

# INTERPRETER

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# INTERPRETER

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# A PLEA FOR NARRATIVE THEOLOGY: LIVING IN AND BY STORIES

*Louis C. Midgley*

*Abstract: The following are reflections on some of the complicated history, including the abuses, of what is commonly known as theology. The Saints do not “do theology.” Even when we are tempted, we do not reduce the contents or grounds of faith to something conforming to traditional theology. Instead, we tell stories of how and why we came to faith, which are then linked to a network of other stories found in our scriptures, and to a master narrative. We live in and by stories and not by either dogmatic or philosophically grounded systematic theology. Instead, we tend to engage in several strikingly different kinds of endeavors, especially including historical studies, which take the place of (and also clash with) what has traditionally been done under the name theology in its various varieties, confessional or otherwise.*

In 1992, I published an essay in which I pointed out the word “theology” and how much of what it describes originated with Plato, Aristotle, and the Orphics. The word is not found in the Bible or other LDS scriptures. It was borrowed by Origen (185-254) and developed by Augustine (354-430);<sup>1</sup> it was a late introduction from pagan sources. What I did not point out is that for Plato it consisted of the noble (and not base) lies told by poets to children and childlike adults. For Augