved to do so. This is how God made us.[35]

Wilkinson concludes, "Evolution and religion are not in conflict."[36]

For believers in God who struggle with evolution or other difficulties, Wilkinson's epiphany is an invaluable example. God helps people in our day who have sought answers to controversies and difficult questions, even academics. Wilkinson is not alone.

Developmental biologist Emily Bates[37] described an epiphany she had.

> I was in school when I started learning about evolution. At the time, my Sunday School teacher had taught me that you could not believe in the teachings of The Church [of] Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and also believe in evolution. I remember learning about evolution in school and thinking it made a lot of sense. There was a lot of evidence for it. So I started praying for a way to see what was wrong with this theory, so I could go on with having my faith in my Church. It was a long time before I felt I had any response. One night I woke up in the middle of the night, and I had this impression that I should read Genesis. I did that and I had this feeling and recognition that there was no conflict. I could see the order of evolution described in the scriptures. That was my first answer to prayer. It became both my testimony of God and my testimony of science at the same time.

Bates added, "I love science; I also have faith, and I don't see a conflict between them."[38]

In his acknowledgments, Wilkinson's tribute to God "for support

35. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, xi–xii; see also p. 235.
36. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 18; see also pp. xi–xiii, 16–18.
37. Bates is currently a professor at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus and was formerly on the faculty in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at Brigham Young University (where I knew her).
38. Bates was part of a panel discussion at a symposium on Science and Mormonism sponsored by The Interpreter Foundation in 2013. The transcript of her words and those of the other panelists are published in Emily Bates, R. Paul Evans, Steven L. Peck, Michael R. Stark, and Trent D. Stephens, "Life Sciences Panel" in *Science and Mormonism Series 1: Cosmos, Earth, and Man*, ed. David H. Bailey, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, John S. Lewis, Gregory L. Smith, and Michael R. Stark (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2016), 423–24, interpreterfoundation.org/reprint-sm1-17-life-sciences-panel.

unseen but nonetheless real"[39] moved me to tears. I resonate with his reasonings, and I also have had epiphanies like those of Wilkinson and Bates as I struggled to resolve the creation-evolution question. I likewise attribute my experiences to inspiration.

I entered graduate school with only a superficial understanding of evolution. I was keenly aware of many inside and outside the Church who opposed the theory of evolution.[40] I also was aware that many in the Church accepted evolution. Nevertheless, I struggled with the controversy. In graduate school, my thesis project forced me to confront evolution. My data on the structure of papilloma and polyoma viruses was consistent with the theory.[41] I persisted in my science and faith and sought greater understanding. In 2000, five or more years later, I came across a new article in the journal *Nature*. Researchers had used evolution in a computer to design machines to crawl across a surface.[42] Like Wilkinson, principles of faith and reason came together in a beautiful, harmonious, and simple way: if people can use evolution (defined as random changes, a test of fitness, and iteration) to make things, God could also have used it to make and maintain life on earth. Several years later, I had an impression like Bates's. While pondering the Creation during its presentation in the temple endowment, a clear thought came into my mind about evolution and Creation: "There is no conflict; there is no conflict."

A third epiphany came thirteen years after my first. I attended a talk by a colleague who studies evolution of pathogens. As an aside, he stated that the poor or imperfect design of some features of life was evidence of a godless evolutionary process.[43] To my surprise, I was

39. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 236.
40. During my time in graduate school (1989–1995), the creation-evolution controversy was often in the news.
41. These two virus groups (now classified as separate families) share an unusual structure, and this could be because they diverged from a common ancestor or because of convergent evolution (as Wilkinson noted for so many other biological characteristics). Rabbit and human papillomaviruses, thought previously to have a fundamentally different structure, have the same structure—consistent with evolutionary predictions. David M. Belnap et al., "Conserved Features in Papillomavirus and Polyomavirus Capsids" *Journal of Molecular Biology* 259 (1996): 249–63, doi.org/10.1006/jmbi.1996.0317.
42. Hod Lipson and Jordan B. Pollack, "Automatic Design and Manufacture of Robotic Lifeforms," *Nature* 406 (31 August 2000): 974–78, nature.com/articles/35023115.
43. This argument assumes that an all-knowing, all-powerful, and benevolent god's creation would be optimal and perfect. The argument is also called the

immediately impressed with a rebuttal compatible with both evolution and faith in God: Life was organized not to have the best design but to provide a test (Abraham 3:24–25). The world would be expected to be imperfect and even cruel, as indicated by the Lord's statement to Adam and Eve that the world would contain sorrows, painful childbirth, thorns, thistles, and sweat (Genesis 3:16–19; Moses 4:22–25). Thorns, thistles, weeds, and sweat suggest the competition among living things that we observe in nature and the hard work people must do to compete and to survive.[44] These scriptural teachings are consistent with a world created by an evolutionary process driven by competition. The result did not need to be optimal.[45]

Wilkinson noted that although the original ideas for his book "came to me almost all at once, in a sort of epiphany," working out the details "took many years."[46] Writing is hard work, of course, but is extremely rewarding because it allows the author to learn much in the process. Like Wilkinson, I found that my writing efforts further amplified my epiphanies. Writing often included feelings of amazement and joy as connections between my faith in God and the theory of evolution were further enhanced. Samuel Wilkinson said his experience was "immensely satisfying . . . to bring together into a unifying framework what I have learned by study and also by faith."[47]

I do not claim that Wilkinson's, Bates's, or my epiphanies have led to perfect understanding or have answered all questions. Moreover, our individual experiences are only binding on ourselves, not others. Nevertheless, we speak with the hope that others may benefit and

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"argument from poor design" or the *dysteleological argument*. An intelligent designer would have made things more intelligently. Many examples of suboptimal design exist. For a few examples, see Belnap, "Theory of Evolution Is Compatible," 278.

44. Another compatibility related to Wilkinson's book is the difficulty of giving birth to big-brained babies and the difficulties in raising children: "in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (Genesis 3:16, Moses 4:22).
45. See also Belnap, "Theory of Evolution Is Compatible" 278–79; Belnap, "Questions and Comments," 397.
46. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 235.
47. Samuel T. Wilkinson, "What Evolution and Human Nature Imply About the Meaning of Our Existence" (Lecture), 17 October 2024, Wheatley Institute and College of Life Sciences, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, youtu.be/oMoEYvjNiCw, see 37:10–37:27. The full statement is the following: "But for me at this point, this has been an immensely satisfying framework, to bring together into a unifying framework what I have learned by study and also by faith."

understand that we see value in believing in God and working in science. In my experience, other Latter-day Saint scientists concur. We may disagree about scriptural or scientific details, but we are united in accepting the theory of evolution and in our belief that God created us and other truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as taught in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Undoubtedly, our understandings have flaws, but, as in any other scholarly endeavor, deficiencies will be resolved as new knowledge is obtained.[48]

Conclusion

Rather than tearing down faith, studying evolution can build faith. It has for Wilkinson, for Bates, and for me.

We have each struggled but chose to accept both our faith and our science and then to move forward. Wilkinson said, "It all came to me after I decided to move forward despite not having all the answers. I still have questions, but this (process) taught me that even if I don't understand it now, there is going to be an answer in a way that is satisfying, because I've been through this process."[49] I feel the same as Wilkinson: not all of my questions are answered, but through the Lord's help, I was able to gain a little insight and move my quest forward. Worry and doubt are gone, replaced by increased hope and faith.

Interestingly, the pattern of questioning, persisting despite serious questions, and finding an enlightening detail also occurs in science. The big questions in scientific fields require tremendous work and, usually, decades of effort. Scientists may work their entire careers and only find morsels of new information. Numerous questions abound in science, and usually the appropriate statement is "the data suggests," not that "the data proves" (as Wilkinson appropriately showed). As the Apostle Paul wrote, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). Seeing now only in part is important to the gospel plan and is a big part of modern science. The pattern of

48. I also acknowledge the many scientists of other faiths who are devoted followers of God and who also find harmony between evolution and divine creation.

49. Mariya Manzhos, "A Yale Doctor's Wrestle with Evolution and Faith" *Deseret News*, 9 March 2024, deseret.com/faith/2024/03/09/evolution-faith-purpose-samuel-wilkinson-book-yale/.

continually searching and moving forward with faith applies to other intellectual quests and any other challenge we may face.

Increased understanding can result from persisting despite questions or difficulties. Since my third epiphany, I have been amazed at how many connections have become apparent between evolution and the gospel. These harmonize with Wilkinson's insight that evolution facilitated life's test between good and evil. These connections link our world with gospel principles that God created this earth, this way, to further our eternal development:

- Both the theory of evolution and the scriptures[50] predict the world in which we find ourselves.
- Eternity and eternal life suggest unlimited time, space, knowledge, and resources, but that is not the case here on earth. Limitations of those four things create competition, struggles, and the need for choices and priorities.[51]
- Imperfections, sickness, injury, aging, and other personal limitations create challenges for us individually and opportunities to serve others.
- Competition and challenges give opportunities to put the gospel into practice.[52]
- Competition and competing priorities create situations where we may need to forgive others and to realize we each need God's grace because limitations of life mean not everyone and not even every good desire can be satisfied.
- Competition, competing priorities, and bodily imperfections mean that no one can act perfectly throughout his or her life. Therefore, we all need redemption through Jesus Christ.
- Ability or advantage in one area often means inability or disadvantage in another (another reason we may need grace).
- Everything can be used for good or ill.
- Decisions often have both good and bad effects.

50. For example, Genesis 3:16–19 (Moses 4:22–25); 2 Nephi 2:11,15–16; Doctrine and Covenants 29:39; Moses 6:55.
51. I heard the idea of unlimited (eternal) vs. limited (earthly) things from Dan Romney, whom I knew in a former ward (Kentlands Ward, Gaithersburg, Maryland). A runner, Dan noted how competition helped him run faster. Thus, competition and struggles can help us improve. Life's limitations relate to the gospel teaching that we face opposition.
52. For example, winners and losers have an opportunity to be graceful and good sports.

- If the Creation were perfect, how could this earth be a testing ground? What would challenge us?
- A perfect creation occurs in the next life — after the resurrection — not here in this life (Philippians 3:20–21). We are created in God's *image*: we are not a copy (Genesis 1:26–27). Therefore, we should not be surprised that the Creation is imperfect. It is still very good (Genesis 1:31).
- Nevertheless, given that its purpose was to provide a test, the Creation may, indeed, be considered perfect.
- How could we have faith in God if his role in Creation or his presence and influence was as clear as the geometric proof of a straight line?[53]

Seeing these connections enhanced my faith in God and belief in the restored gospel. My study of evolution has made me a better disciple of Jesus Christ.

Likewise, Wilkinson's faith was bolstered by his quest.[54] In an interview, he said, "It was a really faith-building and faith-promoting process for me to see how these things — at least in my mind — came together. I hope it, at least for some people, provides some clarity about these issues as well."[55] He urged us all to be patient with our questions and have faith that we will understand someday; we should avoid being so focused on an issue that we are spiritually blinded by it: "This process of writing and researching this, it made me see I didn't understand this before and now I do, and so [there are] a lot of things I don't understand now that I will and just to be patient and to take a step back and not struggle from spiritual-inattention blindness."[56]

Samuel Wilkinson's *Purpose* adds connections between evolutionary processes and God. "*How* we were created may help us

53. No one seriously questions that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, but many question divine creation. The theory of evolution made feasible the idea that life on earth came about by chance (Belnap, "Theory of Evolution Is Compatible"). Therefore, people are now enticed between faith in God and faith in atheism. Wilkinson's wonderful book has given us more evidence consistent with God being the creator, but this evidence is not absolute proof. Faith is still required.
54. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, xi–xiii, 16–18. See also Manzhos, "A Yale Doctor's Wrestle."
55. Daniel Peterson Interview of Dr. Samuel T. Wilkinson, Interpreter Foundation, 18 October 2024, youtu.be/_qOXI48Ns40, 15:22–15:36.
56. Interpreter Foundation Interview, 18 October 2024, 30:52–31:14. For more discussion, start at 29:34.

understand *why* we were created," he noted.[57] Wilkinson quoted Nobel-prize winning physicist Charles Townes: "If the universe has a purpose or meaning, this must be reflected in its structure and functioning, and hence in science."[58] Therefore, if obedience to eternal laws makes people happier and society better, then no wonder that loving family relationships and choosing cooperation, altruism, and love were, and are, an evolutionary advantage.

Wilkinson's ideas also are compatible with several Latter-day Saint beliefs:

- Eternal laws exist.
- God, having a complete understanding of those laws, created the world and gave us commandments for our benefit.[59]
- Opposition is necessary for our spiritual development.[60]
- "The Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was *enticed* by the one or the other" (2 Nephi 2:16).[61]
- Good parenting is critically important.

An expanded discussion of how evolution relates to these and other Latter-day Saint teachings would be a fruitful follow-up to Wilkinson's book.

Purpose shows again how embracing all truth can help us grow spiritually. Believers in God have nothing to fear and much to gain when seeking and learning new truths from scientific and scholarly endeavors.

57. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 12; see also pp. 9, 40.
58. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 18.
59. Wilkinson, *Purpose*, 17–18; *History of the Church* 6:312.
60. See 2 Nephi 2:11, 15; Dallin H. Oaks, "Divine Helps for Mortality," *Liahona*, May 2025, 104.
61. Wilkinson commented in the Interpreter Foundation Interview, 18 October 2024, 21:43–23:00: "It's pretty clear that we are left in a way that we're pulled in different directions. We have capacities for selfishness but also altruism, and it goes down the line. Good and evil, theologically, is what we usually refer to it as. When you combine this with this empirical observation—we have the ability to choose—to me this provides a framework that's very satisfying from an academic as well as a spiritual perspective, that life is a test. It can't really be a test unless you're pulled in one direction or the other. What I've tried to do is show how this makes sense from an evolutionary perspective. There's lots of things that the way evolution, natural selection—I'll use that term because it's more specific—it can and does produce traits and capacities that are in opposition. I see this is very related to this principle that we learn that there must be opposition in all things. To me, those parts are very easy to bring together."



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Alma or Mormon? The Voice of Alma 29

C. Robb Smith

Abstract: *For more than a century, Alma 29 has been read as a direct quotation from the prophet Alma. Yet, unlike every other extended quotation in Mormon's record, this passage lacks attribution, framing, or transition. This anomaly has gone largely unnoticed because of a chapter break, added in 1879, that masks the continuity of Mormon's voice from Alma 28 into chapter 29. This paper challenges the traditional attribution and argues that Alma 29 is more likely Mormon's editorial reflection than Alma's psalm. While the study focuses on Alma 1–29, the editorial patterns it identifies—Mormon's consistent use of speaker attribution, narrative framing, and formal introductions to quoted speech—hold true across his entire abridgment. Alma 29, if understood as Alma's psalm, would stand out as the sole exception, with no introduction to mark a change in speaker. Close attention to verb tense usage, narrative posture, and thematic continuity with Alma 28, together with the prophetic vocabulary Mormon uses elsewhere, suggests that these words reflect Mormon's own meditation. Attributing Alma 29 to Mormon reframes the chapter as the theological culmination of his editorial design. Mormon situates his record within a prophetic chain stretching from Joseph in Egypt, through Nephi, to his own day. His repeated use of "my brethren" reflects covenant kinship rather than contemporaneity, and his testimony of a "holy calling" reveals a prophet who, even in an age of societal collapse, experienced his own quiet triumph in saving souls.*

Within the tradition of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it is well-known that the words *O, That I were an angel*,

found in the Book of Mormon, were spoken by the prophet Alma.[1] This assumption has shaped interpretation for over a century, reinforced by chapter headings that identify Alma as the speaker.

What is less well-known is that the text itself does not name Alma. That detail is easily missed, having been obscured by a chapter break added in 1879, which divided Mormon's original fifteenth chapter into three shorter ones.[2] Our current chapter 28 ends with Mormon's editorial reflections on the events he has just abridged, and chapter 29 begins in what most assume to be Alma's voice. When read without that break, as in the original dictation, Mormon's reflection continues without interruption through the end of chapter 29. What seems like Alma's soliloquy is more naturally read as Mormon's extended commentary — his interpretation of the stories he has just preserved and their meaning for a latter-day audience.

This paper challenges the traditional assumption that Alma is the speaker and argues instead that the words of Alma 29 are more likely Mormon's. When the chapter is heard in his voice, it takes on new meaning, gaining interpretive relevance and prophetic significance. It becomes not merely Alma's soliloquy, but Mormon's meditation — a reflection that reveals how he situated his record in the prophetic chain, how he identified with his likely literal ancestors (Alma and the sons of Mosiah), as covenant kin, and how Mormon found quiet triumph in his ministry, even in a time of widespread apostasy.

Rethinking Attribution: Alma or Mormon?

So, why do we think it is Alma speaking in chapter 29? Book of Mormon scholar Grant Hardy notes some of the reasons:

1. In this paper, any references to *Alma*, without subscript, are to $Alma_2$, son of $Alma_1$. In instances where there could be potential confusion, subscripts are used.
2. The current chapters of the Book of Mormon are the result of changes made in 1879 by Orson Pratt. Evidence from the original manuscript clearly shows that Joseph Smith indicated chapters while dictating the text. See Royal Skousen, "Critical Methodology and the Text of the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6, no. 1 (1994): 137, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1206&context=msr. To reduce any potential confusion, I use Mormon's original chapters in my analysis and Roman numerals when referring to them. Chapter numbers in Arabic numerals are from the current chapter structure for the Book of Mormon. Thus, "Alma 29" is a reference to our current chaptering, while Alma III is a reference to Mormon's original chapter 3.

> The present tense of v. 10, the refrain of "remember[ing] the captivity of my fathers" in v. 11, and the reference to "the success of my brethren, who have been up to the land of Nephi" in v. 14 all point to $Alma_2$, rather than $Mormon_2$, as the author of this passage.[3]

In other words, we attribute the chapter to Alma because it sounds like Alma. The tense, tone, and phrasing seem to reflect his voice much better than Mormon's. And there is a century of interpretive tradition reinforcing this impression, coupled with the absence of any formal challenge. However, when we step back and consider how Mormon frames quotations elsewhere in his record, Alma 29 stands out as a striking exception. Unlike every other quotation he included in his work, Mormon does not introduce, attribute, or formally transition to this one. That omission is significant, and it invites us to reconsider what has long been taken for granted.

This lack of attribution goes unnoticed due to the chapter break added in 1879 which allows readers to easily switch from Mormon's voice into what appears to be Alma's. Chapter 29 thus reads like another quotation from Alma, similar to others nearby. Yet unlike every other instance of quoted speech in Mormon's record, it lacks a clear introduction or explicit editorial transition. In fact, it is the only instance in Mormon's entire record where he fails to frame or identify a quotation — making it an unmistakable anomaly in an otherwise consistent editorial pattern.[4]

Given how careful and consistent Mormon is in introducing quotations, assigning the words of Alma 29 to Alma based solely on indirect internal evidence warrants serious reconsideration. This kind of evidence relies on inference and interpretation and is therefore inherently subjective and susceptible to bias. Reasonable readers could justifiably reach different conclusions. The singular nature of the missing attribution all but demands an explanation: A lost introductory line,

3. Grant Hardy, ed., *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, Maxwell Institute Study Edition* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University [BYU], 2018), 317.
4. 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 and Charles D. Tate (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1982), 185, archive.org/details/bookofmormonauth00reyn/page/184/mode/2up. Larsen and Rencher observe: "From the context of Alma 29 it is clear that Alma is writing, yet Mormon does not identify this as a quotation. This is the only instance we found of this nature."

perhaps, somehow accidentally omitted from the plates or lost during the translation process, thus making it an example of the "mistakes of men" that Moroni warned about.[5] If Alma 29 is indeed a quotation, then some kind of explanation seems necessary, given the pronounced nature of the anomaly.

I first noticed this issue while reading Royal Skousen's *Earliest Text* edition of the Book of Mormon, which restores the original chapter divisions that Joseph Smith indicated during dictation.[6] Reading those verses without the modern chapter break between Alma 28 and 29, I was startled to find Mormon appearing to say those familiar words himself. It took a moment to realize that the speaker had shifted to Alma, somewhere, unmarked and unannounced. The abrupt transition from Mormon's editorial reflections to what seemed like Alma was so unusual that it prompted me to begin marking every quotation and tracking how Mormon transitions between speakers elsewhere. As I studied his editorial patterns more closely, I was struck by how consistently and deliberately he introduces quotations throughout his work, with Alma 29 being the one notable exception.

Along the way, I also began to notice how often Mormon steps out of the narrative to speak to his reader, to explain an editorial decision, clarify a theological point, or reflect on the meaning of the events he recounts. These personal remarks, like quotations, are typically written in the first-person present tense. After multiple close readings focused on who is speaking, I concluded that it is always Mormon narrating the story. His account comes to us in his voice and from his perspective.

Even though I "hear" Mormon's voice in his account, I recognize that others may hear things differently. Because he abridged the work of earlier prophets, some readers may sometimes perceive the voice of the original author. Mormon's abridged account would not be a quotation in the formal sense, even if it preserves elements of the original author's voice. (This distinction is explored further in this paper.) Over time, I began to consider the possibility that Alma 29 might not be a quotation, especially once I realized how well it works as a continuation

5. "And now, if there are faults, they are the mistakes of men" (Book of Mormon Title Page; see also Mormon 8:17). Thus, a hypothetical lost line could have been as simple as the one used to introduce Ammon's words to end Mormon's original fourteenth chapter: "these are the words of Ammon to his brethren, which say thus . . ." (Alma 26:1).
6. *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, ed. Royal Skousen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

of the comments Mormon begins before the added break. That would make Alma 29 one of twenty-two times that Mormon ends a chapter speaking directly to his reader in this way, and one of eight times he does it in extended editorial comments, as can be seen in Alma 29.[7]

Another reason for reconsidering the authorship of Alma 29, is its strong correspondence with the material in the chapters that precede it. The connection is so tight that it seems to require one of the following explanations:

- Mormon selected what to include in those preceding chapters, shaping it based on a quotation from Alma which he intended to use at the end, but then uncharacteristically failed to introduce that quotation.
- Mormon created that same narrative block of material and then stepped back after concluding it, in order to reflect on the narratives he had included.

The second explanation aligns more naturally with both the pattern of Mormon's editorial comments, and with the absence of any attribution to Alma.

Given this lack of explicit attribution, it seems that the burden of proof should fall on modern readers to make a sufficiently compelling case before assigning the chapter to Alma. Yet, no such formal argument has been put forth, and more than a century of tradition has now reversed this expectation. Alma's authorship is taken for granted and alternative readings must bear the burden of proof and justify themselves against this default assumption.

A compelling case can be made for Mormon as the speaker in Alma 29, which I present in the pages that follow. My aim is to show that when the words are heard in Mormon's voice, their meaning changes in important and revealing ways, reinforcing the idea that the Book of Mormon was written specifically for our time as both a witness and a warning. They also give additional insight into the man who wrote/

7. The extended comments in Alma 28:8–29:17 are preceded by, "And thus ended the fifteenth year" (Alma 28:7). The other original chapters that end with extended comments are Helaman 12:1–26 (following Helaman 11:38 which says, "And thus ended the eighty and fifth year"); 3 Nephi 5:8–26 (following 3 Nephi 5:7 which says, "And thus had twenty-five years passed away"); and this pattern is also found in 3 Nephi 10:14–19; 26:6–13; 28:17–29:9; Mormon 5:8–24; 7:1–10. The chapters that end with shorter comments are Mosiah 27:36–37; 28:19–20; Alma 3:25–27; 6:8; 8:30–32; 9:34; 11:46; 22:35; 35:16; Helaman 2:12–14; 6:40; 3 Nephi 7:24–26; 30:1–2; and 4 Nephi 1:49.

compiled the book and invite us to view him, and the circumstances in which he wrote, in a different light.

Mormon's Editorial Voice and Narrative Design

Understanding how Mormon structured and narrated the book of Alma is essential to evaluating the authorship of chapter 29. His role as editor, abridger, and commentator shaped how we receive the material, and his voice is always present. By tracing his editorial patterns and narrative transitions in Alma 1–28, we can determine whether chapter 29 fits Mormon's voice or breaks from his usual methods.

I begin with a brief review of the material leading up to chapter 29 using Mormon's original chapter divisions. I pay particular attention to Mormon's editorial remarks, especially those that open or close his chapters. They show that Mormon actively selected, organized, and shaped the content we now have. The way he presents narrative material provides important evidence that much of the account comes to us in his voice. This review provides a necessary foundation for the detailed analysis of Alma 29, which will follow. I will also discuss the abridging process and suggest that Mormon copied large portions of Alma's original narrative, while adapting it to his own voice and reshaping the material to suit his editorial purposes. I further argue that any material he changed in this way should be attributed to him and heard in his voice, regardless of whether it was copied.

I will also analyze Alma 29 while emphasizing its reflective nature and the many ways it connects to the material in the chapters that precede it. I present indirect evidence that points to Mormon as the speaker and reinterpret that which has traditionally been seen to point to Alma, showing that it also aligns with Mormon's voice and context. I will show that while the words of Alma 29 do fit Alma, they also fit Mormon. And because Mormon is the default narrator and does not attribute the words to Alma, the most reasonable conclusion is that the words are those of Mormon.

Mormon's editorial framework: A review of Alma 1–28

Mormon begins the book of Alma with a heading that appears just before Alma 1 (Alma I):

> *The account of Alma*, who was the son of Alma, the first and chief judge over the people of Nephi, and also the high priest over the Church. An account of the reign of the judges, and

> the wars and contentions among the people. And also an account of a war between the Nephites and the Lamanites, *according to the record of Alma*, the first and chief judge.

Note that Mormon indicates he is including "the account of Alma" and specifies that it is "according to the record of Alma." This description applies to the first forty-four chapters in current Book of Mormon editions, concluding with Mormon's statement: "And thus ended the record of Alma, which was written on the plates of Nephi" (Alma 44:24).[8]

Mormon's next heading, which appears before Alma 45 (Alma XXI), introduces a new source for what follows: "The account of the people of Nephi . . . according to the record of Helaman," thereby marking a clear editorial boundary. Mormon identifies his source at the beginning and the end of his "account of Alma," and he reiterates that attribution five additional times within the account.[9]

My focus here, though, is the first portion of these forty-four chapters, comprising Alma 1–28 (Alma I–XV). Mormon organizes his first fifteen chapters of Alma into three well-defined narrative units. The first is a chapter recounting Alma's encounters with Nehor and Amlici (Alma I). The second tells the story of Alma preaching among the Nephites (Alma II–XI). The third shares the story of the sons of Mosiah preaching among the Lamanites (Alma XII–XV). Mormon deliberately organized the first fifteen years of the reign of the judges into these three narrative units, and they present the concurrent stories of Alma and the sons of Mosiah in a clear, purposeful sequence:[10]

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8. The book of Alma contains the accounts of Alma, Helaman, and Shiblon. King Mosiah gave the plates of Nephi to Alma (Mosiah 28:20), who gave them to Helaman (Alma 50:38), who gave them to Shiblon (Alma 63:1), who gave them to Helaman son of Helaman (Alma 63:11). Mormon ends the book with: "And thus ended the account of Alma, and Helaman his son, and also Shiblon who was his son" (Alma 63:17).
9. Mormon cites his source again before quoting Alma's preaching in Zarahemla and Gideon (Alma 5:2; heading to Alma 7); before quoting Alma and Amulek's preaching in Ammonihah (heading before Alma 9); before his "account of the sons of Mosiah" (heading before Alma 17); and before including Alma's commandments to his sons in Alma 36–42 (Alma 35:16). While it is possible that Mormon drew from other sources, he never mentions any. Rather, he consistently says and exclusively cites the plates of Nephi as his only source , like he did here with his "account of Alma" (Alma 44:24). See Words of Mormon 1:5, 9; Alma 44:24; Helaman 2:14; 3 Nephi 5:10; 26:7, 11; Mormon 6:6.
10. See Appendix B for a fuller presentation of how Mormon organized Alma's source material into six narrative units.

- **Narrative Unit 1:** Alma I; Alma 1–3 (Alma's conflict with Nehor and Amlici)
- **Narrative Unit 2:** Alma II–XI; Alma 4–16 (Alma's preaching to the Nephites)
- **Narrative Unit 3:** Alma XII–XV; Alma 17–29 (Sons of Mosiah preaching to the Lamanites)

In Alma I (Alma 1–3), Mormon begins his first narrative unit by recounting Alma's conflict with Nehor and Amlici. In this chapter, Mormon consistently refers to Alma in the third person, thereby establishing himself as the narrator. The story is presented in Mormon's voice, not Alma's, reflecting Mormon's perspective and editorial control. Near the end of the chapter, Mormon describes how the Amlicites marked themselves to be distinguished from other Nephites, and notes that the Lamanites already differed. This leads to an explanation of the curse placed upon them, followed by interpretive comments. Mormon writes: "Now **we will return** again to the Amlicites, for they also had a mark set upon them. . . . Thus the word of God **is** fulfilled, for these **are** the words which he saith to Nephi" (Alma 3:13–14).[11] He then quotes God's words and continues:

> Now the Amlicites knew not that they were fulfilling the words of God when they began to mark themselves in their foreheads . . . Now *I would that ye should see* that they brought upon themselves the curse. And even so doth every man that is cursed bring upon himself his own condemnation. (Alma 3:18–19)

Mormon frequently inserts explanatory and interpretive commentary into his narrative like this. When he does, it is in his present editorial time and therefore written in the present tense.[12] This is especially relevant because Alma 29 is also written in the present tense. Recognizing that Mormon uses the present tense in his editorial comments is crucial to hearing Alma 29 in his voice.

Mormon continues the story for a few more verses before ending his first chapter in this manner:

> Now, all these things were done, yea, all these *wars and*

11. The current edition reads *said,* while the original dictation was *saith.* Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, six parts (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2004–2009), 1639.
12. See Appendix A for a full list of Mormon's headings and editorial comments.

> *contentions* were commenced and ended in the fifth year of the *reign of the judges.* And in one year were thousands and tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world, that they might reap their rewards according to their works, whether they were good or whether they were bad, to reap eternal happiness or eternal misery, according to the spirit which they listed to obey, whether it be a good spirit or a bad one. *For every man* ***receiveth*** *wages of him who he* ***listeth*** *to obey, and this according to the words of the spirit of prophecy; therefore, let it* ***be*** *according to the truth.* And *thus ended the fifth year* of *the reign of the judges."* (Alma 3:25–27)[13]

Mormon summarizes the destruction caused by war and contention and again uses the present tense while offering a spiritual key for understanding it. He blends the historical facts of his story with theological reflection and introduces a major theme that he develops more fully in later chapters—that agency, sin, and repentance shape the destinies of both individuals and communities. This chapter's ending also links verbally and thematically to Mormon's opening heading of the book of Alma, which describes it as "an account of the *reign of the judges* and the *wars and contentions among the people,* and also an account of a *war between the Nephites and the Lamanites."*

Mormon thus ends the chapter with a clear structural marker—a physical chapter break at the end of a year of the reign of the judges—and with clear literary ties between the chapter's introduction and conclusion. Together these literary and structural features delineate the chapter as a discrete narrative unit. Mormon employs these same devices to construct each of the three narrative units introduced earlier.

Mormon's second chapter (Alma II; Alma 4) begins his second narrative unit and continues Alma's story to the point where he relinquishes the judgment seat to preach full time. In this chapter, Mormon consistently refers to Alma in the third person, thus reinforcing that the account comes to us from Mormon's perspective and in his voice. Although he is working from Alma's record, he is not yet directly quoting him.

However, Mormon's heading before Alma III (Alma 5), signals that

13. The current edition reads *endeth,* while the original dictation was *ended.* Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants,* 1648.

he is about to begin quoting Alma directly, writing: "The words which Alma, the High Priest according to the holy order of God, delivered to the people in their cities and villages throughout the land." The chapter then begins:

> Now, it came to pass that Alma began to deliver the word of God unto the people, first in the land of Zarahemla and from thence throughout all the land. And these **are** the words which he spake to the people in the church which was established in the city of Zarahemla, *according to his own record,* saying: I, Alma, having been consecrated . . . (Alma 5:1–3)

Mormon sets the stage for the quotation, introduces it using the present tense, and again cites his source. He then hands the voice over to Alma for the remainder of the chapter.

So far, we have seen examples of how Mormon inserts editorial comments into his abridged account and how he introduces an extended quotation. As we continue, we will examine more examples of Mormon utilizing these same approaches, and will begin to focus more on whose voice we are hearing in Mormon's abridged account, especially when he adapts or summarizes material without quoting it directly.

Distinguishing the editorial voice: Quotation or abridgment?

Mormon's editorial choices raise a critical question for understanding authorship: when he adapts or summarizes material from earlier authors, whose voice are we hearing? While some narrative passages may originate with Alma, Mormon does not present them as quotations, but rather adapts them into his own third-person voice. Passages adapted like this then become part of Mormon's account and should be heard in his voice, regardless of whether they originated with Alma. Mormon also presents other passages as quotations, preserving Alma's first-person voice. Clarifying this distinction helps us interpret what Mormon meant to be a quotation and what he meant to be heard in his own voice.

Moroni refers to the Book of Mormon as "an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi."[14] Mormon also calls it "an abridge-

14. *The Book of Mormon*, Title Page. The Introduction describes it as "written by many ancient prophets" whose words "were quoted and abridged by a prophet-historian named Mormon." The Brief Explanation About The Book

ment" or a "small abridgment" and repeatedly reminds us that it is "not the full account," not even "a hundredth part."[15] Since we do not have his source materials, we cannot know exactly how he abridged it. We do not know how closely he followed those source materials, what he chose to omit, or how he edited the material that he chose to include.

In Alma VII (Alma 9), Mormon quotes Alma narrating his own story. This gives us a glimpse of the original narrative material.[16] Based on how similar that chapter is to the ones Mormon narrates, it seems likely that he copied significant portions of Alma's narrative, while changing the voice from first- to third-person. Still, even if Mormon adapted Alma's words into his own narrative voice in this way, doing so effectively converts Alma's words into his own. Anything Mormon paraphrased, summarized or otherwise adapted into his own third-person voice should be attributed to him and heard in his voice, even if it originated with Alma. Such material still requires attribution — which Mormon does at both the beginning and end of his "account of Alma," when he states that it is "according to the record of Alma" — but it should not be considered a quotation. When Mormon inserts an actual quotation, he explicitly indicates the transition as he did to begin Alma 5 (Alma III), does again before Alma 7 and 9 (Alma V and VII), and then consistently throughout the rest of his abridgment.

Mormon begins Alma IV (Alma 6) with: "And now it came to pass that after Alma had made an end of speaking unto the people of the church which was established in the city of Zarahemla . . ." (Alma 6:1), showing that he is also explicit in marking the end of his direct quotations from Alma, with only one exception that we will consider below. Mormon then continues narrating the story in his own voice and ends chapter 6 with, "And *Alma* went and began to declare the word of God . . . which had been spoken by *his* fathers, and according to the spirit of prophecy which was in *him* . . . and the holy order by which *he* was called. *And thus, it is written.* Amen" (Alma 6:8). What is Mormon referring to at the end of this verse, again using the present tense, as being

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of Mormon explains that the plates of Mormon are "an abridgment by Mormon from the large plates of Nephi, with many commentaries."

15. Mormon describes his work as *"an abridgment"* (Words of Mormon 1:3; Mormon 5:9; see especially 3 Nephi 5:8–18). Mormon repeatedly explains that he could not record the full account or "hundredth part" of events (Words of Mormon 1:5; Mosiah 1:8; 8:1; 12:8; 29:33; Alma 8:1; 9:34; 11:46; 13:31; 30:17; Helaman 3:14; 8:3; 14:1; 3 Nephi 5:8; 26:6–12; Mormon 2:18; 5:9).
16. Even though Mormon may have made edits to this chapter as well, to what extent is unknown.

written? If he means what he just narrated about Alma in the third person, then it is an example of the point I am making. The original could have been written by Alma in the first person about himself, which would change the wording to: "And *I* went and began to declare the word of God . . . which had been spoken by *my* fathers, and according to the spirit of prophecy which was in *me* . . . and the holy order by which *I* was called." Mormon's change from first to third person makes these words his own, and no longer Alma's. Mormon could have quoted Alma and let him speak for himself in the first person — as he does in a chapter considered below, but instead he chose to change Alma's words into his own voice.[17]

Mormon begins Alma V (Alma 7) with a heading that introduces the quotation it contains and again cites his source: "*The words of Alma* which he delivered to the people in Gideon, *according to his own record.*" After quoting Alma for the entire chapter, Mormon opens Alma VI (Alma 8) by writing: "And now, it came to pass that Alma returned from the land of Gideon, after having taught the people of Gideon many things which *cannot be written* . . ." (Alma 8:1). Mormon ends the quotation just as clearly as he introduced it, while also informing the reader (again using the present tense) of his editorial decision not to include everything Alma taught. This assumes that the qualifier *cannot* refers to Mormon's own selection criteria, not to some other restriction on sharing Alma's teachings.

Without drawing attention to every such occurrence, the pattern is sufficiently clear — Mormon used the present tense (his current time) when he stepped outside his narrative in order to speak to his readers. While his editorial comments may include other verb tenses appropriate to the context, they are always anchored in the present, marking Mormon's position as a narrator of events that occurred before his time, while also addressing a future audience. This pattern appears to hold true not only throughout his record of Alma, but throughout his entire abridged account.[18]

Mormon continues Alma's story in Alma VI (Alma 8) describing Alma's success in Melek, but choosing not to quote any of Alma's

17. This remains hypothetical, since Mormon's sources are unavailable. Another possibility is that Mormon adapted Alma's words spoken in Zarahemla (Alma 5:47–49). In either case, Alma's original words were re-presented in Mormon's narratorial voice.

18. See Appendix A for a list of Mormon's editorial comments. The vast majority are written in the present tense.

preaching there. Nor does he choose to provide details about or quote from Alma's preaching in other cities. Whatever the criteria were for inclusion in or exclusion from his account, it was Mormon who chose. He is also the one who determined how to organize, edit, and present the material, all to serve his literary, rhetorical, and prophetic purposes.[19] I believe that Mormon was true to his original sources while also taking some creative liberties along the way. We simply do not know what he did while abridging the original accounts to produce his own account that we now have because we do not possess the plates of Nephi. All we have is what Mormon gave us, and what he gave us reflects his own perspective and is written in his own voice, unless he explicitly signals otherwise. He ends Alma VI with the Lord's command to Alma to take Amulek and preach again in Ammonihah and briefly previews what will follow.

The heading before Alma VII (Alma 9) sets the stage for quotations from both Alma and Amulek, further previews their upcoming story, and again cites the source for his account:

> The *words of Alma,* and *also the words of Amulek,* which were declared unto the people who were in the land of Ammonihah. And also, they are cast into prison and delivered by the miraculous power of God which was in them, *according to the record of Alma.*

The chapter then begins: "And again, I, Alma, having been commanded of God . . ." (Alma 9:1). This is the chapter referred to earlier wherein Alma narrates his own story, the only instance in this material in which Mormon adopts this approach.[20] The chapter and the quotation it contains both end with the only unclear transition I have been able to find: "And it came to pass that Amulek went and stood forth and began to preach unto them also. And now, the words of Amulek *are not all written;* nevertheless, *a part of his words are written in this book"* (Alma 9:34). That it is Mormon resuming as narrator, rather than

19. Mormon notes seven churches in the land of Zarahemla (see Mosiah 25:23). Alma's preaching in Melek and Sidom is mentioned but not quoted (see Alma 8:3–6; 15:12–14).

20. Mormon also does this one time in Mosiah 9, the only other chapter in Mormon's abridged material that is narrated by the original author, in this case Zeniff. Mormon does, however, also insert a letter from Helaman to Moroni wherein he recounts certain events (found in Alma XXVI; Alma 56–58). Interestingly, Mormon inserted a clarifying editorial comment into it (see Alma 56:52).

a continuation of quoting Alma, is made clear in the next chapter as Mormon refers to Alma again in the third person and then ends that chapter also explaining that he is not including all of Amulek's words.

Alma VIII (Alma 10–11) begins Amulek's preaching, which Mormon had already previewed and sourced in the heading before Alma VII (Alma 9). Alma 10:1 begins: "Now, these are the words which Amulek preached unto the people who were in the land of Ammonihah, saying . . . ." The quotation thus introduced ends a few verses later with: "And now, when Amulek had spoken these words . . ." (Alma 10:12). Mormon continues narrating around additional quotations from Amulek and others, while again referring to Alma in the third person before ending with: "Now, when Amulek had finished these words the people began again to be astonished, and also Zeezrom began to tremble. And thus ended the words of Amulek, or *this is all that I have written"* (Alma 11:46; end of Alma VIII). Mormon is telling his readers that he is not including everything Amulek said, as he also mentioned at the end of his previous chapter (see Alma 9:34). This means that the material is abridged, and that Mormon is narrating this chapter, referring to Alma in the third person (see Alma 10:31; 11:20).

Mormon continues narrating Alma's story in Alma IX (Alma 12–13:9), always referring to him in the third person and always clearly marking the beginnings and endings of quotations. For example: "Now, the words that Alma spake unto Zeezrom were heard by the people round about . . . and he spake on this wise . . ." (Alma 12 2), which was followed by: "Now, when Alma had spoken these words . . ." (Alma 12:7). Later, Mormon records: "And now, Alma began to expound these things unto him, saying . . ." (Alma 12:9); later: "Now, it came to pass that when Alma had made an end of speaking these words . . ." (Alma 12:19); and finally: "Now Alma said unto him . . ." (Alma 12:22). Alma IX ends in the middle of this quotation, taking us to our current Alma 13:9.

Then, in Alma X (Alma 13:10–15:19), Mormon continues that quotation until: "And now it came to pass that when Alma had said these words unto them, he stretched forth his hand unto them and cried with a mighty voice, saying . . ." (Alma 13:21). It continues after this second interruption until: "And Alma spake many more words unto the people which *are not written in this book"* (Alma 13:31). Even though Mormon abridged the words of Alma and Amulek in these chapters, they are still quotations, because he presented them as such, explicitly introducing them and preserving their original first-person voice.

Mormon continues narrating the story in Alma XI (Alma 16). It is

the final chapter of Mormon's second narrative unit, concluding with: ". . . and thus ended the fourteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi" (Alma 16:21). This second narrative unit differs from the first and third units in that Mormon's introduction and conclusion that bookend it — which are also linked through thematic content and verbal repetition — are chapters rather than paragraphs. The opening chapter (Alma II; Alma 4) begins the unit by describing a thriving Church that soon declines due to pride and wickedness, prompting Alma to relinquish the judgment seat to preach full time. The closing chapter of this unit (Alma XI; Alma 16) depicts the situation after his ministry in which — even though Ammonihah is destroyed — the Church is broadly reestablished, victory is gained over the adversary, and the Lord pours out his Spirit and blessings upon the people.

Also, in the opening chapter *inequality* is mentioned twice: first as a source of the contention among the people, and then as the cause of the sorrow that prompts Alma to give up the judgment seat (Alma 4:12, 15).[21] The closing chapter then specifically mentions the absence of inequality as the Church is reestablished (Alma 16:16). Mormon uses this rare word one more time in a "thus we see" statement just before the added break creating Alma 29, thereby linking that review statement to the opening and closing chapters of this narrative unit (Alma 28:13). This accounts for four out of only six times *inequality* appears in the entire Book of Mormon.[22] Additionally, in the opening chapter "envyings and strifes and malice . . ." are listed as contributing factors to the Church's decline (Alma 4:9). In the closing chapter, Mormon states that the Church was reestablished by Alma and others preaching "against . . . envyings and strifes and malice . . ." (Alma 16:15, 18). Mormon does not use this word combination anywhere else.[23] By repeating this uncommon vocabulary and thematically framing the spiritual condition of the people and the Church both before and after Alma's preaching, Mormon effectively links these two chapters to serve as the introduction and conclusion to his second narrative unit, our Alma 4-16.

21. The current edition reads *inequality,* while the original dictation was *unequality.* Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants,* 1659, 1943.
22. The other two uses are by King Mosiah (Mosiah 29:32) and Mormon (3 Nephi 6:14).
23. Nephi also used it (2 Nephi 26:21); as did Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 13:22) and Moroni (Mormon 8:36).

Mormon begins his third narrative unit with a heading before Alma XII (Alma 17–20), introducing it and again citing his source:

> An *account of the sons of Mosiah*, who rejected their rights to the kingdom for the word of God, and went up to the land of Nephi to preach to the Lamanites; their sufferings and deliverance — *according to the record of Alma*.

Mormon starts the unit describing their reunion with Alma after being gone fourteen years among the Lamanites (Alma 17:1–2). By referring to Alma in the third person, Mormon establishes that he — Mormon — is also narrating this story and not directly quoting his source material. He then moves back in time fourteen years to tell the story of Ammon and King Lamoni for the remainder of Alma XII (Alma 17-20). Mormon jumps back in time again to tell the story of Aaron and of Lamoni's father in Alma XIII (Alma 21–22) and then continues telling a combined story of the sons of Mosiah and their labors in Alma XIV (Alma 23–26).

In his third narrative unit (Alma XII–XV; Alma 17-29), Mormon steps out of the narrative several times to speak to his audience in the present tense and explain or reflect on something.[24] We also find three inconsistencies that merit attention. Grant Hardy explains: "There are expressions such as 'at this day' (Alma 25:9) and 'down to the present time' (Alma 18:38; 23:5) that might best be understood as Mormon following his source very closely."[25] These phrases, out of place if written in Mormon's time, show Mormon copying directly from his source material. Given that we already assume Mormon was adapting existing narrative into his own voice, it is not surprising that some inconsistencies like this are found, expressions that could have been modified that slipped through unchanged.

Still, the presence of these minor inconsistencies raises an important question: When narrative material is copied, albeit with occasional edits, should it be treated as a quotation and thus heard in the voice of the original author? This question becomes especially relevant in this narrative unit about the sons of Mosiah, since Alma only appears in it twice, once at the beginning (Alma 17:1–2) and again near the end (Alma 27:16–25).

If Mormon's editorial changes are limited primarily to these framing

24. See Appendix A for a list of Mormon's editorial comments.
25. Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 308.

passages (along with a geographic aside in Alma 22:27–35 that was not necessary in Alma's day) and the rest of the account remains largely unchanged, how should we understand the narrative voice? Is it Alma's, Mormon's, or some combination of the two? And if it is a mixture, does that obligate the reader to discern where the voice shifts and how each part should be heard?

Book of Mormon scholar Brant Gardner believes that the narrative voice is a mixture, and therefore that it obligates the reader to discern.[26] He sees the heading before Alma XII (Alma 17) as introducing a quotation, even though Alma is referred to in the third person both at the outset and again later in the unit. Gardner acknowledges that Mormon modified the narrative and inserted his own material, but maintains that the bulk of it was copied from Alma's record. Therefore, in Gardner's view, there is no need for a formal introduction to Alma 29 (half-way through Alma XV), because Alma has been speaking all along. Gardner understands the narrative as a blend in which Alma remains the dominant voice with occasional selective contributions from Mormon. This requires readers to speculate about where the voice shifts and to decide how each portion should be heard.

I respectfully disagree. Mormon does not merely condense his source material while preserving Alma's voice; rather, he deliberately transforms it into his own voice. When he does quote Alma, he records it in first-person and allows Alma to speak for himself, as he does in Alma VII (Alma 9). Even when a quotation is abridged, Mormon still considers it a quotation and introduces it as such.[27] In modern writing, we would expect quotation marks or similar indicators, and in Mormon's record we consistently see introductory phrases or framing language. By contrast, when he does not present his abridged material as a quotation, it follows that it is not a quotation, even though we know it is based on an earlier source and perhaps even copied directly from it.

This distinction is crucial in understanding Alma 29. Mormon does

26. Brant A. Gardner, "Labor Diligently to Write: The Ancient Making of a Modern Scripture, Chapters 14 & 15," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 35 (2020): 301–10, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/labor-diligently-to-write-the-ancient-making-of-a-modern-scripture-6/#sub-14o. Grant Hardy also considered this possibility but ultimately rejected it. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 308.

27. Mormon abridged each of these sermons but still introduced them as quotations: Alma's sermon in Gideon (Alma 8:1); Amulek's preaching in Ammonihah (Alma 9:34; 11:46); and Alma's preaching in Ammonihah (Alma 13:31).

attribute his source for his "account of the sons of Mosiah" in the heading before Alma XII (Alma 17), but he does not introduce the following narrative as a quotation. He then shifts Alma's voice from first to third person in the account and makes other editorial changes. Without an explicit introduction identifying the passage as a quotation — as he does consistently elsewhere — we cannot classify it as one. Even if much of the content was drawn from Alma's record, the form in which we receive it is Mormon's. It is a redacted narrative based on a source, not a direct quotation from it. It still requires attribution, which Mormon gives, just like he does at the beginning and end of his "account of Alma," but it is not a quotation. If it were he would have introduced it as such and left Alma's words in the first-person.

Mormon ends Alma XIV (Alma 23–26) with a quotation from Ammon, introduced simply: "And now, these are the words of Ammon to his brethren which say thus" (Alma 26:1). This brief introduction shows that Mormon was willing to begin a significant quotation with minimal framing, which allows for the theoretical possibility that a similar line introducing a quotation may have once preceded Alma 29, but was lost. However, this hypothetical lost-line explanation, as well as Gardner's claim that the entire unit is a quotation, both become moot if the words of Alma 29 fit Mormon. Because Mormon is the default voice in this material, if the words fit Mormon, then the most natural explanation for the absence of attribution is that they are his — he is not quoting Alma.

Reconsidering the quotation paradigm

Having reviewed Mormon's narrative design and editorial patterns, we are now in a position to reconsider the supposed quotation. While most readers assume that it begins at Alma 29:1, three scholars who have considered this issue place its beginning at a change in verb tense seven verses earlier.[28] This section explores that possibility, arguing that the shift in tense signals a return to Mormon's editorial voice, rather than the start of a quotation.

Alma XV (Alma 27–29) ends Mormon's third narrative unit and completes the larger three-unit block (Alma I–XV; Alma 1–29) that recounts the events of the first fifteen years of the reign of the judges. In this chapter, Mormon continues the story of the sons of Mosiah as they flee with their converts, reunite (again) with Alma, and settle back

28. John Tvedtnes, Grant Hardy, and Brant Gardner. I engage with and cite their works in detail below.

among the Nephites. He then writes: "And now, it came to pass that after the people of Ammon were established in the land of Jershon . . ." (Alma 28:1). He will repeat this phrase, and some other details, to begin his next chapter and next narrative unit about Korihor and the Zoramites (Alma XVI; Alma 30:1–2). This is an example of resumptive repetition, a literary technique found in both the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon. This technique, when a narrative is interrupted for a digression, repeats a phrase from the departure point to signal the return to the original storyline. Mormon interrupts his narrative here with thirty verses still remaining (Alma 28:2–29:17) — six in the past tense followed by twenty-four in the present tense — before he ends the chapter and resumes his interrupted storyline to begin his next chapter with the repeated line.

The story Mormon is interrupting is this: the contention stirred up by Nehor and Amlici leads Alma to relinquish the judgment seat to preach full-time among the Nephites. Meanwhile, the sons of Mosiah are preaching among the Lamanites. These storylines have converged and now culminate in a tremendous battle; one Mormon describes as the worst to that time among the Nephites, resulting in so many dead that they are not numbered (Alma 28:1–3; resumed in 30:1–2). He then ends his abridged narrative with the following verses, the last ones written in the past tense:

> And now this was a time that there was a great *mourning* and *lamentation* heard throughout all the land, among all the people of Nephi — Yea, the *cry of widows mourning* for their husbands, and also of *fathers mourning* for their sons, and the daughter for the brother, yea, the brother for the father; and thus the *cry of mourning* was heard among all of them, *mourning* for their kindred who had been slain. And now surely this was a *sorrowful* day; yea, a time of *solemnity,* and a time of much fasting and prayer. And thus ended the fifteenth year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi. (Alma 28:4–7)[29]

Mormon ends his narrative block of the first fifteen years with this scene of profound national grief, and the words, "Surely this was a sorrowful day." He identifies the mourners — widows, husbands, fathers,

29. The current edition reads *endeth,* while the original dictation was *ended.* Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants,* 2188.

sons, sisters, and brothers.[30] It is a litany of sorrow, an echo of wailing. These are not the words of a detached historian. They come from Mormon, a man well acquainted with war and its toll on families — one who had surely ministered to many new widows with eyes glazed in anguish, held children in shock from loss, and knelt beside parents undone by grief.

This also applies, in a lesser degree, to Alma, whose original description of these things is what Mormon abridged for the version of the record that we received. But this is not Alma speaking, for Mormon does not present it as a quotation. It is Mormon's voice we are hearing. He is describing this sorrowful scene for his latter-day audience, being moved upon enough to pause and confess from his own heart: "Surely this was a sorrowful day, yea, a time of solemnity, and a time of much fasting and prayer" (Alma 28:6).

At this point, Mormon shifts to the present tense to conclude his third narrative unit and begin reflecting on the stories he included from the first fifteen years of the reign of judges. While most Latter-day Saints see the quotation beginning at the added chapter break in seven more verses (in Alma 29:1), John Tvedtnes, Grant Hardy, and Brant Gardner have all concluded that the quotation begins at this change in tense. John Tvedtnes explains: "It is likely that Mormon began the quote from Alma's record in Alma 28:8–9, where we have a prefacelike colophon (both verses begin with the words 'and this is the account') referring to the previous section abridged by Mormon." After citing a few more verses, Tvedtnes adds: "These statements in present rather than past tense, imply that the writer was Alma, not Mormon."[31]

The present tense itself should no longer be an issue, because we know that Mormon also consistently used it in his editorial remarks. It is also important to clarify that Tvedtnes is not arguing that it is Alma speaking in Alma 29; he is arguing that Alma's words were inspired by the angel's visit to him in his youth. He is only pointing out that Mormon likely began quoting Alma earlier than we have traditionally assumed, as there is no logical break between this part of the Alma 28 text and Alma 29. Tvedtnes also offers reasons why the author is Alma, but they are brief and incidental and are not the focus of his essay.

30. Mormon mentions fathers twice, first as mourning, then as being mourned.

31. 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), 320, archive.org/details/bookofmormonauth0000unse_p1z2/page/320/mode/2up.

They are the same that Grant Hardy gives in footnotes in his Book of Mormon *Reader's* and *Study Edition;* reasons that, as far as I can tell, have never been formally challenged.[32]

After more than a century of interpretive tradition, Alma's voice in this passage has become axiomatic, such that few scholars feel the need to articulate—let alone defend—the attribution. Gardner's response to an early version of this paper reflects that assumption rather than offering a developed argument for Alma's authorship:

> All of the internal evidence points to $Alma_2$ as the author of those verses. . . . Smith spends the rest of his paper exploring how Mormon might be behind the phrases that appear to so clearly depend upon $Alma_2$'s experiences.[33]

This is representative of the prevailing assumption rather than a defense of it, and therefore does not engage the question of authorship at the level of argument.

In what follows, we will examine that internal evidence with fresh eyes and a new perspective. We will start our examination, however, seven verses before the chapter break for Alma 29, because that is where the consensus of Book of Mormon scholars who have considered this question place its true beginning.

Themes, Echoes, and Editorial Intent

To consider whether or not we are hearing Mormon's voice, we must first understand the context in which he wrote. He was a man who sorrowed for the wickedness of his people—a man who had spent his life recording their wickedness as he witnessed the slow collapse of his nation. He wrote of himself: "And wo is me because of their wickedness, for my heart has been filled with **sorrow** because of their wickedness all my days" (Mormon 2:19). And again:

> I had led them, notwithstanding their wickedness, I had led them many times to battle, and had loved them, according to the love of God which was in me, with all my heart; and *my soul had been poured out in prayer unto my God all the day*

32. Grant Hardy, ed., *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 332; Hardy, *Maxwell Institute Study Edition*, 316; Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 308.
33. Gardner, "Labor Diligently to Write," 308.

> *long for them;* nevertheless, it was **without faith**, because of the hardness of their hearts. (Mormon 3:12)

And finally: "I was **without hope**, for I knew the judgments of the Lord which should come upon them; for they repented not of their iniquities . . ." (Mormon 5:2).

When Mormon was likely writing the passage we are about to examine, he was in his early seventies, either retreating north with his people to Cumorah, or already there preparing for what would be their final battle.[34] He describes the sorrow of that gathering in haunting terms:

> we did again take to flight, and those whose flight was swifter than the Lamanites' did escape, and those whose flight did not exceed the Lamanites' were swept down and destroyed. And now behold, I, Mormon, do not desire to **harrow up** the souls of men in casting before them such an awful scene of blood and carnage as was laid before mine eyes . . . therefore I write a small abridgment, *daring not to give a full account* of the things which I have seen, *because of the commandment which I have received,* and also that ye might not have too great **sorrow** because of the wickedness of this people. . . . For I know that such will **sorrow** for the calamity of the house of Israel; yea, they will **sorrow** for the destruction of this people; they will **sorrow** that this people had not repented. (Mormon 5:7–11)

The voice we are now trying to hear is that of an aging prophet who sorrowed deeply for the wickedness of his beloved people, who had lost faith and hope that they would repent, and knew they were about to be destroyed. He was a man unable to fully describe the "awful scene of blood and carnage" he witnessed, not only because of the commandment he had received, but also out of concern for the sorrow of his reader.[35] I say *trying* to hear because the context in which we perceive a writer inevitably shapes how we interpret their words.

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34. This is how I read Mormon 6:5–6.
35. In a letter to Moroni, Mormon gives only a glimpse of what he witnessed (Moroni 9:7–9): torture, rape, women and children deliberately starved and fed the flesh of their husbands and fathers, and other forms of war cannibalism. The atrocities appear systematic, not isolated. The depravity exceeded what Mormon dared, or was allowed, to put in his record. When he speaks of *"blood and carnage,"* it appears he is deliberately withholding the full horror.

Tone, meaning, and even authorship are always filtered through the lens of expectation. In the case of Alma 29, that expectation has been shaped by over a century of tradition and by the quiet, implicit authority of a chapter heading, making it especially difficult to hear an alternative. But that is precisely why, in this case, we must question the instinct to hear only what we already believe. What follows is best approached as a deliberate re-hearing of the passage — one that tests how interpretive expectations shape perceptions of voice.

Rather than present and weigh indirect evidence pointing to either Alma or Mormon, I have instead laid a foundational claim: Mormon is the default voice in the account we have received. My central premise is that his abridgment comes to us in his voice, unless he explicitly indicates otherwise — and in the case of Alma 29, he does not. He offers no attribution to Alma and no introduction of a quotation. This omission is significant. As demonstrated earlier, Mormon is remarkably consistent in introducing and attributing quotations. This is true not only in the chapters examined here but throughout his entire record. If the words that follow can also be heard in Mormon's voice, then that is how we should hear them. There is no need to postulate a missing line of text or explain away the lack of attribution, for it simply is not a quotation.

I say *also be heard* in Mormon's voice because I freely acknowledge that the passage sounds like Alma. I heard it that way my entire life and, at first, it was difficult for me to hear it differently. But, once I became aware of the anomaly and began examining the issue more closely, another possibility emerged. My goal in the balance of this paper is to explore that possibility further and show that the words can also be heard as Mormon's. They also fit as his own reflection on the material he has just abridged. There is nothing in them that disqualifies him as the speaker or requires that they be Alma's words.

Hearing Mormon's voice in Alma 29

This section offers a close reading of Alma 28:8–29:17 as Mormon's editorial reflection, showing how the language, structure, and emotional tone align with his voice and narrative context. If the content also fits naturally with his perspective and concerns, there is no need to assume a change in speaker.

After ending his narrative block of material written in the past tense, Mormon shifts to the present tense to first conclude his third narrative unit about the sons of Mosiah:

> And this **is** the *account of Ammon and his brethren,* their

> journeyings in the land of Nephi, their **sufferings** in the land, their **sorrows,** and their **afflictions**, and their **incomprehensible joy**, and the reception and **safety** of the brethren in the land of Jershon. And now may the Lord, the Redeemer of all men, bless their souls forever. (Alma 28:8)

This conclusion echoes language from the unit's introduction found in the heading before Alma 17 (Alma XII), framing it just like the other two narrative units Mormon created: "An account of the sons of Mosiah . . . their **sufferings** and **deliverance**, according to the record of Alma."

This is the first verse that John Tvedtnes saw as a "prefacelike colophon," introducing the quotation from Alma. Rather than a preface marking the start of a quotation, I submit that it serves as a summary conclusion to the story of the sons of Mosiah and a benediction invoking the Lord's blessing upon them. At the same time, it looks backward and forward — bridging the narrative that just concluded with the retrospective review that follows.

The next verse performs a similar dual function, but on a larger scale: "And this ***is*** *the account* of the *wars and contentions* among the Nephites, and also the *wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites;* and the fifteenth year of *the reign of the judges* ***is*** *ended"* (Alma 28:9). This verse concludes the broader narrative block containing all three units, while also echoing Mormon's heading that introduced the book of Alma: "*An account* of the *reign of the judges* and the *wars and contentions among the people,* and also an account of a *war between the Nephites and the Lamanites . . ."* — the same heading to which the conclusion of his first narrative unit linked. In doing so, it frames the entire block and signals the beginning of Mormon's editorial review of it.

The tense change does not signal a shift to Alma's voice; instead, it marks a transition to Mormon's editorial perspective as he steps out of the narrative to reflect on it — just as he does elsewhere in his record. Notably, he ends the fifteenth year of the reign of judges twice: first using the past tense to close the historical narrative (Alma 28:7), and then again in a present-perfect form — "is ended" — to emphasize from his editorial vantage that the year has just concluded (Alma 28:9). In so doing, Mormon signals that he is no longer narrating events as they unfold, but deliberately pausing to engage directly with what he has just presented, revisiting it from his authorial perspective to interpret and shape its meaning for his latter-day audience.

Mormon begins this reflective review with: "And *from the first year to the fifteenth has brought to pass* the destruction of many thousand lives, yea, it *has brought to pass* an awful scene of bloodshed" (Alma 28:10). Because the first battle he mentions occurred in the fifth year, by saying, "from the first year," Mormon shows that he is referencing the beginning of his "account of Alma." The use of the present perfect "has brought to pass" shows that he considers all the events from years one through fifteen as contributing to and culminating in this current tragedy. The destruction and bloodshed in the stories Mormon told are not merely part of the past; they led to this current editorial moment and remain part of the present as he reflects on the block of material he created to recount them.

As Mormon continues in the present tense, he keeps that destruction and sorrow vivid — not just for himself, but for us as well:

> And the bodies of many thousands are laid low in the earth, while the bodies of many thousands are *moldering* in heaps upon the face of the earth, yea, and many thousands are mourning for the loss of their kindred, because they have reason to fear, according to the promises of the Lord, that they are consigned to a state of endless wo. While many thousands of others truly mourn for the loss of their kindred, yet they rejoice and exult in the hope, and even know, according to the promises of the Lord, that they are raised to dwell at the right hand of God in a state of never-ending happiness. (Alma 28:11–12).[36]

The present tense keeps this scene and its emotional impact immediate, contrasting despair with hope in the face of mass death. In so doing, Mormon reinforces his central theme: agency, repentance, and faith determine eternal outcomes. He teaches that the sorrow or joy in death reflects the choices made in life. The present tense also makes it sound like Alma is speaking, even though these verses have not traditionally been included in the quotation. Rather than Alma speaking, these are Mormon's reflections on the sorrowful close of the narrative arc he has just shaped as he draws out its spiritual implications and eternal significance.

What he does here closely resembles what he does after the destruction of his own people — the only other time the word *molder* (or *moldering*) is found in the Book of Mormon. After the Nephite's

36. See Appendix C for a discussion of "state of never-ending happiness."

last battle, Mormon describes the dead as "left by the hands of those who slew them to *molder* upon the land . . ." (Mormon 6:15), and a few verses later laments:

> ye are gone and my sorrows cannot bring your return. And the day soon cometh that your mortal must put on immortality, and these bodies which are now *moldering* in corruption must soon become incorruptible bodies; and then ye must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to be judged according to your works; and if it so be that ye are righteous, then are ye blessed with your fathers who have gone before you. O that ye had repented before this great destruction had come upon you. But behold, ye are gone, and the Father, yea, the Eternal Father of heaven, knoweth your state; and he doeth with you according to his justice and mercy. (Mormon 6:20–22)

The emotional resonance between these two scenes is unmistakable. The destruction Mormon describes in his abridged narrative echoes, and also anticipates, the devastation he personally witnessed. That earlier account, though historical, must have stirred fresh sorrow as he recorded it, sorrow shaped by memory and experience. Elsewhere he writes: "my sorrow did return unto me again, and I saw that the day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually; for I saw thousands of them hewn down in open rebellion against their God and heaped up as dung upon the face of the land" (Mormon 2:15). Perhaps as he was recording the past tragedy from Alma's day, he was experiencing similar ones in his own. I believe that the emotion aroused by the scene he just described — hinted at in his reflection that "surely this was a sorrowful day" — stirred something more than memory. It awakened a longing, a heartfelt wish he will express in a very personal way in the words that soon follow.

Before those words, however, Mormon offers three "thus we see" statements. He often uses this phrase, or a variation of it, to draw moral or theological conclusions from the stories he presents.[37] The first is especially forceful, linking spiritual inequality not only to circum-

37. The phrase *thus we see* (or *we see, can behold, plainly discern*, etc.) was used a total of twenty-seven times by Mormon to call attention to something in his abridged material (see Alma 19:23, 36; 24:19, 27, 30; 28:13–14; 29:8; 30:60; 46:8–10; 50:19, 21; Helaman 3:27–29; 6:34–36, 40; 12:1–3; 15:5). It was also used two times by Nephi (1 Nephi 16:29; 17:3), once by Ammon (Alma 26:37) and twice by Moroni (Ether 2:9; 14:25) as they comment on their material. It was

stance, but to sin and the devil's deceit: "And thus we see how great the inequality of man *is* because of sin and transgression, and the power of the devil, which comes by the cunning plans which he hath devised to ensnare the hearts of men" (Alma 28:13). The word *inequality* recalls the opening and closing chapters of the second narrative unit previously discussed.[38] The word *cunning* ties this observation to the characterization of Amlici (Alma 2:1–2), and later to the lawyers in Ammonihah who employed "cunning devices" in their attempt to entrap Alma and Amulek (Alma 10:13–15). Using the present-tense verbs *is* and *comes,* alongside the present-perfect *he hath devised,* emphasizes that inequality, sin, and temptation are not just historical conditions, but ongoing, active realities. The devil's schemes, devised long ago, still remain operative in Mormon's day, and in our own.

The second "thus we see" shifts from observation to exhortation: "And thus we see the great call of diligence of men to labor in the vineyards of the Lord" (Alma 28:14). This statement refers directly to the preceding narratives of Alma and the sons of Mosiah, who labored in the Lord's vineyard throughout their stories. Mormon presents their missionary journeys, sacrifices, and struggles as examples of faith and diligence.

The third statement expresses a universal gospel truth, one that has echoed throughout this narrative. It articulates a recurring contrast, a thematic thread tying together multiple earlier passages: the consequences of sin versus repentance. Mormon first introduced this in the conclusion to his first chapter (Alma 3:26), echoed it through Alma's words in Zarahemla and in Ammonihah (Alma 9:28–29), and reaffirmed it as he reflected on the moldering bodies of the dead: "And thus we see the great reason of **sorrow**, and also of rejoicing; **sorrow** because of death and destruction among men, and joy because of the light of Christ unto life" (Alma 28:14). Mormon will return to this theme one more time (Alma 29:4–5).

This is how our current Alma 28 ends, with Mormon reflecting on the sorrow and rejoicing that mark the spiritual consequences of mortality, the accumulated meaning of everything he has included in his account of Alma, reaching all the way back to the beginning. These verses deepen Mormon's editorial voice and prepare the way for the

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also used in this way by Alma in Ammonihah (Alma 12:22, 24), in his letter to Shiblon (37:26), and in his letter to Corianton (42:3, 4, 7, 14).

38. Earlier uses are in Alma 4:12, 15; 16:16. This is the fourth use in this material, out of six total in the Book of Mormon.

reflections that follow in Alma 29. There is no explicit shift in speaker, only a continuation of Mormon's words.

The emotional weight of the destruction he described, and the salvation he held up alongside it, creates the context for what follows. It is in this spirit of mourning and reflection that Mormon expresses one of the most poignant desires found in the Book of Mormon. These words, traditionally attributed to Alma, when heard in this context, resonate just as powerfully in Mormon's voice, as he moves from reflection to yearning without pause or introduction, and expresses his deep, heartfelt desire:

> O that I were an angel and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people! Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more **sorrow** upon all the face of the earth. (Alma 29:1–2).[39]

If Mormon sorrowed for the wickedness of his people and longed for their repentance — if he grieved for the sorrow of those in his narrative, and for those he was witnessing in his own day — then this is the desire we would expect him to express. It continues the emotional and spiritual trajectory already established in the verses leading here, flowing directly from his final past-tense observation: "And now surely this was a **sorrowful** day . . ." (Alma 28:6), and continuing the theme of his last "thus we see" reflection: "And thus we see the great reason of **sorrow,** . . . **sorrow** because of death and destruction among men . . ." (Alma 28:14). Mormon's feelings are not abstract. His wish is to speak with such divine power that it drives sorrow from the earth through universal repentance. And, as we shall see, his longing is not only to end sorrow, but also to save his people from the destruction looming over them.

John Tvedtnes connects these words to Alma's story, writing: "It was the angel's 'voice of thunder, which caused the earth to shake,' that later prompted Alma to desire to be 'an angel.'"[40] That reading fits Alma, but it also fits Mormon. Alma's experience could just as easily

39. See Appendix C for a discussion of *O that I were an angel, trump of God, voice to shake the earth, voice of thunder,* and *plan of redemption.*

40. Tvedtnes, "Voice of an Angel," 314.

have stirred the same desire in Mormon. Mormon recorded that angelic visitation in his book of Mosiah, and in Alma 29 he is reflecting on some of its consequences. Because of the angel's voice of thunder, Alma and the sons of Mosiah repented and escaped personal destruction (see Alma 26:17–20). They then became instruments in God's hands to save the Church and bring thousands of Lamanites into its fold. These miraculous stories — so formative to the early Church — were surely told and retold in Nephite families to build faith in their children, perhaps even to a young Mormon hundreds of years later, and then by him to a young Moroni. These are stories of their ancestors who repented and became angels of mercy to help stave off destruction of others. They surely shaped Mormon's spiritual imagination. Is it any wonder, then, that he might long to be among those who, as he puts it, "were treated as though they were angels sent from God to save them from everlasting destruction" (Alma 27:4).

The longing expressed in Alma 29 is not the beginning of something new, but the continuation of Mormon's review as he now weaves his personal reflections back into the material he has just abridged. Far from stepping aside to quote Alma, Mormon will remain fully in his editorial voice, returning again and again to the stories from the first fifteen years, as he surveys the larger moral arc of that narrative, drawing out the lessons that have impacted his own life, while hoping they will also impact ours.

Intertextual echoes: Alma or Mormon?

Tvedtnes sees additional parallels to Alma in these words, writing:

> One might argue that Alma was not necessarily thinking about his conversion experience. . . . There is further evidence, however, that Alma had his own experience with the angel in mind. It lies in Alma's reference to other aspects of the angel's visit.[41]

Tvedtnes is referring to what the angel commanded Alma to do in Mosiah 27, and other allusions to that experience in the Alma 29 verses that follow. As we review that further evidence, to be fair we

41. Tvedtnes, "Voice of an Angel," 314–15. See also S. Kent Brown, "Alma's Conversion: Reminiscences in His Sermons," in *The Book of Mormon: Alma, The Testimony of the Word*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1992), 149, rsc.byu.edu/book-mormon-alma-testimony-word/almas-conversion-reminiscences-his-sermons.

must remember that Tvedtnes was not arguing for Alma's authorship of Alma 29—again, that was already assumed. He was arguing that Alma's words were inspired by the memory of the angel's visit. On that point I agree—because it also applies to Mormon.

The angel's visit profoundly shaped Alma's life, ministry, and teachings, which in turn profoundly shaped the development of the Church Mormon belonged to. As one of the Church's high priests, Alma urged its members to do what the angel had commanded him to do. Mormon also would have strived to live by those teachings of Alma. We do the same today after reading Alma's words in Mormon's book, though we are much further removed from Alma's time. So, even though I no longer believe it is Alma speaking, I still see echoes of the angel's visit in Alma 29—both in how that experience shaped Alma's teachings, which Mormon is now reflecting on, and in how the legacy of those teachings transformed the religious tradition that Mormon inherited, and thus Mormon himself. That legacy—echoed and preserved in Mormon's voice—helps give these words their enduring power.

Alma 29 continues:

> But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me. I ought not to harrow up in my desires, the firm decree of a just God, for I know that he granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life; yea, I know that he allotteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable, according to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction. . . . he that knoweth good and evil, to him it is given according to his desires, whether he desireth good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience. Now, seeing that I know these things, why should I desire more than to perform the work to which I have been called? (Alma 29:3–6)[42]

Here, Mormon restates his central theme one last time—that God grants to each person according to their desires, for better or worse. This time, it becomes more personal, offering a glimpse into a struggle in Mormon's heart, for he also states that his wish is a sin, and that he "ought not to harrow up in [his] desires, the firm decree of a just God."

Tvedtnes sees the "firm decree" mentioned here as a reference to the divine judgments Alma was forced to face when the angel

42. See Appendix C for a discussion of the phrase *harrow up.*

appeared, noting that "harrow up" also appears in Alma 36, writing: "Similar wording is found in [Alma 29], making it clear that he was thinking about his earlier experience with the angel."[43] This may be an example of confirmation bias. Tvedtnes assumes that Alma is speaking, and his use of the same phrase elsewhere confirms that belief—similar to how the use of the word *molder* confirms mine. Intertextual links like these, though interesting, cannot be evidence for authorship, because they are inherently inconclusive. Even in the case of *molder*—where Mormon's later use is the only other use and it occurs in a nearly identical context—it still does not prove he is the speaker. Parallels like this may enrich our understanding of the text, but they cannot determine authorship and can just as easily mislead when read through the lens of prior assumptions.

Although Alma uses "harrow up" in Alma 36, he employs it quite differently, which could possibly mislead one into misreading its meaning in Alma 29. In its original agricultural sense, a *harrow* is a farming implement used to break up and tear through soil, to prepare it for planting. Metaphorically, *to harrow up* someone's mind or soul means to tear it up, to distress it, or to inflict sharp mental or emotional anguish—as in Alma 36: "I was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins" (Alma 36:12). But in Alma 29—"to harrow up the firm decree of a just God"—it carries a different meaning. Here it refers to agitating or unsettling something that ought to remain settled; a firm decree from God.

This meaning fits perfectly in the context of Mormon speaking, for "the firm decree of a just God" refers to something specific that the Lord said to him: "Because this people repented not after I had delivered them, behold, they shall be cut off from the face of the earth" (Mormon 3:15). After hearing this decree, Mormon stepped back from leading his people and became an idle witness to their downfall. One can almost feel the inner conflict he must have experienced each time he poured out his soul in prayer for them—as though he "ought not to harrow up" what a just God had already decreed. These words in Alma 29 express the sorrow of a man knowing he cannot unsettle what God has already settled.

The same awareness that he "ought not" press against God's justice surfaces in a letter Mormon wrote his son: "I cannot recommend them [the Nephites] unto God lest he should smite me" (Moroni 9:21).

43. Tvedtnes, "Voice of an Angel," 318.

It recalls the feelings of his ancestor Nephi, who saw the destruction of his people in vision and lamented: "O the pain and the anguish of my soul for the loss of the slain of my people! For I, Nephi, have seen it, and it well-nigh consumeth me before the presence of the Lord; but I must cry unto my God: **Thy ways are just**" (2 Nephi 26:7). Like Nephi, Mormon grieved knowing his people's destruction was certain. Yet, knowing a just God "granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life" (Alma 29:4), Mormon chastened himself — condemning even his longing to change God's decree as a sinful desire.

Mormon understood that his people had collectively sealed their own fate through their willful rebellion. As he wrote to Moroni:

> I fear lest the Spirit hath ceased striving with them; and in this part of the land they are also seeking to put down all power and authority which cometh from God; and they are denying the Holy Ghost. And after rejecting so great a knowledge, my son, they must perish soon, unto the fulfilling of the prophecies which were spoken by the prophets, as well as the words of our Savior himself. (Moroni 8:28–29)

Elsewhere he recorded that "the day of grace was passed with [the Nephites], both temporally and spiritually" (Mormon 2:15) and "the Spirit of the Lord hath already ceased to strive with [them]" (Mormon 5:16). In that light, Mormon's quiet confession in Alma 29, "I do sin in my wish," reflects not only his sorrow, but his submission to what he knew that divine justice required. Wishing to provoke repentance and overturn a decree spoken to him personally may have felt like a breach of trust — or even disobedience.

The phrase *firm decree* in Alma 29:4 stands out. Why use the adjective *firm*? Is there such a thing as a decree from the Lord that is not firm? The word choice is deliberate. The only other time these words appear together in the Book of Mormon is in Alma's warning to Ammonihah: ". . . has not the Lord expressly promised and firmly decreed, that if ye will rebel against him that ye shall utterly be destroyed from off the face of the earth?" (Alma 9:24). By repeating Alma's unique word combination from chapter 9, Mormon aligns the fate of his own people with that of the people of Ammonihah — a city that rejected Alma's witness and warning and sealed its own destruction through rebellion and refusal to repent.

This intertextual link serves one of Mormon's broader literary

purposes: to use historical destruction as a typological warning to latter-day Gentiles. Throughout his work he presents the downfall of the Jaredites, the people of Ammonihah, and the Nephites not merely as history, but as prophecy — types and shadows of what awaits those in the last days who likewise reject the Lord. Moroni makes this warning unmistakable:

> And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, *that ye may know the decrees of God* — that ye may repent and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done. (Ether 2:11)

Intertextual links like this could also be seen as evidence for Alma being the voice in Alma 29. Indeed, they are a major reason Alma's voice has long been assumed in this chapter. The reasoning goes: since Alma used similar language elsewhere, he must be speaking here as well. But this reasoning remains speculative; it relies on inference and is therefore vulnerable to confirmation bias, as the earlier examples of "harrow up" and "molder" illustrate. The speaker we assume unavoidably shapes the meaning we perceive. On the other hand, what is conclusive is the lack of explicit attribution by Mormon. If the words can reasonably be heard in Mormon's voice, as I argue that they can, then that is how we should hear them. To do otherwise privileges tradition over text and expectation over evidence, thus overlooking the deeper editorial purpose at work in the text.

Mormon's Literary and Rhetorical Purposes

Having clarified how intertextual echoes should be weighed, we can now examine what Mormon does with them. Another of his literary objectives — closely related to the one just discussed — is to teach the Law of the Harvest: that every person will reap a reward according to his or her works. In Ammonihah, Alma taught: "And now, for this cause, that ye may not be destroyed, the Lord hath sent his angel to visit many of his people, declaring unto them that they must go forth and cry mightily unto this people, saying: Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is nigh at hand" (Alma 9:25). He then adds:

> Therefore, prepare ye the way of the Lord, for the time is at hand that all men shall reap a reward of their works, according to that which they have been — if they have been righteous they shall reap the salvation of their souls, according

> to the power and deliverance of Jesus Christ; and if they have been evil they shall reap the damnation of their souls, according to the power and captivation of the devil. Now behold, this is the voice of the angel, crying unto the people. (Alma 9:28–29)

Mormon uses Alma's words from chapter 9 to teach his latter-day audience that divine justice is ultimately tied to human desire and behavior; that reward is not arbitrary but harvested according to one's will and works. This is a major theme throughout his first three narrative blocks — one Mormon emphasizes by restating it three times in his editorial review.

Another of Mormon's editorial aims is to teach about the role of angels in God's plan. Mormon includes Alma's teaching that the Lord sends angels to declare repentance so that people might avoid destruction (Alma 9:25, 29). Amulek, who also saw an angel, likewise explained that God uses angels to cry repentance and warn of coming judgments (Alma 10:20–21). Then Alma taught that in the beginning God sent angels to reveal himself to mankind and to teach the plan of redemption (Alma 12:29–30), and that angels declare repentance and the day of salvation to all nations (Alma 13:21–26). The angelic visitation that led to the repentance of Alma and the sons of Mosiah is recalled multiple times (Alma 17:2; 21:5; 26:17–20), and the sons of Mosiah were regarded as angels by those they helped save from destruction (Alma 27:4). Through what he includes, Mormon teaches that angels proclaim the gospel, call people to repentance, and help save them from destruction — the very roles the Book of Mormon itself fulfills. Thus, when he expresses his longing to be an angel and speak with the trump of God to all the ends of the earth, Mormon is not merely voicing a personal desire.[44] He is intentionally aligning himself with that angelic pattern and reinforcing the divine purpose of his book.[45]

44. "Trump of God" is only found one time in the Book of Mormon, and only three other times elsewhere. Seeing it as an idiom referring to the Book of Mormon adds figurative meaning to them all. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Doctrine and Covenants 43:18; 88:92.)

45. Angels and trumpets are already inseparably connected with the Book of Mormon. The angel Moroni delivered the gold plates to Joseph Smith on 22 September 1827, an Israelite Holy Day called the Feast of the Trumpets. The very day the Book of Mormon came forth from the dust, Jews around the world were blowing trumpets and praying that God would still remember His exiled people. The trumpet blast symbolizes new revelation, announces the final harvest, and calls the house of Israel to repent and gather in preparation for the

Mormon's ability to layer additional meaning into his words through structure, repetition, and intertextual links is still unfamiliar to many. Grant Hardy was one of the first scholars I noticed highlighting this literary intentionality. In 2010 he wrote:

> In light of Mormon's artistic structuring of his account with deliberate editing, parallel narratives, and specific verbal connections, Latter-day Saints may want to rethink their long-held assumption that the circumstances of Mormon's life forced him to write hurriedly. The intentionality implicit in the literary aspects of his history suggest . . . he did not compose as he engraved, but rather transmitted to the plates a text previously written and carefully revised.[46]

Noel Reynolds expands on this idea, showing that Mormon inherited and worked within a Nephite scribal tradition rooted in an advanced literary heritage developed among the Hebrews over centuries and reaching its peak around the time Lehi fled Jerusalem.[47] Nephi, trained in Hebrew rhetoric or the "learning of the Jews" (1 Nephi 1:2), clearly employed those rhetorical patterns in his writing, and that training was preserved and passed down through the Nephite recordkeepers all the way to Mormon. Not only was Mormon an experienced writer and inspired seer, but he was also well-educated in literary techniques and rhetorical devices. He knew how to layer meaning into his words. More than that, he knew his book would go forth to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people in the last days to restore the gospel of Jesus Christ and gather scattered Israel. He understood that his

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coming of the Lord. Lenet Hadley Read, "Joseph Smith's Receipt of the Plates and the Israelite Feast of Trumpets," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 2 (July 1993): 110–20.

Mormon's book acts as a trumpet in that it literally does these same things, as explained to the Nephites by the resurrected Christ (3 Nephi 16, 20–21; cf. 3 Nephi 29:1). The angel Moroni stands atop many Latter-day Saint temples around the world with a trumpet pressed to his lips, and sometimes even gold plates under his arm. The weathervane for the original Nauvoo temple depicted an angel in flight holding an open book overhead with one hand, and a trumpet pressed to his lips with the other.

46. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 111.
47. Noel B. Reynolds, "The Last Nephite Scribes," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 53 (2022): 95–138, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-last-nephite-scribes/; and Noel B. Reynolds, "Lehi and Nephi as Trained Manassite Scribes," *Interpreter* 50 (2022): 161–216, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/lehi-and-nephi-as-trained-manassite-scribes/.

record would fulfill the prophecies and promises given to his ancestors, extending back through Lehi and Nephi to Joseph in Egypt.

As we continue in Alma 29, we find another subtle example of Mormon's literary artistry as he layers additional meaning into his words through anaphoric parallelism.[48] Twice he asks: "Why should I desire . . . ?" The first concludes: "more than to perform the work to which I have been called" (Alma 29:6); the second, which immediately follows, ends with: "that I were an angel, that I could speak unto all the ends of the earth?" (Alma 29:7). Mormon thus links "the work to which [he has] been called" with the very thing he longs for — to speak with divine authority to all nations. When this layered meaning rises to the surface, his desire aligns perfectly with his role as author of the Book of Mormon — a voice destined to go forth to "all the ends of the earth."

As he continues, Mormon connects his longing and prophetic role even more explicitly to the record he is crafting: "For behold, 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. Therefore we see that the Lord doth counsel **in wisdom** according to that which is just and true" (Alma 29:8).[49] Read in Mormon's voice rather than Alma's, this can be seen less as a general observation and more as a self-referential prophetic statement, shaped with editorial intentionality. On this reading, his desire to cry repentance to all nations is realized through the very record in which he voices that desire: the book itself functions as the instrument by which the Lord grants his word to "all nations . . . in wisdom, all that he *seeth* fit that they should have." The Book of Mormon has now reached hundreds of millions of readers in scores of languages. This is not just poetic irony — it is poetic prophecy being fulfilled before our eyes.

Mormon strengthens this connection by shaping his words into parallel and chiastic balance, hallmarks of Hebrew rhetoric. The entire segment from "O that I were an angel . . ." (Alma 29:1) to "the Lord doth grant unto all nations . . ." (Alma 29:8) falls into a carefully connected symmetry:

A1. O that I were an **angel** . . . **wish** . . . *cry repentance to every people.*
A2. Declare repentance and plan of redemption unto every soul.

48. Anaphoric parallelism is repetition at the beginning of parallel structures for rhetorical effect.
49. The current edition reads *counsel in wisdom,* while the original dictation was *counsel in his wisdom.* Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants,* 2205–6. See Appendix C for a discussion of this phrase.

B. But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish,
for *I ought to be content with the things the Lord hath allotted unto me.*
C. I ought not to harrow up in my desires the firm decree of a just God.
1. For I know he grants according to desire, whether death/life.
2. Yea, I know he allots/decrees according to wills whether salvation/destruction.
3. Yea, I know he gives according to desires whether good/evil, life/death . . .
B'. Now, seeing that I know these things,
Why should I desire more than to perform the work to which I have been called?
A1'. Why should I **desire** that I were an **angel,** that I could *speak unto all the ends of earth?*
A2'. The Lord doth grant to all nations . . . to teach his word . . . all that he seeth fit that they should have.

The outer A-lines pair yearning with provision: 1. Mormon's wish/desire to be an angel and cry repentance/speak to all the ends of the earth; with 2. the declaring of repentance and the plan of redemption unto every soul in parallel with a reference to his record—The Lord doth grant . . . his word . . . in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have. The B-lines disclose an inner reckoning with divine allotment, or the work he was called to do. At the center the C-lines repeat "I know," declaring the law of the harvest—that God grants according to desire, which is central to Mormon's editorial concerns. Such literary symmetry suggests more than spontaneous reflection; it is Mormon's deliberate prophetic meditation, shaped with clear editorial intentionality. Yearning, confession, and knowledge are bound together in a pattern that points beyond Mormon's personal longing to the larger fulfillment realized through the record he is crafting. The structure itself becomes a witness that the Book of Mormon would serve as the angelic voice by which the Lord grants his word to the nations—declaring repentance and the plan of redemption unto every soul.

Mormon reinforces that the last line (Alma 29:8) is specifically referring to the record he is creating by echoing the Lord's words given to Joseph in Egypt about the record of his seed: "And the words which [Joseph Smith] shall write shall be *the words* which are *expedient in my wisdom should go forth. . . .* And they shall cry from the dust, yea, even repentance unto their brethren" (2 Nephi 3:19–20). Even though the only verbal overlap is the phrase "in [God's] wisdom," the conceptual link is strong: both prophecies describe the Lord prudently

granting his word in measured portion as He deems "expedient," or "all that he seeth fit that they should have."

The link between these two prophecies is strengthened when considered beside the Lord's instructions to a future Joseph Smith that were given to Nephi centuries earlier: "Touch not the things which are sealed, for I will *bring them forth* in mine own due time . . . [*when] I shall see fit in mine own wisdom* to reveal all things unto the children of men" (2 Nephi 27:21–22). Nephi verbally links his words to the prophecy of Joseph of Egypt with "bring them forth" and "in mine own wisdom." Then, by repeating "see fit" and "in wisdom," Mormon links his words to Nephi's prophecy, and therefore back to Joseph's again by association. All three passages essentially describe an editorial constraint placed by the Lord upon prophets — that revelation is to be measured out according to divine wisdom and limited to what is expedient. Nephi thus extends Joseph's prophecy, and Mormon in turn aligns his words, and his record, with both, linking Alma 29:8 securely within a prophetic chain.

Mormon further demonstrates the constraint in 3 Nephi 26, wherein he explains that his record only contains the "lesser part" of what Jesus taught the Nephites — "which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith" — and adds: "I was about to write them all . . . but the Lord forbade it, saying: I will try the faith of my people. Therefore I, Mormon, do write the things which have been commanded me of the Lord" (3 Nephi 26:9, 11–12). This passage not only illustrates the editorial constraint placed upon Mormon by the Lord — limiting what he may include — but also conceptually gathers the prophecies of Joseph of Egypt, Nephi, and Mormon into a single frame — revelation given, measured, and timed, all by divine wisdom. It also provides a strong verbal link back to Joseph through the distinctive word *expedient* reinforcing all the other links at once.

The editorial constraint imposed on Mormon by the Lord is an example of the principle first articulated by the Lord to Joseph, extended in His words to Nephi, and then echoed by Mormon with: "the Lord doth grant . . . his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; therefore we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom according to that which is just and true" (Alma 29:8).[50]

Mormon reinforces this principle again in later passages. In 3 Nephi 29:1 he prophesies: "When the Lord shall *see fit, in his wisdom,* that

50. The current edition reads *counsel in wisdom*, while the original dictation was *counsel in his wisdom*. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 2205–6.

these sayings shall come unto the Gentiles according to his word, then ye may know that the covenant . . . is already beginning to be fulfilled." Likewise, in Mormon 5:12–14 he explains: "They shall *come forth* according to the commandment of the Lord, when he shall *see fit, in his wisdom.* And behold, they shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews; and for this intent shall they go . . ."[51] These verses verbally link to Alma 29:8, while reaffirming the same conceptual framework of measured and timely revelation, thereby strengthening the entire chain and reiterating the principle first given to Joseph, extended through Nephi, echoed in Alma 29:8, and demonstrated in the editorial constraint that the Lord placed on Mormon.

This pattern of using similar phrasing — "go/bring/come forth," "expedient," "sees fit," and "in his (my, mine own) wisdom" is neither abstract nor incidental. It deliberately echoes the language of the Lord and earlier prophets, forming a prophetic chain that binds Mormon's editorial voice to theirs. Through this verbal repetition Mormon reinforces that the Book of Mormon participates in a divinely guided sequence of revelation, each link strengthening the others and collectively affirming that the hand of the Lord is intimately involved in not only its content, but also in the timing and manner of its coming forth.

Just as this sequence of phrases binds Joseph, Nephi, and Mormon into one chain of measured revelation, another recurring phrase and its associated imagery create a parallel chain of prophecy: the promise that the record would "cry from the dust" (2 Nephi 3:20). This too originates in the Lord's promise to Joseph of Egypt about the record of his seed. Isaiah adds a link (Isaiah 29:4); Nephi another as he aligns his prophecy with both Isaiah and Joseph (2 Nephi 26:16; 33:13); and Moroni contributes a final one (Mormon 8:23). Each prophet echoes Joseph's prophecy by invoking this distinctive imagery and language, explicitly aligning his own voice with what came before. Nephi and Moroni both affirm that their words are not only prophecy, but also fulfillment. Joseph initiated the chain, Isaiah and Nephi strengthened it, and Moroni brought it to completion — each link strengthens the next until the Book of Mormon itself stands as the promised voice from the dust, a prophetic witness and warning to the nations.

Mormon did not add a new link to the "cry from the dust" chain,

51. After quoting Malachi to the Nephites, Jesus said: "These scriptures, which ye had not with you, the Father commanded that I should give unto you; for it was *wisdom in him* that they should be given unto future generations" (3 Nephi 26:2).

though he recognized this prophecy would be fulfilled in his record. With that recognition in place, his words that follow—"I know that which the Lord hath commanded me, and I glory in it" (Alma 29:9)—can now be heard in a different light: a declaration not of personal achievement but of divine commission.

Mormon glories in his divine commission

Knowing that Mormon is specifically referring to the record he is crafting casts new light on what follows: "I do not *glory* of myself, but I *glory* in that which the Lord hath commanded me; yea, and this is my *glory,* that perhaps I may be an *instrument in the hands of God* to *bring some soul to repentance;* and this is my *joy"* (Alma 29:9).[52] So far in this chapter, Mormon has referred to, "the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me" (v. 3), "the work to which I have been called" (v. 6), and now, twice, "that which the Lord hath commanded me" (v. 9). As Mormon speaking, these expressions explicitly converge on his divinely appointed task of creating the Book of Mormon. He knew the destiny of his record and embraced it with sacred humility. This perspective now prepares us to recognize something even more striking in the resonance between Mormon's voice and the words of Ammon that he quoted earlier.

Mormon's hope that he (and his book) might become "an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance" (Alma 29:9) echoes Ammon's earlier rejoicing that he and his brothers had been "instruments in the hands of God to bring about this great work" (Alma 26:3; restated in 26:15). Ammon also declared: "let us glory, yea, we will glory in the Lord. . . . Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord?" (Alma 26:16). His joy sprang from both mercy received as well as souls saved—a joy only the penitent can fully know. The passage follows the same rhetorical arc found in Ammon's testimony in Alma 26: first, instrument in the Lord's hands to accomplish His work; second, no glory in self but only in God; third, joy so full that words fail. In Alma 26, work, glory, and joy are joined into a deliberate three-part sequence and Mormon echoes this same patterned progression to give voice to what he felt in his own calling. Ammon also testified that it is given to the penitent "to bring thousands of souls to repentance" (Alma 26:22), and described the hope that he and his brothers felt, "that perhaps we might save some few of their souls" (Alma 26:26), and how they

52. See Appendix C for a discussion of "instrument in the hands of God."

had "suffered all manner of afflictions . . . that perhaps we might be the means of saving some soul" (Alma 26:30). Mormon's hope in his sorrow, and his words about glory and joy, perfectly recall Ammon's as he reflects on the destiny of his book.

John Tvedtnes said of Ammon's words: "[They] are so very similar to Alma's poetic utterance that it is likely that one of the two passages is dependent on the other, explainable by the fact that it was Alma who wrote both accounts in his record."[53] I agree with the observation, but not the attribution. Rather than Alma, it is Mormon who poetically intertwines his words with Ammon's in language, tone, and theme. Tvedtnes also suggests that "Alma's wish to speak with the voice of an angel was prompted by the success of his friends, the sons of Mosiah."[54] That insight also equally applies to Mormon, who could have felt the same desire, having just finished telling their story. Indeed, every phrase thought to reflect Alma's experience can just as well reflect Mormon's admiration for it.

Alma's influence on the Church, the Nephite nation, and on Mormon himself cannot be overstated. *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism* observes: "Few individuals have had greater influence upon a civilization than $Alma_2$, son of $Alma_1$. He was a key figure in the rise of the Nephite Church and republic, serving as the first chief judge in Zarahemla, commander-in-chief of the Nephite army, and high priest."[55] Nor should we overlook the legacy of $Alma_1$, who was the first to declare words later echoed in Alma 29. He stated, "after much tribulation, the Lord did hear my cries, and did answer my prayers, and has made me an instrument in his hands in bringing so many of you to a knowledge of his truth. Nevertheless, in this I do not glory, for I am unworthy to glory of myself" (Mosiah 23:10–11). The recurrence of these words in Alma 29:9 should be heard as spiritual echoes, not contradictions.

Likewise, Joseph Smith's phrasing in revelations, letters, and sermons has entered Latter-day Saint vernacular. For example, *stand in holy places; ensign to the nations; marvelous work and a wonder; let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; great and marvelous work; the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; the glory of God is*

53. Tvedtnes, "Voice of an Angel," 319.
54. Tvedtnes, "Voice of an Angel," 319.
55. Robert L. Millet, "$Alma_2$," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 33, archive.org/details/encyclopediaofmo01ludl/page/32/mode/2up.

intelligence; we cannot be saved without them; line upon line, precept upon precept. These are not merely echoes of earlier scripture — they became Joseph Smith's idiom, preserved in revelation and perpetuated through prophetic citation. In the same way, by weaving the words of Ammon and both Almas into his own, Mormon recalls their teachings, honors their legacy, and shapes their language and stories into his own latter-day witness.

Alma 29 continues: "And behold, when I *see* many of *my brethren* truly penitent, and coming to the Lord their God, then is my soul filled with joy . . ." (Alma 29:10). Grant Hardy cited the tense of this verse as pointing to Alma.[56] Tense itself should no longer be an issue. More than that, however, is the phrase "my brethren" which makes the verse sound like a reference to contemporaries, reinforcing the perception of Alma as speaker. That reading makes sense — but this is where the reader must stretch to hear Mormon's voice. Would Mormon see the early missionaries in his story as his brethren, just as we look back on the early Saints in our dispensation as our brothers and sisters? Hearing these words in Mormon's voice requires a shift in perspective, but it is not an unreasonable one. Indeed, "my brethren" will recur several more times in Alma 29, and each instance will reinforce that Mormon's usage reflects covenant kinship, not chronological proximity.

The work of Noel Reynolds highlights studies of how Israelite covenant culture was inextricably tied to kinship — a pattern also demonstrated in the Book of Mormon.[57] In Hebrew thought, covenant relationships were not merely legal agreements but familial bonds rooted in *ḥesed* — steadfast, loyal love expressed through faithful action. *Ḥesed* defines the mutual obligations that unite covenant partners, binding them together as kin. Paul Kalluveettil observes that "a covenant implies an adoption into the household, an extension of kinship, the making of a brother."[58] When Mormon calls earlier prophets and

56. Hardy, *Maxwell Institute Study Edition*, 317.

57. "Drawing on the writings of several of these minor prophets and Job, Glueck goes on to argue that '*hesed*, which formerly existed only between those who stood in a fundamentally close relationship toward one another, undergoes considerable expansion in meaning. Every man becomes every other man's brother, *hesed* becomes the mutual or reciprocal relationship of all men toward each other and toward God.'" Noel B. Reynolds, "Biblical Hesed and Nephite Covenant Culture," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2021): 7.

58. Paul Kalluveettil, *Declaration and Covenant: A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East* (Rome:

missionaries "my brethren," he is invoking this same covenant kinship. His brotherhood with Alma, Amulek, and the sons of Mosiah does not depend on time or place, but on shared covenant loyalty and purpose. Through this language of *ḥesed*, Mormon locates himself within their redemptive fellowship, joining his ministry and his record to theirs, as part of one enduring covenant family.

This covenantal usage was common in Nephite rhetoric. Ammon applied it three times in a single verse, to three distinct groups — his actual brethren and close friends, the Nephites of Zarahemla, and the Lamanites who hadn't been their "brethren" in any ordinary sense for generations:

> Now do ye remember, **my brethren**, that we said unto **our brethren** in the land of Zarahemla, we go up to the land of Nephi, to preach unto **our brethren**, the Lamanites, and they laughed us to scorn?" (Alma 26:23)

Most significantly, both Mormon and Moroni addressed their latter-day readers as "my brethren" (see Words of Mormon 1:6, 8; Ether 12:38; Moroni 1:4; 10:1, 8). Others — including Jacob, Enos, Jarom, King Benjamin, and Gideon — used the term in referring to the Lamanites, reinforcing its covenantal rather than chronological sense (see Jacob 3:5; Enos 1:11; Jarom 1:2; Mosiah 1:5; Mosiah 22:3). Limhi also applied it to Nephites he had never met (see Mosiah 7:14–15). In this rhetorical tradition, *brethren* denotes covenant kinship rather than temporal or chronological proximity. Thus, when Mormon calls Alma and the sons of Mosiah "my brethren," he is speaking the language of *ḥesed* — the loyal love of covenant fellowship — and claiming them as fellow laborers in the cause of Christ.

Mormon continues: "then do I remember what the Lord has done for me, yea, even that he hath heard my prayer; yea, then do I remember his merciful arm which he extended toward me" (Alma 29:10). These words answer a question Alma asked the Saints in Zarahemla: "Have ye sufficiently retained in remembrance his mercy and long suffering?" (Alma 5:6). In that same sermon, Alma pleaded: "repent, repent . . . he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy

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Biblical Institute Press, 1982), 204–5. Cited by Noel B. Reynolds, "Covenant Language in Biblical Religions and the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2022), 157, byustudies.byu.edu/article/covenant-language-in-biblical-religions-and-the-book-of-mormon.

are extended towards them . . .” (Alma 5:32–33).[59] The phrase *he hath heard my prayer* in Alma 29:10 recalls the words of $Alma_1$ quoted earlier: “the Lord did hear my cries, and did answer my prayers”—words which themselves echo the prayer of Zenos, preserved on the plates of brass, that was cited by $Alma_2$ to the Zoramites (see Alma 33:4–5). This language was likely part of the shared covenant tradition that shaped Nephite preaching, and Mormon would have known it well. In employing it here, Mormon is reflecting with reverence on the story and legacy of both Almas, appropriating their words of remembrance as the natural idiom for his own meditation.

Mormon continues:

> Yea, and I also *remember* the *captivity of my fathers;* for I surely do know that the Lord did *deliver* them *out of bondage,* and by this did establish his church; yea, the Lord God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, did *deliver* them *out of bondage.* Yea, I have *always remembered the captivity of my fathers . . .”* (Alma 29:11–12)

Hardy also saw this “refrain” as evidence for Alma.[60] It was indeed central to Alma’s preaching, as well as to his father’s, who first exhorted “all those that had been *delivered out of bondage,* that they should *remember* that it was the Lord that did deliver them” (Mosiah 25:16). The angel reiterated the same to $Alma_2$ (Mosiah 27:16), who then taught it to the Saints in Zarahemla and later to his own sons (Alma 5:6; 36:2, 29). This refrain clearly became a hallmark of Nephite preaching, and Mormon presents it here as part of that heritage. When he says that he has “always remembered the captivity of my fathers” he signals both his obedience to prophetic counsel and his reverence for Alma’s example. As editor, he is not erasing Alma’s words, but reviewing them with appreciation and carrying them forward as part of his own meditation for his latter-day readers.

In Alma 29:11, Mormon said that “the Lord did deliver them out of bondage, and by this did establish his church.” As he continues, he adds: “Yea, and that same God did establish his church among them” (Alma 29:13). This also ties to Alma’s teachings in Zarahemla that his father “began to establish a church in the land which was in

59. Mormon uses *“merciful arm,”* and Alma uses *“arms of mercy.”* It seems like a common expression, as it was also used by Jacob (Jacob 6:5), Abinadi and King Mosiah (Mosiah 16:12; 29:13), and the Lord (3 Nephi 9:10).

60. Hardy, *Maxwell Institute Study Edition*, 317.

the borders of Nephi," and then, after being delivered from captivity, his father "began to establish the church of God throughout this land also" (Alma 5:3, 5). Mormon knew this story well, for his own name came from the place where that Church was first established. He recorded that deliverance in the book of Mosiah, the story of redemption at the Waters of Mormon (see Mosiah 18). For him, that story carried the same covenant weight that the latter-day Restoration does for us today — the founding moment of the Church he belonged to. He then told how that Church — now headquartered in Zarahemla — began to falter but was renewed through the labors of $Alma_2$ and the sons of Mosiah. By preserving these stories of founding and renewal in his record, Mormon was keeping alive the memory that those early prophets had commanded the people to always remember.

As he reflected on what he had written, saying, "I have always remembered the captivity of my fathers" (Alma 29:12), his statement becomes not only editorial but personal — a witness of covenant faithfulness rooted in reverence for the origins of the Church. The historian who wrote, "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" (Mosiah 18:30) bore witness that the God who redeemed his fathers had also established his Church among them. Those memories were sacred and Mormon preserved them in a record that he knew would soon be the only thing left to bear witness of them and to remember them — a record destined to come forth in the last days to show the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord has done for their fathers (see Book of Mormon, Title Page).

By grounding his testimony in the covenant story of his fathers, Mormon prepared to turn from what God once did for them to what the Lord was now doing for him. He affirmed that the same God who established the Church, "hath called me by a holy calling, to preach the word unto this people, and hath given me much success, in the which my joy is full" (Alma 29:13). The phrase *holy calling* appears seven times in the Book of Mormon — six times concentrated in six verses as Alma taught in Ammonihah about priesthood opportunity and responsibility (Alma 13:3–8), and now again here. Mormon deliberately repeats Alma's words to link his own calling to Alma's. He also uses the present-perfect tense — "hath called" and "hath given" — to emphasize that this calling remains active and ongoing in his life. He affirms this elsewhere in nearly identical terms:

> And behold, I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon, the land in which Alma did establish the church among the people, yea, the first church which was established among them after their transgression. Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. *I have been called of him to declare his word among his people,* that they might have everlasting life. (3 Nephi 5:12–13).

At first glance, the claim to have had "much success" preaching seems inconsistent with the portrait Mormon paints of his day — a time of pervasive wickedness and apostasy. Yet this apparent mismatch invites closer scrutiny. Mormon's record emphasizes devastation and decline, but Moroni adds details that complicate the picture. Taken together, they suggest that the Nephite Church persisted longer, and with more vitality, than Mormon's abbreviated account might lead us to conclude. In this light, the affirmation in Alma 29 of "much success" does not disqualify Mormon, instead it requires we look at his ministry in a new light.

Mormon's ministry: A quiet triumph in a time of apostasy

Alma 29:13 poses a serious challenge to hearing Alma 29 in Mormon's voice, because the speaker says that the Lord has given him "much success" preaching and a fullness of joy. This language seems incompatible with how Mormon describes his day. John Tvedtnes saw this verse as strong evidence for Alma's authorship, concluding: "Mormon, unlike the author of these words, had no success preaching."[61] That conclusion reflects the bleak tone of Mormon's own account — a time when "there were none that were righteous save it were the disciples of Jesus" (4 Nephi 1:46), when "the Holy Ghost did not come upon any," and when Mormon was "forbidden to preach unto them" (Mormon 1:14, 17). Even after a later divine commission to preach, he lamented that "it was in vain," for the people "did harden their hearts against the Lord their God" (Mormon 3:3).

Taken at face value, this seems to rule Mormon out. Because the author of Alma 29 experienced "much success," either it is not Mormon or his brief summaries only reflect part of a more complex reality. Moroni's record indicates that such a reality did exist, and that even in a time of general apostasy, Mormon could have experienced success in preaching and joy in that success.

61. Tvedtnes, "Voice of an Angel," 320.

Moroni's record begins with instructions on ordaining priests and teachers and on the proper administration of the sacrament (Moroni 3–5). He then describes how new members were only baptized after showing repentance and willingness to take upon themselves the name of Christ, how the Church met together often to fast and pray, and how their meetings were conducted "after the manner of the workings of the Spirit" (Moroni 6:4–9). What follows below suggests that Moroni is describing a Church he is personally familiar with, one still alive and functioning during his lifetime. Together they show Mormon's day as more spiritually abundant than his terse narrative allows.

Next, Moroni includes a sermon his father delivered "as he taught them in the synagogue" (Moroni 7). In it, Mormon addresses those, "that are of the church, that are the peaceable followers of Christ" (Moroni 7:3). He asks them: "have miracles ceased?" and answers: "Nay. Neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men" (Moroni 7:29). A few verses later he broadens the question: ". . . has the day of miracles ceased? Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them?" Again, his response is emphatic: "Nay; For it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men . . . if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also." He concludes by affirming their faith: "I judge better things of you, for I judge that ye have faith in Christ because of your meekness; for if ye have not faith in him then ye are not fit to be numbered among the people of his church" (Moroni 7:35–39). These words point to a faithful remnant — peaceable followers of Christ, still experiencing miracles, the power of the Holy Ghost, and the ministering of angels.

Second, Moroni includes a letter from Mormon in which he rejoices at his son's call to the ministry (Moroni 8). It appears that Mormon did not extend that priesthood call himself, which means there were others with legitimate priesthood authority and the keys of the Church were still active. It was a Church under strain, as seen in the baptizing of little children and Moroni's description of forced excommunications (Moroni 6:7). Yet Mormon's counsel presumes real opportunity, as he urges his son to "teach repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable" and to exhort parents to "repent and be baptized" (Moroni 8:10). Such instructions imply that people were receptive, able to repent and be baptized, and eligible for salvation. Mormon also laments that "in this part of the land they are also seeking to put down all power and authority which cometh from God; and they are denying

the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 8:28). His words imply that such power and authority still remained, that the Holy Ghost was still striving with them and could be rejected, and that conditions varied by region.

Third, in another letter to Moroni, Mormon expresses despair at the wickedness of his people (Moroni 9). Yet he reports that he is still "laboring with them continually" and must "speak the word of God with sharpness" to get their attention (Moroni 9:4). He exhorts his son: "notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation," and he voices frustration that he is "but a man" and cannot speak and act more forcefully (Moroni 9:6, 18). These statements confirm that both Mormon and Moroni were laboring diligently, striving to magnify their holy callings even in desperate times.

Taken together, these additional details suggest that Mormon's day was not as uniformly apostate as his own narrative may imply.[62] A functioning Church was still administering saving ordinances. The gospel was still being preached diligently by authorized priesthood holders. People were still repenting, being baptized, enjoying the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and experiencing miracles and the ministering of angels. Mormon's despairing claims — "there were none that were righteous," that the "Holy Ghost did not come upon any," and that his preaching "was in vain" — appear to describe local or temporary conditions, not the entire Nephite world across his whole ministry.

This fuller picture invites us to see Mormon's ministry not as a failure, but as a quiet triumph. He could not save his nation from destruction as Alma once had, but he did help save individuals. He may not have converted thousands like the sons of Mosiah, but he saved enough to feel joy and a sense of success in his calling. In a time of near-total collapse, even a few repentant hearts were a sacred victory. Success is always relative: a missionary in Denmark today may see only a handful of converts, while one in the 1840s baptized hundreds, yet both can rejoice in their labors. As the Lord reminds us, "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; . . . and if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring,

62. Joseph M. Spencer, "On the Dating of Moroni 8–9," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 22 (2016): 145–46, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/on-the-dating-of-moroni-8-9. He states that Mormon "shaped the narrative he produced regarding the time in which he lived" for literary concerns. Further, "it was for transparently theological reasons that Mormon portrayed his people as tragically beyond the pale—as if he never met a righteous soul or one with Christian commitment during the course of his days."

save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:10, 15).

What at first seemed incompatible with Mormon — the claim of "much success" (Alma 29:13) — now reads as a reminder that even amid collapse, real joy may be found in saving souls. Perhaps knowing his readers understood that he had experienced missionary success — as reflected in Alma 29 — gave Mormon the freedom to express with full honesty the sorrow he felt as he recorded his people's destruction. That knowledge allowed him to paint a bleak picture, without fearing that his audience would misunderstand. His despair was real, but so was his joy. In sharing both, Mormon bears witness not only to the fall of his nation, but also to the redemptive hope still available to individuals within it.

Hearing Mormon's joy in Alma 29

The understanding that Mormon had success in preaching and felt joy in that success changes how we hear the remainder of Alma 29. If we assume he had no success, it becomes impossible to hear these words in his voice. Once that assumption is set aside, it feels natural to hear Mormon rejoicing as he reflects on the success of the sons of Mosiah:

> But I do not joy in my own success alone, but my joy is more full because of the success of my brethren, who *have been up* to the land of Nephi. Behold, they *have labored* exceedingly, and *have brought* forth much fruit; and how great shall be their reward! (Alma 29:14-15)

The present-perfect tense — *have been*, *have labored*, *have brought* — makes it sound like Alma is talking about his contemporaries. Still, this tense is equally fitting from Mormon's editorial perspective. The missionary work of the sons of Mosiah was complete, but the fruits of their labors endured in memory, in testimony, in Mormon's book, and in the joy Mormon felt as he recorded their story.

That joy is not only retrospective but also anticipatory. Mormon sees their "reward" as still ahead — eternal, not merely historical. Missionary joy has been a constant theme throughout the narrative units Mormon is reviewing, and so far in this review he has expressed joy that his book might "bring some soul to repentance" (Alma 29:9); joy at seeing (in his mind's eye) many of his "brethren truly penitent, and coming to the Lord" (Alma 29:10), and joy in his own missionary

success (Alma 29:13). He now expresses joy in the "much fruit" his brethren's ministry produced and in the future eternal reward they would yet receive.[63] Their story embodies the law of the harvest—a principle Mormon has carefully threaded throughout his narrative.[64] Mormon not only rejoices in the fruit of their ministry, but also, by subtle allusion, anticipates the harvest his record will one day bring.

Both Tvedtnes and Hardy cite Alma 29:14 as supporting an Alma reading, and Tvedtnes adds: "The words are hardly fitting for Mormon, in whose days the 'land of Nephi' probably had only historical meaning."[65] Still, Mormon uses the phrase "land of Nephi" fifty-four times in his abridgement—eighteen of them in his third narrative unit about the sons of Mosiah. He uses the exact phrase, "up to the land of Nephi," eight times, three of them in the same unit.[66] Far from being foreign to Mormon, he consistently associates the phrase with them. When he introduces their journey, he says they asked to "go up to the land of Nephi" and pleaded "that they might go up to the land of Nephi" (Mosiah 28:1, 5). At the beginning of Alma XII (Alma 17), Mormon prefaces his account of their story as, "An account of the sons of Mosiah, which . . . went up to the land of Nephi." As he narrates their departure, he adds: "they departed into the wilderness . . . to go up to the land of Nephi" (Alma 17:8). Because Mormon repeatedly uses this phrase in connection with their mission, it seems natural that he would employ it again here. Even though this verse does sound like Alma, the words fit Mormon just as well.

With that objection set aside, we can now hear the climax of the sequence described earlier. Both Ammon (Alma 26) and Mormon (Alma 29) had traced the same path—first acknowledging themselves as instruments in God's hands, then refusing to glory in self but

63. Joy or rejoicing is found thirty-nine times in the first fifteen chapters of Alma. Six times by Alma (7:4–5, 17, 26), nine times by Alma and the sons of Mosiah (17:2; 27:17–19), four times by Ammon (19:6, 13, 14, 30), four times by Aaron (21:21; 22:8, 15), once by the sons of Mosiah ("rejoice exceedingly," 25:17), fourteen times by Ammon (26:1, 4, 11, 13, 16, 30, 35–37), "incomprehensible joy" (28:8), and seven times in this review (28:14; 29:9, 10, 13–16).

64. Ammon also explicitly used this imagery in Alma 26:5–7.

65. Tvedtnes, "Voice of an Angel," 320; Hardy, *Maxwell Institute Study Edition*, 317.

66. Land of Nephi: Words of Mormon 1:13; Mosiah 7:6–7; 19:15, 19, 22, 24; 20:7; 21:21, 26; 23:35–38; 28:1, 5; 29:3; Introduction to Alma 17; Alma 17:8; 18:9; 20:1–2; 22:1, 28, 32, 34; 24:20; 25:13; 27:1, 14, 20; 28:8; 29:14; 46:29; 47:1, 20; 49:10, 25; 50:8, 11; Helaman 4:12; 5:20. *Up to the land of Nephi:* Mosiah 20:7; 28:1, 5; 29:3; Introduction to Alma 17; Alma 17:8; 24:20; 29:14; 47:1.

giving all the glory to God. The final step is joy so overwhelming that language fails. Mormon reaches that point when he says: "Now, when I think of the success of these my brethren my soul is carried away, even to the separation of it from the body, as it were, so great is my joy" (Alma 29:16).

This verbal overflow recalls Ammon's own climax: "Behold, who can glory too much in the Lord? . . . Behold, I say unto you, I cannot say the smallest part which I feel" (Alma 26:16). Both Mormon and Ammon confess that their joy has outstripped their words. Mormon's phrasing also recalls the two occasions when Ammon's joy physically overcame him (see Alma 19:11; 27:17). His use of "my brethren" in Alma 29:16 and, again, in verse 17 reflects his sense of covenant kinship rather than contemporaneity. As Mormon expresses his joy, he casts it from the same mold, consciously reflecting the covenant joy that Ammon voiced generations earlier, thus binding their testimonies together.

Mormon then concludes his meditation with a final petition:

> And now may God grant unto these, my brethren, that they may sit down in the kingdom of God; yea, and also all those who are the fruit of their labors that they may go no more out, but that they may praise him forever. And may God grant that it may be done according to my words, even as I have spoken. Amen. (Alma 29:17)[67]

This benediction not only recalls the blessing that closed Mormon's third narrative unit — "And now may the Lord, the Redeemer of all men, bless their souls forever" (Alma 28:8) — but also gathers into a single prayer the harvest imagery that runs throughout this unit. His phrase "the fruit of their labors" ties directly back to his earlier conclusion: "Thus we see the great call of diligence of men to labor in the vineyards of the Lord" (Alma 28:14), followed by his contrast between sorrow for the dead with rejoicing in the light of Christ. There Mormon distilled the law of the harvest as the principle of mortality itself: every soul reaps according to desire — life or death, joy or remorse. In Alma 29:17 he applies that principle to the sons of Mosiah and their converts, rejoicing that their labors produced fruit with eternal reward. At the same time, the phrase points forward: Mormon's book, too, was sown with the hope of a last-days harvest.

By this point, it should feel natural to hear this final prayer as Mormon's — a prayer for his brethren in the gospel, for the

67. See Appendix C for a discussion of "go no more out."

missionaries whose stories he had just preserved, and for the many souls they brought to Christ. This petition completes a unified literary and spiritual arc, flowing without interruption from its invocation in Alma 28:8 through the "thus we see" reflections in 28:14, to the concluding "Amen" in 29:17. It testifies not only of missionary success and enduring brotherhood, but also of eternal reward and joy that reaches beyond the grave. Read in this light, Alma 29 is both personal and purposeful: a meditation rooted in covenant kinship, framed by prophetic echoes, marked by the law of the harvest, and suffused with the quiet triumph of saving souls even amid national collapse. In this way, Mormon's record fulfills his yearning. Through it he became an "instrument in the hands of God," his book the "trump of God" sounding from the dust—crying repentance to every nation and gathering fruit for the final harvest.

Conclusion: History into Prophecy, Memory into Warning, Record into Plea

The portrait that emerges in this reading of Alma 29 is of Mormon standing at the precipice of his people's destruction, reflecting on the stories of his ancestors who did what he could not—turn back the tide of wickedness and preserve their people from destruction. His reflections align with his calling, his sorrow, and his prophetic purpose. He longs to cry repentance with the voice of thunder—a righteous desire to save souls and relieve sorrow through repentance—the same longing that shapes his final testimony. These are not just literary parallels; they disclose the consistent voice of a prophet who spoke in the idiom of his covenant kin, echoed earlier prophecies, and bore witness that even in collapse he found joy ministering to the one.

When Mormon was in his early fifties, after preaching in vain for ten years, the Lord decreed: "because this people repented not . . . behold, they shall be cut off from the face of the earth" (Mormon 3:15). After this, Mormon laid down his sword and became a witness, recording his people's downfall. Two decades later, after engraving that decree on plates he would soon pass to Moroni, he turned from past narration to present address to plainly state his purpose for writing:

> For this cause I write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ . . . to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil; And also that ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, which ye shall

> have among you; . . . And I would that I could persuade all ye ends of the earth to repent and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. (Mormon 3:20–22)

This is the same longing that is voiced in Alma 29: "O that I were an angel, and could . . . speak with the trump of God, . . . and cry repentance unto every people!" (Alma 29:1). His desire was fulfilled through the book he produced — the instrument God now uses to teach His word to all nations and gather Israel for the final harvest. Mormon's voice joins a prophetic chain stretching from Joseph of Egypt through Lehi and Nephi to Moroni. Their collective voice crying from the dust invites: Repent, and come unto Christ.

Recognizing Alma 29 as Mormon's words does not diminish Alma but only deepens our understanding of Mormon — the prophet who gave us the keystone of our religion. These verses are more than a psalm of longing, they are the deliberate meditation in which Mormon situates his record within a prophetic chain, demonstrates covenant kinship with Alma and the sons of Mosiah, and testifies of the "holy calling" that, even in an age of decline, brought him joy saving souls. Alma 29 thus reflects a quiet triumph in a time of apostasy — a chapter that reveals Mormon's voice as personal, purposeful, and profoundly covenantal. In Alma 29, history becomes prophecy, memory becomes warning, and record becomes plea — Mormon's voice rising from the dust to call all nations to repentance.

Appendix A: Mormon's Editorial Comments and Book and Chapter Headings

Extended editorial comments

Editorial comments are used by Mormon to explain editorial decisions, supply contextual information, and actively shape how the reader understands the narrative he has selected and arranged. These comments do not merely clarify sources or chronology; they frequently pause the narrative to assess outcomes, highlight recurring patterns, and reflect on the significance of the material as a whole. This section lists extended editorial comments — those longer than five verses — while the following section catalogs shorter interventions of the same kind.

Words of Mormon 1:1–11 "And now I, Mormon, being about to deliver up the record . . ."
eleven verses about the small plates; comments on abridgment from large plates of Nephi.

Alma 11:3–19 "And the judge received for his wages according to his time . . ."
seventeen verses describing the Nephite monetary system, according to their reckoning.

Alma 22:27–34 ". . . the king sent a proclamation throughout all the land . . ."
eight verses describing Lamanite and Nephite geography.

Alma 23:6–15 "And as sure as the Lord liveth, so sure as many as believed . . ."
ten verses describing the faith of the Lamanite converts and listing them.

Alma 24:26–30 ". . . we have no reason to doubt but what they were saved . . . thus we can plainly discern . . ."
five verses about righteous Lamanite martyrs and wicked apostate Nephites.

Alma 28:8–29:17 "O that I were an angel and could have the wish of mine heart . . ."
twenty-four verses reviewing and interacting with his material. *The reason for this paper.*

Alma 48:11–21 "And Moroni was a strong and a mighty man . . ."
eleven verses about Moroni and how Nephites were taught to defend themselves.

Alma 50:19–23 "And thus we see how merciful and just are all the dealings of the Lord . . ."
five verses about how the Lord blesses the righteous.

Helaman 12:1–26 "And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness . . ."
twenty-six verses reviewing and interacting with his material.

3 Nephi 5:8–26 "And there had many things transpired which, in the eyes of some, would be . . ."
eighteen verses about himself and his record.

3 Nephi 10:14–19 "And now, whoso readeth, let him understand . . ."
five verses reviewing prophecies fulfilled at Christ's death and previewing His visit.

3 Nephi 26:6–13 "And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part . . ."
seven verses about an exchange with Jesus regarding what to include in his record.

3 Nephi 28:17–29:9 "And now, whether they were mortal or immortal . . ."
thirty-four verses about the Three Nephites and his record.

Mormon 3:17–22 "Therefore I write unto you, Gentiles, and also unto you, house of Israel . . ."
six verses speaking to the Gentiles and House of Israel about his record and its purpose.

Mormon 5:8–24 "And now behold, I, Mormon do not desire to harrow up . . ."
seventeen verses about his record and prophesying about the Lamanites and Gentiles.

Mormon 7:1–10 "And now, behold, I would speak somewhat unto the remnant . . ."
ten verses speaking to the House of Israel and exhorting them to come unto Christ.

Editorial comments that explain editorial decisions and add information

Mosiah 1:8 "Many more things . . . are not written in this book."

Mosiah 8:1 "He spake many things unto them and only a few of them have I written in this book . . ."

Mosiah 12:8 "And many things did Abinadi prophesy against this people."

Mosiah 18:8 "Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) . . ."

Mosiah 21:35 "An account of their baptism shall be given hereafter."

Mosiah 27:11 "As I said unto you, as they were going about rebelling against God . . ."

Mosiah 28:9 "I shall give an account of their proceedings hereafter."

Mosiah 28:19 "This account shall be written hereafter . . . it is expedient that all people should know . . ."

Mosiah 28:20 "And now, as I said unto you, that after king Mosiah had done these things . . ."

Alma 3:13 "Now we will return again to the Amlicites, for they also had a mark . . ."

Alma 5:1–2 "These are the words which he spake . . . according to his own record . . ."

Alma 6:3 "I mean those which were lifted up in the pride of their hearts . . ."

Alma 6:8 "Alma went and began to declare the word of God . . . And thus it is written. Amen."

Alma 8:1 ". . . taught the people of Gideon many things which cannot be written . . ."

Alma 8:30–32 "And Alma went forth, and also Amulek, among the people . . ."

Alma 9:34 "And now the words of Amulek are not all written, nevertheless a part of his words are written . . ."

Alma 10:1 "Now these are the words which Amulek preached unto the people . . ."

Alma 11:46 "And thus ended the words of Amulek, or this is all that I have written."

Alma 13:31 "And Alma spake many more words unto the people, which are not written in this book."

Alma 15:18 "Now as I said, Alma having seen all these things, therefore he took Amulek . . ."

Alma 17:5 "Now these are the circumstances which attended them in their journeyings . . ."

Alma 18:23 "Yea, I will believe all thy words. And thus he was caught with guile."

Alma 22:1 "We will return to the account of Aaron and his brethren . . ."

Alma 22:30 "The land which had been peopled and been destroyed, of whose bones we have spoken . . ."

Alma 22:35 "And now I, after having said this, return again to the account of Ammon . . ."

Alma 31:7 "These are the names of those who went with him among the Zoramites . . ."

Alma 32:4 "There came a great multitude unto him, who were those of whom we have been speaking . . ."

Alma 35:13 "An account shall be given of their wars hereafter."

Alma 35:16 "We have an account of his commandments . . . according to his own record."

Alma 43:2–3 "Now we shall say no more concerning their preaching . . . And now I return to an account . . ."

Alma 46:41–47:1 ". . . as we must needs suppose. Now we will return in our record . . ."

Alma 49:3 "I say unto you, yea, that it was in part rebuilt . . ."

Alma 51:10 "We shall see that his promise which he made was rash; nevertheless . . ."

Alma 56:52–53 "Thus were the Lamanites pursuing them with great vigor when Helaman . . ."

Helaman 2:12–14 "More . . . shall be spoken hereafter . . . ye shall see . . . I do not mean . . ."

Helaman 3:17 "And now I return again to mine account; therefore what I have spoken . . ."

Helaman 8:3 "Many things did Nephi speak which cannot be written . . ."

Helaman 14:1 "Samuel, the Lamanite, did prophesy a great many more things which cannot be written."

3 Nephi 7:1 "Now behold, I will show unto you that they did not establish a king . . ."

Editorial comments with evaluative commentary

Mosiah 1:16–17 ". . . ball or director, which led . . . every one according to the heed and diligence . . ."

Mosiah 18:30 ". . . of Mormon, how beautiful are they . . . they shall sing to his praise forever."

Mosiah 21:4 "Yea, all this was done that the word of the Lord might be fulfilled."

Mosiah 23:21–24 "Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten . . . I will show . . . brought into bondage . . . he did deliver them . . ."

Mosiah 27:36–37 "Thus they were instruments in the hands of God . . . how blessed are they!"

Alma 3:14–19 "Thus the word of God is fulfilled . . . I would that ye should see . . ."

Alma 3:25–27 "For every man receiveth wages of him . . . let it be according to the truth."

Alma 6:5 "Now I would that ye should understand that the word of God was liberal unto all . . ."

Alma 8:30–32 "Now, this was done that the Lord might show forth his power in them."

Alma 16:15–17 ". . . might not be hardened . . . not be unbelieving, and go on to destruction . . ."

Alma 19:23 "Now we see that Ammon could not be slain . . . Mosiah trusted him unto the Lord."

Alma 19:36 "We see that his arm is extended to all people who will repent and believe on his name."

Alma 24:19 "And thus we see that, when these Lamanites were brought to believe and to know . . ."

Alma 24:22 "We know that they are blessed, for they have gone to dwell with their God."

Alma 25:9–12 "They are hunted at this day by the Lamanites . . . now this is what he meant . . ."

Alma 30:60 "And thus we see the end of him . . . and thus we see that the devil . . ."

Alma 45:18–19 ". . . as to his death or burial we know not of. Behold, this we know . . ."

Alma 46:8–10 "Thus we see how quick the children of men do forget . . . we also see . . ."

Alma 53:10–12 "I have somewhat to say concerning the people of Ammon . . . for this cause they were brought down . . ."

Alma 63:8 "We suppose that they were drowned . . . whither she did go we know not."

Helaman 3:27–30 "Thus we may see that the Lord is merciful . . . we see that whosever will may lay hold . . ."

Helaman 4:11–13 "Now this great loss . . . would not have happened . . . they were left in their own strength . . ."

Helaman 6:34–36, 40 "Thus we see . . . And thus we see . . . And thus we see . . . And thus we see . . ."

3 Nephi 7:24 "Now I would have you to remember also, that there were none . . ."

3 Nephi 30:1–2 "Hearken, O ye Gentiles, and hear the words of Jesus Christ . . ."

4 Nephi 1:23 "And now I, Mormon, would that ye should know . . ."

4 Nephi 1:49 "And thus is the end of the record of Ammaron."

Mormon 2:19 ". . . nevertheless, I know that I shall be lifted up at the last day."

Mormon 3:13 "And thrice have I delivered them out of the hands of their enemies . . ."

Mormon 4:5 "But, behold, the judgments of God . . . and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished . . ."

Mormon 4:11 "And it is impossible for the tongue to describe, or for man to write . . ."

Book and chapter headings

All headings include reference to both the original Book of Mormon book names and chapters, as well as to the book names and chapters used since 1879. The text, capitalization, and punctuation of all headings are from the original edition of the Book of Mormon.

Nephi I; Nephi 1 (Book heading.) "The First Book of Nephi. His Reign and Ministry."

Nephi I; 2 Nephi 1 (Book heading.) "An account of the death of Lehi. Nephi's brethren rebelleth against him. The Lord warns Nephi to depart into the wilderness, &c. His journeyings in the wilderness, &c."

Jacob I; Jacob 1 (Book heading.) "The Book of Jacob. The brother of Nephi. The words of his preaching unto his brethren. He confoundeth a man who seeketh to overthrow the doctrine of Christ. A few words concerning the history of the people of Nephi."

Enos (No book heading.)

Jarom (No book heading.)

Omni (No book heading.)

Words of Mormon (No book heading.)

Mosiah (No book heading; possibly lost with 116 pages.)

Mosiah VI; Mosiah 9 "The Record of Zeniff. An account of his people, from the time they left the land of Zarahemla, until the time that they were delivered out of the hands of the Lamanites."

Mosiah XI; Mosiah 23 "An account of Alma and the people of the Lord, which was driven into the wilderness by the people of king Noah."

Alma I; Alma 1 (Book heading.) "The Book of Alma, the Son of Alma. The account of Alma, who was the son of Alma the First, and Chief Judge over the people of Nephi, and also the High Priest over the Church. An account of the reign of the Judges, and the wars and contentions among the people. And also an account of a war between the Nephites and the Lamanites, according to the record of Alma the First, and Chief Judge."

Alma III; Alma 5 "The words which Alma, the High Priest, according to the holy order of God, delivered to the people in their cities and villages throughout the land."

Alma V; Alma 7 "The words of Alma which he delivered to the people in Gideon, according to his own record."

Alma VII; Alma 9 "The words of Alma, and also the words of Amulek, which was declared unto the people which was in the land of Ammonihah. And also they are cast into prison, and delivered by the miraculous power of God which was in them, according to the record of Alma."

Alma XII; Alma 17 "An account of the sons of Mosiah, which rejected their rights to the kingdom, for the word of God, and went up to the land of Nephi, to preach to the Lamanites.—Their sufferings and deliverance, according to the record of Alma."

Alma XIII; Alma 21 "An account of the preaching of Aaron and Muloki, and their brethren, to the Lamanites."

Alma XVII; Alma 36 "The Commandments of Alma, to his son Helaman."

Alma XVIII; Alma 38 "The Commandments of Alma, to his son Shiblon."

Alma XIX; Alma 39 "The Commandments of Alma, to his son Corianton."

Alma XXI; Alma 45 "The account of the people of Nephi, and their wars and dissensions, in the days of Helaman, according to the record of Helaman, which he kept in his days."

Helaman I; Helaman 1 (Book heading.) "An account of the Nephites. Their wars and contentions, and their dissensions. And also the prophecies of many Holy Prophets, before the coming of Christ, according to the records of Helaman, which was the son of Helaman, and also according to the records of his sons, even down to the coming of Christ. And also many of the Lamanites are converted. An account of their conversion. An account of the righteousness of the Lamanites, and the wickedness and abominations of the Nephites, according to the record of Helaman and his sons, even down to the coming of Christ, which is called the Book of Helaman, &c."

Helaman III; Helaman 7 "The Prophecy of Nephi, the son of Helaman. God threatens the people of Nephi, that he will visit them in his anger, to their utter destruction, except they repent of their wickedness. God smiteth the people of Nephi with pestilence; they repent and turn unto him. Samuel, a Lamanite, prophesies unto the Nephites."

Helaman V; Helaman 13 "The prophecy of Samuel, the Lamanite, to the Nephites."

Nephi I; 3 Nephi 1 (Book heading.) "The Book of Nephi, the son of Nephi, which was the son of Helaman. And Helaman was the son of Helaman, which was the son of Alma, which was the son of Alma, being a descendant of Nephi, which was the son of Lehi, which came out of Jerusalem in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, the king of Judah."

Nephi V; 3 Nephi 11 "Jesus Christ sheweth himself unto the people of Nephi, as the multitude were gathered together in the land Bountiful, and did minister unto them; and on this wise did he shew himself unto them."

Nephi I; 4 Nephi 1 (Book heading.) "The Book of Nephi, which is the son of Nephi, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. An account of the people of Nephi, according to his Record."

Mormon (No book heading.)

Moroni (No book heading.)

Moroni IX; Moroni 9 "The second epistle of Mormon to his son Moroni." (This heading would have been added by Moroni, not by Mormon.)

Appendix B: Proposed Structure for Mormon's Original Chapters (I–XX) of Alma (1–44)

Mormon divided the material he took from Alma's original record into six well-defined narrative units.[68] This material accounts for twenty chapters of Alma in the original edition of the Book of Mormon. These twenty chapters were reorganized into forty-four chapters by Orson Pratt in 1879—the chapter organization used in current editions of the Book of Mormon. Mormon organized his material with clear literary intent, though the details of that intent lie beyond the scope of this paper.

Narrative Unit 1: Alma's conflict with Nehor and Amlici

- Mormon's chapter I

68. My structure differs slightly from those proposed by others in that it follows Mormon's original chapter divisions more closely. See Joseph M. Spencer, "The Structure of the Book of Alma," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 26, no. 1 (2017); see also Grant Hardy, "Nurturing Faith: Literary Patterning in the Book of Alma," 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, BYU, 2019).

- Modern chapters 1–3
- Concludes with "And thus ended the fifth year . . ." (Alma 3:27)

Narrative Unit 2: Alma's preaching to the Nephites

- Mormon's chapters II–XI
- Modern chapters 4–16
- Concludes with "Thus ended the fourteenth year . . ." (Alma 16:21)

Narrative Unit 3: Sons of Mosiah preaching to the Lamanites

- Mormon's chapters XII–XV
- Modern chapters 17–29
- Concludes with "And thus ended the fifteenth year . . ." (Alma 28:7)

The narrative verb tense then shifts from past to present, as Mormon concludes the third narrative unit (Alma 28:8). He then concludes his larger fifteen-chapter block of material (Alma 28:9) and starts to reflect on the first three units with: "And from the first year to the fifteenth has brought to pass . . ." (Alma 28:10). His reflective review continues through the end of Alma XV; Alma 29.

Narrative Unit 4: Alma's Encounters with Korihor and the Zoramites

- Mormon's chapter XVI
- Modern chapters 30–35
- Concludes with "And thus ended the seventeenth year . . ." (Alma 35:12)

Narrative Unit 5: Alma's Commandments to His Sons

- Mormon's chapters XVII–XIX
- Modern chapters 36–42
- Concludes with "And now I return to an account of the wars . . ." (Alma 43:3)

Narrative Unit 6: Captain Moroni's Battle with Zerahemnah

- Mormon's chapter XX
- Modern chapters 43–44

- Concludes with "And thus ended the eighteenth year . . . and thus ended the record of Alma . . ." (Alma 44:24)

Appendix C: Alma-Linked Language in Alma 28–29

The following phrases, found between Alma 28:8 and 29:17, are linked to Alma but were not discussed in the body of this paper. Because Mormon is abridging material originally written by Alma, and incorporating extended quotations from him, it is expected that phrases used by Alma would appear. The key question is whether such use requires Alma as the identified author of Alma 29, or whether it may reflect Mormon's editorial voice.

State of endless wo (Alma 28:11) is very similar to the phrase "state of endless misery and woe" used by Alma in Ammonihah (Alma 9:11). King Benjamin employed a similar phrase "state of misery and endless torment" (Mosiah 2:39). Nephi, the son of Helaman, used two similar phrases, "gulf of misery and endless woe" and "everlasting misery and endless woe" (Helaman 5:12; 7:16). Mormon used "state of endless misery" in other extended editorial comments (Helaman 12:26).

State of never-ending happiness (Alma 28:12) is only found here and in King Benjamin's address (Mosiah 2:41). "State of happiness" is used several times by Alma (Alma 40:12, 15, 21), and once by Mormon (Mormon 7:7). Both Mormon and Alma likely drew on the language of King Benjamin's address.

O that I were an angel (Alma 29:1) is perhaps the most iconic phrase associated with Alma. This phrase resonates closely with his personal conversion experience as recorded by Mormon (Mosiah 27:10–12) and by Alma (Alma 36:6–7). While Alma's influence here is evident, if Mormon was reflecting on Alma's legacy or drawing from Alma's personal writings, this language could easily be appropriated without requiring Alma as the speaker.

Trump of God (Alma 29:1) is unique within the Book of Mormon and appears only three other times across all of scripture: once by Paul (1 Thessalonians 4:16) and twice in Latter-day revelation (Doctrine and Covenants 43:18; 88:92), all in eschatological contexts. If read figuratively — as the record of Joseph sounding in the last days — its use in Alma 29 aligns well with Mormon's prophetic role and voice.

Voice to shake the earth (Alma 29:1) is only found here. But the idea of the earth shaking, as well as the phrase **voice of thunder** (Alma 29:2), are first used by $Nephi_1$ as he chastised his brothers (1 Nephi 17:45), then by either King Mosiah or $Alma_1$ recording the details of the

angels' visits to their sons (on the plates of Nephi), which was then used by Mormon in his abridged version (Mosiah 27:11, 15, 18). Alma also used them to tell his angelic conversion story to his sons (Alma 36:7; 38:7).

Plan of redemption (Alma 29:2) is used seven times by Alma in Ammonihah (Alma 12:25, 26, 30, 32) and, later, another five times (Alma 34:16, 31; 39:18; 42:11, 13). It is possible he originated the expression. It is also found three times in the story of the sons of Mosiah (Alma 17:16; 18:39; 22:13). It likely became part of the Church's common language — as phrases like *plan of salvation* or *plan of happiness* are today. Mormon's use is consistent with the diffusion of Alma's theological vocabulary through the Nephite Church and record.

Harrow up (Alma 29:4) was first used by Jacob preaching to the Nephites (2 Nephi 9:47). Mormon used it twice in regard to Zeezrom (Alma 14:6; 15:3). Ammon used it as he rejoiced (Alma 26:6). Alma used it three times while relating his angelic experience to Helaman (Alma 36:12). Alma used it again when counseling Corianton (Alma 39:7). And finally, Mormon used it when speaking to his readers in his present editorial time (Mormon 5:8), the same type of present editorial time used in Alma 29.

Counsel in wisdom (Alma 29:8) is a special use. Even though the current edition of the Book of Mormon says, "counsel in wisdom," Royal Skousen has shown the original was "counsel in his wisdom."[69] The words "counsel" and "wisdom" are also combined loosely by $Nephi_1$ (2 Nephi 28:30), by Jacob (Jacob 4:10), and by Alma (Alma 37:12). Its use here — in the context of Mormon's record going forth to all nations — was certainly influenced by Alma's use, especially because Alma uses it in the context of the "wise purpose" for the plates of Nephi. Alma's words link directly to what $Nephi_1$ wrote on those plates — plates Mormon had recently become aware of. He was certainly very familiar with Alma's letter to Helaman before writing this, and surely recognized the connection between Alma's words there and what Nephi wrote on the small plates. He alluded to them both in Words of Mormon 1:7.

Instrument in the hands of God (Alma 29:9) appears often. It is used by Mormon to describe Gideon (Alma 1:8) and the sons of Mosiah (Alma 17:9); by Alma (Alma 2:30); by the Lord (Alma 17:11); and by Ammon (Alma 26:3, 15). Lehi also uses the phrase (2 Nephi 1:24; 3:24) as did Mormon earlier (Mosiah 27:36) and again later (Alma 35:14). The phrase had clearly entered Nephite religious language.

69. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants,* 2205–6.

Go no more out (Alma 29:17) was used by Alma (Alma 7:25; 34:36). It was also used by Mormon in other editorial comments (Helaman 3:30; 3 Nephi 28:40). Its appearance here reinforces the eschatological tone of Alma 29:17, in full harmony with Mormon's closing editorial voice.

These examples show that while Alma's voice and vocabulary echo throughout the text, their presence does not require his authorship—especially when Mormon—as abridger and prophet—adopted, echoed, and reframed the language of those he revered.



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The Lord Gave Cain a Sign

Kent P. Jackson

Abstract: *God didn't "set a mark" on Cain. Instead, he gave Cain a sign. The unfortunate translation of Genesis 4:15 in the King James Bible (KJV) has been the source of much misunderstanding over the years. This article is about the English words that the King James translators chose in Genesis 4:15 and the Hebrew words from which they are translated. It shows that the renderings of the words in that verse are inconsistent with how the KJV treats the same words and grammatical features in other passages. The result is a translation that cannot be justified from the Hebrew Bible.*

William Tyndale (1494–1536) did not advance the cause of biblical understanding when he translated the words below from Genesis 4:15 as follows: "And the LORde put a marke vpon Cain that no man that founde hym shulde kyll hym."[1]

וַיָּשֶׂם יְהוָה לְקַיִן אוֹת לְבִלְתִּי הַכּוֹת-אֹתוֹ כָּל-מֹצְאוֹ

In the succession of English Bibles that followed Tyndale's in the sixteenth century, the first half of this passage underwent only a minor change. The Great Bible of 1540 replaced "put" with "set," which remained in most of the subsequent early translations. In the second half of the phrase, the Great Bible revised the wording to read, "lest any man fyndynge him, shulde kyll hym," a reading that continued

1. Tyndale published editions of the first five books of the Old Testament in 1530 and 1534, the first ever printings of those books in English translated from Hebrew. After Tyndale's death in 1536, his colleague John Rogers, under a pseudonym to protect Tyndale's identity as well as his own, republished Tyndale's Old and New Testament translations in 1537. That edition became the first in a succession of English Bibles that led up to the creation of the King James Version.

more or less intact to the King James Version (KJV) of 1611. The members of King James's translation committee followed their base text, the Bishops Bible, except in one word. With minor spelling and punctuation changes made since 1611, the phrase now reads: "And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him."[2]

My translation of Genesis 4:13–16 is as follows:

> Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too large to bear! You've driven me off the land today, and I'll be hidden from you. I'll be a roamer and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who finds me will kill me." The LORD said to him, "Not so. Anyone who kills Cain will suffer sevenfold vengeance."
>
> So the LORD gave Cain a sign that no one finding him would kill him. Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.[3]

This article is about the words in the King James translation of Genesis 4:15 and the Hebrew words from which they are translated. My purpose in using only the KJV in the quotations is to show that its translation of Genesis 4:15 is inconsistent with how it treats the same words and grammatical features in other passages. The KJV misses the meaning of this verse and leads to an interpretation that cannot be defended on the basis of the words in the Hebrew Bible. I will discuss each of the pivotal words individually (*set*, *mark*, *upon*, *lest*) and also examine them in tandem with each other.[4] It will become apparent that God was not putting a mark on Cain at all. He was giving Cain a sign to accompany a promise. This correction is important, because

2. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints uses in its publications the 1769 Oxford edition of the KJV, lightly modernized. The 1611 KJV has, "And the LORD set a marke upon Cain, lest any finding him, should kill him."
3. Kent P. Jackson, *Genesis: A New English Translation with the Joseph Smith Translation and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University [BYU]; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2025), 15.
4. Readers can compare how Genesis 4:15 has been rendered in modern translations at biblegateway.com. Discussions of the words can be found in various commentaries and in works cited in them. See, for example, E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 31n15; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 109–10; Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 35; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 234–35; Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 278; Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 99.

it allays the need to conjecture what the "mark" may have been, and it is particularly relevant in the context of speculations regarding race and skin color.

Mark

Tyndale translated the word *mark* from the Hebrew noun *'ôt*. He had encountered that word before, in Genesis 1:14, where he translated *'ôt* with a different word, *sign*. *Sign* is in fact the best translation of *'ôt* in most cases. In some instances, *mark* has been used in English with the meaning "sign," but that is not among its primary meanings.[5] We cannot be certain why Tyndale chose it in Genesis 4:15, but he did so clearly knowing that it was an anomaly, because at every other occurrence he chose different words for *'ôt* that were more in line with its actual meaning. In all, he translated *'ôt* with *sign* twenty-five times,[6] with *token* eleven times,[7] and with *miracle* eleven times.[8] Those are all valid translations of the Hebrew word. Nowhere else, aside from Genesis 4:15, did he translate it with *mark*.

All the English translators from Tyndale to the KJV followed Tyndale in rendering *'ôt* here as *mark*.[9] The word *'ôt* appears seventy-nine times in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Out of all those, in only this one instance, here in Genesis 4:15, does the King James translation render it as *mark*. It was not a good word choice for Tyndale, nor is it in

5. See Chaucer, "Holy ordre is chief of al the tresor of god and his especial signe and mark of chastitee" "The Parson's Tale*," Canterbury Tales*, 893, chaucer.fas.harvard.edu/pages/parsons-prologue-and-tale; Shakespeare, "Shees a faire lady, I doe spie some markes of loue in her," *Much Ado about Nothing,* 2.3.247-48, The Folger Shakespeare Library, folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/much-ado-about-nothing/read/2/3/; Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "mark," III.9.a.
6. Genesis 1:14; 9:13, 17; Exodus 4:9; 10:1; 13:9, 31:13, 17; Numbers 14:11; 16:38; Deuteronomy 4:34; 6:8, 22; 7:19; 13:1, 2; 26:8; Joshua 4:6; Judges 6:17; 1 Samuel 2:34; 10:7; 14:10; 2 Kings 19:29; 20:8, 9.
7. Genesis 9:12; 17:11; Exodus 3:12; 4:8 [twice], 4:28; 12:13; 13:16; Numbers 17:10; Joshua 2:12; 1 Samuel 10:9.
8. Exodus 4:17, 30; 7:3; 8:23; 10:2; Numbers 14:22; Deuteronomy 11:3; 28:46; 29:3; 34:11; Joshua 24:17. In the only other occurrence, Numbers 2:2, Tyndale translated it as *arms*, as in "coat of arms," a banner or sign identifying the clan.
9. For the uses and semantic ranges of the Hebrew words cited, see, primarily, Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament,* 4 vols. (Leiden, NE: Brill, 1994–99) [hereafter *HALOT*], also Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972). Online sources such as biblehub.com and biblegateway.com are also helpful.

the KJV. In a minority of places the KJV translates *'ôt* as *token*, which is a more archaic word but also means "sign," and in two places the KJV translates it as *miracle*:

> all those men which have seen my glory, and my **miracles**, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness. (Numbers 14:22)[10]
>
> and his **miracles**, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 11:3)

The word *'ôt* in the Hebrew Bible is used with reference to something out of the ordinary that God does to bless his people and that he invokes as evidence of his power and loving-kindness.[11] Often it is a sign by which God confirms a promise he makes, as in the case of the rainbow that he set in the cloud after the Flood:

> This is the **token** of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a **token** of a covenant between me and the earth. (Genesis 9:12–13)

The covenant promise precedes the sign, and the sign is then shown as evidence that God's promise will be fulfilled.

Moses instructed the Israelites what to say if their children asked them why they needed to follow all the "testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments":

> The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the LORD shewed **signs** and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes. (Deuteronomy 6:21–22)

The signs and "wonders" (a parallel and synonymous term) that the Israelites witnessed with their own eyes were evidence of God's miraculous goodness to them, goodness that called forth, in return, their obedience to those testimonies, statutes, and judgments.

Through Isaiah, God promised the Judahite king Ahaz that his enemies would be destroyed and that he and his people would be safe. The faithless Ahaz did not want to believe the message, so God promised to give him a sign as proof. Ahaz was invited to choose the sign:

10. Emphasis added in all the passages quoted.
11. See F. J. Helfmeyer, "אוֹת, *'ôth*," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 1:167–88; see also *HALOT*, 26.

> Ask thee a **sign** of the LORD thy God. (Isaiah 7:11)

Ahaz refused the offer, so the Lord decided to give him a sign anyway:

> Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a **sign**. (Isaiah 7:13–14)

That sign would be the birth of a child.

All these are examples of the noun *'ôt* as it appears in the Old Testament, and they are consistent with the use of the word in Genesis 4:15 in the story of Cain. In the narrative, the Lord curses Cain, who was a farmer, that the ground would no longer produce for him. As a result, he would become a roamer and wanderer on the earth. Cain protests that his punishment is too great for him to bear: "Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me." The Lord's response was clear: no one was going to kill Cain. In the King James Bible, the response begins with a weak "therefore," but the Hebrew is better translated with an emphatic "Not so!"[12] "Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." To confirm this forceful promise that no one would kill Cain, the Lord gives him a sign (Genesis 4:11–16). The sign, unspecified in the narrative, provides assurance to Cain that God will honor his promise. The text gives no indication that anyone else saw the sign, and indeed it suggests that Cain was the only one to view it.

Tyndale was not the inventor of the idea that the sign was something on the person of Cain, because some ancient and medieval commentators had already done the same. John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) identified Cain's sign as tremors, paralysis, and continuing grief.[13] Rabbis in the Talmudic-era *Bereshit Rabba* identified Cain himself as the sign—a sign for murderers or for penitents.[14] The late first-millennium *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*[15] and Rashi (1040–1105) believed a letter of the alphabet was inscribed on Cain's arm or forehead.[16] Ibn

12. As in the Septuagint and in many modern translations, for example "Not so," English Standard Version, New International Version, New Revised Standard Version; "No," Revised English Bible.
13. *Against Judaizing Christians* 8.2.10, ccjr.us/dialogika-resources/primary-texts-from-the-history-of-the-relationship/chrysostom#homily8.
14. *Bereshit Rabba* 22, sefaria.org/Bereshit_Rabbah.22.13?lang=bi.
15. *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* 21, sefaria.org/Pirkei_DeRabbi_Eliezer.21.10?lang=bi.
16. *Commentary on the Tanakh*, sefaria.org/Genesis.4.15?lang=bi&with=Rash

Ezra (1092–1167) wrote, "Some say that the sign the Lord set for Cain was a horn. Others say God removed fear from Cain's heart and gave him courage to face the world."[17] It is likely that traditions like these, still alive in the cultures of later centuries, are the reason why Tyndale selected *mark* in the verse and why the King James translators retained it.

The earliest known translation of the Hebrew Bible is the Greek Septuagint, translated in the third and second centuries BC so that Greek-speaking Jews could have access to their scriptures. In virtually every case, the Septuagint renders the word *'ôt* with *sēmeion*, which means "sign" or "miracle."[18] It is found in several passages in the New Testament with those meanings, as in the following passage where it serves the same function that *'ôt* serves in the Old Testament verses above:

> And many other **signs** truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. (John 20:30–31)

The sign (*'ôt*, *sēmeion*) is given so those who see it will believe. The Lord promises Cain that he will continue to live, despite his murder of his brother, and gives him a sign to confirm the promise.

The Sabbath is a sign (*'ôt*) of a relationship between God and his children, people set up objects to serve as reminders, prophets engage in metaphorical actions to teach others, and worshipers engage in symbolic activities to show their devotion to God.[19] And, more than anything else, God does amazing things to show his love and power, particularly in delivering Israel from Egypt and from other

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i&lang2=en.

17. *Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the Pentateuch,* trans. H. Norman Strickman and Arthur M. Silver (New York: Menorah, 1988), 86.
18. See Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* ed. Frederick William Danker, ed. and trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) [hereafter *BDAG*], "σημειον," "*sign* or *distinguishing mark* by which someth. is known, *sign, token*, *indication,*" 920. The examples provided are best translated as "sign" or "miracle."
19. Relationship, as in Exodus 31:13, 17; Ezekiel 20:12, 20. Reminders, e.g., Joshua 4:6; Isaiah 8:18. Metaphorical actions, e.g., Isaiah 20:2–5; Ezekiel 4:3. Devotion to God, e.g., Genesis 17:11; Exodus 13:14–16; Deuteronomy 6:6–9; 11:18.

woes.[20] The Bible uses *'ôt* in each of these cases. But none of the seventy-nine occurrences of *'ôt* in the Hebrew Bible show God placing a curse on someone, and not a single passage uses *'ôt* to refer to anything that God sets on the person of a recipient.[21] The translation *mark* in the King James Bible is not justified.

Upon

The Hebrew prepositional prefix *lə-*, translated with *upon* in the KJV of Genesis 4:15, does not mean "upon." It almost always means "to" or "for."[22] It is one of the most common features in Hebrew, and it appears about 1,300 times in Genesis alone. Of all those 1,300 Genesis occurrences, the KJV translates it as *upon* only here and in one other place.[23] *Upon* is an inaccurate and unnecessary translation in Genesis 4:15.

Set

The Hebrew verb *śîm* appears over five hundred times in the Old Testament. Its primary meaning is "put" or "set," and that is how the early English translators rendered it in Genesis 4:15: "And the LORde put . . ." (Tyndale), "And the LORD set . . ." (KJV). *Put* and *set* are words that usually connote what we do with tangible objects that can be relocated. In the examples that follow, notice the different word choices that the King James translators made, all translating from *śîm*.

> and [Abraham] bound Isaac his son, and **laid** him on the altar upon the wood. (Genesis 22:9)
>
> [Jacob] took the stone that he had **put** for his pillows, and **set** it **up** for a pillar. (Genesis 28:18)

Words with these meanings are the most common uses of the

20. There are many examples, such as Exodus 7:3; 10:1–2; 12:13; Numbers 14:11, 22; Deuteronomy 4:34–35; 6:20–23; 11:1–3; 26:8; 29:3; 34:11–12; Joshua 24:16–18; Judges 6:17–22; Nehemiah 9:9–10; Psalms 78:43; 105:26–27; 135:9; Isaiah 7:11, 14; Jeremiah 32:20–21.
21. In 1 Samuel 2:34–35, the death of two men is called a sign of God's rejection of them and their family.
22. Hebrew prepositions can be used in a variety of ways. *HALOT*, 507–11, lists several nuanced applications of *lə-* that are found in the Bible. None of the meanings provide support for the wording in the KJV.
23. In Genesis 31:35, the translators used *upon* in an effort to provide idiomatic English. The KJV's use of the word there follows the English translations back to Tyndale.

verb *śîm*.[24] With less tangible objects, however, other English words are usually required for rendering it, depending on the English idiom.

> I will **make** thy seed as the dust of the earth. (Genesis 13:16)
>
> he hath **made** my mouth like a sharp sword. (Isaiah 49:2)

The Greek Septuagint renders *śîm* with the verb *títhēmi* in Genesis 4:15. Like *śîm* its primary meaning is "put" or "set," and it also includes meanings such as "establish" and "appoint."[25] As we look at how the Greek translators rendered the *śîm* along with *lə-*, the preposition that follows it in the Hebrew of Genesis 4:15, it is clear that even translated from the Septuagint the reading "set a mark upon Cain" is not to be desired. In place of a preposition, the Septuagint uses *tō*, which is the Greek definite article in the dative case. It serves to identify the indirect object in the clause, the one to/for whom the Lord established the sign.

The following examples use *śîm* and *'ôt* together. In them *'ôt*, *sign*, is the direct object of *śîm*, just as in Genesis 4:15. They are analogous to that verse because in them God provides a sign and invokes it as evidence for the truth of his promise.

> and my **signs** which I have **done** among them. (Exodus 10:2)
>
> How he had **wrought** his **signs** in Egypt. (Psalms 78:43)
>
> They **shewed** his **signs** among them, and wonders. (Psalms 105:27)

Done, *wrought*, and *shewed* in these verses are all translated from the verb *śîm,* each followed by an *'ôt*, and each parallel to what is happening in Genesis 4:15—to establish the validity of God's promises. There is nothing like a mark in any of these, let alone a mark placed onto a person.

The verb *śîm* is also used to express meanings such a "appoint," "establish," or "assign."

> And the Lord **appointed** a set time, saying, To morrow the Lord shall do this thing. (Exodus 9:5)

24. *HALOT*, 1321–26.

25. *BDAG*, s. v. τίθημι, 1003–4. The semantic range of *títhēmi* is shown to be narrower than that of *śîm*, as in some cases, the Septuagint translators chose verbs other than *títhēmi* to express what Hebrew expresses adequately with *śîm*. See Genesis 13:16; Exodus 9:5; 10:2; Isaiah 42:12.

> And the priest **appointed** officers over the house of the LORD. (2 Kings 11:18)
>
> **unto** whom the prince of the eunuchs **gave** names: for he **gave unto** Daniel the name of Belteshazzar. (Daniel 1:7)

The example from Daniel is particularly relevant to Genesis 4:15, because it includes both *śîm* and the preposition *lə-* (translated here as "unto"). The *lə-* precedes the recipient. Just as the Babylonian official gave names to Daniel and his friends, the Lord gave a sign to Cain. Likewise, both *śîm* and *lə-* are used together in the following phrases:

> The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and **give thee** [give to thee] peace. (Numbers 6:26)
>
> My son, **give**, I pray thee, glory **to** the LORD God of Israel. (Joshua 7:19)
>
> he hath **made with** me an everlasting covenant. (2 Samuel 23:5)
>
> Let them **give** glory **unto** the LORD. (Isaiah 42:12)[26]

In these phrases, the *lə-* precedes and identifies the intended recipient of the action of the verb *śîm*, just as it does in Genesis 4:15.

In the KJV translations above, it will be noted that *śîm* (in present or past tense) is translated with a variety of English words, including *make*, *give*, *wrought*, and *shewed*. These are not ideal translations of *śîm*, but word choices like these are often required in order to create idiomatic English sentences, as can be seen in these verses in responsible translations like the English Standard Version and the New Revised Standard Version.

To Not

The last word is the least important of the words to consider, but in some ways it drives the modern translations of the words discussed above. In Hebrew the formation *ləbiltî* negates the action of the verb that follows it, usually an infinitive.[27] Preceding a verb, *ləbiltî* has the meaning "to not." In Genesis 4:15, the King James translators used for it "lest," resulting in "lest any finding him should kill him." But the Hebrew says, literally, "to not kill him anyone who finds him." Those

26. Other examples include 1 Kings 20:34 and 1 Chronicles 17:21.
27. The word *ləbiltî* is a preposition-noun combination that acts as a preposition or conjunction.

words restate the Lord's promise to Cain, and they express in words the message of the visual sign that God gave him.

The word *ləbiltî* is found seventy-eight times in the Hebrew Bible. King James's translation committee rendered it as "lest" only here and in one other place, so "lest" is not a common or desirable way to express it.[28]

The question about the meaning of *ləbiltî* in Genesis 4:15 concerns how best to translate it in the context of the other words in the clause. Should the meaning be "a sign *that* no one finding him would kill him," or "a sign *so* no one finding him would kill him"? The first of these translations is to be preferred, because it is consistent with the meaning of the previous words in the sentence, that the Lord established a sign for Cain. This interpretation suggests that the sign was something shown to Cain; it was a sign *to* Cain.

The second option suggests that the sign was to be shown to others who would see Cain, but that interpretation requires bending the meaning of the previous words. The King James wording, with the anomalous use of "lest," adopts that meaning. Translators may have been influenced by the Greek Septuagint, which suggests "so that" here, as does the Latin Vulgate. That interpretation would have the sign be visible to others.

There are numerous examples that show that, in Genesis 4:15, "a sign *that* no one finding him" is the desired option. Notice that all the following examples of *ləbiltî* come after a command or a promise:

> Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee **that** thou shouldest **not** eat? (Genesis 3:11)
>
> commanded him concerning this thing, **that** he should **not** go after other gods. (1 Kings 11:10)
>
> he commanded his sons **not to** drink wine. (Jeremiah 35:14)
>
> I lifted up my hand [I swore] unto them in the wilderness, **that** I would **not** bring them into the land which I had given them. (Ezekiel 20:15)[29]

Our example of *ləbiltî* in Genesis 4:15 comes after a promise — a

28. Genesis 38:9. *Lest* usually comes from a completely different Hebrew word, *pen*.

29. Other examples include Deuteronomy 4:21; Judges 21:7; Ruth 2:9; 2 Kings 17:15.

promise that God would protect Cain, accompanied by a sign to confirm the promise.

Translating Genesis 4:15

Although this article is about the King James translation and Hebrew words, it is worth noting that translators have dealt with the passage in a variety of ways, as can be seen in these examples: Tyndale's contemporary Martin Luther (1534) has "Und der HERRE macht ein zeichen an Kain," which suggests that the sign was on Cain's person.[30] The modern German Einheitsübersetzung, in contrast, has, "Darauf machte der Herr dem Kain ein Zeichen," which states that the Lord made the sign "for Cain." The New Revised Standard Version, the English Standard Version, and the New International Version follow in the KJV tradition, as do Hamilton[31] and Speiser.[32] The New American Standard Bible (1995) has, "The Lord appointed a sign for Cain," with similar wordings in the Evangelical Heritage Version and in Friedman's translation.[33] Wenham's "The Lord placed a sign for Cain" is inelegant but linguistically accurate.[34] Sarna writes that it was a sign showing that Cain "is under divine protection." He prefers the traditional translation but gives as an alternative, "The LORD gave Cain a [confirmatory] sign that no one who met him would kill him," the interpretation argued in this article.[35]

Despite the continuance of the customary wording in several modern translation, the Hebrew words in Genesis 4:15 do not support the idea in the King James translation that God put a mark on Cain. Instead, it shows that God established a sign for him as evidence that no one would kill him, despite his crime. Whatever the sign was, it was apparently sufficient to give Cain the assurance he needed. That is what the sign was for. As the Medieval Rabbi Ibn Ezra wrote, it was "a sign that no harm would befall him," and "Cain finally believed God because of

30. Huldrych Zwingli's 1531 Züricher Bibel translates the words the same way Luther did. Both use *Zeichen*, which means "sign."
31. Hamilton, *Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, 229.
32. Speiser, *Genesis*, 30.
33. Richard Elliot Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 39.
34. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 93.
35. Sarna, *JPS Commentary*, 35, brackets in original.

the sign."[36] Perhaps, as Rabbi Radak wrote in the thirteenth century, God "gave him a sign in his heart."[37]

When Cain left God's presence, he moved to another land, had a child, built a city, but presumably spent the rest of his days as a roamer and a wanderer (Genesis 4:16–17). We are not told why God chose to preserve Cain's life and provide the promise to him. But the biblical narrative is stronger because of this story, because ever since his own time, Cain himself has been a sign, a sign that we live in a fallen world in which evil exists, and a sign that evil actions are not always recompensed by God in this life, or in the way that we would prefer. Whatever the nature of the sign, Cain's story continues to be a sign for us.

A lesson we can learn from all this is that we must be careful how we deal with received traditions and how we interpret the words of received translations. Reading the scriptures cautiously and humbly protects us from indefensible conclusions, and reading the Bible with a deep dive into the meanings and uses of its ancient Hebrew and Greek words is often a necessity. As for the translation of Genesis 4:15, here are some options that attempt to put the phrase into idiomatic modern English:

> The LORD set in place a sign for Cain that no one finding him would kill him.
>
> The LORD made a sign for Cain that no one finding him would kill him.
>
> The LORD showed a sign to Cain that no one finding him would kill him.
>
> The LORD gave Cain a sign that no one finding him would kill him.

Perhaps in the case of the story of Cain, a better understanding of the Bible's words can even help change attitudes that are a legacy of the past.



36. *Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the Pentateuch*, 86.

37. "He gave him a sign in his heart, i.e., He fortified his self-confidence which had been shattered," Radak (Rabbi David Kimchi, 1160–235), *Commentary on the Tanakh*, sefaria.org/Genesis.4.15?lang=bi&with=Radak&lang2=en.

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Where Will We Turn for Peace?

Ralph C. Hancock

Review of Patrick Q. Mason and J. David Pulsipher, Proclaim Peace: The Restoration's Answer to an Age of Conflict *(Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2021). 290 pages. $19.99 (paperback).*

Abstract: Proclaim Peace *is a very timely and serious engagement with questions of peace. Consisting of roughly equal parts challenging scriptural exegesis, well-documented historical research, and earnest social activism, it may be taken as exemplary of current LDS academic opinion and institutional action on the interface between religion and politics. This work compels us to consider a critical question: Do we interpret the core meaning of peace as a temporal project of seeking justice? Or do we understand, contextualize, and moderate our passion for temporal justice relative to a promise of eternal peace? If we are intent on unifying heaven and earth, we should be careful from which direction we are working.*

Patrick Mason and J. David Pulsipher's *Proclaim Peace*[1] is a very timely and serious engagement with questions of the greatest importance: What is peace? How does the imperative of peace stand in relation to our most fundamental concerns as human beings, as citizens, and especially as Christians and Latter-day Saints? Mason and Pulsipher's impressive scholarly contribution and earnest personal reflections challenge us to consider carefully the implications of our

1. Patrick Q. Mason and J. David Pulsipher, *Proclaim Peace: The Restoration's Answer to an Age of Conflict* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Brigham Young University [BYU]; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2021).

most basic religious commitments for our deepest ethical and political views — and, I dare say, vice versa.

Our recently deceased prophet and Church President Russell M. Nelson, in recent addresses to the Church,[2] elevated the duty of peacemaking to new prominence, and Mason and Pulsipher's work aligns admirably with the prophet's call, as they offer an original reflection on a perennial theme of philosophy and theology. Their work rests upon a very ample and challenging, albeit contestable, examination of and engagement with scripture and other texts that hold authority for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is a well-documented and carefully argued book, and all readers interested in the interface between the teachings and practices of the Church and our obligations and beliefs as members of political societies — including those readers who, like me, finally disagree with critical assumptions and interpretations within the book — will benefit from the authors' conscientious and intelligent research and writing.

This work also deserves attention for the influence it is exerting in the Church community. The authors' timely and serious treatment of the imperative of peacemaking has been well received among Latter-day Saint scholars and thinkers. The book is a joint publication of BYU's Maxwell Institute and the Church's Deseret Book, and a draft of the book was the focus of a two-day retreat whose sponsors included the Maxwell Institute and the History Department of BYU-Idaho. More recently at BYU's Provo campus, both the College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences and the Wheatley Institute featured *Proclaim Peace* in official efforts to highlight "work related to peacebuilding, bridge-building, depolarization practices, civil discourse and dialogue, community engagement and social cohesion."[3] Consisting of roughly equal parts serious and challenging scriptural exegesis, well-documented historical research, and earnest social activism, the Mason-Pulsipher approach to the meaning of peace and to the task of peacemaking may thus be taken as exemplary of current LDS academic opinion and institutional action on the subject.

Mason and Pulsipher's book is as much a work of theology as

2. Russell M. Nelson, "Peacemakers Needed," *Liahona*, May 2023, 98–101, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2023/05/47nelson.
3. Mason was the keynote speaker for a BYU event (Peacemaker Fair), held on 10 September 2025, under the title: "The Fourth American Revolution: Peacemaking in Polarized Times." See socialsciences.byu.edu/peacemaker-fair-2025-09-10.

of social theory. In keeping with a project that positions itself within the LDS community and its basic teachings, the authors are careful to deny that they intend any doctrinal innovation. Instead, they reassure the reader that everyone can participate in the work of theology, which is simply "reasoned reflection" on doctrine (p. xx). At the same time, they consider theirs an interfaith effort, and it is not always clear how the authors' ecumenical sensibilities (including, notably, explicit affinities with intellectuals identifying with the Community of Christ, pp. x, 225–26) stand with respect to their commitments to teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They do not wish to be seen as radical innovators, it seems, and yet they invite us "to see sacred texts with new eyes" (p. xix). In any case, there are no obvious limits to how far the academic enterprise of theology can shape a person's understanding of the settled doctrine expressed by scripture and by Church authorities that we are supposed to share. It is fair to say, as we will see in examples referenced below, that Mason and Pulsipher are theologians who are far from satisfied with received understandings of LDS teachings. They show how much can be accomplished by independent initiative in theology without frontally challenging authoritative doctrine.

I propose a careful reading of *Proclaim Peace* as a case study in the challenge of (1) understanding and heeding what our faith teaches on this subject while (2) seeking ways to engage most constructively with the larger moral and political world in which we live.[4] We will see that the question of peace is necessarily bound up with the question of justice. Both *peace* and *justice* can be interpreted in a more spiritual or more temporal sense, but certainly Mason and Pulsipher are right that these meanings are always, to some extent, intermingled. Still, it is of the greatest importance to attend carefully to the ways we situate and prioritize eternal concerns on the one hand and social and political concerns on the other.

As we shall see, a pivotal question that arises from this study in elite LDS discourse on peacemaking is this: Do we interpret the core meaning of *peace* as a *temporal* effort, as an outgrowth of a project for justice? Or do we understand and, in fact, contextualize and moderate our passion for temporal justice in light of a promise of *eternal* peace?

4. For a review of Mason and Pulsipher's book that considers its lack of interaction with just-war ethics, see Morgan Deane, "Rich Vein or Fools Gold?," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 51 (2022), 181–98, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/rich-vein-or-fools-gold.

Peace and Social Justice

How can Jesus Christ heal our fallen world? It is from this perspective that Mason and Pulsipher take up the question of peace. Healing the world is not, for them, an "otherworldly aspiration" but a project achievable in this world "if we embrace love, equality, justice, and peace as a way of life" (p. xvii). The authors do not regard this worldly endeavor as distinct from a properly religious understanding of peace. On the contrary, their project is, in a sense, very inward or spiritual, since it hinges on putting the "power of the word" over that of the sword. This verbal power is supported by a firm confidence that God is on our side in the pursuit of love, peace, and justice in this world. At the same time, it is very practical, and, it is fair to say, political, since it is based on the creation of "social and economic conditions that would allow all of God's children to flourish and maximize their full potential" (p. xviii). The authors' practical, temporal focus is also clear in their warning that the alternative to peace is "extinction" (p. xix).

What it means to *flourish* and to *maximize full potential* is left unclear, presumably because it would not be consistent with the equality of "all of God's children" to privilege one substantive idea of flourishing over another. In their use of the most general and inclusive language to define what they see as the essential pre-conditions of peace, we can already start to sense the risk of the authors' secular project setting the tone for and decisively determining the content of their religious vision.

What is meant by *peace*? Mason and Pulsipher's conception is nothing if not capacious. They begin, as becomes authors addressing a religious public, with the idea of personal, inner peace. But their focus is certainly not on spiritual exercises or devotional practices that attune the soul to some higher reality. Nor is it centered on sacred covenants that mark the path and point the way to eternal life. Their inner peace is rather the peace that comes "when a person lives in accordance with moral law and ethical principles" (p. xxi), and therefore with interpersonal peace and intercommunal peace. To speak in classical terms, we can say that, for the authors, the order of the city is prior to the order of the soul. That is, the conception of social and political peace determines the content of inner peace — as it must, surely, if the meaning of *flourishing* or *maximizing full potential* are left open to individual definition.

The authors' definition of inner peace is very closely tied to their conception of social peace, and therefore to their idea of justice, which

is decidedly social. For them, peace depends upon "a state of affairs in which justice, equity, and an abiding commitment to the common good is built into the very structure of society."[5] Inner peace expresses itself definitively in the quest for social justice. Thus, our authors adopt as their standard the term *Justpeace*,[6] which is very far from any conventionally modest effort to achieve an absence of violence, generally called *negative peace* by scholars (p. xxii). Mason and Pulsipher's aim is much larger. Their Justpeace, which they equate with a Latter-day Saint Zion, envisions "new relations [of] equality and fairness according to dictates of human dignity and the common good" (p. xxii). (The terms *human dignity* and *the common good* are just as nebulous and undefined as those of *flourishing* or *maximizing full potential*.)

Mason and Pulsipher's positive view of peace is thus tied to an idea of justice that is quite vague but clearly very demanding. Justpeace requires not only the elimination of war and criminal violence, but of structural and cultural violence. Naturally, all of us love the concept of justice as well as the idea of peace, and so the fusion of these notions can be attractive. Few will object to the ideals of *equality* (or *equity*), *fairness*, and *human dignity*, especially when they are used abstractly, unmoored from any political and philosophical content. It should not be necessary to point out the almost infinite elasticity of these terms. Indeed, it seems that the most sublime and spiritual ideal, human dignity, is the most elastic.

Do we intend by *equality* some understanding of equal opportunity to make ourselves fit to receive specific moral and spiritual goods, or do we mean *equity* in such a way as to categorize all unequal outcomes as proof of oppressive injustice? (The authors largely and prudently avoid the clearly ideologically charged term *equity,* but in their concluding paragraph they practically identify distributing "the world's wealth and resources more equitably" and overcoming "debilitating cultures of racism or sexism or classism" with building Zion [p. 214].)

Do we associate *dignity* with moral accountability and defined potential for practical achievement or even exaltation? Or do we understand it as consistent with a flattening secular gospel of relativistic

5. John Paul Lederach and R. Scott Appleby, "Strategic Peacebuilding: An Overview," in *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World*, ed. Daniel Philpott and Gerard F. Powers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23–24, as quoted in Mason and Pulsipher, *Proclaim Peace*, xxii.
6. The authors' choice of this term is interesting, as it is also the name of a nongovernmental organization (NGO). For more information, see justpeace.ngo.

"love," according to which individuals claim dignity as a reward for expressing or asserting their self-conceived identity? The term *dignity* now appears as the core of a non-partisan ethical consensus, but this rather muddy consensus covers up the vast difference between an idea of human worth that is grounded in an understanding of God and the virtues that lead us to godliness, and one that traffics in the notion of ever-expanding rights, including the right to an "equal dignity" with no basis but human assertion and no substantive moral content.

It should not be necessary to say that the pursuit of a utopian idea of perfect universal justice, of a society that would somehow recognize as equal all rights-claims, tends to fuel the radical rejection of all existing moral and political standards. Far from favoring peace, such rejection of existing standards in the name of radical "equal dignity"—or unconditional deference to victim-coded "identities" and the promise of liberation from all "oppression" including all perceived "unfairness" and "inequality"—ultimately portends revolutionary violence.

Mason and Pulsipher's framework of peace activism is aimed, beyond a minimal absence of war and direct violence ("negative peace"), at the possibility of a pure peace based upon a perfect justice. This framework is heavily indebted to the acknowledged father of the academic peace-studies movement, Norwegian professor Johan Galtung, who founded the *Journal of Peace Research* in 1964. Galtung's career illustrates the hazards of binding the pursuit of political and international peace, as well as the LDS aspiration of building Zion, to an ultimately secular utopian project of justice, understood as liberation from all social and cultural inequality. According to Bruce Bawer, while Galtung is "invariably portrayed in the media as a charismatic . . . champion of decency, [he] is in fact a lifelong enemy of freedom" who praised Stalin's USSR, Castro's Cuba, and above all Mao's China while identifying capitalism with imperialism and condemning the West's "structural fascism."[7]

As Bawer notes, "Galtung's use of the word 'peace' to legitimize totalitarianism is an old Communist tradition." My point here is not to accuse Mason and Pulsipher of any deliberate Communist sympathies. I do not know whether it would be more damning for their argument to surmise that they know—but choose to pass over in silence—the ideological roots of the peace-studies movement in which they position themselves, or to suggest that they have not even

7. Bruce Bawer, "The Peace Racket," *City Journal* (New York), Summer 2007, city-journal.org/article/the-peace-racket.

begun to scrutinize the ideological resonances of their project. The latter would be unsurprising, alas, since it is all too common for LDS academics to celebrate unawares a political agenda and a philosophical worldview alien to what we say we believe. A certain leftish progressivism so permeates the mostly implicit worldview — a secular religion of egalitarian progress — of mainstream higher education (at least in the humanities and social sciences) that few seem even to raise the question of any tension or contradiction between that worldview and Restoration essentials.[8]

Since I have written the word *secular*, we should pause to consider the problem of the temporal and the eternal in relation to the project of *Proclaim Peace.* Mason and Pulsipher understandably draw upon the Restoration's distinctive emphasis on the continuity between this world and the next, and thus on the integration between our practical efforts to improve our moral and material condition and our hope for a final Kingdom of God over which Christ will reign. I agree with the authors on the need to work towards our integration of fundamental concerns, both temporal and eternal. They are right, I think, to argue that our view of *private* salvation must be coordinated with some understanding of the good of our community (pp. 22–23). As the ancient political philosophers taught, the questions of the good of the soul and of the city cannot be severed. But much depends upon whether we tend to absorb our practical, secular concerns within a fundamentally spiritual and religious perspective, or whether we proceed in the opposite direction and read a secular project into the religious framework of the Restoration. Mason and Pulsipher tend heavily to the latter. It seems that, for them, an understanding of the whole meaning of our religion can dispense with any reflection on the actual content of exaltation and eternal life. Instead, they focus on the promotion of Zion, understood according to the canons of secular equality or social justice.

In keeping with their temporal, mortal perspective on the ultimate meaning of *peace*, the authors thus argue that Jesus Christ's ministry was by no means non-political, but rather that it represented a

8. I have previously addressed the LDS intellectual community's untroubled embrace of Jonathan Rauch's appropriation of the LDS concept of "agency." See Ralph Hancock, "Moral Agency and Sustainable Liberalism: Rauch's Proposed Liberal-Christian Alliance," Part I, *Public Discourse*, 4 June 2025, thepublicdiscourse.com/2025/06/98066/; and Ralph Hancock, "A New Political Theology of 'Agency,'" Part II, *Public Discourse*, 5 June 2025, thepublicdiscourse.com/2025/06/98068/.

different way of pursuing political ends. They avoid choosing or balancing between immediate political and social concerns and eternal concerns by positing that these can be joined seamlessly together. There is no need to choose between actual, temporal power and eternal principles of love, because "principles of love and truth . . . exert actual power in this world" (p. 16). Apparently, there is no need to choose between or to balance social justice activism and spiritual discipleship, because "we can transform the world with love" (p. 42). (The authors see no need to distinguish between humanitarian "love" and the divine love offered in the gospel and its covenants. There is no need to choose between the "nonviolent vulnerability" of Jesus Christ and Caesar's greater coercive power, because nonviolence is, or can be, effectively powerful here and now, socially and politically in the present world. [p. 36]) "Love your enemy" is not only the immense and sublime challenge at the heart of Christ's gospel, but also a winning political strategy! "The Power of *Assertive* Love"[9] is not a mere spiritual power but a *winning* strategy, here and now, in this world.

Scripture, Prophecy, and Peacemaking

A close reading of scripture, and especially of the Book of Mormon, is central to Mason and Pulsipher's argument, and occupies the larger part of *Proclaim Peace.* They propose a scriptural hermeneutic or interpretive scheme that serves the purpose of their Justpeace project. All students of the Book of Mormon will benefit from engaging the reading offered here. It is serious and intelligent, although at times almost charmingly tendentious, as the authors do not hide their efforts to produce an understanding of the scriptural text that suits their purposes. In introducing their nonviolent reading, they have to admit that God can use violence — he drowned Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea after all — but they ask us to concede that such violence is not his standard operating procedure.

In the Book of Mormon, Mason and Pulsipher are immediately confronted with the violence that Nephi ultimately inflicted upon the drunken Laban. They grant that Nephi succeeds in acquiring the brass plates through violence and deception, but regard this action as a mistake; they present the reasoning Nephi gives in 1 Nephi 4:10–18 as merely his self-justification (pp. 49–52). More generally, the authors continue a recent trend in the most venturesome Book of Mormon

9. The title of chapter 5, emphasis mine.

scholarship to give the benefit of the doubt to Nephi's wayward brothers rather than to the prophet and king. It is Nephi who wronged his brothers by lording it over them; it is he who somehow "came to believe that the mantle of leadership had bypassed his older brothers and rested on him" (p. 79), and so it seems we should find their attempts to murder him understandable. Nephi repented, but it was too late, as he had already alienated his brothers. Sadly, his unpeaceful attitudes contributed to the destruction of Nephite civilization. Such, for Mason and Pulsipher, is Nephi's "ambivalent legacy" (p. 62). To be sure, the Lamanites were no paragons of pacifism, but it takes two to tango, and thus we should be cautious in accepting the Nephite version of the conflict. Mason and Pulsipher rightly warn us against accepting at face value every Nephite characterization of their Lamanite enemies. At the same time, it is possible to go too far in holding both sides in a conflict equally responsible.

Unsurprisingly, our authors have little patience for "one of the primary heroes" of the Book of Mormon narrative, namely, the Nephite military captain Moroni. They are willing to accuse this would-be hero of unprovoked "ethnic cleansing," and thus consider him a forerunner of the modern age's much derided "settler colonialism" (p. 81). Their expansive theological interpretation allows them to sidestep Mormon's description of Moroni as a man not only of strength but of "perfect understanding," one "that did not delight in bloodshed" and "whose heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God" (Alma 48:11–12). It takes a lot of confidence in the ideology of Justpeace to disqualify the prophet Mormon's remarkable praise: "I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men" (Alma 48:17).

The Anti-Nephi-Lehies provide *Proclaim Peace* its best scriptural example of the approach of "sanctifying nonviolent resistance" that is central to its thesis. Mason and Pulsipher understandably hold them up as "godlike" for their willingness to give up their lives rather than take up the sword, an act that "captures the inherent power of nonviolently loving our enemies" (p. 97). Conceding little to the specific context of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies' magnificent gesture — that is, their contrition for their "many sins and murders" and their fear of relapsing into the same sin (Alma 24:7–17) — Mason and Pulsipher hold them up as a generally applicable example of regarding their would-be enemies as brethren (p. 98).

Such a shallow reading of the scriptural account can be used to justify unilateral surrender as a means of securing peace. The authors' attempts to cite modern examples of this strategy do little to enhance their argument. Their proposal of Costa Rica (which abolished its military in 1948 to secure civilian control of the country) as a general example to the nations of the world is hardly plausible (p. 118). And their quotation of Abraham Lincoln's appeal to "the better angels of our nature" in his first inaugural address overlooks the obvious and inconvenient fact that Lincoln led a war that cost hundreds of thousands of lives to preserve the Union. Further study of Lincoln's second inaugural address (which the authors briefly reference on p. 188) is recommended.

To their credit, Mason and Pulsipher acknowledge that non-violence does not always dominate the Book of Mormon narrative: "The text extols *both* nonviolence and just warfare, without explicitly resolving any apparent contradictions, and holds them in perpetual tension" (p. 90). Is it not fair to ask whether Mason and Pulsipher might have shown more respect for the tension inherent in the sacred narrative? Instead, they make use of a "full range of interpretive resources" to privilege those texts that favor their quasi-pacifist position (p. 168). At least they are willing to admit that "at times we might actually be justified in responding to violence with violence, but such responses will ultimately never heal or transform our conflicts into opportunities for creative growth. Only love can do that" (p. 93). The reader can surely agree with that judgment while doubting the authors' interpretation of love according to their Justpeace agenda.

To be clear, Mason and Pulsipher do not espouse a position of pure pacificism. In chapter 6 they allow that, while God requires patience and forbearance, he does justify or at least excuse self-defense under certain rigorous conditions: violence must be a last resort, legitimate only after many attempts of self-sacrificing peacemaking, and followed by "an increase of sanctifying love." This represents a higher standard, they rightly note, than the Christian just-war tradition (pp. 134–44).

Mason and Pulsipher offer a challenging and well-documented examination of the Latter-day Saint "political theology of friendship" (chapter 8) in relation to the United States of America and its Constitution. Their reading of the LDS perspective on the Constitution is notably nuanced. They grant that the Constitution may be considered "inspired," but only insofar as it aims, according to Doctrine and Covenants 101:77, to guarantee the "rights and protection of all flesh,"

and certainly not only of the flesh of the privileged few who happen to live within the boundaries of the United States. The authors do not mention that the purpose of the Constitution is "that every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment" (Doctrine and Covenants 101:78). Rather than personal moral accountability, they prefer to emphasize "that individual moral responsibility is interwoven with social moral responsibility" (p. 202), and "sinful structures of injustice, inequality, and exploitation" (p. 203). They propose a distinctly minimalist interpretation of the Saints' "befriending" of the "constitutional law of the land" (Doctrine and Covenants 98:6), a bargain devised by Oliver Cowdery that may be said to have worked out reasonably well, but at the cost of the Church's subjection to a nation-state predicated on violence (p. 184).

Regarding "temporal laws and governments" as mere "placeholders" for the Justpeace of Zion they envision, the authors concede the very minimum to "Caesar's claims to territory, lordship, or sovereignty" (p. 180). (They do not mention any objection to the federal government's coercive imposition of monogamy on the Saints.) *Proclaim Peace* thus rests upon a quite remarkable demand for the autonomy and ascendency of religious over political authority. They propose a complete "restoration political theology" (p. 190) recognizing "God is the true and sole sovereign" (p. 191) and based upon confidence that "the kingdom of Christ is real and coming" (p. 191). They grant that "Christ's disciples are citizens of nations" (p. 191), and "encourage friendship toward political regimes" as long as they "promote individual freedom and human rights, protect vulnerable populations, and cultivate human dignity" (p. 191). Again, they affirm that "secular political communities deserve active friendship and loyalty" (p. 192).[10] Their ideal of a nation sets a very high standard ("when the nation is predicated on care rather than violence"), but they grant that "Christians should not withhold their friendship simply because no current political community perfectly embodies the ideals of Zion" (p. 193).

One might ask whether a community that depends purely on "care"

10. Mason and Pulsipher never address what "active friendship" toward a community or nation should look like. Does active friendship mean helping the government achieve their political goals even if those goals don't mesh well with a vision of Zion? If a Christian lives in Iran or Somalia, what should such friendship entail when the political regime is seeking to kill you for your beliefs?

and in no way on "violence," or the coercive force of law, would even be a *political* community. Mason and Pulsipher's "restoration political theology" is not, in fact, a political theology — a reflection on the inherently tangled relationship between political and religious authority. Nor is it a reflection on the problem, older than St. Augustine, of reconciling the imperfect earthly presence of the Church — the City of God — with the natural necessity of the City of Man. *Proclaim Peace* is, rather, an expression of very robust confidence in the proximate possibility of Zion, a project for achieving a post-political society governed wholly by sacrificial Christian love. This is interpreted, of course, in alignment with Justpeace and its essentially liberationist understanding of equal human dignity.

To be sure, all Latter-day Saints who hunger and thirst after righteousness must long for the coming of Zion, but just how do we understand Zion? How do we understand the ultimate and highest meaning of peace, and how can we help bring it about? Mason and Pulsipher's project is, in one sense, an adamantly *religious* project, very optimistic about the effectual power of sacrificial peace, here and now. Yet, in another sense, it is a very *secular* project, one that appeals ecumenically to other Christians and to non-Christians who share a certain idea of peace. They are very eager to join efforts with seekers of peace of all religious or non-religious persuasions who understand peace as the overcoming of all violence, including, notably, structural and cultural violence.

The authors' idea of violence is measured against the ideal of a society defined by equal human dignity, a notion of Christian origin that has certainly traveled far from its doctrinal context. This idea of equal human dignity has no specifically religious content. It refers in no way to covenants, to moral and spiritual discipline, to the difficult task of achieving a Godlike character through the Atonement of Christ and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. Detached from a religious and moral context, "equal dignity" is open to indefinite ideological expansion and, thus, to the increased use of state power to validate the claims of recognized victims to be liberated from structural or cultural authority that, to them, violates a dignity severed from all parameters of moral responsibility.[11] The logic of Mason and Pulsipher's Justpeace project leads to boundless utopian demands on governmental powers from intersectional coalitions in search of an

11. To their credit, Mason and Pulsipher do endorse "a robust sexual ethic" as integral to "a commitment to peacebuilding" (p. 126).

undefinable equity. The resolute, anti-political religiosity of *Proclaim Peace* risks fueling irresponsible activism that demands the growth and exercise of oppressive structural authority.

The authors might understandably insist that, in good Latter-day Saint fashion, they reject any dichotomy between the sacred and the profane, the eternal and the temporal. And they are certainly right that our conceptions of heaven and earth must be integrated, that our exercise of moral agency during our mortal probation is integral to our celestial exaltation, where we will enjoy "that same sociality which exists among us here" (Doctrine and Covenants 130:2). But let us not forget what scripturally follows: "only it will be coupled with eternal glory." Does Mason and Pulsipher's peace, their understanding of perfect communion, recognize the necessity of eternal glory? Or do they replace the properly religious ideas of sanctification and exaltation with an understanding of peace correlated with a secular and ideological notion of equal human dignity?

If we are intent on unifying heaven and earth, we ought to be careful from which direction we are working.

Religion and Politics, and the Two Great Commandments

To understand the dynamic of the argument of *Proclaim Peace,* it is important to note that they begin conceptually by radically separating religion from politics, and then conclude on what is, in fact, a fusion of religion and politics. Religion, for them, is a non-violent commitment to the dignity of every person; it envisions a society of perfect unity and equality. Politics, or Caesar's realm, is the fallen world of violence, coercion, and hierarchy. But the authors end by radically fusing their idea of a religious Zion with a liberationist and secular-humanitarian understanding of the human person and the good community. They tend to reduce the Church's ends and means to just one more effort of supposedly pure human benevolence of hope and change. They imagine that an alliance with secular Justpeace activists can motivate sacrificial non-violence and transform the world. But Mason and Pulsipher's inclusive universalism effectually makes the Church a subsidiary of a globalist activism, blind to the more modest but essential purposes of nation states with their own laws and borders. They want to recommend "active friendship and loyalty" (p. 192) to existing political entities, but they set aside Christ's limited deference to Caesar ("everything is God's" [p. 180]) and emphasize that "God is the true and sole sovereign" (p. 191). They are willing to grant that the U.S. Constitution is

inspired, but only insofar as it guarantees the "rights and protection of *all* flesh" (their emphasis) and does not limit its protection to the privileged few who happen to live in the United States (p. 181). This ignores the question of whether one could embrace the Constitution without embracing the defense and the common good of the actual country and the people for whom it was framed. They seem to grant the legitimacy of "active friendship and loyalty" to real political communities, but then they effectively undermine all such loyalty by stipulating that all influence must be based on care rather than violence.

It is a sad reality of our fallen world that there are no political entities whose authority is not ultimately backed up by coercive power. There are no nation-states that satisfy the standard of care the authors espouse — the renunciation of all forms of violence (direct, structural, and cultural) — meaning the legitimacy of all possible claims of equal dignity. These realities mean that Mason and Pulsipher effectively dismiss all existing national loyalties as inherently idolatrous. The only justice that meets their standard is an imaginary global, borderless Justpeace of miraculously self-sacrificial bearers of unlimited rights of dignity and subjective fulfillment. This fusion of religion and politics falsifies the nature of each. Mason and Pulsipher argue, citing Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, that "the gospel of Jesus Christ holds the answer to every social and political and economic problem the world has ever faced."[12] But in their hands the effectual truth of that argument is reversed: for them, the answer to every social and political and economic problem — Justpeace — is the true meaning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The same sort of reversal can be traced in the way the authors conceive of the relationship between the inward and the outward, that is, between an inner, spiritual peace and an external, social-political peace. In one sense, their argument is deeply, exorbitantly inward and spiritual: they ask every Saint and citizen immediately to embrace the example of Christ and of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies by a readiness to sacrifice their lives for their fellow humans, even for those who aim to destroy them.

In this sense, they seem to honor Ezra Taft Benson's counsel that a truly Christian approach to social problems must work "from the

12. Jeffrey R. Holland, "A Handful of Meal and a Little Oil," *Ensign*, May 1996, 31, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1996/05/a-handful-of-meal-and-a-little-oil.

inside out," whereas "the world works from the outside in."[13] But in the final analysis their understanding of personal or inner peace is wholly subordinated to a project that aims not to transform the human heart and to strengthen the accountable moral agent, but to bring about "a state of affairs in which justice, equity, and an abiding commitment to the common good is built into the very structures of society" (p. xxii). Spiritual peace and moral agency are thus defined in terms of the ideological project of Justpeace, with its boundless ambition to liberate every individual from all inequalities, including structural or cultural norms that some will invariably and inevitably experience as oppression.

By making social change the decisive factor in attaining spiritual peace, Mason and Pulsipher, in effect, prioritize the love of neighbor—or, rather, of the person claiming equal dignity—over the love of God. The authors would do well to attend to Elder Christofferson's counsel regarding the necessary priority of the first great commandment over the second:

> First is the foundational nature of this first commandment. Wonderful and essential as the second commandment is, it does not provide the necessary foundation for our lives, nor is it intended to. Obeying the second commandment makes us nice people, but to what end? What is the point of our existence? For purpose, direction, and meaning, we must look to the first and great commandment. . . .
>
> Second, ignoring the first commandment, or reversing the order of the first and second commandments, risks a loss of balance in life and destructive deviations from the path of happiness and truth. Love of God and submission to Him provide checks against our tendency to corrupt virtues by pushing them to the extreme. Compassion for our neighbor's distress, for example, even when the suffering is brought about by his or her own transgression, is noble and good. *But an unbridled compassion could lead us, like Alma's son Corianton, to question God's justice and misunderstand His mercy.*[14]

13. Ezra Taft Benson, "Born of God," *Ensign,* July 1989, 4, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/ce29dd5d-a8dd-4018-ac84-2dd4a07c9184/0/5.
14. D. Todd Christofferson, "The First Commandment First," (devotional address, BYU, Provo, UT, 22 March 2022), speeches.byu.edu/talks/d-todd

In *Proclaim Peace,* a passion or ambition to pursue social justice, to eliminate all inequalities declared by certain classes of victims to be systemic or structural (or, in Elder Christofferson's terms, to make us "nice people" according to a dominant understanding of "compassion") leads to a quite marked subordination of the question of our ultimate "purpose, direction, and meaning" to an ideological project that is widely embraced, without objection or reservation, by the secular religion of American higher education.

Mason and Pulsipher rightly reject what they describe as a "moral passivity" that defers all resolution of injustice to some other world (p. 41). But here they produce a straw man argument that allows them to avoid reflection on the imperative of fairness in the present life. We are not forced to choose between complete passivity relative to social and political problems and Mason and Pulsipher's complete embrace of a social-justice interpretation of the gospel. It is sufficient to consider the contrast between the argument of *Proclaim Peace* and that made by Elder Renlund in his April 2021 General Conference address.[15] Elder Renlund begins with a story that makes it clear that claims of injustice or unfairness are often motivated by envy and selfishness. Inequality of material advantages may be the result of "diligent choices" that some make and others forgo in their pursuit of "immediate gratification." Beyond the need for reasonable skepticism regarding egalitarian claims, Elder Renlund simply acknowledges the necessary limits of fairness in this life:

> Some unfairness cannot be explained; inexplicable unfairness is infuriating. Unfairness comes from living with bodies that are imperfect, injured, or diseased. Mortal life is inherently unfair. Some people are born in affluence; others are not. Some have loving parents; others do not. Some live many years; others, few. And on and on and on.[16]

In response to the unfairness inherent to some degree in our mortal condition, Elder Renlund does not propose an agenda of social justice that would promise to transform that condition, but instead points to a remedy that operates on another plane: "Jesus Christ," he teaches,

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-christofferson/the-first-commandment-first/, emphasis added. Very similar counsel has been prominent in recent General Conference addresses as well.

15. Dale G. Renlund, "Infuriating Unfairness," *Ensign*, May 2021, 41–44, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2021/05/25renlund.
16. Renlund, "Infuriating Unfairness," 42.

"both understands unfairness and has the power to provide a remedy. Nothing compares to the unfairness He endured."[17] Thus, in a gesture that, for Mason and Pulsipher, would be classified as "moral passivity," Elder Renlund responds to the endemic character of unfairness in the human condition by promising that "*in the eternities*, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will resolve all unfairness."[18] Without denying that we "approach others with compassion and try to alleviate unfairness where we find it; we can try to make things right within our sphere of influence," he makes it clear that the ultimate answer to the problem of injustice is faith that "Jesus Christ will consecrate the unfairness for our gain."[19]

Elder Renlund's response to the claims of those "infuriated" by injustice, either real or perceived, is consistent with the broader perspective of the Restoration as well as a broad and deep Christian tradition. This teaching situates our ultimate peace in a better world whose realization depends upon religious faith, hope, and charity and cannot be achieved by social activism motivated by the secular energy of equality understood as liberation from all oppressive social norms. Mason and Pulsipher have proposed a theological reinterpretation of the Restoration. Clearly a very strong reinterpretation is needed in order to yield the Justpeace activism they promote.

Overall, Mason and Pulsipher seem to favor a direct translation of spiritual principles into political strategies. That is, they are confident that eternal principles of love and truth can "exert actual *power* in this world," here and now (p. 16, emphasis added). "We can transform the world with love," they proclaim (p. 42). In other contexts, however, our authors are at pains to distinguish the divine and the human: "There lies an enormous gulf between imperfect mortals and a perfect God . . . 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts,' God reminds his children, 'neither are your ways my ways'" (p. 155). On the one hand, God's ways, insofar as they align with Justpeace, must be translated directly into political affairs. On the other hand, any examples of God's ways that contradict the Justpeace agenda must be safely bracketed as irrelevant to our temporal concerns. What may seem to be examples of "divine violence" must be viewed as mysterious aspects of divinity reserved for glorified and perfected beings. No such distinction between the divine and the temporal suggests to our authors

17. Renlund, "Infuriating Unfairness," 43.
18. Renlund, "Infuriating Unfairness," 43, emphasis added.
19. Renlund, "Infuriating Unfairness," 43.

any caution in applying the pure evangelical idea of peace to practical national and international problems: "The possibility and reality of force always underlies" the supposed "consent of the governed" in our present political communities (p. 173). Freely deploying a considerable "range of interpretive resources" (p. 168) in order to explain away violence that is commanded or justified in scripture, Mason and Pulsipher propose to undertake an agenda of peace and justice that will replace "the nation-state, predicated on the power of violence," with "the kingdom of God, predicated on the power of love" (p. 173).

The Gospel's Peace

I must pass over, for now, Mason and Pulsipher's challenging and well-researched examination of Latter-day Saint teachings on political theology and the U.S. Constitution, from the Saints' struggles in Missouri to twentieth-century prophetic teachings on war in official messages of the First Presidency. The readings presented in *Proclaim Peace*, like those addressing the question of violence in the Book of Mormon, certainly deserve careful consideration. At the same time, we must note the tendentiousness of the authors' use some statements by General Authorities. They are happy to cite Dallin H. Oaks's "prophetic critique . . . [of] genocide, war, economic inequality, corruption, and the suffering of refugees as the products of sin," in order then to argue that "we should not stop" at the aim of fostering "personal and interpersonal peace," but rather go further "to identify, unmask, root out, and transform structures and cultures of violence, beginning in our own communities" (p. 203). They seem not to notice that their transmogrification of Elder Oaks's Christian counsel of peace into a boundless project of transforming structures and cultures is not at all consistent with the overall thrust of his conference address.[20] To find a practical touchstone of peace in the contemporary world, Elder Oaks turns to the U.S. Constitution, for which he provides a much more robust defense than the reserved and conditional friendship for the Constitution touted by Mason and Pulsipher. Rather than promoting radical structural change, President Oaks insists that "the key" to uniting a diverse and divided society "is constitutional patriotism."[21] Rather than disparaging the political principle of "consent" that is practically

20. Dallin H. Oaks, "World Peace," *Ensign*, May 1990, 71–73, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1990/05/world-peace.

21. Dallin H. Oaks, "Love Your Enemies," *Ensign*, November 2020, 29, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2020/11/17oaks.

embodied in the modern liberal-democratic nation-state as masking "the possibility and reality of force," as do Mason and Pulsipher (p. 173), Oaks declares that it is the "teachings of our Savior" that "inspired the Constitution of the United States and the basic laws of many of our countries."[22]

Elder Oaks quotes Joseph F. Smith: "There is only one thing that can bring peace into the world. It is the adoption of the gospel of Jesus Christ, rightly understood, obeyed and practiced by rulers and people alike."[23] Peace, Oaks clearly states, is not the product of liberation from all structural or cultural inequalities, but can only be achieved through the "general righteousness" of the people in the nations concerned. "The Savior and his Apostles had no program for world peace other than individual righteousness."[24] There is no need, from this point of view, to form a new ecumenical movement of Justpeace:

> Our missionaries . . . are workers for world peace . . . . They are the Lord's servants, and his program for world peace depends on righteousness, not rhetoric. . . . By inviting all to repent and to come unto Christ, our missionaries are working for peace in this world by changing the hearts and behavior of individual men and women.[25]

If this prioritizing of personal righteousness is the true and only road to peace, then the academically inspired movement of Justpeace — the tethering of peace to a radical and secular idea of social justice — is, at best, a distraction.

President Marion G. Romney's perspective on peace is even more explicit in its skepticism of peace projects not derived from the full message of the gospel:

> Must the choice lie irrevocably between peace on the one hand, obtained by compliance with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and contention and war on the other hand? In answer to this question, I feel safe in saying that if there is a middle ground it is as yet undiscovered; and that, too, notwithstanding the fact that the search for it has been long and tortuous. Ignorant of, or ignoring, and without any thought of paying the price of peace, men have tried many approaches. There

22. Oaks, "Love Your Enemies," 29.
23. Oaks, "World Peace," 71.
24. Oaks, "World Peace," 72.
25. Oaks, "World Peace," 73.

> was St. Pierre's project in 1713; Bentham's plan, 1780; Kant's project, 1795; there were the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907; and the League of Nations following World War I, to name but a few. There have been pacts, treaties and alliances, *ad infinitum*, all without success. . . .
>
> If we would have peace, brothers and sisters, we must make up our minds to pay the price of peace. . . . We should rejoice, for to proclaim peace is the sole purpose of our life's mission. We should find no pleasure in the fact that men's strivings for peace have proved ineffectual. I wage no war against their efforts. Many of them are doing the best they can in the light they have. Nevertheless, *I can see no justification for us, who have the clear light of the revealed gospel of Christ, to spend our lives stumbling around through the mists following the uncertain glimmer of a flickering candle lighted by the wisdom of men.* Rather, we should devote our energies to spreading the true light, and leave the mists to those who do not see that light.[26]

Mason and Pulsipher's project seems quite opposite to the Church's consistent emphasis on the priority of spiritual peace, moral accountability, and the essential tasks of living and sharing the gospel in our peacemaking efforts. The authors' program is ecumenical to the point of neglecting the distinctive resources of the Restoration and submerging our efforts as Latter-day Saints into an activist movement based on secular premises and priorities. They often cite examples from and urge us to be more like certain activists within the Community of Christ, a denomination that has largely abandoned the substance of Joseph Smith's legacy and redefined themselves as a social gospel community. Citing Rabbi Heschel, they promise to make us "relevant, ambitious, liberating, and irrepressibly meaningful" and so to save us from the prospect of becoming "irrelevant, dull, oppressive, insipid" (p. 231). In their final chapter, charmingly titled "Just Ward Theory," they enthuse about the example of a BYU stake president who proposed that merely participating in Sunday services was worthless in comparison with the imperative to exhibit "pure religion" by cooperating with "selected social service providers" in the effort to "constructively transform structural and cultural violence" (p. 220–21).

26. Marion G. Romney, "The Price of Peace" *Ensign*, October 1983, 6, emphasis added, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1983/10/the-price-of-peace.

Mason and Pulsipher are willing to acknowledge the relevance of missionary work to peacemaking, as long as missionaries "become more aware of the ways that the global expansion of Christianity has been historically connected with forms of structural and cultural violence such as colonialism and imperialism" (p. 222). In their view, missionaries should also not confuse the aim of being "vehicles of reconciliation that touch hearts and even transform communities" (p. 222) with the old, boring objective of getting people baptized. Naturally, what they find most promising in LDS universities includes an undergraduate major in "intercultural peacebuilding" and exposure to "theories of conflict resolution, conflict transformation, and intercultural understanding" (p. 228). And, of course, many professors and administrators agree with them. It is not the goal of forming eternal families, of building god-like characters, or of enlarging the intellect with a view to eternal truths, but the latest social-scientific strategies of "conflict resolution" that, for the project of *Proclaim Peace,* provide the actual content of BYU's declared mission "to assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life."

Conclusion: In the Beginning

Mason and Pulsipher's idea of peace is decidedly secular and utopian in its description and practical implications. They associate this idea with a Christian and Latter-day Saint vocabulary of faith and love, but in order to avoid absorption into a vocabulary and a worldview of secular-rationalist derivation, such ideas — as well as those of justice, peace, flourishing, human dignity, and so on — must always be informed by some understanding of the human and divine good that is grounded in scripture and prophecy. We must always remember our ultimate nature and keep an eye on our purpose of being.

The authors do not concern themselves at any length with such questions. For the most part, they simply assume an unproblematic fit between Restoration and secular-ideological understandings of human meaning or dignity or, rather, of the optimal non-violent regulation of societies. But their mostly implicit understanding of the ultimate meaning of our humanity comes to light in their first chapter, in a discussion of our beginnings as self-existing intelligences in a pre-mortal existence (p. 4). This discussion allows us a revealing peek at Mason and Pulsipher's deepest theological and philosophical premises.

For Mason and Pulsipher, the ultimate meaning of all things, the baseline reality that obtained "before the beginning," is "a universe

populated by human souls who are truly free" (p. 4). *Freedom*, as used here, has a radical meaning. The original condition that defines all purposes and possibilities in *Proclaim Peace* is the co-existence of "independent personalities," a kind of premortal anticipation of a modern rationalist state of nature in which "each soul chooses and acts within a universe populated with other free souls who are also choosing and acting" (p. 5). What ought these souls choose and how ought they act? For Mason and Pulsipher, there is no inherent purpose or substantive moral content to be found in this primordial condition. They acknowledge in passing that "God was and is 'greater' – more intelligent, more advanced, more perfect in personality and character — 'than they all'" (p. 4), but they find no fundamental guidance, no order of goodness, no rank in states of being, in this recognition of a "more advanced" God. Rather, their very understanding of what advancement or progress could possibly mean is subordinated to the logic of the radical freedom of independent beings that "are *constantly bumping up against and influencing one another"* (p. 5, emphasis added). Their primordial intelligences operate in a moral and teleological vacuum.

Mason and Pulsipher note that their interpretation of Joseph Smith's revelations "might seem like a libertarian paradise" (which is not a bad characterization), given that freedom, for them, is the fundamental ontological premise, one that provides no original and inherent purpose or limits. They add that this interpretation of beginnings "is in fact a web of profound interconnectivity and interdependence" (p. 5) — as if this were an alternative to the "libertarian paradise" interpretation. Extreme individualism and extreme connectivity or collectivism are two sides of the same coin. Mason and Pulsipher's primordial "before the beginning" is the mirror of a modern secular idea of a state of nature defined by its lack of any given or inherent order or purpose.

The only ethic that can be built on this foundation is one of the instrumental value of any remedies that evolve in the "constantly bumping up against and influencing one another" of these primordial intelligences, endowed as they are only with the right to their boundless freedom and not with any guiding purpose. The secular and instrumental tendency of Mason and Pulsipher's concept of peace, its ultimate default to the undefined claims of a human right to equal dignity, is predetermined by the priority they perceive in the realm of primordial souls — the amoral freedom of beings whose only purpose is to solve the problem of "constantly bumping up against and influencing one another." For the authors, peace is effectively defined by social

justice. Peace is not the soul's liberation from sin to attain a higher state of being. Rather, liberation from the injustice of inequality is their most fundamental meaning of peace. The effective priority of external to internal peace, of the social and political to the spiritual or soulful, operates at the deepest level of Mason and Pulsipher's theology.

To question the priorities implicit in the project of *Proclaim Peace* is in no way to imply that there is no value in many of the efforts and strategies that Mason and Pulsipher recommend. My point is rather to underscore the importance of establishing clear priorities and of upholding the primacy of spiritual peace to social peace. The eternal peace and growth offered by the gospel's promise of salvation and exaltation, through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, must not be reduced to the service of any secular project.

As a statement of the essential priorities we must preserve in our understanding and pursuit of peace, I conclude with Elder Russell M. Nelson's words:

> Now, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, what does the Lord expect of us? As a Church, we must "renounce war and proclaim peace." As individuals, we should "follow after the things which make for peace." We should be personal peacemakers. We should live peacefully—as couples, families, and neighbors. We should live by the Golden Rule. We have writings of the descendants of Judah as now merged with writings of the descendants of Ephraim. We should employ them and expand our circle of love to embrace the whole human family. We should bring divine love and revealed doctrines of restored religion to our neighbors and friends. We should serve them according to our abilities and opportunities. We should keep our principles on a high level and stand for the right. We should continue to gather scattered Israel from the four corners of the earth and offer the ordinances and covenants that seal families together forever. These blessings we are to bring to people of all nations.[27]



27. Russell M. Nelson, "Blessed are the Peacemakers," *Ensign*, November 2002, 41, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2002/11/blessed-are-the-peacemakers.

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Divine Council Directive Speech in Jacob 5: Collaborative Governance and Authorized Partnership in Zenos's Allegory of the Olive Tree

Stephen Kent Ehat

Abstract: *Christ the Lord—the Lord of the vineyard or the Son acting in his stead—both fulfills his promises and authorizes his servants to share in the work of saving the vineyard. Building on Brant Gardner's identification of promise/fulfillment pairs in Jacob 5, this study identifies a complementary literary-theological pattern of divine council directive speech acts. These imperatives and cohortatives ("Go and pluck," "Come, let us go down," "let us graft") not only announce divine intention but they commission, consult with, and mobilize covenant agents. Drawing on ancient Near Eastern divine council traditions, speech-act theory, and covenant formulary studies, the paper argues that the allegory presents the plan of salvation as collaborative governance rather than unilateral decree. The Lord directs, delegates, and labors alongside his servants, expanding the gathering of Israel from prophetic mission to collective effort and culminating in shared success. Jacob 5 affirms both divine reliability and covenant partnership: trust the Promisor and join the work.*

Brant Gardner's commentary on Jacob 5 has established essential literary-theological insights into the structure and function of Zenos's allegory of the olive tree. Gardner identifies what he terms "promise/fulfillment pairs" as a fundamental organizing principle throughout the chapter, observing that "the structure of the allegory creates multiple sets of promise/fulfillment pairs. The master declares

that he will take an action, then that action is accomplished."[1] This pattern, Gardner argues, serves dual purposes: it "advances the narrative" while simultaneously "emphasiz[ing] the faithfulness of Yahweh's promise/fulfillment."[2] Through repeated demonstrations that "what Yahweh says through his prophets will come to pass,"[3] the allegory establishes divine trustworthiness as its theological foundation.

Gardner explicitly highlights this structural feature at three key junctures in his commentary. First, analyzing Jacob 5:4–5, he notes the "mild emphasis in verses 4 and 5 on promise/ fulfillment. In verse 4 we have Yahweh's 'word,' the declaration of intent. In verse 5 we have the accomplishment of that intent. The explicit paralleling of intent/ fulfillment highlights Yahweh's trustworthiness."[4] This micro-level correspondence — divine declaration immediately followed by realized action — establishes a pattern that resonates throughout the text.

Second, at Jacob 5:15, Gardner broadens his observation to encompass the allegory's macro-structure, noting that "the structure of the allegory creates multiple sets of promise/fulfillment pairs. The master declares that he will take an action, then that action is accomplished. The repetition of the elements not only advances the narrative but also emphasizes the faithfulness of Yahweh's promise/fulfillment."[5] Here Gardner identifies the pattern as extending beyond individual verses, in order to structure entire narrative cycles, each labor phase in the vineyard recapitulating the promise-fulfillment dynamic.

Third, though Gardner does not explicitly use the term *promise/ fulfillment* in his discussion of Jacob 5:67–69, his commentary on the allegory's concluding implementation phase (verses 68–72) describes how the Lord's detailed restoration plan (verses 52–68) reaches fruition in executed action. This structural observation — that the allegory moves through declaration, planning, and implementation phases — demonstrates Gardner's recognition that narrative repetition serves theological purposes beyond mere literary ornamentation, representing what may be understood as the final major promise/fulfillment cycle.[6]

Gardner's structural analysis rests on solid foundations in ancient

1. Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 532.
2. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 532.
3. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 527.
4. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 527.
5. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 532.
6. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 548 (and generally 547–51).

Near Eastern and biblical literary scholarship. The promise/fulfillment pattern he identifies parallels what Old Testament scholars recognize in covenant formularies, where divine historical prologues (recounting fulfilled promises) establish the credibility necessary for covenant stipulations (commanding future action).[7] George E. Mendenhall's groundbreaking work on covenant forms in Israelite tradition demonstrates that ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaties[8] characteristically opened with historical prologues cataloging the suzerain's past beneficence, thereby establishing grounds for the vassal's trust in the sovereign and thus willingness to fulfill future obligations.[9] The vassal had an "obligation to *trust* in the benevolence of the sovereign."[10]

Gardner's observation that Jacob 5 employs this pattern suggests the allegory participates in broader ancient Near Eastern literary conventions. Jon D. Levenson's theological analysis of covenant relationship emphasizes that divine reliability, demonstrated through fulfilled promises, creates the conditions for human response and partnership.[11] The promise/fulfillment structure Gardner identifies thus serves not merely as literary device but also as theological argument: the Lord's demonstrated faithfulness across Israel's history (promises fulfilled) warrants trust in his future redemptive plans (promises yet to be fulfilled).

Beyond Gardner's specific contributions, scholarly work on Jacob 5 has illuminated multiple dimensions of the allegory's sophistication. Paul Y. Hoskisson's detailed analysis of the allegory's symbolic architecture argues for identifying the Lord of the vineyard as the Father and the servant as Christ, noting that "the working relationship between the Lord of the vineyard and the servant in the allegory accurately reflects the relationship between the Father and the Son, in that Christ does not act alone, but in all things follows the instructions

7. George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (1954): 58–59; see also 63-69; Dennis J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1972), 12–13; see also 4–5 for summary of the point as made by Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament,* vol. 1 (London, 1961).
8. A *suzerainty treaty* is a treaty between two political entities (such as sovereigns or nation-states) that establishes one of the political entities as a dependent to the other.
9. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," 69; see also 58–60 and 63–64.
10. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," 56.
11. Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 132–34, 140–43.

and example of the Father."[12] While Gardner remains somewhat more agnostic about precise identifications — viewing the servant more functionally as a literary device that enables the narrative action[13] — both scholars recognize that the master-servant dynamic structures the allegory's theological vision of collaborative divine work.

Gardner has explored how grafting imagery functions covenantally, with the incorporation of wild branches representing the adoption of the gentiles "into the Abrahamic covenant."[14] These scholars have established that Jacob 5's horticultural imagery operates simultaneously on botanical, historical, and theological registers.

Botanical scholarship has confirmed the allegory's technical accuracy. Wilford M. Hess, Daniel J. Fairbanks, John W. Welch, and Jonathan K. Driggs demonstrate that practices described in Jacob 5 — grafting wild olive shoots onto cultivated stock to rejuvenate roots, propagating olives from buried branches — while seemingly counterintuitive, reflect legitimate ancient oleicultural techniques.[15] This botanical plausibility, documented in ancient sources like Columella's *Rei Rusticæ*, strengthens arguments for the allegory's antiquity and suggests authorial familiarity with Mediterranean agricultural practices.[16]

The broader scholarly context for understanding Jacob 5 as participating in ancient literary traditions includes work on divine council motifs in Hebrew Bible and Second Temple literature. E. Theodore Mullen Jr.'s seminal study *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* notes that the celestial assembly "meets under the leadership of the high god" and the "lesser divinities who comprise

12. Paul Y. Hoskisson, "The Allegory of the Olive Tree in Jacob," in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob* 5, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Foundation for Apologetic Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1994), 72.
13. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 524–26 (esp. 525).
14. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 529.
15. Wilford M. Hess et al., "Botanical Aspects of Olive Culture Relevant to Jacob 5," in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994), 505–8.
16. Columella, Lucius Junius Moderatus, *Rei Rusticæ* [*On Agriculture*], Book 5 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1954), 84–87 (IX.16 ["It happens also frequently that, though the trees are thriving well, they fail to bear fruit. It is a good plan to bore them with a Gallic auger and to put tightly into the hole a green slip taken from a wild olive-tree; the result is that the tree, being as it were impregnated with fruitful offspring, becomes more productive"]); 91 (X.6 ["A tree which is ingrafted is more fruitful than one which is not . . . ."]).

the council receive the question from the deity. In the two Hebrew accounts, a member of the assembly volunteers to carry out the decree of the high god. In Micaiah's vision, it is a member of the heavenly entourage, 'the spirit' . . ." and "in Isaiah's vision, the prophet himself is commissioned by Yahweh to deliver the message of the council. In both, the council envoy is dispatched via the imperative 'Go!' . . . ."[17] Michael S. Heiser's exhaustive examination of divine council scenes in canonical and non-canonical Second Temple texts demonstrates the pervasiveness and enduring longevity of this even earlier motif, noting that the motif reflects that Yahweh's sovereignty is expressed through — not despite — his engagement with the divine council.[18]

Identifying Divine Council Directive Speech in Jacob 5

Building upon Gardner's promise/fulfillment analysis, this study identifies a complementary but distinct literary-theological pattern: what may be termed "divine council directive speech acts" throughout Jacob 5. These utterances differ fundamentally from the future-tense declarations Gardner analyzes. Where promise/fulfillment pairs demonstrate divine reliability through declaration and realization ("I will prune it" [v. 4] followed by "he pruned it" [v. 5]), divine council directives mobilize agency through authorization and commission. They constitute speech acts in which the Lord/master explicitly (1) authorizes a subordinate to act on his behalf, or (2) invites another being into shared divine labor.

This distinction, while subtle, proves theologically significant. Future-tense declarations are *predictive* and *monologic*: the Lord announces what he will do, and his word proves true through unilateral action.[19] Divine council directives are *performative* and *dialogic*:

17. E. Theodore Mullen Jr., *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 208–9.
18. Patrick D. Miller, "Cosmology and World Order in the Old Testament: The Divine Council as Cosmic-Political Symbol," in *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology: Collected Essays* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 431, quoted in Michael S. Heiser, *The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature* (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2004), chap. 2; see also chap. 4, Yahweh's "uncompromised dominion" over other gods and whose sovereignty remains intact while mediated through a council structure; and chap. 1, chap. 2, and chap. 6, viceregency; others operating under the authority of El.
19. In the appendix to this paper I account for all verbs in Jacob 5 (verses 1–77) that are morphologically present tense (e.g., "draweth," "cometh," "is,"

the Lord issues commands or invitations that presuppose the servant's capacity for independent or collaborative response. The former emphasizes divine sovereignty and faithfulness; the latter emphasizes covenant partnership and delegated authority.

Speech act theory, as developed by J. L. Austin and John R. Searle, provides analytical tools for distinguishing these utterance types.[20] Austin's foundational insight was that certain statements do not merely *describe* reality but *perform* actions—a judge saying "I pronounce you guilty" does not report a fact but enacts a legal reality. Searle's later work refined Austin's taxonomy of illocutionary acts. In his 1975 essay "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," Searle proposed five basic categories of illocutionary force: *representatives* (assertions, statements, and descriptions that commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition), *directives* (attempts to get the hearer to do something, including requests and commands), *commissives* (commitments to future action, such as promises and vows), *expressives* (expressions of psychological states, like thanking or apologizing), and *declarations* (utterances that bring about changes in institutional reality, such as appointing or marrying).[21] This classification system provides a more systematic framework for understanding the varieties of things we do with words, building on but significantly reorganizing Austin's original five categories of *verdictives*, *exercitives*, *commissives*, *behabitives*, and *expositives*.[22]

The allegorical discourse of Jacob 5 deploys multiple categories of illocutionary acts as defined by Searle's taxonomy. The Lord's future-tense declarations ("I will prune," "I will preserve," "I will lay up") function as commissives that commit the speaker to future action while simultaneously asserting divine intention and creating expectation of fulfillment.[23] The imperative utterances directed to the servant ("Go to,"

"bringeth," etc.), but semantically future—that is, the action they describe is not yet realized but imminent, often used in prophetic or prospective speech. This phenomenon—sometimes called the prophetic present, present of certainty, or futuristic present—is common in scriptural English modeled on the King James Bible. The appendix sets forth a list of such verbs in Jacob 5, each followed by its verse reference(s) and a brief justification showing why the verb, though grammatically present, is contextually future-oriented.

20. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 6–7.
21. John R. Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," *Language in Society* 5, no. 1 (1976): 1–23.
22. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 150–63.
23. Jacob 5:4, 5:7, 5:8, 5:11, 5:28, 5:50, 5:69, 5:71. On *commissives* as

"Wherefore, go to," "Go and pluck") function as directives that attempt to get the hearer to perform specific horticultural actions.[24] The cohortative constructions ("Come, let us go down," "let us go to") also function as directives but employ a more inclusive first-person plural form that invites collaborative action rather than commanding unilateral obedience.[25] The Lord's evaluative statements ("it grieveth me," "the tree profiteth me nothing") function as expressives that articulate psychological states of disappointment or satisfaction with the vineyard's condition.[26] Together, these varied speech acts create a discourse that is simultaneously descriptive (reporting the state of the vineyard), directive (commanding remedial action), commissive (pledging future intervention), and expressive (revealing divine pathos).

Table 1 catalogs all divine council directive speech acts in Jacob 5, excluding statements that merely announce future divine action without directing another agent.

Table 1. Divine council directive speech acts in Jacob 5.

Verse	Directive (Quotation)	Type	Agent(s) Addressed	Nature and Function
5:7	"*Go and pluck* the branches from a wild olive-tree, and *bring* them hither unto me"	Imperative commission	The Servant	Direct command from the master to the servant to act on divine authority — classic commissioning formula.[27]

commitments to future action, see Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," 11–12.

24. Jacob 5:8, 5:27, 5:62, 5:63. On *directives* as attempts to get the hearer to do something, see Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," 13–14.
25. Jacob 5:27, 5:29, 5:47, 5:62. The *cohortative* differs from the *imperative* in presupposing shared agency; see Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 572–75.
26. Jacob 5:7, 5:11, 5:32, 5:46, 5:47, 5:51. On *expressives* as articulations of psychological states, see Searle, "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts," 15.
27. Norman Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 77 (1965): 297–323.

Verse	Directive (Quotation)	Type	Agent(s) Addressed	Nature and Function
5:7	"and *we will pluck* off those main branches. . . and *we will cast* them into the fire"	Cohortative council summons	The Servant (joint action)	Following the lone commission, the Lord invites the servant to participate collaboratively in removing corrupted branches, establishing a bilateral partnership model.[28]
5:9	"*Take thou* the branches of the wild olive-tree, and *graft* them in"	Imperative commission	The Servant	Authorizes the servant to perform covenantal grafting; divine power delegated.[29]
5:12	"*Go thy way; watch* the tree, and *nourish* it, according to my words"	Imperative commission	The Servant	Ongoing stewardship order; parallels prophetic watchman commissions (cf. Ezek 3:17).[30]
5:15	"*Come, let us go down* into the vineyard, that *we may labor* in the vineyard"	Cohortative council summons	The Servant (joint action)	Invitation to joint descent and labor, identical to the divine-council plural of Gen 11:7 "let us go down."[31]
5:19	"*Come, let us go* to the nethermost part of the vineyard, and *behold* . . ."	Cohortative council summons	The Servant (joint action)	Joint investigative mission; inspection as shared divine work.[32]
5:29	"*Come, let us go down* into the vineyard, that *we may labor* again in the vineyard"	Cohortative council summons	The Servant (joint action)	Eschatological repetition of the council descent formula.[33]

28. Compare this with Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 141.
29. Moshe Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90 (1970): 184–203, wit-resources.s3.amazonaws.com/Grants-and-covenant.pdf.
30. Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, Anchor Bible 22 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 78–79.
31. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 49–50.
32. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch, eds., *The Allegory of the Olive Tree* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994), 11–14.
33. Welch, "The Olive Tree and the Work of God," 6–8.

Verse	Directive (Quotation)	Type	Agent(s) Addressed	Nature and Function
5:33	"*What shall we do* unto the tree, that I may preserve again good fruit thereof unto mine own self?"	Deliberative council inquiry	The Servant	The Lord invites counsel from his servant — true deliberative speech within a divine assembly.[34]
5:38	"*Let us go down* into the nethermost parts of the vineyard, and *behold* . . ."	Cohortative council summons	The Servant (joint action)	Renewed joint investigation; further council participation.[35]
5:49	"*Let us go to* and *hew down* the trees . . . and *cast* them into the fire"	Cohortative council summons (judgment)	The Servant (joint action)	Proposal of shared execution of judgment, subsequently negotiated by the servant.[36]
5:50–51	"*Spare it* a little longer." / "Yea, *I will spare* it . . ."	Intercessory petition + ratified directive	The Servant petitions; the Lord issues a decree of stay	The servant petitions; the Lord issues a decree of stay — paralleling intercessory negotiation scenes (Gen 18).[37]
5:52	"*let us take* of the branches . . . and *let us graft* them . . . and *let us pluck* . . ."	Cohortative council summons (restoration)	The Servant (joint action)	Collaborative restoration plan — joint action framed from the outset.[38]
5:57	"*Ye shall graft* according to that which I have said"	Imperative commission to plural agents	The Servant (and implied additional servants)	Expands delegated authority to plural servants — divine labor bureaucratized.[39]
5:61	"*Go to, and call servants,* that *we may labor* diligently . . . *that we may prepare* the way"	Imperative + cohortative	The Servant → recruiting additional laborers	Recruitment directive initiating final cooperative phase.[40]

34. Heiser, *Divine Council*, 170–74.
35. Ricks and Welch, *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 16–18.
36. Ricks and Welch, *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 19–21.
37. Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 68–71.
38. Szink and Welch, "Zenos and the Allegory," 783–85.
39. Welch, "The Olive Tree and the Work of God," 12–14.
40. Welch, "The Olive Tree and the Work of God," 14–16.

Verse	Directive (Quotation)	Type	Agent(s) Addressed	Nature and Function
5:62	"*Let us go to* and *labor* with our might this last time"	Cohortative council summons	The Servant and servants (plural)	Final collective descent; climactic "last-time" council action.[41]
5:63	"*Graft in* the branches; *begin* at the last . . . and *dig about* the trees . . ."	Imperative commission to plural agents	Servants (plural)	Technical directions for restorative labor.[42]
5:64	"*Dig about* them, and *prune* them, and *dung* them once more"	Imperative commission	Servants (plural)	Final cultivation order anticipating imminent harvest.[43]
5:65	"*Ye shall clear away* the branches which bring forth bitter fruit . . . *ye shall not clear away* the bad . . . all at once"	Imperative commission with restriction	Servants (plural)	Conditional pruning instructions — governing how subordinates must act.[44]
5:66	"*Ye shall clear away* the bad according as the good shall grow . . ."	Imperative commission	Servants (plural)	Final operational order completing delegated purgation.
5:71	"*Go to, and labor* in the vineyard, with your might."	Imperative commission	Servants (plural)	Broad authorization of many laborers — culminating council deployment.[45]

Table 1 demonstrates that across Jacob 5's 77 verses, at least twenty distinct instances of divine council directive speech punctuate the narrative, creating what may be termed a "working divine council," dramatized through horticultural allegory. These directives fall into two primary grammatical-theological categories:

Imperative Commissions (entries 1, 3, 4, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20): The Lord issues direct commands to the servant or servants, typically using second-person imperatives ("Go," "Take," "Graft," "Dig"). These utterances authorize specific agents to perform specific tasks, establishing hierarchical delegation. They parallel biblical commissioning narratives where Yahweh dispatches prophets or angels:

41. Welch, "The Olive Tree and the Work of God," 14–16.
42. Ricks and Welch, *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 27–29.
43. Ricks and Welch, *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 29–31.
44. Ricks and Welch, *Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 29–31.
45. Welch, "The Olive Tree and the Work of God," 14–16.

Isaiah's "Go, and tell this people" (Isa 6:9), or angelic missions throughout Scripture.[46] The imperative mode asserts divine sovereignty while simultaneously empowering human agency — the servant acts *because* commanded, yet acts with genuine delegated authority.

Cohortative Council Summonses (entries 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 15): The Lord invites joint action using first-person plural cohortatives ("Come, let us go down," "let us graft"). These utterances presuppose shared participation rather than unilateral command. Ancient Near Eastern and biblical scholars have long recognized cohortative plurals as characteristic of divine council scenes — Genesis 1:26 ("Let us make man in our image"), Genesis 11:7 ("Come, let us go down and confound their language") — where deity addresses heavenly assembly or angelic retinue.[47] While monotheistic reinterpretation often understands such plurals as "deliberative" (God consulting with himself) or as addressing angels, the grammatical structure preserves earlier polytheistic patterns of divine assembly deliberation.[48]

Jacob 5 consistently employs this cohortative formula at narrative turning points: the initial descent for labor (v. 15), the subsequent inspection tours (vv. 19, 29, 38), the crisis-point deliberation over judgment (v. 49), and the climactic restoration planning (v. 52). The repetition creates a narrative rhythm: divine descent → inspection → deliberation → renewed action. This rhythm mirrors divine council patterns documented in texts, such as 1 Kings 22:19–22, where Yahweh consults his heavenly assembly about how to accomplish a divine purpose, receives proposals, and dispatches a spirit to execute the decision.[49]

The single deliberative inquiry (entry 8) — "What shall we do unto the tree?" — represents the most explicit instance of council consultation. The Lord does not rhetorically ask himself but genuinely invites the servant's counsel. That the servant responds with analysis (vv. 34, 48) and that the Lord modifies his initial judgment accordingly (vv. 50–51) demonstrates functional rather than merely formal consultation. This pattern finds biblical parallel in Genesis 18:23–33, where Abraham negotiates with Yahweh over Sodom's fate, and Exodus 32:9–14, where Moses persuades Yahweh to relent from destroying Israel.[50]

46. Norman Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 77 (1965): 297–323.
47. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 47–52; Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 25–28.
48. Heiser, *Divine Council*, 43–44.
49. Heiser, *Divine Council*, 170–74.
50. See Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 68–71.

These "intercession" scenes troubled later theological interpreters who emphasized divine immutability, but they preserve ancient covenant theology's assumption that divine governance involves genuine responsiveness to righteous intercession.[51]

The intercessory sequence in verses 50–51 warrants particular attention. When the Lord proposes wholesale destruction ("Let us go to and hew down the trees," v. 49), the servant petitions for delay ("Spare it a little longer," v. 50), and the Lord consents ("Yea, I will spare it a little longer," v. 51). This exchange exhibits classic intercessory structure: (1) divine judgment announced, (2) subordinate plea for mercy, (3) divine relenting. The servant's successful intercession demonstrates that divine council participation involves more than mechanical execution of commands — it includes advocacy, counsel, and partnership in shaping (not merely implementing) divine policy. Walter Brueggemann's analysis of prophetic intercession emphasizes that such scenes dramatize covenant relationship as "dialogic rather than unilateral," with divine sovereignty expressed through responsiveness rather than rigidity.[52]

Theological Function: Divine Council Directives and Collaborative Salvation

The twenty divine council directive speech acts identified above perform multiple theological functions within Jacob 5's allegorical architecture:

Revelation of collaborative governance

Unlike future-tense declarations that assert *what* God will unilaterally accomplish, these directives reveal *how* God chooses to accomplish his purposes — through authorized partnership. The Lord of the vineyard possesses absolute sovereignty; he could theoretically execute all vineyard work himself. Yet repeatedly he commissions ("Go and pluck"), invites ("Come, let us go down"), consults ("What shall we do?"), and delegates ("Ye shall graft"). This pattern presents divine governance as hierarchical yet collaborative, sovereign yet relational.

God is willing to fulfill his covenant through interdependent collaborative labor, reflecting a theology of covenant participation; his

51. Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 45–59.

52. Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 68–71.

children are invited to become laborers with him (1 Corinthians 3:9). His sons and daughters participate genuinely (not merely symbolically) in redemptive work. The divine council directives in Jacob 5 narratively enact this theology: servants are not passive recipients of salvation, but active participants in its administration.

This theological vision contrasts with certain streams of Christian soteriology, emphasizing monergistic salvation (God alone acts) versus synergistic salvation (God and humans cooperate). Jacob 5's allegory clearly operates within a synergistic framework, but of a distinctive kind. The Lord initiates, authorizes, provides resources, and guides; the servant(s) cannot act except as commissioned. Yet within that commission, servants exercise genuine agency—they inspect, report, counsel, intercede, and labor. The pattern resonates with covenant theology's emphasis on conditionality: God's promises are sure, but their realization involves human response and participation.[53]

Structuring of the plan of salvation through directive cycles

The divine council directives structure the allegory's temporal progression, marking distinct dispensational phases:

- **Phase 1: Crisis Intervention (vv. 7–12)**: Early directives focus on emergency measures—grafting, pruning, nourishing. The imperative commissions predominate, while also establishing the servant's authorized role.
- **Phase 2: Inspection and Assessment (vv. 15, 19, 29, 38)**: Cohortative summonses ("Come, let us go down") initiate repeated inspection tours. These "descent" formulas mark temporal progression ("a long time passed away," v. 15; "a long time had passed away," v. 29) while maintaining divine-human partnership throughout.
- **Phase 3: Crisis and Intercession (vv. 33, 49–51)**: Deliberative inquiry and intercessory petition occur at narrative crisis, when universal corruption threatens universal destruction. The Lord's receptivity to the servant's plea preserves possibility for Phase 4.
- **Phase 4: Eschatological Restoration (vv. 52, 61–71)**: Restoration planning (v. 52's triple cohortative: "let us take . . . let us graft . . . let us pluck") expands into recruitment

53. Dennis J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 157–78.

> of additional servants (v. 61) and culminates in collective deployment (vv. 62, 71). The expansion from singular servant to plural servants signals eschatological intensification — the "last time" requires mobilization of many laborers.

This four-phase structure maps onto salvation-historical periodization: (1) prophetic ministry addressing apostasy, (2) patient divine oversight across dispensations, (3) pivotal intercession preventing premature judgment, (4) eschatological gathering and final harvest. Each phase employs distinctive directive speech patterns, suggesting that the mode of divine-human interaction adapts to covenantal circumstances.

The repeated "Come, let us go down" formula (vv. 15, 19, 29, 38) deserves particular attention. In Genesis 11:7, Yahweh says "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language" — a statement traditionally understood as divine address to the heavenly court.[54] The verbal parallel between Genesis 11:7 and Jacob 5's repeated descents invites reading Jacob 5's master-servant relationship through the lens of divine council theology. Just as Yahweh descends with angelic retinue to execute judgment at Babel, so the Lord of the vineyard descends with his servant to execute salvific labor in the vineyard.

This "descent" motif carries rich theological freight. In the Hebrew Bible, divine descent often signals theophanic intervention — Yahweh descends at Sinai (Exod 19:18–20), descends to investigate Sodom (Gen 18:21), descends to see Babel's tower (Gen 11:5). Descent bridges transcendence and immanence, signaling divine engagement with earthly affairs. Jacob 5's reiterated descents present the plan of salvation as repeated divine interventions, each requiring the Lord's personal engagement with his vineyard's condition. Yet unlike Genesis's solitary or angel-accompanied descents, Jacob 5's descents are consistently collaborative: "Come, let us. . . ." The servant is not merely witness but partner in investigative and redemptive labor.

Modeling of authorized ministry and delegated priesthood

The progressive expansion of authorized agents — from singular servant (vv. 7–40) to recruited plural servants (vv. 61, 70–71) — models the nature of authorized ministry. John W. Welch observes that the multiplication of servants in the allegory's climactic phase typologically prefigures latter-day missionary expansion: "These are the missionaries

54. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 49–50.

[in] the latter day, both those called formally and those whose efforts effect missionary work without the formal calling."[55] The transition from one servant to many servants narratively enacts the democratization of covenant responsibility in the "last time" (vv. 62-64, 71, 75-76).

Yet this expansion operates under strict divine authorization. The servants in verse 61 are not self-appointed volunteers, but divinely summoned ("call servants") and divinely commissioned ("Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your might," v. 71). The Lord retains supervisory authority — "the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them" (v. 72) — even as he multiplies laborers. This balance between delegation and divine oversight models priesthood theology: authority to act derives from commission, not from inherent human capacity, yet commissioned servants genuinely participate in (not merely symbolically represent) divine work.

The allegory thus presents what might be termed "concentric authorization": the Lord authorizes the servant, who recruits additional servants (v. 70: "the servant went and did as the Lord had commanded him, and brought other servants"), who labor under both the servant's and the Lord's direction. This multi-tiered structure parallels hierarchical priesthood organization, where authority flows from God through prophetic leadership to local ministers, all working collaboratively toward common purposes.

The promise of shared joy in harvest (v. 75: "behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard") confirms that the servants' labor is not merely instrumental but genuinely covenantal — they become partners, not just employees, entitled to share in salvific success. This eschatological vision of shared divine joy recalls Jesus's parable of laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1–16), where all receive full reward regardless of hours worked, and echoes the promise that "if it so be that you should labor all your days . . . and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:15–16). The theological principle is consistent: those whom God commissions to participate in redemptive labor share in redemptive joy.

Dramatization of divine patience and responsive judgment

The interplay between the Lord's judgmental impulses and the servant's intercessory pleas (most explicit in vv. 26–27, 49–51) dramatizes

55. Welch, "The Olive Tree and the Work of God," 14–16.

divine patience as dialogically constituted. When the Lord proposes destroying unfruitful branches (v. 26: "Pluck off the branches that have not brought forth good fruit, and cast them into the fire"), the servant pleads for delay (v. 27: "Let us prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it a little longer"), and the Lord consents (v. 28: "the Lord of the vineyard and the servant . . . did nourish all the fruit of the vineyard"). The pattern repeats at the allegory's crisis: proposed destruction (v. 49), intercessory petition (v. 50), and divine relenting (v. 51).

This recurring pattern cannot be dismissed as mere literary device. As Gardner himself acknowledges, while the Lord/servant relationship functions as a literary mechanism in the allegory, it nevertheless communicates theological truth about the way the Lord works with his children.[56] The literary structure encodes theological conviction: divine judgment is not mechanical nor inevitable, but responsive to righteous intercession. This accords with broader biblical patterns of prophetic intercession, where Abraham, Moses, and others successfully petition God to relent from judgment (Genesis 18:23–33; Exodus 32:9–14). Walter Brueggemann's analysis of prophetic imagination emphasizes that intercessory scenes reveal God's responsiveness to persuasion as a feature rather than weakness of covenant relationship. According to Brueggemann, the prophet's capacity to intercede demonstrates God's covenantal commitments to engage in genuine dialogue with covenant partners, rather than exercising dictatorial control.[57] Jacob 5's repeated intercessions narratively enact this theology, presenting divine patience as emerging from divine-human dialogue rather than as unilateral divine attribute.

The allegory thus answers potential theodicy questions. Why does God permit evil to persist? Why does judgment delay? The narrative answer: because authorized servants petition for mercy, and the Lord honors covenant partnership sufficiently to grant delay. This theological vision resonates with 2 Peter 3:9's claim that "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise; but is longsuffering . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Jacob 5 dramatizes longsuffering as partly (though not entirely) constituted through responsive engagement with intercessory agents.

56. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 525–26, 548–49.
57. Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*, 68–71.

Comparison with Gardner's Promise/Fulfillment Analysis

Gardner's identification of promise/fulfillment pairs and the present identification of divine council directive speech acts represent complementary analyses illuminating different facets of Jacob 5's literary-theological architecture. Both patterns structure the narrative; both reinforce covenant theology; but they operate on different axes and emphasize different aspects of divine character and human role.

Similarities

Gardner's pattern and my pattern feature four similarities:

- **Identification of Structural Repetition as Theologically Significant.** Gardner observes that the repetition of the promise/fulfillment pairs "not only advances the narrative but also emphasizes the faithfulness of Yahweh's promise/fulfillment," offering theological truths about divine faithfulness.[58] Similarly, divine council directives structure narrative progression while modeling collaborative governance. Both analyses resist treating repetition as mere stylistic flourish, instead recognizing it as theological argument.
- **Emphasis on Divine Reliability.** Gardner's pattern demonstrates that "what Yahweh says through his prophets will come to pass."[59] Divine council directives similarly demonstrate reliability — not of prediction, but of authorization. When the Lord commands "Go and pluck" (v. 7), the servant obeys and the action occurs (v. 10). When the Lord invites "Come, let us go down" (v. 15), the collaborative descent occurs (v. 16). Both patterns establish that divine word — whether declarative or directive — proves efficacious.
- **Operation Across the Allegory's Temporal Expanse.** Gardner notes promise/fulfillment pairs occurring at multiple scales — from immediate verse-to-verse correspondence (vv. 4–5) to multi-verse narrative arcs (vv. 8–9, 35–36, 75). Divine council directives similarly span the allegory, from early crisis intervention (v. 7) through repeated inspection tours (vv. 15, 29, 38) to eschatological mobilization (vv. 61–71). Both patterns structure not just isolated passages but the allegory's comprehensive narrative architecture.

58. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 532.
59. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 527.

- **Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Literary Conventions.** Gardner's pattern parallels covenant formulary structures where suzerain's past actions (historical prologue) warrant future obligations (stipulations).[60] Divine council directives parallel ancient Near Eastern divine assembly texts where supreme deity consults subordinate divine beings before dispatching them to execute divine will.[61] Both patterns suggest Jacob 5 participates in broader ancient literary traditions.

Differences

Gardner's pattern and my pattern feature five differences:

- **Declarative vs. Directive Speech.** Gardner's pattern focuses on statements about what God *will* do and observations that God *did* it — declarative speech about divine action. Divine council directives are not declarations but commands or invitations — directive speech mobilizing others' action. The difference is between "I will prune" (declaration) and "Go and pluck" (directive), between promise and commission.
- **Monergistic vs. Synergistic Emphasis.** Gardner's pattern emphasizes divine monergism — God's capacity to unilaterally fulfill what he promises. "What the Lord says through his prophets will come to pass," primarily through divine action. Divine council directives emphasize synergism — God's choice to accomplish purposes through commissioned partnership. The theological emphasis shifts from "God is faithful to act" to "God authorizes others to act with him."
- **Reliability vs. Relationality.** Gardner's pattern establishes divine trustworthiness through fulfilled predictions — proving God reliable. Divine council directives establish covenant partnership through shared labor — proving God relational. Both are covenantal virtues, but they address different aspects of divine character: faithfulness (God does what he says) versus condescension or cooperation (God works with others rather than alone).

60. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," 58–59, see also 64 and 69; McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant*, 12–13.
61. Mullen, *Divine Council*, 209–41; Heiser, *Divine Council*, 41–48.

- **Temporal Orientation.** Promise/fulfillment pairs orient temporally around the promise-to-fulfillment arc, emphasizing the future's conformity to announced divine intention. Divine council directives orient around the authorization-to-execution arc, emphasizing present empowerment for immediate obedience. Promise/fulfillment looks forward; directive/execution looks to responsive action.
- **Human Agency.** In promise/fulfillment pairs, human agency is not thematized — God announces, God fulfills, emphasis falls on divine sovereignty. In divine council directives, human agency becomes essential — servants must respond to commission, exercise judgment in execution, and even counsel the Lord. The servant becomes active covenant partner rather than passive beneficiary of divine promise.

Integrated reading

These patterns function hierarchically: Gardner's promise/fulfillment structure establishes the theological foundation (divine reliability through fulfilled declarations), upon which the divine council directive structure builds the ecclesiological and soteriological superstructure (authorized human participation in divine work). The Lord's fulfilled promises create conditions of trust necessary for servants to respond confidently to directives. This integration reflects what Old Testament scholars identify in covenant formularies, where divine historical prologue (recounting fulfilled promises) precedes stipulations (commanding future action).[62]

Consider Jacob 5:4–5 through both lenses. Gardner reads verse 4's "I will prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it" (promise) as being fulfilled in verse 5's "he pruned it, and digged about it, and nourished it" (fulfillment), thus demonstrating divine reliability. Reading through the directive lens adds dimension: verse 4's declaration of intent creates the context for verse 12's subsequent directive to the servant: "go thy way; watch the tree, and nourish it, according to my words." The Lord's demonstrated capacity to nurture the tree (promise fulfilled, vv. 4–5) authorizes the servant to continue that nurturing

62. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms," 50–76; McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant*, 27–51.

work (directive given, v. 12). Divine reliability (Gardner's emphasis) grounds delegated authority (present emphasis).

Similarly, the allegory's climactic restoration phase (vv. 52–74) exhibits both patterns. The Lord announces restoration plans (promise: "let us take of the branches . . . and let us graft them," vv. 52–54), which are then executed (fulfillment: "they took from the natural tree . . . and grafted," vv. 55–56). This exemplifies Gardner's pattern. But the execution occurs through commissioned servants' labor (directive: "Graft in the branches . . . dig about the trees," v. 63; "Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your might," v. 71; fulfillment: "the servants did go and labor with their mights," v. 72). The Lord's reliable word (promise/fulfillment) is enacted through authorized partnership (directive/execution).

The two patterns thus present complementary dimensions of covenant theology. Gardner's promise/fulfillment pairs demonstrate *that* God is trustworthy — what he says will occur, does occur. Divine council directives demonstrate *how* God proves trustworthy — often by empowering servants to participate in fulfilling divine purposes. Together they yield a comprehensive model of divine-human relationship balancing sovereignty and partnership, monergism and synergism, declaration and authorization.

This integrated reading illuminates Jacob 5's answer to Jacob's originating question (Jacob 4:17): "how is it possible that these, after having rejected the sure foundation, can ever build upon it, that it may become the head of their corner?" The answer emerges through both patterns. Promise/fulfillment demonstrates God's unwavering commitment across Israel's apostasy cycles — patient persistence guarantees eventual restoration. Divine council directives demonstrate the mechanism of restoration — through authorized servants (prophets, missionaries, covenant Israel) who labor under commission to gather scattered branches. Rejection becomes redeemed not through divine fiat alone but through divinely authorized human participation in gathering, grafting, and nurturing work.

Divine Council Motifs in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Context

Understanding divine council directive speech in Jacob 5 requires situating it within broader ancient Near Eastern and biblical divine council traditions. The concept of a divine assembly where supreme deity presides over subordinate divine beings is well-attested across

ancient Near Eastern cultures and appears in adapted forms throughout Hebrew Bible and First Temple and Second Temple literature. The most ancient and explicit examples come from Ugaritic mythology of the late Bronze Age, where the god El, the benevolent and patriarchal "Father of Years," presides over a council of lesser deities, the *bn ʾil* or "sons of God."[63] This council was familial, juridical, and administrative: El is portrayed as an aged patriarch and judge, seated amid the gods, who deliberate on matters of cosmic order, kingship, and destiny.[64] From his cosmic mountain palace, the divine king issued decrees with global effect — "From his mountain, the god issued imperatives, instructions, and judgments" — enforced through heavenly messengers.[65] This model presumes a fully polytheistic cosmos composed of a senior high god, his consort (Athirat/Asherah[66]), and a retinue of subordinate gods, providing the essential cultural and literary backdrop against which the earliest Israelite conceptions of Yahweh must be understood.[67]

Ugaritic and Canaanite divine council traditions

Ancient Ugaritic literature from Late Bronze Age Syria (ca. 1400–1200 BCE) preserves the earliest known texts that explicitly portray a heavenly council of gods. These tablets describe *El* presiding over an assembly of divine beings — called *bn ilm* ("sons of El") or *pḫr mʿd* ("assembly of the council") — who deliberate, decree, and dispatch

63. Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 44.
64. Mullen, *Divine Council*, 217.
65. John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 119.
66. Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 194–200; Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt, "'His Secret is with the Righteous': Instructional Wisdom in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 66 (2025): 437–86, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/his-secret-is-with-the-righteous-instructional-wisdom-in-the-book-of-mormon; Samuel Zinner, "'Zion; and 'Jerusalem' as Lady Wisdom in Moses 7 and Nephi's Tree of Life Vision," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 12 (2014): 281–323, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/zion-and-jerusalem-as-lady-wisdom-in-moses-7-and-nephis-tree-of-life-vision.
67. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 52.

messengers to carry out divine decisions.[68] In the *Baal Cycle*, the council authorizes Baal's kingship and commissions divine envoys to implement its decrees—a sequence of assembly → deliberation → decree → dispatch.[69] E. Theodore Mullen's foundational monograph synthesizes this technical vocabulary across Ugaritic and Hebrew sources, while Mark S. Smith's editions of the *Baal Cycle* highlight the same narrative logic: the high god convenes the council, deliberates policy, and then sends agents to execute the decision.[70]

Latter-day Saint thought does not view the Ugaritic material as the source of the biblical council, but as an ancient witness of a premortal, revealed reality. Joseph Smith taught of a "council of the Gods" that deliberated "before the world was."[71] The Book of Abraham describes "the noble and great ones" assembling in the premortal realm and participating in decisions regarding the Creation (Abraham 3:22–28). Doctrine and Covenants 121:32 likewise refers to decrees issued "in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was." Thus, LDS theology does not deny the comparative evidence; it instead explains why divine council ideology appears in disparate ancient cultures at all—as fragmentary memory of an actual premortal council.

The Divine Council in the Hebrew Bible

Biblical writers preserve the council structure but reconfigure its content, centering Yahweh as sole sovereign. Mark S. Smith notes that Israelite religion functioned much like a typical West Semitic religion, while gradually reinterpreting its inherited divine council language through the lens of exclusive Yahwistic worship.[72] Psalm 82 depicts Yahweh presiding in a divine assembly: "God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment."[73] Other psalms refer to the *bĕnê ʾēlîm* ("sons of gods," Psalms 29:1; 89:7) and the "assembly of the holy ones" (Psalm 89:6), terms interpreted by

68. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 48–54.
69. Mullen, *Divine Council*, 209–26; Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), introduction to KTU/CAT 1.3–1.4.
70. Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vols. 1–2 (Leiden: Brill, 1994–2009).
71. Joseph Smith, *King Follett Discourse*, April 7, 1844, josephsmithpapers.org/site/accounts-of-the-king-follett-sermon.
72. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 150.
73. Psalm 82:1. See also Heiser, "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature," 38.

scholars as referring to heavenly beings with divine status.[74] Patrick D. Miller identifies consistent elements matching the Ugaritic pattern: Yahweh enthroned, heavenly beings present, deliberation over earthly affairs, decree, and commissioning.[75]

Several biblical texts mirror the council pattern:

- **Genesis 1:26.** "Let *us* make man in *our* image." The plural is best read as Yahweh addressing his heavenly council.[76] Smith argues that while the Priestly source is monotheistic, it "acknowledges the heavenly host without compromising monotheism."[77]
- **Genesis 11:7.** "Come, let *us* go down . . ." Yahweh addresses assembled divine beings before dispersing nations.
- **1 Kings 22:19–22.** Micaiah sees Yahweh enthroned, asking, "Who will entice Ahab?" A spirit proposes a plan; Yahweh approves and sends him. This is the clearest biblical deliberation → proposal → commissioning narrative.[78]
- **Isaiah 6:8.** "Whom shall I send, and who will go for *us*?" A council setting frames Isaiah's prophetic commissioning.
- **Job 1–2.** The *bĕnê ʾelohim* present themselves before Yahweh. A council member proposes a test; Yahweh authorizes execution with limits.[79]

Textual criticism reveals that these council passages sometimes underwent later **monotheizing revision**. Deuteronomy 32:8, in its oldest form (Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint), states that Elyon ("the Most High") divided the nations according to the "sons of God"—a tiered council—later altered in the Masoretic Text to "sons of Israel."[80]

LDS scholarship affirms the scholarly consensus on the divine council and insists that biblical depictions are genuine windows into

74. Charles John Ellicott, *An Old Testament Commentary for English Readers* (London: Cassell, 1882), 126; Patrick D. Miller, "The Divine Council and the Prophetic Call to War," *Vetus Testamentum* 18, no. 1 (1968): 102.
75. Miller, "Cosmology and World Order," 430–33.
76. Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 41–43, 52, 56, 62, 112, 233n1.
77. Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 25–28.
78. Miller, "Cosmology and World Order," 430–33.
79. Miller, "Cosmology and World Order," 430–33.
80. Michael S. Heiser, "Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (2001): 60–65; Julie Faith Parker, "Deuteronomy 32:8–9 and the Sons of God," in *My So-Called Biblical Life* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 52.

premortal heavenly governance. Smoot frames Israelite religion as monolatrous — one God worshiped, but a real plurality acknowledged.[81] Bokovoy argues that biblical council scenes match the premortal council described in Restoration scripture.[82] Thus, Ugarit → Bible continuity is accepted, but LDS theology clarifies that the council did not originate in Canaanite polytheism — rather, Canaanite texts reflect a shared, older, revealed pattern.

Divine Council and covenant administration (Jacob 5)

Mullen identifies five structural elements of the ANE council: (1) supreme deity enthroned, (2) assembled subordinates, (3) deliberation over a problem, (4) decree or decision, and (5) dispatch or commissioning.[83] Jacob 5 preserves elements 2–5. Although the allegory omits explicit throne imagery, the servant(s) are already present with the Lord and are consulted before action, functionally corresponding to the "assembled subordinates" of classical council scenes. The Lord then engages in deliberation, often expressed through deliberative inquiry ("What shall we do unto the tree?," v. 33), issues a shared decree ("let us graft . . . let us take," v. 52), and finally commissions action ("they went down," vv. 38–39). The questions in Jacob 5 are therefore not a separate structural element but rhetorical markers of the deliberative phase itself.

Jacob 5 therefore functions as a divine-council narrative, portraying the servant not as a rival god but as a covenant partner. Jon D. Levenson argues that covenant in the Hebrew Bible involves divine self-limitation and genuine reciprocity — God binds himself to respond to his partner.[84] Covenant thus creates a bilateral relationship of mutual obligation.[85] Jacob 5 dramatizes that reality: the Lord proposes destroying the vineyard (v. 49), the servant petitions mercy, and

81. Stephen O. Smoot, "The Divine Council in the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 27 (2017) 1–4, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-divine-council-in-the-hebrew-bible-and-the-book-of-mormon.
82. David E. Bokovoy, "'Ye Really *Are* Gods': A Response to Michael Heiser concerning the LDS Use of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011* 19, no. 1 (2007), scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol19/iss1/15/.
83. Mullen, *Divine Council*, 205–7, 226–33.
84. Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 140–41.
85. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*, 121–48.

the Lord relents (v. 50). Thus, the servant's counsel — and the Lord's acceptance of the counsel — changes the outcome. The Book of Mormon stands out as an ancient scripture in which a divine council narrative unfolds around covenant administration, and Jacob 5 aligns naturally with the ancient premortal-council model: the Lord (Jehovah/Christ) consults a servant who represents premortal agents commissioned to enact divine work.[86] Council structure becomes covenantal partnership. This makes Jacob 5 not merely a vineyard allegory but a window into how God governs: through council, collaboration, and covenant.

Speech Act Theory and Directive Discourse

Analyzing divine council directives in Jacob 5 benefits from speech act theory's analytical categories. J. L. Austin's foundational *How to Do Things with Words* distinguishes *constative* utterances (describing states of affairs) from *performative* utterances (enacting realities through speech itself).[87] Austin's student John R. Searle refines this taxonomy, proposing five categories of speech acts: *representatives* (assertions), *directives* (attempts to get hearer to do something), *commissives* (commitments to future action), *expressives* (expressing psychological states), and *declarations* (bringing about correspondence between propositional content and reality).[88]

Divine council directives in Jacob 5 function primarily as directives in Searle's taxonomy — illocutionary acts whose "point or purpose is to get the hearer to do something."[89] The *imperative commissions* ("Go and pluck," "Take thou," "Graft in") explicitly aim to produce servant action. The *cohortative summonses* ("Come, let us go down") invite collaborative action. In both cases, the speech act's *success conditions* (what Searle terms "felicity conditions") include: (1) speaker has authority to issue directive, (2) hearer has capacity to perform action, and (3) hearer recognizes directive and responds accordingly.[90]

Jacob 5 consistently fulfills these so-called "felicity conditions." The Lord possesses unquestioned authority to command the servant; the servant has capacity to perform directed actions (plucking, grafting, nourishing); the servant recognizes directives as such and responds

86. Bokovoy, "Ye Really *Are* Gods," 5–7.
87. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 6–7.
88. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 33–36.
89. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 66.
90. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 57–61.

with obedience ("the servant of the Lord of the vineyard did according to the word of the Lord," v. 10; "the servants did go and labor with their mights," v. 72). The perlocutionary effect — servant action following directive — demonstrates successful directive speech acts.

Importantly, speech act theory distinguishes between direct and indirect directives. Direct directives use imperative mood or explicit performative verbs ("I command you to . . ."). Indirect directives use interrogatives or declaratives that function directively ("Can you close the door?" functions as request, though grammatically a question).[91] Jacob 5's deliberative inquiry in verse 33 ("What shall we do unto the tree?") functions as indirect directive. Though grammatically interrogative, it illocutionarily invites the servant's counsel and perlocutionarily produces the servant's analytical response (vv. 34, 48). The interrogative form signals consultative rather than dictatorial governance, inviting genuine dialogue within hierarchical relationship.

The cohortative formulas ("let us . . .") represent a distinctive directive type — what might be termed "inclusive directives," where speaker includes self in directed action. These differ from standard imperatives where speaker commands hearer to act alone. Inclusive directives presume joint action, modeling collaborative rather than merely delegative governance. The repeated "Come, let us go down into the vineyard, that we may labor" (vv. 15, 29) not only directs the servant to accompany the Lord, but the Lord commits himself to laboring alongside the servant. This speech pattern encodes theology: salvation is not delegated to human agents while God remains distant, but involves God's ongoing participation in work he authorizes servants to share.

Eschatological Expansion: From Singular to Plural Servants

One of Jacob 5's most significant narrative progressions involves the multiplication of authorized agents. The early allegory (vv. 3–40) consistently refers to "the servant" (singular). Beginning in verse 61, this expands: "go to, and call servants" (v. 61); "the servant . . . brought other servants; and they were few" (v. 70); "the Lord of the vineyard said unto them: Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your might" (v. 71). The transition from singular to plural and from "the servant" to "servants," signals eschatological intensification — the "last time" (vv. 62, 71, 75–76) requires an expanded labor force.

91. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 30–33, 70–71.

This narrative progression models what might be termed *democratic authorization:* the servant (perhaps representing prophetic/priestly leadership) recruits additional servants (perhaps representing a broader covenant community), all working under divine commission. Gardner identifies this expansion as typologically significant: "These are the latter-day missionaries, both those called formally and those whose informal efforts draw others to salvation."[92] The multiplication of servants represents the dispensational widening of authorized ministry from singular prophetic figure to collective covenant community.

Yet this democratization preserves hierarchy. The additional servants are not self-appointed, but divinely summoned through an authorized intermediary ("the servant . . . brought other servants," v. 70). They labor under both the servant's and the Lord's direction ("the servants did go and labor with their mights; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them," v. 72). The structure models concentric authorization: Lord → servant → servants, with authority flowing from center outward, while the center (the Lord) continues participating directly in the work.

The promise of shared joy confirms the genuine divine partnership: "blessed art thou; for because ye have been diligent in laboring with me in my vineyard, and have kept my commandments . . . behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard" (v. 75). The preposition *with* recurs: "laboring with me," "joy with me." Servants are not merely *for* the Lord, but *with* the Lord—genuine covenant partners entitled to share in covenant blessings, including eschatological joy in salvific success.

This eschatological vision resonates with other scriptural expansions of authorized ministry. Joel 2:28–29 prophesies, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." Acts 2:16–18 places the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy in the "last days." Similarly, Jacob 5's multiplication of servants from one to many models dispensational progression toward ever-widening covenant participation.

The allegory's temporal markers reinforce this eschatological reading. Verse 29: "the time draweth near, and the end soon cometh." Verse 62: "this is for the last time that I shall prune my vineyard."

92. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 546.

Verse 71: "the end is nigh at hand, and the season speedily cometh." Verse 76: "for the last time have I nourished my vineyard." These temporal references cluster in the section describing servant multiplication (vv. 61–72), suggesting that the expansion from singular to plural servants is specifically an eschatological phenomenon. The "last time" is characterized not by solitary prophetic ministry, but by collective mobilized covenant community laboring under divine commission.

Contrast with Future-Tense Declarations and Predictive Prophecy

Having identified divine council directive speech acts, it is essential to clarify what they are not. Several statement types in Jacob 5 superficially resemble directives but function differently:

- **Future-Tense Self-Declarations.** "I will prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it" (v. 4); "I will take these young and tender branches, and I will graft them whithersoever I will" (v. 8); "And this will I do that the tree may not perish" (v. 53). These statements declare divine intention but do not commission another agent. They are self-directed commissives (in Searle's taxonomy) rather than directives addressed to others. They contribute to Gardner's promise/fulfillment pattern but not to divine council directive pattern.
- **Inclusive Future-Tense Statements.** "And we will nourish again the trees of the vineyard, and we will trim up the branches thereof" (v. 58). While using first-person plural like cohortatives, these statements describe future joint action without the invitational structure of "Come, let us . . . ." They announce what "we will" do rather than invite "let us" do. They are collective commissives rather than cohortative summonses.
- **Narrative Fulfillment Reports.** "And it came to pass that the servant of the Lord of the vineyard did according to the word of the Lord of the vineyard, and grafted in the branches of the wild olive-tree" (v. 10). These third-person narrative reports describe directive execution but are not themselves directives. They fulfill directives rather than issue them. They constitute the "fulfillment" half of the "promise/fulfillment" formula identified by Gardner.
- **Deliberative Soliloquy.** "What could I have done more

for my vineyard?" (vv. 41, 47, 49). While interrogative, these questions are rhetorical self-reflection, not genuine deliberative inquiry inviting response. They differ from verse 33's "What shall we do unto the tree?" which explicitly invites the servant's counsel and receives substantive response (vv. 34, 48–51). These rhetorical questions eloquently express divine lament.

The critical distinction is between statements *about* future action (predictions, intentions, descriptions) and statements *authorizing*, *commissioning*, *directing*, or *inviting* action (directives, commissions, invitations). The former emphasize divine sovereignty and reliability; the latter emphasize covenant partnership and delegated authority. Both are essential to Jacob 5's theology, but they serve different rhetorical-theological functions and should not be conflated.

Literary and Theological Synthesis

The twenty divine council directive speech acts identified in Jacob 5, when analyzed alongside Gardner's promise/fulfillment pairs, reveal a sophisticated literary-theological architecture. The allegory does not merely narrate covenant history (though it does that); it dramatizes covenant governance as collaborative process involving genuine divine-human partnership.

Narrative structure through directive cycles

The allegory's narrative progression is structured by directive speech initiating action phases. Each phase is initiated by directive speech, proceeds through authorized labor, and concludes with assessment, leading to the next directive cycle. This structure presents the plan of salvation not as linear divine decree progressively realized, but as spiral of crisis → commission → labor → assessment → renewed crisis → renewed commission, and so on, culminating finally in eschatological resolution. This table breaks down the narrative into its constituent cycles, explicitly showing a "spiral" pattern of crisis → commission → labor → assessment.

Table 2 shows a spiral model, where a crisis is a problem that demands a new commission. Each crisis is a negative condition revealed by a prior assessment.

Table 2. Spiral Model of the Plan of Salvation in Jacob 5.

Cycle	Narrative Trigger / Preceding State	Crisis (Revealed by Assessment)	Commission / Directive	Labor	Assessment / Result
Initial (vv. 3–14)	(Allegory begins)	**Tree is decaying** (vv. 3–4)	"I will prune . . ." (v. 4); "go and pluck . . ." (v. 7); "Take thou . . . graft . . ." (v. 9); "go thy way; watch" (v. 12)	Pruning, grafting, hiding branches (vv. 5, 10, 14)	Tree puts forth, but **main top begins to perish** (v. 6)
First Inspection (vv. 15–28)	A long time passed; let us go labor (v. 15)	**(Revealed) One branch has mixed fruit** (v. 25)	"Pluck off the branches . . ." (v. 26) > Countered by "Let us prune . . ." (v. 27)	They nourish it (v. 28)	(Deferred; outcome unknown)
Sub-Assessment 2a (vv. 16–18)	(They go to labor)	(None — Positive) Grafted tree is good (vv. 17–18)	(None — Positive assessment)	(None)	(Confirms previous work)
Sub-Assessment 2b (vv. 19–24)	(They check other branches)	(None — Positive) Natural branches are good (vv. 20, 23–24)	(None — Positive assessment)	(None)	(Confirms previous work)
Second Inspection & Universal Crisis (vv. 29–51)	A long time passed; end is near; let us go labor (v. 29)	**(Revealed) Universal Corruption:** 1. Grafted tree has all bad fruit (vv. 30–32). 2. Natural branches are also corrupt (v. 39).	"What shall we do?" (v. 33); "Let us go to and hew down . . ." (v. 49) > Countered by "Spare it . . ." (v. 50)	(Deliberation, no physical labor)	Lord weeps, assesses his efforts (vv. 41–47); Servant analyzes cause (v. 48). Lord relents: "I will spare it . . ." (v. 51)
Eschatological Restoration (vv. 52–77)	The decision to spare the vineyard (v. 51)	**Imminent loss of the entire vineyard** (stated in v. 51)	"let us take . . . let us graft . . ." (v. 52); "go to, and call servants" (v. 61); "let us go to and labor" (v. 62); "Graft in . . . dig about . . ." (vv. 63–66)	Massive, collective labor by the Lord and many servants (vv. 55–56, 70–72)	**Success:** Natural fruit is restored; vineyard is no longer corrupt (vv. 73–75)

Linear progression of directive cycles in Jacob 5

The progression of directive cycles in Jacob 5 can be represented in a linear flow of the narrative, where each assessment reveals a crisis (a condition that needs divine intervention), prompts a subsequent commission adapted to meet the need, and leads to labor to satisfy the need. The cycles are represented by crisis → commission → labor → assessment → (if needed) deliberation/judgment → resolution/next cycle. Every cycle begins with a crisis and a commission arising from the previous cycle's assessment and ends with a new assessment that determines whether another intervention is required, and if so, leads to the identification of the next crisis and the next commission.

1. **CYCLE 1 (Initial Crisis, vv. 3–14)**
   - **Crisis:** The tame olive tree begins to decay (v. 3)
   - **Commission:** "Prune it, dig about it, and nourish it" (vv. 4–5)
   - **Labor:** Grafting wild branches into the mother tree and removing/taking natural branches to plant elsewhere (vv. 6–14)
   - **Assessment:** The purpose is stated, though the assessment is implicit — "that I may preserve . . . the roots" (v. 13)
2. **CYCLE 2 (Second Visit / First Full Inspection, vv. 15–28)**
   - **Narrative trigger:** "After a long time had passed away" (v. 15)
   - **Commission:** "Let us go down . . . that we may labor again" (v. 15)
   - **Labor:** Inspection of the mother tree (vv. 16–18) and then inspection of the scattered branches (vv. 19–26)
   - **Assessment:** Mixed outcomes:
     - » Tame fruit on the mother tree (vv. 17–18)
     - » Tame fruit on scattered branches (vv. 20–24)
     - » Mixed fruit on the tree in the "good spot of ground" (v. 25)
   - **Sub-cycle (nested directive):** "Let us prune it . . . let us nourish it" (vv. 26–28) — the Master directs specialized labor to address the mixed fruit

3. **CYCLE 3 (Great Apostasy / Deliberation & Judgment, vv. 29–51)**
   - **Narrative trigger:** "After a long time . . . the end soon cometh" (v. 29)
   - **Commission:** "Let us go down . . . that we may labor again" (v. 29)
   - **Labor:** Thorough inspection of all trees and all branches (vv. 30–39)
   - **Assessment:** Universal failure — "They have all become corrupted," "all sorts of bad fruit" (vv. 32, 39–40)
   - **Crisis / Judgment declaration:** "Let us hew down the trees of the vineyard" (v. 49)
   - **Counter-proposal / Deliberation:** The servant pleads — "Spare it a little longer" (vv. 50–51)
4. **CYCLE 4 (Final Restoration / Last Commission, vv. 52–77)**
   - **Crisis:** Imminent loss — destruction is the logical next step (v. 51)
   - **Commission:** Full restoration plan — gather servants, return natural branches to the mother tree, and nourish all parts together (vv. 52–66)
   - **Labor:** Collective, coordinated labor; multiple servants work together (vv. 67–72)
   - **Assessment:** Success — good fruit returns and the bad is removed (vv. 73–75)
   - **FINAL RESOLUTION (two-stage outcome):**
     - » **Good fruit gathered and laid up** (v. 76)
     - » **Vineyard burned / end of the history** (v. 77)

Spiral progression of directive cycles in Jacob 5

The flowchart in figures 1–4 maps the spiral progression of directive cycles in Jacob 5, visually representing the recursive, non-linear nature of the narrative, where each assessment leads directly to a new crisis and a subsequent, adapted commission. The recursive spiral structure of the allegory shows how assessments lead to new crises and how one cycle nests within another in Cycle 2.

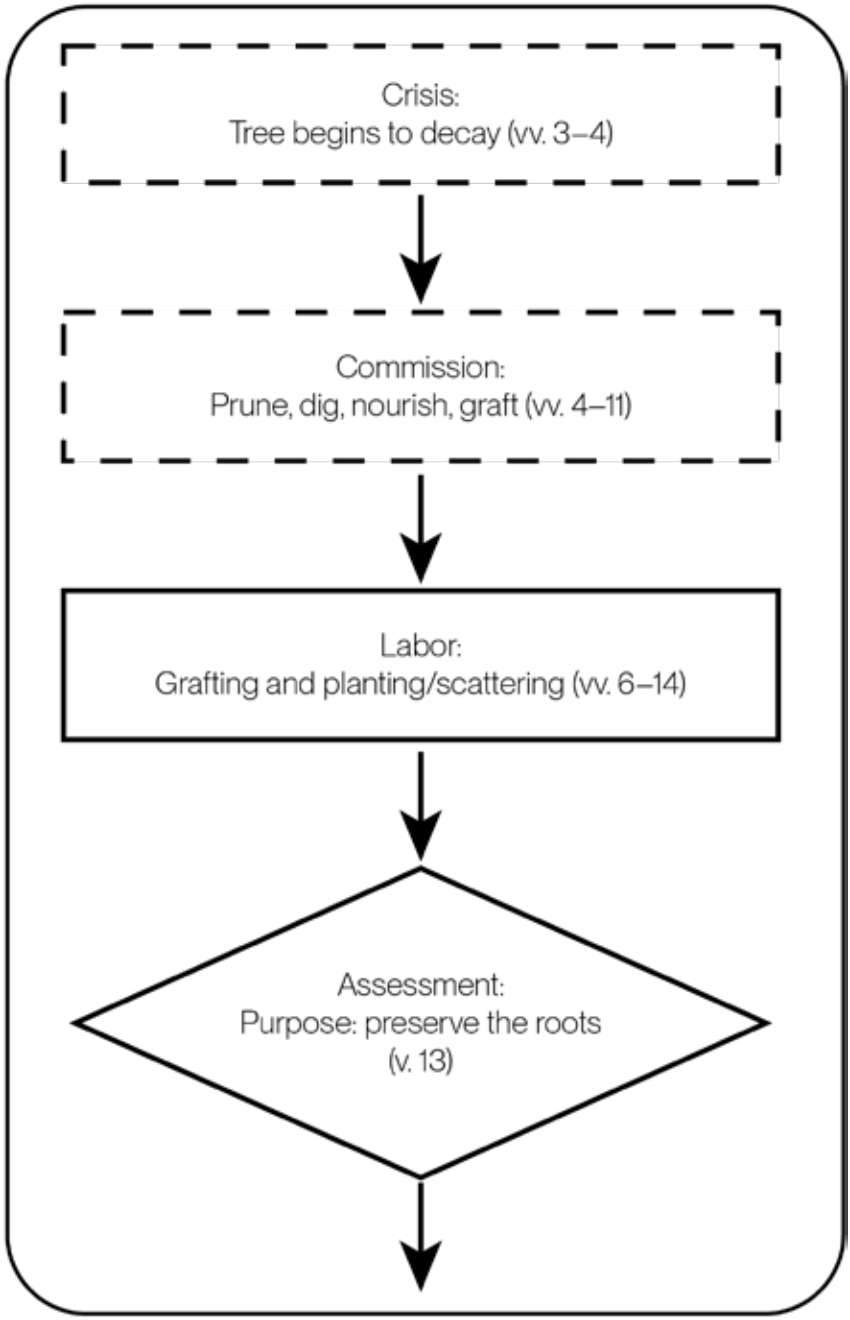


Figure 1. Cycle 1: Initial crisis (vv. 3–14).

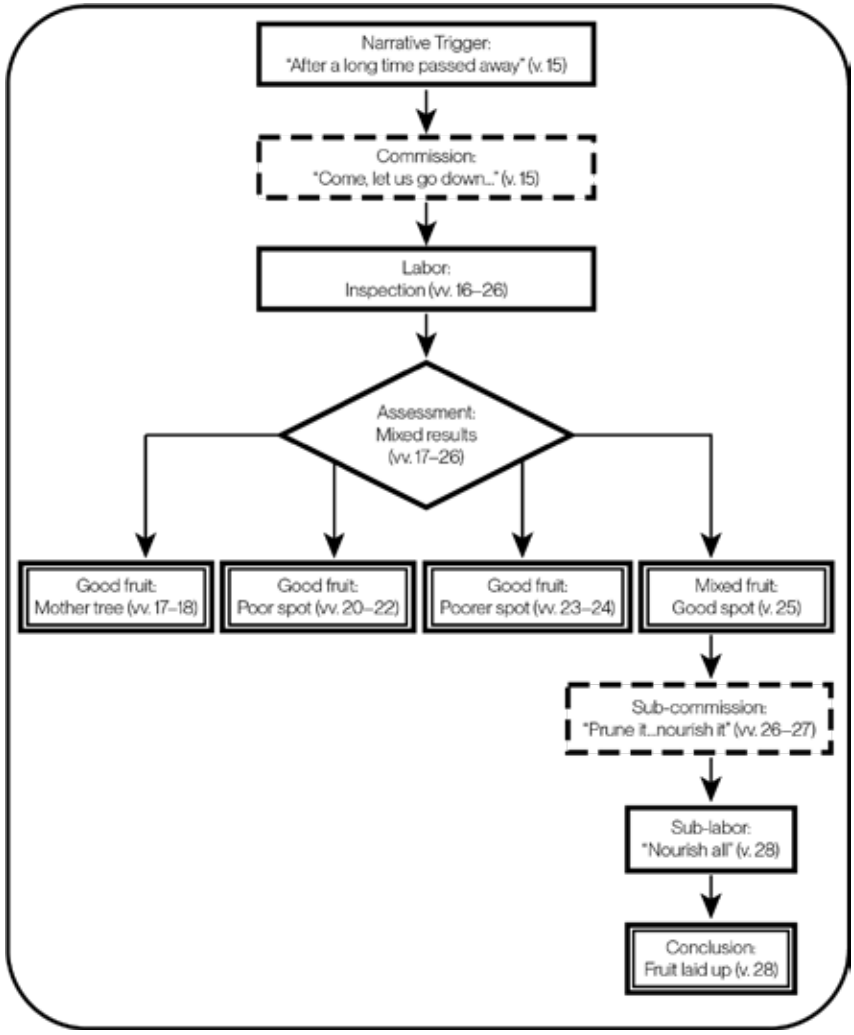


Figure 2. Cycle 2: Second visit / first full inspection (vv. 15–28).

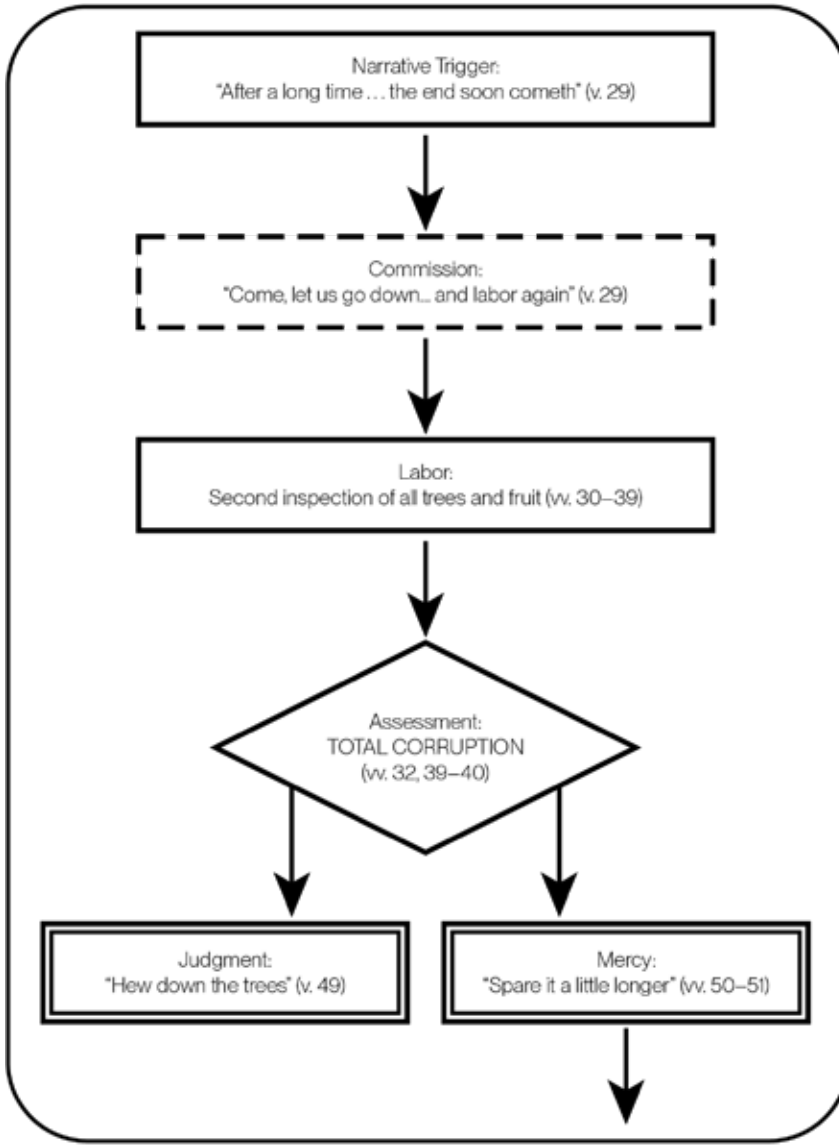


Figure 3. Cycle 3: Major crisis and turning point (vv. 29–51).

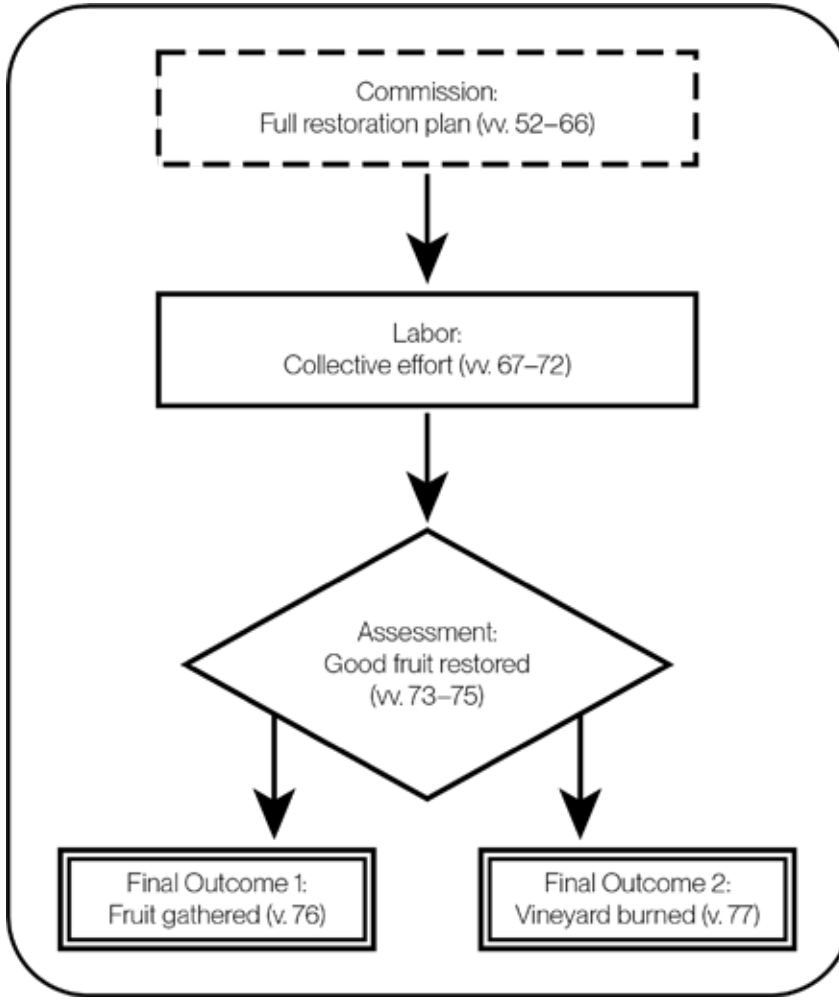


Figure 4. Cycle 4: Final restoration (vv. 52–77).

Theological motifs

Three interlocking theological motifs emerge through divine council directive analysis:

- **Divine Sovereignty Through Partnership.** The Lord retains ultimate authority—he initiates all directives, sets all parameters, supervises all labor. Yet he consistently chooses to exercise sovereignty through partnership. The theological claim is that divine power is expressed through (not compromised by) collaborative governance. This

resonates with Latter-day Saint theological emphasis on divine-human cooperation in salvation.[93]

- **Authorized Agency and Covenant Responsibility.** Servants act *because* they are authorized, not from inherent capacity. Yet within authorization, they exercise genuine agency — inspecting, reporting, counseling, interceding, judging within parameters. The allegory models priesthood theology: authority flows from God through delegation, but delegated authority is genuine authority, not merely symbolic representation.
- **Eschatological Intensification and Democratic Authorization.** The progression from singular servant to plural servants, and from elite prophetic ministry to collective covenant community, models dispensational trajectory. The "last time" is characterized by mobilized, authorized, collaborative labor of many — not hierarchical command structure with passive laity, but council structure with active covenant partners.

Jacob 5 as Divine Council allegory

Synthesizing these observations, Jacob 5 may be understood as ancient Israel's most extensive divine council allegory, transposed from cosmic to covenantal register. Rather than supreme deity consulting heavenly assembly about ordering cosmos (Ugaritic/Canaanite pattern) or judging nations (Hebrew Bible pattern; such as 1 Kings 22), Jacob 5 presents supreme deity consulting authorized servant(s) about preserving covenant relationship with Israel. The focus shifts from cosmology to soteriology, from divine beings to human agents, but the governmental structure — hierarchical yet deliberative, sovereign yet consultative — remains recognizably continuous with broader divine council traditions.

This reading illuminates why Jacob employs Zenos's allegory to answer his question about how rejected Messiah becomes triumphant Messiah (Jacob 4:17). The answer is not simply that God remains faithful despite human faithlessness (though true). The answer is that God works *through* faithful remnant, authorized servants, commissioned laborers across dispensations, to preserve covenant relationship

93. Terryl L. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 86.

until eschatological restoration. The rejected Christ becomes triumphant Christ not through divine fiat overriding human rejection, but through divinely authorized human participation (prophets, apostles, missionaries, saints) in gathering scattered Israel. Divine council directive speech is the literary-theological mechanism dramatizing this salvation-through-authorized-partnership.

Conclusion: Toward a Fuller Reading of Jacob 5

This study has identified and analyzed divine council directive speech acts in Jacob 5 as a pattern complementing and extending Brant Gardner's promise/fulfillment analysis. Where Gardner illuminates divine reliability through fulfilled declarations, divine council directives illuminate covenant partnership through authorized collaboration. Together these patterns present a comprehensive theology of divine governance: God is faithful (promise/fulfillment) and God is relational (directive/participation); God acts (monergism) and God empowers others to act with him (synergism); God declares future (prophecy) and God authorizes present action (commission).

The twenty divine council directives identified span the allegory's narrative arc, structuring temporal progression while modeling covenant relationship as hierarchical yet collaborative, sovereign yet consultative. The pattern resonates with ancient Near Eastern divine council traditions, adapted through Israelite covenant theology to emphasize human rather than divine council members, covenant preservation rather than cosmic ordering, and eschatological gathering rather than immediate judgment.

Jacob 5 thus emerges not merely as horticultural allegory or historical outline but as dramatized divine council in action—a working assembly where the Lord consults authorized servants, invites their counsel, commissions their labor, honors their intercession, and shares eschatological joy in salvific success. This reading enriches understanding of the allegory's answer to Jacob's question (4:17): the rejected Christ becomes triumphant through patient divine persistence (promise/fulfillment) enacted through authorized servant partnership (directive/collaboration) across dispensations, until eschatological consummation.

Future research might profitably explore: (1) comparative analysis of directive speech in other Book of Mormon texts (particularly Nephi's temple vision in 1 Nephi 11–14, which shares council-vision structure); (2) examination of Zenos's other recorded prophecies for similar

patterns; (3) analysis of Joseph Smith's revelations in Doctrine and Covenants using divine council directive framework (many revelations employ directive speech: "Go to," "Let us reason together," and so forth); (4) theological implications for Latter-day Saint priesthood and missionary theology; (5) liturgical implications for understanding temple covenant language as directive speech authorizing salvific labor.

Gardner's foundational identification of promise/fulfillment structure opened scholarly understanding of Jacob 5's literary sophistication. Recognizing the complementary divine council directive pattern deepens that understanding, revealing an allegory that not only chronicles the plan of salvation but dramatizes its governance structure — a structure inviting covenant partners to labor with God in the vineyard until the eschatological harvest, when servants share divine joy in salvific work accomplished together.

Gardner's identification of the promise/fulfillment structure in Jacob 5 remains a cornerstone of the allegory's interpretation, effectively highlighting the unwavering faithfulness of the Lord of the vineyard. This paper has sought to expand this foundational work by illuminating a parallel and interwoven literary-theological pattern: the divine council directive. Cataloging the imperative commissions and cohortative summonses that permeate the text hopefully has demonstrated how the allegory dramatizes the collaborative character of covenant governance. The Lord not only declares his will but actively enlists, authorizes, and deliberates with his servants to bring it to pass.

This synthesis of Gardner's promise/fulfillment model with the council-directive pattern seeks an integrated understanding of Jacob 5. God is not only perfectly reliable in his word but also profoundly relational in his methods, governing his vineyard through a divine council. He elevates his servants to become genuine partners in the work of salvation. This reading hopefully deepens our appreciation of the allegory's complexity and its powerful message about the collaborative nature of the covenant, a work where divine fidelity and human agency are inextricably linked in the great endeavor of bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

Appendix

In this appendix, following a brief explanatory note, I account for all verbs in Jacob 5 (verses 1–77) that are morphologically present tense (e.g., "draweth," "cometh," "is," "bringeth," etc.), but semantically

future — that is, the action they describe is not yet realized but imminent, often used in prophetic or prospective speech. This phenomenon — sometimes called the prophetic present, present of certainty, or futuristic present — is common in scriptural English modeled on the King James Bible. Below is a list of such verbs in Jacob 5, each followed by its verse reference(s) and a brief justification showing why the verb, though grammatically present, is contextually future-oriented.

Brief explanatory note concerning the tense known as the *prophetic present*, *present of certainty*, or *futuristic present*

Verbs or phrases expressing future or potential action generally include *will*, *shall*, *may*, *might*, *should*, *could*, *canst*, and so forth, and yet others exhibit what is called the *prophetic present*, which are ones where certainty of fulfillment licenses a present-tense form to stand for a future event. This is consistent with both Biblical Hebrew's perfect-of-certainty and King James English prophetic idiom. Thus, even though "draweth nigh," "cometh," and a few related verbs, for example (as discussed below) look present in morphology, they function as future-tense equivalents in the rhetoric of divine decree and prophecy.

Form vs. meaning

For example, grammatically the verb *draweth* is the present tense of draw, with the third-person singular ending "-eth" (as in "he draweth," "she goeth," etc.). However, tense and aspect do not always align with temporal reference in Early Modern or biblical English. Context often determines whether a present-tense verb denotes:

- a habitual or current action ("He draweth water daily"),
- or a near-future event ("The hour cometh, and now is" — John 4:23).

Thus, in some contexts the form is present while the sense can be future.

Context in Jacob 5

When the Lord of the vineyard says, "For behold, the time draweth nigh, and the end soon cometh," the phrase describes an event not yet fully realized — the "end" has not yet arrived but is approaching. So, semantically, "draweth nigh" carries prospective or imminent future meaning. It is akin to saying, "The time is drawing near" or "The

time will soon be at hand." In modern English, we would usually treat that as a future-oriented statement, even though the original verb form is morphologically present.

Biblical parallels

This use is entirely conventional in scriptural diction:

- "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2) — grammatically present, semantically future.
- "The hour cometh, and now is" (John 4:23) — "cometh" = present form, future sense.
- "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7).

In all such cases, "is at hand," "cometh," or "draweth nigh" are prophetic present-tense idioms — signaling certain and imminent future events.

In Jacob 5, "draweth nigh" is not grammatically a future verb but semantically it is

Grammatically "draweth nigh" is present tense but semantically future tense, because it functions as a future-oriented verb indicating something about to occur. Thus, "draweth nigh" in Jacob 5, along with the will/shall/may constructions, expresses future imminence rather than present state.

Listing of prophetic present or futuristic present verbs in Jacob 5

"Draweth nigh" (vv. 29, 47, 62, 64)

> "The time draweth nigh, and the end soon cometh."
> "The end draweth nigh."
> "The end draweth nigh."
> "For the end draweth nigh."
>
> Morphological present (*draweth*).
>
> Semantic value: future-imminent; signals that the eschatological "end" is about to occur.

"Cometh" (vv. 29, 47, 62, 71, 76, 77)

> "The end soon cometh."
> "The end draweth nigh, . . ." (paired with "cometh").
> "The end draweth nigh, . . ."
> "The season speedily cometh."
> "Which speedily cometh."

> "When the time cometh . . . and the end; and my vineyard will I cause to be burned."
>
> Formally present; idiomatically used in scripture for impending events ("The day cometh, that shall burn as an oven," Malachi 4:1).

"Is at hand" / "Is nigh at hand" (implied by v. 71)

> "For the end is nigh at hand."
>
> "Is" is morphologically present but expresses proximity in time, functioning as future-in-progress ("The hour *is* at hand," Matthew 26:45).

"Shall again come" (note "cometh" in v. 77)

> "When the time cometh that evil fruit shall again come . . ."
>
> The first *cometh* (present form) marks future arrival, parallel to the auxiliary "shall" following it.

"Behold" (when introducing forthcoming events; multiple occurrences throughout)

> e.g., v. 3, v. 8, v. 29, v. 37, v. 47, v. 68.
>
> While *behold* is imperative in form, in prophetic diction it often frames events about to happen, so its performative function has future orientation (less a verb of sight, more a "see-what-will-happen" marker).

"Cumber" (vv. 49, 66)

> ". . . that they shall not cumber . . ."
> ". . . that they cumber not . . ."
>
> In both clauses the governing auxiliaries ("shall not," "may not") make *cumber* morphologically present infinitive, but semantically future, describing what will *soon* no longer happen.

"Become" (vv. 37, 39, 46, 74)

> "It will soon become ripened."
> "They . . . had become corrupt."
> "The trees . . . have become corrupted."
> "The trees . . . had become again the natural fruit."
>
> Although past forms occur, *become* occasionally functions in a progressive future sense ("will soon become

ripened") — morphologically infinitive or participial but conceptually anticipatory.

"Is" (v. 75)

". . . it is good . . ."

In 5:75–76 the Lord states "that it is good" not as a present observation only, but as a culminated future result following the vineyard's purification — a prophetic perfect, semantically future outcome described as present.

"Bringeth forth" / "Bring forth" — when used in conditional prophecy (e.g., vv. 64–65)

"If it be so that these last grafts shall grow, and bring forth the natural fruit . . ."
"Ye shall clear away . . . lest . . . the graft thereof shall perish."

Bring forth is present in form, but in conditional-prophetic usage it functions as prospective.

"Groweth" / "Grow" (vv. 64–65)

"That they may grow." / "As they begin to grow ye shall clear away . . . lest . . . the graft . . . shall perish."

The growth has not yet happened; *grow* is morphologically present but expresses future contingent development.

"Causeth" / "Cause" (vv. 77)

". . . and my vineyard will I cause to be burned with fire."

Here "cause" is infinitive, but if expressed independently ("the Lord causeth"), the same construction would be a prophetic present of divine agency.

"Is cast away" (vv. 69, 75)

". . . the bad is cast away . . ."

Grammatically perfect/passive, but semantically futuristic perfect — the text speaks of an event that *will* have occurred when the prophecy is fulfilled.

With that explanation, table 3 shows each prophetic present, present of certainty, or futuristic present verb within its full verse clause. The parallel table is ordered in ascending verse order (Jacob 5:1–77), showing each verb or phrase that is grammatically present tense but

semantically future-oriented ("prophetic present"). Note the sharp increase in the cluster of prophetic presents from verse 29 onward.

Table 3. Prophetic or futuristic presents in Jacob 5, ordered by verse.

Verb / Phrase	Verse	Full Clause or Line (KJV-style wording)	Why Future-Oriented
behold (performative)	3	"For behold, thus saith the Lord, I will liken thee . . ."	Imperative form introducing a coming divine act — functions as "see what will occur."
behold (performative)	8	"And behold, saith the Lord of the vineyard, I take away . . ."	Announces a divine action about to happen.
behold (performative)	29	"For behold, the time draweth nigh . . ."	Signals impending fulfillment.
draweth nigh	29	"For behold, the time draweth nigh, and the end soon cometh."	Present form marking the approach of a future event.
cometh	29	". . . and the end soon cometh."	Future arrival of "the end."
become (ripened)	37	". . . and it will soon become ripened, that it may be cast into the fire . . ."	Change not yet complete → near future.
behold (performative)	37	". . . and because that it hath brought forth so much evil fruit thou beholdest that it beginneth to perish . . ."	Perception verb introducing an unfolding (future) condition.
draweth nigh	47	". . . and I have stretched forth mine hand almost all the day long, and the end draweth nigh."	Eschatological "end" is approaching.
Cometh	47	(implicit in parallel "draweth nigh")	Same imminent future sense.
cumber (not)	49	". . . and cast them into the fire, that they shall not cumber the ground of my vineyard . . ."	Prevents a future state; proleptic prohibition.
draweth nigh	62	". . . for behold the end draweth nigh, and this is for the last time . . ."	Marks approaching consummation.
Cometh	62	". . . for behold the end draweth nigh . . ."	Paired with draweth nigh — future arrival.
Grow	64	". . . then shall ye prepare the way for them, that they may grow."	Expected development → future.

Verb / Phrase	Verse	Full Clause or Line (KJV-style wording)	Why Future-Oriented
draweth nigh	64	". . . for the end draweth nigh. And if it be so that these last grafts shall grow . . ."	Immediate future frame.
begin to grow	65	"And as they begin to grow, ye shall clear away the branches . . ."	Growth has not yet occurred → near future.
bring forth	64–65	". . . if it be so that these last grafts shall grow, and bring forth the natural fruit . . ."	Conditional future yield.
cumber not	66	". . . that they cumber not the ground of my vineyard . . ."	Describes a future cleansed state.
draweth nigh	64 (reiterated)	". . . for the end draweth nigh . . ."	Reemphasizes imminence of closure.
Behold	68 (performative)	". . . and thus will I bring them together again, that they shall bring forth the natural fruit, and they shall be one." (The preceding imperative *behold* introduces this yet-future act.)	Transitional marker of imminent unity.
is cast away	69	". . . and the bad is cast away, yea, even out of all the land of my vineyard . . ."	Prophetic perfect — a future result spoken as if accomplished.
is nigh at hand	71	"For behold, this is the last time that I shall nourish my vineyard; for the end is nigh at hand, and the season speedily cometh . . ."	"Is" expresses temporal proximity → future imminence.
Cometh	71	". . . and the season speedily cometh . . ."	Future arrival of season of harvest.
is cast away	75	". . . that my vineyard is no more corrupted, and the bad is cast away . . ."	Future completion depicted as present state of purity.
Cometh	76	". . . for a long time will I lay up . . . against the season, which speedily cometh . . ."	Approaching season — future.
Cometh	77	"And when the time cometh that evil fruit shall again come into my vineyard . . ."	Introduces event not yet arrived.

Verb / Phrase	Verse	Full Clause or Line (KJV-style wording)	Why Future-Oriented
cause (to be burned)	77	". . . and my vineyard will I cause to be burned with fire."	Decretive divine action — prophetic certainty of future judgment.

Observations

The prophetic and futuristic presents in Jacob 5 itemized in table 3 above satisfy four important criteria or characteristics of chiastic texts:

- **Density.** The cluster of prophetic presents increases sharply from verses 29 onward — precisely where Jacob 5 transitions into eschatological and redemptive prophecy. This is consistent with the observation of Arthur Henry King[94] who provides a statistical and rhetorical basis for a clean bipartite division of Jacob 5 at that point in the text. It also is consistent with my preliminary view (offered elsewhere) that Jacob 5 is structured as a thematic chiasm, with the divine lament beginning at that very point in the text, truly a "turning point" in the structure of the text, which scholars observe is characteristic of chiastic texts, as noted, for example, by Lund and Welch.[95]
- **Dominant idioms.** *draweth nigh* (4 ×) and *cometh* (6 ×) are the canonical King-James-type future presents.
- **Function.** Each asserts inevitability rather than prediction — what *will* happen is described as if *already in motion*.
- **Literary effect.** The use fuses divine timelessness with human temporality, a hallmark of Hebraic prophetic diction translated into early modern English idiom.

94. Arthur Henry King, "Language Themes in Jacob 5," in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree*, 67-70.
95. Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 40–41 ("The centre is always the turning point") and John W. Welch, "Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4, no.2 (1995): 8 ("The crux of a chiasm is generally its central turning point" and "without a well-defined centerpiece or distinct crossing effect, there is little reason for seeing chiasmus.")

Critical commentary: The prophetic present and its Hebrew and English roots

Following is a critical commentary linking this pattern to (a) the Hebrew prophetic perfect and (b) the King James translators' corresponding English tense practice:

The prophetic or futuristic present in Jacob 5—verbs such as *draweth nigh*, *cometh*, *is nigh at hand*, and *is cast away*—reflects a well-attested feature of biblical Hebrew verbal aspect known as the prophetic perfect (or *perfectum confidentiae*). In Hebrew, a speaker frequently employs the perfect (morphologically a past form) to describe a future act conceived as certain, especially in divine oracles.[96] The grammatical "completion" implied by the perfect does not mark past time but rather the assured realization of the event. Classical examples include Isaiah 9:6 ("For unto us a child is born") and Isaiah 53:4 ("Surely he hath borne our griefs"), both clearly messianic prophecies set in a future horizon, yet expressed as accomplished facts.[97]

When the King James translators encountered such Hebrew constructions, they typically rendered them in English present tense rather than employing "shall" or "will," thereby preserving the prophetic immediacy and performative certainty of the source text.[98] This explains the recurrent idiom "The day cometh that shall burn as an oven" (Malachi 4:1) and "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7). The same stylistic register governs Jacob 5, where divine discourse likewise collapses temporal distance in time. The Lord's decrees are not portrayed as pending intentions, but as acts already unfolding within divine time—what may be called a realis aspect of prophecy, grammatically present yet eschatologically future.

Thus, the prophetic presents of Jacob 5 operate as translated

96. Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, 2nd English ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), §106n–o; Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, rev. ed. (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2006), §112 k–l; Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §30.5.1–2.
97. See also Moshe Greenberg, "The Hebrew Perfect Tense and the Future," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 73 (1954): 43–47.
98. David Norton, *A Textual History of the King James Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 81–82; see also Robert Alter, *The Art of Bible Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 68–70, on the translators' deliberate retention of Hebraic temporal ambiguity.

Hebraisms, mediated through Early Modern English sacred diction. They merge temporal imminence with ontological certainty, portraying covenantal history — apostasy, redemption, and restoration — as so assured by divine will that these events can grammatically stand in the present tense. Hence the repeated refrain "the time draweth nigh" or "the end cometh" is not mere prediction, but a performative declaration: in prophetic perspective the decreed future already exists. This convergence of Hebrew aspect and English tense yields the distinctive temporal texture of Jacob 5, where divine speech sounds as though time itself has begun to yield to the certainty of fulfillment.[99]

Numerous studies of the Book of Mormon's verbal system show that Joseph Smith's dictated language preserves Early Modern English morphology and aspectual usage — including the historic-present and prophetic-present forms typical of the KJV.[100] Expressions such as "the day cometh," "the time draweth near," and "the end is at hand" occur in both corpora and reflect the translators' effort to reproduce Hebrew-style temporal semantics through the English verbal system of the seventeenth century. Modern English would express these ideas with will or shall, but the Book of Mormon's deliberate archaism allows the reader to sense that divine acts are not merely foreseen, but already in motion.

Consequently, Book of Mormon English functions not as imitation but as continuation of biblical register — an idiom that fuses Hebraic aspect with English present morphology to convey theological certainty. When the Lord of the vineyard declares that "the time draweth

99. For the theological implications of the prophetic present as realized eschatology, compare James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 136–39; and Ernst Jenni, *Das hebräische Perfektum: Syntax und Semantik* (Zürich: EVZ Verlag, 1978), 178–85.

100. Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 209–62, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/a-look-at-some-nonstandard-book-of-mormon-grammar; Stanford Carmack, "The More Part of the Book of Mormon Is Early Modern English," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 40, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-more-part-of-the-book-of-mormon-is-early-modern-english; Stanford Carmack, "Is the Book of Mormon a Pseudo-Archaic Text?," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 28 (2018): 177–232, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/is-the-book-of-mormon-a-pseudo-archaic-text; Royal Skousen, "Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (1990): 41–69, byustudies.byu.edu/article/towards-a-critical-edition-of-the-book-of-mormon; Royal Skousen, "Changes in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014): 161–76, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/changes-in-the-book-of-mormon.

nigh" or that "the end cometh," the grammar itself enacts divine inevitability. In this way, the Book's translation style aligns with the prophetic-perfect logic of the Hebrew Bible and the prophetic present of the King James Version, situating Jacob 5 firmly within the same sacred-linguistic continuum that joins ancient aspect, early modern tense, and eschatological assurance.[101]



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101. Royal Skousen, *The King James Quotations in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2019), 22–27; and Nicholas J. Frederick, *The Bible, Mormon Scripture, and the Rhetoric of Allusion* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2016), 95–97, on the translation's retention of biblical temporal idioms.

An Unsystematic Dive into Gospel Questions

Brent J. Schmidt

Review of Michael Hawkins, Infinite Contingencies: Insights on Latter-Day Saint Doctrine and Practice *(Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2025). 120 pages. $16.99 (paperback).*

Abstract: *A recent book by Michael Hawkins provides subjective answers to timeless gospel questions and practices. Some readers will enjoy its novel approach and will gain insights that will help them live and apply the Restored gospel. Its unsystematic and lay approach, however, is neither apologetic nor scholarly.*

Michael Hawkins's recent work, *Infinite Contingencies*,[1] begins with an autobiographical preface about being rattled as a teenager by a wise humanities instructor's many anti-Mormon talking points based on Bible proof-texts. Because of this harrowing experience, Hawkins encourages those readers who may be over-confident about their doctrinal knowledge to seek a deeper understanding of doctrine so they are able to face such "gale-force winds of opposition" (p. xi). Hawkins hints that his own journey to understand the restored gospel will help others "on their own paths of gospel learning" (p. xi).

Many readers may anticipate well-crafted, apologetic responses to specific critiques of the Restoration in this short book, but what follows are mostly simple and disjointed musings about diverse, unrelated, and unsettled Church doctrines accompanied by four short chapters with application-type suggestions.

1. Michael Hawkins, *Infinite Contingencies: Insights on Latter-day Saint Doctrine and Practice* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2025).

This work has many strengths and some glaring weaknesses. Hawkins writes well; takes a humble, practical approach to each subject; and attempts to explain gospel principles in a faithful way. His original take on some doctrinal topics will appeal to many readers. He also succeeds at clustering relevant scripture and mostly older prophetic quotes to address significant doctrinal topics. However, his academic studies in modern Philippino history does not grant him the ability to deeply explain the linguistic, cultural, philosophical, or historical milieu of the many biblical passages he clusters. Much of the book only exhibits mature but very subjective gospel-based reflection instead of scholarly scriptural discoveries or compelling apologetic material. Yet, Hawkins provides some insights that will assist some readers to consider challenging doctrinal topics from different angles.

Ten chapters discuss doctrinal topics widely ranging from an overview of the gathering of Israel to translation theory, paradoxical transgressions, charity, popular parables, generational struggles, and problems related to perfection, the existence of evil, and relative notions of fairness. Each doctrinal topic is generally evaluated on its own instead of exploring how they may be related as a whole. The diversity of doctrines presented may cause some readers to experience a form of logical whiplash.

Chapters about perfectionism and theodicy[2] are the longest and most original of the ten doctrinal chapters, and so they are analyzed further in this review.

Perfection

All who are striving to become better disciples must confront the spiritual pitfalls of perfectionism. Hawkins correctly explains that one must be perfect in Christ by quoting Moroni 10:32 which alleviates potential "anxiety, fatigue, or disillusionment with the gospel" (p. 5). However, Hawkins does not acknowledge that the opposite extreme of spiritual complacency commonly found in some Protestant circles inhibits individuals from properly utilizing their agency by Christian discipleship and covenant keeping. Choosing to receive God's gifts (grace) naturally motivates action and consistently empowers Saints. A covenant relationship with Heavenly Father through his son, Jesus Christ, gradually inspires soul-enlarging discipleship instead of prideful perfectionism, points that Hawkins neglects to make. While many

2. The term *theodicy* is Greek, meaning "the righteousness of God."

Bible commentaries certainly attempt to "lessen the severity of Matthew 5:48" (p. 3), Hawkins neglects to note that the Joseph Smith Translation of this verse reads, "*Ye are* therefore *commanded to be* perfect," indicating that something obvious must be missing from his analysis of this problem.

When the resurrected Christ visited the Americas, he included himself as being perfect like our Father: "Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect" (3 Nephi 12:48). In comparing the Matthew verse with the 3 Nephi rendition, it seems clear that the resurrection is related to becoming perfect. Then-Elder Nelson taught that the "resurrection is requisite for eternal perfection."[3]

Besides meaning *complete* or *perfect*, the ancient Greek word for *perfection* found in Matthew 5:48 (*teleios*) also describes Gentiles who had been initiated into temple rituals. These rituals included gaining knowledge and information that would allow them to go through the veil, becoming gods and enjoying a resurrected, glorious afterlife.[4] Thus, *teleios* may mean those who will receive the blessings of the endowment. Hawkins missed an opportunity to describe how striving for perfection in Christ entails a gradual journey of repentance along Jesus's covenant path through priesthood ordinances. Perfection in the form of a celestial bodily resurrection results from faithfully making and keeping temple covenants.

Theodicy

Hawkins addressed the ageless topic of the existence of a just God in a fallen world (theodicy) in novel ways. He categorizes the question of the nature of God as the *Euthyphro dilemma* (p. 47). However, no background is provided about Plato's dialogue known as the *Euthyphro* (10a) in which Socrates asks the famous question "Is that which is holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods?"[5] Hawkins avoids answering this simple Greek binary question, though a direct answer would be much easier for the reader

3. Russell M. Nelson, "Perfection Pending," *Ensign* (November 1995), churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1995/11/perfection-pending.
4. For further on this concept, see Plato, *Republic* 363c, 364e; *Phaedrus* 249c; Brent J. Schmidt, "Temple Elements in Ancient Religious Communities," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (2011): 132, byustudies.byu.edu/article/temple-elements-in-ancient-religious-communities.
5. Translation by the author from Greek from Plato, *Euthyphro* (10a), www.perseus

to follow than the distorted and subjective modern interpretations of it. Hawkins points to the German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz who "distilled Socrates's query down to a single binary question of 'whether [a thing] is good and just because God wills it or whether God wills it because it is good and just" (p. 47).

Hawkins then poses a series of questions about theodicy. The questions tend to focus on what has not been definitively revealed about God's nature. His characterization of ancient Greek and Roman gods as not acting according to standards of cosmic mortality but only according to their absolute will (p. 48) is only one of many possible interpretations of Greco-Roman religious beliefs.

Hawkins argues that Heavenly Father chooses to benevolently live within universal law instead of creating it out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) as asserted in creedal Christianity. Hawkins musters scripture and prophetic quotes under the headings of the unity of opposites, existential bounds, eternal progress, and the necessity of an Atonement to support his assertive thesis that God is "bound by laws and forces" which only "greatly elevates him" (p. 57). He concludes this chapter by explaining that humankind must "adhere to divine principles and live according to the same laws of eternal goodness" (p. 58).

Hawkins seems unaware that some scripture and prophetic statements do not support his conclusions about the eternal nature of law. In a helpful *BYU Studies* article, James McLachlan provides a thorough and robust treatment of this particular subject that would have greatly informed the conclusions of the chapter.[6] In contrast to a dogmatic approach, McLachlan leaves open the possibility that God created law, a possibility that renders Hawkins's insights about God's nature too one-sided. Joseph Smith's statement in the King Follett discourse about the reason God instituted laws teaches God may have created law:

> The first principles of man are self existent with God; that God himself finds himself in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was greater, and because he saw proper to institute *laws*, whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself, that they might have one glory upon

.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0170%3Atext%3DEuthyph.%3Asection%3D10a

6. James McLachlan, "Is God Subject to or the Creator of Eternal Law?," *BYU Studies* 60, no. 3 (2021), byustudies.byu.edu/article/is-god-subject-to-or-the-creator-of-eternal-law.

> another, in all that knowledge, power, and glory, &c., in order to save the world of spirits.[7]

Unfortunately, Hawkins's doctrinal question about God following or creating eternal law remains unsettled at the end of the day. In general, it seems that Restoration scripture is much more focused on each individual's personal responsibility to abide God's law than on God's responsibility to abide law of unspecified and unrevealed origin. Throughout the Old Testament, God is known as the Almighty, but in latter-day scripture he is also described as a *lawmaker* or *lawgiver* (Doctrine and Covenants 29:30–35; 38:1–3; 76:3–4, 12–13; 88:11–13, 36–43; 121:29–32). Such references focus on humankind's need to follow God's word or law rather than a "need" for God to follow something independent of him.

Discipleship centered on obedience to God's laws is much more spiritually profitable than speculation about the ultimate origin of God's law. To his credit, Hawkins acknowledges that asking and answering the right questions is what really matters (p. 112).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Hawkins's treatment of many challenging doctrines has at least motivated this reader to ponder them further, which can be considered an accomplishment of the author's goal.



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7. "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons*, 15 August 1844, 615, emphasis added, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-published-in-times-and-seasons/4

A Fresh Investigation of Latter-day Saint Theology

Spencer Kraus

Review of Grant Underwood, Latter-day Saint Theology among Christian Theologies *(Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2025). 640 pages. $39.99 (hardcover).*

Abstract: *Grant Underwood's recent book,* Latter-day Saint Theology among Christian Theologies*, is an excellent treatment on the theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints written primarily for those outside of our faith. However, it is still a very useful book for Latter-day Saints and well worth their attention. Specifically, this book helps Latter-day Saints better understand other Christian denominations and beliefs, can help them communicate their own beliefs more clearly to others not of our faith, and (though not written for this intent) provides good apologetic grounds for the restoration of the gospel as Latter-day Saint belief is compared with the theology of early Christianity. This book would be a welcome addition to any Latter-day Saint's library.*

Since the early days of the Restoration, the accusation that Latter-day Saints are not Christian has been almost constantly leveled by critics of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Reasons for this dismissal typically tend to focus on doctrines of the restored gospel that many other Christians do not believe, or more often, understand. In recent years, however, outreach from both Latter-day Saints and other Christians has seen an increased dialogue between faiths and caused many to revisit their assumptions about the Latter-day Saint faith.

Despite these dialogues, Grant Underwood noted that something was missing: "a single volume addressed to non-Latter-day Saints that systematically brings Mormon thought into conversation with main currents of Christian theology" (p. 5). As such, Underwood has provided that book himself, aptly titled *Latter-day Saint Theology among Christian Theologies*.[1] This book takes seriously the question of how Latter-day Saints should be understood within the broader realm of Christian thought, in large part, because of how diverse Christian theologies actually are. Rather than being a clear-cut monolithic Christian theology that critics can point to in an attempt to delegitimize the restored gospel, after all, there are 2,000 years of Christian history that have developed multiple theological systems, many of which are still found in different churches today.

To illustrate how the restored gospel fits within this wider web of Christian beliefs, Underwood organizes his material "around the standard, classical subdivisions of theology, its *loci communes*" (p. 5). These include items such as theology proper, Christology, ecclesiology, soteriology, and eschatology. Such a book thus offers not just a primer on Latter-day Saint theology, but Christian theology as a whole. Such an organization also allows Underwood to better address his non-Latter-day Saint audience on grounds they are more prone to recognize and "make Mormonism intelligible to them in the concepts and vocabulary of traditional Christian theology" (p. 8).

It should be noted that Underwood does not have his principal training in theology, but in history. Even given Underwood's focus on the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and on its unique worldview and doctrine through his many publications, some may wonder if he is qualified to write on such a topic. Although he may lack a degree in theology, he makes up for this in his careful use of sources throughout the book—a brief glance through the Works Cited and numerous footnotes will show that Underwood has done extensive reading on each topic discussed. Further, it should be noted that this book is not intended to be a definitive work on the subject, and more dialogue is invited by the author himself. In his introduction, Underwood states that the parameters of the book required that he focus on what Latter-day Saint apostles and prophets have taught rather than citing at length the work of Latter-day Saint scholars (who, in a discussion regarding the doctrine of the Church, by

1. Grant Underwood, *Latter-day Saint Theology among Christian Theologies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2025).

nature maintain a less important position than that of the scriptures or prophets) (pp. 12–14). He also states that he "leaves to other authors the detailed excavation and reconstruction of Mormon thought from earlier periods in the church's history," and notes that this work necessarily had to focus its citations of major Christian theologians (including the Church Fathers of the early centuries AD) rather than draw comparisons to smaller Christian churches that would likewise be possible (pp. 13–14). So, while he may not have the same qualifications as others who have written introductory textbooks on Christian theology, Underwood is absolutely qualified to tackle this issue, especially given the premises of this work itself and its own limitations given the scope of the topic (all of which are acknowledged by Underwood).

Furthermore, the question has been raised to me in conversations with others if, given this book's focus and publisher, any effort was made to undersell the Latter-day Saint position in an effort to be accepted by Eerdmans (a typically Protestant publisher) or by other Protestants as a whole. I am pleased to say that any who takes the time to read this book will come away knowing that this is not the case. Great care is taken throughout the work to emphasize both the similarities to other faiths and also the unique aspects of our theology. And, for their part, Eerdmans has been open in its desire to "hand the microphone" to an active Latter-day Saint and allow him to tell their primarily traditional Christian audience what Latter-day Saints believe.[2] The approach to better understand other faiths that Eerdmans appears to be taking can also be seen in a similar book they published the same year that serves as an introduction to Jewish theology, written by a Jewish scholar and intended for a Christian audience.[3] Reading these books, one would be hard-pressed to find an instance where the author felt strong-armed into conceding anything in order to make the book more

2. Kurt Manwaring, "Why Did Eerdmans Publish a Book on Latter-day Saint Theology?" *From the Desk* (blog), 14 November 2025, fromthedesk.org/eerdmans-publishing-latter-day-saint-theology/. This is an interview with the editor-in-chief of Eerdmans, James Ernest, during which he explains that while Eerdmans had published a polemical expose on the Church some years ago, it was not a fair portrayal of the Church and this book was seen as an opportunity "to help Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox believers come to grips with Mormon thought" while avoiding the pitfalls that polemical approaches would take. Furthermore, Eerdmans is "likely to want to begin our engagement with traditions outside of mainstream Christianity by inviting representatives of those traditions to explain their own traditions."
3. See Tzvi Novick, *Judaism: A Guide for Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2025).

acceptable to Eerdmans's traditional audience. Rather, it is clear from the first page that *Latter-day Saint Theology* is intended to help other Christians better understand Latter-day Saint beliefs and practices.

As such, "this book is not addressed to Latter-day Saints, though they may profit by reading it" (p. 8). I concur with Underwood. I believe that this book is useful for Latter-day Saints and they will profit by reading it for a variety of purposes. Where other reviews of this book by non-Latter-day Saint scholars and theologians have focused on how this book helps clarify the restored gospel for outsiders, I will focus this review on how the book can be useful to Latter-day Saints specifically.[4] In particular, I will focus on three points. First, this book will help Latter-day Saints better understand other Christian faiths and traditions. Second, this book will help Latter-day Saints better communicate their beliefs to other Christians in a way that both parties can understand. And finally, while the book itself is not written to be apologetic in nature, it can be useful for apologetic defenses of Latter-day Saint faith and doctrine as a restoration of ancient Christianity.

Understanding Other Christian Faiths and Traditions

Underwood's book is extremely well researched and covers a wide variety of Christian thought from Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant interpretations. While Christians (including Latter-day Saints) may have a general idea of how each branch of Christianity developed and unique doctrines to each branch, many may not know much more about other Christian denominations outside their own. For Latter-day Saints, we find ourselves in a unique position as neither Catholic nor Orthodox nor Protestant. As such, though we share beliefs with all three, many may not properly understand or even be aware of certain beliefs in other Christian denominations and will walk away from this book having learned more and gaining a better understanding of other Christians.

For example, most are aware that some Christian churches (such as the Catholic or Anglican churches) practice infant baptism (or

4. See, for example, John G. Turner, "Review of *Latter-day Saint Theology Among Christian Theologies* by Grant Underwood," *BYU Studies* 64, no. 2 (2025): 171–74; Robert D. Cornwall, "Review: *Latter-Day Saint Theology Among Christian Theologies*," *Word & Way*, 10 April 2025, wordandway.org/2025/04/10/review-latter-day-saint-theology-among-christian-theologies/. See also Manwaring, "Why Did Eerdmans Publish a Book on Latter-day Saint Theology?" for similar remarks on this book's usefulness for non-Latter-day Saints by James Ernest.

pedobaptism). However, less commonly discussed is why this practice emerged or why it is continuously practiced to this day. In his discussion of this practice, Underwood does not take anything for granted, nor does he assume that his audience will know the complex history surrounding this topic. As such, he clearly and concisely discusses why pedobaptism emerged and what caused other Christians to reject this idea in favor of believer's baptism. (It should be noted that this is the same approach he takes for all other issues raised in this book, making it very accessible to readers of any theological background.) Reading this discussion, one can appreciate the objective tone that Underwood utilizes as he shares the reasons each side has to offer for their preferred mode of baptism, and how Latter-day Saint doctrine fits into the wider discussion on the proper age for baptism (pp. 377–83).

Another long-standing issue in Christian theology has surrounded the concepts of grace, faith, and works. Many Christians maintain that we are saved by grace regardless of our works, while Latter-day Saints and other Christians maintain that good works are a vital aspect of our salvation. In his discussion on soteriology, these issues are addressed. In discussing the long history of these topics, Underwood notes how "from Augustine onward," some theologians have tried to make sense of how God's grace could be irresistible without eliminating the free will and choice of the believer, culminating in Calvin's more famous take on the irresistible grace of God (p. 226).

Underwood includes a discussion on how Paul discussed grace and works, the epistle to the Romans in the New Testament, and how they were intended to function alongside one another (pp. 243–45). This discussion certainly could have been longer and could have benefited by more direct mention of the "New Perspective on Paul" in scholarship that most strongly advances how grace and works worked alongside one another in Paul's writings (especially regarding a proper understanding of faith and grace in the Bible given their first-century definitions). It is understandable, though, why Underwood would instead focus his attention on specific churches, such as the Orthodox faith, that advocate for a position similar to the Latter-day Saints (p. 244).

Ultimately, the discussion on grace can help Latter-day Saints better understand what factors led to different churches coming to different views on these important topics and how Latter-day Saints' understanding of these doctrines is rooted in both historical and

biblical Christianity (see especially pp. 253–67). As always, he does not disparage any other viewpoint and focuses only on helping his readers understand the different views.

Similarly, Latter-day Saints may be unfamiliar with many Christian churches' views of priesthood authority. For this discussion, Underwood helpfully splits the topic into "ministerial priesthood" and the "priesthood of all Christians" (pp. 339, 344). Though there are many churches that do emphasize the priesthood of all believers, many do distinguish between the ministry and the "priesthood" inherent in being a Christian. And, because Latter-day Saints do not use the term "priesthood of all believers," we may miss that not all churches view this term in the same ministerial light. Through his discussion, lay Latter-day Saint readers may be better able to appreciate why some Christians believe in this "priesthood of all believers" and how not all Christians view it in the same way. Using phrases such as "every member a minister," many emphasize that all Christians are called to share the gospel with their neighbors and do not all view this in the same vein as ministerial authority given to ordained priests (p. 346). Underwood also notes how the restored Church distinguishes between these two ideas: there is a ministerial priesthood received through the laying on of hands, and Church leaders have taught that all Saints — men and women — can exercise priesthood authority in their callings, and each Latter-day Saint man and woman receives priesthood power and authority through the temple endowment (pp. 347–50).

Toward Better Communication

Such comparisons invite Underwood's audience to better understand each other. The discussion regarding the priesthood is also an example of the second point in my review: Namely, this book can have a great capacity to help Latter-day Saints communicate their beliefs with other Christians. Oftentimes, interfaith dialogues have a tendency for either party to talk over the head of the other simply because the language used to express the same idea differs between churches.

Other examples could be used to further illustrate this point. For example, Latter-day Saints use the term "Godhead" to describe the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as the supreme authority in the universe that are unified in purpose, each being their own separate personage. For other Christians, the term "Trinity" is used. What is often lost in translation is just how varied that beliefs in the "Trinity" can be. While many Christians maintain that the Trinity is a "divine mystery" (p. 44),

Underwood notes that our understanding of three divine beings united in purpose is close to how some other Christians may view the Trinity. Not only have early Christians, such as Origen, described the Trinity/Godhead as three divine beings united in purpose, but "social Trinitarianism" likewise views the Trinity in these terms (pp. 48, 51). While differences exist between social Trinitarianism and the Latter-day Saint understanding of the Godhead (p. 53), by describing various beliefs regarding the Trinity, Underwood is able to "translate" our beliefs and the beliefs of other Christians into language that each will understand, allowing them to better recognize how our beliefs may align (or differ) with their own (p. 7). This is a skill that is, more often than not, underappreciated in interfaith dialogues.

Another example of "translation" of beliefs can be found in chapter 9, discussing the role baptismal interviews play in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. While early baptisms in both The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the early Christian church appeared to be more spontaneous, as time progressed both developed traditions regarding the preparation an individual should receive before baptism. In Catholic and Orthodox churches today, these individuals may be referred to as "catechumens" and be expected to "affirm the faith by responding to a series of baptismal interrogatories" prior to baptism (p. 384). Though we do not refer to those seeking admission to the Church by this term (instead opting for "investigators" or "friends"), and though the process for the initiate may differ between Christian churches, the underlying idea is the same, and Underwood's presentation allows Christians of any stripe to better understand the processes involved in each faith tradition (p. 385). Such can also be used to explain to non-Latter-day Saints why we hold these interviews in the first place to show that it is not a unique practice when viewed in the broader spectrum of Christianity.

An Apologetic Resource

Regarding the apologetic use this book provides, it should be noted that Underwood emphasizes that his book was not written to persuade anyone of the truthfulness of any doctrinal position he discusses:

> While the theological expressions discussed here are treated with empathy and respect, they are also not promoted. The volume seeks to investigate, not indoctrinate, to analyze, not catechize. Its objective is to probe, not

> propagate, the theological viewpoints under study. In short, it endeavors to explain, not persuade. (p. 8)

Regarding this, Underwood succeeds, as his book is written in such a way that doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ are explained clearly in a way that other Christians will be able to understand without being polemical or intended to proselytize.

In doing so, it should not be said that Underwood does not give the Church or its doctrines the merit they deserve. Just because something is written non-polemically does not mean that it is written in an effort to undersell our position. Rather, Underwood explains the doctrines, beliefs, and practices of the Church of Jesus Christ clearly and defensibly. He does not concede any point of doctrine in order to "fit in" with other Christians, nor does he disparage any faith tradition that disagrees with Latter-day Saint belief or practice. A tone of objectivity is maintained, as should be expected for any academic treatment on the topic. For this, Underwood is to be praised in presenting the doctrines of the restored gospel in a clear and concise manner to non-Latter-day Saints. This alone can be useful for apologists who strive to accurately relate our beliefs to others and understand others' beliefs as well.

As Underwood strives to explain beliefs of other faith traditions, he necessarily provides an overview of many of the beliefs in question. Often, each chapter will include a scholarly overview of the topic at point and will trace the history of the belief from early Christianity to the present. Each topic is thoroughly covered, allowing one to see a brief overview of the history of a particular doctrine's development among major branches of Christianity.

Take, for example, the first chapter on theology proper, that is, the study of God himself. Underwood begins the chapter by demonstrating the present scholarly view of anthropomorphism in the Bible: Namely, God did not just appear to have a body to the authors of the Old Testament, "he actually *has* one" (p. 19). Though this belief was eventually rejected by later Christian and Jewish thinkers, "this would all be challenged by the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, who dramatically reclaimed the physicality of God and sought to bridge the unbridgeable chasm between finite and infinite" (p. 20). Underwood provides a brief history of why the doctrine of an embodied God was eventually replaced by its metaphorical counterpart as well as how that doctrine was challenged by other Christian thinkers (pp. 20–24), after which he expounds on the doctrine of The Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints on this topic. In so doing, Underwood not only places our belief in an embodied God in its proper context among other Christians' views on the subject but also shows how this doctrine fits closer to the earliest beliefs on this topic. (We might even say how Joseph Smith restored this doctrine.)

Another instance where this is seen is in chapter 12, which discusses eschatology or the theology of the end times and destiny of mankind. In this chapter, Underwood lays out the aspects of the plan of salvation pertaining to the afterlife, including our belief that there are three kingdoms of glory that we can inherit based upon our actions and our commitment to follow Christ and keep our covenants with God. Underwood notes that such an idea was maintained by early Jewish and Christian writers, and even that "the notion that all receive the same degree of glory in heaven . . . was condemned at synods in Rome and Milan near the end of the fourth century," believing rather that our faithfulness determined the quality of heavenly reward we received (p. 526). Though the idea of multiple heavens was eventually lost, the idea of multi-tiered rewards perpetuated among the Reformers as well (pp. 526–27). Underwood's discussion highlights how the idea of multiple levels of heaven fits neatly into Christian thought, while also demonstrating how Joseph's visions in Doctrine and Covenants 76 and 19 expands upon this belief by expanding heaven and shrinking hell (pp. 527–32).

Similarly, the Latter-day Saint belief of exaltation is not only compared to Protestant beliefs of eternal progression in the afterlife (p. 536), but also the Orthodox belief of *theosis* while highlighting how Latter-day Saint belief differs from these beliefs as well (pp. 535, 539–42). However, even though we may differ on some aspects of these points, Underwood demonstrates how the restored gospel fits neatly into broader Christianity as a whole.

Summary

Other examples could be drawn upon throughout this book for each of the three points I discussed. To keep this review brief, however, I will not go over every point possible. Further, while some (whether Latter-day Saint or not) may quibble at some of the points or the presentation of the material in this book, I find that it is an excellent primer on each topic that invites further dialogue. Given the book's own stated purposes, Underwood masterfully succeeds in presenting the restored gospel in a way that other Christians can appreciate. Furthermore, he

does an excellent job in presenting the case that the restored gospel fits within the broader spectrum of Christian theologies. In fact, I would even call this book an act of consecration on Underwood's part. Having dedicated decades of his life to this research, Underwood is able to present the restored gospel to a wide audience that may help them reconsider their former assumptions about Latter-day Saints and their beliefs. This book is well worth the time and will be a welcome addition to any Latter-day Saint's library.



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A Comparative View of Causative Constructions in the Book of Mormon

Stanford Carmack

Abstract: *One type of English frequently found in the Book of Mormon is the finite causative construction. For example, "they caused* that *he should be bound" (Alma 30:29). There are 136 finite instances after the verb* cause*. Twenty-five pseudo-archaic texts do not have any finite causatives. The King James Bible has only three in more than 300 contexts. A subtype of the finite causative is the ditransitive causative. The King James Bible does not have any. The Book of Mormon has twelve. The most found in another text is four. This usage was obsolete around the year 1725. John Bunyan employed one ditransitive causative in about forty writings. Neither that nor his limited finite causative usage prompted pseudo-archaic imitation. In many ways, it is clear that there was no Bunyanesque influence on Book of Mormon English. The comparative evidence indicates that the Book of Mormon's causative complex did not originate with Joseph Smith.*

It is appropriate to compare the Book of Mormon text to written texts, since it reads like a written text in various ways. Relevant to this study, which treats a portion of the text's verbal complementation, there are more than 500 finite complements after verbs of influence. This kind of complementation is typical of formal, written registers.[1] There is also a very large amount of matching syntax between the Book of Mormon and earlier written texts.

For this study, as in my other studies of Book of Mormon English, I have made a best effort at searching the largest databases, using many spelling variants and searching for both continuous stretches of language and discontinuous combinations. The primary sources

searched are in the accompanying note.[2] I use WordCruncher for searches,[3] employing filters and taking into account punctuation and many syntactic possibilities, as needed. Consequently, the searches are good at gathering a wide variety of syntactic examples. Nevertheless, later studies will be able to improve on these results since databases improve over time. Examples have been missed due to incomplete and flawed databases.

In searching these databases over the past eleven years, I have found that the Book of Mormon has dozens of outliers of historical English usage, in some cases extreme outliers, such as its "save it were|be" phraseology. In cases such as these, the Book of Mormon seemingly fills gaps in historical English usage that were little used, though the syntactic structures could have been frequently used by analogy. In the case of the archaic syntax "save it were," there are fewer than ten original instances in the databases before 1830; at present I know of six. Joseph Smith dictated seventy-seven of them.

Numbers of Words in the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon text that I searched for this study has 270,002 indexed and tagged words. (See the end of note 1 for the critical text assembled by Royal Skousen that was digitized for searching in WordCruncher.) There are 252,355 words marked as nonbiblical—mostly occurring outside identifiable biblical quotation sections. There are 17,168 words marked as biblical; they are part of thirty-six biblical sections. There are 479 words marked as part of the two witness statements. For this study, 252,350 is the number used most often in comparisons and for normalization.

Comparison of *Cause* and *Make*

The focus of this paper is on a subset of the text's verbal complementation after verbs of influence (suasive verbs).[4] The verb *cause* obligatorily takes a complement in English. As an example, it would be ungrammatical to say "they caused" without a complement. Sometimes the complement is an object: "they caused trouble"; sometimes it is a verbal complement: "they caused us to wait." The latter is called a *causative construction* (*causative*, for short). The verb *make* is also a causative verb. In present-day English, the expression with the verb *make* would most often be "they made us wait." In earlier

English, "they made us to wait" was a possibility as well. EEBO has eleven original instances of "they made us to <infinitive>."

In nonbiblical portions of the text, the Book of Mormon has 235 causative constructions after the verb *cause*, and ten after the verb *make* (for example, "I will make that thy food shall become sweet"; 1 Nephi 17:12). The King James Bible (not including the Apocrypha) has 303 causative constructions after the verb *cause*, and 291 after the verb *make*.

For both causative verbs in the Book of Mormon and the King James Bible, the finite–infinitive complementation binaries contrast sharply, as indicated in table 1. Specifically, in the King James Bible, after both verbs, verbal complementation is almost entirely infinitival (99.3 percent infinitival; for example, "they caused it to be proclaimed"; Exodus 36:6). But in the Book of Mormon, complementation is mostly finite after the verb *cause* (57.9 percent); and after the verb *make* there is an equal split (five of each).[5]

Table 1. Causative constructions in scriptural texts: instances and infinitive rates.

	cause	***make***
King James Bible	303 (99.0%)	291 (99.7%)
Book of Mormon	235 (42.1%)	10 (50.0%)

Biblical passages

In biblical sections of the Book of Mormon, there are seven *cause* causatives, all infinitival and all found in the King James text.[6] These are not included in the tally of 235 *cause* causatives. Also, in biblical sections, there are seven *make* causatives, all infinitival and all but 2 Nephi 7:2 found in the King James text.[7] Only 2 Nephi 7:2 is counted as one of the ten *make* causatives in the Book of Mormon:

> I *make* the rivers a wilderness and *their fish to stink*.

The end of this sentence shows a difference from the biblical reading, which is "I make the rivers a wilderness: *their fish stinketh*" (Isaiah 50:2). This is one of quite a few complex differences between biblical readings and what is found in biblical sections of the Book of Mormon.[8]

As indicated above, the causative verb distribution (*cause*|*make*) in nonbiblical sections of the Book of Mormon is 235|10 (96%|4%). This preferential use of *cause* over *make* for the causative verb was

atypical for the year 1830. It is also unlike King James usage, whose distribution is 303|291 (51%|49%).

We have been told repeatedly that Joseph Smith imitated King James English as he dictated, even though there are many stark differences between biblical English usage and the language he dictated, in thousands of cases, such as in finite complementation rates after many verbs and the lexical distribution of the causative verb. Another clear difference involving rhetorical *if* is discussed below.

Causative syntax and a historical view of causatives

Consider the causative expression, "they caused us to wait." Expressed with a finite complement, this would be "they caused that we waited" or "they caused that we wait" (tense-leveling in the dependent clause) or "they caused that we should wait" (general case: "cause$_{[verb]}$ *that* X <verb.phrase>"). In the last finite expression, the function of the modal auxiliary verb *should*, historically speaking, was primarily grammatical rather than semantic.

Except for one partial exception,[9] all finite causative constructions after the verb *cause* in the Book of Mormon have embedded modal auxiliary verbs; most of the time the modal is *should*. The other two embedded modals occurring in the text are *shall* and *may*. Historically speaking, *should*, *shall*, and *may* were the modals most commonly used, and the absence of a modal auxiliary verb was quite common as well. The use of the modals *might*, *will*, and *would* was less common.

The Book of Mormon dataset of 235 *cause* causatives, which are about 58 percent finite, disproves the idea that Joseph Smith dictated in the same way he spoke, since no one spoke English that way. The following paragraph provides independent confirmation of this. *Cause* causatives began to be used in Late Middle English as mostly infinitival in their verbal complementation, not finite. By Late Modern English they were even more infinitival. This observation is not limited to Book of Mormon causatives, but applies to hundreds of instances of verbal complementation in the text, after quite a few other verbs, most notably after the verbs *command* and *suffer*. There are more than 500 finite complements after suasive verbs in the text. This means that large amounts of its English usage might be different from how Joseph spoke.

In 2018, two linguists discussed historical causative syntax in English. Hubert Cuyckens stated that "the replacement of finite *that*-clauses by *to*-infinitives with causative verbs would already have

occurred in the transition from OE to ME [Old English to Middle English]."[10] (Causative constructions with the verb *cause* only began in the fourteenth century; before that, other verbs were used.) In an accompanying paper, Brian Lowrey made the following observations about causatives: "The shift from finite to non-finite complementation remains one of the elements that characterize the transition from the OE to the ME period"; "I should perhaps begin by confirming the essentially marginal status of finite causative complements in ME"; "his figures show that finite complements in general occur only occasionally with causatives throughout the ME period, suggesting that, like *that* complements to other verbs, they become less frequent over time."[11]

Moreover, the language of Joseph Smith's mother's biographical book,[12] dictated after his death, repeatedly disproves that he dictated the same way he spoke (she was born in 1776). Although both books were dictated, the linguistic usage and patterns of their dictated English are sharply different, in many different ways, including in causatives and verbal complementation. These differences are often not explainable as a pseudo-archaic response on the part of Joseph Smith, as in the case at hand. That is, the preferential finite pattern of complementation in causative constructions in the Book of Mormon is not a pseudo-archaic pattern.

Historical outliers of finite causatives

The language that Joseph Smith dictated in 1829, as found in both the original and printer's manuscripts, has 136 finite *cause* causatives (for example, "they caused that he should be bound"; Alma 30:29). I have tried to determine the historical upper bound of this finite causative usage in English-language texts, considering more than 300,000 earlier texts. The most I have found so far in one text is eighteen (in about 143,700 words). It is a 1620 translation from Latin by a native French speaker who was fluent in English.[13] The influence of French and Latin syntax led to the text being an outlier in its finite causative usage. That influence was absent in the case of the Book of Mormon; Joseph Smith was a monolingual English speaker in 1829.

Trailing this 1620 translation in finite causative usage, four translated texts dating between 1583 and 1664 were found to have twelve each, but with much lower finite rates than the 1620 translation, whose rate exceeds 75 percent. The finite rates in these four texts range

between three and 21 percent. Two are Latin translations; two are French translations.[14]

It is possible that there is another English-language text with more than eighteen finite causatives, but less likely that it is an original English-language composition. An earlier text is more likely than a later one, because finite rates gradually fell over time. At this point, the vast majority of longer early modern texts have been searched, since they are part of the early modern corpus of the approximately 60,000 texts searched. The early modern database is also much more accurately transcribed than the eighteenth-century ECCO database, which is much less likely to have texts with many finite causatives. In any event, if an earlier text with more than eighteen is found, then the difference between the Book of Mormon and the next highest text will be less than 118. Yet the difference could still be quite large.

Finite rates, instances, and intensity

This study considers finite causative rates and finite instances (or tokens) as possibly statistically significant values. The finite rate, as calculated here, is independent of the number of words in a text or corpus. It is an internal rate calculated as the number of finite causatives divided by the total number of causative constructions in a text or corpus. Although tokens can be normalized, the raw numbers might be statistically significant since large numbers might indicate sustained use. This is distinct from a limited amount of finite usage in a short text or limited clumping of finite usage in a long text. To take this into account, I have calculated a normalized finite intensity for individual texts and corpora. The normalized intensity is the finite rate multiplied by a normalized value of finite tokens. Of course, calculating usage intensity in other cases, based on the total number of words, also differentiates sustained use in a longer text from limited use in a shorter text.

The finite intensity of *cause* causatives in the Book of Mormon is 31.0, normalizing on the basis of a text length of 100,000 words. The normalized finite intensity for the King James Bible, not including the Apocrypha, is only 0.004. The finite intensity in the pseudo-archaic texts with causatives is zero, since there are no examples of finite causatives at all, neither with the verb *cause* nor with the verb *make*. The pseudo-archaic authors who used causatives, in the corpus of twenty-five texts, had more than 100 opportunities to employ a finite

cause causative, but they did not do so. These values will be revisited, in a comparative way, after the following section.

In view of these stark contrasts in finite intensity, neither biblical influence nor pseudo-archaic influence on Book of Mormon causatives is supported. On the other hand, the King James Bible's extremely low finite intensity is similar to the pseudo-archaic intensity of zero, so biblical influence was possible. The Book of Mormon, in possibly having more than 100 finite causatives than earlier texts, has a finite intensity that could be uniquely high. In any event, it is an un-English pattern.

Bunyanesque Influence on Book of Mormon English

William L. Davis has recently proposed that the English usage of John Bunyan (1628–1688) noticeably influenced Joseph Smith (1805–1844) in the spiritual language he chose in dictating the Book of Mormon in 1829.[15] I first noted linguistic overlap ten years ago, also noting extensive non-overlap. Davis's theory of Book of Mormon English sees a text with substantive and syntactic errors beyond those traditionally recognized as mistakes. Some explanations lack textual support; others are unlikely. I do not favor implausible naturalistic explanations over the possibility of specific revelation to Joseph Smith, since I do not view the latter as a zero-probability case.

One problem relevant to studies of Book of Mormon English is that the topic is vast. There is no way to properly treat the subject in a paper, not even in a short series of papers. Those who might think that Davis's paper provides a thorough analysis of Book of Mormon English ought to know that he was limited in what he could cover due to the constraints of article length in journals.

Davis mentioned the verb *cause* in his paper, but did not discuss it, presumably due to scope limitations. The normalized finite intensity of *cause* causatives in thirty-nine writings by John Bunyan is only 0.22.[16] This is less than 1 percent of the Book of Mormon's finite intensity. Moreover, there is no observable Bunyanesque influence in pseudo-archaic writings toward finite causatives.

Before comparing Bunyan's causative usage further, it is worth mentioning two items of Davis's analysis and two items of counterevidence to Bunyanesque influence on Book of Mormon English. There are many such items, which cannot be discussed here due to scope limitations.

As for what he covered in his paper, there were errors in his analysis. Here, I confine myself to the following two points. First, a number of

times, vocabulary that Bunyan employed, which did not match the targeted vocabulary usage of the Book of Mormon, was used to explain it. For example, the preposition/conjunction *but*, although not used as a subordinating conjunction by Bunyan, was used to explain the possible use of *but* as a subordinating conjunction in the Book of Mormon.

Second, in order to explain the Book of Mormon's un-English "if, and" expressions, non-matching biblical syntax was used. Specifically, the syntactic coordination found in Matthew 17:20 and Luke 17:6 does not match the coordination found in Helaman 10:9 and elsewhere, yet it is used to explain the odd syntax.[17] A clear example of this distinctive, original Book of Mormon usage, after a *when*-clause, is the following: "*when* Coriantumr had leaned upon his sword, that he rested a little, *and* he smote off the head of Shiz" (Ether 15:30).

Counterevidence to Bunyanesque Influence

Davis did not mention many items of counterevidence to his theory that Bunyanesque English influenced Joseph Smith. For example, the Book of Mormon has early modern periphrastic *did* usage that is not in Bunyan's writings or pseudo-archaic texts or the King James Bible. The main one is archaic "did have," which was very uncommon in Early Modern English. I have verified only about twelve early modern instances (late modern instances are emphatic, contrastive, legalistic, or poetic). Only the Book of Mormon has many examples of archaic "did have." I specifically mentioned this aspect of the text in the 2015 paper.[18]

Another item of counterevidence is the "if so be" and "if it so be" difference. Both phrases are primarily characteristic of earlier English, and both were popular in Late Middle English. Indeed, "if it so be" was more popular earlier than later, which is noticeable in a scan of EEBO.

Table 2 shows a categorical difference in usage. The Book of Mormon turns out to have the most instances of "if it so be" of any text. The writing with the second most is shown, authored in the early fifteenth century. The text with the highest known usage rate is shown as well. The Book of Mormon ranks second in usage rate, after this 1540 translation,[19] but highest in intensity among known texts.

"If it so be" is one example of an extreme outlier in the Book of Mormon.[20] If this were a one-off match of archaism, this would not be noteworthy. That is not the case. The rhetorical *if*-phrase also triggers a subjunctive, modal *shall* in the following clause six times. This shows substantial archaic usage.

Table 2. A comparison of rhetorical "if so be" and "if it so be" usage.

Text | Corpus	*if so be*	*if it so be*	per 100k	Intensity
King James Bible (1611, with Apocrypha)	18	0	1.9	3.4
Pseudo-archaic corpus (25 texts, 1740–1888)	5	0	0.9	0.5
John Bunyan corpus (39 texts, 1656–1688)	9	0	0.6	0.5
Book of Mormon (1829, nonbiblical sections)	0	42	16.6	69.7
The birth of mankind (1540)	3	10	32.6	32.6
Lydgate's Troy Book (1412–1420)[21]	13	21	9.8	20.6

One interesting recent discovery is that this phrase exhibits an uneven distributional pattern in the text. Other linguistic features do as well, suggesting a division of the text into two sections. If we follow the order that Joseph Smith dictated the text in 1829, textual usage often motivates dividing the text into a section going from Mosiah 1 to 3 Nephi 7, and from 3 Nephi 8 to Words of Mormon. The first section is approximately 57.5 percent of the dictation (counting nonbiblical words). The forty-two instances of "if it so be" in these two sections of the dictation exhibit a 3|39 split. In percentage terms, the distribution of rhetorical "if it so be" usage is 7%|93%, in a 57.5%|42.5% division of the text. Usage rates are sharply different; almost all instances of "if it so be" occur in the second, shorter part of the dictation.

The most dramatic distributional difference in the text occurs with archaic, biblical "after that S" usage, whose raw distribution is 0|115 when using a 3 Nephi 7|8 boundary (examples begin at 3 Nephi 12:1). In a 57.5%|42.5% division of the text, then, the percentage usage of "after that S" is 0%|100%.

There are at least thirty of these English usage shifts noticeable in the text, including these two.[22] My interpretation of this textual reality is as follows: Thirty or more shifts show that a large-scale English-language usage shift was not accidental. But the shifts also could not have occurred from a conscious decision on Joseph Smith's part. The complex and extensive nature of the usage shifts was too diverse for him to have been the one who controlled the text.

Taken together, shifts in English usage suggest multiple English authorship. For those who reject revelation, this is a problem, since Joseph Smith was the only one who dictated the text. For those who

think he worded the text from revelation, this is a problem, since he was the only one who dictated the text.

Bunyan's complementation tendencies after *cause* and *suffer*

The strongest case to be made of similarity between Book of Mormon causatives and John Bunyan's usage is found in *The Holy War* (1682). The normalized finite intensity is 2.4,[23] one-twelfth of the Book of Mormon's usage. The intensity of the 1620 translation mentioned above (*The Anatomy of Arminianisme*), 9.8, is the only one noted that somewhat approaches the Book of Mormon.[24] Table 3 compares texts and corpora.

Table 3. Finite *cause* causatives and normalized finite intensity.

Text | Corpus	*n*	Finite intensity
Book of Mormon (1829)	136	31.0
The Anatomy of Arminianisme (1620)	18	9.8
The Holy War (1682)	7	2.4
John Bunyan corpus (39 texts, 1656–1688)	24	0.22
King James Bible (1611)	3	0.004
Pseudo-archaic corpus (25 texts, 1740–1888)	0	0

Although the 1620 translated text does not explain how someone in Joseph Smith's position could have dictated so many finite causatives, it does provide the profile of a person who might have done so on their own: an earlier translator who was translating from Latin or French into English (or from another language with a higher degree of finite causatives than English).[25]

Some of the twenty-five pseudo-archaic authors in the corpus I searched (see note 1) could have been familiar with Bunyanesque language. In fact, some of the more literate authors were probably more familiar with Bunyan's writings than Joseph Smith. For example, Roger O'Connor was a man of extensive reading and literary acquirements[26] and Richard Grant White was a Shakespearean scholar. Seven finite causatives by Bunyan in *The Holy War* did not prompt these authors to produce any finite causatives.[27] While no one consciously notes finite rates of causatives except linguists, pseudo-archaic evidence argues that any possible Bunyanesque influence on causative formation was more likely infinitival. Perhaps Bunyan's strong preference for infinitive causatives in dozens of writings (87.4 percent) was actually the salient aspect of his language that they internalized.

Consider also that Bunyan never employed finite complements after the suasive verb *suffer*, in at least 120 instances. This datapoint shows that for Bunyan, finite complementation tendencies after *cause* and *suffer* were distinct. They were not both 0 or 12 percent finite.

The Book of Mormon has sixty-three finite complements after *suffer* (63.6 percent finite). Bunyanesque influence is contraindicated. According to current searches, sixty-three is about forty more than any other text. This is one additional example of syntax that is sharply different from Bunyan's early modern usage. It is also another example of an extreme outlier in the Book of Mormon that points away from nineteenth-century, monolingual English authorship.

Ditransitive Causatives

The Book of Mormon, as originally dictated, had twelve instances of ditransitive complementation after the verb *cause*. (The current edition has eleven.) For example, "they did cause the Lamanites that they should harden their hearts" (Alma 21:3; general case: "cause$_{[verb]}$ <noun.phrase> that <pronoun> <verb.phrase>"). The 1620 text (*The Anatomy of Arminianisme*) does not have any ditransitive causatives. Database searches currently indicate that twelve ditransitive causatives are three times as many as occur in any other text. The text found with four is a 1616 translation from several Romance languages, with structural borrowing primarily from French syntax.[28]

Five ditransitive causatives in the Book of Mormon have two coreferential pronouns, as in "he will cause *it* that *it* shall soon overtake you" (3 Nephi 29:4; the first *it* was later removed). Four of these pronominal examples have a subjunctive, modal *should;* these four persist in the text:

> and did *cause us that we should* hope for our deliverance in him (Alma 58:11)
>
> *causing them that they should* suffer all manner of afflictions (Alma 60:17)
>
> to *cause us that we should* believe in some great and marvelous thing (Helaman 16:20)
>
> tempting them and *causing them that they should* do great wickedness in the land (3 Nephi 3:3)

Obsolescence of ditransitive causatives

Lowrey wrote that ditransitive *cause* syntax was obsolete by around 1700 (the end of the early modern period).[29] In all, I have verified at least forty ditransitive *cause* causatives, dating between 1430 and 1727.[30] So the above language is not nineteenth-century phraseology, and Joseph Smith did not speak with this kind of language. Some do not believe in the obsolescence of any textual usage in the Book of Mormon, including its twelve ditransitive causatives. They reject independent linguistic assessments such as Lowrey's.

The obsolescence of ditransitive causatives shows that potential analogical influence is not always operative. This syntax could have been used into the future, but it died out. There were analogs that conceivably could have prompted persistence of the construction, yet there was no persistence. One analog that potentially could have maintained the use was ditransitive *command* syntax, which continued to be used sporadically.

When a past usage has become obsolete, then it was no one's native expression anymore. Thus, Joseph Smith did not use his native expression when he dictated these. This observation is supported by dictating the causative complementation pattern differently from how he spoke. There are other linguistic features in the text that he did not dictate according to his native expression. He did not dictate "it supposeth me" syntax according to his native expression.[31] He did not dictate "they which" in object position according to his native expression (for example, "I remember *they which* are upon the isles of the sea"; 2 Nephi 29:7; one of twenty-three).[32] He did not dictate "if/when/after/as/because . . . and" syntax according to his native expression (more than forty instances). He did not dictate some obsolete vocabulary items according to his native expression. And so on and so forth.

"Did cause" and purposive syntax with the noun *cause*

Alma 58:11 has "did cause," where *did* is a past-tense marker, as in Early Modern English. At least twenty-one of these occur in causative constructions. Searches have indicated that the Book of Mormon has more "did cause" than any known text (forty-seven instances). The closest text was published in 1597 and has thirty-nine instances.[33] The normalized intensity of "did cause" in these two texts is unmatched.[34] EEBO indicates that archaic "did cause" usage rates peaked during the 1590s (1591–1600; 152 instances; 46.1 million words).[35]

English from the end of the sixteenth century ought to be of interest

to readers of the Book of Mormon since the text has a substantial amount of syntactic usage that was most prevalent in the history of the language around this time. One example that has received little or no attention is this phraseology: "for this cause that he might not bring upon him injustice" (Alma 55:19; general case: "for this cause that X may/might (not) <infinitive.phrase>.") The noun *cause* conveys an archaic meaning of *purpose* in these. The Book of Mormon has seven instances,[36] which is a high level of usage and a historical outlier. Only two texts have been found to have more, both published in the 1580s and both translations of Calvin.[37] Among early modern texts with at least two instances of this syntax, the Book of Mormon ranks seventh in per-word usage, right between these two Calvin translations. In intensity, these texts rank higher.

These two linguistic features of the text are examples of many similar items found in the Book of Mormon. The number of outliers makes it a statistically weak claim that Joseph Smith accidentally or deliberately expanded rare and obsolete English usage in dozens of different ways.

Bunyan and Malory

John Bunyan (1628–1688) employed one ditransitive causative in his writings, in *The Holy War* (1682). It has repeated pronouns but no modal auxiliary: "and you shall cause me that I [ø] dwell securely with you."[38] This did not lead to pseudo-archaic imitation. Thus, there is no support for saying that this ditransitive causative prompted Joseph Smith to imitate it.

Malory's Late Middle English usage is a closer match with the Book of Mormon's ditransitive causative modal usage:

> and that shall cause me that I *shall* not be known (Malory, *Morte d'Arthur* (1470–85), book 7, chapter 27, spelling modernized)
>
> he will cause it that it *shall* soon overtake you (3 Nephi 29:4)
>
> he can cause the earth that it *shall* pass away (1 Nephi 17:46)

Malory's English usage is also a strong match with the Book of Mormon's use of *whereby* to mean "why?" (Ether 8:9), *but if* to mean "unless" (Mosiah 3:19), and plural *mights* (ten and twelve instances, respectively), as well as other usage.

Scribal Shaping

One reviewer of this paper provided a list of conceivable naturalistic explanations for the Book of Mormon's causative complex. However, there is no pseudo-archaic or general textual support for these explanations. The one suggestion that was new to me was "scribal shaping." Even if Oliver Cowdery had shaped the language, there is no pseudo-archaic support for him shaping causatives the way they read.

Skousen has addressed this topic, without using the above term, in presentations and in a recent text-critical publication, *The Early Transmission of the Text*.[39] There is manuscript evidence against scribal shaping by Oliver. He read back to Joseph Smith the text he had scribed, and in fifteen cases changes to manuscript readings were made, from one acceptable reading to another equally acceptable reading, presumably under Joseph's direction.

Interpretive Conclusion

In summary, there is no earlier textual support for someone in Joseph Smith's position composing so many finite and ditransitive causatives. The idea that the text was specifically revealed explains why his 1829 dictation ended up with these. A revealed text also explains various features of the original manuscript, as Skousen has pointed out. A revealed text also explains the thirty-six closely quoted (non-paraphrastic) biblical passages, but with more than 700 differences from biblical readings, some complex.[40]

Bunyanesque influence is not supported textually in many different ways; most of these could not be discussed here due to scope limitations. Though there is overlap in linguistic features, the Book of Mormon has many not found in his writings. Some pseudo-archaic authors were probably as familiar as Joseph Smith with Bunyan's language, yet they did not employ the Book of Mormon's preferentially finite verbal complementation. As noted, *suffer* syntax is utterly different.

We also learn from the causative complex that Joseph Smith did not speak the way the verbal complementation reads in more than 500 instances. He did not use his native expression to word ditransitive causatives, similar to "it supposeth me" and many vocabulary items. He did not word the personal relative pronoun system, since it is not the way he spoke, nor is there biblical or pseudo-archaic support

for it.[41] He did not word the uneven textual distribution of "if it so be" and "after that S." And so on and so forth.



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Notes

1. Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, and Jan Svartvik, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (New York: Longman, 1985). "The mandative subjunctive is . . . formal and rather legalistic in style" §3.59, p. 357; "The indirect directive construction is rare and formal in comparison with the similar infinitive construction" §16.59. pp. 1212–13 [example of indirect directive: "She petitioned the king *that* her father (might/should) be pardoned"]; "The alternative *that*-clause construction, however, is more formal" §16.63, p. 1216.

2. Primary sources: *Early English Books Online* (EEBO): about 60,000 texts (1473–1700) and 1.45 billion words; quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebogroup. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (ECCO) has about 195,000 texts (1701–1800) and 9.3 billion searchable words (mostly late modern, but many earlier texts); gale.com/primary-sources/eighteenth-century-collections-online. *Evans Early American Imprint Collection:* 5,012 texts, about 100 million words, freely available as a WordCruncher ebook, quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans. These sources are all found online in the University of Michigan Library's digital collection. I search all of the above texts using WordCruncher.

   Two other sources are *Google Books,* books.google.com/advanced_book_search and *Google Books Ngram Viewer,* books.google.com/ngrams. In 2024, Google Books had about 20.5 billion words from 1801 to 1829, but it had only about 4.9 billion words from 1470 to 1800. This overrepresentation misleads the perceptions of casual researchers.

   Additionally, I use a corpus of twenty-five pseudo-archaic texts containing approximately 582,500 words. This corpus includes twelve longer texts (close to 561,300 words total): *Chronicle of the Kings* (1740), *Book of Jasher* (1751), *American Chronicles* (1775), *American Revolution* (1793), *Napoleon the Tyrant*

(1809), *History of Anti-Christ* (1811), *Late War* (1816), *Chronicles of Eri* (1822), *Ignatius and Polycarp* (1827), *Sacred Roll* (1843), *Healing of the Nations* (1855), and *New Gospel of Peace* (1863). Because of their length, and the possibility of sustained language use, these are the most important texts for comparison with the Book of Mormon.

The pseudo-archaic corpus also includes thirteen shorter texts (close to 21,100 words total): *Book of Preferment* (1742), *French Gasconade* (1743), *Parable Against Persecution* (1755), *Chronicles of Nathan* (1758), *Samuel the Squomicutite* (1763), *Book of America* (1766), *Chapter 37th* (1782), *Chronicles of John* (1812), *Book of Chronicles* (1812), *Chronicles of Andrew* (1815), *Muttonville Chronicle* (1830), *Reformer Chronicles* (1832), and *Chronicles of Gotham* (1888).

I have made this corpus freely available in WordCruncher, wordcruncher.com. Anyone can download the app and find the corpus in the book repository and search it precisely. To make this corpus, I consulted Eran Shalev, a pseudo-biblical expert, and Duane Johnson, who gathered many different pseudo-biblical texts more than ten years ago. More details are provided in Stanford Carmack, "Is the Book of Mormon a Pseudo-Archaic Text?," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 28 (2018): 177–232, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/is-the-book-of-mormon-a-pseudo-archaic-text.

All quotations from the Book of Mormon in this paper are taken from Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009). A slightly modified version is available as a searchable WordCruncher e-book with part-of-speech tagging in the WordCruncher book repository.

3. Information on this program is found at wordcruncher.com.
4. For background, see Stanford Carmack, "The Book of Mormon's Complex Finite *Cause* Syntax," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 49 (2021): 113–136, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-book-of-mormons-complex-finite-cause-syntax; Stanford Carmack and Royal Skousen, "Archaic Syntactic Structures in the Book of Mormon," in Royal Skousen, *Book of Mormon Critical Text Project*, vol. 3, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon*, pt. 3, *The Nature of the Original Language* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS] and BYU Studies, 2018), 575–84. The relevant portion of the second essay grew out of a working paper on Book of Mormon causatives that I began in 2014.
5. Alma 10:13 is included in the infinitive count of this paper. It was not counted in the 2018 text-critical essay cited at the end of note 4 herein.
6. 1 Nephi 20:21, 1 Nephi 21:8, 2 Nephi 13:12, 2 Nephi 19:16, 2 Nephi 23:10, 2 Nephi 23:11, 3 Nephi 12:32.
7. 2 Nephi 7:2, 2 Nephi 8:4, 2 Nephi 21:15, 2 Nephi 24:3, 2 Nephi 24:16, 3 Nephi 12:45, 3 Nephi 22:3.
8. Complex differences are by and large ignored by those who say that Joseph Smith read from a Bible as he dictated the biblical sections.

9. 1 Nephi 17:46: "he can cause that rough places *be* made smooth and smooth places *shall* be broken up."

10. Hubert Cuyckens, "Exploring English historical syntax," in *Explorations in English Historical Syntax*, ed. Hubert Cuyckens, Hendrik De Smet, Liesbet Heyvaert, Charlotte Maekelberghe (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2018), 12.

11. Brian Lowrey, "Finite causative complements in Middle English," in *Explorations in English Historical Syntax*, 106–108.

12. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother, Lucy Mack Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958). See also "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845," Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845; and "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845," (The History of Lucy Smith, Mother of the Prophet), Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/5. This history has approximately 90,000 words. I do not know how many words are original to Lucy.

13. Peter du Moulin, *The Anatomy of Arminianisme* [. . .] (London, 1620), name.umdl.umich.edu/A69245.

14. Pietro Martire Vermigli, *The Common Places of the Most Famous and Renowned Diuine Doctor Peter Martyr* [. . .] (London,1583), name.umdl.umich.edu/A14350; Charles Estienne, *Maison Rustique, or The Country Farme* [. . .] (London, 1616), name.umdl.umich.edu/A00419; Pierre de La Primaudaye, *The French Academie Fully Discoursed and Finished in Foure Books* [. . .] (London,1618), name.umdl.umich.edu/A05105; Felix Platter, *Platerus Golden Practice of Physick: Fully and Plainly Discovering* [. . .] (London, 1664), name.umdl.umich.edu/A90749.

15. William L. Davis, "Joseph Smith's Spiritual Language: The Presence of Early Modern English in the Book of Mormon," *Dialogue* 58, no. 2 (2025): 41–77.

16. Approximately 1.4 million words, twenty-four finite causatives, 191 total causatives, a 12.6 percent finite rate.

    Bunyan's writings, in publication order according to the EEBO database, begin with name.umdl.umich.edu and proceed as follows: ~/A30208, ~/A77832, ~/A77813, ~/A30128, ~/A30158, ~/A30200, ~/A30143, ~/A30152, ~/A30212, ~/A30136, ~/A30137, ~/A30138, ~/A30198, ~/A30159, ~/A30167, ~/A30209, ~/A30130, ~/A30170, ~/A30211, ~/A30164, ~/A30127, ~/A30168, ~/A58733, ~/A30153, ~/A30202, ~/B01830, ~/A30141, ~/A30197, ~/A30122, ~/A30125, ~/A30139, ~/A30206, ~/A30213, ~/A30214, ~/A30118, ~/A30160, ~/A30150, ~/A30201; plus *The Holy War* (1682), available in the ECCO database and elsewhere.

17. The "and it shall remove" in Matthew 17:20 begins an additional main clause following a main clause, while the "and it shall be done" in Helaman 10:9 begins a main clause following a subordinate clause. This leads to English grammaticality of clause-initial *and* in the Matthew and Luke examples, and ungrammaticality of clause-initial *and* in the Book of Mormon examples.

18. Stanford Carmack, "The Implications of Past-Tense Syntax in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 14 (2015): 153, 173,

interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-implications-of-past-tense-syntax-in-the-book-of-mormon.

19. Eucharius Roeslin, The Byrth of Mankinde [...] (London, 1540), name.umdl.umich.edu/A10887.

20. When most researchers draw conclusions about the Book of Mormon's English usage based on outliers, they mention those that can easily be identified, such as "it came to pass," "behold," and "yea." They do not mention outliers such as "if it so be," "save it were," "save it be," or "had spake." (Here I have only mentioned outliers that can be pointed out simply.)

21. John Lydgate, *Lydgate's Troy Book: A.D. 1412–20*, 3 vols. (London: Early English Text Society, 1906–10), archive.org/details/lydgatestroybono9701lydguoft, archive.org/details/lydgatestroyno9702lydguoft, archive.org/details/lydgatestroybookpartthreeber.

22. There is also uneven distribution of other features such as the following: "because that S," "before that S," "whoso," "wherefore," "it must needs be," object "they," the conjunctions "save" and "except," and the personal relative pronouns "that" and "who."

23. Approximately 97,000 words, seven finite causatives, twenty-one total causatives, a one-third finite rate.

24. Approximately 143,700 words, eighteen finite causatives, twenty-three total causatives, a 78.3 percent finite rate. This is the only text I have noted (besides the Book of Mormon) with at least twenty causatives and more finite than infinitive causatives.

25. A recent 2017 translation of an early seventeenth-century Yiddish text has sixty-six finite causatives. Morris M. Faierstein, ed., *Ze'enah U-Re'enah: A Critical Translation into English* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2017). The translation data are interesting but irrelevant to authorship of the Book of Mormon's finite causatives. As it turns out, the *cause* causatives are not even 25 percent finite, and the normalized finite intensity is only 2.9, less than one-tenth of the Book of Mormon's. (The numbers used to determine the intensity are as follows: $n_{[finite]}$=66; $n_{[total]}$=279; 23.7% finite; 540,000 words.)

    The finite causatives of this translation are historically atypical in their embedded modal use. The main oddity is that finite causatives have modal *will* (9×) but no modal *shall*. Overall, the embedded modal use, the low finite rate, the low finite intensity, and the lack of ditransitive causatives mean that it is not a close match with the Book of Mormon. The data were hastily pointed out to me as evidence that substantial finite use might have been expected in Joseph Smith's dictation.

26. John P. Prendergast, "Dangan and Roger O'Connor," *The Irish Monthly* 12, no. 127 (1884): 35.

27. There are many very short pseudo-archaic texts in old newspapers. There could be a finite causative in one of those. Even so, there is no possible sustained finite use in short pseudo-archaic texts.

28. The English of the following text has four ditransitive causatives. Charles

Estienne, *Maison rustique, or, The countrey farme* [. . .], trans. Richard Surflet and Geruase Markham (London, 1616), name.umdl.umich.edu/A00419.

29. Lowrey, "Finite causative complements," 125. According to Lowrey, the ditransitive causative, which he refers to as V+NP+*that*, "remains productive, albeit marginally, until the end of the [Middle English] period and even beyond, examples being found until [Early Modern English]." In a 2021 paper, I was more conservative than Lowrey in estimating the obsolescence of ditransitive *cause* syntax, noting a latest natural language example dated 1744. This potential example, however, is a false positive, and another example that I dated as *a*1732 (that is, *before* 1732, the year of the author's death) dates internally to 1723, leaving a 1727 example as the latest one.

    Itemized details: The ditransitive causative dated *a*1732 on page 127 of my "Complex Finite *Cause* Syntax" paper dates internally to 1723. The ditransitive dated 1727 seems to be accurately dated. The latest example given in this 2021 paper, dated 1744, is a false positive. The 1737 second edition shows that it is an infinitive construction, because of a comma that is missing in the 1744 fourth edition: "or cause them that they have**,** *to* be new tinned" (emphasis added). In other words, "cause them to be new tinned."

30. For a large sampling of these ditransitive *cause* causatives, see Carmack, "Complex Finite *Cause* Syntax," 124–27.

    Late nineteenth-century examples are resultative in nature, such as the expression "caused it that it should . . ." occurring here: babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924106296399&seq=323. This language is equivalent to "made it *so* that it would . . . ."

31. Stanford Carmack, "Why the Oxford English Dictionary (and not Webster's 1828)," *Interpreter*: A Journal of Mormon Scripture15 (2015): 65–77, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/why-the-oxford-english-dictionary-and-not-websters-1828.

32. Stanford Carmack, "Book of Mormon Grammar and Translation," *BYU Studies* 63, no. 3 (2024), 59. scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol63/iss3/4.

33. Raoul Lefevre, *The auncient historie, of the destruction of Troy* [...] (London, 1597), name.umdl.umich.edu/A05236.

34. Normalized intensity of "did cause" calculated per 10,000 words as 87.5 and 71.7.

35. The 1580s was the next highest decade of "did cause" usage (128 instances; 1581–1590; 48.3 million words).

36. In dictation order: Alma 9:25, Alma 55:19, Helaman 12:22, 3 Nephi 21:6, 1 Nephi 4:17, 1 Nephi 4:36, 2 Nephi 10:15.

37. Jean Calvin, *A harmonie vpon the three Euangelists* [. . .], trans. Eusebius Pagit (London, 1584), name.umdl.umich.edu/A16078; *M. Iohn Caluin vpon the Actes of the Apostles* [. . .], trans. Christopher Fetherstone (London, 1585), name.umdl.umich.edu/A17642. The 1584 translation probably has the most ever, twenty-three; the 1585 translation has at least eleven.

38. Carmack, "Complex Finite *Cause* Syntax," 127.

39. Royal Skousen, *Critical Text Project of the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon*, pt. 7, *The Early Transmission of the Text* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2024), 71–76.
40. Royal Skousen, *Critical Text Project of the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon*, pt. 5, *The King James Quotations in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU Studies, 2019), 19, 182, 210.
41. Stanford Carmack, "Personal Relative Pronoun Usage in the Book of Mormon: An Important Authorship Diagnostic," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 49 (2021): 5–36, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/personal-relative-pronoun-usage-in-the-book-of-mormon-an-important-authorship-diagnostic.

Easter and Doctrine and Covenants 138: Our Harrowing of Hell, Our *Descensus Christi ad Inferos*, Our Anastasis

Janet Ewell

Abstract: *Easter should be a feast for all our senses. Early Christians recounted the events between Christ's death and Resurrection with joy, and much in their accounts is familiar to us. Doctrine and Covenants 138 describes and celebrates Christ's visit to the world of the spirits between his death and Resurrection. As this revelation becomes part of our Easter celebration, we, like the early Christians before us, will find our Easter to be the feast of feasts.*

Doctrine and Covenants 138 can be our main course on Holy Saturday, the day between Christ's death and his Resurrection. It may become to our Easter what shepherds and wise men are to our Christmas. We should embrace this revelation with joy, just as early Christians celebrated with joy Christ's Holy Saturday descent to the spirit world and his redemption of the dead.

The vision Joseph F. Smith received in 1918, which became Doctrine and Covenants 138 in 1979, includes both restoration and revelation. It restores truths concerning Christ's visit to the spirit world; truths that were once widely known among early Christians. Although these beliefs were later diminished, dismissed, or misplaced in the Western Church, Christ's descent to the land of the dead is still remembered joyously in the Eastern Church.[1]

President Smith's vision was also a revelation that included at

1. It is commemorated on Holy Saturday, Holy Thursday, and two other days each year as part of the "Vesperal Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great." Basil was bishop in Caesarea Mazaca in Cappadocia.

least one doctrinal truth not previously known in the restored Church. Through this vision, we are invited to view Christ's saving actions between his death and Resurrection, actions that reveal "the great and wonderful love made manifest by the Father and the Son in the coming of the Redeemer into the world" (Doctrine and Covenants 138:3). If we build our Easter feast upon this revelation, our view of Christ's love may expand. We may find in it more mercy, love, forgiveness, and hope than most have ever dreamed possible — perhaps more than most of us reading this dare think possible. It can ease our aching hearts.

What could give us more cause to celebrate? In that spirit, and in the spirit of the "occasional" essay that is this paper, I have attached an appendix containing suggestions for four scenes that can contribute to our Holy Saturday's celebration including suggested scripts and lists of characters, props, and costumes.

The Descent to the Dead in the Primitive Church

Doctrine and Covenants 138 is a restoration of gracious and simple truths that were widely taught[2] in the Primitive Church:[3] that Christ descended into the land of the dead to rescue and teach at least some who were imprisoned there. Inklings of these teachings remain, though they are sometimes dismissed as medieval superstitions or simply metaphoric. Christ's mission between his death and his Resurrection is variously called the *Descensus Christi ad inferos* (Latin: Christ's descent to the lower world or descent to the dead[4]), the *Anastasis* (Greek: rising up, raising up, resurrection), or, by about 1000 CE, the *harrowing of hell* (Anglo-Saxon: the *siege of hell*).

2. "The narrative of Christ's descent was nearly omnipresent in the early Church." "Until the middle of the fourth century the descent was simply part of the narrative of Christ's saving work for humanity and of God's generosity in rescuing the lost and those who had not heard the proclamation of the good news during their life in the world." Martin F. Connell, "*Descensus Christi ad Inferos*: Christ's Descent to the Dead," *Theological Studies* 62 (2001): 262, 264, static .csbsju.edu/documents/Theology/10%20Descensus%20ad%20Inferos.pdf.
3. The "Primitive Church," is generally considered to extend up to the first Council of Nicaea in 325 CE.
4. Rufinus of Aquileia changed the phrase from *Descensus Christi ad inferos* ("Christ descending to those below") to *Descensus ad inferna* ("descending to the burning place," "to hell") in his *Commentary on the Apostles Creed* in about 400 CE. "The earlier stratum [writers who used the word *inferos*] portrayed Christ preaching to those who, while on earth, did not hear the word of God, while the latter [those who used the word *infernos*] described the reconciliation of sinners." Connell, "*Descensus Christi ad Inferos*," 262, 264n3.



Figure 1. The great emblem of Easter for 300 million Orthodox Christians and others, the Anastasis, shows Christ's rescue of Adam and Eve shortly after his Crucifixion. This early fourteenth-century fresco is the centerpiece of a side chapel of the Chora Church (now Kariye Mosque) in Istanbul. (Image courtesy of WikiMedia, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chora_Anastasis1.jpg.)

The *descensus* was familiar to early Christians. Works written by or attributed to Melito of Sardis, Clement of Alexandria, and Hippolytus of Rome speak of it as part of Christ's redemptive mission. Tertullian rails against the belief. The *Odes of Solomon* (written between 70 and 120 CE), the *Epistle of the Apostles* (second century), and *The Shepherd of Hermas* (written before 150 CE) refer to the *descensus* and use it to preach and to expound doctrine. Other works also refer to it.[5]

Early Christian works provide many examples of how commonly

5. In addition to scriptures thought to refer to the *descensus*, such as 1 Peter 3:18–21 and 4:18–21, "the descent to the dead is taken up in, among others, the works of Justin Martyr and Ignatius of Antioch; in Irenaeus of Lyons; Cyprian of Carthage; and, at greater length, in the writings of Tertullian. Testimony is found in the second-century eucharistic prayers of pseudo-Hippolytus and Melito of Sardis. The descent is mentioned in the writings of Epiphanius and Hilary of Poitiers; in the Alexandrians Origen, Clement, and Cyril." Connell, "*Descensus Christi ad Inferos*," 264n4.

Christ's descent was mentioned, taught, and celebrated in the Primitive Church. Much they taught would have seemed strange to nineteenth-century Christians in the Western World, but to today's Latter-day Saints it will usually seem familiar.

The following six sections provide early Christian mentions of specific beliefs that are also discussed in Doctrine and Covenants 138:

- Between his death and Resurrection, Christ visited the dead to redeem them (Melito; Hippolytus; Odes of Solomon; Epistle of the Apostles; Shepherd of Hermas; Tertullian, arguing for the contrary position).
- Christ taught and enlightened at least some of the dead who were not perfect nor sinless (Melito, Clement).
- Christ freed some of the dead from bodily death through the Resurrection (Melito, Hippolytus, Odes of Solomon, Epistle of the Apostles) and from sin through repentance (Odes of Solomon, Epistle of the Apostles).
- The dead would be judged by what they had done, whether good or evil (Epistles of the Apostles).
- The dead could teach others who were dead (Clement, Epistle of the Apostles).
- Baptism (the seal) might somehow be provided to the dead (Odes of Solomon, Epistle of the Apostles, Shepherd of Hermas).

Christ visited the dead to redeem them

The Homily for Holy Saturday, attributed to Melito of Sardis,[6] teaches of Christ's ministry between his Crucifixion and Resurrection. Melito

6. Some question whether Melito was the author of this homily and if it was really that early; very little in those first, turbulent days of Christianity has not been challenged. The homily has also been attributed to Epiphanius, Archbishop of Cyprus. Language from the text sometimes attributed to Melito is embedded in the text attributed to Epiphanius, but the second is a much longer and more elaborate homily. For the text of the homily attributed to Epiphanius, see "Our Father among the Saints Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus," *Saint George Melkite Greek-Catholic Church of Sacramento* (website), stgeorgemelkite.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/St.-Epiphanius-Holy-Saturday-Homily-full.pdf. (The *descensus* section begins on page 7.) Epiphanius lived most of his life after the Council of Nicaea and so would not be considered a primitive Christian. For the text attributed to Melito (and excerpted here) see "The Lord's Descent into Hell," *Vatican* (website), vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit_20010414_omelia-sabato-santo_en.html.

was a bishop in Smyrna in modern Türkiye, one of the seven churches in Revelation. We read in the homily that Christ

> has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, He has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve, He who is both God and the Son of Eve. . . . The Lord approached them bearing the cross, the weapon that had won him the victory. . .
>
> He took [Adam] by the hand and raised him up, saying, "Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light. I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. Out of love for you and for your descendants I now by My own authority command *all who are held in bondage to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened*, all who are sleeping to arise. I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in Hell. . . . Rise, let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly Paradise. I will not restore you to that Paradise, *but I will enthrone you in Heaven*. I forbade you the tree that was only a symbol of life, but see, I who am Life itself am now one with you. I appointed cherubim to guard you as slaves are guarded, *but now I make them worship you as God*. The throne formed by cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager. The Bridal Chamber is adorned, the banquet is ready, the eternal dwelling places are prepared, the treasure houses of all good things lie open. The Kingdom of Heaven has been prepared for you from all eternity."

The Homily for Holy Saturday reports Christ's victorious descent to free Adam and Eve and their descendants from death, to enlighten them, and to lead them back into God's presence "as God," using the imagery from Psalm 82:6 and the furnishings of the Holy of Holies.

Christ taught and enlightened the dead

Clement of Alexandria portrays Christ as a teacher as well as the Redeemer during his descent. Clement had expansive views of who could be saved. He writes that Christ descended to teach both the apparently unbaptized Hebrews and also to initiate the redemption of Gentiles and sinners. He writes, "the Lord preached the Gospel to those in Hades."

> The apostles, following the Lord, preached the Gospel to those in Hades. For it was requisite, in my opinion, that as here, so also there, the best of the *disciples should be imitators of the Master; so that He should bring to repentance those belonging to the Hebrews, and they, the Gentiles;* that is, those who had lived in righteousness according to the Law and Philosophy, who had ended life not perfectly, but sinfully.

This is because, according to Clement, "God is not only Lord of the Jews, but of all men."[7]

Christ brought freedom from death and sin

Hippolytus, a bishop in Rome who became a saint and martyr, wrote that Christ descended to overcome death and hell, to weaken the devil's power, and to give light to the righteous — the presumably *unbaptized* righteous, who died before his coming. The *Apostolic Traditions,* attributed to Hippolytus, seems to be a sort of handbook of instructions for bishops. This section may tell how to bless the Eucharist's bread and wine:

> We give thee thanks, O God, through thy beloved Servant Jesus Christ, . . .who, fulfilling thy will, and winning for himself a holy people, spread out his hands when he came to suffer, that by his death *he might set free them who believed on thee*. Who, when he was betrayed to his willing death, that he might bring to nought death, and break the bonds of the devil, and tread hell under foot, and give light to the righteous, and set up a boundary post, and manifest his resurrection, taking bread and giving thanks to thee said: Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you.[8]

7. Clement of Alexandria, "The Stromata, or Miscellanies," book VI, chapter VI, *Early Christian Writings* (website), earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-stromata-book6.html.
8. Burton Scott Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 35–36, archive.org/details/apostolictraditi0000hipp/page/34/mode/2up. Hippolytus was involved in many doctrinal controversies and was schismatic—he broke away with some followers from other presbyters (probably bishops) in Rome over, among other things, the relationship between the Father and the Son and the manner and extent to which Christ was both God and man. (These issues continued to strain the greater church's internal relations for at least four centuries.) He wrote extensively against heresies, both non-Christian, including Jewish heresies,

The anonymous *Odes of Solomon* dates from between 70 and 120 CE. They may have been written by a Greek or Syriac-speaking Jewish Christian who was familiar with the sorts of documents found at Qumran. ("The seal" was used to refer to baptism and its associated ordinances during the first millennium.)[9] The last ode relates these words in the voice of Christ:

> And I was not rejected though I was reckoned to be so. I did not perish, though they devised it against me.
>
> Sheol[10] saw me and was made miserable: Death cast me up and many along with me. I had gall and bitterness, and I went down with him to the utmost of his depth: And the feet and the head he let go, for they were not able to endure my face: And *I made a congregation of living men amongst his dead men*, and I spake with them by living lips: Because my word shall not be void:
>
> And those who had died ran towards me: and they cried and said, Son of God, have pity on us, and do with us according to thy kindness. And *bring us out from the bonds of darkness: and open to us the door by which we shall come out to thee*. For we see that our death has not touched thee. Let us also be redeemed with thee: for thou art our Redeemer.

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and against what he saw as Christian heresies. In 235 CE, under Emperor Maximinus, Roman persecution of Christians began anew; both Hippolytus and his chief doctrinal opponent (an anti-pope and a pope) were arrested and sent to the mines of Sardinia where they both died from the harsh conditions. They are honored as martyrs and saints. The work of Hippolytus is held in high regard in the Eastern Church.

9. See, for instance, Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 8:

   > "Seal" was the commonest baptismal designation in the second century. Some texts show the seal clearly as a mark of ownership and protection. For Christian usage in the relation to baptism there are two lines of thought—an eschatological and a juristic. There is a close relation of seal and name in the second and third centuries so that "seal" and "baptismal formula" are close together. Indeed "seal" is no separate baptismal rite but an interpretation of the baptismal bath.

   Ferguson further states, "Hermas, like *2 Clement,* identifies the seal with baptism" (p. 218) and baptism "was an immersion administered in the name of the Son of God and so was designated as a seal of his ownership and protection" (p. 220).

10. *Sheol* is the abode of the dead. It does not imply either punishment or glory.

> And I heard their voice; and *my name I sealed upon their heads*: For they are free men and they are mine. Hallelujah.[11]

We read that the victorious Christ descended to the dead, gave them life *and* redeemed at least some of them. Once again, temple imagery is invoked.

Christ will judge the dead according to their deeds

The Epistle of the Apostles, an anonymous second-century book, was rediscovered in 1895 and is preserved in Coptic and Ethiopic. In the voice of Christ, it recounts his descent into "the place of Lazarus" (perhaps the Lazarus in the parable in Luke 16), where he teaches the children of light and redeems them. It suggests that those he taught during his descent would teach others so they could also "come out of the prison-house."[12]

> 26 Verily I say unto you: the flesh shall arise, and the soul, alive, that their defence may come to pass on that day *in regard of that that they have done, whether it be good or evil*: that there may be a *choosing-out of the faithful* who have kept the commandments of my Father that sent me; *and so shall the judgement be accomplished with strictness*. . . .
>
> 27 For to that end went I down unto the place of Lazarus, and preached unto the righteous and the prophets, that they might come out of the rest which is below and come up into that which is above; and I poured out upon them with my right hand the water (?) [*baptism* in the Ethiopic text, unclear in the Coptic text] of life and forgiveness and salvation from all evil, as I have done unto you and unto them that believe on me. . . .
>
> 28 But so much the more have I redeemed you, the children of light, from all evil . . . *and every one that believeth on me by your means. For that which I have promised unto you will I give unto them also*, that they may come out of the prison-house and the fetters of the rulers.

11. "The Odes of Solomon," Ode 42:13–26, *Early Christian Writings* (website), earlychristianwritings.com/text/odes2.html.
12. "The Epistula Apostolorum," 26–28, *Early Christian Writings* (website), earlychristianwritings.com/text/apostolorum.html.

Christ commissions others to teach in the spirit world

The *Epistle of the Apostles* is also a rich source for other precepts including that the children of light were not only redeemed by Christ at his descent, but were sent as teachers to others so they also could be redeemed. In verse 28, as just cited, Christ promises those whom he has redeemed from all evil that "every one that believeth on me by your means" could also be redeemed.

This echoes the roughly contemporary teachings of Clement, also mentioned above, that Christ's apostles, in imitation of Christ, were to teach the gospel to the dead, including Gentiles and sinners.

Christ provides some means for the dead to receive baptism

The Shepherd of Hermas suggests that the Apostles taught and baptized repentant sinners among the dead.[13] In a parable, redeemed souls are compared to stones fit for building a tower, presumably representing the kingdom of God or the Church. The narrator asks the Shepherd:

> "Why, sir, . . . did the forty stones also ascend with [the Apostles] out of the pit, having already received the seal?" "Because," he said, "these apostles and teachers who preached the name of the Son of God, after falling asleep in the power and faith of the Son of God, preached it not only to those who were asleep, *but themselves also gave them the seal of the preaching. Accordingly they descended with them into the water, and again ascended*."[14]

Challenges to the *Descensus ad Inferos*

Primitive Christianity was not united on all points of Christian practice or belief. Tertullian argued *against* the idea of Christ's victorious and redeeming descent to the underworld to free the captives, though he accepted that Christ did spend "three days in the heart of the earth" so that the Patriarchs and prophets could be "partakers of Himself." Ironically, his arguments given *against* the teaching that Christ

13. Baptism seems to be referred to here as "the seal," as it often was in the early church (see note 9). *The Epistle of the Apostles*, verse 27, may also suggest, at least in the Ethiopic version, that baptism was available to "the righteous and the prophets."

14. "The Shepherd of Hermas," Parable 9:16, *New Advent* (website), newadvent.org/fathers/02013.htm.

redeemed at least some while his body lay in the tomb is a witness that others *did* believe it.[15]

Tertullian, a Carthaginian, was the first to write Christian theology in Latin,[16] and he frequently wrote against heresies, both worldly and within the Church. He took on Plato and the Stoics as well as the Jews, but kept his sharpest scorn for fellow Christians, including those who believed Christ rescued the righteous while his body lay in the tomb. Tertullian voices what he thought these heretical Christians would say: "that is just the reason why Christ went down into Hell — so that we should not have to go."[17]

According to Tertullian, there was no escape from hell until the Second Coming. Tertullian suggests Christians who hoped that Christ had rescued the just "would place the servants above their Lord, disciples above their Master, and . . . would no doubt loftily disdain the solace of awaiting the resurrection in the bosom of Abraham."[18] Not only were such Christians prideful in his eyes, they were slothful. Only a death not in "some gentle fever in a soft bed, but in the torture of martyrdom," granted access to paradise.[19] Only martyrs escaped hell before the Second Coming. "The only key that unlocks the gates of Paradise is your own blood. Look at my treatise on Paradise where I showed that all [other] souls are kept in Hell until the Second Coming of the Lord."[20]

Tertullian's forceful writings suggest that Christ's mission between his death and Resurrection, both its location and its purpose, was controversial in the early third century. But his writings acknowledge that others did believe that Christ both descended and rescued those who had died before his earthly ministry.

In Doctrine and Covenants 138 we see ancient and glorious teachings renewed, expanded, and set in the sacred context of Christ's redeeming work. Early Christians suggested, and the Doctrine and Covenants makes clear, that Christ's mission between his Crucifixion and Resurrection brought abundant mercy and hope: Christ visited

15. Tertullian, *Apologetical Works and Minucius Felix Octavius*, trans. Rudolph Arbesmann, Emily Joseph Daly, and Edwin A. Quain (Washinton, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1950), chapter 55, web.english.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Tertullian_On_the_Soul.pdf.
16. Many early theological works were written in Greek.
17. Tertullian, *Apologetical Works,* 298.
18. Tertullian, *Apologetical Works,* 298.
19. Tertullian, *Apologetical Works,* 299.
20. Tertullian, *Apologetical Works,* 300.

the dead to redeem them; Christ taught and enlightened the dead; Christ brought freedom from death and sin; Christ will judge the dead according to their deeds, good or evil; Christ commissions others to teach in the spirit world; and Christ provides means for the dead to receive baptism.

Why would anyone reject such hope and such mercy if they had once been taught about them? How could the *Descensus ad inferos*, the Anastasis, the harrowing of hell be so easily dismissed? Why is Doctrine and Covenants 138 not a cherished highpoint in our Easter celebration?

How Christians in the early Church, as well as more modern ones, received Christ's Holy Saturday descent to the dead is intertwined with at least three other questions:

- How many people would Christ save?
- Is our eternal fate sealed by our spiritual condition at the moment of death?
- If change after death is possible, could anyone else — living or dead — improve the lot of the deceased?

How many people would Christ save?

Would Christ save only a select group from among baptized Christians, or would he save almost everyone? Writers with expansive views of Christ's mercy and redemption tended to cherish the *descensus*.[21] These writers dared hope that Christ's redemption would extend to the presumably unbaptized prophets and patriarchs or beyond them to people who had not heard of Christ in mortality. Or, possibly, even to people who died as sinners.

In Hans Urs von Balthasar's *Dare We Hope?*, the author compares the highly expansive views of Origen with the narrower views argued for by Augustine. "Some passages in [Origen's] works allow at least a glimmer of hope for all men to shine through, almost always supported

21. See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved"?*, trans. David Kipp and Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014). Von Balthasar was a Catholic theologian who had been nominated to become a cardinal shortly before his 1988 death. While the book addresses the question of who will be saved, p. 31n6 surveys the literature concerning Christ's "descent to hell." Von Balthasar contributed greatly to the modern interest in the *Descensus Christi ad inferos*. He writes about the most expansive and the most limiting views in the early church concerning who could be saved in chapter 3, "Origen and Augustine."

by words from Holy Scripture."[22] Origen entertains, at least academically, the possibility that even devils "will in a future world be converted to righteousness because of their possessing the faculty of freedom of will."[23]

During the Decian persecutions in 250 CE, Origen was tortured for his faith. His health broken, he died in 253. Almost 300 years later the Emperor Justinan the First had him declared a heretic and ordered his books burned. (Origen also had written about the preexistence of souls.)

In contrast, Augustine, who was born roughly a hundred years after Origen died, puts forth one of the most limiting early views of who might be saved. The entire Book 21 in the *City of God* is devoted to the punishments of hell and the damned who are beyond the reach of mercy, either human or divine, according to von Balthasar.[24] Augustine advanced the idea of original sin through Adam's fall, making humankind a *massa damnata* (a condemned crowd). Accordingly, our corrupted nature leads us to sin, which leads to more damnation. For Augustine, "the whole of earthly life is depicted in terms of punishment and burden."[25] Infants were damned at birth and he condemns the *descensus* story as groundless. Augustine is considered a Doctor of the Church and was made a saint shortly after his death in 430 CE.

Is our eternal fate sealed by our condition at the moment of death?

Does our condition at death, despite death's apparently capricious timing, determine our fate? Or does Christ's victory over death also vanquish even this uncertainty? After death could we still turn toward God, learn, repent, and grow?[26] Many, though not all, of the early mentions of the *descensus* seemed to support the latter hope.

22. Von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 43.
23. Von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 42–43.
24. Von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 47–49.
25. Von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 48.
26. Augustine's position rejected "all forms of posthumous salvation." Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: The Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 126. Latter-day Saint historian Stephen Harper writes "the first Christians didn't believe that death was a deadline that determined a person's salvation. Peter taught that Jesus Christ preached His gospel to the dead so they could be judged as justly as the living (1 Peter 3:18–20; 4:6). Paul taught that Christians could be baptized for the dead (1 Corinthians 15:29) . . . It turns out that it was Augustine, not Jesus or his apostles, who decided that death should be a

If change after death is possible, could anyone else—living or dead—improve the lot of the deceased?

Did apostles and disciples preach to dead sinners as Clement and the Shepherd of Hermas taught? Could they perform baptisms in the afterlife as the Shepherd of Hermas seems to suggest? Could the living, through prayers and ritual acts, including baptism for the dead, change either the dead or the judgments against them?

> It is widely believed today that the church in ancient times held to some notion of postmortem evangelization. This theme is scattered throughout various early Christian sources and seems to suggest that the early church was in agreement that Christ 'descended into hell,' per the Apostles' Creed.[27]

According to Trumbower:

> Numerous conceptions of posthumous rescue found their way into the earliest Christian speculations: an implicit universal salvation (Rom. 11:32), vicarious baptism "on behalf of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:29), talk of proclaiming the gospel among the dead (1 Pet. 4:6), the dead apostles' baptizing the righteous dead (*Shepherd of Hermas, Sim.* 9.16.2–7), and even God's granting the righteous the privilege of saving some of the damned at the final judgment. (*Apocalypse of Peter* 14:1–4; *Sibylline Oracles* 2:330–38).[28]

A Christian's intellectual position on these theological questions might influence their reception of the *descensus.* Conversely, homilies, odes, Eucharist prayers, extra-canonical epistles (certainly sometimes read aloud), apocrypha, hymns, and *descensus* parables had power to engage audiences in visceral and imaginative ways. All these modes of presentation engage the senses of the body in ways that reach the soul.[29] These forms left deep and lasting impressions on communities of believers who embraced the *descensus* traditions.

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deadline that determined a person's salvation." Steven C. Harper, "Section 137 & 138 Context," *Steven Craig Harper* (blog), stevencraigharper.com/post/come-follow-me-doctrine-covenants-137-138.

27. David L. Paulsen "Are Christians Mormon? Reassessing Joseph Smith's Theology in His Bicentennial," *BYU Studies* 45, no. 1 (2006): 122, byustudies.byu.edu/article/are-christians-mormon-reassessing-joseph-smiths-theology-in-his-bicentennial.
28. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead*, 33.
29. Anna D. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton: Princeton

Doctrine and Covenants 138 can have a lasting impression on Latter-day Saints, if we feast upon it and are prepared to budge some of our unexamined and perhaps cerebral positions about Christ's "great atoning sacrifice . . . and the great and wonderful love made manifest by the Father and the Son" (Doctrine and Covenants 138:2–3).

The Descent to the Dead in the First Centuries after the Council of Nicaea

When the Emperor Constantine reversed Diocletian's policy of persecution and granted Christians legal status, he saved many Christian lives, but he also imposed on the struggling Church the Roman Empire's structures and priorities, including uniformity and loyalty, loyalty often secured through grants of privileges. The Emperor enjoyed a power no bishop had possessed. He not only could summon bishops from major Christian centers to ecumenical councils, but he could enforce their decisions.[30] The councils, held under the Emperor's eye and written down in learned Greek, were convened to reach a consensus on doctrine that was meant to unify all those who agreed to it. Those who did not agree were identified as heretics; they and their flocks risked excommunication.[31] Though the Emperor himself did not excommunicate the heretics, he enjoyed the power to enforce the

University Press, 1986), 228, archive.org/details/anastasismakingo0000kart/page/228/mode/2up.

30. The first seven ecumenical councils were held in modern-day Türkiye at Nicaea (325 CE), Constantinople (381 CE), Ephesus (431 CE), Chalcedon (451 CE), Constantinople (553 CE), Constantinople (680–681 CE), and Nicaea (787 CE). For a concise and accessible summary of each, see "Crash Course on the Seven Ecumenical Councils," *Dallas International University* (website), diu.edu/diu-today/program-spotlights/crash-course-on-the-seven-ecumenical-councils/.

31. Each of the seven major councils, in addition to developing doctrine, created language that addressed controversies within the Church, often with political repercussions. For example, the first Council of Nicaea, in 325 CE, differentiated between orthodox Christianity and Arianism, declaring many of the Arian positions to be anathema. This not only denounced a doctrine but excommunicated its advocates. At the first Council of Constantinople, in 381 CE, thirty-six heretical Pneumatomachian bishops were refused seating because they denied the Holy Spirit's divinity and wrote against Appolinarianism, which taught that Christ had a human body but a divine mind. At the Council of Ephesus, in 431 CE, Mary was declared *theotokos* (God-bearer). The council dismissed Nestorianism, ultimately removing Nesotrius from his bishopric position and anathematizing his teachings.

councils' decisions. To be heretical was to risk your civic protection, privileges, property, and possibly freedom.

The first councils addressed pressing issues including the suppression of incorrect views such as Arianism, Apollinarism, Sabellianism, Nestorianism, Pelagianism, Monophysitism, Origenism, Monotheltism, and Iconoclasm. In an attempt to differentiate between correct positions and all others, they forged language specifying the nature of the Trinity and the manner in which Christ was both man and God.[32]

Council agendas were full of these weighty matters; Christ's mission between his death and Resurrection was not directly addressed, nor was the number and potential of those in hell. But the councils' positions did influence the fate of the *descensus.* The Nicene Creed was both a statement of belief and a loyalty test. It sidestepped *descensus*-related issues by employing language that both Melito and Tertullian could have endorsed by using the most inclusive — and most bland — possible language: Christ "suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again."

The Apostles' Creed, which also found its lasting form in the fourth century, goes further than the Nicene Creed but still skirts most *descensus*-related controversies, saying only that Christ "descended into Hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead."[33]

Believers in the redeeming mission of the *Descensus Christi ad inferos* and their various opponents continued their teachings after the first four ecumenical councils, but the councils' carefully worded positions on Christ's dual nature as man and God denied to the *descensus*' narrative its earlier vigorous arc. What mortal or divine part of Christ descended to the dead? Was his body truly dead, or, since it did not see corruption, did it sleep or keep a vigil?[34] A linguistic misstep concerning these subtle and sometimes unresolved issues could brand one a heretic.[35] According to Catholic theologian Martin F.

32. The study—and debate—of Christ's nature is called *Christology* and includes question such as "What parts of him were divine, what parts mortal?" "Did he have two natures in one body?" "Were they mixed or separate?" "Did Jesus cease to be God when he became a man?"
33. The full Apostles' Creed can be found in many places. See, for example, "Apostle's Creed," *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (website), usccb.org/prayers/apostles-creed.
34. Connell, "*Descensus Christi ad Inferos*," 268.
35. Connell writes that "in this period . . . the christological contentions about the person and natures of Christ resulted in some awkward configurations of the person of Christ in the span between death and Resurrection. There was a

Connell, these Christological controversies eventually resulted in the redeeming nature of the *descensus*'s "virtual disappearance from the tradition,"[36] or at least from learned discourse in the West.[37]

The voices against the *descensus* were less hobbled by the councils' statements. By 380, Philastrius of Brescia had branded the *descensus* a heresy and, according to Connell, had "eliminate[d] salvation for those who died before the coming of Christ."[38] Augustine, often referred to as the preeminent Doctor of the Church,[39] dismisses the redemptive *descensus*. He writes concerning 1 Peter 3:19–20, "Consider . . . whether all that the Apostle Peter says concerning spirits shut up in prison . . . may not after all have been written *without any reference to hell*. . . . Let us . . . refuse to entertain the thought that the gospel was once preached, or is even to this hour being preached in hell in order to make men believe and be delivered from its pains, as if a Church had been established there as well as on earth." [40]

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problem about how the salvation borne by the descent could have happened if the body or 'flesh' was in the silence of the tomb." Connell, "*Descensus Christi ad Inferos*," 268. See also Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 36–38 for her discussion of the Christological problems involved in portraying Christ's death.

36. Connell, "*Descensus Christi ad Inferos*," 265. He was most probably speaking of the Western, Catholic tradition. The Orthodox tradition took a different course, as discussed below, relying less on Augustine and more on earlier liturgies. In Western visual art during the Middle Ages, there are examples of the *Descensus Christi ad infero* theme, but they are not common and in them the message of redemption is muted. Kartsonis lists three images in Rome from the eighth century and four from the ninth century. Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 82. In at least one image, the underworld, *sheol,* is portrayed as hell, the post-judgment place of fire, punishment, and torment. Western Medieval images containing creative and multiple torments followed in this tradition. Western art conflated what had earlier been the underworld, *sheol* (*spirit prison* in LDS parlance) with the hell awaiting sinners after the Final Judgment. The *Descensus ad inferos* (to those below) had becoming *Descensus ad infernos*, (to the place of burning) as portrayed by Dante in the fourteenth century. By the ninth century in the West, "Adam is not saved from death, but rather from punishment for his sins." Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 85.
37. Thomas Aquinus took up *descensus* issues in the thirteenth century but "his contribution on the descent seems to have brought little change to Christology in this regard." Connell, "*Descensus Christi ad Inferos*," 272.
38. Connell, "*Descensus Christi ad Inferos*," 266.
39. The title *Doctor of the Church* is an honorific bestowed by the Catholic church for certain saints whose teachings are considered especially important for understanding Christian doctrine. As of this writing, the title has been bestowed thirty-seven times.
40. Augustine, "Augustine Letter 164 (A.D. 414)," *New Advent* (website), chapter 5:15, newadvent.org/fathers/1102164.htm.

The Descent to the Dead in the Orthodox Tradition

Though Latin-speaking leaders of the church refuted or lost interest in the *descensus* tradition, the leaders of the Greek-speaking Eastern church took a different course in both writings and art, perhaps influenced by their choice of liturgies.[41] The Eastern church continues to use fourth-century liturgies attributed to Basil the Great and John Chrysostom. The Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great is normally celebrated ten times each year, while John Chrysostom's liturgy is celebrated on most of the remaining Sundays and feast days.[42] Both probably drew on earlier liturgies and so preserve very early texts.[43]

The Vesperal Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great is added to his Divine Liturgy on Holy Thursday[44] and on Holy Saturday. It is particularly important for preserving and teaching about Christ's acts between his death and Resurrection. Early in the Divine Vespers there is a comment addressed to Christ:[45]

> Going down to death, O Life Immortal, Thou hast slain hell[46] with the dazzling light of Thy divinity. And when Thou hast raised up the dead from their dwelling place beneath the earth, all the powers of heaven cried aloud: 'Giver of life, O Christ our God, glory to Thee.'

41. The liturgy is the celebration of the Eucharist, the center of Orthodox worship.
42. The Liturgy of Saint James, probably from the late fourth century, and The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, probably from the late sixth century, also are celebrated.
43. Basil shortened existing liturgy to accommodate the "slothfulness and degeneracy of men, how they were wearied by the length of the liturgy," according to Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople. "Liturgy of St. Basil," *Orthodox Wiki* (website), orthodoxwiki.org/Liturgy_of_St._Basil. In its current form, Saint Basil's Liturgy spans about an hour and a half. On Holy Saturday, Holy Thursday, and on other feast days when Vespers are combined with the Divine Liturgy, the service may be two-and-a-half or three hours long.
44. Holy Thursday is the day before Good Friday.
45. The excerpts from the Divine Vespers are taken from "Great and Holy Saturday: The Third, Sixth, and Ninth Hours with the Typika and the Vesperal Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great," *Church of the Resurrection of Christ* (website), orthodox.net.nz/files/Holy-Saturday-Liturgy.pdf.
46. The word *hell* in English suggests the fiery place of punishment for the damned. In the Greek of the liturgy it is ὁ Ἅδης, *Hades,* more closely associated with the god of the underworld and often seems to be a personification of death. Thus, Hades was in the earlier *inferos* tradition and in the earliest icons where Hades is the bound and trussed creature beneath Christ's feet. In the Gospel of Nicodemus, Satan and Hades both appear as characters.

Later, hell is given a voice three different times,[47] separated by other elements of the liturgy:

> Today hell groans and cries aloud:
> 'It had been better for me, had I not accepted Mary's Son,
> for He has come to me and destroyed my power;
> He has shattered the gates of brass,
> and as God He has raised up the souls that once I held.'
>
> Today hell groans and cries aloud:
> 'My power has been destroyed.
> I accepted a mortal man as one of the dead;
> yet I cannot keep Him prisoner,
> and with Him I shall lose all those over whom I ruled.
> I held in my power the dead from all the ages;
> but see, He is raising them all.'
> Glory to Thy Cross, O Lord, and to Thy Resurrection
>
> Today hell groans and cries aloud:
> "My dominion has been swallowed up;
> the Shepherd has been crucified
> and He has raised Adam.
> I am deprived of those whom once I ruled;
> in my strength I devoured them,
> but now I have cast them forth.
> He Who was crucified has emptied the tombs;
> the power of death has no more strength.'
> Glory to Thy Cross, O Lord and to Thy Resurrection.

John Chrysostom's beautiful Paschal homily is read each Easter morning.[48] It includes these references to Christ's descent:

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47. This takes place shortly before the entrance of the priest and the deacon through the Holy Doors. This entrance is a dramatic highlight of the liturgy. Some identify the deacon as representing John the Baptist while the priest represents Christ. By coming through the Holy Doors, as if coming through the veil, they may also represent angels, or angels and Christ, coming to earth. The deacon and priest accompany a gospel book around the nave in the presence of the congregation and back to the Holy Table, the altar, where they leave it. The later Great Entrance brings the elements of the Eucharist, the bread and wine, into the nave in a similar manner.
48. *Pascha*, from the word in Hebrew for *Passover*, is the name commonly given to what English-speaking people call *Easter*. Christ's betrayal and death happened during the Jewish Passover, and Christ is frequently referred to as the Lamb of God, referencing the lambs slain at Passover.

> Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again;
> for forgiveness has risen from the grave.
> Let no one fear death, for the Death of our Savior has set us free.
> He has destroyed it by enduring it.
> *He destroyed Hades when He descended into it.*
> *He embittered it even as it tasted of His flesh.*
> Isaiah foretold this when he said,
> You, O Hell, have been troubled by encountering Him below.
>
> O death, where is thy sting?
> O Hades, where is thy victory?[49]

Leaders of the Greek-speaking church continued to refer to, write about, and preach of Christ's activities between his death and Resurrection.[50] These events were also taught visually, most notably through the Anastasis images, which became the Pascha (Easter) icon. The principal elements of the Anastasis icon appeared before the eighth century and became quite standard by the ninth century when the phrase *the Anastasis*[51] appears as a sort of title, usually above Christ's head. The icon's early development is unfortunately obscured by the destruction brought by iconoclasm, discussed below.

Eastern Anastasis icons and their earlier Eastern predecessors

49. "The Easter Sermon of John Chrysostom," *The Liturgy Archive* (website), liturgies.net/Easter/Sermons/Chrysostom.htm.
50. Kartsonis mentions authors Anastasius Sinaita (early eighth century, from Saint Catherine's Monastery) who "allegedly wrote a sermon on the Descent of Christ to the Underworld," which remains unpublished and untranslated. Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 64. Psuedo-Epiphanius, who may have been a bishop in Cyprus, wrote a homily about it for Holy Saturday. It was such a dramatic homily that scholars have wondered if it were meant to be live theater and have called it "baroque." Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 64. An eighth-century Homily on Holy Saturday on Christ's Crucifixion, burial, descent, and the lamentation of Mary attributed to Patriarch Germanus I. Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 66. John of Damascus's late seventh- or early eighth-century Easter Canon includes, in Ode VI: "You descended, O Christ, to the depths of the earth. You broke the everlasting bars which had held death's captives, and like Jonah from the fish on the third day, You arose from the grave." "Reader's Service for the Matins of Pascha," *Diocese of the Midwest* (website), domoca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Readers-Service-for-Pascha-Matins.pdf.
51. While in the Latin-speaking west it was called the *descensus* (the *descent*), in the Greek-speaking east it is called *anastasis* (the *raising* or *rising*). In New Testament Greek, *anastasis* is usually translated as *resurrection*.

traditionally show the haloed Christ striding victoriously, dressed in gold or white, his entire body surrounded by an almond-shaped mandorla, having descended into the underworld with his robes still floating slightly upward from the descent, as in a wind (see figure 1). He grasps Adam (or Adam and Eve) by the wrist, nail marks visible on Christ's hands and feet, as he lifts them from their sepulchers. (Often, especially in early images, Eve stands behind Adam supplicating Christ, her hands covered in her robe.) Below Christ's feet are the broken doors of Hades, often but not always positioned diagonally, crossing each other to form an X. A dark figure, Hades, symbolizing death, is bound helpless beneath Christ's feet and is surrounded by broken locks, chains, and keys, though apparently not by instruments of torture. Around Christ are Old Testament figures, sometime identifiable. John the Baptist, the forerunner, may be shown coming toward Christ. Above Christ's head are the words (in Greek, most often) *The Anastasis*. It is a dramatic scene, as evident in figure 1.

If the word *Anastasis* was used for these scenes earlier than the ninth century, the evidence has been lost. The Byzantine Empire underwent a great purge of its religious art under its iconoclastic leaders in Constantinople from 726 to 787 CE and again between 814 and 843 CE. For most of those years it was forbidden to create or display certain religious images, including the Anastasis.[52] Its development was thwarted for at least 120 years, while earlier images were destroyed or covered over. Artists fled beyond the borders of the Byzantine Empire, including into Italy.[53] Consequently, art historians studying eastern art dating before the ninth century must work from very limited data. Nonetheless, examination of smaller, privately owned objects suggests that the Anastasis was used no later than the middle of the seventh century on rings, manuscripts, and reliquaries.[54]

52. Iconoclasts objected to images unworthy of adoration. The thieves' presence on crosses neighboring Christ's ruled out many pictures of the Crucifixion, and the image of Hades defeated under Christ's feet ruled out the Anastasis. They also forbade images of the resurrected Christ because his body had become incorruptible and immortal, and so should not be represented. His mortal body could be shown, however, at least according to some iconoclasts. Perhaps showing him between his death and Resurrection also became a delicate issue.
53. Byzantine-style large-scale art in the west that provides clues to the heritage that was lost in the east includes Santa Maria Antiqua and in San Clemente.
54. Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 81.



Figure 2. An Anastasis scene in miniature, about one inch by two inches. It occupies the lower right-hand corner on the inside lid of a ninth-century reliquary, a small, enameled box meant to hold remnants of the True Cross. The Fieschi-Morgan Staurotheke is in New York at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and is thought to have been made for private use in Byzantium during the time of iconoclasm. (Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/md/original/DT233513.jpg.)

The earliest remaining art with the words *The Anastasis* associated with Christ's Holy Saturday descent is a ninth-century Byzantine psalter, or a book of psalms.[55] Such small, privately held objects escaped the iconoclasts' wrath even in Byzantium and apparently continued to

55. Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 135–36, 138–39, fig. 45.

be produced in a Byzantine style beyond the empire's reach where its artists had fled.[56]

The Anastasis image reemerged after 843 CE when the Council of Constantinople ended iconoclasm. In the following centuries, the image appeared more frequently and grew to be more powerful, becoming

> the sacred image associated with the celebration of Easter. . . . It eventually became the image accompanying the text of Saint John's Gospel in the illustrated lectionaries that [were] read for the Paschal vigil liturgy and the emblem of the triumphal Paschal labarum or banner carried in the liturgical processions of Easter. In sum, the Anastasis becomes the festal image of Pascha.[57]

In Orthodox churches, the Anastasis icon and the liturgies of Holy Week provide what moderns might term an "immersive reality experience" with all the senses engaged including the contemplative senses of empathy and imagination. The liturgies involve physical movement: processions, response, music, and chanting. Beautiful language is addressed both to the worshiper and to Christ. Rich and intricate visuals, including the lighting and altar cloths, reflect the appropriate solemnity or joy of the liturgy, as do the ritual spaces and the ritual garb of those celebrating the Divine Liturgy. The Anastasis image depicts a descending, striding, reaching, rescuing Christ. The liturgy is both reverent and dramatic. On Holy Saturday it provides the setting, characters, and action for engaging drama, including Christ's victorious appearance and Hades's anguished and futile complaints. The senses of smell and taste are also enlisted through incense smelling of frankincense, myrrh, and other resins and the Orthodox Eucharist's leavened bread and sweet, red wine.

"For the untutored Christian, [the Anastasis] was a potent illustration of Christ's willingness and ability to perform the miracle of the Resurrection, the act which promised redemption for everyone, the

56. The eighth-century descensus images, twice at Santa Maria Antiqua and once in the Oratory of John VII, are "thought to be an eastern iconographic import of Constantinopolitan origin, and not a local artistic invention." Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 70.

57. Bishop Joachim of Amissos, "The Image of the *Anastasis* in the Shrine of Saint Nicholas," *Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at the World Trade Center* (website), friends.stnicholaswtc.org/iconography-the-image-of-the-anastasis-in-the-shrine-of-saint-nicholas/.

spectator included."[58] This is, in part, because "the sense of vision — along with the other senses of the body — easily reaches the soul."[59]

The Descent to the Dead among the Less Learned

Learned discourse does not always reflect the religious lives of non-elites[60] whose beliefs and experiences may be dismissed as superstition or folklore. Even many of the clergy were not masters of learned Latin. Simpler people, such as these clergy and their congregants, do not often leave monuments and only occasionally leave written records even when they are literate. The impressive spread of *descensus* literature suggests a variety of believers, including less-prominent ones, were attached to the *descensus* for well over a millennium.

The *descensus* certainly had legs. In the British Isles, for example, Caedmon wrote about it in Anglo-Saxon during the seventh century. By 1000 CE, Ælfric of Eynsham, in a homily, had dubbed it *the harrowing of hell*. In the fourteenth century, William Langford wrote of it in his poem, *Piers Plowman*. It forms the climactic scene in multiple Medieval and Renaissance mystery play cycles,[61] which were often noisy, bawdy, and entertaining.[62]

The *descensus* also had a robust life elsewhere in the Christian

58. Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 236. She continues, "For the learned theologian, the representation of the Anastasis was also a microcosmic and macrocosmic review of the christological and soteriological doctrines as well as the services of the Church which encapsulated them."
59. Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 228.
60. "The great names . . . and those not so great but still known to us through their writings or the mentions of them as heroes of one sort or another—all these together count as no more than a hundredth of one per cent of the Christian population at any given moment." Ramsey MacMullen, *The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200–400* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), xi. MacMullen wrote specifically of the years 200 to 400 CE, but his position may be true for any Christian population before literacy became widespread for both genders.
61. Mystery plays were often performed during the feast of Corpus Christi two months after Maundy Thursday (the day before Good Friday) on the streets rather than in churches. They were presented in vernacular languages and did not always cleave closely to the scriptures. They sometimes involved local guilds that might develop their scenes over years with elaborate props and costumes, much like a Mardi Gras krewe. Their aim was to enjoy and to entertain as well as to instruct. Clergy were forbidden to participate.
62. For a Middle High German example performed by Oxford's Medieval Germanists (a translation into Modern English is provided) and a video of a production that would do Monty Python proud, see "Harrowing of Hell," *St. Edmund*

world. Copies of the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus,* which recounts details from Christ's trial and Crucifixion not found in scripture and tells of the *descensus,* have been found in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, Georgian, Slavonic, and Old English. As with virtually all documents at this time, each was copied by hand using homemade ink on individually prepared parchment or papyri, so there must have been a considerable appetite for the work. Since the *Gospel of Nicodemus* was not canonized scripture, not approved to be read in church, not part of liturgy, and not in the creeds, its continued popularity across space and across centuries shows the story's power.

The *Gospel of Nicodemus* took its current form before 600 CE, perhaps as early as the fourth or fifth centuries.[63] In places, the text simply embellishes scriptures. It recounts Simeon greeting the infant Christ and his parents at the temple in Luke 2, staying as close to the scriptural account as do many Sunday school retellings. But *Nicodemus* also creates characters and actions absent from scripture. Simeon is identified as the high priest, and *Nicodemus* tells of two previously unrecorded sons, Charinus and Lenthius. All three are dead and publicly buried by the time of Christ's Crucifixion. In *Nicodemus* 12, the sons have risen from the grave, having witnessed his descent to the dead, and are recruited to testify of Christ to the Jews in their synagogue, probably the Sanhedrin, in what may be a very early courtroom drama.

In the courtroom scene, the brothers recount their experience in "the depth of hell, in the blackness of darkness" before Christ's appearance (*Nicodemus* 13:2). Gold and purple lights appear. Adam rejoices, Isaiah quotes from his prophecies, their father Simeon retells his encounter with the infant Christ. John the Baptist, described as being "like a little hermit" (*Nicodemus* 13:10), recounts Christ's baptism and announces Christ's coming to hell.

In chapter 15, Satan and "the prince of hell" (Hades?) have a tremendous and possibly comedic row. In chapter 16, a voice of thunder quotes from Psalm 24 ("Lift up your gates," *Nicodemus* 16:1, 13) while the prince of hell scrambles to lock down his brass gates with iron bars, as in Psalm 107. He asks, using the language of Psalm 24, "Who is that King of Glory?," (*Nicodemus* 16:14). King David responds

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Hall, University of Oxford (website), seh.ox.ac.uk/mystery-cycle/harrowing-of-hell.

63. *The Gospel of Nicodemus,* archive.org/details/TheGospelOfNicodemus/mode/2up.

with language from Psalm 107, then adds, "now, thou filthy and stinking prince of hell, open thy gates, that the King of Glory may enter in" (*Nicodemus* 16:17). The mighty Lord appears "in the form of man" and enlightens the dark places (*Nicodemus* 16:18). The narrator, quoting from Mark 5:4, says Christ "broke asunder the fetters which before could not be broken; and with his invincible power visited those who [sat] in the deep darkness by iniquity, and the shadow of death by sin" (*Nicodemus* 16:19).

In chapter 17, death's minions and legions of devils are bound. They beweep their fallen state and bemoan Christ's power. It is very dramatic. (As Milton found, the devils get all the best lines.) Christ "trampling upon death, seized the prince of hell, deprived him of all his power, and took our earthly father Adam with him to his glory" (*Nicodemus* 17:13). In chapter 18, Beelzebub, prince of hell, indignantly blames Satan for the fine mess they have gotten themselves into. In the last verse of the chapter, the King of Glory gets his first speaking lines of the account as he imprisons Satan in Beelzebub's "dominions for ever, in the room of Adam [in the place of Adam] and his righteous sons, who are mine" (*Nicodemus* 18:14). Christ takes Adam by the hand and "ascended from hell, and all the saints of God followed him" to Paradise (*Nicodemus* 19:12).

The Jews of the Sanhedrin said, "blessed be the Lord Jesus for ever and ever," and "went all out with great concern, and fear, and trembling, and smote upon their breasts and went away every one to his home" (*Nicodemus* 21:10–11). In the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the Christian side is victorious both in court and in the afterlife.

Many popular retellings and stagings of the *descensus* appeared later than *Nicodemus,* as did visual images. This is not to say that *Nicodemus* was the source for them all, as some have suggested.[64] In the British Isles, the earliest record of the descent is in the *Book of Cerne*, a personal prayerbook probably compiled between 820 and 840 CE.[65] Only fifty-five lines long, it contains a scene set in hell. The

64. Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, 14–16 refutes the argument that the *Gospel of Nicodemus* was the source for the emerging *Anastasis* images. The *Descensus* is frequently mentioned by early Christian teachers and is present in early liturgy before *Nicodemus* was published. Later works treating the subject, even in vernacular languages, may vary from *Nicodemus* more than they resemble it. Taken together, this evidence suggests that there were most likely multiple possible avenues for its continued transmission, one of which was *Nicodemus.*

65. Brandon W. Hawk, "The Book of Cerne Harrowing of Hell: A Translation," *Brandon W. Hawk* (website), brandonwhawk.net/2021/04/03/the-book-of



Figure 3. Christ resurrects Adam and Eve, with more of the human family following in a chain in this marginal illustration from an eleventh-century psalter, a book of Psalms called the Barberini Psalter, in the Vatican. (Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, fig. 45.)

"innumerable crowd of saints who were held in the captivity of hell," and then, Adam and Eve speak to Christ as Christ descends. Adam and Eve speak in poetry, but the lines that could be stage directions or lines for a narrator or chorus ("Adam was loosed out of the bonds, grasping the knees of Jesus Christ" and "Yet Eve persists in weeping") are written in rhythmic prose. The prose and poetry are marked in red or black ink. It may be the earliest example of an oratorio, if it

-cerne-harrowing-of-hell-a-translation/. The surviving Anglo-Saxon version of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* appears to be an eleventh-century document.

was meant to be sung, or the earliest surviving Christian drama. Its dialogue relies heavily on Psalms, but not the same psalms used in *Nicodemus*. Very little about the two works overlap.[66]

Whence the Popularity of the *Descensus*?

What accounts for the continued popularity of the *descensus,* Anastasis*,* and harrowing of hell accounts? Philip Jenkins suggests that they grew to fill lacunae in the scriptures. Where did Christ go and what did he do while his body lay in the tomb? The topic had been "neglected in our canonical gospels," and so, imagination was enlisted to fill in the gaps.[67] This is a helpful suggestion, but it does not adequately account for the *descensus's* frequent mention in the Primitive Church in very sober discourse. According to Connell, "Christ's descent is omnipresent in the Fathers of the next few centuries" after 1 Peter was written.[68] Perhaps oral teachings or documents were known at that time beyond those that were eventually canonized. Our ignorance of them does not mean they did not exist. There may be more than curiosity and imagination at play.

Jenkins further suggests that there were lacunae in the doctrine and teachings of the church. "Over the centuries, believers mulled over theological problems that the church did not confront or adequately explain."[69] To this I would add that the descent tradition is inherently hopeful; it shows a victorious Christ. It may have eased the cognitive dissonance created by the idea of a loving Savior on one hand and on the other, the harsh, post-Augustine doctrines concerning those who died unrepentant or without baptism. Plays, stories, poems, homilies, and art about the *descensus* could carry weight on the side of a loving Savior against the assault of Augustine's learned Latin.

The ubiquity of death may be a singularly potent explanation for the tradition's longevity. Death was a familiar companion. We moderns — those of us lucky enough not to live in war zones — may imagine death,

66. The *Gospel of Nicodemus* chapters that concern the descent use Psalms 24 and 107, a quotation from Isaiah, and Mark 5:4. According to Hawk, the *Book of Cerne* text "is based on the Latin Pseudo-Augustine *Sermo* 160, with parts of the Roman Psalter added." He identifies material excerpted from the following psalms: 35, 84, 73, 78, 115, 106, 102, and 118, with language from Genesis 24, 26, and 48.
67. Philip Jenkins, *The Many Faces of Christ: The Thousand-Year Story of the Survival and Influence of the Lost Gospels* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 77.
68. Connell, "*Descensus Christi ad Inferos*," 264.
69. Jenkins, *The Many Faces of Christ*, 77.

if we imagine it all, as a distant inevitability, something we expect will come in a gently lit bedroom, preferably our own gently lit bedroom, and only when we have aged-out of most of our sins and repented of the others. What we call *early deaths* not only grieve us — as they surely did our ancestors — they shock us.

Our ancestors often witnessed more death in a year than we do in a lifetime. Many, through no fault of their own, died unbaptized, especially babies and young children. If our human hearts could love them and grieve for them, why could not Jesus? How could he consign them to eternal darkness? The stories of the *descensus* gave hope for the unbaptized, even in the presence of official doctrine that denied that hope.

And what of the untaught dead, those who never were taught Christ's good news? Hope glimmers in the *descensus.*

What of the unrepentant among the dead? My family history shows that until well into the twentieth century children died, mothers died (giving birth could be a death-defying act), and young men were killed in wars as though they were harvest wheat. They died at sea, at work, and in raids by hostile groups. Typhoid, striking in London, left three survivors from a family of ten. So many died unexpectedly and often young, many times without opportunity to repent. Again, the *descensus* gave hope.

I do not wish to speculate publicly on my chances for heaven, but I hope they will be greater in my ninth decade than they were when I was twenty. What was to happen to those we loved who were cut down at the height of their pride or their frivolity? Are they to be sorted eternally by their righteousness at the moment of their death, as Augustine insists? The *descensus* traditions suggest that repentance and growth may go on beyond the grave.

The *Descensus Christi ad inferos* and the Anastasis, in almost all of their variations, could give hope and comfort in a harsh and death-haunted world. It offered glimpses of a generous Christian afterlife, however out of step with official doctrine it might be. Christ's redemptive descent to hell was celebrated, sometimes reverently, as on Holy Saturday, sometimes with boisterous good will, as in mystery plays. But the *descensus* was never forgotten.

Doctrine and Covenants 138 as Our *Descensus Christi ad Inferos* and Our Anastasis

Doctrine and Covenants 138 is a restoration of beliefs held during the earliest three centuries of Christianity, beliefs that appeared in many early writings mentioned thus far. In addition to teaching mutually held doctrine, Joseph F. Smith and these pre-Nicene writers seem to have accessed a visionary experience. No mortal witness could have recorded the events of Holy Saturday, though the Primitive Church could possibly have possessed accounts from those resurrected along with Christ on Easter morning. Whatever the source of their knowledge, writers in the Primitive Church discussed Christ's mission between death and Resurrection with as much confidence as they spoke of his Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Section 138 is also a revelation, though most—but not all—of the Latter-day Saint doctrines expressed in it were already familiar to Church members in 1918. Saints already knew that "the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel . . . in the great world of the spirits of the dead" (Doctrine and Covenants 138:57). James E. Talmage had taught that doctrine in the 1915 edition of *Jesus the Christ,* as had others.[70]

We will return below to the new "doctrinal insight," as Robert L.

70. Chapter 36 of Talmage's *Jesus the Christ* (1915), "In the Realm of Disembodied Spirits," was not updated in later editions to reflect the canonization of Doctrine and Covenants 138.

> Missionary labor among the dead was inaugurated by the Christ; who of us can doubt that it has been continued by His authorized servants, the disembodied, who while in the flesh had been commissioned to preach the gospel administer in the ordinances thereof through ordination in the Holy Priesthood? That the faithful apostles who were left to build up the Church on earth following the departure of its divine founder, that other ministers of the word Of God ordained to the Priesthood by authority in the Primitive as well as in the Latter-day Church, have passed from ministerial service among mortals to a continuation of such labor among the disembodied, is so abundantly implied in scripture as to be made a certainty. They are called to follow in the footsteps of the Master, ministering here among the living, and beyond among the dead.

James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915), 675–76, archive.org/details/jesusthechrist1915/page/n689/mode/2up.

Millet calls it, that was introduced in Section 138.[71] The Lord provided President Smith with an extensive vision, which included new doctrine. Both the vision and the doctrine are important in different ways.

To Joseph F. Smith, the vision must have been a blessing on several levels. World War One still raged, with 15,000 members of the Church involved in military service.[72] The 1918 influenza pandemic had reached the West Coast that September. His first-born son and fellow Apostle Hyrum Mack Smith died just ten months before the revelation. Increased understanding of the afterlife and a witness Christ's Redemption would have been a comfort.

It was also an affirmation of his life's work and the doctrines he had taught. It was a new witness to the Savior's redemptive power and his love. Perhaps it witnessed anew that all of his deceased family continued beyond the grave,[73] or it may also have reminded him that when he laid aside his frail body, he could stride forward in the saving work he had loved throughout his life. (President Smith died only seven weeks after the vision.)

The vision was not meant only for him. On 31 October 1918, a council made up of the counselors in the First Presidency,[74] the Patriarch, and the Quorum of the Twelve "accepted and endorsed the revelation as the Word of the Lord" and directed it to be published in the next (December) issue of the *Improvement Era*.[75] It was meant for all the Saints.

An account of a vision can do much more than expand doctrine, as important as that is. It records a three-dimensional and immersive experience for the one who received it. In the vision, a person may ask questions and receive answers in words and through the senses—vision, hearing, feeling (both tactile feeling and subjective feelings), taste, and smell.[76] The account of a vision may record information that

71. Robert L. Millet, "The Vision of the Redemption of the Dead (D&C 138)," in *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Doctrine and Covenants,* ed. Craig K. Manscill (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 324, rsc.byu.edu/sites/default/files/pub_content/pdf/The_Vision_of_the_Redemption_of_the_Dead.pdf.
72. Millet, "Vision of the Redemption of the Dead," 315.
73. President Smith lost thirteen children and an adopted son. His father and uncle, Hyrum and Joseph, were killed when he was five. His mother, Mary Fielding Smith, died when he was thirteen.
74. President Smith was too ill to attend the meeting.
75. Millet, "Vision of the Redemption of the Dead," 321.
76. Lehi and Nephi's visions in 1 Nephi include information from every sense

is not recognized as important at the moment but becomes important later.[77] Accounts of visions yield fresh understanding to those who study them and provide answers to questions that may not have been on the mind of the person receiving the revelation.[78]

Visions merit our attention and reward our study. Doctrine and Covenants 138 deserves more attention than it receives, especially at Easter.

The new doctrinal insight that Millet highlights is this: "The Lord went not in person among the wicked and disobedient" but rather "from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority . . . to [go to] all the spirits of men" (Doctrine and Covenants 138:29–30). "But unto the wicked

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except the sense of smell. Isaiah 6 reports smoke, which may well imply incense.

77. 1 Nephi 15:27 may be an example of this. Nephi explains "the water which my father saw was filthiness; and *so much was his mind swallowed up in other things* that he beheld not the filthiness of the water." Another significant example may be Nephi's vision of the tree of life, as explained in Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and his Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 16–25, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol9/iss2/4/.

78. To cite a personal example, discourse around missionaries to spirit prison has tended to be male-centric. The vision does say, "the faithful *elders* of this dispensation . . . continue their labors," though President Smith had taught several years before the vision that "women minister to women in the spirit world, even as they do in holy places on earth." Millet, "Vision of the Redemption of the Dead," 324. Its relevance to women may have been less apparent in 1976 when it was canonized than it is now. Hosts of young women are opting to serve missions, and missions are presided over by mission leaders, not the "mission president and his wife" of earlier years.

    In Doctrine and Covenants 138:30, Christ "appointed *messengers*, clothed with power and authority and commissioned them to go forth." The verse contains temple language and could apply to either endowed sisters or elders and to both the brother and sister mission leaders. Christ prepares "faithful prophets who had testified of him in the flesh" (v. 36). The gift of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus, and testifying of Christ is not a privilege reserved for one gender.

    When the vision lists the mighty and great ones, two of the first three mentioned are women: Father Adam and "our glorious Mother Eve" and "many of her faithful daughters" (v. 38). President Smith reports the presence of "choice spirits . . . to take part in laying the foundation of the great latter-day work, including the building of the temples and the performance of ordinances therein for the redemption of the dead, were also in the spirit world" (vv. 53–54). When I read this, I can see not only brothers, but sisters who donate tithes and offerings, temple matrons, sister ordinance workers, laundry workers, cleaners, and sister patrons "also in the spirit world."

he did not go, and among the ungodly and the unrepentant who had defiled themselves while in the flesh, his voice was not raised." (v. 20)[79]

That doctrinal insight builds on many restored and revealed teachings, including baptism for the dead and the potential for the unbaptized to receive celestial glory, as taught in Doctrine and Covenants 137. It raises many questions but also allows us to imagine some of the new doctrine's implications, always remembering what is revealed truth and what is speculation. President Dallin H. Oaks reminds us that "we know very little about the spirit world that follows mortality or even about the spirit world that preceded it.[80]

We do know Christ's Atonement reaches to the very sinful, including Noah's terminally wicked contemporaries who perished in the flood. In Doctrine and Covenants 138 we learn Christ could not go to them, and so their redemption must be facilitated by Christ's messengers. We do not know who all these messengers may be. It is likely those who perished in the Flood left no descendants, save perhaps through Noah's family, but we may imagine that the parents and grandparents of those who perished continue to love and grieve for them. If our ancestors may seek after their descendants who are in spirit prison, might Adam and Eve have sought out Cain? Might Lehi and Sariah have gone in search of Laman and Lemuel? Could this be one of the meanings for "the hearts of the fathers being turned to the children?" Perhaps our Father Adam and our glorious Mother Eve will be our ultimate mission leaders.

We learn from President Smith's revelation that Christ could not go to the ungodly and unrepentant, but we are not told why he could not. Perhaps the glory of his presence would overwhelm and destroy them? Perhaps his presence would be such a strong witness that it would override their moral agency, much as Satan's plan would have taken away the agency of man? (Moses 4:3). We know our agency is so important that Christ died for it. As interesting as it is to wonder and speculate, we only know that "unto the wicked he did not go, and among the ungodly and the unrepentant who had defiled themselves

79. See Millet, "Vision of the Redemption of the Dead," 323–24. This was a reversal of what President Joseph F. Smith and others had taught; they had preached that Christ had taught the wicked and unbelieving.

80. Dallin H. Oaks, "Coming Closer to Jesus Christ" (devotional, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 10 February 2026), speeches.byu.edu/talks/dallin-h-oaks/coming-closer-to-jesus-christ/.

while in the flesh, his voice was not raised" (Doctrine and Covenants 138:20).

We know from this revelation that Christ's messengers to those in spirit prison were clothed with power and authority. We may suppose that some in spirit prison, especially those who had not heard the gospel in life, may repent swiftly once they are taught. Perhaps others, including those who had heard the gospel but would not receive or abide by it, might need more time to repent, might take more patient teaching, or might need more encouragement. It is not hard to imagine the sort of missionary, teacher, family member, or ministering brother or sister who would continue to love and teach these as I have watched them in this life.

Those who were truly wicked and defiled themselves while in the flesh — perhaps including those destroyed by the flood — may resist all love, all teaching, all encouragement, and all repentance for a very long time. C. S. Lewis wrote, "the doors of hell are locked on the *inside*."[81] Doctrine and Covenants 138 suggests that Christ still has hope for them. I can imagine — but only imagine — the sort of messengers who will be able to turn such hearts. I sometimes catch glimpses of such potential messengers, but not in the places where I usually seek my heroes nor where I aim my aspirations. They are not necessarily among the successful, but rather among the humble and patient. I may be aspiring to the wrong attributes.

What Should We Do with Doctrine and Covenants 138?

Section 138 is an Easter text. The vision shows the events that took place on Holy Saturday, between Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection. The Easter homilies of the Primitive Church resonate with its hope. As we study the scriptures to learn of Christ's Crucifixion and the events of Easter morning, we would do well to include Doctrine and Covenants 138. Indeed, we should do more than study it — we could ponder it, imagine it, teach it to our children, and celebrate it, much as we celebrate the events of Christ's birth.

The events of the Savior's earthly advent are made real to us through countless nativity scenes and posadas, some more reverent than others. Re-enactments allow us to live the events of Christ's humble birth, to participate with our bodies and our imaginations, and to write those

81. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 127, archive.org/details/problemofpain0000unse_g2g2/page/126/mode/2up.

events on the fleshy tablets of our hearts (figure 4). Some retellings may stray a bit from scriptural truth, but never mind — we do not know how many Wise Men there were, how they dressed, their ethnicity or age, or if they used camels or donkeys. We do know the Wise Men arrived a considerable time after the shepherds saw the star, but our nativity scenes show shepherds and kings surrounding the manger together. That manger may well have been made of stone, not wood.[82] The towels we use for headdresses may not closely resemble the woolen clothing of the shepherds. The inns in which the family sought shelter may not match the ones we visit during Las Posadas. But the central events are real to us because we participate in them.

Re-enactments often give form to our ward, branch, and stake Christmas concerts and Sunday services. Carols and nativity elements twine around each other like the red and white in a candy cane. In a similar spirit I offer suggestions for a little Easter play about our Anastasis (Doctrine and Covenants 138) in the appendix.

Conclusion

Doctrine and Covenants 138 is our revelation for Holy Saturday, our harrowing of hell, our *Descensus Christi ad inferos,* our Anastasis. It is full of hope and can be a balm to our aching hearts. As we feast on it, read it, celebrate it, and live it, it can unite us with other faithful Christians who have preserved this hope for two millennia.

At Easter, throughout the Eastern World, Christians greet each other using some variation of the word *Anastasis*. One might say, "Christos Anesti" ("Christ is risen"); the other replies "Alithos Anesti!" ("he has risen indeed!").

I, too, testify: He is risen indeed!

Appendix
The Descensus: An Easter Play in Four Acts

These four acts are offered as a prompt, a suggestion as to how we may connect the long tradition of Christians celebrating Christ's *descensus* and our own revealed texts. It is my hope that as we re-enact the events of Christ's visit to the spirit world, these events will

82. See Jeffery R. Chadwick, "Stone Manger: The Untold Story of the First Christmas," *Meridian Magazine*, 21 December 2011, latterdaysaintmag.com/article-1-9109/.



Figure 4. Halos slightly askew, bathrobes dutifully donned, and a real baby, this senior Primary nativity reenactment may not have been uniformly reverent or completely scripturally accurate, but it helped write the story of Christ's birth into our memories in ways a simple reading cannot. (Photo by author.)

become as dear and familiar to us as those of the Nativity. While the Nativity inspires tenderness and introduces a vulnerable God into the human world, the *descensus* can show us the redeeming and heroic Christ who breaks the bands of death and proclaims liberty to the captive. With plays such as this, we can see the end from the beginning and glimpse his great majesty and his compassion for us all.

This template provides ideas for cast, props, costumes, and such; it is just a template. Please adjust any of it to fit your cast and audience or your understanding of the revelation and its implication. You could add lines from the homilies cited earlier in this paper or from any scripture or conference talk. Feel free to add or subtract characters. (I added Satan in scene one and gave him a few choice lines. It is a great role, though not in Doctrine and Covenants 138.)

I have suggested music in a few places, but please choose your own music and put it wherever you wish. (Do not forget the resources composed for children.)

Be mindful that if such plays are to be performed in a Church setting, the *General Handbook of Instructions* gives specific requirements

when portraying Christ.[83] God the Father and the Holy Ghost may not be portrayed, but the Savior may be portrayed under these conditions:

- It must be done with reverence and dignity.
- Only a man of wholesome personal character should be considered for the role.
- The person portraying the Savior should not sing or dance.
- When speaking, he should use only direct quotations from scriptures *spoken by the Savior*.
- At the end of the performance, he should immediately change into regular clothes.
- Children should not portray the Savior except in a Nativity scene.

This is also excellent advice for performances with family and friends.

Scene One

Settings: World of spirits among the just, as Christ dies on Calvary and just after. Closet or other enclosure for spirit prison.

Dramatis personae with speaking lines

- Narrator and Christ (perhaps the bishop?)
- Adam
- Eve
- The just, A through D. Black chains on their wrists.
- Satan, collar up, glowering.

Dramatis personae without speaking lines, but with costumes or props

- A host (army) of the dead, small and great, including Adam and Eve, Lehi and Sariah, Ruth, etc. Black chains on their wrists. Shawls as available. Perhaps name badges, depending on the needs of your production or class.
- Spirits of those yet unborn, including noble and great ones reserved to come forth in the latter days.

83. "Portrayal of Deity," *General Handbook of Instructions* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2026), 20.5.6, churchofjesus christ.org/study/manual/general-handbook/20-activities?lang=eng#title_number35.

Props and costumes

- Large black construction paper chains, large rubber bands stapled on the ends, as needed.
- Signs reading SPIRIT PRISON to be attached to whatever closet or bin you use as the entrance to spirit prison. Also, a sign reading SPIRITS OF THOSE YET TO BE BORN, placed near those cast members.
- White shawls, scarves, and ties. A white cape for the bishop?
- Something for the spirits of those yet to be born?

Begin scene one

Song: "Gethsemane," "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?," "Behold the Great Redeemer Die"

Narrator (off stage or otherwise out of sight): When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said:

Bishop as Christ (in a loud voice): It is finished!

Narrator: And he bowed his head and gave up the ghost (John 19:30).

[Adam and Eve with four of the just are excited, rejoicing, talking almost on top of one another.]

Adam: He is coming!

Eve: He has redeemed us.

The Just A: He will deliver us from death!

The Just B: He has delivered us from our sins.

The Just C: Will he really come here? To us? Won't he go to Father first?

Adam: He said he would come to us as soon as he gave up his life.

Eve: And He always keeps his promises!

The Just D: Yes, we know him. We knew him. He always keeps his promises.

The Just A: No matter how hard.

The Just B: No matter how hard.

The Just C: He is coming!

Bishop as Christ, steps forward, perhaps from behind a screen.

Satan (Collar turned up, glowering. Stands (perhaps from near spirit

prison) and shouts at Christ): Argh! I hate you! You've ruined everything! Everything! I hate you. I hate you. I will get you for this. No! I will get **them** for this [points to the spirits yet unborn] and **you** and **YOU**! [Turns back to the Savior] You will be sorry then! **I WILL get you!** [Exits, slams door.]

[The spirits yet unborn shrink in fear.]

Adam: We are loosed **from the bands of death, yea, and also the chains of hell**. (Alma 5:10)

[The just break off their chains and throw them down, and possibly jump up, joyously.]

Eve (turning to individuals among the just): Our sleeping bodies will be restored to their perfect frames, bone to our bone, and the sinews and the flesh upon them, our spirit and our perfected body to be united, never again to be divided, that we may receive a fulness of joy. (Doctrine and Covenants 138:17)

Song of Rejoicing: "I Stand All Amazed"

Scene Two

Settings: World of spirits among the just, immediately after Christ has freed them from their chains of death and promised them resurrection. Some of the just may bow or kneel to him or sit near his feet.

Dramatis personae with speaking lines

- Narrator and Christ
- Ruth
- Spirits yet unborn, A through H. G is a young female, not yet old enough to go to the temple. H is her older brother, perhaps nearing 16.

Dramatis personae without speaking lines, but with costumes or props

- A host (army) of the dead, small and great, including Adam and Eve, Lehi and Sariah.
- Spirits of those yet unborn, including noble and great ones reserved to come forth in the latter days.

Props and costumes

- Signs reading SPIRIT PRISON to be attached to whatever

closet or bin you use as the entrance to spirit prison. Another sign reading SPIRITS OF THOSE YET TO BE BORN. Those spirits yet unborn should be separate from the postmortal just.

- White shawls, capes, scarves, ties, etc. A white cape for the bishop?
- Something for the spirits of those yet to be born?

Note: Bishop's lines as Christ are taken from 3 Nephi 27:13–20, where Christ defines his gospel. Edit this for brevity as appropriate to your cast and audience, but leave in the references to baptism and that no unclean thing can enter into the kingdom.

Begin scene two

Song: "Rejoice, the Lord is King," verses 1 and 3.

Bishop as Christ: This is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father . . . that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and . . . that I might draw all men unto me, . . . so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil . . .

That whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world. . . . And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.

Ruth: Dear Lord, hear my plea. I was faithful to my testimony of the God of Israel, and I suffered tribulations in thy holy name as I left the land of my birth and my family. I offered sacrifices looking forward to thy sacrifice, and I kept the Law of Moses in my home, as my mother-in-law Naomi taught me. But I have not been baptized. Is it too late for me? I am but a spirit and have no body to be immersed and brought forth clean!

Adam and Eve: Have faith, my daughter. The hearts of these, the children yet unborn [points to Spirits yet unborn] will turn toward you. These are even now receiving their first lessons in the world of spirits. They will build temples. They will perform work for you and for all the dead. They will administer ordinances in temples and labor for the

salvation of all who will repent (Malachi 4:6; Doctrine and Covenants 138:56).

Spirits Yet Unborn A: I promise that I will help build temples in the latter days that will connect the world of spirits to the world of mortal men. There you may receive baptism as if you still lived, afterwards to live according to the word of God in the spirit.

Spirits Yet Unborn B: I will help build temples.

Spirits Yet Unborn C: I will also.

Spirits Yet Unborn D: I, too, will help build temples.

Spirits Yet Unborn E: And I will work in the temple so that you may receive your ordinances.

Spirits Yet Unborn F: I will work in the temple laundry, because without clean laundry, the work would not go forth!

Spirits Yet Unborn G (female): Ruth, as soon as I am old enough, I will go to the temple and be baptized for you!

Spirits Yet Unborn H (older brother to G): I will stay worthy so that I as a priest can stand in a temple font on earth with my little sister. Then, having authority, I will administer baptism to you in the spirit world, Ruth, as I baptize my sister for you and in your behalf.

Ruth: I will wait with gratitude for your day and the time when your hearts are turned toward the fathers and mothers.

Song: "How Beautiful Thy Temples Lord," "I Love to See the Temple"

Scene Three

Settings: World of spirits among the just, being taught by Adam and Eve and Christ. (Think of Adam and Eve as mission leaders, counseling with Ruth.) Some of the just may bow or kneel to Christ or sit near his feet.

Dramatis personae with speaking lines

- Narrator and Christ
- Ruth
- Adam and Eve
- Lehi and Sariah

Dramatis personae without speaking lines, but with costumes or props

- A host (army) of the dead, small and great.

Props and costumes

- Signs reading SPIRIT PRISON to be attached to whatever closet or bin you use as the entrance to spirit prison.
- White shawls, scarves, and ties. A white cape for the bishop?

Begin scene three

Song: "I hope They Call Me on a Mission"

Ruth: Dear Lord, what of my family in Moab? I did not go back to them when I became a widow. I chose to trust in Naomi and in thee, the God of Israel. To be honest, dear Savior, my family was not always kind, especially to their daughters. But they did not know thy ways, so perhaps it could not be helped. I believe they may be there. [Motions sadly toward spirit prison.] And they are still my family.

[Adam and Eve look toward the Savior, as for instruction. The Savior smiles on them.]

Adam or Eve: Do you have hope that they might repent?

Ruth: Perhaps if they heard the news of Christ's redemption and learned his law.

Adam or Eve: Would you like to teach them?

Ruth: I'm a little afraid, but yes, I love them. And if the Lord will help me now as he helped me during my life, I would like to try.

Adam or Eve: Some may welcome your good news and swiftly embrace the gospel. For others it may not be easy. It may take a long time. They must pay the penalty for their transgressions and be washed clean through obedience to the ordinances of the House of God. Then shall they receive a reward according to their works and they can become heirs of salvation (Doctrine and Covenants 138:59).

Eve or Adam: But if you are willing, Christ will lead you and appoint you to be his messenger. He will clothe you with power and authority and commission you to carry the light of the gospel to those who are in darkness (Doctrine and Covenants 138:30, 31).

Ruth (clapping her hands): That is my desire! If I labor all my days and

bring but one soul to thee, how great shall be my joy in the Kingdom of God (Doctrine and Covenants 18:15).

Adam or Eve: Then you are called to the work. Faith, hope, charity, and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify you for the work. Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence. Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you (Doctrine and Covenants 4:5).

Scene Four

Settings: World of the spirits among the just. Christ passes among the just. Adam and Eve (as mission leaders), after being greeted by Christ, move with Sariah and Lehi to the front of the scene, speaking together. Christ, meanwhile, sits with the just in silence in a teaching pose as they listen. Sign for spirit prison should be clearly visible

Dramatis personae with speaking lines

- Christ
- Adam and Eve
- Lehi and Sariah

Dramatis personae without speaking lines, but with costumes or props

- A host (army) of the dead, small and great.

Props and costumes

- Sign reading SPIRIT PRISON to be attached to whatever closet or bin you use as the entrance to spirit prison.
- White shawls, capes, scarves, ties, etc.

Begin scene four

Sariah or Lehi (to Adam and Eve): Some of our children and grandchildren are there in spirit prison. We grieve for them. Perhaps you also understand how we feel?

Lehi or Sariah: We have lost Laman and Lemuel and all our grandchildren from them. I do not know if we could ever be happy without them, but we think they must be in spirit prison.

Sariah or Lehi (pleadingly, turning to Christ): If they could just look on thy face, surely they would remember what they were taught! Surely,

they would believe and repent and be saved in thy kingdom. Will you not go to them?

Eve or Adam: That he cannot do. He cannot go among the ungodly and the unrepentant who have defiled themselves while they were in the flesh (Doctrine and Covenants 138:20).

Adam or Eve: But do you still have hope for them, your children, and grandchildren? Do you still love them?

Lehi and Sariah (looking at each other, then solemnly nodding): Yes, Father Adam, Mother Eve. We do still love them and have hope for them.

Adam or Eve: And so does Jesus.

Eve or Adam: They are not beyond the reach of his great and healing sacrifice, if they choose to repent. But they are in a worldly state, in the bonds of iniquity, without God. They have gone contrary to the nature of God, therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness. They must pay the penalty of their transgressions and be washed clean through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God. Then shall they receive a reward according to their works (Alma 41:11).

Adam or Eve: It may not be easy for them to obtain forgiveness. Whoever tries to teach them will need both love and patience. Your children will retain their agency, their right to choose. Force is of no use. It would only harm them. Do you still want to go into that dark place [indicates spirit prison] where you may not be successful? Do you wish to try to teach them of our Father's love? (Alma 39:6)

[Lehi and Sariah nod, make sounds of assent]

Adam and Eve: Then you are called to the work and will bear Christ's name into the dark places and represent him to your lost children. You will have his image on your faces.

Eve or Adam: We will, with Christ's help, teach you and appoint you to be his messenger. He will clothe you with power and authority and commission you to carry the light of the gospel to those who are in darkness.

How beautiful in that dark place will be the feet of them who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7).

Sariah and Lehi: Our hearts are turned toward our children, and we rejoice in the work thou hast given us. For surely the worth of each of their souls is great!

Adam or Eve: The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

[Christ and the spirits move to rejoin Adam, Eve, Lehi, and Sariah.]

Bishop as Christ (facing the audience): I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (John 8:12).

Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life . . . For verily I say unto you that I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the light and the life of the world — a light that shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

I came unto mine own, and mine own received me not; but unto as many as received me gave I power to do many miracles, and to become the sons of God; and even unto them that believed on my name gave I power to obtain eternal life. And even so I have sent mine everlasting covenant into the world, to be a light to the world, and to be a standard for my people, and for the Gentiles to seek to it, and to be a messenger before my face to prepare the way before me.

Wherefore, come ye unto it . . . And I will show it plainly as I showed it unto my disciples as I stood before them in the flesh, and spake unto them . . .

For as ye have looked upon the long absence of your spirits from your bodies to be a bondage, I will show unto you how the day of redemption shall come, and also the restoration of the scattered Israel. . . .

And when the times of the Gentiles is come in, a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel; . . . And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy (Doctrine and Covenants 45:5, 7–10, 16–17, 28, 71).

Song: "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go, Dear Lord"

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"The Travail of His Soul": The Narratological Use of Isaiah's Suffering Servant Typology in Mosiah 14–24

Matthew L. Bowen

Abstract: *The narrative account of Abinadi, king Noah and his priests, and Alma$_1$—the lone believer in Abinadi's words among Noah's priests—ends with Alma$_1$'s people being brought into bondage by the aptly-named Amulon (Hebrew, "man of travail," "man of labor") and his collaborators. Amulon, Alma$_1$'s former priestly colleague, imposed Egypt-like bondage on Alma$_1$'s people, with "tasks" overseen by "taskmasters" (Mosiah 24:9). Abinadi had quoted Isaiah's poem of the suffering servant (Isaiah 53) in Mosiah 14 to answer the question from one of Noah's priests about the meaning of Isaiah 52:7–10. Isaiah 53:11 foretells that the suffering servant would experience "travail" (*ʿāmāl*) that would give him experiential "knowledge" that would make many righteous. Alma$_1$ and his people's fulfillment of the messianic suffering servant typology of Isaiah 53/Mosiah 14, which gave them experiential knowledge to "stand as witnesses," helps us better appreciate how covenant Israel at other times fulfills this typology. A recognition of the validity of this approach can help Latter-day Saints extend more Christ-like empathy to ethnicities, faith groups, communities, and individuals who suffer persecution.*

Jo Ann Hackett, a non-Latter-day Saint Hebraist and scholar of Northwest Semitic languages, was the first to propose that the Book of Mormon personal name Amulon, which later becomes a toponym (place name), could derive from *ʿāmāl*/*ʿāmēl*, "toil," "trouble,"

"labor," or "travail."[1] Of all the proposals for the origin and meaning of Amulon, Hackett's proposal is far and away the most promising. It is the best candidate from an etymological standpoint and is an even better candidate when the ways in which the name Amulon occurs within the narrative of Mosiah 23–24 are considered.

The *-ôn* ending affixed to Hebrew names means "man/person of X" or "place of X." In other words, the appellative *-ôn*, affixed to another Hebrew term "describ[es] some feature or aspect"[2] of the site or person. Thus, Amulon — derived from *ʿāmāl*/*ʿāmēl*, "toil" or "trouble" — would then mean "man of toil," "man of labor," "man of trouble," or "man of travail." It is probably a significant aspect of Mormon's narratology, then, that in using the terms "tasks" and "taskmasters," he (or his source) takes a keen interest in comparing Amulon to the Pharaoh of the exodus.[3] In so doing, he reinforces the meaning latent in the name Amulon in terms of Hebrew *ʿāmāl*/*ʿāmēl*, "toil," "trouble," "labor," or "travail" — for example, "man of toil," "man of trouble," "man of labor," or "man of travail" (see especially Mosiah 24:8–11).

A recent study has highlighted how Mormon uses the connection between Amulon ("man of labor," "toil," "travail," etc.) and the pharaonic labor that Amulon imposed on $Alma_1$ and his people.[4] Mormon does this to draw a distinction between the type of priesthood represented by "the order of the Son of God" (Melchizedek priesthood) and the type of priesthood championed by Amulon and king Noah's other priests and its successor order, the order of the Nehors. In speaking about Melchizedek to the people of Ammonihah — many of whom belonged to what Mormon described as "the order of the Nehors," "order of Nehor," or "profession of Nehor"[5] — $Alma_2$ taught that the priests after the order exemplified by Melchizedek "were ordained

1. See Paul Y. Hoskisson, ed., *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. "Amulon," onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php?title=AMULON.
2. Anson F. Rainey, "Toponymics of Erets-Israel," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 231 (1978): 4.
3. Alan Goff, "Historical Narrative, Literary Narrative—Expelling Poetics from the Republic of History," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5, no. 1 (1996): 97–99.
4. Matthew L. Bowen, "Amulon's Imposed Labor and Alma's Exodus as a Story of Contrasting Priestly Legacies," in *In the Eyes of the Ancients: Historical Perspectives on the Book of Mormon,* ed. Kerry Hull and Ryan Sharp (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2026), 215–38.
5. See especially Alma 21:4; 24:28, where "order of the Nehors is used twice"; Mormon uses the expression "order of Nehor" with Nehor in the singular in Alma 24:29. He uses "profession of Nehor" three times in 14:18; 15:15; and 16:11. He uses "order and faith of Nehor" once in Alma 14:16.

after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption" (Alma 13:2). This statement suggests that priests after this order—like $Alma_2$'s father—typified the Son of God, beginning with ordination, through lifelong suffering and affliction, sometimes even in death.

$Alma_2$ and Mormon both appear to have recognized Christological typology, not only in Abinadi's suffering and martyrdom at the hands of king Noah and his priests, but also in $Alma_1$'s suffering at the hands of Amulon and the other priests of king Noah and his gaining experiential knowledge ("*that ye may know of a surety* that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions," Mosiah 24:14). This experiential knowledge would enable him and his people to "stand as witnesses" of divine deliverance ever after (24:14), help others to receive the same divine deliverance, and to "comfort those who stand in need of comfort" in ways that king Noah, Amulon, and the other priests of king Noah never could.[6]

Abinadi's quotation of the entirety of Isaiah 53 in response to a question from one of Noah's priests—possibly $Alma_1$[7]—about the meaning of Isaiah 52:7–10 and its messenger (see Mosiah 12:20–24) certainly functions as a prophecy of Jesus Christ and his atoning suffering and death, as traditionally interpreted.[8] John W. Welch writes, "Abinadi's rebuttal was an extensive and brilliant explanation of the true essence of redemption and how it brings good tidings to those who accept Christ (see Mosiah 12:29–37 and chs. 13–16)."[9]

In this article, I endeavor to sketch out an additional narratological function for the inclusion and arrangement of this poem in Mosiah 14–24: as a harbinger of $Alma_1$ and his people's suffering travail at the hands of Amulon and their divine redemption. Just as $Alma_1$, the "young man" (compare Hebrew *ʿelem*) who believed Abinadi's "report,"

6. Matthew L. Bowen, "'This Son Shall Comfort Us': An Onomastic Tale of Two Noahs," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 23 (2017):291–94, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/this-son-shall-comfort-us-an-onomastic-tale-of-two-noahs.
7. Aaron P. Schade and Matthew L. Bowen, "'To Whom Is the Arm of the Lord Revealed?' Part 1," *Religious Educator* 16, no. 2 (2015): 90–111, rsc.byu.edu/vol-16-no-2-2015/whom-arm-lord-revealed-part-1.
8. See, for example, Matthew 8:17; Luke 22:37; Acts 8:32–35; 1 Peter 2:22–25.
9. John W. Welch, "Isaiah 53, Mosiah 14, and the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: Foundation for Apologetic Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1998), 294, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/43/.

was the one "upon whom [*ʿal-mî*] the arm of the Lord [was] revealed" (Mosiah 14:1), he and his people also suffer "travail" (*ʿāmāl*) of soul at the hands of Amulon and his henchmen before the Lord redeems them out of bondage as he had done for Israel in the exodus. They became suffering servants in the mode of Isaiah 53, like the Messiah of a century and a half later. $Alma_1$, as a suffering servant-priest, already typologically represented Christ to all his people who subsequently came to assume the role of suffering servants through their baptismal covenant (compare Mosiah 18:8–10 with Isaiah 61:1–2). In this way, $Alma_1$'s covenant community became a miniaturized "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6), doing the work of the Messiah their king. In universalizing the Christological typology from the priests to all people, as we see with $Alma_1$'s people, we witness the continued fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant ("in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," Genesis 22:18) and the growth of the kingdom of God envisioned in Isaiah 52:7–10.[10] Priesthood and its ordinances not only portray and preenact divine redemption (and ultimately resurrection), but also bind covenant members of covenant communities closer to the Lord and to each other, because they require community members to rely on each other.[11]

Moreover, in fulfilling the Christological typology of the suffering servant, $Alma_1$ and his people help us better see how the Lord's covenant people fit into the servant songs of Isaiah 49–53. We thus see why the Lord in a revelation to Nephi uses the language of Isaiah 49:3, 6 and 53:3–4 that casts the Jewish people collectively as suffering servant in the face of many centuries of antisemitism: "Do they [the Gentiles] remember the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the

10. On Isaiah 52:7–10 and its use in the Book of Mormon, see Dana M. Pike, "'How Beautiful upon the Mountains': The Imagery of Isaiah 52:7–10 and Its Occurrences in the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 249–91.
11. Samuel M. Brown, *First Principles and Ordinances: The Fourth Article of Faith in Light of the Temple* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2014), 86, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/36/. Brown writes, "Ordinances force us to rely on others. A priest blesses the sacrament for us each week so that we can renew our covenants. A patriarch relies on the promptings of the Spirit to pronounce a blessing that will help guide our lives. Male and female temple workers rise early and stay late to officiate in temple ordinances so that we can receive our own blessings and be bound to generations of our families. We are saviors on Mount Zion for one another. Ordinances are essential for our salvation not merely in and of themselves but as constant reminders that we cannot save ourselves. In this, ordinances always point to Christ."

Gentiles?" (2 Nephi 29:4). A recognition and appreciation of this multivalent interpretive approach can lead Latter-day Saints to a greater appreciation for their own spiritual heritage, but also to greater empathy for the Jews as the Lord's "ancient covenant people" (2 Nephi 29:5), who — like the Latter-day Saints themselves — are the Lord's "servant[s]."

"He Shall See of the Travail of His Soul": Amulon as the "Travail" (*ʿāmāl*) of Alma$_1$'s Soul

In Mosiah 11:5–6, Mormon records that upon Noah's succession of his father Zeniff, Noah purged his father's priests and consecrated new priests: "For he put down all the priests that had been consecrated by his father, and consecrated new ones in their stead, such as were lifted up in the pride of their hearts" (Mosiah 11:5). The ethos of this new cadre of priests represented a vastly different one from their predecessor: "Yea, and thus they were supported in their *laziness*, and in their idolatry, and in their whoredoms, by the taxes which king Noah had put upon his people; *thus did the people labor exceedingly to support iniquity*" (Mosiah 11:6).

This characterization of Noah's priests ironically reflects the Hebrew meaning of Noah's name: "[divine] rest," a meaning echoed throughout the biblical account of the patriarch Noah[12] and in the restoration account of Enoch's vision of Noah and his posterity and the earth's eventual "rest."[13] A subsequent statement in the narrative affirms the intentionality of this play on meaning, with a more direct wordplay on "Noah" in terms of "rest":

> And the seats which were set apart for the high priests, which were above all the other seats, he did ornament with pure gold; and he caused a breastwork to be built before them, *that they might rest their bodies* and their arms upon

12. Isaac M. Kikawada, "Noah and the Ark," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freeman, et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1123–24. See also Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gan, IL: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 203–4; Matthew L. Bowen, "'And He Was a Young Man': The Literary Preservation of Alma's Autobiographical Wordplay," *Insights* 30 (2010): 2–3, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/insights/vol30/iss4/3/.
13. Terrence L. Szink, "The Vision of Enoch: Structure of a Masterpiece," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17, nos. 1–2 (2008): 13–14, 18; Bowen, "This Son Shall Comfort Us," 264–74.

> while they should speak lying and vain words to his people. (Mosiah 11:11)

King "Rest" gave luxurious "rest" to himself and his priests, while he and his priests caused his people to "labor exceedingly to support iniquity." The priests' imposition of excessive "labor" on the people "to support iniquity" also hints at the name Amulon and Amulon's imposition of labor (compare Hebrew *ʿāmāl*, "labor," "travail") of Egyptian-style bondage and "taskmasters" as recounted in Mosiah 24:8–10 (compare Deuteronomy 26:7, "the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction**,** *and our labour* [*ʿămālênû*] and our oppression").

It is the nature of self-serving royal and priestly conduct to impose grievous burdens, toil, and travail on people whose burdens they should be making lighter (compare Matthew 23:4 with 1 Nephi 17:4 and Mosiah 2:14). The contrast could not be more clear, with respect to Jesus Christ and his Atonement, where the Lord "knows" and bears the burdens, toil, and travail of his people. The scriptures repeatedly testify of Lord's intimate acquaintance with the sorrows of ancient Israel in Egypt ("I know their sorrows," Exodus 3:7) as well as his understanding of the hearts of Alma$_1$ and his people ("he did know their hearts," Mosiah 24:12), and Isaiah describes the experiential "knowledge" that emerged from the "travail," "labor," or "misery" of the suffering servant's "soul." Isaiah prophesies, "He shall see *of the travail* [*mēʿămal*, labor] of his soul, and shall be satisfied: *by his knowledge* shall my righteous servant justify many [or, make many righteous]; for *he shall bear* their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:11; Mosiah 14:11). Through the lens of Jesus Christ and his Atonement, we can also understand the Deuteronomistic narrator's comment about the Lord being "grieved" over Israel being mired in a cycle of apostasy, bondage, and incomplete repentance: "And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord: and *his soul was grieved* [*wattiqṣar*] *for the misery* [*baʿămal*] of Israel" (Judges 10:16). The Lord is always grieved and pained for the misery of his people, even with his atoning suffering accomplished. Surrounded by the Lamanites and Nephites at the temple in Bountiful, the Resurrected Lord prayed: "And it came to pass that when they had knelt upon the ground, Jesus groaned within himself, and said: Father, I am troubled because of the wickedness of the people of the house of Israel" (3 Nephi 17:14).

In his quotation and interpretation of Isaiah 53 as preserved in Mosiah 14–16, Abinadi clearly and appropriately has Jesus Christ in mind as the fulfillment of that prophetic poem. Nevertheless, Abinadi's

quotation of Isaiah 53 with its Messianic implications and his refusal to recant his testimony of Christ, resulted in his own martyrdom as a "suffering servant."[14] $Alma_1$, who alone "believes" the words of Abinadi, in his turn also becomes a "suffering servant." A comparison of Mormon's introductions of $Alma_1$ and Amulon into his narrative (table 1), with the respective plays on the meaning of their names, suggests that Mormon wished to highlight Amulon, along with his corrupt priestly cohort, as the authors and $Alma_1$ as the sufferer of the "toil" or "travail" (*ʿămal*) that bound $Alma_1$ and his people more closely with Christ:

Table 1. Introductions of $Alma_1$ and Amulon.

Mosiah 17:1–4	Mosiah 24:9–12
And now it came to pass that when Abinadi had finished these sayings, that *the king commanded that the priests should take him and cause that he should be put to death*. But there was one among them whose name was **Alma**, he also being a descendant of Nephi. And he was **a young man** [cf. Hebrew *ʿelem*] and *he believed the words which Abinadi had spoken*, for *he knew concerning the iniquity which Abinadi had testified against them*; therefore he began to plead with the king that he would not be angry with Abinadi, but suffer that he might depart in peace. But the king was more wroth, and *caused that Alma should be cast out from among them*, and *sent his servants after him that they might slay him*. But he fled from before them **and hid himself** [compare *ʿlm* and its synonyms *str*, *ḥbʾ*, etc.] that they found him not. **And he being concealed** for many days did write all the words which Abinadi had spoken.	For ***Amulon*** *knew Alma*, that he had been one of the king's priests, and that *it was he that believed the words of Abinadi and was driven out before the king*, and therefore he was wroth with him; for he was subject to king Laman, yet he exercised authority over them, and **put tasks upon them**, **and put task-masters over them**. And it came to pass that *so great were their afflictions that they began to cry mightily to God*. And **Amulon** commanded them that they should stop their cries; and he put guards over them to watch them, that *whosoever should be found calling upon God should be put to death*. And Alma and his people did not raise their voices to the Lord their God, but did pour out their hearts to him; and *he did know the thoughts of their hearts*.

Mormon's text in Mosiah 17:2 plays on the meaning of the name of *Alma*,[15] a derivation from the Semitic/Hebrew word *ʿelem*, "young man," or "stripling,"[16] as a key part of his introduction of $Alma_1$ into the

14. Schade and Bowen, "'To Whom Is the Arm of the Lord Revealed?,'" 90–111.
15. Bowen, "And He Was a Young Man," 2–4; Matthew L. Bowen, "Alma: Young Man, Hidden Prophet," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 19 (2016): 343–53,interpreterfoundation.org/journal/alma-young-man-hidden-prophet.
16. Hugh W. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (Provo, UT: FARMS; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 76, scholarsarchive.byu

narrative: "[A]nd he was a young man and he believed the words of which Abinadi had spoken." Mormon also places repeated emphasis on $Alma_1$'s hiddenness, which could be a paronomasia on the name *Alma* in terms of the *ʿlm* ("hide") or one of its several Hebrew synonyms.[17] $Alma_1$ had to clandestinely form his community (see also Mosiah 18:1, 3, 5).

Later, Mormon recalls the exact narrative moment that $Alma_1$ "believed [the] report" or prophetic testimony of Abinadi: "Amulon knew Alma, that he had been one of the king's priests, and that it was he that believed the words of Abinadi and was driven out before the king" (Mosiah 24:9). There, Mormon does something similar with the name *Amulon* in terms of its meaning, "man of toil" (compare Hebrew *ʿāmāl*, "toil," "labor," "travail"): "[H]e exercised authority over them, and put tasks upon them, and put task-masters over them." In so doing, Mormon connects both $Alma_1$ and Amulon to the testimony of Abinadi, which both men heard, but to which only one responded affirmatively.

The words of Isaiah that $Alma_1$ had heard Abinadi quote with reference to the suffering servant (Christ), would come to have greater meaning for $Alma_1$ in subsequent years, perhaps especially, "He [the Lord] shall see **of the travail** [*mēʿămal*] of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Mosiah 14:11). $Alma_1$, for his own part, would taste such "travail," "trouble," "toil," or "labor" as a suffering servant under the hands of Amulon, and his former priestly associates. That "travail" or "toil"—*ʿămal*—connected $Alma_1$ more closely to Jesus Christ.

The suffering servant would be "oppressed" or "tasked" (*niggaś*, Isaiah 53:7; Mosiah 14:7), just as ancient Israel had been "task[ed]" in Egypt (Exodus 3:7, 9; 5:13–14) and $Alma_1$ and his people had been "task[ed]" (Mosiah 24:9–11). For Mormon, the names *Noah* and *Amulon* apparently helped emphasize the deep parallels he saw between Israel's "hard bondage," "affliction, . . . labour [*ʿămālēnû*], . . . and . . . oppression" in Egypt (Deuteronomy 26:6–7). The same kinsman

.edu/mi/12/. Nibley wrote that *Alma* can mean "a young man, a coat of mail, a mountain, or a sign." See also Paul Y. Hoskisson, "What's in a Name? Alma as a Hebrew Name," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, no. 1 (1998): 72–73, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol7/iss1/10.

17. The extent to which Mormon appears to have done this in his narrative is remarkable. 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.

Redeemer redeemed them all because he "knew" (Exodus 3:7; Isaiah 53:11/Mosiah 14:11; Mosiah 24:12; cf. especially Alma 7:11–13).

"By His Knowledge": Jesus and $Alma_1$ as Suffering Servants and "Travail" as the Source of Experiential Knowledge

The acquisition of experiential knowledge through suffering constitutes a vital element in the vicarious suffering of the servant foretold in the servant song of Isaiah 53 and fully realized in the atoning suffering of Jesus Christ; it is also reflected in the toil and travail of $Alma_1$'s people in the land of Helam. Regarding the suffering servant, the prophet declares, "He shall see of **the travail** [*mēʿămal*] **of his soul**, **and shall be satisfied**; **by his knowledge** [*bĕdaʿtô*] shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:11; Mosiah 14:11). Abinadi interpreted the phrase "and shall be satisfied" as being fulfilled by Jehovah in atoning for humanity: "having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, **and satisfied the demands of justice**" (Mosiah 15:9).

However, in using the phrase "by his knowledge" in Isaiah 53:11/Mosiah 14:11, Isaiah appears to reference his description of the suffering servant as "a man of sorrows **and acquainted with grief** [*wîdûaʿ ḥōlî*; or, **and one given knowledge by sickness**]" (Isaiah 53:3). Biblical translations such as the KJV frequently obscure the lexical connection between the servant's "knowledge" and his being "one given **knowledge by** sickness." In both instances—first with a participial form of the verb *yādaʿ* "know" (*wîdûaʿ*, "and one known given knowledge by" or "informed by") used adjectivally[18] and second with a prefixed and suffixed form of the noun *daʿat*, "knowledge"—Isaiah clearly describes knowledge that the servant gained through the experience of suffering.

In addressing the righteous church members in the city of Gideon, $Alma_2$ directly paraphrased Isaiah 53:3–5 when he foretold the atoning suffering of Jesus Christ: "And he shall go forth, suffering pains and

18. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 619–20. They write, "By adjectival is meant the use of a participle in a clause where it could be replaced by an adjective, either attributive or predicate, rather than by some other part of speech" (619). As an example of the *qātul* form, they cite *wîduʿîm* ("experienced, respected"—literally, "knowledgeable") in Deuteronomy 1:13 and invite comparison to *wîdûaʿ* in Isaiah 53:3 (620n37).

afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith **he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people**" (Alma 7:11). The KJV rendition of Isaiah 53:3–4 reads,

> He is despised and rejected of men**; a man of sorrows** [*ʾîš makʾōbôt*], **and acquainted with grief** [*wîdûaʿ ḥōlî*]: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne **our griefs** [*ḥŏlāyēnû*], and carried **our sorrows** [*ûmakʾōbênû*]: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

As Thomas Wayment has previously pointed out, $Alma_2$'s rendition of "the pains and the sicknesses" in Alma 7:11 more accurately reflects the meaning of "sorrows" and "grief"/"griefs" and "sorrows" in Isaiah 53:3–4 (cf. Mosiah 14:3–4).[19] Donald W. Parry rendered Isaiah 53:3–4 thus:

> He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and familiar with sickness; and like one from whom people hid their faces; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our sicknesses and carried our pains; but we considered him plagued, smitten by God, and afflicted.[20]

Parry's translation, though more personal (and, in my view, more felicitous) than the KJV, still slightly obscures the lexical connection between *wîdûaʿ* ("given knowledge [of]") and *daʿat* ("knowledge") in Isaiah 53:11.

As $Alma_2$ more fully explicates Isaiah 53:3–5 and 53:11, he clearly and thoroughly emphasizes the experiential dimension of the knowledge gained by the Son of God through his atoning sacrifice:

> And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and *he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh,* **that he may know** *according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities*.

19. Thomas Wayment, "The Hebrew Text of Alma 7:11," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 98–103, 130, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol14/iss1/10.
20. Donald W. Parry, *Harmonizing Isaiah: Combining Ancient Sources* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001), 210–12, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/40/.

> Now the Spirit **knoweth** all things; nevertheless *the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people*, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me. (Alma 7:12–13)

Conceivably, the Spirit *could have* informed or acquainted the Messiah with all necessary *cognitive* knowledge *about* his people. Yet a "perfect atonement" (Doctrine and Covenants 76:69) required something more: the Messiah's experiential knowledge.[21] Thus, he chose to know the pains, sicknesses, infirmities, and the consequences of his people — and all humankind — by suffering and experience.

The Lord said of his people Israel as they were oppressed by "taskmasters" in Egypt, "I know their sorrows [*makʾōbâw*]"[22] or "I know their **pains**" (Exodus 3:7) — the same term is used in Isaiah 53:4–5 with respect to the servant's vicarious suffering. In Mosiah 24, Mormon avers that the same Lord "knows the thoughts" of $Alma_1$ and his people's "hearts," as they have suffered as servants or slaves in "bondage" (*ʿăbōdâ*; literally, service or servitude). He also *acknowledges* their baptismal covenant with him, a covenant with an ordinance that portrays divine deliverance through the waters of death and chaos, as in the Exodus. Isaiah describes this type of deliverance in Isaiah 51:9–11 (2 Nephi 8:9–11) with Jehovah acting as divine warrior in defeated Israel's cosmic enemies at the time of the Exodus:

> Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

21. See, e.g., Neal A. Maxwell, "Willing to Submit," *Ensign*, May 1985, 72–73, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1985/05/willing-to-submit. See further Godfrey J. Ellis, "Experiential Knowledge and the Covenantal Relationship in Alma 7," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 51 (2022): 29–80, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/experiential-knowledge-and-the-covenantal-relationship-in-alma-7.

22. Or, *makʾōbāyw*.

Paul described this event as Israel being "baptized . . . in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:2).

Daniel Belnap helps us see how all of this fulfills the Abrahamic covenant: "This imagery [in Isaiah 51:9–11; 2 Nephi 8:9–11] is tied directly into the restoration of the promised land, for when the Divine Warrior comes, the covenant is fulfilled."[23] Their baptisms in the waters of Mormon prefigured their deliverance from bondage in the land of Helam. Their restoration to the land of Zarahemla would enable them to stand as witnesses of God in fulfillment of their baptismal covenant, and the experience would give them experiential knowledge:

> And Alma and his people did not raise their voices to the Lord their God, but did pour out their hearts to him; *and he did know the thoughts of their hearts*. And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came to them in their afflictions, saying: Lift up your heads and be of good comfort, *for I know of the covenant* which ye have made unto me; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage. And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; *and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and* **that ye may know of a surety** *that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions*. (Mosiah 24:12–14)

Just as the Son of God, in submission[24] to the will of God, chose to suffer and "know according to the flesh how to succor his people" (Alma 7:12), $Alma_1$, in compliance with the will of God, suffered in consequence of earlier choices, and came to experientially "know of a surety" that God "visit[s] [his] people in their afflictions." Just as Christ acquired the experiential knowledge that enables him to help his people, $Alma_1$ and his people — a people of the Lord — acquired the experiential knowledge that enabled them to help many other people.

In being experientially empowered to "stand as witnesses for [Christ] hereafter," $Alma_1$ and his people could now fulfill the covenant obligation that they had willingly taken upon themselves at the waters

23. Daniel Belnap, "'I Will Contend with Them That Contendeth with Thee': The Divine Warrior in Jacob's Speech of 2 Nephi 6–10," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17, no. 1–2 (2008): 29, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/4743/.

24. Compare Mosiah 3:19.

of Mormon, "to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life" (Mosiah 18:9). In "mourn[ing] with those that mourn" and "comfort[ing] those that stand in need of comfort," $Alma_1$ and his people participated in the Messiah's work "to comfort all that mourn" (Isaiah 61:2). What they suffered increased their capacity to administer comfort, and without it, they could not have "st[oo]d as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places . . . even until death" as a matter of experience. $Alma_1$, as a priest, was authorized to administer the ordinances of baptism — the ordinance necessary for the creation of a unique covenant relationship that enables becoming one with the Lord: to take Christ upon oneself, bearing the name of Christ ("to be called his people," "blessed is this people who are willing to bear my name," Mosiah 18:8; 26:18), standing as witnesses of God (Mosiah 18:9; 24:14), serving as types of the suffering servant. In baptizing his people, $Alma_1$ also prefigured the Lord's redemption of his own people from Amulon and the Lamanites under his leadership, and Christ's ultimate redemption of all humankind in the resurrection.

The whole community, such as $Alma_1$'s community, that participates in this covenant is blessed and redefined to share the same characteristics and bear the same burdens — that is, to "bear one another's burdens, that they may be light" (Mosiah 18:8), just as Jesus Christ bore our burdens (see Isaiah 53:4, 6, 11; Mosiah 14:4, 6, 11). Regarding $Alma_1$'s people, Mormon records,

> And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, the Lord did strengthen them that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord. (Mosiah 24:15)

It seems very likely that their "burdens were made light" as they fulfilled their baptismal covenant to "bear one another's burdens, that they might be light." $Alma_1$ and his people baptizing each other beautifully prefigured in ritual this sharing of burdens and suffering that preceded the Lord's later deliverance of the whole community. $Alma_2$ seems to have had his father's people and these events in mind when

he blessed the poor Zoramites: "[M]ay God grant unto you that your burdens may be light, through the joy of his Son" (Alma 33:23).

It is through "the order of his Son" (Melchizedek priesthood) and the Atonement of his Son that the administration of such blessings is made available to everyone, as all — male and female — share in the duties and blessings of priestly service, including priesthood ordinances, and come into unity with the Lord and each other (compare Mosiah 18:21).[25] As this happens more and more in communities and nations throughout the world, the Abrahamic covenant will come to fulfillment: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18).

Covenant Israel as Suffering Servant and Messianic Type

The examples of Abinadi, $Alma_1$, and $Alma_1$'s people help us see how prophets and the Lord's covenant people, individually and collectively, can fulfill aspects of the Servant Song of Isaiah 53, and thus serve as types of the Messiah himself. $Alma_1$ "believed" Abinadi's "report" (Isaiah 53:1; Mosiah 14:1; "But there was one among them whose name was Alma . . . And he was a young man, and he believed the words which Abinadi had spoken," Mosiah 17:2). The Lord's words again had reference to Isaiah's question, "Who hath believed our report?" (Mosiah 14:1/Isaiah 53:1) when he commended $Alma_1$ for having faith in the words of Abinadi: "Thou art blessed because of thy exceeding faith in the words alone of my servant Abinadi" (Mosiah 26:15). The Lord further commended $Alma_1$'s people as well for believing his report: "And blessed are they because of their exceeding faith in the words alone which thou hast spoken unto them" (Mosiah 26:16). Those who *believed* $Alma_1$'s *report* gathered to the land and waters of Mormon:

> And as many as would hear his word he [$Alma_1$] did teach. And he taught them privately, that it might not come to the knowledge of the king. *And many did believe his words*. And it came to pass that *as many as did believe him did go forth to a place which was called Mormon*, having received its name from the king, being in the borders of the land having been infested, by times or at seasons, by wild beasts. Now,

25. Mosiah 18:21: "And he [$Alma_1$] commanded them that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another."

> there was in Mormon a fountain of pure water, and Alma resorted thither, there being near the water a thicket of small trees, where he did hide himself in the daytime from the searches of the king. And it came to pass that *as many as believed him went thither to hear his words*. And it came to pass after many days there were a goodly number gathered together at the place of Mormon, to hear the words of Alma. Yea, *all were gathered together that believed on his word, to hear him*. And he did teach them, and did preach unto them repentance, and redemption, and faith on the Lord. (Mosiah 18:3–7)

As editor, Mormon — who previously included Abinadi's use of Isaiah 53 and its introductory phrase "Who hath believed our report?" into his abridgment — emphasizes that the community that formed at the land and waters that were his namesake (3 Nephi 5:12) were those who "believed" in the prophetic word, just as $Alma_1$ had (Mosiah 17:2). There they formed themselves into a covenant community (Mosiah 18:8–35). Like Abinadi, $Alma_1$ and his people suffered "travail" (*ʿāmāl*) of soul (Isaiah 53:11) at the hands of Amulon and his fellow priests in Mosiah 24:8–16, a foreshadowing or type of the Messiah's suffering.

The Jews as the Messiah's own people — described to Nephi as "mine ancient covenant people" as covenant Israel — also fit the typology of Isaiah's suffering servant. A common modern Jewish reading of the Servant Song of Isaiah 53 is that the servant is the Jewish people.[26] Latter-day Saints should neither be averse to nor dismissive of this reading. In fact, Nephi himself records an oracle from the Lord using language that draws on the servant songs of Isaiah, including Isaiah 53, to condemn Gentile antisemitism and ingratitude for the Jewish production, transmission, and preservation of the biblical writings:

> But thus saith the Lord God: O fools, they shall have a Bible; and it shall proceed forth from the Jews, mine ancient covenant people. And *what thank they the Jews for the Bible which they receive from them?* Yea, what do the Gentiles mean? Do they remember **the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews**, **and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles**? *O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant*

26. David Noel Freedman, ed., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. "Servant of the Lord" (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1189–90.

> *people? Nay; but ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them.* But behold, I will return all these things upon your own heads; for *I the Lord have not forgotten my people*. Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. *Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews*? (2 Nephi 29:4–6)

When Nephi records the Lord's scathing question, "what thank they [the Gentiles] the Jews for the Bible which they receive from them?," the use of the verb "thank" — Hebrew *ydy* or *ydh* — cleverly plays on the names *Judah* (*yĕhûdâ*, "praise, thanks") and its tribal derivative, *Jews*[27] (*yĕhûdîm*, those who are to be "thanked" or "praised out of a feeling of gratitude"),[28] similar to the etiological wordplay on Judah in the birth report in Genesis 29:35 ("And she [Leah] conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the Lord [*ʾôdeh ʾet-yhwh*]: therefore she called his name Judah") and Jacob's blessing on Judah in Genesis 49:8: "Judah [*yĕhûdâ*], thou art he whom thy brethren *shall praise* [*yôdûkā*, literally, thy brethren *shall thank thee*]; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee."

When the Lord asks another pointed question, "Do they [the Gentiles] *remember the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews*, and their diligence unto me, in *bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles*?" (2 Nephi 29:4), he has reference to several of the servant songs of Isaiah.

Firstly, "travails" in the triad "the travails, and the labors, and pains of the Jews" recalls the "travail" (*ʿămal*) of the servant's "soul" in Isaiah 53:11; "labors" recalls, the servant's exclamation in Isaiah 49:4: "I have laboured [*yāgaʿtî*] in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work [*ûpĕʿullātî*] with my God"; and "pains" recalls the "man of pains" and "the pains" borne in Isaiah 53:3–4.

Secondly, the phrase "diligence in bringing salvation unto the Gentiles" clearly and deliberately alludes to Isaiah 49:3, 6. In Isaiah 49:3, the Lord expressly designated the people of Israel as his

27. Matthew L. Bowen, "'What Thank They the Jews'? (2 Nephi 29:4): A Note on the Name 'Judah' and Antisemitism," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 12 (2014): 111–25, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/what-thank-they-the-jews-2-nephi-294-a-note-on-the-name-judah-and-antisemitism.

28. Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 171.

servant — "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified" — and further foretold, "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation [*yĕšûʿatî*] unto the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). Thus, in 2 Nephi 29:4, the Lord duly notes the "diligence" of the Jews, implicitly as "my servant, O Israel," in "bringing salvation unto the Gentiles."

It is true that Isaiah 49:6 in the narrowest sense describes the eternal "salvation" (*yĕšûʿâ*) "authored" (Hebrews 5:9; cf. Hebrews 12:12; Moroni 6:4) by Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah ("and thou shalt call his name Jesus [Greek *Iēsoun* < Hebrew/Aramaic *yĕhôšûaʿ* or *yēšûaʿ*]: for he shall *save* [Greek *sōsei* < Hebrew *yôšîaʿ*] his people from their sins," Matthew 1:21). Simeon, when Jesus was brought to the temple as an infant, specifically applied the language of Isaiah 49:6 to Jesus:

> Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have *seen thy salvation* [Greek *sōtērion sou*], Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; *A light to lighten the Gentiles*, and the glory of thy people Israel. (Luke 2:29–32)

Nevertheless, Isaiah 49:6 has been applied to multiple individuals and communities throughout time. For example, Saul (Paul) and Barnabas, the great missionaries to the Gentiles, applied Isaiah 49:6 to themselves: "For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:46). In a 6 December 1832 revelation, the Lord directed the following to early members of the restored church of Christ: "Therefore, blessed are ye if ye continue in my goodness, *a light unto the Gentiles*, and through this priesthood, *a savior unto my people Israel*. The Lord hath said it. Amen" (Doctrine and Covenants 86:11). Here, the Lord uses the language of Isaiah 49:6 and Christological language ("a savior unto my people") to designate the faithful early Saints as his servant. The Lord's words to Nephi in 2 Nephi 29:4–6 collectively designate the Jews as his servant in the same way. His use of the language of Isaiah 53:3–4 (especially "travails" and "pains") in Nephi's oracle further characterizes the Jews collectively as a *suffering* servant.

Even a cursory review of antisemitism from antiquity to the present more than validates the application of "man of sorrows," as in Isaiah 53:3, as a collective description of Jews as a people. The "pains" of persecution and abuse borne by Jews over long centuries is movingly

captured in Mark Markovich Warshawsky's Oyfn Pripetshik, a Yiddish song about teaching Jewish children the Hebrew aleph-beth (alphabet). This song became very popular among Eastern European Jews during the late part of the nineteenth century. The fourth verse particularly captures the Jewish experience with antisemitism and persecution (see table 2).

Table 2. Oyfn Pripetshik in Yiddish and English.

אויפן פריפעטשיק	Oyfn Pripetshik (4th Verse)[29]	At the Fireplace
אַז איר וועט, קינדער, עלטער ווערן וועט איר אַליין פֿאַרשטיין וויפֿל אין די אותיות ליגן טרערן און ווי פֿיל געווייַן	Az ir vet, kinder, elter vern, Vet ir aleyn farshteyn, Vifl in di oysyes lign trern, Un vi fil geveyn.	Children, when you will grow older you will understand how many tears are contained in these letters, and how much weeping.

The later collective experience of the *Shoah* (Holocaust) further imbued this song with inexpressible grief and poignancy.[30] It thus behooves everyone to "remember the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews," the Lord's "ancient covenant people" from antiquity to the present (2 Nephi 29:4–5). According to Nephi, the world will be held accountable for the degree to which they have hearkened to and "respect[ed] the words of the Jews"—the scriptural records brought forth through their efforts to copy and preserve them ("Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?"; 2 Nephi 29:6)—and the divine word in other scriptural witnesses.[31]

29. Mark Markovich Warshawsky, "Oyfn Pripetshik (At the Fireplace)," in *Mir Trogn A Gezang: Favorite Yiddish Songs*, by Eleanor Gordon Mlotek (New York: The Workman's Circle, 2000), yiddishsongs.org/oyfn-pripetshik/.
30. See, for example, Avrom Akselrod, "Baym geto toyerl" ["By the Ghetto Gate"], United States Holocaust Museum, collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn671450. This is a Holocaust-era song written to the tune of Oyfn Pripetshik that offers a snapshot of life during the Holocaust. A recorded audio version has been preserved. The song is described there as follows: "A topical song about food smuggling in the Kovno ghetto, By the Ghetto Gate draws on the melody of the much-loved 'Yiddish alphabet song,' Oyfn pripetshik [sic] (At the Hearth). Lyricist Avrom Akselrod, a refugee who had fled Poland at the start of World War II, wrote a number of parodic verses in the ghetto. He was killed in July 1944, when German militiamen set fire to his underground hiding place."
31. See 2 Nephi 31:14. There Nephi cites three such scriptural witnesses: "And you that will not partake of the goodness of God, and respect the words of the Jews, and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out

In 3 Nephi 29:8, Mormon prophetically writes:

> Yea, and ye need not any longer hiss, nor spurn, nor make game of the Jews, nor any of the remnant of the house of Israel; for behold, the Lord remembereth his covenant unto them, and he will do unto them according to that which he hath sworn.

The unjust and unjustifiable suffering of the Jewish people through antisemitism ("ye have cursed them, and hated them, and have not sought to recover them"; 2 Nephi 29:5) is mirrored in the unjust suffering of the Messiah himself, a Jew.

In view of all of the foregoing, we can better appreciate the prophetic assurance given to Joseph Smith in the "appendix" to the Book of Commandments: "And *they also of the tribe of Judah, after their pain*, shall be sanctified in holiness before the Lord, to dwell in his presence day and night, forever and ever" (Doctrine and Covenants 133:35). That great day is coming.

Conclusion

Mormon's narrative links $Alma_1$ and Amulon through the story of Abinidi's testimony of the suffering servant and then, through extended wordplay on their names, he shows that $Alma_1$ and his people also become suffering servants at the hands of the taskmaster Amulon. The names of both $Alma_1$ ("and he was a young man [*ʿelem*]," Mosiah 17:2, and "to [upon] whom [*ʿal-mî*] is the arm of the Lord revealed," Isaiah 53:1/Mosiah 14:1) and Amulon ("yet he exercised authority over them, and put tasks upon them, and put task-masters over them," Mosiah 24:9; "he shall see of the travail [*mēʿămal*] of his soul") are linked to the testimony of Abinadi when Mormon notes that $Alma_1$ "believed" that testimony or "report," Amulon and his cohorts did not. The Book of Mormon personal name *Amulon* likely derives from the Hebrew word *ʿāmāl* ("travail," "labor, toil"). Mormon and his source, almost certainly $Alma_1$, recognized the lexical affinity between this term and the name

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of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day." Nephi's invoking of these three scriptural witnesses is consistent with the Deuteronomic law of witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). On Nephi's idiosyncratic use of the law of witnesses, see Bruce A. Van Orden, "The Law of Witnesses in 2 Nephi," 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), 307–21.

Amulon. Further, they recognized the irony of Amulon ("man of travail," "man of labor") as the name of the leader of the priests of King Noah ("rest"), those who imposed Egypt-like bondage, taskmasters, and labor on $Alma_1$ and his people (see Mosiah 24:8–16), just as they had caused King Noah's people to "labor exceedingly to support iniquity" (Mosiah 11:6).

The name *Amulon* itself functions as one of several significant terminological links to Isaiah 53 in Mosiah 14–24. The "travail" (*ʿāmāl* [*mēʿămal*]) of the servant's "soul" described in Isaiah 53:11 that gave him experiential "knowledge" not only foretold the Messiah's sufferings that gave him experiential knowledge (see Alma 7:11–13) but suggested a typology of experiential suffering in which Abinadi, $Alma_1$, and $Alma_1$'s people fit. While Abinadi "suffer[ed] the pains of death by fire" and "sealed the truth of his words by his death" as a martyr (Mosiah 17:15, 18, 20; cf. Isaiah 53:3–4), $Alma_1$ and his people subsequently suffered "afflictions" at the hands of Amulon ("man of travail," "man of toil") and his henchmen who imposed Egypt-like bondage on them, necessitating divine deliverance.

Recognizing the narratological use of the suffering servant typology and how the covenant people of the Lord fit within that typology helps us to reconcile the common Jewish reading of Isaiah 53 with the Messianic one embraced by Latter-day Saints and other Christians. Indeed, additional textual support for that reading exists within pages of Book of Mormon, in 2 Nephi 29:4–5 ("Do they remember the travails, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles?"; cf. Isaiah 49:3, 6; 53:3–4). This should lead Latter-day Saints to greater empathy for the Jews as the Lord's "ancient covenant people" and to a greater appreciation of their own spiritual heritage. The Jews, like the Latter-day Saints, are the Lord's "servant."

The priesthood and its ordinances make it possible for everyone to make covenants with the Lord. Nevertheless, to become *like the Lord* requires our following the way of the suffering servant. As we willingly "bear one another's burdens, that they may be light," we, like Jesus the Messiah, will learn through experience to "mourn with those that mourn; . . . and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (compare again Mosiah 18:8–9 to Isaiah 61:1–2). If this was the Messiah's path, how else could we learn to be like him?

As we do the Messiah's work of atonement — "to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy

for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," those blessed by our efforts become "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified" (Isaiah 61:3). The Abrahamic covenant is then fulfilled as covenant keepers "build the old wastes, . . . raise up the former desolations, and . . . repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations" (Isaiah 61:4; compare Isaiah 58:12).



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Gamma Marks: Recent Works Relevant to Their Study

Janet Ewell

Abstract: *Many are familiar with the so-called gamma marks as they are portrayed on early medieval mosaics in Ravenna and Rome. They appear as right-angle marks, usually with toothed ends, or in a shape like a capital H on the corners of angels' and worthies' robes or in mosaics depicting textiles such as altar cloths and hangings. The marks defy easy explanation, in part because they are also portrayed in multiple cultural contexts, well beyond Italy, and because they take other forms. This paper surveys publications from Maciej Szymaszek, one of three scholars whose recent works significantly increase our knowledge of the marks' geographic spread, their frequency of use, and their persistence across time.*

Several significant works relating to *gamma marks*, or *gammadia*, have been published in the last dozen years.[1] These works expand our knowledge of their range and frequency in Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period and offer hints concerning their significance to some who viewed or wore them.

Maciej Szymaszek catalogued and studied first- to third-century textile remnants with notched bands that bear the marks shown in figure 1. Cristina Cumbo photographed and documented more than 200 instances of the marks portrayed on the edges of the worthies'

1. The word *gammadiae* first appears in print in the fifteenth century in the *Liber Pontificalis,* the Book of Popes. We do not know how ancients referred to the marks; because they seem only loosely and visually connected to either the Greek letters *gamma* or *eta*, scholars often refer to them as "so-called gamma marks." Except when quoting others, this paper simply calls them "gamma marks." (Γ) and (H) are used for clarification where necessary.

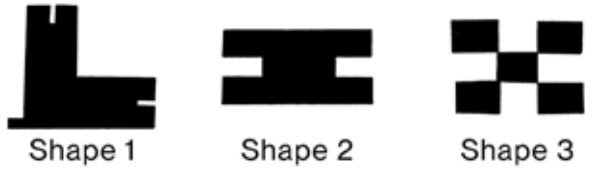


Figure 1. The three shapes Szymaszek found woven into textiles are from the first to third century CE. Shape 1 is the most common shape found in the study, named for its resemblance to the Greek letter gamma (Γ) and sometimes called the right-angle mark. Shape 2 resembles the Greek *eta* (H) and is sometimes called the H-shaped mark. Beyond their loose resemblance, they do not seem connected to the Greek alphabet. (Maciej Szymaszek, "The Distribution of Textiles with 'Greek Letter' Signs in the Roman World: The Case of the So-called *gammadia*," in *Textile Trade and Distribution in Antiquity*, ed. Kerstin Dross-Krupe (Wiesbaden, DE: Harrossowitz, 2014), 193.)

mantles[2] in the frescoes of Roman catacombs. Gamma marks portrayed on a robe in the catacombs can be seen in figure 2.

In addition, Jelena Bogdanović wrote in 2014 about the liturgical context and the ritual and spatial significance of the fifteenth-century priestly vestment, the sakkos of Photios, the Metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus'. The sakkos' opulent decorations were applied in the form of four crosses, each surrounded by sets of four right angles or gamma marks (see figure 3). Figure 4 shows a sketch of the cross-and-gammas pattern that may be difficult to discern amid the sakkos' rich embroidery.

These recent scholarly works enrich our knowledge of the marks' range and frequency and offer insight into their possible significance. To use comparative religion's vocabulary, these papers, taken together, suggest that the marks sometimes delineated sacred spaces and may in some cases have been associated with rituals, including rites of passage.

In this study I share images of what are frequently considered to be gamma marks and discuss Szymaszek's doctoral work on the first- to third-century textile remnants that bear these marks.[3] Using

2. A mantle is an outer garment, usually worn over a tunic, woven in one piece as a large rectangle, and meant to be wrapped around the body with the selvedges—the long, self-finished edges—at the bottom and top. It is often shown in art with an end draped over the left arm and extending below knee level. On women, the mantle may also serve as a veil or head covering and extend to cover the person's lower legs. A mantle may be called a *robe*, a *pallium* (Latin), a *himatio*n (Greek), or a טליתּ (*tallit*, Hebrew).
3. In a forthcoming paper I will discuss the work of both Cumbo and Bogdanović, summarize the contributions of these three scholarly works, and consider the potential implications they raise.



Figure 2. Note the mark above Christ's left knee as he multiplies loaves and fishes in this fresco in Rome's catacomb of Via Anapo, fourth century CE. (Anonymous, *Christ multiplies the loaves of bread*. Wikimedia Commons, s.v. "*Christ multiplies the loaves of bread, anonymous catacomb of via Anapo,"* commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Christ_multiplies_the_loaves_of_bread,_anonymous_catacomb_of_via_Anapo.jpg.)



Figure 3. The Major Sakkos of Photios, the early fifteenth century Metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus'. Scriptural events are embroidered with the crucifixion and anastasis (the victorious Christ standing on the doors of hell, raising Adam and Eve from the dead) shown inside the two central crosses. These crosses are surrounded by four gamma marks (Γ). (Anonymous, *Major Sakkos of Photios,* circa 1417, satin embroidered with gold and silver thread and silk with pearl ornaments, Kremlin Armory, Moscow. Wikimedia Commons, s.v. "Large sakkos of photius," commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Large_sakkos_of_photius.jpg.)

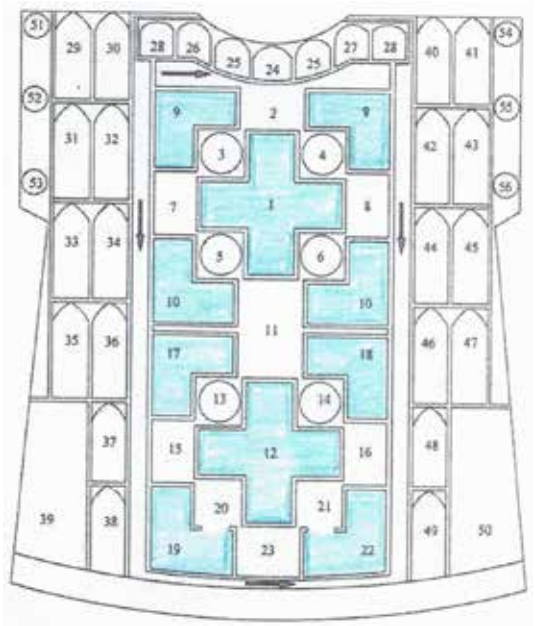


Figure 4. This drawing of the Major Sakkos of Photios shows more clearly the eight gamma shapes (Γ) surrounding crosses on the front of Metropolitan Photios's major sakkos show in figure 3. Another two crosses and eight gammas are on the back. (Jelena Bogdanović, "The Moveable Canopy, The Performative Space of the Major Sakkos of Metropolitan Photios," *Byzantinoslavica* 72, no. 1–2 (January 2014): 251.)

Szymaszek's work, archeological reports, and the ensuing scholarly analysis, the paper suggests patterns that seem to emerge and looks at the patterns' implication.

The primary evidence of gamma marks is visual, not verbal. Therefore, it is much easier to point to a gamma mark than it is to define one. See figures 5 through 23 for examples of gamma marks.

Gamma Marks on Preserved Textiles: Maciej Szymaszek's Work

Maciej Szymaszek's 2014 unpublished doctoral dissertation[4] examines over 160 textiles with woven-in, notched bands from the first to

4. Maciej Szymaszek, *Signs (So-Called Gammadia) on Roman and Late-Antique Textiles in the Light of Archeological, Iconographic, and Literary Sources* (PhD diss., John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, 2014).



Figure 5. A sixth-century mosaic in San Vitale, Ravenna, contains ten gamma marks: four on top at the altar cloth's corners enclose the Eucharist, four on the front enclose the eight-pointed emblem, two in gold on the altar itself, and four at knee level on prophets' and angels' robes. (Anonymous, *Mosaic of Sacrifice of Abel and Offering of Melchizedek*, Ravenna, Italy. Wikimedia Commons, s.v. "Mosaic of Sacrifice of Abel (left) and Offering of Melchizedek, (right) Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna (6098688702)," commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosaic_of_Sacrifice_of_Abel_(left)_and_Offering_of_Melchizedek,_(right)_Basilica_of_San_Vitale,_Ravenna_(6098688702).jpg.)



Figure 6. A third-century CE mosaic, Mytilene, Greece, illustrates Act 3 of Menander's third-century-BCE comedy "Samia." The central figure has marks on his robe. (Anonymous, *Girl from Samos mosaic panel from the dining room of the House of Menander in Mytilene,* third century CE, photograph of floor mosaic, University of Texas, Austin. Wikimedia Commons, s.v. "Samia (Girl from Samos) Mytilene 3cAD," commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Samia_(Girl_from_Samos)_Mytilene_3cAD.jpg.)



Figure 7. The oldest known icon of Christ Pantocrator, from Saint Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai. Christ holds scriptures encased in a golden book cover on which the central cross is surrounded by gamma marks (Γ). (Anonymous, *Icon of Christ Pantocrator*, sixth century, paint and hot beeswax. Wikimedia Commons, s.v. "Spas vsederzhitel sinay," commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spas_vsederzhitel_sinay.jpg.)



Figure 8. This Roman-era Egyptian woman's mummy mask includes a gamma mark (Γ), possibly on a veil, near her right ear. (Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period: Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue*, 3 vols. (New York: Bollinger, 1964), 11, fig. 135.)



Figure 9. A male mummy mask from Roman-era Egypt with the eta (H) shape. (Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 11, fig. 132.)



Figure 10. The golden book covers of Theodolinda's Gospel, with two central crosses, each framed by four gamma marks (Γ). (Anonymous, L'Evangeliario di Teodolinda nella propria teca presso il Museo e Tesoro del Duomo di Monza, Circa 603, gold book covers, The Museum and Treasury of Monza Cathedral, Italy. Wikimedia Commons, s.v. "L'Evangeliario di Teodolinda nella propria teca presso il Museo e Tesoro del Duomo di Monza," commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:L%27Evangeliario_di_Teodolinda_nella_propria_teca_presso_il_Museo_e_Tesoro_del_Duomo_di_Monza.jpg.)

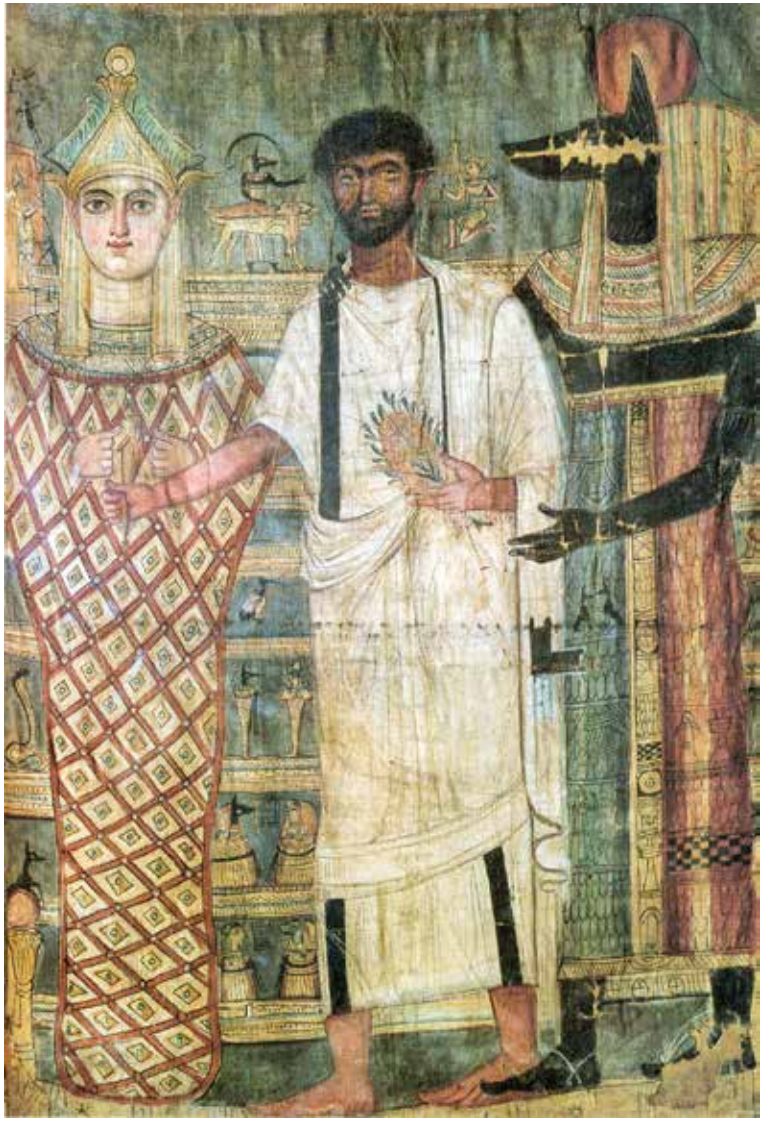


Figure 11. Possibly a shroud, this nearly life-sized tempura-on-linen portrait shows the deceased between Osiris (as a mummy) and Anubis. A prominent gamma mark (Γ) extends beyond the edge of his mantle. The Berlin Egyptian Museum indicates it is from the mid-first century CE. (Anonymous, *Mummy Wrapping of a Young Man,* Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection, Berlin. Wikimedia Commons, s.v. "Shroud from the time of the Ptolemaic dynasty," commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shroud_from_the_time_of_the_Ptolemaic_dynasty.jpg. On Wikimedia it is identified as Ptolemaic. For the later date, see Isabelle Régen, "Ombres Une iconographie singulière du mort sur des « linceuls » d'époque romaine provenant de Saqqâra" *Et in Ægypto et ad Ægyptum,* eds. Annie Gasse, Frédéric Servajean, and Christophe Thiers (Montpellier, FR: Archéologie des Sociétés Méditerranéennes Université Paul Valéry, 2012), 604 and fig. 1.)



Figure 12. From the Huqoq Synagogue Floor Mosaics with eta (H) shaped marks on the defenders' robes. Fifth century CE, Israel. Since warriors were unlikely to go into combat with robes draped over their arms, their marked clothing serves to identify them as Jews. (Anonymous, *Huqoq Synagogue Floor Mosaic,* fifth century CE, mosaic tile, Stroum Center for Jewish Studies, University of Washington, jewishstudies.washington.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Huqoq-elephant-panel.jpg.)



Figure 13. The Latin Poet Virgil is depicted in a fourth- to fifth-century manuscript in a robe with gamma marks. The manuscript is at the Vatican. (Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 11, fig. 127.)



Figure 14. A youth, possibly the Apostle John, in a gamma-marked mantle in the Via Dino Compagni Hypogeum, Rome. (Anonymous, *Youth in Toga, possibly the Apostle John*, circa fourth century, fresco, Via Dino Compagni Hypogeum (Via Latina Catacombs) Rome. Image courtesy of the International Catacomb Society.)



Figure 15. Gamma marks in floor mosaics from an inner room of a high-priestly house in Jerusalem, destroyed by fire along with the temple in 70 CE. (Nahman Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), fig. 164.)



Figure 16. Gamma marks filling in the corners of the square around a circular rosette in floor mosaics in the Magdala Synagogue, Galilee. Probably destroyed 67 or 68 CE. It may have been used during Christ’s time in Galilee. (Photo by author.)



Figure 17. Fifth-century Jewish rock cut tomb, Tamara, Galilee. A rough-hewn tomb with four gamma marks capped with arrowhead or leaf shapes enclose the carved image of doors topped by a menorah. (See נחמן אביגד and N. Avigad, “Relics of Ancient Jewish Art in Galilee / משרידי האמנות היהודית העתיקה בגליל,” *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies* (1964): 24 ארץ-ישראל מחקרים בידיעת הארץ ועתיקותיה ז, jstor.org/stable/23614641.)



Figure 18. Christ Between Peter and Paul. Six eta (H) shaped gammas are visible. (Anonymous, *Christ between Peter and Paul,* circa fourth century, fresco, Catacomb of Saints Marcellinus and Peter, Rome. Wikimedia Commons, s.v. "ChristPeterPaul," commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ChristPeterPaul.jpg.)



Figure 19. Christ's lifeless body, his waist covered by a cloth on which is a cross surrounded by smaller crosses in circles. Gamma marks frame the crosses. An epitaphios (lamentation upon the tomb) may also be an icon and a liturgical cloth used during Friday or Saturday of Easter. (Anonymous, *Epitaphios of King Stefan of Uros II Milutin Serbia*, circa 1300, Liturgical cloth and icon in silk, velvet, gold and silver wire, gold and silver thread, Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Belgrade inventory no. 4660. Wikimedia Commons, s.v. "Plaštanica kralja Milutina, XIII-XIV stoleće," commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pla%C5%A1tanica_kralja_Milutina,_XIII-XIV_stole%C4%87e.jpg.)



Figure 20. Saints, crowns in hand, approach Christ in Sant'Appolinare Nuovo, Ravenna. A variety of marks appear at knee level. (Anonymous, *Male Saints Approaching Christ*, sixth century, mosaic, Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna. Wikimedia Commons, s.v. "Ravenna Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo mosaic," commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ravenna_Basilica_of_Sant%27Apollinare_Nuovo_mosaic.jpg.)



Figure 21. Virgin martyrs across the nave from the male saints in figure 20, their crowns in hand, approach Mary and Christ, gold rectangles on their white robes, front and back. (Anonymous, *Virgin Martyrs Approaching Mary and Christ*, sixth century, mosaic, Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna. Wikimedia Commons, s.v. "Meister von San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna 002," commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meister_von_San_Apollinare_Nuovo_in_Ravenna_002.jpg.)



Figure 22. Christ enthroned on Mary, a small gold gamma without pronged ends near her gold rectangle. Angels have pronged gammas on their robes. (Frederica Bustreo, *Ravenna Guide to the Masterpieces* (Florence: SCALA, 2013), 72–73.)



Figure 23. The screen between the nave and apse in this Orthodox church "follows the model of the unified first millennium Church of both East and West . . . utilizing hanging curtains instead of icons to complete the enclosure." Shawn Tribe, "The Byzantine Church of Panagía Gorgoepíkoös" *Liturgical Arts Journal*, 19 September 2025, liturgical artsjournal.com/2025/09/the-byzantine-church-of-panagia.html. (Image anonymous, *The Interior of Panagia Gorgoepíkoös* fourteenth-century Byzantine church, Athens. Wikimedia Commons, s.v. "Panagía Gorgoepíkoös interior 2010," commons.wikimedia .org/w/index.php?curid=11196635.)

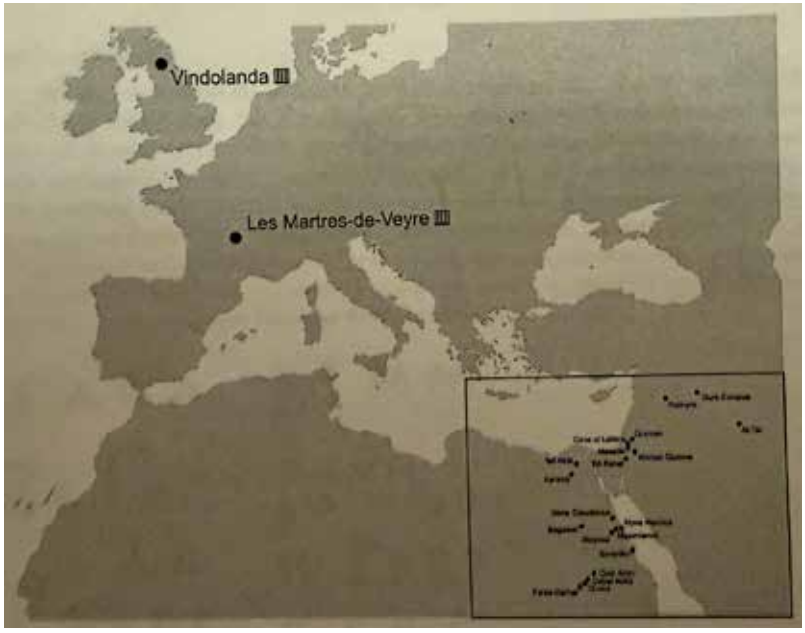


Figure 24. Distribution map of textiles with marks. (Szymaszek, "Distribution," 191.)

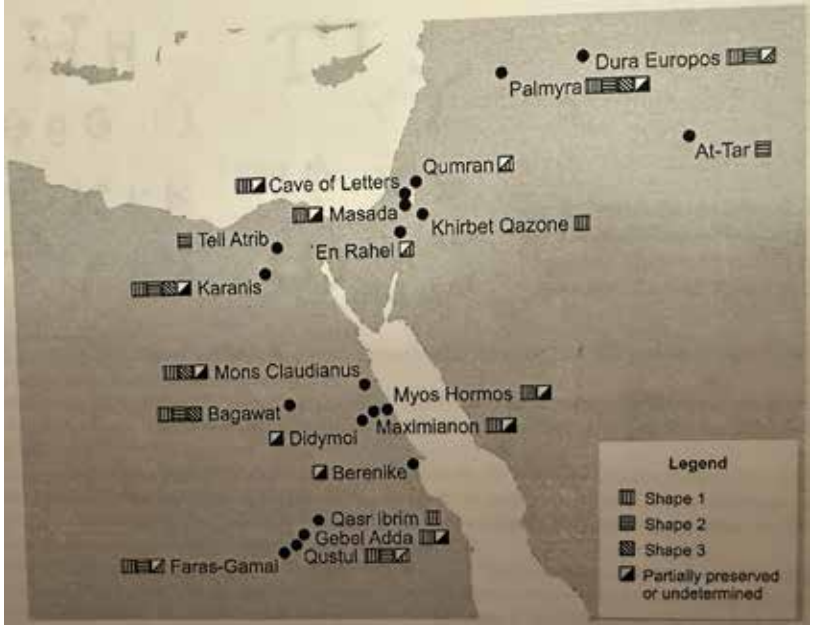


Figure 25. An inset map from figure 24 showing the locations where climates were more favorable to textile preservation. Most textiles were found in these areas. (Szymaszek, "Distribution," 191.)

the third century CE from more than twenty sites in the Roman Empire of the time.[5] See figures 24 and 25.

Many were previously unpublished. The bands were most often tapestry woven into woolen cloth with colored wool threads that contrasted with the larger textile. (See figure 29 for a close look at a tapestry-woven gamma.) The tapestry-woven bands were red, yellow, blue, black, or purple.

Of the more than 160 textiles, 54 percent were sufficiently well-preserved to allow Szymaszek to identify the marks' original forms. These fell into three shapes. (See figure 1.) Among these textiles with identifiable shapes, shape one, a right angle — the so-called gamma shape, referring to the capital Greek gamma — is the most common with about fifty-eight examples (36 percent) found at sixteen sites. Shape two, an H — the so-called *eta shape*, referring to the capital Greek *eta* — is less common, with roughly twenty-four examples (15 percent) found in eight sites, while there are eight examples of shape three, which were woven with a checkerboard pattern made from five squares. Eight of these (4 percent) were found at four sites.[6] Multiple sites produced both textiles with right-angle marks and textiles with the H shaped marks.[7]

Though most of the textile remains are small, handkerchief size, a few are considerably larger. The larger textiles indicate the marks could appear near the corners of rectangular fabrics that had been woven to shape. Szymaszek referred to these as mantles.[8] One remarkably intact textile from the Sudan measures more than seven-and-a-half feet long and four-and-a-half feet wide. See figure 26.

5. Maciej Szymaszek, "The Distribution of Textiles with 'Greek Letter' Signs in the Roman World: The Case of the So-called *gammadia*," in *Textile Trade and Distribution in Antiquity*, ed. Kerstin Dross-Krupe (Wiesbaden, DE: Harrossowitz, 2014), 189.
6. Szymaszek, "Distribution," 193. Yigael Yadin reports two garments with the checkerboard pattern from the Cave of Letters, but the checkerboards were in the middle section of the upper selvage, in contrast to the presumed placement of the right-angle and H-shaped marks nearer the corners. Yigael Yadin, *The Finds from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1963), 225.
7. Szymaszek, "Distribution," 191, fig 1b.
8. Maciej Szymaszek, "On the Interpretation of Textile Finds with Right-angled or H-shaped Tapestry Bands," in *Textiles, Tools and Techniques of the 1st Millennium AD from Egypt and Neighbouring Countries: Proceedings of the 8th Conference 'Textiles from the Nile Valley' (Research group) Conference Antwerp, 4–6 October 2013* (Tielt, BE: Lannoo, 2015), 170.



Figure 26. This gamma-marked textile from Sudan measures over 7.7 feet by 4.6 feet. The right-angle marks were woven in near corners. (Szymaszek, "On the Interpretation," 170, fig. 4.)

Szymaszek also writes that smaller remnants could have come from veils and tunics based on the gamma shapes' artistic representations from the period, including from mummy masks and mosaics portraying bands with notched ends.

The textiles were found principally in Egypt, Sudan, and Syria, where the dry climate favors textile preservation, but they were also found across a wider geographic range, including in Vindolanda (a Roman fort in England just south from Hadrian's Wall), in a burial in central France, and in Israel, Jordan, and in At-Tar in modern Iraq.[9] The Middle East's dry climates aid in textile preservation, while the textiles

9. Szymaszek has referenced other examples since his doctoral research, including a gamma-marked textile from Pompeii. See Annette Paetz gen Schieck, Sylvia Mitschke, and Luigia Melillo, "Purpur, Gold Und Seide: Textile Vielfalt Aus Der Asche Des Vesuvs," in *Antike Welt* (2014): 15–21, 18–19, Figure 6. Szymaszek refers to this in note 1 of his "On the Interpretation." It is quite possible that Jews, Christians, and initiates into the Isis cult groups that have elsewhere been associated with gamma marks in Late Antiquity each lived in Pompeii. For the possible presence of Jews in Greco-Roman Pompeii, see Jewish Virtual Library, s.v. "Pompeii," https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/Pompeii, which points to Hebrew names among established members of Pompeii's society and among recent immigrants, possibly Jews who fled Jerusalem at the time of the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. For the possible presence of Christians in Pompeii, see Bruce W. Longenecker's *The Crosses of Pompeii: Jesus-Devotion in a Vesuvian Town* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 112–15. Longenecker also notes the presence of Isis worship in Pompeii.

from Vindolanda were preserved when the 97 CE Roman fort was razed to make way for the 104 CE fort,[10] with the old fort's remains covered "by a layer of turf or clay, to provide a clean area for the new structure." The resulting "anaerobic conditions" preserved virtually all the Roman debris.[11] The Les Martres-de-Veyre textiles from the burial in central France were preserved by "the presence of carbolic acid which permeates the region and acts against bacterial or biological degradation."[12]

Szymaszek has more recently facilitated the radiocarbon dating of eleven other well-preserved, tapestry-woven textile fragments with notched bands from burials that were rescued before the flooding by the Aswan Dam in upper Egypt and neighboring countries in 1960.[13] The oldest dates from as early as 130 CE, the most recent from as late as 540 CE. As with the first- to third-century textiles studied in his doctoral work, several textiles appear to have been originally rectangular, with woven-in bands forming right angles or H-shaped motifs near the textiles' corners. Seven of the eleven were clearly in a right-angle shape, and two were clearly in the H or eta shape. See figure 27.

Szymaszek writes that the marks serve no structural function, such as reinforcing the cloth.[14] He also writes that these marks may have served as a "decorative motif" and cautions that "at the current state of research it cannot be confirmed that the signs conveyed a symbolic or religious meaning" (*allo stato attuale della ricerca non si puo confermare che i segni trasmettessero un significato simbolico o religioso*).[15]

10. Carol Van Driel-Murray, John Peter Wild, Mark Seaward, and Jennifer Hillam, "The Dating of the Periods of Occupation," in *The Early Wooden Forts* (Greenhead, UK: Roman Army Museum Publications for the Vindolanda Trust, 1993), viii, see also 84.
11. Robin Birley, "Introduction," in *The Early Wooden Forts*.
12. Sophie Desrosiers and Alexandra Lorquin, "Gallo-Roman Period Archeaologicial Textiles Found in France," in *Textiles in European Archaeology: Report from the 6th NESAT Symposium, 7–11th May 1996 in Borås,* eds. Lisa Bender Jørgensen and Christina Rinaldo (Goteborg, SE: NESAT, 1998), 54-55.
13. Maciej Szymaszek and Lena Larrson Loven, "Radiocarbon dating of Late Nubian textiles at the Museum Gustavianum in Uppsala, and the Oriental Institute Museum in Chicago," in *Excavating, Analysing, Reconstructing: Textiles of the First Millennium AD from Egypt and Neighbouring Countries*, eds. Antoine De Moor, Cacilia Fluck, Petra Linscheid (Tielt, BE: Lannoo, 2017),297,https://www.spranglady.com/uploads/7/7/0/8/77084287/james_medard.pdf.
14. Szymaszek, "Distribution," 189. They are not weavers' marks, designations of fabric quality, nor "used to strengthen corners of the cloth."
15. Maciej Szymaszek, "L'origine delle cosiddette gammadiae nell'arte cristiana

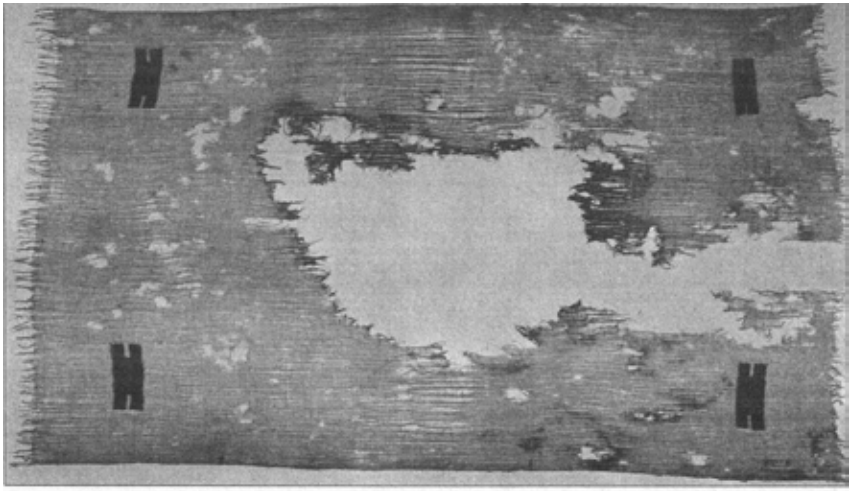


Figure 27. This textile, also from Sudan, has the eta (H) shapes woven into the fabric near the corners. Fourth to sixth century CE. (Maciej Szymaszek, "L'origine delle cosiddette gammadiae nell'arte cristiana antica," in *Acta XVI Congressvs Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae (Rome 22–28 September 2013)*, ed. Olof Brandt et al. (Vatican: Pontifical Institute for Christian Archeology, 2016), fig. 2.)

He also notes that the widespread occurrence of textile artefacts bearing the same two shapes — the right angle and the H shape — have been repeated in the same way for more than 500 years" (*le forme del signi sono state ripetuti all stesso modo per più di 500 anni*).[16]

He eschews discussion of the textile owners' ethnic or religious identities. The textiles' findspots, that is, the physical location where they were recovered, are often complex, as discussed below in "Textile finds referenced in Szymaszek's work." His study does, nonetheless, enlarge our views concerning who might have worn or used such textiles. Though artistic and monumental representation show these marked mantles generally on people with elite status or high prestige,[17] predominantly male,[18] the woven artefacts confirm they were worn by

antica," in *Acta XVI Congressvs Internationalis Archaeologiae Christianae (Rome 22–28 September 2013)*, ed. Olof Brandt et al. (Vatican: Pontifical Institute for Christian Archeology, 2016), 2410.

16. Szymaszek, "L'origine," 2417.
17. Where it can be determined who is portrayed wearing a gamma-marked mantle, the marks as represented in Christian and Jewish contexts are predominantly on figures of prestige or, in the case of funerary art in Egypt and Palmyra, the honored dead.
18. Women are less often portrayed than men in frescoes and mosaics generally. In a fourth-century gold glass from Catacomba di Novaziano, Saint Agnes

both genders and at least sometimes by non-elites. His work documents the marked mantles' use by people from many social classes, including miners, quarry workers, soldiers, and Jews under siege at Masada and at the Cave of Letters. The artefacts he catalogues show that they generally seem to be domestically produced textiles rather than imported or luxury goods.

He also documented more than 360 images of these marks from Late Antiquity that show close correlation between textile artefacts and artistic representations, noting Egyptian mummy portraits, Palmyrene sculpture, Jewish mosaics,[19] catacomb paintings, and Christian man-

is portrayed orant—that is, praying with her hands raised above her head—wearing a gamma-marked mantle bearing the H shape. See Cristina Cumbo, *Le c.d. gammadiae nelle catacombe Cristiane di Roma: Censimento, confronti ed ipostisi interpretative* (Oxford: BAR, 2019), Appendix 4, 218. An interesting version of the gamma mark, a golden rectangle, is portrayed on women in the fifth and sixth centuries. The female martyrs portrayed processing toward the apse in Ravenna's sixth-century Sant'Apollinare Nuovo wear white mantles over their left shoulders with golden rectangles in the corners, parallel to the placement of gamma-marks on the revered males processing on the opposite side of the nave and the males who appear in the register above them. (The males' mantles are wrapped around them as well as draped over the left shoulder.) Mary, holding the Christ Child, also has such a golden rectangle on the corner of her blue mantle, while the Christ Child on her lap has a golden right-angle shape on his robe in a parallel position. In San Vitale, also sixth century, one member of the Empress Theodora's retinue wears a similarly marked white mantle with a golden rectangle. This shape is also portrayed in Sant'Apollinare Nuovo's mosaic of the Last Supper where it is centered on an altar cloth surrounded by right-angle gamma marks and on the hanging of the temple in the mosaic of a Pharisee and a Publican going up to the temple to pray. In the Catacomb of San Gennaro in Naples, the same rectangular shape appears on the robes of the two orant women on either side of San Gennaro (wearing a mantle with a Z shape gamma mark), probably from the fifth century. The rectangle surrounded by gamma shapes appears in the mosaics of *vela*, curtains or veils in Sant'Apollinare Nuovo.

19. Szymaszek's list has not been published. In addition to those he mentioned in "On the Interpretation," fifth-century Jewish mosaics were uncovered in 2012 during the excavations of a synagogue in Huqoq, bringing forward by 150 years the major evidence of the use of these marks in a Jewish context. *Eta* or H-shaped marks appear there on Jewish figures in the elephant mosaic. One other report of a fifth-century right-angle-shaped mark, "on a stone door of a Jewish tomb from the fifth century at Tamara," is shown in figure 17 and was published by Yigael Yadin in 1963. Yadin cites נחמן אביגד and Avigad, "Relics of Ancient Jewish Art in Galilee," 24. See Yigael Yadin, *The Finds from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1963), 230n62, archive.org/details/findsfrombarkokh0001yadi. Yadin mentions four right-angle shapes capped with arrowhead or leaf shapes found in

uscripts, as well as mosaics and frescoes in public and religious buildings. He writes, "Bands depicted in art closely correspond in shape, colour and position to those seen on archaeological finds from the first to the third century CE."[20]

Of these more than 360 ancient artistic representations, 85 percent come from Christian contexts, while 15 percent are associated with Jewish, Egyptian, Palmyrene, Roman, and Greek contexts.[21] These "numerous representations in art demonstrate that textiles with the signs have also been known in regions where archeological evidence is not preserved due to conditions unfavourable for fabric survival."[22]

Previous publications concerning these gamma marks have focused on the marks' artistic representations,[23] which were likely commissioned by those with at least some financial means. These artistic representations have informed — and perhaps skewed — scholars' interpretations. The textile remains Szymaszek studied are primary evidence, while the paintings and mosaics are secondary representations or perhaps tertiary evidence, if artists and craftsmen worked from copy books or from other representations.[24]

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relief. The tomb is not far from Huqoq. The carving is rough-hewn and is surmounted by a menorah on the lintel. The four right-angle marks enclose what appears to be pair of doors with three panels each, which are divided by an astragal that is also topped by a menorah.

20. Szymaszek, "Interpretation," 172n19.
21. Szymaszek, "L'origine," 2418.
22. Szymaszek, "Distribution," 195.
23. In addition to mantles portrayed in frescoes and mosaics, these marks are portrayed in gold glass, mummy portraits and masks, book covers, illuminated manuscripts, paintings, stone carvings, and metal work.
24. See Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue: The Excavations at Dura-Europos conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report VIII Part I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), 383; see Kraeling's discussion of "copy book art" as it pertains to Dura-Europos. He also speaks of a manuscript tradition. Also note Rina Talgam, "Christian Floor Mosaics," in *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Art*, ed. Robin M. Jensen, Mark D. Ellison (London: Routledge, 2018), 115. R. Pfister and Louisa Bellinger write that the frescoes in the third-century Dura-Europos synagogue "may be copied from earlier pictures." See R. Pfister and Louisa Bellinger, *The Textiles: The Excavations at Dura-Europos conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report IV Part II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945), 10. Long trains of transmission, not just wide geographic spread, through copy books may be implied.

Textile Finds Referenced in Szymaszek's Work

Seven of the twenty-two findspots Szymaszek documents are discussed below, chosen here for the quantity of the information available about the findspots and their contexts, for their geographic spread, and for their capacity to add information about the textiles' owners and uses. They also illustrate the difficulties scholars face when trying to identify textiles' owners or when trying to discern what the textile meant to its owner.[25]

Textiles from Les Martes-de-Veyvre

A second-century woman's burial from Les Martes-de-Veyvre (in central France about 110 miles west from Lyon) reveals her gender and that she was buried in a wooden coffin with a woolen, tabby-woven[26] textile bearing a woven-in, right-angled, denticulate gamma that spanned roughly six inches on the cloth.[27] The researchers who studied this and other Gallo-Roman textiles from across France concluded "the available data are inadequate to risk cultural attributions, and to separate what stems from the Gallic tradition, the Roman contribution or imports." France "includes a part of *Gallia comata* conquered by Caesar and the *Provencia,* Roman for a long time, but under the influence of early Greek settlement and heir to a long tradition of Mediterranean exchange."[28] Obscure though the burial may be, it does contribute at least one important idea: a second-century female burial could include a mantle with a right-angle shaped mark.

Textiles from Vindolanda

The gamma-marked textile was deposited between 97 and 104 CE at a frontier, wooden Roman fort (a mile south from where Hadrian's Wall would later be built, now in northern England). The fort, which was adjacent to ironstone and lead workings and at that time contained

25. A majority of the textile finds come from Egypt and neighboring counties. Discussion of the difficulties involved in identifying the users or owner of the textiles is found in Nobuko Kajitani, "Textiles and Their Context in the Third-to-Fourth Century CE Cemetery of al-Bagawat, Khargah Oasis, Egypt, from the 1907–1931 Excavations by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York," in *Textiles in Situ: Their findspots in Egypt and neighboring Countries in the First Millennium CE,* ed. Sabine Schrenk (Riggisberg, CH: Abegg-Stiftung, 2006).
26. Tabby woven or plain weave cloth is a basic weaving pattern, one thread up, the next one down.
27. Desrosiers and Lorquin, "Gallo-Roman," 59, fig. 7.
28. Desrosiers and Lorquin, "Gallo-Roman," 60.

daub and wattle buildings, housed the Ninth Cohort of Batavians[29] from present-day Holland, fewer than 500 men. This early fort enclosed only a few acres. The textile with a gamma mark was one of the nicer ones found among those discarded in the area of the *praetorium* where the fort's leadership and their families would have lived. The woolen textile was woven in a "fine, half-basket weave . . . (with) a tapestry-woven notched gamma inserted into it" in a full basket weave, but with "innumerable faults."[30] J. P. Wild writes, "It began life as a cloak, was carefully remodelled for another, unknown, textile function and finally (perhaps after a tertiary use) was jettisoned with many other rags" in room XII of the praetorium.[31] It may have belonged to the Prefect Flavius Cerialis or his literate wife Sulpicia Lepidina,[32] but no textiles found there were imported "eastern exotica."[33] While the prefect and his wife had prestige and were educated people in this frontier Roman fort, it would be hard to argue that anyone there enjoyed exalted status.

Textiles from the Cave of Letters

The remains from five to eight woolen mantles with notched bands[34] were found in burial niches[35] in the Cave of Letters (five kilometers west from En-Gedi in the Judean desert) where "Jews who were definitely supporters of Bar Kokhba in his struggles against Rome (132–135 CE) diligently adhered to the various *halakhoth* contained in Talmudic literature of the period."[36] See figures 28 and 29.

They were members of families that led the rebellion in En-Gedi[37] and were pinned in the cave by Roman soldiers camped above them

29. "The Dating of the Periods of Occupation," in *The Early Wooden Forts*, viii. *Coh. VIIII Batavorum*.
30. J. P. Wild, "The Textiles," in *The Early Wooden Forts*, 79. No colors are noted, but other textiles from the site have "varying degrees of natural pigmentation" with darker brown or purple woven-in bands.
31. Wild, "Textiles," 84.
32. Sulpicia Lepidina's correspondence in ink on wooden tablets from two other Roman women, including a birthday party invitation from a neighboring commander's wife, are among the earliest known Roman women's letters.
33. Wild, "Textiles," 86.
34. Yadin, *Finds*, 237, Figure 39-2.54, for a possible gamma mark. For others with gamma marks, see 203 and 238–40.
35. Yadin, *Finds*, 221. He also writes that the number of gamma-marked mantles and the number of male skeletons are in accord "more or less," 232.
36. Yadin, *Finds*, vii.
37. Yadin, *Finds,* vii.



Figure 28. A mantle from the Cave of Letters, after washing. (Yigael Yadin, *Bar Kokhba* (New York: Random House, 1971), 76.)



Figure 29. A close up of a mark from the Cave of Letters, showing the woven-in, or tapestry-woven, gamma shape. (Yadin, *Bar Kokhba*, 77.)

who cut them off from both escape and from the only water source in the region.

Only one mantle is well enough preserved to indicate its size: 8.9 feet by 4.6 feet,[38] large enough to be "used as blankets or bed covers" and woven to shape on a very broad loom.[39] Yigael Yadin, who excavated the site, compares the mantle's shape and size to the dimensions of a Roman woman's pallium, where the measure from the floor to the base of the neck was equal to the cloth's width. Its length, which was to be wrapped about the body, was two-and-one-sixth times the width.[40] The gamma marks appear near the mantle's corners. The gamma-bearing mantles were colorful compared to other textiles from the cave,[41] and Yadin originally identified them as women's items based on the frescoes in the synagogue at Dura-Europos. They were dyed reddish-brown from madder or blue-black from madder, indigo, and saffron.

One fragment with gamma marks had "a blue thread wrapped around the loose warp ends," suggesting the presence of *tzitzits* — tassels — on the corners of at least one of the gamma-marked mantles.[42] The *tzitzits* suggest that the mantle may have served as a *tallit gadol*, a prayer shawl. (A *tallit gadol* may also serve as a shroud. See Numbers 15:38 and Deuteronomy 22:12.) Yadin notes that the mantles

38. Yadin, *Finds,* 223, 238.
39. Yadin, *Finds,* 238. There, see a sketch of the mantle with one corner (and so, one gamma) missing.
40. Yadin, *Finds,* 238. This paper's author stands roughly 61 inches tall, with a length from the floor to base of neck of about 53 inches. Based on the length of a Roman soldier's stride, a thousand paces making a mile (*mille passuum*), and since one's stride, left foot to left foot, is usually about one's height, the average Roman soldier in the first century CE was a bit less than five foot three inches. In Dura-Europos, the light-colored male mantles are shown to fall mid-calf, while women's mantles extended below the ankles. The textile's dimensions would have been adequate for most people of either gender in the Roman period.
41. Yadin, *Finds,* 225. Yadin originally assumed the gamma-marked textiles to be women's garments, based on the paintings at Dura-Europos where only females, the Widow of Zarepheth, and Moses's mother and sister display the full shape of the right-angle gamma marks. One is robed in a saffron-colored mantle. On men at Dura-Europos, only pronged ends extending from near the corners of the mantles are shown. The mantles on men are generally white or painted in pastel colors—arguably to break up the whiteness of multiple mantles, for instance, in the group of gamma-marked Jews at David's anointing.
42. Yadin, *Finds,* 240. *Tzitzit* are associated since ancient times with the *tallit* used by males during prayer, though modern women also use them.

found in the burial niches had no traces of *tzitzits.* He writes, "I do not believe that this is incidental, for it was evidently customary to remove the *sisith* from the mantles of person being buried."[43]

Yadin also reports unattached unspun wool in bundles, tied in the middle with linen thread and dyed by dipping the tufts in blue (or double dyed in madder and indigo, as Orit Shamir writes[44]), presumably for the *tzitzits*.[45] Shamir adds that "they were found in a letters-skin . . . wrapped in a piece of woollen mantle decorated with the H-shaped design and a linen cloth."[46]

The belongings left in the caves indicate a level of prosperity among the people from En-Gedi. A cache of bronze utensils was found hidden in Hall A.[47] Hall C yielded three glass vessels that "had been neatly wrapped and carefully hidden away. . . . Their exceptional packing would indicate that their owners had attached special importance to them, and there is little doubt that they had been packed in En-Gedi prior to flight to the cave."[48] Keys, all iron, left in the cave indicated these refugees possessed locked chests for jewelry and other precious possessions. They also had keys to what were probably doors, some "very thick and heavy doors such as those of a courtyard or fort."[49] The papers of Babata, found in a water skin in the cave, indicated she owned date orchards inherited from her first husband and was wealthy enough to loan money to her polygynous second husband. Nothing in the cave, however, indicates exalted status.

43. Yadin, *Finds,* 221. Orit Shamir points out that other mantles found in the cave, which were not used for burial, had no *tzitzit*. Orit Shamir, "Two Special Traditions in Jewish Garments and the Rarity of Mixing Wool and Linen Threads in the Land of Israel," in *Ancient Textiles Series Vol.18, an offprint from Prehistoric, Ancient Near Eastern and Aegean Textiles and Dress: An Interdisciplinary Anthology,* eds. Mary Harlow, Cecile Michel and Marie-Louise Nosch (Oxford: Oxbow, 2014), 305. Shrouds for Jewish burials of the period usually were made of linen, thought the Cave of Letters was hardly an ordinary situation. See Orit Shamir, "Mixed Wool and Linen Textiles (*Sha'atnez* in Hebrew) from a Nabatean Burial Cave at 'En Tamar," in *Arise, Walk Through the Land,* eds. Joseph Patrich, Orit Peleg-Barkat, Erez Ben-Yosef (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2016), 56.
44. Shamir, "Two Special," 305.
45. Yadin, *Finds,* 182–87. See 183 for their use as *tzitzit.*
46. Shamir, "Two Special," 304.
47. Yadin, *Finds,* 17.
48. Yadin, *Finds,* 101.
49. Yadin, *Finds,* 100.

Textiles from Khirbet Qa'azone Cemetery

Excavation at this first- to third-century burial site (southeast from the Dead Sea, now in Jordan) recovered fifty-seven identifiable textile garments,[50] including parts of five mantles.[51] Two have gamma marks at the corners. A red one, which was large enough to be worn around the body and over a woman's head and shoulders as a veil, as shown in the Dura-Europos synagogue frescoes,[52] preserves parts "of at least two of the four gamma motifs that originally decorated it" with "projections or spurs at the corner of the gammas."[53] It was at least two meters wide. One relatively small textile (forty-nine inches by less than 92 inches, perhaps for a child) was coarser, undyed wool and had four simple squares in the gamma or *eta* shapes' places.[54]

Textiles were found scattered on the surface and in looted graves in the cemetery, which was estimated to hold 3,500 graves. Konstantin D. Politis excavated twenth-three previously intact internments. Some bodies were buried in leather shrouds but others in reused textiles, usually in a simple tabby weave. Most textiles at the site appear to be clothing, repurposed as shrouds.

Politis wrote, "Most [textiles] are characteristic sleeveless Roman tunics with a purple-colored stripe . . . or rectangular Greek mantles decorated with four symmetrically placed, colored motifs, usually gamma-shaped." He writes, "As exciting and rare as these finds may be, they do not characterize a specific ethnic group nor can they be attributed to a particular religious affiliation; they simply reflect the

50. Konstantin D. Politis "The Discovery and Excavation of the Khirbet Qazone Cemetery and Its Significance Relative to Qumran," in *Qumran: The Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Archaeological Interpretations and Debates Proceedings of a Conference held at Brown University, November 17–19, 2002*, eds. Jean-Baptiste Humbert, Jürgen Zangenberg, Katharina Galor (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2006), 216.
51. Hero Granger-Taylor, "Textiles from Khirbet Qazone and the Cave of Letters, Two Burial Sites Near the Dead Sea: Similarities and Differences in Find Spots and Textile Types," in *Textiles in Situ: Their Find Spots in Egypt and Neighbouring Countries in the First Millennium CE,* ed. Sabine Shrenk (Riggisberg, CH: Abegg-Stiftung, 2006), 119.
52. Granger-Taylor, "Textiles from Khirbet Qazone and the Cave of Letters," 115.
53. Hero Granger-Taylor, "The Textiles from Khirbet Qazone (Jordan) in *Archeologie des textiles dex origins au Ve siècle: Actes du colleque de lattes, october 1999*, eds. Alexis Gorgues, Pierre Moret (Montagnac, FR: Monique Mergoil, 2000), 151. Others had "short bands; both were characterized by indentations" or notches at the ends of the bars.
54. Granger-Taylor, "The Textiles from Khirbet Qazone (Jordan)," 151–52.

popular clothing styles of the period." [55] He writes that the majority of burials were Nabataean, that Greek appears on stelae and papyri from the site, and that "no evidence of Aramaic or Hebrew texts or symbols . . . indicate the presence of Jews . . . at the site."[56] However Hero Granger-Taylor writes, "It is likely that a portion of the population was Jewish since we know from the Babatha documents [from the Cave of Letters] that there were Jews living the area."[57]

There were no luxury grave goods. A few burials contained grave goods such as iron, copper, silver, or gold earrings and bracelets. Granger-Taylor writes, "Judging by their clothes, these people were not impoverished but nor were they wealthy."[58]

Politis mentions the "peaceful coexistence between Jews and Nabataeans in the area" surrounding the harbors at the Dead Sea's south end, which led to "various intercommunal influences, among which, apparently, were shaft burials. Even intermarriage between the two groups at the highest level was acceptable [including] King Herod the Great, whose father was Jewish, and mother was Nabataean."[59]

The excavations at Khirbet Qa'azone reveal multiple mantles with gamma marks coming from relatively humble burials and demonstrate how complex it can be to determine who wore them or why.

Textiles from Masada

One clearly gamma-marked textile and two possibly gamma-marked textiles were found among the roughly 2,000 textiles recovered from the hilltop fortress Masada (built on a high plateau in the Judean desert to the west of the Dead Sea). According to Josephus, 960 people chose death over surrender when Romans laid siege, built a ramp, and then breached the walls with a battering ram. Only 122 textile items, or 6 percent, of the 2,000-plus textiles have been examined and published,[60] with others awaiting study and publication.[61]

55. Politis, "Khirbet Qazone Cemetery," 216.
56. Politis, "Khirbet Qazone Cemetery, 216.
57. Granger-Taylor, "Textiles from Khirbet Qazone and the Cave of Letters," 118.
58. Granger-Taylor, "The Textiles from Khirbet Qazone (Jordan)," 156.
59. Politis, "Khirbet Qazone Cemetery," 219.
60. Avigail Sheffer and Hero Granger-Taylor, Textiles *from Masada: A Preliminary Selection* (Israel, Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 154.
61. The others have been moved to the Israel Antiquities Authority office in Jerusalem and are being inspected by Hero Granger-Taylor, who has been asked to compile a final report. Orit Peleg-Barkat, email message to author, February 18, 2025.

Among the 122 published items was 28M, a "large fragment with a gamma motif, probably from a man's draped mantle or *tallit,*"[62] a prayer shawl. The textile remnant is thirty-two by forty centimeters. Two smaller fragments may bear gamma marks but are too small to say conclusively. One, 105N, is a right-angle shape that lacks the characteristic "teeth" protruding from the ends — the entire textile is about ten by fourteen centimeters with the tapestry woven mark filling only a small edge section. Avigail Sheffer and Hero Taylor-Granger write it may have been a baby tunic.[63] It is undyed wool with the mark tapestry woven into it. The third textile, 7M, is salmon pink wool "with part of a notched band and a second band in bright purple tapestry woven into it. It also is small, seventeen by six-and-a-half centimeters."[64]

We have some information about the people at Masada who might have worn gamma-marked textiles. They were almost certainly Jews, but their more specific affiliations are hard to determine.[65] The Roman garrison there was overcome in 66 CE by people Josephus identifies as Sicarii, or dagger-men. He indicates the people holed up in Masada were urban, from Jerusalem, and espoused religious beliefs and national aspirations that provoked them to murder "men in broad daylight in the heart of the city":

> There sprang up another sort of robbers in Jerusalem, which were called Sicarii, who slew men in the daytime, and in the midst of the city; This they did chiefly at the festivals, when they mingled themselves among the multitude, and concealed daggers under their garments, with which they stabbed those that were their enemies; and when any fell down dead, the murderers became a part of those that had indignation against them; by which means they appeared persons of such reputation, that they could by no means be discovered. The first man who was slain by them was Jonathan the high priest, after whose death many were slain every day.[66]

62. Sheffer and Granger-Taylor, "Textiles from Masada," 153 and 199–201.
63. Sheffer and Granger-Taylor, "Textiles from Masada," 202–3
64. Sheffer and Granger-Taylor, "Textiles from Masada," 198–99
65. Masada was built by the Hasmonean and Herodian dynasties and so had housed both Jews and a Roman garrison.
66. William Whiston, trans., *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish Historian* (1737), 2:254–56, https://lexundria.com/go?q=J.+BJ+2.254–263&v=wst.

After the Temple's destruction in 70 CE, more people fled from across Israel, particularly from Jerusalem, to Masada.[67] The Masada textiles' provenance is further complicated because, Josephus writes, the Sicarii "plundered all the villages around the fortress."[68] Textiles may have come from the plunder.

These often-urban Jews had a wider range and better-quality textiles generally than did their neighbors sixty years later, the people of En-Gedi who died in the Cave of Letters. Sheffer and Granger-Taylor write, "The dominant impression given by the textiles [at Masada] is of a wealthy community fallen on hard times" who, previously at least, had been wealthy and well connected,[69] but who were forced to mend, alter, and repurpose relatively good-quality textiles. Josephus does not identify anyone with exalted status at Masada.

Textiles from al-Bagawat Cemetery, Khargah Oasis, Egypt

Textiles from al-Bagawat Cemetery at Egypt's Khargah Oasis provide the strongest archeological evidence for Christian use of gamma-marked textiles.[70] (The cemetery served Hibis, the Great Oasis's capital, which sat on important trade routes a four- or five-day camel journey west from Thebes in the Nile Valley.[71]) Thirty-one gamma-marked textiles were found during the Metropolitan Museum of New York's Egyptian expeditions, 1907 to 1930.[72]

67. Sheffer and Granger-Taylor, "Textiles from Masada," 242–43.
68. These raids included one on En-Gedi, the location from which the Cave of Letters people fled the Roman army roughly 60 years later. The raid on En-Gedi occurred at Passover and had two purposes, according to Josephus: to plunder (*Jewish Wars,* 4:405) and to combine "against those prepared to submit to Rome" (*Jewish Wars,* 7:254.)
69. Sheffer and Granger-Taylor, "Textiles from Masada," 242–43.
70. This author queried Maciej Szymaszek, "Are there textile remains where you feel comfortable saying, 'Yes, indeed, this was from a Christian context and this textile was worn by a Christian?'" Szymaszek responded, "Religious association is very tricky, and I would say that the textiles from al-Bagawat cemetery in Khargah Oasis are the closest to what you look for." Maciej Szymaszek, email to author, 22 June 2023.
71. Kajitani, "Cemetery of al-Bagawat," 96. The railroad first reached Khargah in 1907.
72. See, for instance, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York's Accession numbers: 33.10.1; 33.10.2; 33.10.4; 33.10.24; 33.10.50; 33.10.27, each from burials at al-Bagawat and each showing signs of gamma marks. See The Met (website),https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search?searchField=AccessionNum.

Attributing textiles to one group in Egypt is challenging

Though Egypt and its neighbors have a rich history of both Christianity and gamma-marked textiles, proof that one group used a particular textile is rare. Sometimes inscriptions, grave goods, and markings, such as a cross or an akh, are so closely associated with burial textiles that it is possible to say with certainty that the person buried with the textiles, or at least their immediate family, belonged to a particular group. More often such certainty, especially in Egypt, is illusive.

- Burial practices and dress in Egypt are rarely unique to one group, so identification from such physical remains alone is problematic. Roman, Greek, Nabatean, Arabic, Muslim, Pre-Christian, Meroitic, Jewish, and Coptic populations all lived in Egypt in the first millennium, and populations appear to have frequently overlapped in time and place.[73]
- Several groups who have left evidence elsewhere that they used gamma-marked textiles, including Jews and Nabateans, lived or traded in Egypt. If only a small number of gamma-marked textiles are identified as coming from an Egyptian findspot, we have not shown that the larger population used or wore them. (Textiles that combined linen and wool were probably not worn by Jews except priests.)[74]
- The antiquities trade in recent centuries often obliterated textiles' provenances, thwarting their owners' identification. In addition, during its infancy, modern archeology also excavated textiles but did not document or conserve them systematically.[75]

73. The last temple to an Egyptian god, Isis, on the island of Philae was closed in the mid-sixth century CE, while St. Mark was said to have introduced Christianity to Egypt in 46 CE. Arabs invaded Egypt in 642 CE, but not until 850 CE did the majority of Egyptians convert to Islam. Earlier, Rome had occupied Egypt for almost 700 years and Greece occupied it for nearly 300.
74. Shamir, "Mixed Wool," 57. Some gamma-marked Egyptian textiles are linen with woolen patterns woven in and thus less likely to have belonged to Jews.
75. An example of this is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which holds a particularly impressive and complete fourth-century textile from Egypt made of linen and decorated with purple wool, over six feet wide and almost nine feet long. (Wool took dyes more easily than linen.) See V&A, s.v. "Cover," 15 June 2009, https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O249067/cover-unknown/. It was purchased by the museum from "the Parisian dealer Monsieur A P Andrea." Nothing more is said about its origin. The textile includes gamma marks and a large circle with an eight-pointed star and is likely to have been used as a

- Syncretism may have been at play; cultures borrowed each other's manner of dress and burial practices. Families as well as communities may have included "mixed" traditions in what appear to be contemporaneous family groupings — in Egypt and elsewhere[76] — that may include burials that align with more than one ethnicity or religious tradition.
- Graves may have been plundered, with their less valuable contents dumped in surface pits. Graves may also have been re-used for later burials long before archeologists arrived.

Al-Bagawat cemetery shares these complexities with other Egyptian burial sites and middens. Though sometimes referred to a Christian cemetery,[77] the earliest burials at al-Bagawat show no signs of a Christian presence.[78] "The continued presence of pagan burials alongside Christian interments is evidenced in Egypt up until the Arab conquest in the seventh century."[79] Pagans and Christians "were known to have lived side by side" at *al-Bagawat*.[80]

Al-Bagawat provides a strong case for associating Christians and gamma marks

The Al-Bagawat cemetery has characteristics that, taken together, increase the likelihood that Christian burials there yielded the gamma-marked textiles.

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mantle, as it is not symmetrical. Yadin, *Finds*, 228, Figure i, identifies it as Coptic—that is, belonging to an Egyptian Christian who is a member of teh Coptic Orthodox Church—but the museum goes no further than to say it is Egyptian. In contrast to this textile's completeness are many Egyptian textiles at the Victoria and Albert that appear to be decorations cut from larger textiles deemed less interesting to collectors and early archeologists and so are also stripped of their context, even the shape of the textile they adorned.

76. See Kajitani, "Cemetery of al-Bagawat," 105, and Nicola Denzey, *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost Worlds of Early Christian Women* (Boston: Beacon, 2007), chap. 2, for a discussion of burials in the catacomb of a mixed pagan-Christian family.
77. Kajitani, "Cemetery of al-Bagawat," 95n2.
78. Matthew Martin, "Observations on the Paintings of the Exodus Chapel, Bagawat Necropolis, Kharga Oasis, Egypt," in *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in Honour of Roger Scott*, eds. John Burke et al. (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2006), 233.
79. Martin, "Exodus Chapel," 233n1. The cemetery was used into the eleventh century.
80. Kajitani, "Cemetery of al-Bagawat," 105.

First, written records show that the Khargah Oasis had a significant Christian population from at least 250 CE, a population large enough for the Patriarch of Alexandria to appoint a bishop for the area.[81]

Second, its remoteness spared it some nineteenth-century archaeologists' irregularities. Though known in the west in the early nineteenth century,[82] it was not investigated until the early twentieth century by the Egyptian Expedition of the Metropolitan Museum of New York, which studied it sporadically between 1907 and 1931. The later Egyptian Antiquities Service's investigation provided the first published archeological report in 1951.[83]

Third, and archeologically significant, the cemetery includes over 260 mud-brick funerary chapels arranged into "streets" as are "known from Rome and Byzantine Italy and best exemplified . . . by the Isola Sacra Cemetery . . . north of Ostia."[84] Twenty-two chapels at al-Bagawat were decorated with Christian symbols and painted scenes. "Seven contain figurative art, the others evidencing just painted crosses or the like."[85] Two chapels have extensive and well-preserved painted decorations that show a Christian context and are similar in style to paintings at the Apa Jeremiah and Apa Apollo monasteries.[86] Christian worthies portrayed in al-Bagawat's chapels include Noah, Abraham, Thekla, and Mary, each identified anciently in Coptic.[87] Burials — and therefore their textiles — are closely associated with the funerary chapels "in shallow rectangular graves around the mud-brick chapels or beneath them, sometimes in multiple chambers, in subterranean *hypogea* accessed by vertical shafts."[88]

The most skillfully decorated chapel at al-Bagawat, the Chapel of Peace, shows two worthies wearing gamma-marked mantles, Noah and Abraham, painted inside the chapel's dome. See figures 30, 31, and 32.

The clothing portrayed on worthies in the chapel frescoes and the cloths in which the associated dead were shrouded bore similar

81. Matthew Martin, "Observations on the Paintings of the Exodus Chapel, Bagawat Necropolis, Kharga Oasis, Egypt," in *Byzantine Narrative,* 253.
82. Martin, "Exodus Chapel," 233.
83. Martin, "Exodus Chapel," 233. The Egyptian Antiquities Service did not discuss textiles, but rather the site's layout.
84. Martin, "Exodus Chapel," 233–4.
85. Martin, "Exodus Chapel," 234
86. Martin, "Exodus Chapel," 235
87. Martin, "Exodus Chapel," 234.
88. Martin, "Exodus Chapel," 234n10.



Figure 30. The ceiling of the Coptic Chapel of Peace at Bagawat Cemetery, a funerary chapel, Kharga Oasis, Egypt. (Ahmed Fakhry, *The Necropolis of El-Bagawat in Kharga Oasis* (Cairo: Government Press, 1951), frontispiece.)



Figure 31. Detail from figure 30 showing Noah. Note the mark near the left knee on Noah’s robe. The accompanying women have their hands raised in prayer.



Figure 32. Detail from figure 30 showing Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. To allow free use of both his hands, Abraham has thrown the end of his mantle over his left shoulder; it usually was draped over his left arm. Note the mark on that end. It may be a variation on the eta (H) shape.

gamma marks also placed near the textiles' edges. They strongly suggest that not only were Christian worthies clothed in gamma-bedecked mantles, but so were the Christian dead.[89]

The Metropolitan Museum of New York's Egyptian Expedition retrieved thirty-three bodies — two male and eight female adults and nine infants were identifiable[90] — and preserved ninety-seven textile fragments from al-Bagawat. Thirty-one textiles were from linen burial shrouds without pre-burial use;[91] they had been specifically woven as

89. Al-Bagawat is not unique in presenting both images of the marked mantles on worthies (Noah and Abraham) and their contemporary use. The Dura synagogue, discussed below, also presents marked textiles and images of their use on worthies. These two sites may be the only known examples.
90. Kajitani, "Cemetery of al-Bagawat," 103.
91. Kajitani writes that most other textiles had also been used to wrap the thirty-three bodies, which were enclosed in multiple layers of cloth. (Kajitani, "Cemetery of al-Bagawat," 97). He also notes that he does not know the museum's criteria for retaining or disposing of textiles, writing that textiles that "had decorations in good condition were saved." We do not know how representative the saved sample are.

shrouds.[92] Two of the thirty-one have woven-in right angle gamma marks, fifteen have the *eta* shape, another nine have solid circles, two have *crux gammata,* crosses made from gamma shapes, that is, swastikas. Three have diamond shapes.[93] They are dated from the mid-third century through the early fifth century CE.[94] Some combine wool and linen.[95] One remarkably complete shroud is almost eleven-and-a-half feet long and over a yard wide.[96] All shrouds have slits or have been divided near their ends to facilitate the neat wrapping of bodies. See figure 33.

Al-Bagawat shows that Christians, both male and female, used textiles bearing these marks in death and that such textiles and marks were appropriate for the general population's burial, as well as appropriate for Abraham and Noah, as they were portrayed in the dome frescoes of the Chapel of Peace.

Textiles from the Dura-Europos Synagogue

The 1932 excavation at the Dura-Europos synagogue revealed extensive and well-preserved third-century frescoes.[97] Among the frescoes, which included many Old Testament scenes, were painted figures wearing mantles that display gamma marks or at least the pronged ends of them.[98] See figure 34 for gamma shapes (Γ) on women. See figure 35 for the pronged ends of some sort of mark on males' robes and for the Dura artists' use of pastel colors, perhaps to break up the monotony of multiple white robes in some scenes.

Dura-Europos was a small garrison and trading city on the river Euphrates, in modern Syria, then on the frontier between the eastern

92. Kajitani, "Cemetery of al-Bagawat," 106.
93. Kajitani, "Cemetery of al-Bagawat," 105–6n35.
94. Kajitani, "Cemetery of al-Bagawat," 96.
95. Kajitani, "Cemetery of al-Bagawat," 107.
96. Kajitani, "Cemetery of al-Bagawat," 106.
97. The synagogue was the second of two at the site. The older one was perhaps 75 years older than the latter one, which had been recently enlarged and extensively remodeled into the second synagogue eleven years before it was destroyed.
98. Dura-Europos was destroyed in 256 CE. The paintings on the synagogue wall were recent at that time; paint drops still in evidence at the time of its destruction. An inscription indicates the edifice was raised in 245 CE, creating a nine-year window in which the paintings were created. The 245-CE synagogue supplanted an earlier synagogue, which had been remodeled and expanded from a house. It can safely be said that the paintings represented the intent of leaders the Jewish community there in roughly 250 CE.

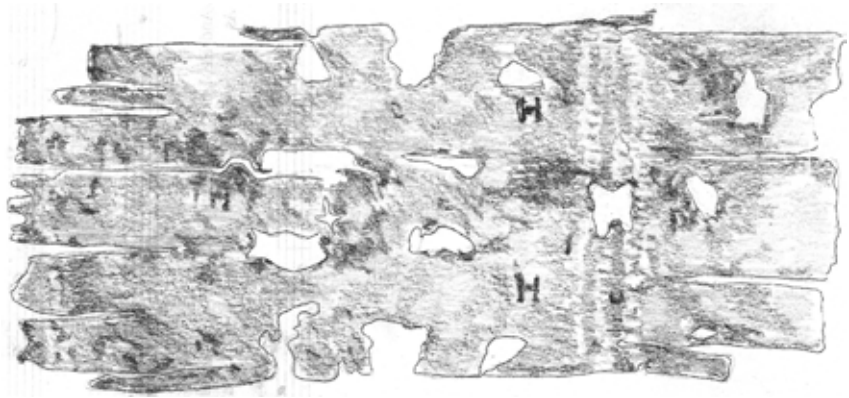


Figure 33. Sketch of a Bagawat shroud at the Egyptian Museum show eta (H) marks at corners, with slits or divisions near their ends to facilitate the wrapping of bodies. These would not have been useful to the living as either robe or blanket. (Anonymous, *Burial Shroud, Khargah Type*, undated, woven linen, Egyptian Museum, Cairo. Accession number 65796 from CXII West, Burial 3. Drawing by Dorothy Giles; used with permission.)



Figure 34. In frescoes in Dura's House of Assembly, two Israelite women (left), perhaps Jochebed and Miriam, display complete gamma marks (Γ), as they pass the infant Moses to pharaoh's daughter. Elsewhere in the synagogue, men display only the notched ends of bands that may be parts of gamma or eta shapes. The remainder of the shapes are consistently concealed in the folds of the men's robes. (Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue: The Excavations at Dura-Europos conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, Final Report VIII Part I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), plate LXVII.)



Figure 35. In frescoes in Dura's House of Assembly Elijah's white robe is alternated with others' pink attire. The pronged ends of bands are visible on the robes of the priest, who display only the notched ends of bands that could be parts of the gamma (Γ) or (H) shaped signs. (Kraeling, *The Synagogue,* plate LXII.)

Roman Empire and Persia. The entire city was destroyed during a Persian siege circa 256 CE. The site was buried in sand until the early twentieth century. The excavating archeologists also recovered nineteen tapestry-woven wool fragments that displayed gamma-marks,[99] which "may well have come from a sacred vestry."[100] Though the textile remains are too small to indicate the original items' shape, R. Pfister and Louisa Bellinger, who compiled the textile report for the Yale University-French excavation, wrote that "on the evidence of the pictures [in the synagogue] we may confidently class pieces with decorations of the shape H and Γ as belonging to those garments [the mantles]."[101]

99. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols* 9:127. The last three volumes of his eleven-volume work, volumes 9–11, concern the Dura synagogue.
100. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:128.
101. Pfister and Bellinger, *The Textiles*,15. The gamma shapes they examined were on small pieces of cloth, not attached to mantles, though they may have once been. The tapestry woven marks were probably much denser than the cloth into which the tapestry weaving was inserted and so more likely to

The frescoes showed figures wearing mantles with either complete right-angle gamma marks — on the Israelite women in the Infancy of Moses panel — or what are thought to be the pronged ends of an eta or gamma shape on the Israelite men, with the rest of the mark uniformly obscured in their mantles' folds.[102] Some male mantles also showed three threads hanging from the mantles corners "that have usually been identified with the zizith, or ceremonial threads require by Jewish law for a prayer shawl," that is, a *tallit gadol*, the covering from which a man could pray.[103]

The male figures portrayed wearing these gamma-marked mantles are frequently large, indicating their importance. "Moses, Elijah, Jacob, Samuel, Ezekial in his triumph, the heads of the tribes in the Exodus scene," and five more whose identity is disputed, as well as the Throne Mates both of Solomon and the Great King in the reredos by the Torah niche, each wear a gamma-marked mantle.[104]

Their mantles are "generally white"[105] "or "almost always of a light color."[106] Erwin R. Goodenough, who devoted the last three volumes of his eleven-volume *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* to the Dura-Europos synagogue, notes that on the synagogue's west wall immediately to the Torah shrine's right is the single exception to the light-colored mantles on a major Israelite character. In the Anointing of David fresco (figure 36), Samuel's importance is shown by his large size. Six other men are clad in marked robes like Samuel's, all pastels or white, with three holding their right hands up to about ear level. (We cannot see if the other three are also holding up their hands.) David is alone in wearing a dark robe. Goodenough writes that this has the appearance of a rite of initiation.[107] As Samuel anoints David, David's mantle "conspicuously" has no visible gamma marks.[108]

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survive both wear and burial. The marks also could have been removed from the cloths before they were discarded.

102. Pfister and Bellinger, *The Textiles,* 11. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:163.
103. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:127. See also Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols* 11: fig 324, 326, 331, 337. Pfister and Bellinger, *The Textiles,* 11.
104. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:127.
105. Pfister and Bellinger, *The Textiles*, 11
106. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:125. In panels containing multiple Jewish figures, white, light gold, and pink mantles are also visible, perhaps to relieve the visual monotony of multiple white garments. Kraeling's images are often more intensely colored than the ones Goodenough published. Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, plates LI to LXXVII.
107. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:188.
108. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:126.



Figure 36. Samuel anointing David, painted on the west wall immediately to the right of the aedicule of Dura's House of Assembly. (Kraeling, *The Synagogue,* plate LXVI.)

Goodenough writes, "we shall find this contrast apparently significant."[109] David's hands are hidden inside his dark mantle in the humble position of a supplicant (see figure 20), as one who has not completed an initiation. The scene suggests that David's anointing precedes his clothing in a white, gamma-marked mantle such as those the other men wear. Goodenough writes:

> If such a scene, with no biblical identification, had been found in Pompeii or Alexandria, we should at once have supposed the artist was representing the initiation of a neophyte into a mystic cult. His dark dress, the humbly covered hands, would seem to illustrate the novitiate before he had received the new garments of the cult.[110]

The textile fragments buried in the embankment associated with the synagogue included nineteen textiles with "pronged ornaments"[111]

109. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:126.
110. Goodenough *Jewish Symbols,* 9:188.
111. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:127.

as well as "ornate clothing."[112] He writes, "It seems to me highly unlikely that the ordinary clothing at Dura was either white or ornamented in the way we see in the paintings or in the preserved textiles."[113] Goodenough notes the gamma-marked fragment's whiteness. "Much of the cloth had apparently not been dyed at all but was what we call 'unbleached'; and some of these may originally have been 'white,' for pure whiteness, as any laundress, knows, is extremely hard to preserve."[114] Based on a contemporary price list from a third-century textile trader at Dura, white garments were "the most expensive, so we may presume that white was rarely worn."[115]

Goodenough also notes that "many of them seem to have been rags when dumped into the embankment, but this in no way indicates that the place where they had been kept was a common or ordinary one."[116] "It is quite possible that they represent a store of garments, especially pieces on which were sacral marking, from a ritualistic treasure." But this can no more be asserted, he continues, "than that they were ordinary rags. All the textile fragments tell us is that the ornaments shown on the painted costumes of the synagogue were used on costumes of some sort worn in Dura."[117]

What the Textiles Imply Collectively and by Findspots

Taken as a group, the textile artefacts Szymaszek studied add information to what was previously gleaned from the marks' occurrence in artistic, funerary, and monumental media. There they were predominantly associated with angels, worthies, or people of high spiritual status, most often male.

Patterns seem to emerge from the information gleaned from the artefacts, patterns that may have implication for our understanding of marks. The artefacts contribute the information that textiles marked with pronged ends were worn by non-elites, both male and female, over at least four centuries in the first millennium CE. They also show an impressively wide geographic range, from northern Britain to

112. Many figures, including the royalty of Israel's enemies, are portrayed in the frescoes in opulent clothing.
113. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:128.
114. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:127–28.
115. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:128.
116. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:128.
117. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:128–29.

Iraq and south to Sudan. These textile artefacts do not appear to be imported or luxury goods but rather locally or domestically produced.

The textiles' geographic range suggests that they were also used in other areas where we find their representations, but where the climate did not favor textile preservation.

Individual findspots — or groups of findspots — suggest additional insights. However, what a textile from one findspot or several findspots implies should not be hastily generalized to all locations and all wearers or users of such textiles. All that can be confidently asserted is that to some people at certain places, the marks may have functioned in a particular way. Nonetheless, these data and insights deserve notice, and when patterns are suggested, they also should be noted.

The evidence for local production and for the marked mantles persistent characteristics

At least three widely-separated findspots — Vindolanda, Les-Martres-de-Veyvre, and Khirbet Qa'azone — attest to local or domestic production. From first- or second-century Vindolanda we learn that a mantle was woven by a less-than-expert weaver into a fine, half-basket weave with innumerable faults. From second-century Les Martes-de-Veyvre, we learn the wool was tabby-woven, the most basic weaving pattern. At first- to third-century Khirbet Qa'azone, the marks appear in coarse, undyed wool. These imply the gamma-marked mantles' weavers were not highly skilled and were probably domestic or local weavers. Yet a tapestry-woven gamma or eta shape inserted into a mantle in a contrasting color required resources — wool dyed a second color, usually in a heavier yarn, to cover the background wool's color. The weaving-in of such marks was not a slight skill for a domestic weaver in the first three or four centuries CE and required additional time and effort.[118]

This raises questions about how and why the weaving tradition — if that is what it was — was transmitted with consistency across centuries and significant distances.[119] On monumental art and in artistic

118. See Yadin, *Finds,* 195–97, for specifics.

119. Szymaszek studied prong-ended marks. Archeological reports from the seven findspots examined in this paper mention four other shapes that had been tapestry-woven into the corners of mantles: simple squares on the small, coarsely woven mantle from Khirbet Qa'azone; nine mantles with solid circles, two with *crux gammata* (the swastika shape), and three diamond shapes from al-Bagawat, though many of these are arguably later than the third century. A simple checkerboard shape was noted from the Cave of Letters, but

media the marks' persistence may be explained in at least two ways: Powerful patrons, their architects, designers, or craftspeople may have traveled and thus viewed other works displaying such marks, perhaps studying with the masters who had previously reproduced them. Additionally, artisans may have worked from copy books[120] or other intermediate media. But neither method for transmitting the designs seems to apply to local weavers who would rarely travel nor see copy books. Other transmission methods should be considered to explain the marks' consistency.

An admittedly incomplete answer is that weavers in each community carefully copied existing local textiles for centuries and across thousands of miles. This explanation, however, raises additional questions. What motivated domestic weavers to continue to include the marks? Why were they copied with such consistency?[121] The mark's persistence implies their form carried meanings across multiple transmission chains. Absent other compelling explanations, rituals, which can be highly conservative over both time and space, should be considered as a factor in the marks' spread.

The evidence for the marks and mantle's use in burials

From al-Bagawat we learn that the marked mantles — at least at that findspot — were appropriate for burials, since the shrouds showed no sign of previous use. All have slits near their ends, so they would not have been useful to the living. At other sites, Les Martres-de-Veyre, Khirbet Qa'azone, and the Cave of Letters, it could be argued that gamma-marked mantles were used as shrouds because they were at hand, not because they were specifically appropriate for burial, though if the mantles at the Cave of Letters were indeed *tallitot*, prayer shawls, then their use in burials might be expected. But at al-Bagawat,

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it came from the middle section of the upper salvage edge, not the corners. Szymaszek notes occurrence of eight checkerboard shapes in total in the textiles he catalogued.

120. See Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 383; Talgam, "Christian Floor Mosaics," 115; Pfister and Bellinger, *The Textiles*, 10.

121. The frescoes in the catacombs of Rome, as documented by Cristina Cumbo, show a much larger variation in the marks' shape, as do the sixth-century mosaics in Ravenna. Szymaszek's work on textiles remnants is pioneering and limited to textiles with tapestry-woven pronged ends, primarily in the first to the third centuries, arguably earlier than the catacomb frescos, so it is not possible to state with certainty that the woven marks maintained greater consistency than their artistic representations, though so it appears at this point.

wrapping the dead in a new gamma-marked mantle was a common preparation for internment, the ultimate earthly rite of passage.

These burial textiles combine with multiple instances of the marks shown in funerary contexts, grave markers, tombs, mummy masks, and memorials. Together they suggest the marks and the mantles had — at least to some — specific relevance to burial and the transitions that death and burial imply.

The presence of the marks on shrouds adds weight to Goodenough's comments about the mantles' frequent appearance in funerary art, even as other attire is portrayed elsewhere on the living and the divine. (Here he is not discussing gamma marks specifically, only draped mantles. He uses the Greek word for a mantle, *himation*.) He asks "whether the person depicted is wearing his ordinary clothes or specially recognized holy garb."[122] He notes that more than half of the people portrayed in mummy masks were wearing an himation, presumably with the himation's end wrapped around the women's heads, as at the Dura synagogue.[123] (See figure 34.) The mantles appeared on memorial statues and were carved in stone or wooden funerary couches, in grave reliefs and tomb paintings, and on grave stele.[124] He writes, "The use of the robe . . . has led us too often to monuments of ritualistic dignity, if not to mystical or eschatological associations or to the gods themselves, for us to suppose that this dress was ever used casually, or merely to correspond to what we might call 'formal' dress."[125] Speaking of mummy masks, Goodenough writes that "the dead are dressed to come into God's presence."[126]

It is also possible that the marks added to shrouds were meant to provide protection to the Kharga Oasis' Christian dead as they encountered whatever challenges awaited them in the afterlife. If so,

122. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:133.
123. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:144–5.
124. Goodenough explores the role of the himation in sacred and funerary art in his chapter "Symbolism of Dress" in volume 9, noting its appearance on gods, priests, mystic philosophers, and Christian worthies.
125. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:143. Goodenough is correct that the himation was not "formal dress" and that people of wealth or standing—those who could commission monumental art—had multiple other options for both daily and "formal" clothing. However, the remains of textiles show that for people of limited means, such as those buried Khirbet Qa'azone, the chiton (tunic) and himation (mantle), remained in use as everyday wear well into Late Antiquity.
126. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:145.

they may have also been used to provide protection for the living who wore them. Archeological evidence is unable to distinguish between what might be an apotropaic device, such as the evil eye, and what might be the evidence for deeply held religious beliefs.

The evidence for *tzitzit* associated with gamma marks

The blue threads on the corner of a gamma-marked mantle in the Cave of Letters shows that — at least at that site — gamma marks were sometimes used on a *tallit gadol*, a large prayer shawl, which made the "little tent" from which a Jew could pray. The apparent *tzitzits* painted on gamma-marked mantles on the Dura synagogue's walls add additional instances where *tzitzit* and gamma marks both frame the mantles' edges and may have set apart sacred spaces.[127] (See figures 37 and 38.)

Gamma marks on textiles supplement previous insights gained from the fifteenth-century *Liber Pontificalis,* the Book of Popes.[128] The textile artifacts with marks also support their artistic representations on book covers, altar cloths, and clerical robes, as well as ossuaries, and the image of doors of a fifth-century Jewish tomb with gamma marks. In each case, they may delineate sacred spaces, setting boundaries between levels of sacredness or between the sacred and the profane, this world and the next.

The evidence for multiple Jewish users of gamma-marked textiles at three sites across two centuries

Gamma-marked mantles found at first-century Masada, the second-century Cave of Letters, and third-century Dura shows that the marked textiles' use endured for several centuries in Jewish contexts. It also suggests that at least in the matter of gamma-marked textiles, the Jews at Dura were not outliers. They shared attire with Jews at Masada and at the Cave of Letters, notably Jews who have strong

127. Goodenough also sketched tzitzit on Samuel in *Samuel Anoints David*, his Figure 337, and on *Abraham in The Wilderness Encampment* and *The Miraculous Well*, his Figure 331, presumably from details not clear in photographs.
128. Maciej Szymaszek, "The Textile Term *Gammadia*," in *Textile Terminologies from the Orient to the Mediterranean and Europe, 1000 BC to 1000 AD*, ed. Salvatore Gaspa, Cécile Michel, and Marie-Louise Nosch (Lincoln, NE: Zea Books, 2017), 484, doi.org/10.13014/K2MW2F9S.

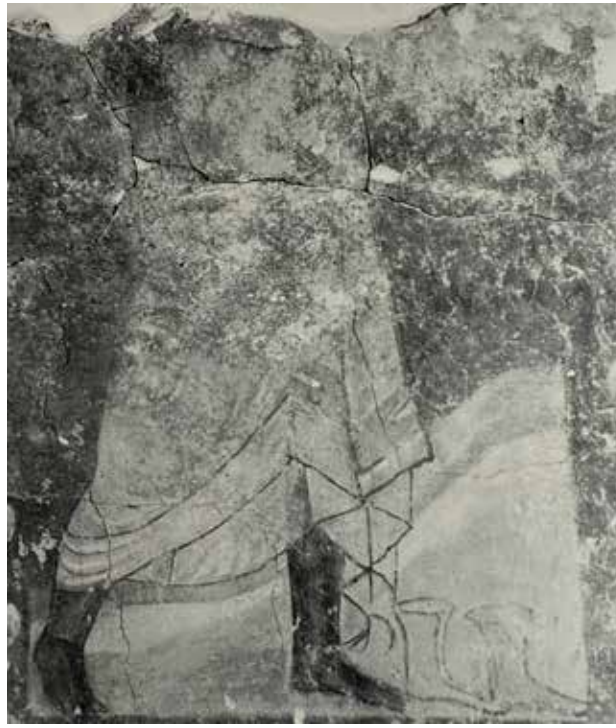


Figure 37. Moses Receives the Law. Kraeling photographed this partially destroyed panel on the upper left-hand side of the west wall. It appears to show Moses without shoes, approaching the burning bush. Note the strings hanging from the edge of his mantle by his left foot, below the pronged end of marks on his mantle. Kraeling identifies them as *tzitzit.* (Kraeling, *The Synagogue,* plate XXVI.)

credentials as resistors to compromise, whatever questions scholars may have had about Dura's Jews.[129]

129. Dura did not demonstrate the Judaism that scholars, including Kraeling and Goodenough, expected, and so the Judaism of the worshipers there was suspect. Kraeling sees considerable influence from—and perhaps compromise with—the nearby pagan cultures, especially in the design and focus of the Dura synagogue, which "relied on old Babylonian temple forms and the other contemporary religious structures of the city and region" (Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 21). The Dura synagogue "contrasts sharply with the synagogues known from Palestine and the region immediately to the east of Jordan." Kraeling contrasts other synagogues' "structural elegancies" with the "inelegancy of Dura's House of Assembly, a simple mud-plastered cube, so vivid are the contrasts in general organization and disposition" (Kraeling, *The Synagogue,* 21). Foundation deposits at the great doors to the synagogue's House of Assembly also puzzle Kraeling: parts of two human fingers under the main doors, and three human teeth (Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 19, 20) at



Figure 38. Ezra, Reading the Law, shows both apparent gamma marks and *tzitzit* hanging down on his left side. (Kraeling, *The Synagogue,* plate LXXVII.)

These textile artefacts combine with other evidence from mosaics and funerary art, largely discovered since Dura's excavation, to

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the base of the secondary door, which Kraeling indicates was for women to enter (Kraeling, *The Synagogue,* 19 and 19n86 thereon). Human remains as foundation deposits are known from pagan structures at Dura, but Kraeling writes they are not otherwise known in Jewish literature or synagogues. (Coins as foundation deposits, often worn or low value coins, are widely attested in later synagogues in Palestine.) "Indeed, in Palestine the presence of human remains would have been presumed to render impure both the site and the persons approaching it." Goodenough describes the *Anointing of David* scene as "the initiation of a neophyte into a mystic cult" (Goodenough *Jewish Symbols,* 9:188), where he draws a strong distinction between Hebrew scriptures (history) and "initiation into a mystery religion": "Artistically it represents initiation into a mystery religion, and . . . at the same time it represents the historical anointing."

show the marks' continuing use among Jews from the first to the fifth century: the mosaic floor at the Jerusalem high priestly house, destroyed in 70 CE, [130] the mosaic floor at the Magdala synagogue in Galilee, destroyed in 67 CE or perhaps in the second century,[131] the eta-shaped gamma marks on Jewish worthies' robes shown in mosaics at the fifth-century synagogue at Huqoq,[132] and the rough-cut stone door to a fifth-century Jewish tomb at Tamara[133] and on Jewish ossuaries.[134] The Dura synagogue sits chronologically roughly in the middle of these occurrences of gamma marks.

The gammas' persistence in the land of Israel shows that the gamma-marked mantles at Dura were not necessarily borrowed from local, pagan usage, nor can we say the Syrian Jews were casual about their religion, because the marks and mantles appeared on their synagogue's walls. The gamma-marked textiles at Dura did not show the Jews there were at odds with their coreligionists in Palestine, at least in this matter.[135]

Though the marks appeared with some frequency, except at Dura no evidence links the Jewish gamma-marked textiles to initiation rites, with the possible exception of the remains of blue thread, identified as *tzitzit,* from the Cave of Letters. We can only say that at one spot, Dura, the textiles and initiation rites appear linked. However, it would seem strange if Jews alone in Late Antiquity eschewed initiation rites; such rites were a staple across the Mediterranean. The cults of Mithras, Isis, Dionysus, Bel, Artagastis, and Serapis were highly participatory and apparently involved initiation rites. Adult Christians during this era were washed, anointed, ritually bathed in immersion baptism and clothed in new white garments.[136] Earlier Israelites practiced washing, anoint-

130. Discovered in 1978.
131. Discovered in 2009.
132. Discovered in 2012.
133. Avigad, "Relics of Ancient Jewish Art in Galilee," 24.
134. Yadin, *Finds,* 228f.
135. The first- through fifth-century uses of the marks in a Jewish context were largely undiscovered or unpublished when Pfister and Bellinger published the textile report from the excavation in 1945. Kraeling published the excavation report in 1956, and Yadin published his *The Finds from the Bar-Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters* in 1963. Goodenough published his three last three volumes of *Jewish Symbols*, those concerning the synagogue at Dura-Europos, in 1964.
136. See Robin M. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012).

ing, and clothing, arguably for King David (2 Samuel 12:20) but also for Aaron and his sons (Exodus 40:12).[137] A new Essene was given a robe of white "upon his initiation."[138]

Carl H. Kraeling — who wrote the reports for the entire Dura-Europos excavation, including the synagogue's — and Goodenough saw at Dura a Judaism different from that memorialized in Rabbinic sources.[139] Despite the Dura synagogue's considerable size and impressive frescoes — or perhaps because of the latter — the Dura synagogue did not meet either scholar's expectations.[140] But the

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Jensen discusses rites of initiation into the cults of Demeter, Persephone, Ises, Mithras, Jewish ablution rites, and Essene initiation (pp. 45–47); the Christian baptismal process which included washings and anointings (pp. 40–43), a three-fold baptism "in the Name of the Father," and "of the Son," and "of the Holy Spirit," (p. 43) and the new, white garment given to the newly baptized (pp. 2–3). She refers to the baptismal rites as "initiation" and "rites of initiation" (pp. 4, 9, 63, 66, etc.).

137. The Dura synagogue "was built by priests." Matthew J. Grey reports Aramaic inscriptions on ceiling tiles: "This house was built . . . in the eldership of the priest Samuel son of Yeda'yah, the Archon. Now those who stood in charge of this work were: Abram the Treasurer, and Samuel son of Sapharah. Another tile inscription confirms that all of these individuals were priests." Other inscriptions "indicate that the congregation included other members with priestly or Levitical associations: Phineas, Bethus and Ahiah . . . of the sons of Levi." Matthew J. Grey, "Jewish Priests and the Social History of Post-70 Palestine" (PhD diss, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2011), 279–80.
138. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:169.
139. See Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:4–10; Kraeling, *The Synagogue: The Excavations at Dura-Europos,* 340–6. This type of tension at Dura between how Rabbinic literature describes Judaism and what the physical evidence suggests occurs whenever a group's written accounts and the physical evidence differ. Goodenough writes that "before the discovery of the Dura synagogue in 1932 anyone would be thought mad who suggested that Jews could have made such a place of worship" (10:197). Matthew J. Grey writes, "Scholars have long recognized that the Dura synagogue displays elements that are in tension with rabbinic *halkhah* from this period." Grey, "Jewish Priests and the Social History of Post-70 Palestine," 278.
140. Kraeling is both puzzled by Dura's deviations from rabbinic norms and dismissive of the Dura synagogue's variation from known Palestinian synagogues of the era, which were arguably later than Dura's. He calls the Dura synagogue's House of Assembly "inelegant," "a simple mud-plastered cube" and speaks more fondly of the slightly later synagogues built on the plan of a basilica. Goodenough devotes much of Volume 10 of Jewish Symbols to exploring written precedents for Dura's version of Judaism, including an apparent initiation rite signaled in part by the gamma-marked textiles and the frescos. He posits "a mystery religion," which he identifies as a "Cosmic Judaism." He writes that the whole program of the frescoes, "the decorations

recently published evidence for gamma marks in multiple other Jewish contexts now makes it harder to dismiss the worshippers at Dura and their peculiar building as pagan or exhibiting a weak or lapsed Judaism. If it was not a poorly executed synagogue,[141] what sort of building was it? The Aramaic inscriptions at the site call the entire building simply *bet*, meaning *house*.

Whenever we are called upon to identify a newly discovered object, the vocabulary we use can either limit or expand the range of the objects' potential meanings and functions. Kraeling and Goodenough described the three spaces in the Dura synagogue using the Greek and Latin vocabulary for pagan temples: *temenos*, *pronaos*, *naos, cella,* and *aedicule*, [142] noting similarities and differences between the

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in general at Dura [is] in harmony with two traditions of Jewish mysticism that gave access to the throne of God, the Maaseh tradition and the Hekhaloth tradition, as explained by Gershom Scholem" (Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 10:70-71). He writes that some Jews "adored [God] simply in vision from afar, others put on robes, used sacred formulae, and did other things that indicated genuine mystic absorption and identification" (73). He examines Philo's writing for precedents. He also writes that Dura may have represented a poorly informed "Babylonian Judaism before the halachic [rabbinic] reform." He writes that "in A.D. 220, when the first synagogue of Dura was in operation, the great scholar Rav returned to Babylonia from his training in the Palestinian Academy [a Talmudic academy] and went through the Jewish settlements of Babylonia establishing school where his fellow Jews, who he found painfully ignorant of the Law, could be trained" (Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:8–9).

141. Beyond "house" we cannot say what the worshippers at Dura called the building nor if they called themselves "Jews," a term sometimes used to distinguish those who returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity from others who had not gone into captivity. The Samaritans in Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* told Alexander the Great they were Hebrews but not Jews (Ant. 11.8.6).

142. Kraeling and Goodenough do not always use the words in the same way. The *temenos* (Greek) was an area "cut off" and so was a precinct reserved for a sacred function at a Greek temple (Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:28, 30, 36, 37). Goodenough seems not to include the forecourt in the synagogue itself; rather, "it was designed like a sacred *temenos*" (Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, 9:28). (One is tempted to think of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.) Kraeling, on the other hand, notes that in pagan sanctuaries at Dura, three elements are normally present: the outer court, the *pronaos* (Greek, "before the dwelling place of deity"), and a *naos* (Greek, the "dwelling place" of the deity), but "in the synagogue, naturally, a true *naos* of the deity is lacking" (Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 22n97). Kraeling suggests the Forecourt fills the role of the outer court in pagan temples. Both Kraeling and Goodenough view the House of Assembly as the *pronaos* (Goodenough 9:29, 65; Kraeling, *The Synagogue,* 22n97). However, the House of Assembly also resembles a *naos* of pagan

Jewish building at Dura and known pagan temples. We do not know the names the worshippers at Dura used for the spaces in the synagogue. In English, the three spaces at Dura are often called — moving from east to west — the forecourt, the House of Assembly, and the aedicule. The aedicula contained the Torah Shrine — the "House of the Ark," according to a Dura inscription.[143] Perhaps the two early scholars did not consider that the Hebrew terms *ulam, heikhal* and *debir*[144] were warranted in Dura, or perhaps they reserved them solely for the earlier Israelite sacred spaces, the Tabernacle in the wilderness and Solomon's and Herod's Temples in Jerusalem, which were each oriented on an axis from east to west and surrounded by a sacred precinct, as were some pagan temples at Dura and elsewhere and as was the Dura synagogue. If the Hebrew terms are also considered when describing the Dura synagogue, additional possible sources or allusion are available for consideration.

Both Goodenough and Kraeling note that the Dura synagogue's layout resembles not Palestinian synagogues but some pagan temples.[145] Neither scholar reports comparing its layout to Israelite sacred

temples in terms of its painted decorations, according to Goodenough (9:42). Both Goodenough and Kraeling also refer to the House of Assembly in terms of the *cella* (Latin, "little cell," a small room, used as a synonym for *naos,* referring to the small, hidden, inner part of a Greek or Roman temple where the image of the deity was housed) (Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 66 and Goodenough 9:42). Neither *cella* nor *naos* seem congruous with the House of Assembly's impressive size. Both scholars agree the Torah niche is contained within the *Aedicule* (Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:30, Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 22n97). *Aedicule,* Latin, literally the "little temple," serves as the inner shrine for the House of Assembly.

143. An Aramaic inscription at Dura reads, "I, Uzzi made the repository of the *Bet 'arona*" (Kraeling, *The Synagogue,* 269). Literally, *Bet 'arona* means mean "House of the Ark." It is often translated as "Torah Shrine" or "Torah Niche," though the space in the aedicule was too small to hold "the full range of texts that were utilized in the Jewish sacred calendar in the course of a year," or even the multiple scrolls of the Pentateuch that might be read from on special holidays or sabbaths. Some scrolls would need to be stored elsewhere. Eric M. Meyers, "The Torah Shrine in the Ancient Synagogue: Another Look at the Evidence" *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (1997), 311–12, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40753196.
144. The *ulam,* אוּלָם, was the porch or portico before the temple. The *heikhal,* הֵיכָל, literally the "palace" or "temple," was the holy place before the veil in the temple. The *debir,* דְּבִיר, was the inner sanctuary, the most holy place, on the inside of the veil and in the Divine Presence.
145. Kraeling, *The Synagogue,* 22 and 22n97 thereon. Kraeling discusses the synagogue's shape compared to three elements of pagan temples: "the outer

spaces. The main spaces in the synagogue at Dura were oriented in almost a straight line, with the entry, the lowest area, on the east and the worship's focus and the highest area, the aedicule, on the west.[146] Goodenough writes that with the remodeling of the earlier synagogue "the shekinah or real Presence was brought to precisely this axis and put into a new little kodesh, the *aron hakodesh* or holy ark behind curtains."[147] Kraeling notes that such "axial organization" resembles "the domestic architecture of Mesopotamia (which in turn shares certain traits with temple architecture)," apparently referencing pagan temples. He notes that "the size of [the House of Assembly] . . . [is] a monumental hall for which parallels exist at Dura only in pagan temples."[148] The Dura synagogue's layout and axial orientation resembled not only some pagan temples, but also the earlier temples at Jerusalem, both of which were entered on the east, with the worshiper ascending to the west, the focus of worship being at the far west end of the structure.

Worshippers entered the Dura synagogue's compound through a door off a small street to the compound's north into what had once been a private home. See figure 39.

They passed through a space created from domestic dwellings and used for the synagogue's practical matters, including a travelers' hostel and housing for personnel. Moving west through these formerly domestic rooms and up four steps, a half meter,[149] the worshiper encountered the first space that was built on a grand scale, the *forecourt* as Kraeling called it, the *temenos* for Goodenough, and the *ulam* for Israelite temples. It was enclosed on four sides, and was entered through a door or doors centered in the forecourt's eastern wall and

court, the pronaos and the naos. The pronaos bears the closest structural similarity to the form of the Synagogue."

146. Synagogues historically have oriented their Torah shrines toward Jerusalem (though not the fifth-century Sepphoris Synagogue, which was oriented to the west). From Dura, Jerusalem was west.
147. Goodenough writes that the Dura synagogue was an early adapter of the fixed Torah niche behind curtains, a form that later became a common pattern: "It would indeed be a large conclusion that the change was made by the Jews of Dura for the first time. A similar change was taking place in Palestine . . . but that the new idea had been adopted by the Jews of Dura by the first half of the third century can be assumed with confidence" (Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, 9:36). Kraeling also hints that this pattern may have originated at Dura (Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 25).
148. Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 22.
149. "Like a sacred temnos," according to Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:28.

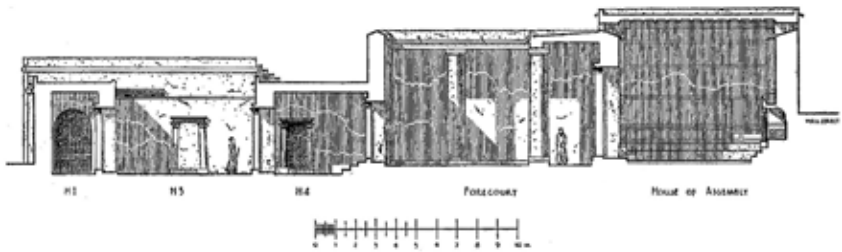


Figure 39. The synagogue was entered on the east through a formerly domestic structure. Worshippers would have proceeded upward and in a straight line westward once they entered the synagogue itself. (Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, Plan VII House H and Synagogue, Section.)

across from the likewise centered and grand double doors into the House of Assembly further west.[150] The forecourt was 43.6 feet wide, 33.6 feet deep, and lined on three sides "with tall, massive columns."[151] Goodenough and Kraeling write that the columns held up an ambulatory's roof (implying the room was probably otherwise open to the sky). Both agree the columns were tall, fourteen feet (Kraeling) or twenty feet (Goodenough, citing Kraeling). The forecourt had at least one laver. Evidence left from the earlier synagogue there supports the presence of an altar measuring a yard square.[152]

The House of Assembly (the *pronaos* for Kraeling and Goodenough, sometimes the c*ella* for Goodenough, and the *heikhal* for Israelite temples) was a flat-roofed box with fourteen-foot-tall doors[153] and twenty-three-foot-high ceilings. It "formed one of the largest single rooms of which we have knowledge at Dura,"[154] forty-five feet wide

150. The forecourt's entry door was tucked into the corner of one of the existing domestic rooms, but from inside the forecourt, both doors—including the great door into the House of Assembly—were centered on opposite walls.
151. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, 9:28. Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 12.
152. Kraeling, *The Synagogue,*13. Goodenough also reports remains of what appear to be altars or possibly braziers buried under the "new" floor when the second synagogue was built. Because they were buried, they escaped complete destruction in 256 CE. One possible altar is two-foot square and in a side room. The second possible altar is a yard square an in the forecourt. He suspects it was an incense altar (Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:26).
153. Smaller but still massive doors, also on the east but near the south wall, are said to be for women who apparently could enter the House of Assembly in this the second synagogue built on this spot, though they appear to have been relegated to a side room in the earlier synagogue.
154. Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 14.

and more than twenty-five feet from entry door to its western wall. It was lined with benches along all sides,[155] as one would expect in a synagogue, but also decorated with extraordinary frescoes. In pagan temples the statue or god's image would have been displayed as the rituals' focal point in this room. Whatever participatory rites the textiles from the "sacred vestry" imply probably took place in this room under the frescoes. But Dura displayed no cult statue nor divine image, in contrast to pagan analogues. Worship was instead visually focused on the aedicule, which contained a niche built into the thickness of the wall about sixteen inches. It was the room's only architectural embellishment. See figure 40.

For it to be appropriate to refer to the aedicule by the Hebrew word *debir*, the Holy of Holies, it would need to be seen as a separate architectural space, set apart by a higher elevation and approached through a barrier, a curtain, veil, or door. In Solomon's temple, the *debir* would have held the Ark of the Covenant topped by the Mercy Seat on which God (and sometimes the king) sat, though in the Second Temple (Zerubbabel's and Herod's), the space was empty.

The aedicule at Dura framed or enclosed what is variously called the Torah Shrine or Torah Niche or House of the Ark. [156] According to Goodenough, "Where the scrolls are, there is the Shekinah, or Presence of God in all reality."[157] See figures 41 and 42.

The Torah niche was, similar to the entry from the domestic spaces into the forecourt, four steps up. The fourth step, however, was considerably higher than the other three; the fourth step became the niche's floor. Goodenough writes that "the *aron* or box that held the scrolls was laid upon this higher level by men who themselves only ascended the first three steps."[158] This space extended into the wall's thickness in a semicircle, forming a shape not unlike a small, elevated apse that was, when finished, sixteen inches deep. Both Kraeling and Goodenough agree this sort of fixed Torah shrine was not known before Dura.[159]

155. The benches could seat 124 people (Meyers, "The Torah Shrine in the Ancient Synagogue," 306).
156. Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, 269, for Torah Shrine.
157. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:37.
158. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:65. The *aron* would need to be less than 33 inches wide and not much more than 16 inches deep, the platform's dimensions, though it could have been quite tall.
159. Synagogues "from at least the Constantinian period on [306–337 CE] acquired an apse to house the *aron* or Scroll Chest" (Kraeling, *The Synagogue,*

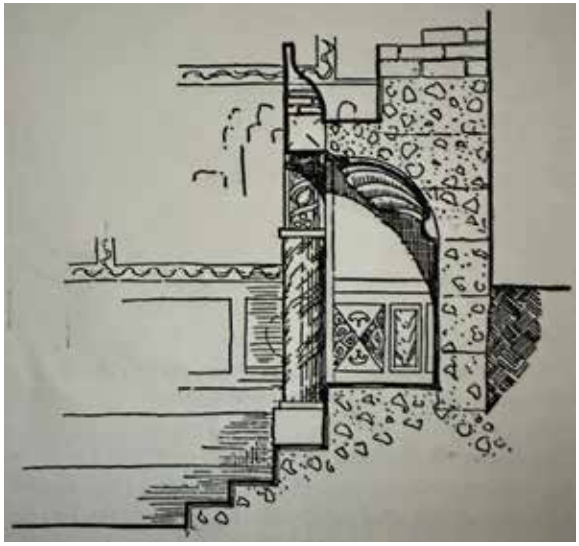


Figure 40. The aedicule, seen here in profile, was the only architectural embellishment in the furthest west room of the Dura synagogue, the House of Assembly, which otherwise was a flat-roofed box with fourteen-foot-tall doors and twenty-three-foot-high ceilings. The aedicule was set sixteen inches into the rubble-filled outer wall of the House of Assembly. The aedicule also extended into the House of Assembly sixteen inches and may have been further extended by a sort of baldachin with curtains or veils. (Kraeling, *The Synagogue,* 16, fig. 3.)

Since the aedicule seems to have extended into the Hall of Assembly sixteen inches or so, the enclosed space was, in total, thirty-two inches deep or a bit more, and therefore roughly square. Kraeling reports evidence that the aedicule was further extended into the House of Assembly and covered by an "ornamental and protective covering . . . a baldachin of the type mentioned in rabbinical sources, which would have supported two curtains" before the aedicula. "Clearly the Torah Shrine had an over-all ornamental and protective covering that completed it at the top."[160] Both Kraeling and Goodenough portray the aedicula as covered by curtains or veils.[161] Worshipers first saw the

21). When the first synagogue at Dura was constructed, "there may or may not have been a niche for the Torah, since there was none in the earlier Palestinian synagogue, or those in Asia Minor or perhaps at Hamman Lif" (Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 10:198).

160. Kraeling, *The Synagogue,* 257–9. Kraeling notes holes on the wall above and beside the shrine and suggests both an "inner veil and the outer curtain" (259).

161. Kraeling, *The Synagogue,* 257. He earlier wrote that "a raised dais and baldachin that set off a royal throne [was] transferred to religious architecture in



Figure 41. The paint around the aedicule was vivid, even moist, when the archeologists removed the earth and sand that had been used during the mid-third century to fortify the city’s wall against Persian attack, filling the western end of the synagogue. The aedicule predated all known Torah niches at the time. (Anonymous, *Photograph of an Aedicula (Torah Shrine) in the West Wall of the Synagogue at Dura-Europos*. Photograph taken 1932–33, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven. Wikimedia Commons, s.v. “Dura-Europos archival photograph, Synagogue, west wall, aedicula, general view Synagogue,” commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dura-Europos_archival_photograph,_Synagogue,_west_wall,_aedicula,_general_view_Synagogue.jpg.)

aedicule from twenty-five feet away, as it was almost directly across the House of Assembly from the massive entry doors.

When the synagogue was unearthed in the early twentieth century, the proposed, more perishable baldachin and curtains were absent as was whatever structure had been anchored in the synagogue’s walls to support the baldachin or curtains. The excavators looked directly into the aedicule and Torah Shrine, which most at Dura would

Greek temple cellae.” Both use the term “curtain.” Kraeling refers to a “veil” or פָּרֹכֶת (paroketh). Also, Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:36.



Figure 42. The paint on the aedicule was swiftly stabilized against the dry Syrian air, which had begun to fade it, and the aedicule was cleaned and photographed. (Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, plate LI.)

not have seen. The shrine itself resembled an elevated seat, about sixteen inches deep and thirty-three inches wide.[162] Above it was "an elaborate scallop shell . . . heavily imposed upon the semidome rather than structurally integrated with the surface" and painted light blue and dark green. The shell symbol was widely used above "sacred objects of all kinds to indicate the divine character of the object under it."[163]

162. Meyers, "The Torah Shrine in the Ancient Synagogue," 309. Taken with the sixteen-inch space the aedicula enclosed by thrusting into the House of Assembly, the space was not far from square.
163. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols,* 9:66.

If the Torah Shrine can be seen as a separate and elevated space, then this enclosed space could be called a *debir.* If so, we are justified in considering the Hebrew words for temple spaces, in addition to the Greek and Latin vocabulary. It is possible the synagogue referred to the Tabernacle in the Wilderness and the successive temples in Jerusalem not just in its frescos, but also in its layout, orientation, focus, and perhaps some of its functions.

These gamma marks' multiple occurrences connect the synagogue at Dura with wider strains of Judaism in ways that were apparently not documented in Jewish literature but may have influenced the design of the synagogue. It is possible the worshipers at Dura may have drawn on earlier Israelite temples and on rituals they associated with them as they designed and built the *bet,* the house.

The Anointing of David panel at Dura and the discovery of gamma-marked textiles at Dura may indicate an eastern peculiarity, or they may hold clues to the gammas' meaning in the Jewish context.

Summary and Conclusion

Physical artefacts illuminate cultures in ways their written records cannot and in ways their monuments and fine arts do not. They give insights into the lives of that majority who could not produce documents nor commission art. Textiles can be especially illuminating. Maciej Szymaszek's study of the tapestry-woven gamma-marked textiles from Late Antiquity reveal their widespread and relatively consistent use by both genders in a variety of social classes in multiple cultures and religious contexts and across great distances. They add to what gamma-marked monuments and art may show. The evidence Szymaszek collected shows that — at least in some cases — the marked mantles were not imported luxury goods but rather were domestically produced and used by humbler classes of people. In some cases, they were associated with death and burial. The textiles, when taken with written evidence from the *Liber Pontificalis,* the monuments, and the art, suggest the marks sometimes delineated boundaries or levels of sacredness. They may have sometimes been associated with rites of passage or other rituals. In the Jewish context, the textiles and the monumental art show the marks' use for more than four centuries in Late Antiquity at multiple sites across the region. They link the textiles found at Dura-Europos and portrayed in the Anointing

of David panel with other Jewish contexts and invite a reconsideration of the influences on the Dura synagogue.



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A New Reading of Lehi: A Rhetorical Context for Understanding His Teachings about the Fall of Adam and Eve

Kelly E. Taylor

Abstract: *Based on Lehi's teachings in 2 Nephi 2, many Latter-day Saints conclude that it was necessary for Adam and Eve to partake of the forbidden fruit to acquire the ability to have children. While this appears to be a straightforward reading of the text, it sets up the dilemma of conflicting commandments—obedience to one of the two commandments they were given in the Garden of Eden would require that they disobey the other. In this article, the author argues that the larger rhetorical context presents a different framework in which these teachings may be read—one that does not raise this dilemma. Lehi presents his teachings on the consequences of the Fall in two parallel chiasms. The rhetorical links within and between these chiasms (and with the other sections of Lehi's teachings) suggest that God's purposes for mankind may not have been frustrated if Adam and Eve had obeyed him. While their Fall was likely inevitable, it may not have been a required element in God's eternal plan for his children. Rather, it might have been something he expected and for which he prepared.*

There are two ways to understand why Latter-day Saints believe that the Fall was necessary in order for Adam and Eve to have children. Both are based primarily on Lehi's teachings in 2 Nephi 2. Lehi's statement, "Adam fell that men might be" (2 Nephi 2:25), is paraphrased in current temple teachings where patrons learn that once Eve had transgressed and faced expulsion from the garden, Adam also needed to transgress to remain with her so they could have children. In this sense, Adam's fall became necessary.[1] The other sense in

which one may understand why the Fall was necessary is based on Lehi's teachings in the same chapter:

> 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. (2 Nephi 2:22–23)

These verses may be read to teach the idea that the fall of both Adam and Eve was necessary to acquire the ability to have children.[2] While this reading has been presented as the plain reading of the text,[3] it does raise the dilemma that obedience to one of the two commandments given to Adam and Eve in the garden would require that they disobey the other.[4]

The Larger Rhetorical Context

The larger rhetorical context of Lehi's teachings, however, suggests a reading that differs from this "plain reading" of the text. Consistent with ancient Hebrew rhetoric, each section of Lehi's teachings to his sons is structured by and linked to the other sections by the repetition of keywords, phrases, and ideas.[5] The links within and between these sections of his teachings must be taken into consideration when reading them. The paratactic nature of ancient Hebrew texts further complicates one's ability to understand them.[6] In order to truly understand Lehi's teachings, one must utilize the same rhetorical tools to read them that he used to present them. This will provide a better understanding of his development of thought.

Assumptions and Scope

Lehi's teachings to his sons may represent commentary on an early Hebrew version of the Creation and Garden of Eden narratives that are now in Genesis. This would have been the version with which his sons, who grew up in Jerusalem, would be most familiar,[7] especially if these narratives were read or enacted in temple festivities as has been proposed by multiple scholars.[8] But Lehi's commentary incorporates

insights and content that he obtained from the narratives on the brass plates, narratives that were recorded using the Egyptian language (1 Nephi 5:11).[9] These may have been the narratives from which the Hebrew versions were derived.[10] Lehi's commentary also incorporates things that he learned in his early revelations (1 Nephi 1:5–15, 18–19; 8:2–18).

It makes sense that Lehi would have used a Hebrew version of these narratives if one were available because he would not have had to translate the entirety of the narratives on the brass plates for his sons. Thus, we can assume that Lehi's use of language that is found in the biblical version of the Creation and garden narratives comes from his Hebrew source. Nevertheless, corresponding references in the Book of Moses, as well as Lehi's use of non-biblical language that is also found in the Book of Moses, will be cited, since there is good reason to suspect that the version of these narratives in the Book of Moses more closely resembles the version that was on the brass plates.[11] Thus, any non-biblical language or concepts in Lehi's teachings that are also found in the Book of Moses may be attributed to the brass plates.[12]

The scope of this paper is limited to Lehi's teachings about the Fall. While contributions from the other sections of his sermon will be noted where necessary, space does not allow for a comprehensive analysis of each section. A suggested structure for the other sections is included in appendix B, with explanations provided in the end notes.

The Rhetorical Structure of Lehi's Teachings about the Fall

In 2 Nephi 2:19–25, Lehi presents his teachings about the consequences of the Fall of Adam and Eve. This is a complex passage and presents some challenges for the reader. Noel Reynolds warned:

> The rhetoric we have learned in the western tradition is *hypotactic* in that it is direct, open, and logical. Hebrew rhetoric, in contrast, is *paratactic* in that it tends to be indirect, making important points both through its structure and *through words that may have their full meaning provided and adjusted gradually throughout the text*.[13]

These teachings from Lehi are a good illustration of this feature of Hebrew rhetoric. While they lack the straightforward logic used in Western rhetoric, Lehi does provide a rich background of information that he intends for his audience to use to understand his teachings.[14]

This section defines the limits of this rhetorical unit by identifying the configuration of its component parts. This provides some idea of Lehi's thought development, but requires the identification of Lehi's underlying assumptions based upon the background material that he provided in his teachings to his sons.

In studying 2 Nephi 2:19–25, the first thing to note is that two different garden scenarios are presented. The first describes what happened after Adam and Eve transgressed the commandment to not partake of the forbidden fruit. At the center of this passage is the sentence, "their state became a state of probation." The second scenario is hypothetical. It evaluates what would have happened if Adam had not transgressed. At the center of this passage is the statement, "they would have remained in a state of innocence."[15] This is the opposite of a state of probation. To find antithetical climactic ideas at the center of two adjacent scenarios suggests that the passage might have parallel chiasms.[16] Initially, as one arranges the keywords moving out from the center, one finds symmetry within each scenario, but this symmetry does not appear to extend between the two scenarios. While the keywords in Scenario 2 do begin with a similar theme — the length of life — that is where any parallel with Scenario 1 ends. The two potential chiasms do not appear to be parallel:

Scenario 1	**Scenario 2**
days . . . prolonged	*remained forever . . . had no end*
according to . . . God	*had no children*
repent	
state of probation	state of innocence
time . . . lengthened	*no joy . . . no misery*
according to . . . Lord God	*no good . . . no sin*
repent	

The keyword repetitions in the second scenario do hearken back to Lehi's earlier discussion about the need for opposition in *all things* (2 Nephi 2:11–13). Thus, it is interesting that *all things* are the keywords in the very next lines, moving outward from here. And in these lines, the keywords do exhibit symmetry with those in Scenario 1:

Scenario 1
family of all the earth
days . . . prolonged
according to . . . God
repent
state of probation
time . . . lengthened
according to . . . Lord God
repent
all men

Scenario 2
all things
remained forever . . . had no end
had no children

state of innocence
no joy . . . no misery
no good . . . no sin

all things . . . all things

Here, the key idea in this line of Scenario 1 is *all mankind*, whereas in Scenario 2 it is *all things*. The reader can also note that there are, after all, two parallel chiasms, each with a different second-level structure embedded within (now in bold). Also there exists a trend in the second scenario: the keywords in the second half are doubled. This continues as one moves out from here:

Scenario 1
driven out from the garden of Eden

family of all the earth
days . . . prolonged
according to . . . God
repent
state of probation
time . . . lengthened
according to . . . Lord God
repent
all men
they were *lost*

Scenario 2
he would not have *fallen . . . remained in the garden*
all things
remained forever . . . had no end
had no children

state of innocence
no joy . . . no misery
no good . . . no sin

all things . . . all things
Adam (*'ādām*) *fell* that *men* (*'ādām*) might be

There is symmetry between the two chiasms. This is because the words *lost* and *fallen* (paired nine times throughout the Book of Mormon[17]) are here paired in parallel lines of two adjacent chiasms. Lundbom noted that paired words can serve as keywords:

> Rhetorical critics make much of "keywords," which are normally repeated words or word cognates in a given discourse. But they can also be synonyms, antonyms or *fixed-pairs that balance one another*.[18]

The words *lost* and *fallen* are a fixed word pair in the Book of Mormon. The parallelism of these four lines also serves to define this word pair. The state of being *lost* and *fallen* is associated with being "driven out from the garden of Eden" (2 Nephi 2:19). For Lehi and Alma, to be lost

and fallen was to be separated from the tree of life or the path that leads to it (1 Nephi 8:28; Alma 42:6–7). That path was located within the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24).[19]

In the second scenario, an example of *paronomasia* (a play on multiple meanings of identical or cognate words) occurs. Here, Lehi plays on the multiple meanings of the Hebrew noun *ʻāḏām*. When used without a definite article, this noun can be used as either the proper name *Adam* or as the collective noun *mankind*.[20] When used in the latter sense, the KJV Old Testament translates it as *men*.[21] Thus, when Lehi presented these teachings in Hebrew, he would have pronounced the noun *ʻāḏām* twice: "*ʻāḏām* fell that *ʻāḏām* might be." This is consistent with the previous three lines where there is a double use of the keyword, although here, it is repeated with a different meaning. This observation allows the reader to understand how the last line of the second chiasm balances with the first line:

Scenario 1	**Scenario 2**
Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit	*Adam* (*ʻāḏām*, proper name) *had not transgressed*
driven out from the garden of Eden	he would not have fallen . . .
	remained in the garden
family of all the earth	all things
days . . . prolonged	**remained forever . . . had**
according to . . . God	**no end**
repent	had no children
state of probation	state of innocence
time . . . lengthened	
according to . . . Lord God	**no joy . . . no misery**
repent	**no good . . . no sin**
all men	all things . . . all things
they were lost	Adam (*ʻāḏām*) fell that men (*ʻāḏām*) might be
transgression of *their parent*s	*men* (*ʻāḏām*, generic) are . . . *have joy*

In the last line of the second chiasm, Lehi may have used *joy* as an antithetical parallel to *transgression,* which is found in the first line of the same chiasm and in the last line of the adjacent chiasm. Alma illustrates the same idea by pairing *wickedness* with *happiness* in the statement, "Wickedness never was happiness" (Alma 41:10).

In the statement, "For he shewed unto all men that they were lost because of the transgression of their parents," Lehi may be using the phrase *transgression of their parents* as a metaphor for the sinful or fallen nature inherited from one's parents. In the second chiasm, the man named Adam (*ʻāḏām*) becomes all men (*ʻāḏām*) between the first

and last lines. In the first chiasm, *Adam and Eve* may have become all *parents* between the first and last lines. While Lehi previously referred to Adam and Eve as "our first parents" (1 Nephi 5:11, 2 Nephi 2:15), here he is not necessarily referring to the *first* parents of all men when he refers to just "their parents." Using rhetoric, in the last lines of these two scenarios, Lehi may be showing that *Adam* was an archetype for *all men* and that *Adam and Eve* were an archetype for *all parents*. This explains how the last lines continue the parallelism between the two chiasms. This allows understanding the phrase "the transgression of their parents" as a metaphor for the human nature that all inherit from their progenitors, just as Benjamin later uses the phrase "the transgression of Adam" as a metaphor for the same thing.[22]

In summary, the delimitation of this rhetorical unit is accomplished by teachings that form two parallel chiasms. Embedded within each chiasm and at the same location and beginning with the same theme is another level of structure that is identified by repetitions that are directly parallel. At this level, the parallelism exists within each scenario but not between them as in the other lines. Thus, the following can be the structure for the rhetorical unit in 2 Nephi 2:19–25:

A And after that *Adam and Eve* had *partaken of the forbidden fruit*,
  B they were *driven out from the garden of Eden* to till the earth.
    C And they have brought forth children, yea, even the *family of all the earth*.
      D1 And the *days* of the children of men (*ʿāḏām*) were *prolonged*,
        2 *according to* the will of *God*,
          3 that they might *repent* while in the flesh.
        E Wherefore their state became a *state of probation*,
      D' 1 and their *time* was *lengthened*
        2 *according to* the commandments which the *Lord God* gave unto the children of men (*ʿāḏām*).
          3 For he gave commandment that all men (*ʿāḏām*) must *repent*,
    C' for he shewed unto *all men* (*ʿāḏām*)
  B' that they were *lost*
A' because of the *transgression of their parents*.
A And now behold, if *Adam* (*ʿāḏām*, proper name) had not *transgressed*,
  B *he* would not have *fallen*, but *he* would have *remained in the garden of Eden*;
    C and *all things* which were created must have remained

in the same state which *they* were after that *they* were created.
D1 And *they* must have *remained forever* and had *no end*,
2 and *they* would have had *no children*.
E Wherefore *they* would have remained in a *state of innocence*,
D'3 having *no joy*, for *they* knew *no misery*,
4 doing *no good*, for *they* knew *no sin*.
C' But behold, *all things* have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth *all things*.
B' *Adam* (*ʾāḏām*, proper name) *fell* that *men* (*ʾāḏām*, generic) might be,
A' and *men* (*ʾāḏām*, generic) are that *they* might have *joy*.

Lehi's Development of Thought

The first chiasm (2 Nephi 2:19–21) addresses the biblical garden scenario where Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, but it also includes elements from the plan of redemption that are not found in the biblical narrative. These include the understanding that this life is a period of probation in which mortals are given the opportunity to repent. The second chiasm addresses a hypothetical alternative to the biblical story (2 Nephi 2:22–23), a scenario where Adam chooses not to fall. In these two scenarios, Lehi describes the associated consequences. The framework presented for understanding Lehi's thought development in these teachings is defined by the following proposals which are based upon the rhetorical features of this text:

- In each scenario, Adam and Eve have partaken of the fruit from one of the two trees that are identified in the second Creation narrative (Genesis 2:9; Moses 3:9).
- The consequences of the choice made in each scenario affect only Adam and Eve and their posterity, not all of Creation.
- In both scenarios, Adam and Eve were not fully prepared to make their choice. Thus, some of the consequences are not what one would expect for the choice that was made.

In what follows, there is a defense of each of these proposals by using, primarily, the same rhetorical tools to read these teachings that Lehi used to present them. In the process, Lehi's development of thought and intent will become more evident.

A choice for "the one or the other"

In the garden scenario from the first chiasm, Adam and Eve have partaken of the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge. This is clearly the biblical story, as the punishment for this transgression is described by paraphrasing the description found in Genesis 3:23–24 (also Moses 4:29, 31), "they were driven out from the garden of Eden to till the earth."[23]

In the alternative garden scenario in the second chiasm, Lehi does not specifically mention the tree of life. However, in an earlier section of these teachings (2 Nephi 2:15–16), he presented the tree of life and the forbidden fruit as the alternatives in a choice that Adam and Eve would be enticed to make:

> it must needs be that there was an opposition, even the *forbidden fruit* in opposition to the *tree of life*,
> **a** *the one* being sweet and *the other* bitter.
> **b** Wherefore the Lord God gave unto *man* that he should *act for himself* ;
> **b'** wherefore *man* could not *act for himself*
> **a'** save it should be that he were enticed by *the one* or *the other*.

In these teachings, the two trees represent the presence of opposition in the garden. While Lehi did not use the word *choice*, the idea that these two trees also represented a mutually exclusive choice may be implicit in the statement that man (*'āḏām*) "should act for himself" after being "enticed by the one or the other." He may choose either the fruit that is bitter or the fruit that is sweet, but not both.

The use of the collective noun *man* to translate the Hebrew noun *'āḏām* in this passage may be a hint that this simple choice given to Adam (*'āḏām*) represents the choice that is given to all mortals, the choice for "the way of eternal life" or "the way of everlasting death" (2 Nephi 9:23). This choice is also mutually exclusive (1 Nephi 14:7) in the sense that one cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24; 3 Nephi 13:24). However, in a simplified story, perhaps designed to be acted out in temple ritual, the choice that is given to all may be represented in the fruit from two opposing trees that offer Adam and Eve either eternal life or death (Genesis 2:17; Alma 12:23; Moses 3:17).[24]

This understanding may help the reader recognize how Lehi read his version of what is in Genesis 2–3. After the two trees are identified in Genesis 2:9 (Moses 3:9), Adam is placed in the garden and God gives him the commandment to not eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge — in other words, the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:15–17; Moses

3:15–17). Eve later adds the detail that they were commanded to not even touch that tree (Genesis 3:3; Moses 4:9). But nowhere does the text read that Adam and Eve have any interaction with the tree of life or receive any instructions from God regarding that tree. How might this be understood considering Lehi's teaching that they were to be "enticed by the one or the other?"

Since the tree of life was not forbidden, some have proposed that Adam and Eve were eating its fruit all along and that this may have been the means by which they were sustained in an immortal state while in the garden.[25] But this is not consistent with Lehi's view that the choice was for "the one [fruit] or the other." Others point to the phrase "lest he put forth his hand, and take *also* of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" (Genesis 3:22; Alma 42:3; Moses 4:28), to show that Adam had not been eating from the tree of life before he ate the forbidden fruit.[26] That reading would be consistent with Lehi's view.

This leaves two possible explanations for why the Genesis narrative does not have Adam and Eve interact with the tree of life: Either they didn't know it existed or they knew it existed but the way to the tree of life had not yet been revealed to them when they ate the forbidden fruit.[27] It is not likely that the first explanation represents Lehi's understanding as an awareness of both trees would be required for Adam and Eve to use their agency and make a choice. The second explanation would align with Lehi's teachings, especially if it were understood that the way of or path leading to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24; Moses 4:31)[28] represents a process of preparation for Adam and Eve that would be required before they could eat the fruit from that tree. That is how this path was portrayed in Lehi's vision (1 Nephi 8), and it is also what the covenant path represents today. However, one must first demonstrate trust in the Lord and compliance with the law of obedience before one may access that path. Is it possible that the commandment to not partake of the forbidden fruit served as a test of our first parents' willingness to be obedient? Had they kept that commandment, would they have been able to prepare for and eventually have access to the tree of life while in the garden? These two questions circle back to the two garden scenarios in Lehi's teachings.

Since, in the first scenario, Adam and Eve "had partaken of the forbidden fruit," in the parallel, second scenario, the idea that Adam and Eve had partaken of the fruit from the tree of life must be implicit in the statement that Adam "would have remained in the Garden of Eden."

That statement is found in line B of the second chiasm, and this proposal is supported by two observations:

- In the second garden scenario, the choice for the tree of life is not considered as a future possibility as one might expect, if Adam had not yet made that choice.
- The tree of life is also implicit in the parallel line B from the first chiasm.

Adam and Eve were not driven from the garden because the earth needed to be tilled; rather it was to prevent them from partaking *also* of the tree of life (Genesis 3:22; Alma 42:3; Moses 28). Thus, background information from an earlier section of Lehi's teachings and rhetorical links between the two chiasms indicate that in both of Lehi's garden scenarios, Adam and Eve partook of the fruit from one of the two trees identified in Genesis 2:9 and Moses 3:9. However, in the hypothetical second scenario, they have not had the preparation that would be required for that choice. The significance of that detail will become apparent while unraveling Lehi's development of thought.

The consequences of each choice

In the biblical Garden of Eden narrative, very little indicates that the Fall affected the entire earth. The Garden of Eden was clearly a holy place set apart from the rest of the world, as temples are today.[29] The Bible does not indicate that the entire earth was created in a paradisiacal state.[30] While God cursed the ground or earth that Adam would be "driven out from the garden of Eden to till" (2 Nephi 2:19), the Garden of Eden may also have required tilling.[31] And the earth apparently remained in place and, presumably, in the same condition after Adam was removed from it, as cherubim were placed at the garden's entrance to "keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24). The idea that the Fall affected the entire earth doesn't come from the Bible, but from 2 Nephi 2:22.

In the 2012 edition of the Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 2:22 reads as follows:

> 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.

The last sentence of this verse includes the C and D1 lines from the second chiasm. These two lines are separated by a semicolon. At first glance, the punctuation and verse division would suggest that these two lines should be read together and that the pronoun *they* refers to "all things which were created." One may argue that the plain reading of this verse says that "all things" were "created" in a "state" where there was no death. With this reading, the Fall would be responsible for introducing death into the world.[32]

Given the fact that Joseph Smith did not provide either the punctuation or the verse divisions for the Book of Mormon, it is possible to take a closer look at the rhetorical features of this text to see if there is any indication that this is how Lehi intended that it be read. The following paragraphs indicate that Lehi's use of keywords linking to other sections of these teachings, his use of Hebrew wordplay on the multiple meanings for the noun *ʿāḏām*, and his structuring of this rhetorical unit all suggest that this is not the correct reading of these teachings. These features of Lehi's rhetoric show that the "state" in which "all things" were "created" was, what one might call, the natural state. In Lehi's blessing of Jacob, the natural state is necessarily characterized by opposition. Thus, if there is life there must also be death. If Adam and Eve have not eaten of the tree of life, it cannot be assumed that they were immortal. The rhetorical structure and Hebrew wordplay also show that in the garden scenarios that begin each chiasm, Lehi uses the pronoun *they* to refer specifically to Adam *and* Eve. Thus, studying 2 Nephi 2:22–23 with these observations in mind, gives a reading where the consequences of the Fall affect only Adam and Eve and their posterity, not all of creation.

The state in which all things were created

The keywords *all things* and *created*, found in line C of the second scenario, link specifically to Lehi's previous description of the state in which "all things" were "created," a state that, according to Lehi, requires "opposition in all things":

> *for it must needs be that there is an opposition in all things*. If not so, my first born in the wilderness, righteousness could not he brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither happiness nor misery, *neither good nor bad*; wherefore all things must needs be a compound in one. Wherefore if it should be one body, it must needs remain as dead, *having no life*

> *neither death*, *nor corruption nor incorruption*, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility. (2 Nephi 2:11)

Lehi uses these teachings about opposition in all things to segue from his blessing of Jacob to the teachings that he presented to all his sons. He begins the latter by speaking about the creation of "all things" (2 Nephi 2:14–15). He presents these teachings in two parallel panels:[33]

2 Nephi 2:14
A For there is a *God*
B and he hath *created* all things,
C both *the heavens* (*šāmayim*) and *the earth*
D and *all things* that in them is,
E both things *to act* and things *to be acted upon*.

2 Nephi 2:15
A And to bring about *his* eternal purposes in the end of man—
B after that he had *created* our first parents
C and *the beasts of the field* and *the fowls of the air* (*šāmayim*)
D and, in fine, *all things* which are created—
E *it must needs be that there* was *an opposition,* even the forbidden fruit in *opposition* to the tree of life

Note that the keywords in the climactic fifth line (the E line) of each panel are also found in the sentences that bracket Lehi's teachings on *opposition* in Jacob's blessing (2 Nephi 2:11–13), albeit in reverse order:[34]

for *it must needs be that there* is *an opposition* in all things. (2 Nephi 2:11)

both *things to act* and *things to be acted upon*. (2 Nephi 2:14)

And if there is no God,
we are not,
neither the earth.
For there could have been no creation of *things*,
neither *to act*
nor *to be acted upon*;
wherefore all things must have vanished away. (2 Nephi 2:13)

it must needs be that there was an opposition, (2 Nephi 2:15)

This linkage of Lehi's teachings about the creation of "all things" to those earlier teachings in Jacob's blessing strongly suggests that those earlier teachings were describing the nature of God's creation. Thus, in line C of Lehi's second chiasm (2 Nephi 2:22), the "state" in which "all things" were "created" and "must have remained" was very likely what might be called the "natural state."[35] These teachings about

the Fall begin with the world in its natural state, Adam and Eve included. Indeed, according to the biblical account, when God completed the Creation, he "saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31; Moses 2:31).[36] What could that statement have meant if the world at that time was not characterized by opposition in all things? According to Lehi, in such a world, there could have been "neither good nor bad" (2 Nephi 2:11). For Lehi, creation was all about dividing something into opposites to provide definition, meaning, and purpose. This was the ancient Hebrew understanding of creation.[37]

It has been argued that the Fall was the final step of Creation, that it was necessary to bring about "the mortal condition."[38] According to this understanding, Adam and Eve were originally placed in a world where there was no death and no procreation—in other words, a world without opposition in all things. The Garden of Eden served as the place where Adam and Eve would be given a commandment and would be tested to see if they would obey it. Yet, it was necessary that they disobey for both death and procreation to be introduced, as these conditions were essential for God "to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man" (2 Nephi 2:15). Thus, according to this understanding, a world without death and procreation served as the state in which Adam and Eve would make a decision that would set God's plans in motion.

Lehi probably would not have agreed with this idea. In his blessing of Jacob, he emphasizes that if God had created a world without opposition, then it would have served no purpose at all:

> Wherefore it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. (2 Nephi 2:12)

Would Lehi have said that if he intended to teach that God originally placed Adam and Eve in a world without opposition? In Lehi's understanding, when Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden, they were very likely in a state that was analogous to the state in which little children exist, a natural state of innocence. However, as natural beings in the garden, Adam and Eve were not "an enemy to God," as Benjamin characterizes the fallen, natural man (Mosiah 3:19). They were not beings who were "carnal, sensual, and devilish," as Alma describes fallen man (Alma 42:10). The natural man is only "an enemy to God" if he does not yield "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit," which

was present with Adam and Eve in the garden.[39] Also, Alma notes that because "fallen man" has been "cut off, both temporally and spiritually, from the presence of the Lord," they have become "subjects to follow after their *own will*" (Alma 42:6–7; Moses 6:49), not necessarily a *new will* or nature. While one's "own will" is "carnal, sensual, and devilish by nature" (Alma 42:10), the Lord has given everyone the means to follow after "the will of his Holy Spirit" rather than "the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein" (2 Nephi 2:28–29). While Adam and Eve may have been natural beings in a state of innocence in the garden, they were not fallen beings and, thus, enjoyed the presence of the Lord.

The origin of death

In those teachings to Jacob, Lehi associates the origin of death with the Creation rather than the Fall. This signals that Lehi did not read the warning in Genesis 2:17, "thou shalt surely die," as a warning of the origin of death writ large, but as a sentence of death for Adam and Eve alone. Robert Alter, in support of his translation of the phrase "thou shalt surely die" as "you are doomed to die," had this to say:

> The form of the Hebrew . . . is what grammarians call the infinitive absolute: the infinitive immediately followed by a conjugated form of the same verb. The general effect of this repetition is to add emphasis to the verb, but because in the case of the verb "to die" it is the pattern regularly used in the Bible for the issuing of death sentences, "doomed to die" is an appropriate equivalent."[40]

Thus, God's warning predicts a sentence of death rather than the origin of death.[41] As John Walton reads the garden story, the tragedy is not that Adam and Eve "initiated a situation that was not already there [the existence of death]; it is that they failed to achieve a solution to that situation that was in their reach. . . . We are all doomed to die because when they sinned we lost access to the tree of life."[42]

Alma understands the warning in Genesis 2:17 in the same way. After noting that "it was appointed unto man to die," he shows Corianton that God carried out that sentence of death by having Adam and Eve "cut off from the tree of life" (Alma 42:6–7). At Ammonihah, after referring specifically to the warning in Genesis 2:17, he notes that "it was appointed unto man that they *must* die" (Alma 12:23, 27). In other words, God was telling Adam and Eve that if they ate the forbidden fruit, then they would no longer have an alternative to death.

The pronoun "they"

Each of the two chiasms begins with a garden scenario involving both Adam and Eve. In the first scenario, Lehi uses the pronoun *they* to refer specifically to Adam and Eve up to the point where the narrative departs from the biblical garden scenario (Genesis 2 and 3). When Lehi begins to speak about the "children" of Adam and Eve, the pronoun *they* refers to the children. After noting that these "children" represent "the family of all the earth," Lehi refers to them as "the children of men (*ʾāḏām*)."[43] So, by the end of this first chiasm, "the children of men" have become "all men (*ʾāḏām*)." One sense in which one may understand this play on the multiple meanings of the noun *ʾāḏām* is that the children of Adam have become Adam. This may be another hint that, for Lehi, the story of Adam and Eve is everyone's story.

In the second garden scenario, as with the presumption that Adam had eaten the fruit from the tree of life, it is not at first clear that Eve is included in the scenario. That is because Lehi begins this second chiasm with just Adam as the subject, referring to him using the pronoun *he* in line B. The reasons why Lehi does this will be explored later. Here it can be seen that the pronoun *they* refers to Adam *and* Eve in this second garden scenario when one recognizes that in this chiasm, as in the first, Lehi plays on the multiple meanings for the Hebrew noun *ʾāḏām*.[44] A pronoun shift from *he* (Adam) to *they* (Adam and Eve) in this second scenario is one way in which he does that, and this has the effect of reintroducing Eve into the subject *as* if she had been there all along. Lehi was able to do this because the Hebrew noun *ʾāḏām* can carry both singular and plural meanings; there is biblical precedence for this shift from singular to plural when referring to the noun *ʾāḏām*:

> So God created man (*ha ʾāḏām*) in his *own* image,
> in the image of God created he *him*;
> male and female created he *them*. (Genesis 1:27)

> This is the *book of the generations* of Adam (*ʾāḏām*).
> In the day that God created man (*ʾāḏām*),
> in the likeness of God created he *him*;
> Male and female created he *them*;
> and blessed *them*, and called *their* name Adam (*ʾāḏām*),
> in the day when *they* were created. (Genesis 5:1–2)

In the *book of generations* context, the plural pronouns may refer specifically to Adam and Eve. As in Genesis 1:27 and 5:1–2, the noun

ʿāḏām in line A of the second chiasm can be read as a reference to just Adam or as a reference to Adam and Eve.[45]

Most commentators have recognized that, by 2 Nephi 2:23, there has been a pronoun shift from *he* to *they* that serves to reintroduce Eve into the subject.[46] This is because the reference to "no children" and the discussion about doing "no good" and knowing "no sin" in verse 23 wouldn't make much sense if Lehi were speaking about other creatures. As previously noted, most people read the pronoun *they* in verse 22 as referring to "all things which were created," but, given the current punctuation and verse division and the fact that Eve has not been formally reintroduced into the subject, that does make sense.

However, the rhetorical structure of this passage would favor a reading where all instances of the pronoun *they* in verses 22 and 23 refer specifically to Adam and Eve. The structure of this alternative scenario clearly indicates that in line E, and in the four parallel D lines that surround it, the pronoun *they* refers to the same thing:

D 1 And *they* must have *remained forever* and had *no end*,
2 and *they* would have had *no children*.
E Wherefore *they* would have remained in a *state of innocence,*
D' 3 having *no joy*, for *they* knew *no misery*,
4 doing *no good*, for *they* knew *no sin*.

This is the punctuation used in the Yale edition of the Book of Mormon. With this punctuation, lines C and D1 are in separate sentences and line D1 (the last line of verse 22) is separated from line D2 (the first line of verse 23) by a comma. The rhetorical structure favors this punctuation because it shows that line D1 is to be read with line D2 rather than line C. Note also, that together, all the D and E lines make the most sense when the pronoun *they* refers to both Adam and Eve.

In line C from the first chiasm, the pronoun *they* still refers to Adam and Eve, and reading that pronoun in the parallel line C as a reference to Adam and Eve does make sense, especially if one reads the conjunction *And* in line D1 as *But*. The conjunctions *and* and *but* both translate from the same Hebrew word.[47]

Thus, after Adam and Eve had partaken of the fruit from the tree of life, "all things must have remained in the same state which they (Adam and Eve) were after that they (Adam and Eve) were created." All things, including Adam and Eve, were in the natural state after their creation.[48] "~~And~~ [But] *they* (Adam and Eve) must have remained forever and had

no end." Only Adam and Eve would have become immortal after they ate the fruit from the tree of life. This consequence for that choice would be expected, as immortality was something that the tree of life had to offer them. If they had been created as immortal beings, then the incentive or enticement to choose the tree of life would have been greatly diminished.

Of course, this scenario may have created a problematic situation where Adam and Eve were immortal beings in a natural world. But Lehi uses this hypothetical scenario to show the problems that it would create. This scenario is hypothetical for a reason that will be explored later. For now, one may surmise that, just as God did not allow Adam and Eve to partake of the tree of life after eating the forbidden fruit (while they were in an unworthy state), he probably would not have allowed them to partake of its fruit while they were in a state of innocence (an unprepared state).

In this chiasm, as in the first chiasm, after the narrative leaves the garden scenario, the pronoun *they* is used to refer to all *men* (line A'). Thus, the following can be the reading for this second chiasm:

A And now behold, if *Adam* (*ʾāḏām*, proper name) had not *transgressed*,
  B *he* would not have *fallen*, but *he* would have *remained in the garden of Eden* (chosen the tree of life);
    C and *all things* which were created must have remained in the same state which *they* (Adam and Eve) were after that *they* (Adam and Eve) were created (the natural state).
      D 1 [But] *they* (Adam and Eve) must have *remained forever* and had *no end*,
        2 and *they* (Adam and Eve) would have had *no children*.
        E Wherefore *they* (Adam and Eve) would have remained in a *state of innocence*,
      D' 3 having *no joy*, for *they* (Adam and Eve) knew *no misery*,
        4 doing *no good*, for *they* (Adam and Eve) knew *no sin*.
    C' But behold, *all things* have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth *all things*.
  B' *Adam* (*ʾāḏām*, proper name) *fell* that *men* (*ʾāḏām*, generic) might be,
A' and *men* (*ʾāḏām*, generic) are that they might have *joy*.[49]

Again, it appears that Alma reads the biblical version of the garden narrative as Lehi does. At Ammonihah, after addressing the Fall, which led to mankind becoming "a lost and a fallen people," he addresses

the measures that God took to prevent Adam (*ʿāḏām*) from partaking *also* of the tree of life. He notes that if Adam had been able to partake of its fruit "at that time," then "there would have been no death" (Alma 12:22–23). To show that this general reference to "death" applied just to Adam and the penalty that he incurred, rather than to all of creation, he cites the warning from Genesis 2:17 as follows: "if *thou* eat, *thou* shalt surely die" (Alma 12:23). Alma then follows this paraphrase with a statement noting that the Lord kept his word after Adam (*ʿāḏām*) had transgressed: "And we see that death comes upon *mankind* (*ʿāḏām*), . . . which is the temporal death" (Alma 12:24).[50] Thus, these teachings are consistent with Lehi's:

- The tree of life offered immortality to Adam.
- Adam could not make both choices.
- The sentence of death applied only to mankind (*ʿāḏām*).

In this passage, Alma plays upon the full range of meaning for the noun *ʿāḏām*, as does Lehi.

A summary of the consequences

The rhetorical links within 2 Nephi 2 show that in the second garden scenario, Adam had eaten the fruit from the tree of life and that the "state" in which "all things" were "created" was the natural state. From these observations, and from Lehi's wordplay with the Hebrew noun *ʿāḏām* (which included the pronoun shift from *he* to *they*), one can recognize that the consequences of the choice for the tree of life would have affected only Adam and Eve and their potential for posterity, not all of creation.

In the Bible, the punishment given to Adam and Eve for eating the forbidden fruit was separation from the garden which contained the path leading to the tree of life (Genesis 3:22–24; Alma 42:2–3). Adam and Eve and their children would "surely die" because they all lost access to the tree of life. That consequence was to be expected, based on the warning in Genesis 2:17. But Genesis says nothing about a change from immortality to mortality for Adam and Eve or any other creature. Thus, it is significant to note that, in their commentaries on this biblical scenario, neither Lehi nor Alma describe a change from immortality to mortality for Adam and Eve or any other creature.

To be clear, the decision to eat the forbidden fruit brought death to both Adam and Eve and to all mankind. Consistent with the Bible dictionary's definition for the Fall of Adam, one may say that the Fall was

"the process by which mankind became mortal on this earth," if mortality is defined as the certainty of death.[51] Still, the scriptures nowhere describe a change from immortality to mortality for Adam and Eve or any other creature.

What may be unexpected in the Bible is the fact that Adam and Eve do not die "in the day that" they eat the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:17). In commenting on the biblical scenario, Lehi notes that their days were prolonged so they could repent. Alma notes the same thing (Alma 12:24; 42:4). Because of this, both Lehi and Alma understand that in this interval between the Fall and death, Adam and Eve (and all mankind) find themselves in a *lost* and *fallen* state. Lehi learns this from his vision of the tree of life. In that vision, this *lost* and *fallen* state is described as separation from the tree of life or the path that leads to it (1 Nephi 8:23, 28, 34; 10:6–7). And, as previously noted, one also sees this in Lehi's two adjacent chiasms. The keywords and ideas in the four parallel B lines clearly show that to be *lost* and *fallen* is to be separated from *the Garden of Eden*. Lehi also understood that mankind's *lost* and *fallen* condition leads to "captivity and death" as opposed to "liberty and eternal life" (2 Nephi 2:27).

Alma understands mankind's *lost* and *fallen* condition in the same way that Lehi did. He defines separation from the tree of life (our lost and fallen condition) as separation from God's presence in both a temporal and spiritual sense (Alma 42:6–7). This separation leads to both temporal and spiritual death (Alma 42:8–9). Thus, in this *lost* and f*allen* condition, mortals are left to "follow after [their] *own will*" (Alma 42:7), not necessarily a *new will*, because they lose access to the Holy Spirit which provides guidance and help for those who are on the path that leads to the tree of life (2 Nephi 2:28–29, 32:3, 5).

In the garden scenario from Lehi's second chiasm, the direct consequence of eating the fruit from the tree of life — immortality — would also be expected. Again, it would be expected for Adam and Eve only, as Lehi has explicitly noted that everything else would have remained in the same state that *they* were in after *they* were created. Whether one reads the pronoun *they* in that sentence (line C) as a reference to *all things* or to just *Adam and Eve*, it is the same. Lehi had clearly identified the state in which all things were created as the natural state.

However, based on the descriptions of what Lehi and Nephi had experienced after eating the fruit from the tree of life, one learns that this choice for the tree of life also carried unexpected consequences. While joy was the hallmark of their experience, Lehi avers that Adam

and Eve would have had no joy if they had eaten the same fruit. Yet, in both scenarios, the unexpected consequences may be explained by the fact that when Adam and Eve made their choice, they were not fully prepared to make it.[52]

Adam and Eve were not fully prepared to choose

In both scenarios, Adam and Eve make their choice while they are in a "state of innocence." Although they were given a commandment and a warning of the consequences for disobeying it, which gave them a sense of right and wrong and, thus, accountability for disobedience, they did not yet comprehend the concepts of good and evil (Genesis 3:5, 22; Moses 4:11, 28). While commenting on James Talmage's teaching that when Eve ate the forbidden fruit, "She feared not evil, for she knew it not,"[53] Jeffrey Bradshaw states the following:

> I am persuaded that Elder Talmage states the situation accurately. Although he recognized that Satan beguiled Eve, he in no way implies that she chose evil — because "she knew it not.[54]

A knowledge of good and evil is the basis for fully understanding the commandments that mortals are given and for using their agency to make choices. In Lehi's teachings about the plan of redemption, this knowledge of good and evil is an essential element in the plan:

> and the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free. And men are instructed sufficiently that they *know good from evil*, and the law is given unto men. . . . And the Messiah cometh in the fullness of time that he might redeem the children of men from the fall. And *because that they are redeemed from the fall*, they have become free forever, *knowing good from evil* (2 Nephi 2:4–5, 26)

However, the plan of redemption wasn't implemented until after the Fall. In the second, hypothetical garden scenario (2 Nephi 2:22–23), Lehi teaches that if Adam and Eve had chosen to eat the fruit from the tree of life while in their state of innocence, then they would have remained in that state forever, "doing *no good*, for they knew *no sin"* (line D'4). This implies that in that state of innocence, they did not yet "know good from evil." Lehi also links the statement that "they would have had no children" directly to this state of innocence (lines D2 and E), signaling that he understood his version of the Genesis statement "they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not

ashamed" (Genesis 2:25) to imply that Adam and Eve were in a state of innocence in that scenario as well. This raises the question of why God would even allow Adam and Eve to be tempted to disobey the commandment to not eat the forbidden fruit while they did not fully understand the concepts of good and evil.

As will be shown later, Lehi does address that question and it may be why he presents these teachings about the consequences of the Fall. But here, one must note that some of the consequences for the choice that was made in each garden scenario are not what one would expect for the choice that was made. These unexpected consequences may be explained by the fact that Adam and Eve were in a state of innocence when they made their choice, in both scenarios. That observation shows that these unexpected consequences could have resulted from the time when Adam and Eve made their choice and not just from the fact that they made the choice.

Unexpected consequences

In the second, hypothetical garden scenario (2 Nephi 2:22–23), Lehi teaches that if Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit from the tree of life, then they "must have remained forever and had no end" (line D1). One would expect that the tree of life would offer them immortality. As previously noted, Lehi also teaches that Adam and Eve would have had "no joy" because they "knew no misery" (line D'3). The tree of life would not have offered Adam and Eve the joy that Lehi had described when he partook of its fruit (1 Nephi 8:12). Adam and Eve also would never have experienced joy from their posterity because they would have also had "no children" (line D2). From what Lehi and Nephi have described so positively in the accounts of their vision after eating the fruit from the tree of life (1 Nephi 8:10–16, 11:2–5, 8–11, 21–23), one would not expect that this same choice would produce such negative consequences for Adam and Eve.

It has also been noted that, in the first garden scenario, Adam and Eve do not die "in the day that" they eat the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:17). Rather, their days are "prolonged" or "their time was lengthened" so they could "repent" (2 Nephi 2:21). That may also be unexpected.

Choices made prematurely

All these unexpected consequences may be the result of *when* these choices were made. They were made while Adam and Eve were in a state of innocence. Because of this, in the first scenario God could offer

leniency to Adam and Eve as they may not have been fully accountable for their choice. While they were commanded to not eat the forbidden fruit and must have understood the consequence for doing that, they did not yet have the fully developed ability to differentiate between good and evil. Thus, they were easily beguiled, persuaded by the devil to violate that commandment, and they had to suffer the consequences: expulsion from the garden and, ultimately, death. Yet their days were prolonged. They were offered an opportunity to repent and were given what may have been a second chance to learn "the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24) and prepare to partake of its fruit.

In the second scenario, the consequence of eating from the tree of life while in a state of innocence was threefold: Adam and Eve would have "remained in the garden of Eden"; they "must have remained for ever, and had no end"; and "they would have remained in a state of innocence." In some sense, eating the fruit from the tree of life while in a state of innocence would have had the effect of perpetuating that state of innocence forever. This perpetuation of their state of innocence does explain why they would have had "no children." That, coupled with the fact that they would never have experienced death, goes a long way toward explaining why they would have had "no joy" and "no misery." The fact that they would have done "no good" because they "knew no sin" is also explained by this perpetuation of their state of innocence — they would not have known the difference.

The fact that Adam and Eve would have "remained in a state of innocence" after eating the fruit from the tree of life indicates that they were in that state when they made that choice. However, since remaining in that state of innocence was a consequence of their choice, had they not made it *when* they did, would they have remained in that state of innocence forever, in the garden? Lehi does not say that they would have.

Indeed, if they were in a condition analogous to the state in which all find themselves as little children, then it would be expected that, with time, Adam and Eve would outgrow their state of innocence within the garden, as they did outside the garden in the first scenario. Thus, if they had not partaken of the forbidden fruit *when* they did, would they have been able to learn from the things that they experienced in the garden that all things have their opposite? From this experience, from Lucifer's presence in the garden, and with further instructions from the Lord, could they have learned to distinguish good from evil while in the garden? Would they have been able to experience joy therein?[55]

Is it possible that they were placed in the garden to see if they would do *all* that the Lord commanded (Abraham 3:25)? If so, then they, eventually, must have been able to have children while there,[56] and their posterity would have brought them great joy as well.

The realization that Lehi viewed Adam and Eve as natural beings when they were placed in the Garden of Eden does raise the possibility that the answer to all these questions is yes. It is possible that Lehi just assumed that his sons would understand that Adam and Eve would not have remained in a state of innocence forever, had they remained in the garden.

Regardless of how prepared intellectually and spiritually Adam and Eve may or may not have been when they made their choice in this second scenario, they may not have been physically ready to eat the fruit from the tree of life while in a state of innocence. Thus, many of the blessings associated with the tree of life could not have come to fruition for them in this hypothetical garden scenario. The negative consequences associated with eating the fruit from the tree of life in this hypothetical scenario might suggest that God would not have allowed them to eat the fruit from that tree while in an unprepared state.[57]

This reading of 2 Nephi 2:22–23 does raise another question: If this hypothetical Garden of Eden scenario did not show that the Fall was necessary to introduce procreation and death into this world, then what purpose did it serve in Lehi's teachings?

The Question that the Hypothetical Scenario Answers

Lehi's statement that "all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things" ends the hypothetical garden scenario in the second chiasm and returns to what happened in the biblical story. From what precedes this statement and from what follows, it appears that this hypothetical scenario serves to answer a question that may have been raised by what happened in the first scenario, which addresses the biblical story. Why would God have allowed Adam and Eve to be "beguiled" or persuaded to eat the forbidden fruit while they were in a state of innocence? That does not seem fair. Perhaps, this was a question raised by Lehi's sons as one of Alma's commentaries on the garden narrative was prompted by a similar question from Corianton (Alma 42:1). Regardless, in this hypothetical scenario, Lehi showed his sons that if God had intervened to give Adam and Eve the fruit from the tree of life before they could be "beguiled" or persuaded

to eat the forbidden fruit, then it would have destroyed the very purpose for which they were created, which was to attain eternal life and eternal joy.

Adam's fall was necessary

God allowed "all things" to happen as they inevitably would in the kind of world that he had to create for his children to have the experience necessary to attain eternal joy. Thus, "Adam fell that men might be."[58] The rhetorical structure of these teachings helps reveal that this Adam in line B', who chooses to fall "that men might be," is the same Adam who had chosen not to fall in the parallel line B, where he was referred to using the pronoun *he*. Yet Lehi is not necessarily singling out Adam for any reason other than to state the obvious: once Eve has fallen and faced expulsion from the garden, Adam's fall becomes necessary for them to obey the commandment to multiply and replenish the earth (Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28). Even though Lehi does not mention Eve by name in the second chiasm, the fact that she is with Adam the whole time is evident by his use of the plural pronoun *they*. Further, Lehi does not give Adam or Eve credit or blame for the Fall. Multiple passages in the Book of Mormon note that *both* Adam and Eve are beguiled by the devil, and it is the devil himself who gets the blame for the Fall (2 Nephi 9:9; Mosiah 16:3; Ether 8:25). Lest this statement from Lehi is read to suggest that he is giving Adam exclusive credit for the Fall, one may remember temple teachings where it is learned that it was Eve who helped Adam understand why he must eat the forbidden fruit. In the Book of Moses, what Adam refers to as "my transgression," Eve refers to as "our transgression," even as she reminds him why he needed to transgress (Moses 5:10–11).[59] Were it not for her role in Adam's Fall, he may have remained a lone man in the garden, forever. Thus, her role is equally necessary and most fortunate for us.[60] In her more enlightened state, after eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge, Eve's only motive is to be obedient to the extent possible, not to be disobedient.

An important takeaway from these teachings is that Lehi does not indicate that Adam and Eve needed to fall to acquire the ability to have children. If they had not partaken of the fruit from the tree of life prematurely, then they may have eventually had children naturally, while they were in the garden, as they did when they were outside the garden. If this is correct, then the dilemma of contradictory commandments disappears.

While Lehi's statement, "Adam (*'adam*) fell that men (*'adam*) might

be" indicates that Adam's fall became necessary for mankind to have this earthly experience, the Hebrew wordplay in this statement also helps one to recognize the same wordplay, involving the same noun (*'adam*), in the first and last lines of the second chiasm. It is in this last line where the climax of Lehi's teachings on the consequences of the Fall (the purpose for all creation) occurs.

The purpose of existence

Lehi concludes his commentary on the consequences of the Fall with the simple statement, "men (*'adam*) are that they might have joy." Lehi has taught his sons that the experience of this life is necessary for them to obtain joy in the fullest sense. The world was created as it is to allow all to have the necessary experience for this end. But God, "who knoweth all things," surely understood that in the kind of world that he needed to create — a world of opposition, of things to act and things to be acted upon — the Fall was probably inevitable. Thus, he had a plan of redemption in place to address it. Still, it is important to note that in teaching about the Fall, Lehi gave no reason to assume that God's anticipation of the Fall was an indication that it was a required element in his eternal plan of happiness. Could God not have also been prepared for and maybe even preferred the possibility that his children might obey him? Why was the path to the tree of life within the garden in the first place? Lehi apparently does not see a need to address the problem of conflicting commandments because he does not do it. Instead, both he and Alma embed their discussion of the garden scenarios within a larger discussion of God's eternal justice and mercy (2 Nephi 2:5ff; Alma 42:1–15).

Again, one should note that Lehi skillfully plays upon the multiple meanings of the noun *'āḏām* in these teachings. He uses that noun to refer to Adam, to Adam and Eve, and to all men. By beginning the second chiasm with just Adam as the subject and using the noun *'āḏām* with its narrowest and broadest meanings in the first and last lines, respectively, Lehi also prepares his audience to understand how the story of Adam and Eve is everyone's story as well. In the first chiasm, the children of *'āḏām* become *'āḏām*. In this second chiasm, the man *'āḏām* (Adam) becomes all *'āḏām* (men).

The Larger Structure of Lehi's Teachings

Not only do these teachings about the Fall show why the world was created as it is (which helps all appreciate the purpose for which they

were placed in it) in the final sections of these teachings—which deal with the plan of redemption (2 Nephi 2:26–27) and the doctrine of the two ways (2 Nephi 2:28–29)[61]—Lehi shows his sons that this story about Adam and Eve is a simplified version of one's own story. Because of the Atonement, everyone begins this life in a state of innocence, is given agency, acquires knowledge of good and evil, and discovers that choices have as their consequence either "liberty and life" or "captivity and death" (2 Nephi 2:26–27). Further, everyone receives enticements to choose between the options (2 Nephi 2:28–29). Finally, everyone can also come to understand that the choice for "the way of eternal life" or "the way of everlasting death" (2 Nephi 10:23) is, like the choice given to Adam and Eve in the garden, a choice for "the one or the other" (2 Nephi 2:16, 27; 1 Nephi 14:7).

In the end, Lehi placed his teachings about the consequences of the Fall at the very center of his teachings to his sons. These two parallel chiasms are surrounded by sections that together exhibit a fourfold pattern similar to what others have associated with the plan of redemption and the temple: the Creation, the Fall, the Atonement, and redemption (see appendix A).[62] The teachings in these four sections answer the *what* questions related to mortal existence whereas the teachings in the two chiasms at the center, together, answer the *why* questions. There is not anything quite like Lehi's teachings about the consequences of the Fall in the rest of scripture when it comes to answering important questions:

- Why did God create the Earth?
- Why didn't he just create us to live with him in Heaven?
- Where did evil come from?
- Why did God allow evil to exist along with the good in this world?
- Why didn't he just start over with a new Adam and Eve after the first Adam and Eve disobey him?

The insights that Lehi shares in just seven verses help to answer some of the most difficult questions that might be asked.

Conclusion

Lehi's teachings about the Fall in 2 Nephi 2:19–25 provide valuable insights that create better understanding of the Creation and garden narratives in Genesis 1–3 and Moses 2–4. It is possible that these teachings represent commentary on an early Hebrew version of these biblical narratives, commentary that is clearly enhanced by insights

that Lehi gained from the brass plates and from his own visions or revelations. Nevertheless, Lehi repeatedly alludes to a source with which his sons must be familiar (2 Nephi 2:14–21, 24–25), and his skillful use of the tools of ancient Hebrew rhetoric — especially his wordplay with the Hebrew noun *'adam* — are consistent with the hypothesis that it was a Hebrew source. If these narratives were presented in Solomon's temple, then Lehi's older sons would have been familiar with them. Indeed, Lehi's teachings to his sons may represent the only commentary on these ancient Hebrew narratives that exist from someone who lived in the culture that produced them.

In the teachings found in 2 Nephi 2:19–25, Lehi effectively uses two adjacent chiasms to contrast the consequences of the choice to eat the forbidden fruit (the biblical garden scenario) from those associated with eating from the tree of life (a hypothetical, alternative scenario) to show why God had to allow the biblical Garden of Eden scenario to happen. God knew that in the kind of world that he needed to create to provide eternal life and eternal joy for his children, the Fall was likely inevitable. Thus, he had a plan in place to address it. Lehi's teachings do not necessarily state that God's anticipation of the Fall was an indication that it was a required element in his plan "to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man" (2 Nephi 2:15). Rather, the Fall may have been something for which God had to plan.

Since Lehi did not explain why God would give Adam and Eve conflicting commandments in the garden, one may surmise that his reading of these ancient Hebrew narratives did not raise that question. He probably did not intend to teach the idea that the Fall was required to introduce death and procreation into the world. From his teachings, it is apparent that he understood that the story of Adam and Eve was a simplified, figurative version of everyone's story, which makes a lot of sense if these narratives were read or enacted in ancient temple proceedings as they are in today's temples. Indeed, Lehi's teachings may be as relevant for helping patrons understand current temple teachings as they were for his sons and daughters in helping them understand theirs.

Appendix A: The Rhetorical Structure of Lehi's Teachings to his Sons: A Thematic Chiasm (2 Nephi 2:14–30)

I. The Creation: Preparation of the Earth for mankind (2 Nephi 2:14–16)[63]

a. Summary of the two Creation narratives
b. The choice given to man
II. The Fall (2 Nephi 2:17–18)
III. The consequences of eating the forbidden fruit (2 Nephi 2:19–21)
III.' Why God allowed Adam to eat the forbidden fruit (2 Nephi 2:22–25)
II.' The Atonement: Redemption from the general consequences of the Fall (2 Nephi 2:26–27)[64]

I.' Redemption: Redemption from one's own sins (mankind's preparation for eternity, 2 Nephi 2:28–30)[65]
a. Summary of the two ways
b. The choice that Lehi made

Appendix B: The Structure of Each Rhetorical Unit in Lehi's Teachings to His Sons

Creation: Preparation of the Earth for mankind

A summary of the two creation narratives[66]

14 *And now my sons, I speak unto you* these things for your profit and learning. (inclusio)
A For there is a *God*[67] (extended alternate)
B and he hath *created* all things,[68]
C both *the heavens* (*šāmayim*) and *the earth*[69] (merism)
D and *all things* that in them is,
E both *things to act* and *things to be acted upon.*[70]
15 **A** And to bring about *his* eternal purposes in the end of man—
B after that he had *created* our first parents
C and *the beasts of the field* and *the fowls of the air* (*šāmayim*) (merism)
D and, in fine, *all things* which are created—
E it must needs be that there was an *opposition*, even the *forbidden fruit* in opposition to the *tree of life,*

The choice given to man

F *the one* being sweet and *the other* bitter. (chiasm)
16 **G** Wherefore the *Lord God* gave unto *man* that he should *act for himself*,
G' Wherefore *man* (*'āḏām*) could not *act for himself*

F' save it should be that he were enticed by *the one* or *the other*.

The Fall

17 **H** And I Lehi, according to the things which I have read,[71] must needs suppose (repeated alternate)[72]
I that an *angel of God*, according to that which is written, had *fallen from heaven*;
J wherefore he *became* a *devil*,
K having *sought* that which was evil before God.
18 **I** And because that *he* had *fallen from heaven*
J and *had become miserable* forever
K he *sought* also the misery of *all* mankind;
L wherefore *he saith* unto Eve
J —yea, even that old serpent which is the *devil* (Revelation 12:9; 20:2)[73]
K which is the father of *all* lies (Moses 4:4; John 8:44)
L wherefore *he saith*:
M Partake of the forbidden fruit and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God,[74] knowing good and Evil (Genesis 3:4, 5).

The consequences of eating the forbidden fruit

19 **N** And after that *Adam and Eve* had *partaken of the forbidden fruit*, (parallel chiasms)
O they were *driven out from the garden of Eden* to till the earth.
20 **P** And they have brought forth children, yea, even the *family of all the earth*.
21 **Q** 1 And the *days* of the children of men (*ʻāḏām*) were *prolonged*, (extended alternate)
2 *according to* the will of *God*,
3 that they might *repent* while in the flesh.
R Wherefore their state became a *state of probation*,
Q' 1 and their *time* was *lengthened*
2 *according to* the commandments which the *Lord God* gave unto the children of men (*ʻāḏām*).
3 For he gave commandment that all men (*ʻāḏām*) must *repent,*
P' for he shewed unto *all men* (*ʻāḏām*)
O' that they were *lost*
N' because of the *transgression* of *their parents*.

Why God allowed Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit

22 **N** And now behold, if *Adam* (*'āḏām*, proper name) had not *transgressed*,
O *he* would not have *fallen,* but *he* would have *remained in the garden of Eden*;
P and *all things* which were created must have remained in the same state which *they* were after that *they* were created.
Q 1 And *they* must have *remained forever* and had *no end*, (repetition of the words *they* and *no*)
23 2 and *they* would have had *no children*.
R Wherefore *they* would have remained in a *state of innocence,*
Q' 3 having *no joy*, for *they* knew *no misery*,
4 doing *no good*, for *they* knew *no sin*.
24 **P'** But behold, *all things* have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth *all things*.
25 **O'** *Adam* (*'āḏām*, proper name) *fell* that *men* (*'āḏām*, generic) might be, (paronomasia)
N' and *men* (*'āḏām*, generic) are that they might have *joy*.

Atonement: Redemption from the general consequences of the Fall

26 **S** And *the Messiah* cometh in the fullness of time (chiasm)
T that he might *redeem* the *children of men* from *the fall*.
And because that *they* are *redeemed* from *the fall*,
U a *they* have become *free* forever, (extended alternate)
b *knowing good from evil*,
c_1 *to act* for themselves
c_2 and not *to be acted upon*,
d save it be by the *punishment of the law* at the great and last day,
e *according to* the commandments which *God* hath given.
27 **U'** a Wherefore *men* are *free* according to the flesh,
b and *all things* are given them which is expedient unto man.
c_1 And they are free *to choose* liberty and eternal life
d through *the great Mediator* of all men,
c_2 or *to choose* captivity and death
e *according to* the captivity and power of *the devil*,
T' for he seeketh that *all men* might be *miserable*
S' like unto *himself [the devil]*.

Redemption: Redemption from our own sins (mankind's preparation for eternity)

A summary of the two ways

28 And now my sons, I would that ye should *look to the great Mediator* (anabasis: ascent)
and hearken unto his great *commandments*
and be faithful unto *his words*
a and *choose eternal life*[75] (simple alternate)
b *according to the will of his Holy Spirit*,
29 a and *not choose eternal death*[76] (catabasis: descent)
b *according to the will of the flesh* and the evil which is therein,
which giveth the spirit of the devil *power to captivate*,
to *bring you down to hell*,
that he may *reign over you* in his own kingdom.[77]

The choice that Lehi has made

30 c *I have spoken* these few words *unto you all, my sons*, (inclusio)
d in the last days of *my* probation.
(repeated alternate)
c And *I have* chosen the good part,
d according to the words of *the* prophet.
c And *I have* none other object
d save it be the everlasting welfare of *your* souls. Amen.

Appendix C: Lehi's Final Blessing of his Sons and Their Families (2 Nephi 1:28–4:11)

A Lehi's "first blessing," addressed collectively, to Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and also, "my sons which are the sons of Ishmael." (1:28–29)[78]

B Blessing addressed to Zoram. He is told that "thy seed shall be blessed with [Nephi's] seed . . . upon the face of this land forever." (1:30–32)[79]

C Blessing addressed to Jacob, Lehi's "first born in the wilderness." (2:1–13)

D *Lehi's teachings to all his sons.* (2:14–30)[80]

C' Blessing addressed to Joseph, Lehi's "last born. . . . in the wilderness." (3:1–25)

A' Nephi's narration of the blessings addressed to the children of Lehi's "first born" and then, to the sons and daughters of the other individuals listed in section A (except Sam) (4:1–10)[81]

B' Blessing addressed to Sam. His seed is blessed to be "like unto [Nephi's] seed." (4:11)[82]

Appendix D: Jacob's Blessing (2 Nephi 2:1–13)

Lehi introduces Jacob's blessing with the statement, "And now Jacob, I speak unto you." After a brief introduction, he adds the following:

> Wherefore I know that thou art redeemed because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer, for thou hast beheld that in the fullness of time he cometh to bring salvation unto men. (2 Nephi 2:3b)

Note the similarities between the words that follow this statement and those that Nephi used to introduce his tree of life vision:

Lehi	**Nephi**
And thou hast beheld in thy youth his glory, wherefore thou art blessed even as *they unto whom he shall minister in the flesh*. For the Spirit *is the same yesterday, today, and forever,*[83] *and the way is prepared* from the fall of man, and salvation is free. (2 Nephi 2:4)	I Nephi was desirous also that I might see and hear and know of these things by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him as well in times of old as *in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men*, for he *is the same yesterday and today and forever. And the way is prepared* for all men from the foundation of the world . . . (1 Nephi 10:17–19)

This blessing repeats some words and concepts that are found in Nephi's introduction to his own revelation, in the same order. This is an indication that Jacob experienced the same heavenly ascent experience that Lehi and Nephi had shared.

The Atonement

5 And men are *instructed sufficiently*

that they know[84] good from evil, and the law is given unto men. And by the law *no flesh* is justified (Romans 3:20); or by the law men are cut off, yea, by the

temporal law they were cut off. And also by the *spiritual* law they perish from that which is good and become miserable forever.

6 Wherefore redemption cometh in and through *the Holy Messiah*, for he is full of *grace* and truth (John 1:14).

7 Behold, he offereth himself a *sacrifice* for sin,

to answer the ends of the law

unto all those which have a *broken heart* and a contrite *spirit*.

And *unto none else*

can the *ends of the law be answered*.

8 Wherefore how great the importance to *make these things known* unto the inhabitants of the earth,

that they may know that there is *no flesh* that can dwell in the presence of God

save it be through the merits and mercy and *grace* of *the Holy Messiah*, which layeth down his life (John 10:17)

according to the *flesh* (Acts 2:30) and taketh it again (John 10:17) by the power of the *Spirit* (Luke 4:14),

that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22:31),[85] being the first that should rise (Acts 26:23).

9 Wherefore he is the *firstfruits* unto God (Revelation 14:4), inasmuch as he shall make intercession (Hebrews 7:25) for all the children of men, and they that believe in him shall be saved.

10 And because of the intercession (Hebrews 7:25) for all, all men cometh unto God. Wherefore they stand in the presence of him (Luke 1:19) to be judged of him according to the truth and holiness which is in him;

wherefore *the ends of the law* which the Holy One hath given

unto the inflicting of the *punishment which is affixed*

which ~~punishment that is affixed~~ (error?) is in opposition to that of *the happiness which is affixed*,

to answer the ends of the atonement—

The nature of God's creation

11	for it must needs be that there is an opposition in ***all things***	Inclusio,[86] *all things*
	If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness,	
	righteousness could ***not*** be brought to pass,	
	neither wickedness,	
	neither happiness ***nor*** misery,	
	neither good ***nor*** bad;	Accumulatio
	wherefore *all things* must needs be a *compound in one*.	
	Wherefore if it should be *one body*, it must needs remain as dead, having	
	no life ***neither*** death,	
	nor corruption ***nor*** incorruption,	
	happiness ***nor*** misery,	
	neither sense ***nor*** insensibility.	Accumulatio
12	***Wherefore*** it must needs have been ***created*** for *a thing* of ***naught***;	
	wherefore there would have been ***no*** purpose in the end of its ***creation***.	
	Wherefore *this thing* must needs destroy the wisdom of God	Anaphora
	and his eternal purposes, ***and*** also the power	
	and the mercy ***and*** the justice of God.	Accumulatio
13	***And if*** ye shall say there is ***no law***, ye shall also say there is ***no sin***.	Anaphora
	And if ye shall say there is ***no sin***, ye shall also say there is ***no righteousness***.	Protasis Apodosis
	And if there be ***no righteousness***, there be ***no happiness***.	Chain Figure
	And if there be ***no righteousness nor happiness***, there be ***no punishment nor misery***.	
	And if these things are not, there is ***no God***.	
	And if there is ***no God***,	Parallel Tri-cola
	we are not,	
	neither the earth.	
	For there could have been ***no creation*** of things,	
	neither to act	
	nor to be acted upon;	Synecdoche[87]
	wherefore ***all things*** must have vanished away.	Ballast Line, includes the inclusio, *all things*

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Notes

1. As B. H. Roberts explained this understanding,

   > Eve was already "in the transgression" [1 Tim. 2:14] and stood in the shadow of the penalty of the law—banishment from Eden . . . death! Under these circumstances what shall Adam do? Conjointly they had received this mission to "replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28). . . . Not deceived, but with eyes open and knowing all the consequences, he ate the forbidden fruit offered by a loving hand.

   B. H. Roberts, *The Truth, The Way, The Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology* (San Francisco: Smith Research Associates, 1994), 395–96.

2. For an interesting summary of the sometimes-controversial interpretive history of 2 Nephi 2:22–23, see T. Benjamin Spackman, "(NO) Death Before the Fall?: The Basis and Twentieth Century Interpretation," in *The Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ and Evolution*, ed. Jamie L. Jensen et. al (Provo, UT: College of Life Sciences, Brigham Young University [BYU], 2025), 81–115, lifesciences.byu.edu/the-restored-gospel-of-jesus-christ-and-evolution.

3. Joseph Fielding Smith, "Faith Leads to a Fullness of Truth and Righteousness," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 21 (October 1930), 148–49, familysearch.org/library/books/viewer/284228/?page=8. This speech was presented on 5 April 1930.

4. To make sense of the paradox of conflicting commandments, Latter-day Saint leaders and commentators have offered a variety of suggestions. Perhaps the most common is that the two commandments represented greater and lesser commandments, that "the act that produced the Fall was not a sin—inherently wrong—but a transgression—wrong because it was formally prohibited."

Dallin H. Oaks, "The Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign* (November 1993), churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1993/10/the-great-plan-of-happiness. Others reclassify the two commandments as a choice, each offering a different outcome for Adam and Eve. See Roger R. Keller, "Teaching the Fall and the Atonement: A Comparative Method," *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* 5, no. 2 (2004): 103–4, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/re/vol5/iss2/10. Proponents of this view propose that Adam and Eve were not deceived but, rather, acted with an understanding of the importance of the choice that they made in God's overall plan for mankind. See, for example, Beverly Campbell, *Eve and the Choice Made in Eden* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 70–75. Another author has noted that the language about the "two mutually exclusive commandments" is "figurative" and not to be taken literally, that this story has more to do with "us and our personal fall" than it does with Adam and Eve and their fall. Alonzo L. Gaskill, *The Truth About Eden: Understanding the Fall and our Temple Experience* (Springville, UT: CFI, 2013), 24, 28, 29. A recent variation of this idea presents the two commandments as a *paradoxical injunction*. This provided a means by which God could place Adam and Eve in "an influence-free decision-making environment with the implied message of 'make a decision!' without having to 'introduce evil' or 'make an argument in one direction over another.'" Jared Balmer, "Why God Placed Adam and Eve Under Paradoxical Injunctions: A View of the Garden Scene through the Optics of Communication Theory," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 66 (2025): 239–46, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/why-would-god-place-adam-and-eve-under-paradoxical-injunctions-a-view-of-the-garden-scene-through-the-optics-of-communication-theory.

5. Jack R. Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 4; and Noel B. Reynolds, "Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts: Second Nephi as a Case Study," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship 41* (2020): 197, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/chiastic-structuring-of-large-texts-second-nephi-as-a-case-study.

6. Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 73–74.

7. The fact that Lehi alludes to these narratives throughout his teachings, using vocabulary from and paraphrases of various passages in them, yet seldom cites a source, indicates that his sons are familiar with the narratives. In commenting on Genesis 1, Gary Rendsburg noted that "These texts were the national literature of the people of ancient Israel." Based on his experience primarily oral cultures, he assumed "that the people of ancient Israel had an uncanny appreciation for belles letres." He noted that "For the ancients . . . reading was an aural experience: one *heard* the text before it was processed by the brain." He noted that the Hebrew verb that means *call aloud* also means *read*. See Gary A. Rendsberg, *How the Bible is Written* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2019), 26–29. If Rendsberg is correct, then Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi would have likely been familiar with the Hebrew version of these Creation and garden narratives before they left Jerusalem and before acquiring the brass plates.

8. Multiple authors have suggested that the biblical Creation and Garden of Eden

narratives were used in teachings presented in Solomon's temple. See, for example, Hugh W. Nibley, "The Circle and the Square," in *Temple and Cosmos, Beyond This Ignorant Present*," ed. Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Foundation for Apologetic Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1992), 149; Stephen D. Ricks, "Liturgy and Cosmogony: The Ritual Use of Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 120–22; LeGrand L. Baker and Stephen D. Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the LORD? The Psalms in Israel's Temple Worship in the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2011), 13–14, 229–33; and David Calabro, "Ancient Israelite Temple Ritual Through the Telescope of Restoration Scripture," in *The Temple: Plates, Patterns, and Patriarchs*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2024), 367.

9. While Mosiah 1:3–4 might suggest that the texts on the brass plates were recorded using the Egyptian language exclusively, Brian Stubbs raised the possibility that some Hebrew texts were included on those plates. See Brian D. Stubbs, "Book of Mormon Language," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, (New York: Macmillan, 1992): 1:180, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/EoM/id/5542.

10. Noel B. Reynolds, "A Backstory for the Brass Plates," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 53 (2022): 208–10, 212–13, 230, 235–36, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/a-backstory-for-the-brass-plates.

11. The recognition that dozens of passages in the Book of Mormon and the Book of Moses share language that is not found in the Bible raises the possibility that this language was on the brass plates. Noel B. Reynolds, "The Brass Plates Version of Genesis," *Interpreter: A Latter-day Saint Journal of Faith and Scholarship* 34 (2020): 63–96, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/the-brass-plates-version-of-genesis; 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; and Jeffrey D. 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.

12. An example of Lehi's use of content from the brass plates and from his early revelations may be found in his brief discussion of the devil's fall from heaven (2 Nephi 2:17–18). Except for his general reference to "the words of the prophet" at the very end of this sermon (2 Nephi 2:30), the only time that Lehi cites a source is for these teachings about the devil's fall. Lehi refers to it as "things which I have read" and "that which is written." Apparently only Lehi had read it. His need to cite this source may suggest that, as with Genesis, the Hebrew

garden narrative with which his sons are familiar does not include this text. Lehi could be referring to the brass plates or to the book he has been given to read in his second vision (1 Nephi 1:11), or he may be referring to both. His discussion about the devil's fall contains an exact quote of phrases found in Moses 4:4, *the father of all lies*, and Revelation 20:2, *that old serpent which is the devil* (compare with Revelation 12:9). Both quotes are associated with accounts of Satan's fall. While neither Lehi nor Nephi describe having seen the devil's fall in the vision they shared (1 Nephi 10:17; 11:1, 6; 14:29), Nephi prophetically links that vision to the one that John will later receive (1 Nephi 14:24, 27). Nephi also notes that his account of the vision that he shared with his father does not describe all that he and Lehi have seen (1 Nephi 14:28–30).

13. Reynolds, "Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts," 197, emphasis added.

14. See Lundbom's discussion of this in Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 74.

15. Unless stated otherwise, all Book of Mormon citations are from Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022).

16. For simplicity, this paper refers to structures that exhibit the repetition of a series of words, phrases, and/or ideas in reverse order as *chiasmus* without an effort to differentiate between *chiasmus* (repetition of ideas) and *antimetabole* (repetition of words and phrases) or between a *chiasm* (two central elements) and a *concentric structure* (one central element). For a good discussion of the technical differences, see Stephen Kent Ehat, "Centered on Christ: The Book of Enos Possibly Structured Chiastically," *Interpreter: Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 58 (2023): 247–56, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/centered-on-christ-the-book-of-enos-possibly-structured-chiastically.

17. See 1 Nephi 8:28, 10:6; 2 Nephi 2:21–22, 25:17; Mosiah 16:4; Alma 9:30–32, 12:22, 34:9, 42:6. In his groundbreaking study on the presence of word pairs in the Book of Mormon, Barney showed that in the Bible, recurring word pairs could show up in chiasms where they were paired in parallel lines of the chiasm. See Kevin L. Barney, "Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4, no. 2 (1995): 24, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol4/iss2/2. In that study, Barney identified within the Book of Mormon 40 word-pairs that also show up in the Bible. Barney, "Poetic Diction," 25, 80–81. James Duke was the first to identify the words *lost* and *fallen* as a word pair in the Book of Mormon. He noted eight occurrences of this word pair. See James T. Duke, "Word Pairs and Distinctive Combinations in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no.2 (2003): 38, chart 1, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol12/iss2/5. Lehi's pairing of *lost* and *fallen* in parallel lines from adjacent chiasms would constitute a ninth occurrence of this word pair in the Book of Mormon.

18. Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 32, emphasis added.

19. David Calabro noted that the phrase "the way of" in Genesis 3:24, from the Hebrew word *derek̲*, may also be translated as *the path leading to* or *the way to*, as it is in Genesis 16:7. David M. Calabro, "Lehi's Dream and the Garden of Eden," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 26 (2017): 275, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/lehis-dream-and-the-garden-of-eden.

20. In the Hebrew version of Genesis, when the noun *ʾāḏām* is used without the definite article *ha*, it may refer to humanity in general or it may be used as a name for a specific individual. In Genesis, *ʾāḏām* is only used like the proper name Adam in Genesis 5:1, 3–5. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 59–62.

21. Blue Letter Bible, s.v. "Men" and "H120," blueletterbible.org//search/search.cfm?Criteria=Men+H120&t=KJV#s=s_primary_0_1. Note that, in the Pentateuch, the noun *ʾāḏām* (H120 אדם) is translated as *men* in Genesis 6:1, 2, 4; 11:5; Leviticus 27:29; Numbers 5:6, 12:3, 16:29 (twice), 16:32, 18:15, 31:11. It is translated as *men* in 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, multiple times in Psalms, Isaiah, Jerimiah, Ezekial, and in the minor prophets.

22. Benjamin does the same thing with the phrase "the transgression of Adam." In Mosiah 3:11, the phrase "those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam" is used as a parallel to the phrase "as in Adam or by nature they fall" in Mosiah 3:16. The inverted order of the words *fallen/fall* and *Adam* in these two phrases reflects that fact that together, Mosiah 3:11, 16 form a small chiasm, even as these two verses serve as the P and P' sections of a larger P Q R Q' P' chiasm in Mosiah 3:11–16. Thus, it appears that Benjamin uses "the transgression of Adam" as a metaphor for our "human nature." John W. Welch, "Parallelism and Chiasmus in Benjamin's Speech," in *King Benjamin's Speech: That Ye May Learn Wisdom*, ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 348–49. See also Moses 6:55.

23. In the KJV, the phrase translated here as "to till the *earth*" is translated as "to till the *ground*" (Genesis 3:23). The words *earth* and *ground* are both acceptable translations of the Hebrew word *ʾăḏāmâ*. See Blue Letter Bible, s.v. "H127—ʾăḏāmâ—Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (kjv)," blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h127/kjv/wlc/0-1/. This translation choice supports the hypotheses that Lehi used a Hebrew text to structure these teachings and that the Egyptian characters that Nephi used to record Lehi's sermon on the small plates were used to record the Hebrew words that Lehi spoke rather than an Egyptian translation of those words. See Stubbs, "Book of Mormon Language," *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:179. It is also an indication that Joseph Smith was not just copying from the KJV Bible.

24. Some may question the idea that this choice was mutually exclusive based on details contained in the account of Lehi's tree of life dream. In the narrative of that dream, some who had partaken of the fruit from the tree of life later "fell away into forbidden paths and were lost" (1 Nephi 8:26–28). They effectively made the other choice after having partaken of the fruit from the tree of life. But this apparent contradiction between Lehi's dream and how Lehi read the Creation narratives does not necessarily present a problem. There are enough similarities between the garden narrative in Genesis and the narrative of Lehi's dream to understand that they are connected. See Corbin T. Vollus, "Lehi's Dream of the Tree of Life: Springboard to Prophecy," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 2 (1993): 34–37, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/jbms/vol2/iss2/3; and Calabro, "Lehi's Dream," 269, 287. While Calabro proposed that Lehi had access to a "variant account" of the garden narrative to explain the differences (Calabro, "Lehi's Dream," 295–96), an alternative explanation

could be that the dream narrative serves to illustrate how the story of Adam and Eve represents our story. Differences in the dream narrative, such as the larger scale for the setting (1 Nephi 8:8–10, 20), may just reflect the fact that the garden story is a simplified narrative that was intended to be acted out in temple ritual. Thus, it does not allow for the portrayal of all alternatives and outcomes. Choosing "one [fruit] or the other" is one act of obedience or disobedience, depending upon the choice. All have many choices between right and wrong, all commit many sins, and all do many good deeds. While a choice between two trees serves as a good, simple illustration of the doctrine of the two ways in a temple setting, that choice must represent more choices for mortal partakers. The same may be said about the consequences of those choices. While in the narrative of Lehi's dream, there is one path to the tree of life (1 Nephi 8:20), there isn't a need for a forbidden fruit because there are many "forbidden paths" that may be taken (1 Nephi 8:27–28). There is not a need for a serpent because temptations come from multiple sources (1 Nephi 8:23, 26–28). The significance of these differences, however, diminishes when considering the figurative nature of these teachings.

25. Trent D. Stephens, D. Jeffrey Meldrum, with Forrest B. Peterson, *Evolution and Mormonism: A Quest for Understanding* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 135, 181–85.

26. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses* (Salt Lake City: Eborn, 2010), 64. Bradshaw cites Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 209.

27. Roberts suggested that at the time of their transgression, Adam and Eve did not yet "know the way to the tree of life." Roberts, *The Truth, The Way, The Life,* 388. Ginzberg noted the ancient legend that, "In Paradise stand the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, the latter forming a hedge about the former. Only he who has cleared a path for himself through the tree of knowledge can come close to the tree of life." Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews: All Four Volumes—Complete,* trans. Henrietta Szold (n.p.: Adansonia Press, 2018), 35. See also, Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, 77. In this sense, the tree of knowledge may have served as a veil to prevent access to the tree of life. This may explain why Adam and Eve were not also prohibited from eating its fruit while they were in their state of innocence. They may not have had access to it.

28. See note 19.

29. Donald W. Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary," *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 126–27; Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2004), 4; and John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsityPress, 2009), 104, 117. Alma understood that in the garden, Adam and Eve enjoyed the Lord's presence in both a temporal and a spiritual sense (Alma 12:31; 42:7).

30. The tenth Article of Faith notes that "the earth will be renewed and *receive* its paradisiacal glory" not "*return to* its paradisiacal glory." *History of the Church,* 4:535–41.

31. In the LDS edition of the KJV, there is a note in Genesis 2:15 indicating that "to dress it" is translated from the Hebrew meaning "to till it."

32. Both Joseph Fielding Smith and Bruce R. McConkie advocated for this reading. Smith, "Faith Leads to a Fullness of Truth and Righteousness," 148–49 and Bruce R. McConkie, "Christ and the Creation," *Ensign* (September 1983): 9–15, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/1983/09/christ-and-the-creation.

33. See appendix B for a discussion of the parallels in each of the five lines and of how the content of each panel aligns with the content of one of the two creation narratives in Genesis (Genesis 1:1–2:4a; 2:4b–25).

34. See appendix D.

35. This might be called the natural state because Lehi would have had no understanding of the natural/supernatural dichotomy. Walton noted that, "there is no concept of a 'natural' world in ancient Near Eastern thinking. . . . The Israelites, along with everyone else in the ancient world, believed instead that every event was the act of deity. . . . No 'natural' laws governed the cosmos." Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 20. Thus, while Lehi adequately described the natural world in 2 Nephi 2:11–13, he did not call it that. Later discussions about the "*natural* man" by Benjamin (Mosiah 3:19), or mankind's being "carnal, sensual, and devilish *by nature*" by Alma (Alma 42:10, compare with Moses 6:49), serve as functional equivalent translations of what was recorded on the plates. The Lord told Joseph Smith that he spoke unto him "that you may *naturally* understand," even while noting that "all things unto me are *spiritual*" (Doctrine and Covenants 29:33–34).

36. With only one exception, after the completion of each stage of the Creation, as described in Genesis 1 and Moses 2, the reader is told that "God saw" that the work that was accomplished was "good." (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25; Moses 2:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). The one exception was the creation of the firmament on day 2.

37. The ancient Hebrew understanding was not about describing the origin of the materials from which all things are made. As John Walton described it, "To distinguish something from other things is to create it; to name something is to create it." See Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, 33.

38. Robert J. Matthews, "Fall of Adam." *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:485.

39. Reading Mosiah 3:16 and 19 together might suggest that Benjamin views Adam as a natural man already, before he ate the forbidden fruit. Indeed, Benjamin also understands the metaphor of *creation from dust* (Genesis 2:7) to imply mortality (Mosiah 2:25–26).

40. Robert Alter, *Genesis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 8n16–17.

41. Other biblical passages that use this wording ("thou shalt surely die" in the KJV) to issue a death sentence include Genesis 20:7; 1 Samuel 14:44; 1 Kings 2:37, 42.

42. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, 145.

43. In the KJV Bible, in twenty-one of the twenty-three times that the phrase "children of men" is used, the Hebrew noun translated as "men" is *ʾāḏām*. Blue

Letter Bible, s.v. "Children of Men," blueletterbible.org/search/search.cfm?Criteria=Children+of+Men&t=KJV&ss=1#s=s_primary_0_1.

44. Walton provides a good discussion of the full range of meaning for, and the complex use of the Hebrew noun *'adam* in the early chapters of Genesis. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, 59–62.

45. See Skousen's discussion of this proposal in Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU Studies, 2004), 1:506–7, interpreterfoundation.org/atv-p1. This remained unchanged in the second edition.

46. In B. H. Roberts's quote of 2 Nephi 2:22–24, the names *Adam* and *Eve* were placed in brackets after the first use of *they* in verse 23. Roberts, *The Truth, The Way, The Life,* 388. When Bruce R. McConkie cited 2 Nephi 2:23, he put "our first parents" in brackets after the first use of the word *they.* McConkie, "Christ and the Creation," 9–15.

47. The Hebrew conjunction *waw* may be translated as *and* or *but*. These alternatives are used interchangeably in the Book of Mormon. See David E. Bokovoy and John A. Tvetnes, *Testaments: Links Between the Book of Mormon and the Hebrew Bible* (Tooele, UT: Heritage Distribution, 2003), 221–22.

48. As previously noted, King Benjamin may have understood that Adam was a natural man *when* he transgressed (compare Mosiah 3:16, 19), and Moses 3:8–9 shows that the trees were growing naturally in the garden.

49. While it is not certain if or how Lehi used the definite article *ha*, his use of the noun *'āḏām* with all the meanings associated with it in Genesis 1–5 is another indication that he is likely using a Hebrew text to structure these teachings.

50. In Moses 6:45 and 48, one sees the same thing—a reference to *death* in general, where the context could limit its use to just mankind, in this case, to "our fathers."

51. *Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Fall of Adam and Eve" (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 670, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bd/fall-of-adam-and-eve. As previously noted, King Benjamin understands the metaphor of *creation from dust* (Genesis 2:7) to imply mortality (Mosiah 2:25–26). Thus, he may have disagreed with this use of the word *mortality*.

52. Jeffrey Bradshaw recognized that "eating of either tree in an unprepared state may bring dire consequences." Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, 67.

53. James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1899), 67–68, archive.org/details/articlesfaithas00talmgoog/page/68/mode/2up.

54. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, 140.

55. The Garden of Eden was a stage for learning. Opposition was present, represented by the two trees. The trees were all bearing fruit as Adam and Eve were told they could eat from all of them except the tree of knowledge. Thus, there was procreation in the garden. The presence of both the Lord and Lucifer

means that good and evil were represented there as well. Death must also have been represented, else what would the warning that "thou shalt surely die" have meant to Adam and Eve?

56. Daniel Ludlow noted the following:

> The scriptures do not say Adam and Eve *could not* have children; they say Adam and Eve *would not* have had children if they had remained in a state of innocence, not knowing good from evil. . . . This scripture seems to indicate that Adam and Eve were physically capable of having children in the Garden of Eden (thus they could have had children), but so long as they remained in their state of innocence, they never would have had children.

Daniel H. Ludlow, "Q & A," *New Era*, September 1973, 13–14, churchofjesus-christ.org/study/new-era/1973/09/q-and-a-questions-and-answers/why-did-the-lord-command-adam-and-eve-to-multiply-in-the-garden-of-eden-when-they-could-not-have-children-before-the-fall.

57. This illustrates a significant difference between Lehi's dream and the two garden scenarios he presents to his sons. In the dream, those who partake of the fruit from the tree of life do so only after having pressed forward on the path all the way to its end. They can do this because they held fast to the rod of iron through the mists of darkness (1 Nephi 8:21–24). On the other hand, in both of Lehi's garden scenarios, Adam and Eve partake of the fruit while in a state of innocence. They have not even entered the path that leads to eternal life. While Adam and Eve are given a second chance after choosing the forbidden fruit, it appears that the consequences for eating the fruit from the tree of life while in an unprepared or an unworthy state would have been irreversible. That would explain the perpetuation of their state of innocence in the hypothetical garden scenario, and it would also explain why cherubim with a flaming sword were placed at the garden's entrance to prevent Adam and Eve from partaking *also* of the tree of life, after they had partaken of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:22; Alma 42:3–5).

58. This statement is like something revealed to Enoch: "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 something like this passage were on the brass plates, then it may have served as Lehi's source for this teaching. Alma's teachings in Alma 12:23–24 may also have been influenced by this same passage, Moses 6:45, 48 (see note 50). Jeff Lindsay has persuasively linked other teachings in Alma 12 to teachings in the Book of Moses. Lindsay, "Further Evidence," 420–24.

59. Moses 5:10–11 reads that Adam and Eve rejoice greatly after learning about the plan of redemption. Using different words, they rejoice about the same things in the same order, except that Eve adds something to the top of the list that Adam does not mention. There are nuances in the words that they use that make sense in a context where Adam rejoices in the realization that he may yet enjoy certain blessings that he thinks he is giving up by choosing to remain with Eve, whereas Eve wants to emphasize the fact that he would not have enjoyed those blessings with her by his side, had he remained in the garden. Thus, Adam notes that "because of *my* transgression *my* eyes are opened, and in this life *I* shall have joy" and "in the flesh *I* shall see God," whereas Eve

uses plural pronouns, noting that "were it not for *our* transgression *we* never should have had seed [children], and [*we*] never should have known good and evil and the joy or *our* redemption." By focusing on blessings that he thought he had lost, Adam overlooked the blessing that he gained by following Eve, the blessing of having children with her. Considering this current understanding of Lehi's teachings, one no longer needs to read Moses 5:10–11 as teaching that none of these blessings would have been available to Adam and Eve had they remained in the garden. They could have become available, and there is support for this in contemporary temple teachings.

60. According to the Book of Moses, when God confronted Eve with the question, "What is this thing which thou hast done?" (Moses 4:19), the allegation from Adam was that she had given him the forbidden fruit. Adam did not mention that she also had partaken of that fruit. He left it to Eve to make that confession, but in his own confession, Adam had offered Eve's defense for persuading him to do what she had done: "The woman thou gavest me, *and commandest that she should remain with me*, she gave me of the fruit of the tree and I did eat" (Moses 4:15–18). For that defense to be understood, when Eve was confronted by God, she needed only to offer the confession that she, too, had partaken of the forbidden fruit. She did not need to address the allegation at hand because God would understand why she gave the fruit to Adam. The Lord himself implicates Eve in Adam's transgression when he turns to Adam and says: "*Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife*, and hast eaten of the fruit of the tree . . . cursed shall be the ground for thy sake" (Moses 4:23). This is the basis for understanding Eve's reference to "our transgression" as a reference to her role in Adam's transgression.

61. See appendix B.

62. Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Salem, OR: Salt Press, 2012), 42, 46–49. Spencer notes that Barker's work on temple theology, presented using the pattern of Creation, broken Covenant, Atonement, and divine wisdom, "expresses both the spirit and the letter of Nephi's pattern," which Spencer describes as Creation, Fall, Atonement, and veil. Barker, *Temple Theology,* 13, 33, 53, 75; and Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 49. Later, Spencer notes that Nephi equated current temple experience at the veil with redemption. Spencer, *An Other Testament,* 57.

63. One parallel between Creation and redemption is the fact that both lead to a new stage of life for man—temporal life followed by eternal life or eternal death. The Fall and the Atonement represent an antithetical parallel.

64. The Atonement of Christ provides universal redemption from the consequences of Adam's Fall that, for no fault of one's own, affect all mankind. Lehi notes that it is because of the Atonement that all begin this life in a state of innocence and that all can exercise their agency to make choices. In addition, regardless of the choices one makes, all will be resurrected to stand in God's presence for judgment, because of the Atonement (2 Nephi 2:26–27; Moses 6:54).

65. The Atonement of Christ also provides the means and the way by which all may be redeemed from their own sins and thus ultimately receive the gift of eternal life in God's presence (2 Nephi 2:28; Moses 6:55–57). However, in Lehi's presentation of the two ways, not all who meet the Lord at the veil (2 Nephi 2:10)

will be redeemed and thus allowed to enter into his presence for eternity. In 2 Nephi 2:29, Lehi also describes the devil's modus operandi or the way by which *he* may bring the wicked into captivity and, ultiamtely, "eternal death" (2 Nephi 2:27, 29).

66. The content of the first and second panels of this passage corresponds directly with the content of the first and second creation accounts in Genesis 1:1–2:4a and Genesis 2:4b–25, respectively.

67. The A lines in these two panels refer to the creator. Lehi uses the two names or titles for the creator, *God* and *Lord God*, in a manner consistent with their use in the first three chapters of Genesis. Genesis 1 refers to the creator as God (Elohim), whereas the narrative in chapters 2 and 3 refers to him as the LORD God (*Yahweh Elohim*). The first panel of these teachings from Lehi refers to the creator as God. The second panel refers to him by using the possessive pronoun "his." This passage leads to Lehi's discussion of the two trees introduced in the second creation account, and this discussion refers to the creator as the Lord God (2 Nephi 2:16).

68. The B lines reflect the scope of the two creation accounts in Genesis. The scope of the first account is more universal and could be said to relate to the creation of "all things." Indeed, the phrase "the heaven(s) and the earth" is a merism that represents everything that was created. The second account in Genesis begins with the creation of the man and culminates with the creation of the woman. Thus, it is appropriate to say that the scope of this account relates to the creation of "our first parents."

69. The C lines contain phrases specific to the two biblical accounts; "the heaven(s) and the earth" from the first (Genesis 1:1, 2:4a) and "the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air" from the second (Genesis 2:19). These phrases complement each other not only because they both use the Hebrew noun *šāmayim* (*heavens* and *air* both translate this noun), but because "the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air" represent all creatures that occupy "the heavens and the earth" that are described in the first creation account (see Genesis 1: 8, 10, 20, 24, 25).

70. Each panel ends with the theme of opposition using phrases that bracket Lehi's preceding discussion about "opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11–13), albeit in reverse order. See note 87.

71. Lehi's need to cite this source may suggest that, like Genesis, the Hebrew narrative with which Lehi's sons were familiar did not include this narrative of the fallen angel.

72. Lehi's use of a literary structure with three parallel panels, where the latter two are offset one line from the previous panel and add a new line at the end, creates the impression of a staircase and thus simulates a descent. This may have served to illustrate how an angel would fall from God's presence in heaven and end up on earth. Lehi's use of three panels could equate with the three tiers of sacred space represented in the temple by the most sacred Holy of Holies, the sacred Holy Place, and the profane outer court. As the High Priest left the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he would descend into the Holy Place and then descend again to enter the outer court.

2 Chronicles 3:4 explains that the porch in front of the holy place was elevated from the courtyard, and an elevated floor for the Holy of Holies would explain the observation that its height was ten cubits less than that given for the whole temple edifice (1 Kings 6:2, 16–20). Indeed, a precipitous descent, such as being "driven" from the garden (Genesis 3:24; 2 Nephi 2:19) or temple (in heaven or on earth), could be viewed as a fall.

73. Calabro shows why Lehi's identification of the angel who became "a devil" as "that old serpent," and Jacob's description of "that angel who fell . . . and became the devil" as an "awful monster," one who "transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light" (2 Nephi 9:8–10, 19, 26), fit quite well into an ancient Near Eastern context. Calabro, "Ancient Israelite Temple Ritual," 354–55.

74. In Lehi's paraphrase of Genesis 3:5, he reads that verse to say "ye shall be as God" rather than "ye shall be as gods," as in the KJV (Genesis 3:5) and in the Book of Moses (Moses 4:11). Noting that "In Hebrew it is possible to translate the word ordinarily translated as 'God' as 'gods,'" Avram Shannon made this observation: "This has implications for the underlying language of the Book of Mormon. This translation choice derives from the Hebrew text, which suggests that both Lehi and Alma had access to and could understand something like the Hebrew text." Avram R. Shannon, "The Documentary Hypothesis and the Book of Mormon," in *They Shall Grow Together: The Bible in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Charles Swift and Nicholas J. Frederick (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 2022), 265–66, 274n51, rsc.byu.edu/they-shall-grow-together/documentary-hypothesis-book-mormon.

75. The first four lines identify the path to follow when one is heeding the promptings of the Holy Spirit and "act" to choose eternal life. Lehi illustrates this path by walking his audience back through the previous four sections of this sermon, using keywords or ideas from these sections in reverse order. Interestingly, these keywords and ideas equate with each part of the journey that Nephi later outlines for his audience as they enter the path that leads to eternal life and press forward to its end: faith in Christ (the great Mediator), obedience to the *commandments* to repent and be baptized, and to feast on the words of Christ while pressing forward to the end of the path—which is eternal life (2 Nephi 31:17–21, 33:4). The reference to "his words" in the third line represents the antithesis of the words that the devil used to tempt Eve in the second section of this sermon, 2 Nephi 2:18. Those words led to the Fall.

76. If Nephi's doctrine of Christ may be called "the way of eternal life," then these teachings in verse 29 may be called "the way of everlasting death" (2 Nephi 10:23). All the details of the devil's "way," as described in Moses 4:4, are found in the account of Nephi's vision or in allusions to it in the discussions that Nephi has with his brothers. See 1 Nephi 13:4–9, 26–28; 14:3–4, 9–10, 17; 15:24; 16:38.

77. There is remarkable consistency in the details of the devil's modus operandi in the garden narrative from the Book of Moses in Nephi's vision and in the story of Zeezrom (Alma 12:1–7, 11). In the Book of Moses, Satan works through the serpent to "beguile Eve" (Moses 4:6). In the end, the serpent is the only individual who is cursed (Moses 4:20). In Alma, the adversary works through Zeezrom to get the people of Ammonihah to cast out and even try to destroy Alma and Amulek (Alma 12:1, 4). As Alma notes, these people ultimately will suffer the

same fate (Alma 12:6, 11). In Nephi's vision, the devil uses those who belong to the church of the devil to persecute the early Christians, using the same method. Eventually, those people are subjected to the same thing (1 Nephi 14:3, 4). In all these teachings, the devil conducts his evil works by using agents to inflict pain and suffering on others; however, in time, he subjects these agents to the same fate.

78. Lehi uses the expression *w't(h),* "and now," to introduce each of the blessings given to his sons and to Zoram, and Nephi uses it to introduce his narration of the blessings that Lehi gives to the children of his rebellious brothers. The use of this verbal or transitional marker is an indication that Lehi and Nephi were trained as scribes. See William M. Schniedewind, "Adaptation in Scribal Curriculum: Examples from the Letter Writing Genre," in *The Scribe in the Biblical World: A Bridge Between Scripts, Languages and Cultures*, ed. Esther Eshel and Michael Langlois (Boston: De Gruyter, 2023), 220; and Brant A. Gardner, *Engraven Upon Plates, Printed Upon Paper: Textual and Narrative Structures in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2023), 91–92.

79. While Nephi does not include his blessing in this narrative of the blessings that Lehi gives to his sons and their families, the blessing to Zoram indicates that Nephi has also received a blessing from Lehi. Grant Hardy offers a reasonable proposal for why Nephi's blessing isn't included. See Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 50–52.

80. The phrases "And now my sons I speak unto you" and "I have spoken . . . unto you all my sons" may serve as the inclusio for Lehi's teachings to all his sons at the center of this chiasm (2 Nephi 2:14, 30).

81. By grouping the blessings given to the children of Lehi's rebellious sons together in his narration (section A'), Nephi was able to preserve the parallel with section A in the overall chiastic structure of this passage.

82. In 2 Nephi 5:6, Zoram is listed before Sam in the list of those who followed Nephi into the wilderness. Zoram was older than Sam and likely was blessed and listed before him for that reason.

83. One of the keyword phrases shared in 1 Nephi 10:17–19 and 2 Nephi 2:4 is one found only in the New Testament. The phrase "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" is found in Hebrews 13:8. However, this may just be the New Testament way of teaching an idea that is found in the Old Testament: "But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end" (Psalm 102:27). Its use by both Lehi and Nephi and its similarity to Psalm 102:27 would argue that it serves as a functional equivalent for what was recorded on the plates.

84. The keyword repetitions are in bold italics and phrases that are also found in the New Testament are underlined. The keyword repetitions reveal that these teachings were presented in two panels, each with similar framing. The phrases *that they know* or *that they may know* are used at the beginning, and the phrases *ends of the law* or *ends of the atonement* are used at the end. The intervening material reveals other parallels.

85. The symmetry or balance between the two panels is disrupted by the inclusion in

verses 8–10 of a cluster of phrases that are found in the KJV New Testament. Skousen has noted that the Book of Mormon contains other clusters of phrases from all over the Bible. Royal Skousen, "The Language of the Original Text of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2018): 104–5, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol57/iss3/5. In this passage, these phrases address the Resurrection and Judgment and likely serve as functional equivalent translations of what was inscribed on the plates.

86. For the definitions of the terms in this column, see Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 33, 133, 168, 177, 178, 184, 186. While an inclusio usually includes words found only at the beginning and ending of a passage, an additional use of the phrase *all things* is required in the body of this passage to show how *all things* must become *one thing* (*a compound in one*, *one body*, *a thing, this thing*) in a world without opposition.

87. Scholars note that the six days of creation in Genesis 1 may be divided into two parallel triads of events. In Lehi's version of this framework hypothesis, the first triad describes the creation of *things to be acted upon*, and the second describes the creation of *things to act* (2 Nephi 2:14–15). Mankind (*we*) and *the earth* were created on the last day of their respective triad and thus represent all that was created *to act* and *to be acted upon*, respectively. See Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 111–12; C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2006), 73; and Charles E. Hummel, *The Galileo Connection: Resolving Conflicts Between Science and the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 205.

Color in the Book of Mormon

David Grandy

Abstract: *Given that only four colors are mentioned in the Book of Mormon (white, black, red, and gray), readers may ask, "Where are all the other colors?" But this is a distinctively modern question, that is, one keyed to the early modern understanding of color pioneered by Isaac Newton. The Book of Mormon does not embody this understanding. Instead, it reenacts difficulties associated with grasping color meanings intrinsic to the Bible and Homer's* Iliad *and* Odyssey. *These difficulties support the claim that we are reading an ancient record.*

For many readers of the Book of Mormon, few passages are more challenging than Nephi's explanation of why the Lord cursed or marked Lamanites with a black skin: "For behold, they had hardened their hearts against him, that they had become like unto a flint; wherefore, as they were white, and exceedingly fair and delightsome, that they might not be enticing to my people the Lord did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them" (2 Nephi 5:21). This passage, along with others,[1] appears to link white skin with righteousness and black skin with wickedness, though some scholars have argued that the color labels are metaphorical rather than physical.[2]

In this article, I set aside the issue of skin color while taking a

1. 3 Nephi 2:14–16; Jacob 3:8; 2 Nephi 30:6.
2. For an overview of different responses, see Brant A. Gardner, "What Does the Book of Mormon Mean by 'Skin of Blackness?,'" FAIR Latter-day Saints (website),fairlatterdaysaints.org/archive/publications/what-does-the-book-of-mormon-mean-by-skin-of-blackness. Also, Scripture Central Staff, "What Is the 'Skin of Blackness' in the Book of Mormon?," KnowWhy 718, 18 April 2024, scripturecentral.org/knowhy/what-is-the-skin-of-blackness-in-the-book-of-mormon.

wide-angle look at color in the Book of Mormon. We cannot assume, I argue, that we live in the same color experience as the Nephites and Lamanites. This may seem a trite observation, for the color experience of one culture never cleanly translates into another, and when we encounter ancient cultures, the difficulty mounts. But it seems to me that no one to date has seriously tried to think outside the color narrative that shapes modern thought while reading the Book of Mormon. When one does this, it is surprising how well the Book of Mormon aligns with older understandings of color, which indeed may appear as misunderstandings. The first task then is to note the change in perspective that occurred during the early modern period.

Our Modern Color Experience

A familiar aphorism states that you never know where you are until you know where you came from. Without that knowledge, it is reflexive to assume that all people, regardless of time and place, share your categories of understanding. A case in point is color. Thanks mostly to early modern developments in science and culture, our color experience is very different from that of our ancestors long ago. Let me offer a brief genealogy of the modern color experience.

The colors we reflexively impose on nature are mirrored in our historically unprecedented understanding of the rainbow. In 1666, Isaac Newton held a prism up to a shaft of sunlight and saw the light reappear as an array of colors on the wall of his darkened study. He then inverted a second prism, placed it between the first prism and the wall, and merged the colors back into colorless light. Finally, wishing to see if colored light could be broken down further, he let a colored ray of light pass through a prism and noted that it kept its color. These and other observations led Newton to assert that colors are the primary elements of colorless light, or what is sometimes called "white" light.

By assigning primacy to colors, Newton upended the prevailing belief that colors occur when white light is stressed or modified. Put differently, white light is primary or elemental and colors are secondary effects. Today, virtually no one — no scientific authority — endorses this understanding of color.[3] It has been consigned to history's trash bin.

3. The lone exception may be Arthur Zajonc, a physicist with Goethean sympathies. (Goethe's view is discussed below.) See Arthur Zajonc *Catching the Light: The Entwined History of Light and Mind* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), archive.org/details/catchinglightent0000zajo/page/n5/mode/2up.

Largely because of Newton's experiments and his analysis of the prismatic spectrum, we now experience the rainbow differently. Believing that there must be a connection between its colors and the seven tones of the musical scale (C, D, E, F, G, A, B), Newton bequeathed it with seven colors — red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.[4] It is doubtful, however, that anyone sees exactly seven colors while looking at a rainbow.[5] In theory, we see — or at least we look at — an indefinite number of colors, for each tiny gradation of the rainbow vibrates at a different frequency. Historically, however, people perceived fewer than seven colors. That is, they were culturally predisposed to see fewer than seven colors, even though they possessed the biological apparatus to see arbitrarily many. Medieval representations of the rainbow often feature four colors, linking them to the four Aristotelian elements. Isidore of Seville explained that the rainbow gathers red from the sky (where fire, the lightest terrestrial element, naturally exists), white from air, purple from water, and black from earth.[6]

The moral of this strange (to us) medieval color arrangement is that we generally see what we are prepared to see. Reflecting on the change in humankind's color sensibilities during the early modern era, Michel Pastoureau writes, "The [prismatic] spectrum, the color wheel, the notion of primary colors, the law of simultaneous contrasts, the distinction between retinal rods and cones — these are not eternal notions but stages in the ever-changing history of knowledge."[7]

4. Penelope Gouk, "The Harmonic Roots of Newtonian Science," in *Let Newton Be! A New Perspective on His Life and Works,* ed. John Fauvel et al. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1990), 98–125.
5. After commenting on "the strong mystical thread" in Newton's work and his subjective penchant for pairing musical tones with colors, Philip Ball writes, "And so the Newtonian rainbow acquired its indigo and violet where I defy anyone to see other than a blue deepening to purple." *Bright Earth: Art and the Invention of Color* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 25.
6. Isidore of Seville, *On the Nature of Things* (*De Natura Rerum*), trans. Carolyn Embach (Berlin: Weidmann, 1969), 40, researchgate.net/publication/315663902. Isidore adds that "other rainbows" are composed of two colors, blue and rose, the former relating to the destruction of sinners by the flood in the days of Noah and the latter to a future annihilation of sinners by fire (p. 40).
7. Michel Pastoureau, *Blue: The History of a Color*, trans. Markus I. Cruse (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 9. Pastoureau laments that many scholars, when talking about the history of color, fail to distinguish between vision and perception. Vision is "a biological phenomenon" while perception "is a function of culture." Failure to separate the two results in anachronistic outlooks that are "ethnocentric, imprecise, and dangerous," 25.

Further, "Color is first and foremost a social phenomenon. There is no transcultural truth to color perception."[8]

Black and white feature prominently in premodern color typologies, though for some modern purists they are not colors because they do not exist on Newton's color spectrum.[9] Pressing the matter further, however, we note that Newton rejected as "vulgar" the belief that colors are real outside the human mind: "For the Rays [of the prismatic spectrum] to speak properly are not coloured. In them there is nothing else than a certain Power and Disposition to stir up a Sensation of this or that Colour." He compared this disposition to the sound-making potential of "a Bell or musical String," whose "trembling Motion" produces air waves that impinge on the eardrum to trigger acoustical sensations.[10]

This outlook, which is the received view of modern physical science, tracks back to the Greek atomists who evacuated the world of color (and other sensory qualities like sound and taste) in order to explain nature merely as a congeries of interactions among lifeless atoms. Aristotle and others rejected atomism as too spare to account for life's richness,[11] but after Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things* was rediscovered in 1417, atomism became a vanguard of modern thought.[12] The aim was to edit sense experience so that superfluous or subjective details might be distinguished from real features of the world, and color was deemed a superfluous detail. It happened in the brain but not in physical nature. For Newton, atoms (what he called "corpuscles") were real because they were bits of matter obeying his

8. Pastoureau, *Blue*, 7.
9. If the prismatic spectrum (rainbow) is regarded as the cradle of color, neither black nor white qualify as colors. White, however, occurs as prismatic colors combine, and black occurs in the absence of light, or when an object absorbs all light that falls upon it. With pigments (rather than light of different frequencies), different rules apply, which is why printers can produce faux black print from cyan, magenta, and yellow ink cartridges when the black cartridge is depleted. In this article, every hue or shade that one might find in a box of crayons is considered a color.
10. Isaac Newton, *Opticks* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003), 124–25.
11. According to Democritus, atoms are the basic units of being moving in a void—an expanse of nonbeing. Although colorless, invisible (too small to be seen), indivisible, and immutable, they are differently shaped so as to combine or fit together to form the larger objects of everyday experience. Among other things, Aristotle balked at their supposed invulnerability to change and decomposition. His reservations may be found in Book I of his *Physics*.
12. Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011).

laws of motion; their associated colors, however, were merely brain-detonated sensations plastered on a colorless world.

The upshot was a brightly colored world held aloft by the illusion of color. While most people took this explanation in stride, some protested. When Johann Wolfgang von Goethe undertook his study of light, he procured a prism and instinctively looked through it.[13] What he saw contradicted Newton's conclusion regarding the primacy of colors. Like Newton, he saw prismatic colors, but only at the interface of light and darkness. A blank piece of paper, for instance, does not produce colors when viewed through a prism. Its image is simply displaced according to the laws of refraction. Colors, however, show up along its edges when the paper is held against a darker or lighter background. Colors, in other words, flash into existence when light and darkness clash; when an expanse of light is broken by darkness. Accordingly, "colors are the deeds of light; its deeds and sufferings."[14] They are beautiful by-products of the oppositional clash between light and darkness.

Goethe adduced the following rule regarding the production of colors: lighter edges (lighter backgrounds) produce warm colors (yellow, orange, red) while darker edges produce cool colors (green, blue, violet). Then, turning from his indoor study to nature at large, he found macrocosmic affirmation of these inferences. The sun, he noted, burns with a colorless radiance, but we generally see it as yellow owing to the atmosphere in which its light is refracted: atmospheric particles catch the sunlight and darken it to yellow. At dawn and dusk, the effect is even more pronounced when sunlight deepens toward reddish hues as it passes through a lengthening field of atmospheric haze and dust.

The opposite effect is seen at midday. Looking skyward, we see blue, which is the light-moderated darkness of outer space. In this instance, darkness (Goethe saw it as an active force, not the absence of light) travels through the earth's atmosphere, but the atmosphere, not perfectly transparent, resists darkness in the form of light-illuminated particles. These tone down or lighten the blackness of space

13. Some of the following is taken from David Grandy, "Goethe on Light and Color," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 17, no. 1/2 (Fall 2005), 26–44.
14. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Color* (London: John Murray, 1840), gutenberg.org/ebooks/50572, quoted in David Seamon and Arthur Zajonc, *Goethe's Way of Science: A Phenomenology of Nature* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 19.

and give us the blue sky. (One should note here that light cannot be seen until it interacts with material bodies. On the moon, whose atmosphere is very thin, the white sun is surrounded by blackness at midday.)

It is interesting that these overarching color sensations — the blue sky and the yellow sun — originate in the atmosphere, which people once felt demarcated the upper and lower worlds, and which functioned as a site of conflict between the powers of light and darkness. We now live within that conflict, Goethe believed, and the colors of nature express "the deeds and sufferings" of light on our behalf.

Herman Melville's critique of modern color theory is less philosophical though no less forceful. Ishmael, the narrator of Melville's *Moby Dick*, stated that it "was the whiteness of the whale that above all things appalled me."[15] He acknowledged that while white may be beautiful in some settings, when left to itself it can become repulsive and ghastly. And so, throughout the novel, the reader suspects something unnatural about the white whale that Captain Ahab and his crew relentlessly pursue. Ishmael states that the whale is emblematic of "the palsied universe" given us by "natural philosophers" (scientists): "The sweet tinges of sunset skies and woods; yea, and the gilded velvets of butterflies, and the butterfly cheeks of young girls; all these are but subtile deceits, not actually inherent in substances, but only laid on from without; so that all deified Nature absolutely paints like the harlot, whose allurements cover nothing but the charnel-house within . . . of all these things the Albino whale was the symbol," and such motivated the pursuit.[16]

It was a contest between humankind, armed with technology, and nature, seen now as indifferent to humankind's fate by reason of its "palsied," bleached-out state. Ishmael suggests that Moby Dick is proxy for our fear of extinction. The whale's chromatic indefiniteness "shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky way."[17] Whereas the Milky Way had once represented a "Bridge Out of Time" leading to a better world,[18] it now, for Ishmael, suggested oblivion.

15. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1851), 207, archive.org/details/mobydickorwhale01melv/page/n7/mode/2up.
16. Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 216–17.
17. Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 216.
18. Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay on*

All this flowed from the simple decision to subtract from nature its sensory qualities while promoting early modern science's atomistic agenda. Along with color, sound was blinked away as well, and taste, texture, and aroma — qualities of nature that resisted mechanical and mathematical analysis. The inevitable effect was Ishmael's "palsied universe," a far cry from what seems to be the case when nature is taken at face value.

And a bit of a doublethink. In his discussion of science's dismissal of subjective qualities, Alfred North Whitehead wrote that "we forget how strained and paradoxical is the view of nature which modern science imposes on our thoughts."[19] This view teaches us that "[material] bodies are perceived with qualities which in reality do not belong to them, qualities which in fact are purely the offspring of the mind."[20] If this is true, Whitehead continued, "nature gets credit which should in truth be reserved for ourselves; the rose for its scent; the nightingale for his song: and the sun for his radiance. The poets are entirely mistaken. They should address their lyrics to themselves, and should turn them into odes of self-congratulation on the excellency of the human mind. Nature is a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colourless; merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly."[21]

While most people today do not worry about modern science's mechanistic streamlining of nature, they nevertheless live with its consequences. Whitehead insisted that this narrow approach to nature has cleared the field of all its rivals and shadows our religious and philosophical thought. "And yet," he adds, "it is quite unbelievable."[22] Who really believes that the song of the meadowlark is just a succession of soundless air waves impacting the eardrum and activating the experience of music in the brain? Or that colorless daffodils emit colorless sense data that trigger a yellow sensation upon entering the brain?

These are abstract ideas contradicted by ordinary experience. When, however, they are accepted as scientific fact (rather than merely as a consequence of a scientific agenda), they shape our apprehension of the world in new ways by eliminating possibilities of belief that once freely abounded. "There are more things in heaven and earth . . .

Myth and the Frame of Time (Boston: David R. Godine, 1977), 2.

19. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 122, archive.org/details/sciencemodernwor00whit_0/page/n7/mode/2up?q=paradoxical.
20. Whitehead, *Science*, 80.
21. Whitehead, *Science*, 80.
22. Whitehead, *Science*, 80.

than are dreamt of in your philosophy," Hamlet told his friend Horatio.[23] Ironically, early modern science gave us *fewer* things to believe in. The subjective qualities of nature were dismissed, and heaven itself, along with angels, spirits, and other supernatural or paranormal beings, was called into question in a rush to explain the world mechanistically.

Premodern Color Experience

The foregoing is not meant as an attack on Newtonian science or our modern understanding of color. Every culture lives on its own map of reality, a map fitted to its fundamental aims and preconceptions. Because, however, maps are invariably less comprehensive than the territory they purport to represent, things may seem distorted as we move from one map to another. We are, however, more likely to view those distortions charitably if we are aware of the predilections, limitations, and incoherencies of our own map.

A surprising feature of ancient and medieval texts is the relative paucity of references to color and a seeming confusion in the application of colors to things we "know" to be differently colored. "There are but few real color-terms found in Biblical or traditional literature," wrote Emile G. Hirsch and Caspar Levias in 1906.[24] "Only white, and two of the elementary colors, red and green, are distinguished by name; while for blue and yellow distinct terms are entirely wanting." By "elementary," Hirsch and Levias apparently mean the modern colors of the rainbow. They continue, "The other elementary colors are expressed by words denoting degrees of lightness and darkness; while non-elementary colors are indicated by the names of the objects from which they are derived. Moreover, one and the same word is used to denote not only several shades of one color, but even what are now known as different colors."[25]

Hirsch and Levias attribute these disparities to an "undeveloped" color vocabulary. This presupposes that there is but one right way to experience and talk about colors, a view that would find little support today.[26] Nevertheless, it is difficult not to be surprised by the differ-

23. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1.5.187–88. References are to act, scene, and lines.
24. *Jewish Encyclopedia.com*, s.v. "Color," jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4557-color.
25. Hirsch and Levias, *Jewish Encyclopedia.com*, s.v. "Color."
26. Athalya Brenner indicates a late nineteenth-century shift away from such dismissive thinking. She writes,

ences they discuss. Black and white seem to play starring roles in the Biblical imagination and tend to embrace darker and lighter hues that we would associate with colors like purple, brown, yellow, and so on. Moreover, colors were laden with symbolism (as also were numbers in antiquity: think of the Biblical significance of seven or twelve), and so there may be much more to a color than its location on the prismatic spectrum or the frequency at which it vibrates. These are scientific definitions that tend to lift color out of everyday experience, but for people innocent of such thinking and keyed to other criteria, there might be wildly different ways of apprehending the colors of nature. Hirsch and Levias, for instance, state, "The term 'yaraḳ,' originally 'pale,' is used [in the Bible] to describe those uncertain colors which waver between green, yellow, and blue."[27] Our struggle to grasp this migratory color need not imply that it was not a perfectly sensible descriptor to the people who once used it.

Stepping beyond the Bible, we encounter similar color puzzles in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. William Gladstone was probably the first scholar to publicly wonder why Homer unfailingly described the waters of the Mediterranean Sea as "wine-dark" or "wine-looking" rather than blue.[28] Wine is now typically described as dark red, and while there may be occasional instances of watery redness in the sea, these, for us, are exceptions to the rule of blue. Further, we imagine the sea taking its coloring from the blue sky, but Homer never calls the sky

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> The lack of a colour name in a language might imply a lack of discrimination of that (chromatic) color on the part of the speakers of that language. This assumption was held to be valid mainly until 1880. It was widely applied to so-called "primitive" cultures and to literatures of ancient civilizations, where the absence of a single term for our "blue," for instance, is conspicuous; colour names are few (in comparison to modern European languages); and the boundaries between chromatic colours seem to be only vaguely defined, if at all. . . . [Hugo] Magnus showed already in 1880 that colour perception and its verbal identification are not directly connected.

That is, the perception of colors need not necessitate color naming, and the absence of color names need not imply mental or cultural backwardness. Athalya Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* (Sheffield, UK: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press, 1982), 12, scribd.com/document/475527352/COLOUR-TERMS-IN-THE-OLD-TESTAMENT-pdf.

27. Hirsch and Levias, *Jewish Encyclopedia.com*, s.v. "Color."
28. Guy Deutscher, *Through the Language Glass: Why the World Looks Different in Other Languages* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), 33–36, 57. Deutscher, a linguist, rehearses the puzzlements of Gladstone, a nineteenth-century English statesman and classicist.

blue. Evidently thinking of its shining, metallic quality, he calls it copper, bronze, or iron. He also commits such modern howlers as calling sheep violet and honey green.[29]

Believing that anyone with normal vision would speak properly when assigning colors to nature, some scholars speculated that Homer was colorblind.[30] This hypothesis, however, is now widely dismissed. Homer has a fine eye for visual detail; that detail, though, appears to be contextual rather than separately picked out. Colors for him seem to be more intimately associated with other qualities of nature and the moods and feelings that suffuse a particular setting. Being more poetic than scientific, they blur and blend differences rather than isolate and multiply them as distinct, self-standing categories. Accordingly, Homer's color vocabulary, like the Bible's, is small compared to the one we employ.

Early Greeks who reasoned about color and color vision had similarly small vocabularies and seemingly convoluted analysis. Empedocles, the first thinker to posit four fundamental elements, associated white or bright with fire and black or dark with water, feeling that

29. Deutscher, *Through the Language Glass,* 33–34. Here again we need to bear in mind the distinction between biological vision and cultural perception. It is interesting that blue, the most popular color in the modern world according to Pastoreau, was perceived as barbaric, frightening, and evil in many ancient cultures. "Having blue eyes was considered almost a physical deformity, or at the very least a sign of bad character," states Pastoureau in his description of ancient Rome's deep dislike of blue. Such loathing appears to have contributed to a reluctance to pick out blue and link it with a specific word. Pastoureau observes that there "were numerous terms for blue" in ancient Rome and ancient Greece, "but they were all polyvalent, chromatically imprecise and sometimes contradictory." Pastoureau, *Blue*, 26–27. Hence it was seen but not precisely named.

30. We cannot, of course, assume that Homer was eyewitness to the events he narrates in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey.* He lived three or four hundred years after they occurred. Nor is it generally assumed that he wrote those epics as a modern author would. A common theory holds that he was heir to an oral tradition from which he composed the epics with the help of narrative markers whereby they could be remembered, sung, and passed on to future generations. Only much later were they written down.

    A related question pertains to Homer himself. Was he a single individual or proxy for generations of poets who incrementally and collectively composed the epics? We will probably never know for sure, but none of these issues alter the color puzzles I am addressing. If they were puzzles for his ancient listeners, they would have been questioned and corrected long before they reached modern readers. There is no evidence that ancient color schemes, whether Homeric or Biblical, were puzzling to people of their time.

this opposition was sufficient to generate all the intermediate shadings and tints of nature.[31] Plato likewise began with black and white but also included "bright" and red as the basic colors of nature from which all other colors are derived by mixing. By mixing red and white we get orange, he states, and then writes that "red mixed with black and white is of course *purple*."[32] Of course? We generally think of purple as a mixture of red and blue, but blue for Plato is an unnamed color so he finds another route.

Still, the inclusion of black may seem odd, along with bright, both primary colors for Plato. And then we have white, which, like black, might strike a modern thinker as the absence or cancellation of color. Additionally, Plato seems to feel that he is talking beyond his remit, for he insists that god alone can know the proportions for these mixtures, and that if anyone were to put "these matters . . . to an actual test, he would demonstrate his ignorance of the difference between the human and the divine."[33]

Clearly, Plato's color sensibilities are different from our own. Less in awe of color mixtures, Aristotle conjectured that all non-primary colors spring from mixtures of black and white, the most pleasing of which are combined according to simple mathematical ratios like those that govern pleasing musical intervals.[34] In principle, these colors could be produced by a painter.

What about the Book of Mormon?

The foregoing is a brief sampling of premodern color theories in Western and Near Eastern (Biblical) thought. Although incomplete, the sketch suggests a wide disparity between our own color experience and that of ancient people. Some might propose that the ancients were fumbling toward the truth that we now grasp, but I suggest their

31. Katerina Ierodiakonou, "Empedocles on Colour and Colour Vision," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 2005, 1–37, academia.edu/3677794/Empedocles_on_colour_and_colour_vision.
32. *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 1269–70, emphasis in original. Plato's comment about purple parallels a similar comment by Pope Innocent III (AD 1161–1216) regarding green in his revision of liturgical colors: "green is a color halfway between white, black, and red." Quoted in Pastoureau, *Blue*, 40.
33. *Plato: Complete Works*, 1270.
34. Aristotle, *Sense and Sensibilia,* 1.3.1, classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/sense.1.1.html. This is one variation on Aristotle's thesis that all colors originate from black and white, or, variously, dark and light.

experience bubbled up from different premises and preconceptions of nature — this was the point of my earlier discussion about Newton's game-changing prism observations and analysis. Alter a few fundamental understandings and everything falls into place in a radically different way. It is as if Newton and company — Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, among others — turned the kaleidoscope of the Western mind.

According to Guy Deutscher, we see with three eyes: two physical eyes and the eye of the mind.[35] The worldviews we inherit mediate the phenomena of nature differently. Speaking scientifically, there is no physiological difference between modern readers of the Book of Mormon and the Lehites and Jaredites they read about. And because we share the same physiology, there is no difference in the way raw sense data impact our sense organs. There is, however, a vast difference in the way we interpret those data.

We need to remember also that some sense data do change over time: we do not live in the same visual world as our distant ancestors. When my wife Janet and I visited Israel, we were told that the ground that Jesus walked on in Jerusalem was several feet lower than the ground we were walking on. Material debris had slowly accumulated, making it impossible to literally walk where Jesus once walked.[36] Similarly, a kind of visual or imagistic debris separates us from the past. As I look out my window, I see in the distance automobiles traveling along an interstate highway. Who saw that long ago? (On the other hand, how often have I seen mule teams pulling wagons when looking out my window, or a caravan of camel-riding Bedouin?) At night we flip on incandescent or florescent lights to illuminate the darkness, but just two centuries ago people lit kerosene lanterns or gas lamps, which not only illuminated a different world but illuminated it differently.[37]

35. Deutscher, *Through the Looking Glass of Language*, 55.
36. Heinrich Schliemann's discovery of the ancient city of Troy is another case in point. Having inferred the location of the city from Homer's *Iliad*, he misidentified the city in the strata that had accumulated over several millennia of ecological wear and tear. That is, his surface coordinates (latitude and longitude) were correct, but his depth coordinate was erroneous.
37. Even the switch from incandescent to florescent lighting exacts an emotional toll. From the first to the fourth grades, I attended school in older buildings with incandescent lights. Then, in the fifth grade, my classmates and I were transferred to a brand-new building, one with fluorescent lights. I recall not liking them. They were bright but lacked the warm tones of the incandescent lights.

Pastoureau argues that as we try to grasp the past, even scholars forget that the past unfolded in a different visual ambience — one very difficult for us to imagine and reproduce. Speaking of the cave paintings of Lascaux, Altamira, and other European sites, he wonders, "Who is really aware that between these paintings and the present, millions — billions? — of color images from all eras have intervened, images that neither our gaze nor our memory has been spared? These images have the effect of a distorting filter; we have consumed, digested, and recorded them in a kind of collective unconscious. Time has done its work, millennia have passed, art has continually been transformed. That is why we cannot see and will never be able to see as our distant ancestors did. This applies to forms and is even more true of colors."[38]

Despite the difficulty of the quest, or perhaps because of it, Pastoureau has spent nearly fifty years trying to recover lost color narratives. Our own quest begins with a simple observation. Under the title "Colors in the Book of Mormon," Grego, an Internet blogger, writes, "Wow! This hit me today: there are very few colors in the Book of Mormon, especially for descriptional purposes. For those who hold the belief that Joseph Smith, an American, wrote this book of fiction, this is incredible to me."[39] Grego then notes the absence of seven familiar colors: yellow, blue, green, orange, purple, violet, and brown.

While his remark on the paucity of colors is a bit unclear, it appears that Grego wishes to propose that if the Book of Mormon were the product of Joseph Smith's imagination, it would include all or most of the colors familiar to people of his time and place — nineteenth-century America. There is, however, a puzzling absence of seven common colors.

Moreover, the colors mentioned in the Book of Mormon are the colors most likely to be found in ancient texts. White and black are foundational mainstays in such texts, and red is invariably the first color mentioned thereafter.[40] Reaching back to light and darkness,

38. Michel Pastoureau, *Red: The* History *of a Color*, trans. Jody Gladding (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 18.
39. Grego, "Colors in the Book of Mormon," *Book of Mormon Notes—How Deep Can You Dig?* (blog), 3 September 2008, bookofmormonnotes.wordpress.com/tag/book-of-mormon-colors/.
40. Pastoureau writes, "For thousands of years in the West, red was the only color worthy of that name, the only true color. As much on the chronological as hierarchical level, it outstripped all others. Not that they did not exist, but they had to wait a long time before they were considered colors and then played

white and black are primordial features of the cosmos, while red, by scholarly consensus, is striking and memorable because it is the color of blood and fire. White, black, gray (understood as a mixture of white and black in some ancient cultures[41]), and red are the only colors mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Red is mentioned in connection with the Amlicites, who marked themselves with red, presumably a red dye (Alma 3:13, 14). Gray receives one mention: it is the color that Lehi's and Sariah's hair turns as they lament Laman and Lemuel's disobedience (1 Nephi 18:18). It is a bit of an outlier, for gray, in all known cultures, was not picked out and named as a distinct color until well after red, but its single mention in the Book of Mormon by Nephi describes what happens as black hair progressively turns white. Attuned to black and white (the vast majority of color references in the Book of Mormon concern black and white), Nephi presumably could see the black-to-white transition of graying hair, and this transition Joseph Smith, relying on his own color lexicon, described as "gray" while translating the gold plates.

What about scarlet? While beholding the great and abominable church in vision, Nephi states that he "saw gold, and silver, and silks, and scarlets, and fine-twined linen, and all manner of precious clothing; and I saw many harlots" (1 Nephi 13:7). Here "gold" and "silver" refer to precious metals rather than colors, and the term "scarlets" (note the

a comparable role in material culture, social codes, and systems of thought." *Red*, 14. Here Pastoureau glosses over the consciousness-kindling apprehension of white and black, two "colors" so foundational that they were often regarded as categorically different phenomena. He adds, though, that in many ancient languages "only three color terms seem to exist: white, black, and red. But the first two are not always recognized as true chromatic adjectives; essentially, they describe darkness and light," 14.

41. Ingrid Blom-Böer and David A. Warburton, "The Composition of the Colour Palette and the Socio-Economic Role of Pigments Used in Egyptian Painting," in *The Value of Colour: Material and Economic Aspects in the Ancient World*, ed. Shiyanthi Thavapalan and David Alan Warburton (Berlin: Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, 2019), 242, academia.edu/40771331/The_Value_of_Colour_Material_and_Economic_Aspects_in_the_Ancient_World. We pick out gray as a color worthy of its own name. Ancient Egyptians, like other ancient peoples, did not. They saw it, of course, but considered it a variation of black or white, or an interblending of the two, one that did not merit its own name. A parallel instance is the English word *blue*. It covers a range of colors that we feel no need to name other than to add modifiers such as "light," "dark," "navy," and so on. In Russian, by contrast, two *different* colors— ссссс (*siniy* resembling our dark blue) and сссссссс (*goluboy* resembling our light or pale blue)—cover that range.

plural) most plausibly refers to a distinctive kind of clothing once worn by people of high rank. For moderns, scarlet is a shade of red, but, according to John Munro, it was originally (in the European Middle Ages) identified primarily as an expensive woolen textile whose color might correspond to our modern notion of scarlet but might also be "black, purple, violet, murrey (mulberry: purple-red), brown, grey, blue, perse (dark greyish-blue), green — or even white."[42] He writes, "The enigma posed by the sudden eleventh-century appearances of scarlet is equally matched by the mystery of the word's specific meaning. The popular notion of so long ago that the medieval scarlet was necessarily a textile having this unique brilliant red colour was effectively refuted by nineteenth-century historical, literary, and especially philological scholarship."[43]

In brief, medieval scarlet was a textile — one made from finest wool — but it was not matched to a specific color. Nephi's description of the great and abominable church captures this point perfectly. He links "scarlets" with "silks," another expensive cloth of nonspecific color, and then adds, "and all manner of precious clothing." His concern is not with color but with the cost and exclusivity of the textile.

42. John Munro, "The Medieval Scarlet and the Economics of Sartorial Splendor," in *Cloth and Clothing in Medieval Europe: Essays in Memory of Professor E. M. Carus-Wilson*, ed. N. B. Harte and K. G. Ponting (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), 20, archive.org/details/clothclothinginm0000unse/page/n5/mode/2up.

43. Munro, "Medieval Scarlet," 19. John Gage comments that in late antiquity, lawyers "sought to stabilize" the color purple

> by referring not to a chromatic term but to a method of manufacture. . . . It continued to be so in Europe at large until the Renaissance, so that we find many "purples," from white and yellow to blue and black, as well as red and green. . . . The history of the much more recent colour-term "scarlet" suggests a similar progression from material to abstraction. The two colours [purple and scarlet] had a close relationship as dyestuffs in Jewish culture; but the term "scarlet" itself appeared in the German-speaking world in the eleventh century to signify a fine shorn woollen cloth of great value. "Scarlets" of many colours from black and blue to white (undyed) and green are documented in the early literature but since the complement to the most valuable woollen textile of the period was, understandably, the most valuable dye (which in the Middle Ages was the bright red *kermes* or *coccus*), it seems that by the thirteenth century the most usual "scarlet" was that dyed with this colour. Hence came the confusion of the colour with the cloth.

John Gage, *Color and Culture: Practice and Meaning From Antiquity to Abstraction (*Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 80.

We note also that Nephi's description of the great and abominable church aligns with John's description of Babylon in Revelation 17, which Joseph Smith may have reflexively called up while translating the gold plates. Interestingly, though, Nephi's description lacks modern markers included by John, or perhaps by later translators of the Bible. There is no mention of purple, which is often paired with scarlet in the Bible. (Here, again, the question is not when a color is first perceived, but rather when it is *picked out* as a color worthy of its own name. In antiquity both scarlet and purple were "unnamed" colors. They were perceived but subsumed under broader color designations like red and imprecisely, even ambiguously, specified by modifiers.) Moreover, whereas in Revelation the woman representing Babylon is explicitly arrayed in a scarlet-*colored* garment (in the King James version, and implicitly so in other versions), in 1 Nephi "scarlets" more naturally denotes luxurious articles of clothing and the prideful wearing of them. This is a familiar motif in the Book of Mormon — Church members fall into apostasy as they acquire costly apparel and dress more extravagantly than their peers.

Still, skeptics might protest that four colors (with gray being a mix of black and white or, sometimes, a subcategory of one or the other) is too slim a foundation from which to support the antiquity of the Book Mormon. My reply is that a slim foundation is exactly what we should expect from an ancient text. What is more, the colors of the Book of Mormon line up with the color sequence found in the Bible and other ancient records. By "color sequence" I mean the chronological order in which cultures name the colors of the world. Invariably they first key off light and dark, day and night, white and black, and then they appear to be startled by red, owing to the sight of blood and fire, both of which intimate life — blood by the loss of life as blood flows from the body and fire by its bright movement and life-giving warmth. The Book of Mormon follows this sequence.

Citing a watershed study in color naming, Wolfgang Schenkel writes:

> The anthropologists Brent Berlin and Paul Kay established in 1969 that for all the [twenty] languages they studied, the different languages of the world reveal individual, but parallel, historical sequences for the acquisition of colour words, beginning at Stage I with the distinction between black and

> white, and culminating in Stage VII with the multitude of colour terms familiar to *us*.[44]

Schenkel then adds: "Egyptian stands at Stage IIIA, having terms for black and white (Stage I), red (Stage II), and green; it is the green that puts Egyptian at stage IIIA, because it did not add yellow (rather than green) after red (which would have been Stage IIIB)."[45] By this criterion, the Book of Mormon is a Stage II document.

The Book of Mormon does not follow the color sequence as far as the Bible, wherein green comes after red and then yellow. Insofar as it goes, however, it gets things right. Not only that, but its smaller complement of colors makes sense in light of the historical fact that, unlike the Bible, it has not undergone centuries of translation and emendation. After observing that "the Bible is poor, very poor, in color notations," Pastoureau writes that it has "become increasingly colorful over the course of centuries and translations, and all the more so as vernacular languages accentuated this phenomenon in the modern era."[46] At the very least, if any of Grego's unmentioned colors (yellow, blue, green, orange, purple, violet, and brown) were referenced in the Book of Mormon at the expense of white, black, or red, that would indicate a modern provenance. But these three basic colors slip into the Book of Mormon in just the right way and thereby support Joseph Smith's claim that he translated an ancient record.

The Book of Mormon Color Experience

The Book of Mormon message — that Jesus is the Christ and that God has blessed humankind with a plan of lasting happiness — transcends culture. For that reason, one can profitably read the record without grasping the ancient thought world from which it sprang. If, however, we aspire to a deeper understanding of the record, we can try to step into that thought world.

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44. Wolfgang Schenkel, "Colours as Viewed by the Ancient Egyptians and the Explanation of this View as Seen by Academics Studying Colour," in *The Value of Colour*, 42. The watershed study is Brent Berlin and Paul Kay, *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). After studying twenty languages, Berlin and Kay broadened their research to include another seventy-eight languages and claimed to find further evidence of a universal or near-universal uniformity in the emergence of color terms.
45. Schenkel, "Colours as Viewed by the Ancient Egyptians," 42.
46. Pastoureau, *Red*, 50, 58.

With its mention of black, white, and red, the Book of Mormon reenacts a multicultural tricolor motif that some scholars insist arises from our shared (human) biology. The neural processes that govern color vision gift us with a package deal of black, white, and red, and these three colors consequently show up together in many contexts. Jessica Hemming writes, "The red-white-and-black tricolour is a symbolically charged set of colours virtually worldwide, and as such has drawn comment from many disciplines, principally folklore, anthropology, linguistics, comparative religion, psychology, and art history."[47]

In the Book of Mormon, however, red receives scant mention. Although the Book of Mormon fits the Berlin-Kay taxonomy as a Stage II document, it appears to be early Stage II because red is not explicitly combined with black and white. In her *Colour Terms in the Old Testament*, though, Athalya Brenner proposes that a memory of brightness resulting from primordial light-dark contrast is hidden up in all color. After observing that "[b]rightness . . . is the decisive factor for naming the distinction between dark and light, black and white," she writes, "It will be submitted that names for the achromatic 'black/white' originally had, and — to a certain degree — even retained, a basic meaning of 'darkness' /'light'; that the motivation for installing further terms was first brightness and only later chromaticity."[48] This, I suggest, is the thought world of the Book of Mormon: brightness is more elemental than color. Clearly there are resonances here with Lehi's teaching on the existential necessity of primordial opposition and with Goethe's belief that colors arise from the clash of light and darkness.

From a modern perspective, the Book of Mormon thought world is more black-and-white than technicolor. It does not mention most of the colors that populate our experience. But that, I believe, is because we live downstream from the ancient appreciation of light, which the Book of Mormon dramatically instantiates on several occasions. The implicit understanding that motivates the black-white typology of the Book of Mormon is this: colors, no matter how many or how few, exist by the grace of light and are therefore secondary blessings.

It is neither accident nor anomaly that Plato, while offering an account of the creation of the universe, included bright as one of the four basic colors. Bright or brightness is the agency by which we see

47. Jessica Hemming, "Red, White, and Black in Symbolic Thought: The Tricolour Folk Motif, Colour Naming, and Trichromatic Vision," *Folklore* 123 (December 2012): 310.

48. Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament*, 12–13.

the other colors — black, white, and red. In the *Republic*, Plato calls sight "the most sunlike" of the senses and likened the sun to "the good." Sunlight, in turn, is compared to "the child of the good, which the good produced as its own analogue."[49] Just as the ungraspable idea of the good imparts intelligibility to all other (lesser) ideas, so unseen sunlight imparts visibility to all physical bodies.[50] One is like the other in that neither can be reduced to the revelation it brings about. When Socrates (Plato's principal interlocutor) explains this to his listeners, one responds, "This is an incredible beauty you are talking about . . . if it [the good] is the cause of knowledge and truth itself surpasses them in beauty."[51]

In brief, Plato is putting his finger on something higher than visible reality, something irreducible to the play of colors that tends to mesmerize modern culture. In his own philosophical way, he is "chant[ing] the radiance" of the world.[52] Centuries later, Percy Bysshe Shelley appears to have channeled Plato's ancient appreciation of light — an appreciation shared by many others in antiquity — when he wrote, "Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly; Life, like a dome of many-colour'd glass, Stains the white radiance of Eternity."[53]

White is the color most evocative of light because it trembles on the possibility of clarity and revelatory understanding. In his description of the sixteen molten stones that the brother of Jared took to the Lord to be brightened by his touch, Moroni equates whiteness with clearness: "And they were white and clear, even as transparent glass" (Ether 3:1). Black, on the other hand, recalls the crippling, smothering darkness that preceded the resurrected Savior's visit to the Nephites. Each color names a basic human experience, and the two together name

49. Plato, *Republic*, 6.508a-509c, ia802802.us.archive.org/20/items/PlatoTheRepublicCambridgeTomGriffith/Plato%20The%20Republic%20(Cambridge%2C%20Tom%20Griffith).pdf.
50. Plato, *Republic*, 6.508a-509c.
51. Plato, *Republic*, 6.509a.
52. I borrow this felicitous phrase from Daniel Boorstin, who uses it to suggest that the world's radiance was the primeval trigger for belief in God. "Not the fitting-together-ness, not the hierarchy of beings or the order of nature, but the blinding splendor, the Light of the World. How the world once came into being or how it might end seemed irrelevant before the brightness of the visible world." Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Creators: A History of Heroes of the Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 4.
53. Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats," stanza 52, poetryfoundation.org/poems/45112/adonais-an-elegy-on-the-death-of-john-keats.

the light-dark opposition of day and night, a basic rhythm of our being, and, at a higher turn of the spiral, the good news that God wishes to "snatch" us from darkness into light. To follow the younger Alma, "I was in the darkest abyss, but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more" (Mosiah 27:29).

Even the Book of Mormon as we have it today may be said to have been snatched from darkness. The plates from which it was translated were buried in the earth and then brought to daylight under the direction of the angel Moroni. Further, according to some eyewitnesses, Joseph, while using a seer stone to translate the gold plates, peered into a dark hat so that the illuminated characters or images of the record could be seen. David Whitmer, for instance, wrote, "Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English."[54]

"Where danger is," wrote Friedrich Hölderlin, "also grows the saving power."[55] Darkness is danger, and light is power that grows and saves by scattering darkness. This is the basic color typology of the gospel of Jesus Christ, repeated again and again in sacred writ. "In the beginning . . . darkness was upon the face of the deep. . . . And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:1–3). Then comes the separation of day and night, dry earth and sea, and so on, all of which presumably give rise to a multicolored earth, though colors are not mentioned. What is absolutely fundamental is the emergence of light from darkness, the two opposites compounding to produce life, meaning, and the possibility of lasting joy, according to Lehi (2 Nephi 2:11–13).

John begins his New Testament record by echoing the language of Genesis: "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1). By the Word

54. David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, MO: David Whitmer, 1887), 12, archive.org/details/addresstoallbeli00whit/page/n7/mode/2up, and Russell M. Nelson, "A Treasured Testament," *Ensign* (July 1993), 61–65, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/daad1a45-4d4d-450c-a1a1-892781f7130c/0/62.

55. From the opening lines of *Patmos*, which in the original German read, "Nah ist/ Und schwer zu fassen der Gott./ Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst/ Das Rettende auch," holderlinpoems.com/deutsche_texte/patmos1.html.

(Christ) all things were created, and "in him was life; and the life was the light of men (John 1:4). Then darkness: "And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:5). Although darkness is an essential element of creation, its primordial intrigue is incomprehension. All the same, it is what makes light so wondrous.[56] The younger Alma reported that it was his pain-filled darkness that made his light-mediated rescue from darkness so exquisite and sweet: "And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!" (Alma 36:20).

The "marvelous light" that Alma experienced was a sudden expansion of understanding regarding God's rescuing love. "I was lost and now I am found / am blind, but now I see," runs a lyric from the gospel hymn "Amazing Grace." For Alma, light was amazing grace, and after his rescue from darkness, he praised God and exulted in his new understanding. He did not, however, adorn his praise with color details. At that moment light was everything and color at best an afterthought.

If we sometimes feel that the Book of Mormon embodies a black-white overload, this is because we fail to appreciate the depth of its commitment to the basic lost-and-found narrative of the gospel of Jesus Christ. To borrow from John Milton, "paradise lost" and "paradise regained"; that is, the fall and the redemption, the interplay of despairing loss and Christ-mediated joyful recovery that is the heart and hub of all existence.

Joseph Smith stated, "I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book."[57] I suggest that part of the Book of

56. It is wrong to characterize darkness as wholly negative. As Pastoureau points out, it is the necessary precondition for light, whether we consider the Genesis creation account or the Big Bang, or even if we posit a universe with no beginning. In any case, we picture a dark world swollen with the possibility of light and life: "a world perfectly black, matrix on the one hand, terrifying on the other. A dual symbolism will accompany the color black throughout its history." Michel Pastourneau, *Black: The History of a Color* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 20. Pastoureau goes on to note that black earth connotes fertility and rebirth and that some blacks are dull while others are shiny or "luminous." Finally, I note that blackness or darkness can be revelatory. The darker the night sky, the more stars we see.

57. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:461, archive.org/details/HistoryOfTheChurchOfJesusChristOfLatter-daySaints1902-Volume4/page/n505/mode/2up; also, Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), 194.

Mormon's "correctness" lies in its ancient, pristine character. Unlike the Bible, it was not, while tumbling down through the centuries, exposed to changing understandings of reality and constant emendation. This is why it mentions so few colors and embodies a color narrative unaligned with modern color consciousness. It is instead attuned to antiquity's vivid apprehension of light and dark, day and night, life and death.



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Multiple Degrees within the Celestial, Terrestrial, and Telestial Kingdoms

David W. Smith

Abstract: *Based on Doctrine and Covenants 131:1, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that there are three degrees within the celestial kingdom. There has been a proposal that this teaching is incorrect and instead this scripture should be interpreted as a reference to the three kingdoms described in Doctrine and Covenants 76 (celestial, terrestrial, and telestial). This proposition is based on two claims. First, the word* celestial*, in Joseph Smith's day, meant heavenly or belonging to heaven, so Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 should be interpreted to mean "in heaven there are three degrees." The second claim is that interpreting Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 as referring to three degrees in the celestial kingdom is a twentieth-century innovation based on one sermon by one Apostle, with almost no other apostolic support before or after that sermon. This article shows that the first claim is very likely incorrect and the second is demonstrably false. The article then briefly addresses the question of degrees in the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms.*

In 1832, Joseph Smith saw a vision that heaven consists of three glories or kingdoms, which he called celestial, terrestrial, and telestial.[1] This is now canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 76. Ten years later, in 1843, Joseph further taught, "In the celestial glory there [are] three heavens or degrees."[2] This instruction is now canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 131:1. Based on this scripture, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints still currently teaches that there are three degrees within the celestial kingdom, the highest glory described in Doctrine and Covenants 76.[3]

In a 2021 published essay, Shannon Flynn challenges the Church's interpretation of Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 and argues that this verse is merely a restatement of the three degrees of glory defined in section 76, rather than a description of sub-degrees within the celestial kingdom.[4] Flynn's proposition has gained traction and seen increasing acceptance.[5] Because of this, his proposition warrants closer scrutiny.

In this article, I will first describe and then rebut his proposition. I will also briefly address the question of degrees in the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms and how the principle of degrees within the three kingdoms is an example of Heavenly Father's pure and universal love.

The Proposition

Flynn proposes that Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 was a restatement of the three kingdoms described in Doctrine and Covenants 76. Based on this reading, he believes that there are *not* three degrees within the celestial kingdom. This proposition is based on two claims.

The first claim is that Joseph Smith used the word *celestial* in the generic nineteenth-century sense of *heaven* as a whole, and not as a reference only to the celestial glory described in Doctrine and Covenants 76. Flynn assumes this based on contemporary British and American dictionary definitions of the word *celestial*. From this, Flynn concludes that William Clayton, who recorded Joseph Smith's instruction, did not mean that there are three degrees within the celestial kingdom.[6]

The second claim is that interpreting Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 as referring to three degrees in the celestial kingdom is a twentieth-century innovation with almost no apostolic support. In his research on this topic, Flynn claims to have found that the general concept of degrees in the celestial kingdom was referenced only five times before 1922 (three times by one Apostle, two times by other Church members). He also claims that the Church's current interpretation of Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 was not even officially published until 1981 and has only been referenced three times in general conference addresses, all by members of the Seventy.[7]

Flynn attributes the Church's current interpretation to a 1922 discourse by Apostle Melvin J. Ballard, who distinctly taught that there are three degrees within the celestial kingdom. In that discourse, Elder Ballard cites Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4 as support. Flynn states:

> I do not believe that Ballard had any idea he was introducing

> a radically new concept. . . . It seems likely that the teaching was not yet widely held within the LDS community. In my view, announcing three sub-degrees [within the celestial kingdom] as official church doctrine was a simple mistake on the part of the popular apostle and speaker. However, the concept gradually took hold in the LDS community. . . .
>
> Suffice it to say that the idea started off slowly and gained steam until it is generally believed, I suspect, by the majority of church members today. . . .
>
> Such errors happen regularly in every religion, including the Mormon Church. . . . But no amount of certainty, dogmatism, and conviction-bearing can change the fact that it is wrong.[8]

In the following sections, I will explain why Flynn's first claim is likely incorrect and the second claim is demonstrably false. First, I will suggest that, beginning as early as 1832, Latter-day Saints understood the word *celestial*, in the context of Joseph Smith's 1832 vision (Doctrine and Covenants 76), and not as a reference to the generic Christian heaven. Further, Joseph Smith consistently used the word *celestial* in the same way. Second, I will conclusively demonstrate that the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom was repeatedly taught by Apostles and in Church publications beginning as early as 1847, not just following Elder Ballard's discourse in 1922.

Joseph Smith's Vision and His Use of *Celestial*

Flynn correctly observes that the word *celestial* in the nineteenth century generally meant "heavenly" or "dwelling in heaven."[9] It is also helpful to note that, in this time period, "Christianity had almost universally embraced Protestant notions of an immediate post-mortem judgment and two diametric afterlife states — Heaven and Hell."[10] Even the term *celestial kingdom* "was a common synonym for heaven in the Christian vernacular."[11] Based on this common usage outside of the Church, the first claim in Flynn's proposition is that, because *celestial* and *heaven* were synonymous in the 1800s, a Latter-day Saint would have understood any reference to the celestial kingdom simply as a reference to heaven, including in Joseph Smith's 1843 instruction (Doctrine and Covenants 131:1).[12]

Recognizing how Latter-day Saints would have understood the word *celestial* in Joseph Smith's teachings helps explain how they

might have initially received Joseph Smith's 1843 instruction. However, that does not determine what Joseph himself meant. Because William Clayton (the scribe for the instruction) was merely recording Joseph's words,[13] the relevant question is how Joseph Smith himself understood and used the word *celestial*.

In this portion of my article, I address both Latter-day Saint understanding of the word *celestial* and Joseph Smith's usage of that word. I first suggest that, despite the dictionary definition, Latter-day Saints came to understand the word *celestial* differently than was understood in broader Christianity — as referring to the highest part of heaven, not all of heaven. I then demonstrate that Joseph Smith consistently used the word *celestial* with that same understanding, not as a synonym for heaven in general.

Latter-day Saint understanding of the word *celestial*

The more restrictive Latter-day Saint understanding of the word *celestial* is based on a vision Joseph Smith received in 1832.[14] The introduction to the vision in the Manuscript History of the Church noted: "It appeared self evident from what truths were left, that if God rewarded every one according to the deeds done in the body, the term 'heaven', as intended for the Saints eternal home, must include more kingdoms than one."[15] The recorded description of the vision focused on the glories that await humankind in eternity. There were four groups: the ungodly (who do not receive any glory),[16] and those who receive celestial, terrestrial, or telestial glory.[17]

Because of this vision, Latter-day Saint understanding of heaven changed to differ from that of Christianity generally.[18] Their use of the word *celestial* also changed to differ from common usage. This suggestion is based on four points, three of which are briefly addressed in this section, and the fourth in the next section.

First, after Joseph Smith's 1832 vision was recorded, copies of the record quickly circulated.[19] The vision's importance to Church members is demonstrated by the fact that it was published just a few months after it was received,[20] and it was reprinted in 1835.[21] Most Church members likely learned about this vision of three kingdoms of glory soon after its publication, either from reading the published version or hearing it preached by missionaries or others.[22] Through this reading or preaching, Latter-day Saints would have been exposed to (and likely adopted) this new understanding of the word *celestial* as

a reference to the highest part of heaven, not as a synonym for the generic *heaven*.

Second, missionaries appear to have regularly taught about Joseph's 1832 vision, which would have included teaching that the word *celestial* referred to the highest of three degrees of glory. Evidence for this comes from instructions that Joseph gave in 1837. Shortly before the gospel was first preached in England, Joseph instructed missionaries not to mention this vision of three degrees of glory "until such time as the work was fully established."[23] This instruction would have been unnecessary unless missionaries were regularly preaching about the vision, and thus teaching about *celestial* being the highest glory in heaven, not as synonymous with all of heaven. Further, the restriction on preaching about the vision was limited to England and was only temporary, as evidenced by the vision being published in 1841 in the Church's newspaper in England.[24]

Third, the concept of *celestial* being the highest kingdom in heaven, not a synonym for the generic *heaven*, appears to have become part of Latter-day Saint consciousness. For example:

- In 1836, a missionary had a vision of "the resurrection of the Celestial Kingdom or the inhabitants thereoff," followed by a vision of "the resurrection of the Terrestrial kingdom whose glory was lesser than the celestial."[25] This illustrates that the word *celestial* was used in context of Joseph's 1832 vision.
- In 1837, speakers in a high council meeting used the terms *celestial law* and *telestial law* to frame a dispute about modern revelation.[26] This illustrates the unique meaning Latter-day Saints assigned to the word *celestial*.
- John Corrill's 1839 history included the concept of celestial, terrestrial, and telestial glories alongside other basic gospel principles such as the sacrament and healing the sick, demonstrating that the concept of *celestial glory* referring to only the highest part of heaven was a basic part of the gospel.[27]

These three points (widespread dissemination, regular missionary teaching, and examples of Latter-day Saint usage) suggest that Latter-day Saints understood the word *celestial* in Joseph Smith's teachings as a reference to the highest degree in heaven, not as a synonym for heaven generally.[28] This suggestion is further supported by how Joseph Smith used the word *celestial*, which is addressed next.

Joseph Smith's use of the word *celestial*

In currently available documents, Joseph first used the word *celestial* in the text of his 1832 vision. The word appeared just two weeks later in the text of a revelation from the Lord explaining that inheriting the celestial glory required obedience to God's commandments and that being equal in earthly things was required in order to be equal in heavenly things. These were all new concepts distinctly referring to the celestial glory described in the vision Joseph had experienced just two weeks earlier. The resulting blessing, the Lord further explained, would be standing "independent above all other creatures beneath the Celestial world," referring to those in the celestial glory being above all things.[29]

Within about a week of this revelation,[30] Joseph revised 1 Corinthians 15:40–41 to emphasize the difference between celestial, terrestrial, and telestial glories: "Also Celestial bodies, and bodies Terrestrial, and bodies Telestial; but the glory of the Celestial, one; and the Terrestrial, another; and the Telestial, another."[31] Again, this distinguishes *celestial* as referring to part of heaven, not all of heaven.

In December 1832, the Lord revealed more information concerning the three glories. Of particular note was the fact that abiding by celestial, terrestrial, or telestial law determines the glory a person receives.[32] Again, this revelation emphasized the distinction between the highest (celestial) glory and the lower glories (terrestrial and telestial).

Thus, in all four Joseph Smith documents in which the word *celestial* first appears, it is clearly referring to a specific part of heaven, not to heaven as a whole. His continued use of the word *celestial* remains consistent with this meaning. (See appendix 1 for a review that is too extensive to include here.)

Further, Joseph was focused on helping Latter-day Saints understand the principles of the vision. For example, he wrote a letter in 1834 to priesthood holders explaining more about the concept of law as it pertained to inheriting the celestial glory (taken from the December 1832 revelation). In this letter, he clarified that when he spoke of entering "the heavenly kingdom," he meant "the celestial glory."[33] This would be a confusing statement if the word *celestial* were synonymous with *heaven*.

Also, as historians Michael MacKay and Daniel Belnap noted, Joseph started an effort in the summer of 1832 to better convey what he saw in his 1832 vision. This effort later included the Egyptian Language Documents (ELD) created in 1835, which contained notes

distinguishing celestial, terrestrial, and telestial glories, demonstrating that Joseph and those working with him continued to understand and work toward a way to teach celestial glory versus the lesser glories.[34]

Joseph likely strove for this better way of teaching because he viewed his 1832 vision as an essential part of the gospel. In a November 1833 letter, which discussed a member who had rejected the 1832 vision, Joseph stated that those who did not accept it and his other revelations "have no fellowship with us."[35] In his 1837 instruction to missionaries referenced in the previous section, he included the vision along with the principles of both gathering to Zion and accepting continuing revelation, thus highlighting the essential nature of the vision.[36] And a note commenting on the vision in the Manuscript History of the Church stated that "every law, every commandment, every promise" showed the truth of the vision.[37]

Especially relevant to the context of Joseph's May 1843 instruction was the February 1843 publication of a poetic adaptation of the text of his 1832 vision, which again emphasized the word *celestial* as a specific kingdom in heaven. One stanza provides an apt example:

> 63. And so the telestial is minister'd to,
> By ministers from the terrestrial one,
> As terrestrial is, from the celestial throne;
> And the great, greater, greatest, seem's stars, moon, and sun.[38]

In summary, Joseph Smith first used the word *celestial* in the text of his 1832 vision. Thereafter, he consistently used the word to refer to the celestial glory described in that vision. In 1834, he clarified that when he spoke of entering "the heavenly kingdom" he meant "the celestial glory." He also consistently worked to more effectively teach the doctrine of his vision, which he viewed as an essential part of the gospel. All of this is evidence that he consistently used the word *celestial* to describe part of heaven, not all of heaven. These facts provide context for his May 1843 instruction.[39]

On 16 May 1843, Joseph and his scribe, William Clayton, stopped for the night at the home of Ben and Melissa Johnson.[40] During this visit, Joseph taught:

> Except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant[41] and be married for eternity while in this probation by the power and authority of the Holy priesthood[42] they will cease to increase when they die (i e) 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. . . .
>
> In the celestial glory there was three heavens or degrees, and in order to obtain the highest a man must enter into this order of the priesthood and if he dont he cant obtain it. He may enter into the other but that is the end of his kingdom he cannot have an increase.[43]

Given the entire context of Joseph Smith's teaching about and use of the word *celestial*, this 1843 instruction about "three degrees" (now canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 131:1) is best understood to mean three degrees within the celestial kingdom.

Teachings about Three Degrees in the Celestial Kingdom

The second claim of Flynn's proposition is demonstrably false. The second claim is that interpreting Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 as referring to three degrees in the celestial kingdom is a twentieth-century innovation with almost no apostolic support.

From the 1840s to the 1870s

In his research, Flynn could identify only three instances before 1876 (when Joseph's instruction was canonized) when the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom was mentioned, and all three instances were from Orson Pratt, who was an Apostle at the time. Based on this incomplete summary, Flynn concludes, "It is my view that Pratt was putting forth his own ill-defined opinions."[44] However, this research overlooked several additional references by Elder Pratt and other Apostles. Thus, Flynn's conclusion that Elder Pratt was advancing "ill-defined opinions" is undermined by the fuller range of available sources.

Latter-day Saints may have first encountered Joseph's 1843 instruction in print when it was published in the *Deseret News* in 1857.[45] But Latter-day Saints who read the *Millennial Star* would have read about the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom ten years earlier. An article in the *Millennial Star*, likely written by Apostle Orson Hyde, explained that those who are faithful and receive all priesthood ordinances will be crowned in the celestial kingdom, while others:

> May obtain salvation in the celestial kingdom, but not a

> celestial crown. Many are called to enjoy a celestial glory, yet few are chosen to wear a celestial crown, or rather, to be rulers in the celestial kingdom.[46]

Although the article does not include the word *degrees* or specify a number, some differentiation of glory within the celestial kingdom is clearly contemplated.

President Brigham Young also taught this principle in April 1854 and again in 1857. In 1854, he discussed those who were more focused on earthly riches than eternal rewards:

> Will they be saved? Yes. What! and be prepared to go into the celestial kingdom of God? Yes, if they repent of their sins and turn unto the Lord. … Will they be crowned with crowns of glory, immortality, and eternal lives? No; but they will be prepared to enter there to serve others.[47]

In an 1857 address Brigham Young further stated:

> If we can pass the sentinel Joseph the Prophet, we shall go into the celestial kingdom, and not a man can injure us. . . . Will we all become Gods, and be crowned kings? No, my brethren, there will be millions on millions, even the greater part of the celestial world, who will not be capable of a fulness of that glory, immortality, eternal lives and a continuation of them, yet they will go into the celestial kingdom.[48]

As with the 1847 article, he didn't use the word *degree* or specify a number of levels,[49] but he taught differentiated levels of glory within the celestial kingdom. He did state the number of degrees in the celestial kingdom two years later, in the final address of the April 1859 general conference:

> Man is created what for for [sic] an exaltation to dwell with his Father in the heavens shall I say [in] the heaven of heavens or in the third heavens in the celestial kingdom . . . the object pertaining to the celestial kingdom is so organized [intelligence?] and that intelligence to receive intelligence and intelligence glory upon glory power upon power until they are prepared to enter back again into the presence of their Father and Savior.[50]

Unless he had learned the number independently of Joseph, President Young was relying on Joseph's 1843 instruction to specify the number of degrees.[51] In any case, President Young's statement

is clear: There are three heavens (or degrees) within the celestial kingdom.

A month later, Apostle Orson Pratt discussed the celestial, terrestrial, and telestial glories[52] and explicitly taught about three degrees in the celestial kingdom. This was noted by another Apostle, Orson Hyde, a week later: "You recollect that Brother Pratt clearly delineated to you that in celestial kingdom differences all [are?] not the same class but he pointed out 3 different degrees in celestial kingdom." Hyde affirmed Pratt's teaching by connecting the fruit in the parable of the sower to the celestial kingdom — that the thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and hundredfold fruit represent the three different degrees within that kingdom.[53]

Thus, no later than mid-1859, Brigham Young, Orson Pratt, and Orson Hyde — all of whom were intimately acquainted with Joseph Smith's teachings and language — clearly taught that there are three degrees in the celestial kingdom. This teaching came more than fifteen years before Joseph Smith's 1843 instruction was canonized (what is now Doctrine and Covenants 131:1), and more than sixty years before Elder Melvin J. Ballard's 1922 discourse.

President Young and Elder Pratt would reiterate the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom over the next two decades. For example, in August 1867, President Young taught:

> There will a great many people go into the celestial kingdom of our Father and God that will not be crowned gods [and] have influence of god they will be angels servants.[54]

And in January 1873, Elder Pratt taught:

> Concerning the nature of this higher state of glory called celestial. Will there be any difference among those who are redeemed into that glory? There will, in some respects. . . . Some who will inherit a portion of that glory will have no families, . . . while others will receive an exaltation and kingdom, and will have wives, children, dominion, greatness and power far above those I first referred to.[55]

Additional examples are listed in appendix 2.

From canonization to the 1920s

Joseph Smith's 1843 instruction about three degrees in the celestial kingdom was canonized in 1876 as Doctrine and Covenants 131:1.[56] Flynn identified only two references between 1876 and 1922 to three

degrees in the celestial kingdom. These instances were an 1888 report of a sermon by a stake presidency counselor[57] and, more importantly, an influential 1893 book by Elder B. H. Roberts, who was then serving in the First Council of the Seventy.[58]

However, Flynn's research overlooked many other examples from Apostles and Church publications. For example, in 1883, Apostle Erastus Snow taught that:

> The holy covenant of marriage for time and for all eternity . . . is that which completes the exaltation and glory of the righteous. . . . Many may enter into the glory of God, and become servants in the house of God and in the celestial kingdom of God, who are not able to abide this new and everlasting covenant; but as we are told in the Doctrine and Covenants, with them there is an end to their exaltation.[59]

Another example, and probably the most prominent work overlooked in Flynn's research, was James E. Talmage's *The Articles of Faith*, published by the Church in 1899 and repeatedly published and referenced for over a century.[60] Talmage was, at this time, a well-respected scientist and gospel scholar, though not yet an Apostle. However, this book had been reviewed by three members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and three other trusted gospel scholars.[61] In his discussion about the degrees of glory, Talmage stated that there were "a multitude of subdivisions" in the celestial kingdom, and cited Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 for support.[62] This statement has remained nearly unchanged throughout the various editions of the book.[63] And, after becoming an Apostle, Talmage quoted that statement almost verbatim in his 1912 publication *The House of the Lord*.[64]

Another Apostle, Orson F. Whitney, also explicitly discussed the principle of three degrees in the celestial kingdom in his 1914 book *Gospel Themes: A Treatise on Salient Features of "MORMONISM,"* also published by the Church:

> The Prophet also taught that there are grades of glory, even in the celestial kingdom; his exact language being: "In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees" (D. & C. 131:1).[65]

Multiple other Church publications from this period also referenced or discussed this principle (see appendix 2).

Elder Ballard's discourse

As noted above, Flynn attributes the generally Church-wide interpretation of Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 as referring to three degrees within the celestial kingdom as primarily coming from the 1922 discourse by Apostle Melvin J. Ballard. In that sermon, Elder Ballard cites Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 and repeated what had been taught by multiple Apostles and Church Presidents:

> Now, I wish to say to you that the only possible candidates to become what God is are those who attain Celestial Glory, and those who fail in that will never, worlds without end, be possible candidates to become what God is. Then I wish to say to you that there are three degrees of glory in the Celestial Kingdom and only those who attain the highest degree of Celestial Glory will be candidates to become what God is.[66]

As noted earlier, Flynn's research did not identify a reference in a Church manual to three degrees in the celestial kingdom until 1981, and identified only three times in general conference addresses when the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom was referenced, all by members of the Seventy.[67] However, Flynn's research overlooked several Church manuals published long before 1981 that discussed this principle. The earliest such manual that I located was published in 1901 and was followed by many subsequent manuals and Church publications discussing this principle (see appendix 2). Flynn's research also overlooked several references in general conference addresses up through 2000, including references by two Church Presidents and six Apostles (see appendix 2).

The reason for citing references after Elder Ballard's 1922 discourse is to make the point that the consistent interpretation of Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 over the last 175 years continues to have support from Church leaders[68] and is included in current Church publications. For example, the entry "Kingdoms of Glory" in the Church's "Topics and Questions" portion of Gospel Library states:

> From another revelation to the Prophet Joseph, we learn that there are three degrees within the celestial kingdom. To be exalted in the highest degree and continue eternally in family relationships, we must enter into "the new and everlasting covenant of marriage" and be true to that covenant. In other words, temple marriage is a requirement for obtaining the

> highest degree of celestial glory. All who are worthy to enter into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage will have that opportunity, whether in this life or the next.[69]

From numerous Church publications and discourses by Apostles, it is clear that—far from "start[ing] off slowly and gain[ing] steam"[70] after Melvin J. Ballard's 1922 discourse, as asserted in Flynn's proposition—the principle of three degrees in the celestial kingdom was repeatedly taught by Apostles and others many times before (as well as after) the 1922 discourse.

Multiple Degrees in the Terrestrial and Telestial Kingdoms

The established principle of three degrees in the celestial kingdom raises a question about the other two kingdoms of glory: Are there multiple degrees within the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms? Some statements by Apostles and in Church publications suggest that there are indeed multiple degrees within those kingdoms.

Doctrine and Covenants 76:98 seems to imply varying degrees within the telestial kingdom:

> The glory of the telestial is one, even as the glory of the stars is one; for as one star differs from another star in glory, even so *differs one from another in glory in the telestial world*.[71]

This verse has been either paraphrased or cited to support the principle of varying degrees in the telestial kingdom. For example, Apostle (later President) Joseph Fielding Smith briefly mentioned the telestial kingdom in the influential book *Doctrines of Salvation* using wording from this verse: "Those who enter into the telestial kingdom, where their glories differ as do the stars of heaven in their magnitude."[72] And the current institute manual for the Doctrine and Covenants unequivocally states: "The telestial kingdom is also comprised of various glories (see D&C 76:98)."[73]

Charles W. Penrose, then in the First Presidency, also noted the following for the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms:

> Those who get into the terrestrial kingdom are to have certain qualities that are explained; there are *several degrees in that one glory*; . . .
>
> Then comes the third group. These are they who come forth in the telestial glory, and their glory differs as one star differs from another, and they shall each be judged

> according to their works, as all will be. So *there are various degrees* of these people who are brought forth according to their crimes and their punishments and their redemption; they come forth into the glory of the stars.[74]

Relatedly, there have been some suggestions that the number of degrees or gradations may be innumerable. For example, President Brigham Young stated, "Were I to enumerate thousands of different degrees of glory and kingdoms, I probably should over-enumerate the kingdoms God has prepared."[75] Elder John A. Widstoe echoed this when he wrote: "These gradations in salvation may be innumerable, since all members of the human family are different. The many gradations are however reduced to three classes," which are the celestial, terrestrial, and telestial.[76]

As a summary of the principle of multiple degrees in the celestial, terrestrial, and telestial kingdoms, below is a passage from the original 1899 edition of Talmage's *The Articles of Faith* (and repeated in his 1912 *The House of the Lord,* written after he had been ordained as an Apostle):

> The three kingdoms of widely differing glories *are themselves* organized on an orderly *plan of gradation*. We have seen that the telestial kingdom comprises a multitude of subdivisions; this is also the case, we are told, with the celestial; (*footnote:* [Doctrine and Covenants 131:1]; see also [2 Corinthians 12:1–4]) and, by analogy, we conclude that a similar condition prevails in the terrestrial. Thus the *innumerable degrees* of merit amongst mankind are provided for in *an infinity* of graded glories.[77]

Although there have been some references to the existence of degrees in the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms over the years, by far the greatest emphasis by Church leaders has been on the celestial kingdom. This emphasis is not surprising. President Dallin H. Oaks states:

> The Lord has chosen to reveal comparatively little about two of these kingdoms of glory [the terrestrial and telestial]. In contrast, the Lord has revealed much about the highest kingdom of glory . . .
>
> The purpose of the doctrine and policies of this restored Church is to prepare God's children for salvation in the

> celestial glory and, more particularly, for exaltation in its highest degree.[78]

But even what little has been revealed about the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms highlights the pure and universal love of Heavenly Father.[79] A teaching by President Dallin H. Oaks on the three kingdoms generally might also be applied to degrees within those kingdoms:

> The ultimate destiny of all who live on the earth is not the inadequate idea of heaven for the righteous and the eternal sufferings of hell for the rest. God's loving plan for His children includes this reality taught by our Savior, Jesus Christ: "In my Father's house are many mansions."
>
> The revealed doctrine of the restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that *all the children of God*—with exceptions too limited to consider here—will ultimately inherit one of three kingdoms of glory, even the least of which "surpasses all understanding." . . .
>
> Under that loving plan, there are multiple kingdoms—many mansions—so that all of God's children will inherit a kingdom of glory whose laws they can comfortably "abide."[80]

Summary and Conclusion

Based on Doctrine and Covenants 131:1, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that there are three degrees within the celestial kingdom. Shannon Flynn proposes that this scripture instead refers to the three kingdoms described in Doctrine and Covenants 76 and therefore does not indicate that there are three degrees in the celestial kingdom. This proposition is based on two claims: (1) the word *celestial* in Joseph Smith's day simply meant "heavenly," and (2) the idea of three degrees in the celestial kingdom is a twentieth-century innovation with little apostolic support.

Responding to the first claim, I have suggested that, beginning as early as 1832, Latter-day Saints understood the word *celestial* in the context of Joseph Smith's 1832 vision of three degrees of glory. Further, Joseph Smith consistently used the word *celestial* to refer to the highest glory in that vision, not to all of heaven. Thus, Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 is best understood as a reference to the celestial kingdom.

I have shown that the second claim is demonstrably false. The principle of three degrees in the celestial kingdom was taught by

Brigham Young, Orson Hyde, and Orson Pratt no later than 1859. The principle was also repeatedly taught or referenced by Apostles and in Church publications before (as well as after) Melvin J. Ballard's 1922 discourse. Thus, Elder Ballard's discourse was simply one of a long line of addresses and publications that taught this principle.

The importance of three degrees in the celestial kingdom was most recently highlighted by Dallin H. Oaks, then a Counselor in the First Presidency. In an extended discourse in the October 2023 general conference on the celestial, terrestrial, and telestial kingdoms, he noted:

> In the "celestial" glory *there are three levels*, of which the highest is exaltation in the celestial kingdom. . . . Through revelation, God has revealed the eternal laws, ordinances, and covenants that must be observed to develop the godly attributes necessary to realize this divine potential. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints focuses on these because the purpose of this restored Church is to prepare God's children for salvation in the celestial glory and, more particularly, for *exaltation in its highest degree*.
>
> God's plan, founded on eternal truth, requires that exaltation can be attained only through faithfulness to the covenants of an eternal marriage between a man and a woman in the holy temple, which marriage will ultimately be available to all the faithful.[81]

As the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: "Any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law, *and the whole law too*."[82] Understanding the law that governs exaltation in the celestial kingdom allows us to choose to abide by that law (or at least desire to do so)[83] in order to receive the fulness of the blessings promised by a loving Heavenly Father.[84]

Appendix 1: The Word *Celestial* in Joseph Smith's Documents

This review of the word *celestial* in Joseph Smith's documents is based on a search on the Joseph Smith Papers (JSP) website. There is also at least one instance of the word appearing in *The Words of Joseph Smith* but not on the JSP website.

The Joseph Smith Papers

The JSP website search yielded 161 results (focused only on the Documents/Papers category). Many results were duplicates (such as the word appearing in multiple copies of the same revelation), some results are from History, 1838–1856 (which was simply a compilation of other notes), some results are from the historical introductions or footnotes, and some results are from individuals other than Joseph Smith.[85] These are all excluded from the number of documents analyzed in this article.

There were thirty-seven Joseph Smith documents where the word *celestial* appears, as shown in table 1. The word is almost always accompanied by allusions to the celestial glory described in the February 1832 vision (in bold). Where there are no allusions, the wording clearly distinguishes the *celestial kingdom* from other kingdoms in the eternities, thus showing that Joseph Smith did not use *celestial* as a synonym for the generic *heaven*.

On the allusions noted below, it is helpful to recognize that many descriptors of the celestial glory were also used in Protestant teachings about heaven. The difference between that Protestant usage and Joseph Smith's usage was emphasis, as Richard Bushman noted:

> Protestant sermons on heaven spoke mostly of surcease from sorrows and the joy of knowing Christ. . . . Ideas highlighted in "The Vision," like the possibility of becoming "joint heirs with Christ" and partaking of his glory, were minor Protestant themes. Joseph's revelation, by contrast, paraphrases one biblical scripture after another on the exalted condition of humans in the celestial heavens.[86]

It is Joseph Smith's themes that are repeatedly alluded to in his documents, not the Protestant themes.

Table 1. Uses of the word *celestial* by Joseph Smith. Italicized text is my editorial notes. Bolded text notes allusions to the celestial glory described in Doctrine and Covenants 76. Bracketed text is from the Joseph Smith Papers.

Document	Text
16 February 1832 Vision[87]	*The text is extensive and available at the Joseph Smith Papers website.*

Document	Text
1 March 1832 Revelation[88]	To advance the cause which ye have espaused [espoused] to the salvation of man and to the glory of your Father who is in heaven that you may be **equal in the bonds of heavenly things** yea and earthly things also for the obtaining of heavenly of heavenly things for if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly thing[s] for if ye will that I give unto you a place in the celestiel world you must prepare yourselves by **doing <the> thing which I have commanded & required of you** & now verily thus saith the Lord it is expedient that all things be done unto my glory . . . whereby you may accompish the commandments which are given to you that through the providenc of your Father **notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you you may stand independent** above all other creatures beneath the Celestial world that you may **come up unto the crown prepared for you and be made rulers** over many kingdom[s].
Between 1–8 March 1832 Revision[89]	*The Joseph Smith revision of the New Testament included revised wording of 1 Corinthians 15:40–41. Although celestial is original to the KJV, Joseph included it in a description of heaven that clearly echoes his vision a couple weeks earlier.* *Original KJV:* There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.[90] *Joseph Smith Revision:* Also Celestial bodies, and bodies Terrestrial, and bodies Telestial; but the glory of the Celestial, one; and the Terrestrial, another; and the Telestial, another.[91]
27–28 December 1832 Revelation[92]	*The text is extensive and available at the Joseph Smith Papers website.*
4 January 1833 Letter[93]	Repent of all your sins and **be baptized in water for the remission of them, in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the Holy Ghost**, and receive the ordinance of **the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power**, that ye may receive the holy spirit of God, and this according to the holy scriptures, and of the Book of Mormon; and the only way that man can enter into the Celestial kingdom.
5 December 1833 Letter[94]	Our trust is in God and we are determined by his grace assisting us to maintain the cause and **hold out faithful to the end** that we may be **crowned with crowns** of celestial glory and **enter into that rest**[95] **that is prepared for the children of God**.
10 December 1833 Letter[96]	I cannot learn from any communication by the spirit to me that Zion has forfeited her claim to a celestial **crown notwithstanding the Lord has caused her to be thus afflicted.**

Document	Text
16–17 December 1833 Revelation [D&C 101][97]	I must gather to gether my people according to the parable of the wheat and the tares that the wheat may be secured in the garner to possess **eternal life and be crowned** with celestial glory **when I come in the Kingdom of my fathe[r]**.
February 1834 Letter[98]	The Father of our spirits, in providing a sacrifice for his creatures, a plan of redemption, a power of atonement, a scheme of salvation, having as one of its great objects, to bring men back **into the presence of the King of heaven**, **crown them** in the celestial glory, and make them **heirs with his Son** to that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away. . . . We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion **to the heed and diligence given** to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the more conspicuous are his views, & the greater his enjoyments, until he has **overcome the evils of this life** and **lost every desire of sin**; and like the ancients, arrives to that point of faith that he is wrapped in the glory and power of his Maker and is **caught up to dwell with him**. But we consider that this is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment: he must have been instructed into the government and laws of that kingdom by proper degrees . . . it is necessary for men to receive an understanding concerning the laws of the heavenly kingdom, before they are permitted to enter it: we mean the celestial glory. . . . God has in reserve a time, or period appointed in his own bosom, when he will bring all his subjects, who have **obeyed his voice and kept his commandments**, **into his celestial rest**.
March 1834 Letter[99]	For a moment reflect, what could have been the purpose in our Father in giving to us a law? Was it that it might be obeyed, or disobeyed? And think further too, not only the propriety, but **the importance of attending to his laws in every particular**. . . . We can only say, that if an anticipation of the joys of the celestial glory, as witnessed to the **hearts of the humble** is not sufficient, we will leave with yourselves the result of your own diligence; for God ere long, will call *all* his servants **before him, and there from His own hand** they will receive a just recompense and a righteous reward for all their labors.
22 June 1834 Revelation [D&C 105][100]	[The Saints] are full of all manner of evil and do not impart of their substanc[e] as becometh saints; to the poor and afflicted among them and are not **united, according to the union ~~of~~ required by the law** of the celestial kingdom and Zion cannot be built up **unless it is by the principoles of the law** of the Celestial kingdom

Document	Text
5 December 1834 Blessing[101]	Prolong his [Oliver Cowdery's] life to a good old age, and bring him in peace to his end, and to **rejoice with thy saints, even the sanctified**, in the celestial kingdom.
1 March 1835 Blessing to Willard Snow[102]	You shall go to distant lands and if you desire it with all your heart you shall return. But if you desire you may be **received up into the bosom of your Heavenly Father** in Distant lands, from all trouble into the celestial kingdom.[103]
Fall 1835, Egyptian Alphabet[104]	[2.23] Ebethcha the greatest place of hapiness **where God resides** the Celesstial Kingdom. *Alternate Text:* The heaven of heavens, <wh[e]re god resides Ce[lestial]. K[ingdom].>the greatest place of hap.
Fall 1835, Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language[105]	[2.23] The celestial Kingdom **where God dwells**. [2.30] Lish Zi hoe oop Iota: The glory of the celestial Kingdom: The connection of attributes; many parts perfected, and compounded into one **Having been united; being united that which will be united**, **one glory above all other glories, as the the [sun?] excels ~~in~~ the ~~light~~ Moon in light**, this glory excels being filled: with the same glory **equaility**. [2.36] Jah-ni hah: **one delegated from the highest** soar acting in or b[e]ing clothed with the power of another; **one from sent from the Celestial Kingdom**.[106] [2.42] Kolob. signifies the first creation nearer to the celestial,[107] or **the residence of Lord**, first in government, the last pertaining to the measurement of time, the measurement according ~~according~~ to celestial time.[108]
23 October 1835 Prayer[109]	And also that [God] will assist all others **who desire, accordingly ~~ly~~ to his commandments**, to go up and purchase inheritances; and all this easily and without perplexity, and trouble; and finally, that in the end he will save us in his Celestial Kingdom.
12 November 1835 Discourse to the Twelve[110]	The order of the house of God has and ever will be the same, even after Christ comes, and after the termination of the thousand years it will be the same, and we shall finally **roll into**[111] the celestial kingdom of God and enjoy it forever; — you need an endowment brethren in order that you may be prepared and able to **overcome all things.**
10 December 1835 Prayer[112]	The way be prepared before them, that they may journey to the land of Zion and be established, on their inheritances, to enjoy undisturbe[d], peace and happiness for ever, and ultimately, to be **crowned with everlasting life** in the celestial kingdom of God.

Document	Text
21 January 1836 Visions [D&C 137][113]	I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof, whether in the body or out I cannot tell,— I saw the transcendant beauty of the gate ~~that enters~~, through which the heirs of that kingdom will enter, which was like unto circling flames of fire, also **the blasing throne of God, whereon was seated the Father and the Son** . . . I saw . . . my brother Alvin that has long since slept, and marvled how it was that he had obtained ~~this~~ an inheritance <in> ~~this~~ <that> kingdom, seeing that he had departed this life, before the Lord <had> set his hand to gather Israel <the second time> and **had not been baptized for the remission of sins** — Thus ~~said~~ came the voice <of the Lord un>to me saying all who have died with[out] a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it, if they had been permited to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God . . . I also beheld that all children who die before they arive to the years of accountability, are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven . . . I finally saw the 12 in the celestial kingdom of God
5 January 1841 Discourse[114]	We came to this earth that we might have a body, & **present it pure before ~~before~~ God** in the celestial kingdom. . . . This earth will be **roled back into the presence of God** & **crowned** with celestial glory.
26 January 1841 Letter[115]	Be assured of my continued regard for your welfare and for the prosperity of the Saints in Kirtland, and I pray that they may prosper in every good word and work and **after the afflictions and tribulations of mortality** be **crowned** with everlasting joy in the celestial kingdom of our God.
6 January 1842 Journal Entry[116]	Truly this is a day long to be remembered . . . a day in which those things begin to be made manifest which have been hid from <before> the foundations of the world. & which Jehovah has promised should be made known in his own due time. unto his servants, **to prepare. the earth for the return of his glory**, even a celestial glory; and **a kingdom of Priests & Kings** to God & the Lamb forever
30 January 1842 Discourse[117]	That the God & father of our Lord Jesus Christ was once the same as the Son or Holy Ghost but having redeemed a world became the eternal God of that world he had a son Jesus Christ who redeemed this earth the same as his father had a world **which made them equal** & the Holy Ghost would do the same in his turn & so would all the Saints who inherited a Celestial glory so their would be **Gods many** & Lords many

Document	Text
15 March 1842 Book of Abraham Printing[118]	Fig. 1. Kolob, signifying the first creation, nearest to the celestial, or **the residence of God**. First in government, the last pertaining to the measurement of time. The measurement according to the celestial time; which, celestial time, signifies one day to a cubit.[119] Fig. 2. Stands next to Kolob, called by the Egyptians Oliblish, which is the next grand governing creation, near to the celestial or **the place where God resides**.
20 March 1842 Discourse[120]	**Baptism is a sign**, ordained of God for the believer in Christ to take upon himself in order to enter into the kingdom of God. . . . It is **a sign of command which God hath set** for man to enter into ~~the~~ this ~~Kingdom of God~~ those who seek to enter in any other ~~will~~ way will seek in vain, for God will not receive those neither will the angels acknowledge their works as accepted, for they have not taken upon themselves those ordinances & signs which God ordained for man to receive in order to receive a celestial glory, & God had decreed that all ~~that~~ <who> will not **obey his voice** shall not escape the damnation of hell, . . . God hath decreed & ordained that man should repent of all his sins & Be Baptized for the remission of his sins then he can **come to God in the name of Jesus Christ** in faith then we have **the promise of the Holy Ghost**.
February 1843 Poem[121]	*The text is extensive and available at the Joseph Smith Papers website.*
17–18 March 1843 Letter[122]	And if you ~~have a~~ <would only> ~~notion to~~ join me ~~before you die~~, ~~count the cost as Jesus says~~, and go for eternal reward in the celestial Kingdom of God, **independent of mobs, persecutions, this world's goods, or the highest honors of the Mammon of unrighteousness.**[123]
23 March 1843 Blessing to Joseph Kingsbury[124]	I Seal the[e] up to **come forth in the first reserection** unto **Eternal Life** — And thy Companion Caroline [Whitney Kingsbury] who is now dead **thou Shalt have in the first Reserection** . . . no one Shall have power to take her from thee, And you both Shall be **crowned** and enthrowned to **dwell together** in a Kingdom in the Celestial Glory **in the presents of God.**
2 April 1843 Instruction[125]	Then the white stone mentioned in Rev. c 2 v 17 is the Urim & Thummim whereby all things pertaining to an higher order of kingdoms even all kingdoms[126] will be made known and ~~a~~ the white stone is given to each of those who come into ~~this~~ the celestial kingdom, whereon is a new name written which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. The new name is the key word.

Document	Text
14 May 1843 Discourse[127]	That more sure word of prophecy that they were **sealed in the heavens** & had the promise of **eternal live** in the kingdom of God — Then **knowledge through our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ** — is the grand key that unlocks the glories & misteries of the kingdom of heaven . . . the main key that unlocks the heavens & puts in our possession the glories of the celestial world.
16 May 1843 Instruction[128]	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 (i e) 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. . . . In the celestial glory there was three heavens or degrees, and in order to obtain the highest a man must enter into **this order of the priesthood** and if he dont he cant obtain it. He may enter into the other but that is the end of his kingdom he cannot have an increase.
25 November 1843 Remarks[129]	If any man commit adultery He could not received the celestial kingdom of God even if he was saved in any kingdom[130] it could not be the celestial kingdom.
21 January 1844 Discourse[131]	Any person who is exhalted to the highest mansion has to **abide a celestial law** & the whole law to[o] . . . . How many will be able to **abide a celestial law** & go through & recieve their exhaltation I am unable to say but many are called & few are chosen.
10 March 1844 Discourse[132]	By this we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise ie Elijah To obtain this sealing is to make our calling and election sure which we ought to give all diligence to accomplish there are two sins agains which this power does not secure or prevail they are "The sin against the Holy Ghost" And "shedding of innocent Blood" which is equivelant to "crucifying the son of God afresh & putting him to an open shame" Those who do these it is impossible to renew unto repentance for they are delivered to the buffettings of satan untill the day of redemptions 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 prom[i]se that God would not leave his soul in Hell[133]

Document	Text
15 March 1844 Blessing to John and Catharine Wilkie[134]	May their hearts expand and become enlarged to receive the **fulness: of the blessings** of <the> Kingdom of heaven . . . and their **faith increase from day to day untill they shall have power to lay hold on the blessings of God** and the gifts of the spirit untill they are satisfied, and finally may they live to a good old age and when they have lived while they desire life may the[y] die in peace and be received into the mansions of **eternal life** and enjoy a celestial glory for ever and ever.
7 April 1844 Discourse[135]	Those who have **died in the faith** are now in the selestial kingdom[136] of God, they have gone to await the resurrection of the dead to go to the celestial glory, while their is many who die who will have to wait many years, But I am authorized to say to you my friends in the name of the Lord that you may wait for your friends to come forth to meet you in Eternity **in the morn**[137] of *the celestial world*, those Saints who have been **murdered in the persecution shall triumph** in the celestial world.
12 May 1844 Discourse[138]	In order for you to receive your children to yourself, you must have a promise, **some ordinance**[139] some blessing— or else it may be an angel— they must rise just as they died— we can there hail our **lovely infants**[140] with the same glory, the same loveliness in the Celestial glory where they **all enjoy alike.**

12 May 1844 discourse

There is an additional instance of the word *celestial* in the text of Joseph Smith's 12 May 1844 discourse as published in *The Words of Joseph Smith* by Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook that does not appear in the JSP version of that discourse.

The original text was written by Thomas Bullock at the time of the discourse (and included in the JSP).[141] The text was inscribed into the Manuscript History of the Church probably in late 1855 or early 1856 with important insertions[142] and published in August 1857[143] (and included in *The Words of Joseph Smith*). A comparison of the original text with the altered text, as shown in table 2, notes the differences.

Ehat and Cook mistakenly attribute the expanded text to Joseph Smith, instead of the more likely George A. Smith, Wilford Woodruff, or Brigham Young.[144] However, despite the text being added in the 1850s, the insertions are another point of evidence to refute Flynn's second claim, as Ehat and Cook noted:

Table 2. Alterations to Joseph Smith's May 1844 Discourse.

Original	With Insertions
My text is 14 John In my Fathers house are many mansions &c In my Father's Kingdom are many Kingdoms — in order that ye may be heirs of God and joint heirs with me — I do not believe the methodist doctrine of sending honest men, and noble minded men to hell, along with the murderer and adulterer — they may hurl all their hell and fiery billows upon me, for they will roll off me as fast as they come on — but I have an order of things to save the poor fellows at any rate, and get them saved for I will send men to preach to them in prison and save them if I can. there is baptism &c for those who are alive, and baptism for the dead, all who died without the knowledge of the gospel I am going on in my progress for eternal life	My text is *on the resurrection of the dead, which you will find in the 14th ch. of* John. "In my Father's house are many mansions." *It should be,* "in my Father's Kingdom are many Kingdoms", in order that ye may be heirs of God and joint heirs with me. I do not believe the Methodist doctrine of sending honest men, and noble minded men to hell, along with the murderer and adulterer; they may hurl all their hell and fiery billows upon me, for they will roll off me as fast as they come on. But I have an order of things to save the poor fellows at any rate, and get them saved; for I will send men to preach to them in prison, and save them if I can. *There are mansions*[145] *for those who obey a celestial law, and there are other mansions for those who come short of that law; every man in his own order.* There is baptism &c for those *to exercise* who are alive, and baptism for the dead who died without the knowledge of the gospel. I am going on in my progress for eternal life

> Admittedly, D&C 131:1 could be interpreted as "In the heavens, there are the three glories: celestial, terrestrial and telestial." However, Joseph Smith clearly indicates in this sentence [about obeying a celestial law] that there are differences of glory within the Celestial Kingdom. This, therefore, effectively eliminates this possible alternate interpretation.[146]

Appendix 2: References to Degrees in the Celestial Kingdom after 1843

There are numerous references to degrees in the celestial kingdom after 1843. Below are the date, speaker, and type of source. For works available online, I provide only the citation in the cited note. For works not available online, I include the quotation in the bulleted list.

Discourses or articles by Church leaders from 1847 to 1925

The following are discourses or articles by Church leaders that I identified from 1847 to 1925 that explicitly reference the principle of degrees

in the celestial kingdom. Beginning in 1876, most references specify that there are three degrees.

- 15 January 1847, Orson Hyde, newspaper article[147]
- 6 April 1854, Brigham Young, general conference address[148]
- 8 March 1857, Brigham Young, address in the Tabernacle[149]
- 7 April 1859, Brigham Young, general conference address[150]
- 8 May 1859, Orson Pratt, address in the Tabernacle[151]
- 15 May 1859, Orson Hyde, address in the Tabernacle[152]
- 28 August 1859, Orson Pratt, address in the Tabernacle[153]
- 27 August 1867, Brigham Young, address in Lehi, Utah[154]
- 7 October 1869, Orson Pratt, address in the Tabernacle[155]
- 19 January 1873, Orson Pratt, address in Salt Lake City[156]
- 30 May 1875, Orson Pratt, address in the Tabernacle[157]
- 24 June 1883, Erastus Snow, address in Parowan, Utah[158]
- 10 November 1918, George F. Richards, address at a mission conference[159]
- 22 September 1922, Melvin J. Ballard, address in Ogden Tabernacle[160]
- 25 October 1925, Melvin J. Ballard, address in the Tabernacle[161]

Church publications from 1893 to 1955

The following are Church publications (or works published under the direction of Church leaders) between 1893 and 1955 that explicitly reference the principle of three degrees in the celestial kingdom (sometimes using the phrase "highest degree in the celestial kingdom").

- 1893, B. H. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*[162]
- 1899, James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*[163]
- 1901, unknown writer, Young Men Mutual Improvement Association lesson manual[164]
- 1904, Joseph B. Keeler, reference book for Church schools[165]
- 1912, James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord*[166]
- 1914, Orson F. Whitney, Melchizedek Priesthood quorums lesson book[167]
- January and May 1922, unknown writer, lesson guides for the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association[168]
- 1930, unknown writer, British Mutual Improvement Association lesson manual[169]

  - » *Quotation:* "In the celestial or highest glory that God can confer on man — there are three degrees (Section 131:1–3)."
- 1933, unknown writer, Sunday School manual[170]
- 1941, unknown writer, Sunday School manual[171]
  - » *Quotation:* "Marriage is necessary to those who would aspire to the highest degree in the celestial kingdom."
- 1941, William E. Berrett, lesson book for Church seminaries[172]
  - » *Quotation:* "Within each glory [celestial, terrestrial, and telestial] there are again numerous divisions or gradations according to the worthiness of the individuals who enter therein. Concerning the celestial glory, for example, the Prophet said: [Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4]."
- October 1942, John A. Widtsoe, *Improvement Era* article[173]
- 1948, Joseph Fielding Smith, Melchizedek Priesthood quorums lesson book[174]
  - » *Quotation:* "There will be many who shall not be given the exaltation, and in the celestial kingdom in their saved condition are barred from passing by the angels and the gods who stand to guard the way to the exaltation and continuation of the seeds forever (Doctrine and Covenants 131; 132:16–17, 19–22)."
- March 1948, John A. Widstoe, *Improvement Era* article[175]
- 1955, William E. Berrett, Sunday School manual[176]

General conference addresses from 1940 to 2000

The following are general conference addresses from 1940 to 2000 that explicitly reference the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom. I include the position of the speaker after the name. I also note whether the reference was an explicit discussion or a passing reference (usually with a phrase like "the highest degree in the celestial kingdom").

- October 1940, George F. Richards, Apostle, reference[177]
- April 1949, Milton R. Hunter, Seventy, discussion[178]
- October 1950, Bruce R. McConkie, Seventy, discussion[179]
- April 1957, Bruce R. McConkie, Seventy, discussion[180]
- April 1957, Harold B. Lee, Apostle, discussion[181]
- October 1959, George Q. Morris, Apostle, discussion[182]
- April 1961, Delbert L. Stapley, Apostle, reference[183]

- April 1964, David O. McKay, President of the Church, reference[184]
- October 1964, Spencer W. Kimball, Apostle, discussion[185]
- October 1969, Milton R. Hunter, Seventy, discussion[186]
- October 1988, Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Church, reference[187]
- April 1989, Royden G. Derrick, Seventy, discussion[188]
- October 1991, Gordon B. Hinckley, Counselor in the First Presidency, reference[189]

There are numerous other instances when Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4 is quoted without comment or a repetition of something like the "highest degree of the celestial kingdom." I have not included those references.

Writings by Church members and others from 1888 to 1911

Based on his research, Flynn concluded that Latter-day Saints generally did not believe in degrees in the celestial kingdom before the 1920s.[190] However, in addition to the Church leaders and publications already referenced, there are multiple instances of Church members writing about this principle. The following are writings by Church members I identified from 1888 to 1911 that explicitly referenced the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom.

- 2 June 1888, Joseph E. Taylor, discourse in Logan Temple[191]
- 15 July 1893, Alfred Peterson, letter to a newspaper[192]
- March 1902, John Nicholson, newspaper editorial[193]
- 20 August 1903, unknown writer, newspaper editorial[194]
- 21 January 1909, William A. Morton, newspaper editorial[195]
- 15 June 1911, S. N. L., newspaper editorial[196]

I also found a reference by Christian ministers who included this principle in a critique of Latter-day Saint doctrine. This reference is included here simply to demonstrate that even non-Latter-day Saints recognized that Saints in the early 1900s were taught about the principle of degrees in the celestial kingdom:

- 4 June 1907, Christian ministers, statement critiquing Latter-day Saint doctrine[197]

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Notes

1. See "Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76]," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/1.
2. "Instruction, 16 May 1843," p. 15–16, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-16-may-1843/3.
3. See "Kingdoms of Glory," Topics and Questions, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/kingdoms-of-glory; Dallin H. Oaks, "Kingdoms of Glory," *Liahona*, November 2023, 26–29, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2023/10/17oaks.
4. See Shannon P. Flynn, "Three Sub-degrees in the Celestial Kingdom?" in *Continuing Revelation: Essays on Doctrine*, ed. Bryan Buchanan (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2021), 127–40. This is an expansion of his blog post, see Shannon P. Flynn, "Three sub-degrees in the Celestial Kingdom?" *By Common Consent* (blog), 19 April 2018, bycommonconsent.com/2018/04/18/three-sub-degrees-in-the-celestial-kingdom/. A one-paragraph review of Flynn's essay is included in Ron Bartholomew, "Continuing Revelation: Essays on Doctrine by Bryan Buchanan," *Journal of Mormon History* 49, no. 1 (2023): 152, doi.org/10.5406/24736031.49.1.17.
5. See Chad Nielsen, "In the celestial glory there was three heavens," *Times And Seasons* (blog), 15 March 2023, archive.timesandseasons.org/2023/03/in-the-celestial-glory-there-was-three-heavens/; Kurt Manwaring, "Are There 3 Degrees in the Celestial Kingdom?" *From the Desk* (blog), 11 May 2025, fromthedesk.org/sub-degrees-of-glory-celestial-kingdom-flynn/; Steven C. Harper, *Doctrine and Covenants Contexts* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2024), 245–46, byustudies.byu.edu/online-book/doctrine-and-covenants-contexts/1353. For an earlier example of this proposition, see Kevin Barney, "Is the Celestial Kingdom Divided into Three Subdegrees?" By Common Consent (blog), 18 March 2006, bycommonconsent.com/2006/03/18/is-the-celestial-kingdom-divided-into-three-subdegrees/.
6. Flynn, "Three Sub-degrees?" 131. See also Harper, *Doctrine and Covenants Contexts*, 246.
7. Flynn, "Three sub-degrees?" 132–34, 136, 138–39.
8. Flynn, "Three sub-degrees?" 136, 139–40.
9. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: S. Converse, 1828), s.v. "celestial," archive.org/details/americandictiona01websrich/page/352/mode/2up.

10. Jim Hansen, "Degrees of Glory: A Brief History of Heaven and Graded Salvation," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 59 (2023): 100, interpreterfoundation.org/journal/degrees-of-glory-a-brief-history-of-heaven-and-graded-salvation. See also Elizabeth Tingle, "Changing Western European Visions of Christian Afterlives, 1350–1700: Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory," in *A Companion to Death, Burial, and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, c. 1300–1700*, ed. Philip Booth and Elizabeth Tingle (Boston: Brill, 2021), 39–71; Gary Scott Smith, *Heaven in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47–69. See also references in note 14.
11. J. B. Haws, "Joseph Smith, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Section 76: Importance of the Bible in Latter-day Revelation," in *The Doctrine and Covenants, Revelations in Context*, ed. Andrew H. Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman, Alonzo L. Gaskill (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University [BYU]; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008), rsc.byu.edu/doctrine-covenants-revelations-context/joseph-smith-emanuel-swedenborg-section-76-importance-bible-latter-day-revelation.
12. See Flynn, "Three sub-degrees?" 130. Flynn specifically names William Clayton, who was the scribe for Joseph's 1843 instruction. However, the idea can be applied to any Latter-day Saint.
13. By May 1843, Clayton had studied and taught Joseph Smith's revelations since Clayton's conversion in 1837, had heard Joseph preach regularly since 1840, and had served as his personal scribe since 1842. He would therefore have been familiar with Joseph Smith's usage of the word *celestial*. See James B. Allen, *No Toil Nor Labor Fear: The Story of William Clayton* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2002), 7–10, 17–18, 24–27, 63–71, 105–20.
14. See Mark Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting for Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009), 319–30; Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 195–202; Jubal Lotze, "Joseph Smith's Vision of the Celestial Kingdom: Context, Content, Ritualization, Canonization, and Theological Implications" (master's thesis, BYU, 2020), 6–9, scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/8108/.
15. "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 183, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/189.
16. In the vision text, the word *glory* is not used for this group. In a December 1832 revelation, the Lord revealed that this group inherits "a kingdom that is not a kingdom of glory." "Revelation, 27–28 December 1832 [D&C 88:1–126]," p. 36, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-27-28-december-1832-dc-881-126/4. See also character 2.26 in "Comparison of Characters," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/back/comparison-of-characters.
17. See "Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76]," p. 1–10, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/1. The words *bodies*, *glory*, and *world* are used to describe three groups who

receive a glory, but *kingdom* is not. Rather, associating *kingdom* with celestial, terrestrial, or telestial would first occur in a December 1832 revelation. See "Revelation, 27–28 December 1832 [D&C 88:1–126]," p. 34–36, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-27-28-december-1832-dc-881-126/2.

18. See Matthew McBride, "The Vision," *Revelations in Context: The Stories behind the Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Matthew McBride and James Goldberg (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016), churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/revelations-in-context/the-vision.
19. See Historical introduction, "Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76]," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/1#historical-intro.
20. See Historical introduction, "Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76]," p. 2n10. See also, "Revelations printed in The Evening and the Morning Star, June 1832–June 1833," p. 2–3, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelations-printed-in-the-evening-and-the-morning-star-june-1832-june-1833/4.
21. See "Revelations printed in Evening and Morning Star, January 1835–June 1836," p. 27–30, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelations-printed-in-evening-and-morning-star-january-1835-june-1836/7.
22. See McBride, "The Vision."
23. "History, 1838–1856, volume B-1 [1 September 1834–2 November 1838]," p. 762, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-b-1-1-september-1834-2-november-1838/216.
24. See "A Vision," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 2, no. 2 (June 1841): 17–21, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/MStar/id/73/rec/1. See also "Revelation Given December 27, 1832," *Millennial Star* 1, no. 10 (February 1841): 245–46, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/MStar/id/118/rec/1.
25. "Daybook (31 December 1835 - 3 January 1837)," p. 63, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/p/j6Wy. The missionary was Wilford Woodruff, who at this time was not a Church leader.
26. See entry for 24 April 1837, in "Minute Book 2," p. 74, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minute-book-2/76. A Church council heard charges against Lyman Wight for teaching that the older version of the revelations, the Book of Commandments, was superior (a "celestial law") to the new version of the revelations, the Doctrine and Covenants (a "telestial law"). The council sanctioned him for this teaching. The use of *celestial* and *telestial* did not seem to be the problem; rather, the issue was Wight preferring old revelation to new revelation.
27. See "John Corrill, "A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1839," p. 46–47, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/john-corrill-a-brief-history-of-the-church-of-christ-of-latter-day-saints-1839/45.

28. Contrary to Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1993), 52–54; Underwood, "Saved or Damned: Tracing a Persistent Protestantism in Early Mormon Thought," *BYU Studies* 25, no. 3 (1985): 85–103, byustudies.byu.edu/article/saved-or-damned-tracing-a-persistent-protestantism-in-early-mormon-thought. Underwood claims that among Latter-day Saints, even after Joseph's 1832 vision, the term *celestial kingdom* "was understood in the usual way as a synonym for heaven." He supports this claim by positing that "discussion, even mention, of the 'Terrestrial' or 'Telestial' kingdoms . . . appears to have been almost nonexistent" (*The Millenarian World*, 53). This argument from silence is untenable on two counts. First, as shown in this article, concepts from the vision were likely well known by Latter-day Saints, so it is safe to assume that they used terms like *celestial* with that understanding. Second, even in today's Church, references to the terrestrial or telestial kingdoms are rare. For example, a word search of the LDS General Conference Corpus (lds-general-conference.org/) for the years 2000–2025 showed twenty uses of *telestial*, twenty of *terrestrial*, and an astounding 372 of *celestial*. This disparity appears despite the contemporary universal understanding of there being three degrees of glory. Consequently, a similar imbalance in the 1830s—a period for which surviving records are limited—cannot support the argument that early Latter-day Saints retained a binary heaven-or-hell framework.

29. "Revelation, 1 March 1832 [D&C 78]," p. 1–2, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-1-march-1832-dc-78/1.

30. Whether the 1 March revelation or the New Testament revision came first is uncertain. Joseph Smith revised 1 Corinthians 15 sometime between 16 February and early March 1832. See Kent P. Jackson, *Understanding Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2021), 5. Because 1 Corinthians 15 comes about three-quarters of the way through the text revised during this roughly three-week period, I have placed its revision in early March.

31. "New Testament Revision 2," p. 129–30 (second numbering), The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/new-testament-revision-2/197; compare with "Bible Used for Bible Revision," p. 699, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/bible-used-for-bible-revision/821.

32. "Revelation, 27–28 December 1832 [D&C 88:1–126]," p. 34–36, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-27-28-december-1832-dc-881-126/2. The revelation also used the term *celestial spirit* and connected that term with the righteous who will inherit the celestialized earth.

33. "Letter to the Church, circa February 1834," p. 135, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-church-circa-february-1834/1. See also the entry for this document in appendix 1.

34. Michael MacKay and Daniel Belnap, "The Pure Language Project," *Journal of Mormon History* 49, no. 4 (2023): 2, 20–21, 26–32; the "Sample of Pure Language" document is also relevant, 8–10. See also notes 105–8 in appendix 1.

35. "Letter to Church Leaders in Geneseo, New York, 23 November 1833," p. [3], The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-church-leaders-in-geneseo-new-york-23-november-1833/3.

36. See "History, 1838–1856, volume B-1 [1 September 1834–2 November 1838]," p. 762, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-b-1-1-september-1834-2-november-1838/216.

37. "History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834]," p. 192, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/198.

38. "Poem to William W. Phelps, between circa 1 and circa 15 February 1843," p. 85, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/poem-to-william-w-phelps-between-circa-1-and-circa-15-february-1843/4; cf. pages 82–85.

39. The unfolding understanding of eternal marriage is also an important context for this instruction. See Lotze, "Joseph Smith's Vision of the Celestial Kingdom," 56–58; Historical introduction, "Revelation, 12 July 1843 [D&C 132]," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-july-1843-dc-132/1#historical-intro.

40. See historical introduction, "Instruction, 16 May 1843," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-16-may-1843/1#historical-intro.

41. On the everlasting covenant being connected with the celestial glory, see "Letter to Church Brethren, 15 June 1835," p. 1n3, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-church-brethren-15-june-1835/1. Further, the term "new and everlasting covenant" would, two months after this May 1843 instruction, be clearly connected with celestial kingdom concepts. See "Revelation, 12 July 1843 [D&C 132]," p. 1–3, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-july-1843-dc-132/1.

42. The 1832 vision spoke of priesthood ordinances and authority only in context of the celestial glory (for example, baptism, laying on of hands, "him who is ordained and sealed unto this power"). Thus, *priesthood* here is best understood with that association.

43. "Instruction, 16 May 1843," p. 14–16, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-16-may-1843/2.

44. Flynn, "Three Sub-degrees?" 132. These instances were in August 1859, January 1873, and May 1875. See appendix 2 for citations.

45. See "History of Joseph Smith," *Deseret News* 6, no. 29 (24 September 1856): 225, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2573957. This was a series publishing the Manuscript History of the Church. The instruction had been inscribed into the Manuscript History probably in late 1854 or early 1855 with very minor alterations (such as punctuation). See "History Draft [1 March–31 December 1843]," p. 31, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-draft-1-march-31-december-1843/42; "History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843]," p. 1551, The

Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/194.

46. "A Diagram of the Kingdom of God," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 9, no. 2 (15 January 1847): 23, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/6cb8c607-ac4c-4869-b5c9-57cfda52acf5/0/6. The article was unsigned, but Orson Hyde was the editor of this issue (see p. 32) and is thus typically attributed as the author. For example, see Jonathan A. Stapley, "Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 63.

47. "Minutes of the General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 16, no. 28 (15 July 1854): 437–38, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101076460078&seq=453.

48. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:271–72 (8 March 1857), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/488/rec/5. The quoted text is very similar to the report in Wilford Woodruff's journal entry for 8 March 1857. See "Journal (January 1, 1854–December 31, 1859)," March 7, 1857–March 10, 1857, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/p/58lK.

49. For sermons included in the *Journal of Discourses* that were recorded and reported by George Watt, "the precise wording and exact examples and phrases used by the speaker cannot be relied upon with any degree of certainty." Gerrit Dirkmaat and LaJean Purcell Carruth, "The Prophets Have Spoken, but What Did They Say? Examining the Differences between George D. Watt's Original Shorthand Notes and the Sermons Published in the *Journal of Discourses*," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (2015): 28, byustudies.byu.edu/article/the-prophets-have-spoken-but-what-did-they-say-examining-the-differences-between-george-d-watts-original-shorthand-notes-and-the-sermons-published-in-the-journal-of-discourses.

50. "Brigham Young, 1859 April 7," p. 4–5, in "Church History Department Pitman Shorthand transcriptions, 2013–2025," Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter, "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions"), catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/093e861b-f5af-4d04-aa21-c4bdcd2bc4c6/0/0; bracketed material in original transcription, except for [sic]. A brief summary of his address is in "Minutes of the Annual Conference," *Deseret News* 9, no. 6 (13 April 1859): 41, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2590746.

51. Brigham may have been reminded of Joseph's instruction when Brigham reviewed the instruction in the Manuscript History of the Church prior to its publication (see note 45). See "Introduction to History, 1838–1856 (Manuscript History of the Church)," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/intro/introduction-to-history-1838-1856-manuscript-history-of-the-church; Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4: 439–73, byustudies.byu.edu/article/the-writing-of-joseph-smiths-history.

52. See "Tabernacle," *Deseret News* 9, no. 10 (11 May 1859): 80, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2588246. A transcription of Pratt's discourse does not seem to be extant.

53. "Orson Hyde, 1859 May 15," p. 7–8, in "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions,"

catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e686c84d-a52e-4330-bdb6-91a76d340f7b/0/0. See Matthew 13:3–8, 18–23. An abbreviated summary of Hyde's discourse is "Tabernacle," *Deseret News* 9, no. 11 (18 May 1859): 88, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2588302. Recently, Jim Hansen made the same connection between the parable of the sower and the degrees in the celestial kingdom. See Hansen, "Degrees of Glory," 102.

54. "Brigham Young (Lehi), 1867 August 27," p. 3, in "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions," catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/a16cd766-15e9-4f29-991f-ee14653dd211/0/0.

55. *Journal of Discourses*, 15:319 (19 January 1873), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/5592/rec/16.

56. See The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Doctrine and Covenants," Church History Topics, Gospel Library, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/topics/doctrine-covenants.

57. The sermon was Joseph E. Taylor, "The Resurrection," *The Deseret Weekly* 38, no. 1 (29 December 1888): 26, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2675585. The sermon was delivered in June and printed in December. For Taylor's position, see "Patriarch Taylor is Called Beyond," *Deseret Evening News*, 18 February 1913, p. 1, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=24995832.

58. B. H. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Company, 1893), 426, archive.org/details/outlinesofeccles00brobe/page/426/mode/2up. This book was published for almost a century, with the last "official" edition being published in 1979. See entry in WorldCat for OCLC number 4775934.

59. In *Journal of Discourses*, 24:161 (24 June 1883), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/8599/rec/25.

60. For a current example of being referenced, see "Articles of Faith 1:1–4" and "Articles of Faith 1:5–13" in *The Pearl of Great Price Student Manual, Religion 327* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2017), churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/the-pearl-of-great-price-student-manual-2018/the-articles-of-faith/articles-of-faith-1-1-4.

61. See preface to James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith: A Series of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1899), archive.org/details/articlesfaithas00talmgoog/page/n10/mode/2up. Further, Talmage had preached the principle of multiple degrees within the three kingdoms six years earlier. See "Church Theology Class," *The Deseret Weekly* 47, no. 22 (18 November 1893): 688, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2740078.

62. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 420.

63. The only changes were minor editing updates. The next paragraph in the book—a discussion about advancement between the telestial, terrestrial, and celestial kingdoms—had significant changes between the first edition and later editions. See Ben Spackman, "James E. Talmage, the Articles of Faith, and Progression between Kingdoms: New Light," Ben Spackman (blog), 17 August

2021, benspackman.com/2021/08/james-e-talmage-the-articles-of-faith-and-progression-between-kingdoms/.

64. James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1912), 99, archive.org/details/TalmageTheHouseOfTheLord/page/n113/mode/2up. See also James E. Talmage, "The Philosophical Basis of 'Mormonism,'" *Improvement Era* 18, no. 11 (September 1915): 956, archive.org/details/improvementera18011unse/page/956/mode/2up.

65. Orson F. Whitney, *Gospel Themes: A Treatise on Salient Features of "MORMONISM"* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1914), 44, archive.org/details/gospelthemestre00whit/page/44/mode/2up.

66. Melvin J. Ballard, *Discourse: Three Degrees of Glory* (Mount Ogden Stake Genealogical Committee, 1922), 10–11, archive.org/details/threedegreesofgl00ballrich/page/10/mode/2up. The citation to Doctrine and Covenants 131:1 came a few paragraphs after the text quoted here. See also Melvin J. Ballard, "The Purpose of Life," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 83, no. 1 (7 January 1926): 7; no. 2 (14 January 1926): 18, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89073243263&seq=19.

67. Flynn, "Three sub-degrees?', 137–38. The manual was *The Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual, Religion 324–25* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981), 325, churchofjesuschrist.org/bc/content/shared/content/english/pdf/language-materials/32493_eng.pdf. The conference addresses were by Milton R. Hunter in 1949 and 1969 and Royden G. Derrick in 1989 (see appendix 2).

68. See Oaks, "Kingdoms of Glory"; Russell M. Nelson, "Celestial Marriage," *Ensign*, November 2008, 92–94, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2008/10/celestial-marriage.

69. "Kingdoms of Glory," Topics and Questions. See also *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual, Religion 324–325* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), 765, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-student-manual-2017/chapter-51-doctrine-and-covenants-131-132-1-33.

70. Flynn, "Three sub-degrees?", 139.

71. See also "Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76]," p. 8, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/8.

72. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), 2:22. For a similar statement by Joseph Fielding's father, see Joseph F. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses*, 21:12 (7 December 1879), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/7900.

73. *Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual, Religion 324–325* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), 403, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-student-manual-2017/chapter-28-doctrine-and-covenants-76-50-119. For a similar reference in a much earlier Church manual, see *Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations Manual, 1901–1902, Subject: Principles of the Gospel, Part 1* (Salt Lake

City: Deseret News, 1901), 52, archive.org/details/principlesofgosp00unse/page/52/mode/2up.

74. Charles W. Penrose, *Conference Report*, April 1922, 30–31, emphasis added, archive.org/details/conferencereport1922a/page/30/mode/2up

75. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:139 (28 Jul 1861). Other statements by Brigham seem to indicate he believed there were more than just the three general kingdoms of glory. See *Journal of Discourses*, 6:347 (31 July 1859); 8:35 (6 Apr 1860); 8:154 (26 Aug 1860); "Brigham Young, 1864 April 10," p. 13, in "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions," catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/1b05b8ac-235b-424e-b973-2cffdc7f5183/0/0. See also "Discourse, 30 January 1842," p. [4], The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-30-january-1842/2.

76. John A. Widtsoe, "Evidences and Reconciliations: cxxi. How May Membership and Exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom Be Won?" *Improvement Era* 51, no. 3 (March 1948): 161, archive.org/details/improvementera5103unse/page/160/mode/2up. See also the 1955 Sunday School manual: William E. Berrett, *Teachings of The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School General Board, [1955]), 74–75, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/7d491752-b10a-4498-a4bf-f8280498c56a/0/81.

77. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith*, 420, emphasis added. See also Talmage, *The House of the Lord,* 99; James E. Talmage, "The Philosophical Basis of 'Mormonism,'" *Improvement Era* 18, no. 11 (September 1915): 956, archive.org/details/improvementera18011unse/page/956/mode/2up.

78. Dallin H. Oaks, "Divine Love in the Father's Plan," *Liahona*, May 2022, 101–2, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2022/04/51oaks.

79. See D. Todd Christofferson, "The Love of God," *Liahona*, November 2021, 16–18, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2021/10/15christofferson.

80. Oaks, "Kingdoms of Glory," 26.

81. Oaks, "Kingdoms of Glory," 27, empasis added.

82. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011), 418, emphasis added, online at churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-joseph-smith/chapter-36.

83. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland stated,

> For various reasons, marriage and children are not immediately available to all. Perhaps no offer of marriage is forthcoming. Perhaps even after marriage there is an inability to have children. Or perhaps there is no present attraction to the opposite gender. Whatever the reason, God's richest blessings will eventually be available to all of His children if they are clean and faithful.

"Helping Those Who Struggle with Same-Gender Attraction," *Ensign*, October 2007, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2007/10/helping-those-who-struggle-with-same-gender-attraction. See also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Howard W. Hunter* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2015), 212, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual

/teachings-of-presidents-of-the-church-howard-w-hunter/chapter-16-marriage-an-eternal-partnership.

84. See Oaks, "Kingdoms of Glory"; "Divine Love in the Father's Plan."

85. *Celestial*, even when used by others in The Joseph Smith Papers, usually referred to the highest degree of glory. For example, in a letter to the Saints, Orson Hyde used "celestial tears" (coming from seraphs around the throne of God), "celestial radiance" (coming from the sun), and "celestial strength" (coming from God). See Orson Hyde, in "*Times and Seasons*, 1 June 1842," p. 805, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/times-and-seasons-1-june-1842/7; "*Times and Seasons*, 15 July 1842," p. 847, 849, 852, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/times-and-seasons-15-july-1842/1. As one counterexample, "his Celestial Majesty" was used in reference to the emperor of China. See "History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842]," p. 1225, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/397.

86. Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 200–1.

87. "Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76]," p. 1–10, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/1

88. "Revelation, 1 March 1832 [D&C 78]," p. 1–2, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-1-march-1832-dc-78/1.

89. "New Testament Revision 2," p. 129–30 (second numbering), The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/new-testament-revision-2/197; compare with "Bible Used for Bible Revision," p. 699, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/bible-used-for-bible-revision/821. On the date of the revision, see note 30.

90. "Bible Used for Bible Revision," p. 699, The Joseph Smith Papers.

91. "New Testament Revision 2," p. 129–30 (second numbering), The Joseph Smith Papers.

92. "Revelation, 27–28 December 1832 [D&C 88:1–126]," p. 34, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-27-28-december-1832-dc-881-126/2.

93. "Letter to Noah C. Saxton, 4 January 1833," p. 16–17, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-noah-c-saxton-4-january-1833/3.

94. "Letter to Edward Partridge, 5 December 1833," p. 69, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-edward-partridge-5-december-1833/5.

95. The Lord had defined His rest as "the fulness of his glory." "Revelation, 22–23 September 1832 [D&C 84]," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-22-23-september-1832-dc-84/1.

96. "Letter to Edward Partridge and Others, 10 December 1833," p. 71, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-edward-partridge-and-others-10-december-1833/2.

97. "Revelation, 16–17 December 1833 [D&C 101]," p. 79, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-16-17-december-1833-dc-101/7.

98. "Letter to the Church, circa February 1834," p. 135–36, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-church-circa-february-1834/1.

99. "Letter to the Church, circa March 1834," p. 142–43, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-church-circa-march-1834/1. This is a continuation of the February 1834 letter.

100. "Revelation, 22 June 1834 [D&C 105]," p. 199, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-22-june-1834-dc-105/1.

101. "Ordination and Blessing of Oliver Cowdery, 5 December 1834," p. 19, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/ordination-and-blessing-of-oliver-cowdery-5-december-1834/1.

102. "Blessing to Willard Snow, 1 March 1835," p. 175, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/blessing-to-willard-snow-1-march-1835/1.

103. This may have been a reference to the state of paradise between death and the resurrection. Even if that is the case, this is still connected to the celestial glory of the 1832 vision. See note 136.

104. "Comparison of Characters," The Joseph Smith Papers. All bracketed text is from the JSP. For an explanation of the documents, including the bracketed numbers, see "Introduction to Egyptian Alphabet Documents, circa Early July–circa November 1835," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/introduction-to-egyptian-alphabet-documents-circa-early-july-circa-november-1835/1. Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and W. W. Phelps each wrote an alphabet. Joseph's text is featured here (Cowdery's text was nearly identical), with the alternate text by Phelps.

105. "Comparison of Characters." See also MacKay and Belnap, "The Pure Language Project," 30–31. This document was created by William W. Phelps and Warren Parrish. "It is not known whether Joseph Smith directed the production of this volume or whether Joseph Smith or others besides Phelps and Parrish were involved with the project, but it is almost certain that Joseph Smith at least knew and approved of the work Phelps and Parrish were doing," so this example is included here as a Joseph Smith document. Historical introduction, "Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language, circa July–circa November 1835," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/grammar-and-alphabet-of-the-egyptian-language-circa-july-circa-november-1835/93#historical-intro.

106. See MacKay and Belnap, "The Pure Language Project," 32.

107. That *celestial* is here referring to the celestial kingdom (and is not a synonym for the generic *heaven*) is clearly indicated by Kolob being *near* the celestial, not *in* the celestial. See also MacKay and Belnap, "The Pure Language Project," 30–31. Further, the astronomy depicted in the Book of Abraham is very similar to the celestial hierarchy described in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, in which

there are eight levels or firmaments. God and his throne are in the eighth firmament, while the stars are in the fifth, thus clearly distinguishing God's residence from the rest of the heavens. See John Gee, William J. Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson, "'And I Saw the Stars': The Book of Abraham and Ancient Geocentric Astronomy," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, BYU, 2005), 9.

108. It was later revealed that "Kolob was after the manner of the Lord, according to its times and seasons in the Revolutions thereof, that one revolution was a day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning, it being one thousand years according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest; this is the reckoning of the Lord's time." "Book of Abraham and Facsimiles, 1 March–16 May 1842," p. 719, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-abraham-and-facsimiles-1-march-16-may-1842/5. This correlates with Joseph Smith's teaching that God's time is according to the planet on which He resides; see "Instruction, 2 April 1843, as Reported by William Clayton [D&C 130]," p. 68, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-2-april-1843-as-reported-by-william-clayton-dc-130/3.

109. "Prayer, 23 October 1835," p. 51, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/prayer-23-october-1835/2.

110. "Discourse, 12 November 1835," p. 34, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-12-november-1835/5.

111. This is connected with the earth becoming both celestialized and the dwelling-place of those who receive the celestial kingdom. See the 5 January 1841 Discourse in table 1.

112. "Journal, 1835–1836," p. 61, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/62.

113. "Visions, 21 January 1836 [D&C 137]," p. 136–38, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/visions-21-january-1836-dc-137/1.

114. "Discourse, 5 January 1841, as Reported by Unidentified Scribe," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-5-january-1841-as-reported-by-unidentified-scribe/1.

115. "Letter to Oliver Granger, 26 January 1841," p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-oliver-granger-26-january-1841/2.

116. "Journal, December 1841–December 1842," p. 57, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1841-december-1842/12. "While nothing explicitly identifies [this] statement as Joseph Smith's, its content and tone suggest that it, or its main ideas, originated with him rather than with Willard Richards," the scribe. "Journal, December 1841–December 1842," p. 57, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1841-december-1842/12n50.

117. "Discourse, 30 January 1842," p. 3–4, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-30-january-1842/1.

118. "Book of Abraham Excerpt and Facsimile 2, 15 March 1842 [Abraham 2:19–5:21]," p. 0, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-abraham-excerpt-and-facsimile-2-15-march-1842-abraham-219-521/5; see also "Explanation of Facsimile 2, circa 15 March 1842," p. [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/explanation-of-facsimile-2-circa-15-march-1842/1.
119. See notes 107 and 108.
120. "Discourse, 20 March 1842, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff," p. 136, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-20-march-1842-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/3.
121. "Poem to William W. Phelps, between circa 1 and circa 15 February 1843," p. 84, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/poem-to-william-w-phelps-between-circa-1-and-circa-15-february-1843/3. This is a re-rendering of the text of the 1832 vision.
122. "Letter to James Arlington Bennet, 17–18 March 1843," p. 2–3, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-james-arlington-bennet-17-18-march-1843/2.
123. Alluding to "overcome all things" from the 1832 vision.
124. "Blessing to Joseph Kingsbury, 23 March 1843," p. 14–15, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/blessing-to-joseph-kingsbury-23-march-1843/1.
125. "Instruction, 2 April 1843, as Reported by William Clayton [D&C 130]," p. 69–70, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-2-april-1843-as-reported-by-william-clayton-dc-130/4.
126. The wording here indicates that *celestial kingdom* is one of many kingdoms and thus cannot be a reference to the generic *heaven*.
127. "Discourse, 14 May 1843," p. 32, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-14-may-1843/3.
128. "Instruction, 16 May 1843," p. 14–15, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-16-may-1843/2
129. "Remarks, 25 November 1843," p. 166, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/remarks-25-november-1843/1.
130. The wording here indicates that *celestial kingdom* is one of many kingdoms and thus cannot be a reference to the generic *heaven*.
131. "Discourse, 21 January 1844," p. 183, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-21-january-1844/3.
132. "Discourse, 10 March 1844, as Reported by Franklin D. Richards," p. 33–34, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-10-march-1844-as-reported-by-franklin-d-richards/2.
133. Those who would inherit the telestial glory were described as "they who are thrust down to hell these are they who shall not be redeemed from the devel untill the last reserection." "Vision, 16 February 1832 [D&C 76]," p. 7, The Joseph

Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/vision-16-february-1832-dc-76/7.

134. "Blessing to John and Catharine Paine Wilkie, 15 March 1844," p. 449, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/blessing-to-john-and-catharine-paine-wilkie-15-march-1844/1.

135. "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff," p. 139, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/7.

136. This instance of *celestial kingdom* does not directly refer to the celestial glory of the 1832 vision but rather the state of paradise between death and the resurrection. In the Book of Mormon, Alma had taught that when people die, their spirits, "whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life." Those who were righteous go to paradise (and those who were wicked to outer darkness) to await the resurrection. See "Book of Mormon, 1830," p. 334–35, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-mormon-1830/340. Still, *celestial kingdom* here is clearly connected with the final celestial glory because this "intermediate" paradise or celestial kingdom is the waiting place for those who will receive the final celestial kingdom, as indicated by the subsequent allusions. As support for this understanding, in an 1846 article, Orson Pratt described the spirit world as being divided into four groups corresponding to the four groups in the 1832 vision:

    1. Disembodied spirits in celestial paradise or place of happiness.
    2, Disembodied spirits in terrestrial paradise or prison.
    3, Disembodied spirits in telestial paradise or outer darkness.
    4. Disembodied spirits of the sons of perdition, the most degraded of all.

    "Mormon Philosophy," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 7, no. 2 (15 January 1846): 30, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/MStar/id/1402/rec/7.

137. "In the morn" was a reference to "in the morn of the resurrection," which applied to those who were faithful (or the resurrection of the just). See "Discourse, 16 April 1843, as Reported by Willard Richards," p. 140, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-16-april-1843-as-reported-by-willard-richards/2.

138. "Discourse, 12 May 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-12-may-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/2.

139. In the record of the 1832 vision, ordinances were only ever mentioned in connection with the celestial glory.

140. In 1836, Joseph Smith learned "that all children who die before they arive to the years of accountability, are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven." "Visions, 21 January 1836 [D&C 137]," p. 137, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/visions-21-january-1836-dc-137/2.

141. See "Discourse, 12 May 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," p. 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-12-may-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/2.

142. For the timing of the alterations, see historical introduction, "Discourse, 12 May 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-12-may-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/1#historical-intro, especially footnote 12. For the altered text, see "History, 1838–1856, volume F-1 [1 May 1844–8 August 1844]," p. 19, The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-f-1-1-may-1844-8-august-1844/25.

143. See "History of Joseph Smith," *Deseret News* 7, no. 23 (12 August 1857): 178, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2576260.

144. See "Introduction to History, 1838–1856 (Manuscript History of the Church)," The Joseph Smith Papers, josephsmithpapers.org/intro/introduction-to-history-1838-1856-manuscript-history-of-the-church; Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4: 439–73, byustudies.byu.edu/article/the-writing-of-joseph-smiths-history.

145. That this refers to multiple degrees within the celestial kingdom is implied by the second part of the statement—that there are other mansions for those not living in the celestial kingdom (referencing, presumably, the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms). This is in contrast to the teaching that individuals in the celestial kingdom inherit kingdoms, as in Orson Pratt, "Equality of dominion we cannot understand, by supposing each person that comes into the celestial glory is going to have the same number of worlds, and of kingdoms, and thrones set off to him that those have who have been in the celestial glory millions of ages," in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:103, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/7948/rec/3. See also the comment by Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook in the paragraph after the table.

146. "12 May 1844 (Sunday Morning). Temple Stand," *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1980), 403n24 (cf. 367–68), rsc.byu.edu/words-joseph-smith/12-may-1844-sunday-morning-temple-stand.

147. "A Diagram of the Kingdom of God," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 9, no. 2 (15 January 1847): 23, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/6cb8c607-ac4c-4869-b5c9-57cfda52acf5/0/6. Orson Hyde was the editor of this issue (see p. 32).

148. In "Minutes," *Deseret News* 4, no. 11 (13 April 1854): 42, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2580223.

149. *Journal of Discourses*, 4:271–272 (8 March 1857), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/488/rec/5. The quoted text is very similar to the report in Wilford Woodruff's journal entry for 8 March 1857. See "Journal (January 1, 1854 – December 31, 1859)," March 7, 1857 - March 10, 1857, The Wilford Woodruff Papers, wilfordwoodruffpapers.org/p/58lK.

150. "Brigham Young, 1859 April 7," p. 4–5, "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions," catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/093e861b-f5af-4d04-aa21-c4bdcd2bc4c6/0/0.

151. See discussion of this earlier in the article, including citations in notes 52 and 53.

152. "Orson Hyde, 1859 May 15," p. 7–8, in "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions,"

catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e686c84d-a52e-4330-bdb6-91a76d340f7b/0/0. An abbreviated summary of Hyde's discourse is "Tabernacle," *Deseret News* 9, no. 11 (18 May 1859).

153. "Orson Pratt, 1859 August 28," p. 35, in "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions," catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/bd7d8a5e-fc65-4ada-89e6-b669ae9afe2b/0/0; compare with *Journal of Discourses*, 7:89, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/3055/rec/8.

154. "Brigham Young (Lehi), 1867 August 27," p. 3, in "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions," catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/a16cd766-15e9-4f29-991f-ee14653dd211/0/0.

155. *Journal of Discourses*, 13:186, 187 (7 Oct 1869), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/4957/rec/14. Pratt is likely echoing what Young taught ten years earlier: "We see the world of mankind before us they have the ability to propagate their progeny if you and I are exalted into the celestial kingdom of our Father and God we have no less ability there than we have here." "Brigham Young (two sermons), 1859 October 6," p. 11, in "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions," catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/77f76f61-d243-4753-afc1-0aa9eb11aeeb/0/0.

156. *Journal of Discourses*, 15:318–19, 322 (19 January 1873), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/5593/rec/16.

157. "Orson Pratt, 1875 May 30," p. 49–51, in "Pitman Shorthand transcriptions," catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/9176e7d9-3168-431f-b765-f58f87080da1/0/0

158. *Journal of Discourses*, 24:161 (24 June 1883), contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/JournalOfDiscourses3/id/8599/rec/25.

159. "Minutes of the Nottingham Conference," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 80, no. 47 (21 November 1918): 749–50, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89073243156&seq=761

160. Ballard, *Discourse: Three Degrees of Glory*, 10–11.

161. Ballard, "The Purpose of Life," 18.

162. B. H. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Company, 1893), 426, archive.org/details/outlinesofeccles00brobe/page/426/mode/2up. Similar wording to his 1893 book, but omitting the sentence about the three heavens (and the citation to Doctrine and Covenants 131), is printed in his *A New Witness for God* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon, 1895), 390–91, archive.org/details/newwitnessforgod1895robe/page/390/mode/2up.

163. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith,* 420.

164. *Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations Manual, 1901–1902*, 52, 57.

165. Joseph B. Keeler, *The Lesser Priesthood and Notes on Church Government, Also a Concordance of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1904), 169–70, archive.org/details/keeler/page/n185/mode/2up. The book included a brief concordance of verses in the Doctrine and Covenants. The entry on celestial listed four scriptures: 76:70 (about the

celestial glory), 88:22, 25 (about abiding a celestial law and glory, and the earth abiding the celestial law), and 131:1 (in the celestial glory there are three heavens).

166. Talmage, *The House of the Lord*, 99.

167. Orson F. Whitney, *Gospel Themes: A Treatise on Salient Features of "MORMONISM,"* 44.

168. The January 1922 issue had a lesson about "the destiny of the unmarried," which stated: "The modern prophet Joseph Smith taught that no woman could enter the celestial kingdom without having been sealed to some man; but neither can a man enter there without his wife." An erratum to this lesson was published in the May issue, italics in original:

> Our attention is called to an error in Lesson XIV, "The Destiny of the Unmarried," paragraph one, page 57. It should read: The modern prophet, Joseph Smith, taught that no woman can enter into her *exaltation* in the Celestial Kingdom without having been sealed to some man; but neither can a man be *exalted* without his wife.

No indication is given of who noted the erratum, but the change indicates there was a desire to clarify the difference between entering the celestial kingdom and receiving exaltation in that kingdom. "Lesson XIV. The Destiny of the Unmarried," in "An Everlasting Covenant. Lessons on Marriage and Family Life. Senior Course of Study," *The Young Woman's Journal* 33, no. 1 (January 1922): 51, 56–57, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/YWJ/id/20493; "*Erratum*," in "M. I. A. Notes," *The Young Woman's Journal* 33, no. 5 (May 1922): 301, italics in original, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/YWJ/id/27158. The error in the original was reprinted in the January 1928 issue. See "Lesson XIV. The Destiny of the Unmarried," in "An Everlasting Covenant. Lessons on Marriage and Family Life. Senior Course of Study," *The Young Woman's Journal* 39, no. 1 (January 1928): 64, contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/YWJ/id/25770/rec/41.

169. *Modern Revelation As Contained in The Book of Doctrine and Covenants: A Study Course for the Mutual Improvement Associations in the British Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for the Year 1930–1931* (Liverpool, GB: Latter-day Saints, European Mission, British Mission, 1930), 63.

170. "Gospel Doctrine Sunday School Lessons" (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union Board, n.d.), 119, compiled in *Sunday School Lessons 1933, Vol. 6*, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d4d0166d-414e-48ce-96d2-c9287a1099d3/0/638.

171. *Gospel Doctrine Sunday School Lessons for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union Board, 1940), 117.

172. William Edwind Berrett, *Doctrines of the Restored Church: A Brief Treatment of the History, Beliefs, Doctrines and Literature of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Department of Education of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1941), 212. The content was merged in 1944 into the Church history book *The Restored Church*, which was used

"for decades [as] the approved text for the seminary course taken by high school seniors." "Chapter One: By Small and Simple Things, 1912–1935," in *By Study and Also by Faith: One Hundred Years of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2015), churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/by-study-and-also-by-faith/chapter-one-by-small-and-simple-things-1912-1935 (which incorrectly dated the book to 1943). See also "Acknowledgement—Fourth Edition," introductory matter in William Edwin Bennett, *The Restored Church: A Brief History of the Growth and Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Department of Education of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1944). This quote appeared identically in that book (p. 605).

173. John A. Widtsoe, "Evidences and Reconciliations: lvii. Are All Exalted Who Enter the Celestial Glory?" *Improvement Era* 45, no. 10 (October 1942): 641, 671, archive.org/details/improvementera4510unse/page/640/mode/2up.

174. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation: Being a Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums For the Year 1948* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, n.d.), 58.

175. John A. Widtsoe, "Evidences and Reconciliations: cxxi. How May Membership and Exaltation in the Celestial Kingdom Be Won?" *Improvement Era* 51, no. 3 (March1948):161,189,191,archive.org/details/improvementera5103unse/page/160/mode/2up.

176. William Edwin Berrett, *Teachings of The Doctrine and Covenants, Second Printing* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School General Board, 1955), 76, catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/7d491752-b10a-4498-a4bf-f8280498c56a/0/83

177. George F. Richards, Conference Report, October 1940, 51, archive.org/details/conferencereport1940sa/page/50/mode/2up

178. Milton R. Hunter, Conference Report, April 1949, 71, archive.org/details/conferencereport1949a/page/70/mode/2up.

179. Bruce R. McConkie, Conference Report, October 1950, 15, archive.org/details/conferencereport1950sa/page/14/mode/2up.

180. Bruce R. McConkie Conference Report, April 1957, 19, archive.org/details/conferencereport1957a/page/18/mode/2up.

181. Harold B. Lee, Conference Report, April 1957, 22, archive.org/details/conferencereport1957a/page/22/mode/2up.

182. George Q. Morris, Conference Report, October 1959, 48–49, archive.org/details/conferencereport1959sa/page/48/mode/2up. In his discussion of celestial marriage, Elder Morris states that those who reject it are shut out of God's glory. In context of the address, this seems to be different than being shut out of God's presence.

183. Delbert L. Stapley, Conference Report, April 1961, 66, archive.org/details/conferencereport1961a/page/66/mode/2up.

184. David O. McKay, Conference Report, April 1964, 45, archive.org/details/conferencereport1964a/page/44/mode/2up.

185. Spencer W. Kimball, Conference Report, October 1964, 27–28, archive.org/details/conferencereport1964sa/page/28/mode/2up.

186. Milton R. Hunter, Conference Report, October 1969, 79, archive.org/details/conferencereport1969sa/page/78/mode/2up.

187. Ezra Taft Benson, "To the Single Adult Sisters of the Church," *Ensign*, November 1988, 96–97, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1988/10/to-the-single-adult-sisters-of-the-church.

188. Royden G. Derrick, "The Way to Perfection," *Ensign*, May 1989, 76–77, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1989/04/the-way-to-perfection

189. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Daughters of God," *Ensign*, November 1991, 97–100, churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1991/10/daughters-of-god. I counted President Hinckley as an Apostle in my tally in the section "Elder Ballard's discourse."

190. Flynn, "Three Sub-degrees?", 133, 137–138.

191. Joseph E. Taylor, "The Resurrection," *The Deseret Weekly* 38, no. 1 (29 December 1888): 26, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2675585. The sermon was delivered in June and printed in December.

192. "What the Dead May Attain," *The Deseret Weekly* 47, no. 4 (15 July 1893): 105, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2740961. The editorial answer didn't indicate any problem with Peterson's assumption about degrees in the celestial kingdom. The answer focused on what it means for someone to receive the gospel in the flesh versus the spirit world, for receiving the celestial versus terrestrial glory.

193. "Answers to Questions: Relating to Degrees of Glory," *Improvement Era* 5, no. 5 (March 1902): 390–93, archive.org/details/improvementera0505unse/page/390/mode/2up. At the end of his discussion, Nicholson stated there are "two classes within the celestial degree," meaning married in the highest degree versus single in the lower two degrees.

194. "Editorial: Doctrine of Marriage," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 65, no. 34 (20 August 1903): 538, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89073242968&seq=550. Apostle Francis M. Lyman was the editor of the paper, but he was away when this issue was published, so I cannot say for certain that he wrote this editorial.

195. W. A. M. [William A. Morton], "To Him That Overcometh," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 71, no. 3 (21 January 1909): 33, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89073242919&seq=43

196. S. N. L., "Thy Brother Shall Rise Again," *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 73, no. 24 (15 June 1911): 379–80, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89073243057&seq=389. For the writer, see the *Millennial Star*, 73, no. 25 (22 June 1911), 396, babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89073243057&seq=406.

197. In a June 1907 statement, the Christian ministers included a quote from a Church manual about the celestial glory, including a description about "the highest degree of this glory." See "A Review of the 'Address to the World'

Issued in Defence of the Mormon Church," *Salt Lake Tribune* 75, no. 51 (4 June 1907): 7, newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=13918518; reprinted in B. H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints, Volume II* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1912), 274, 276, archive.org/details/defenseoffaithsa02robe/page/274/mode/2up.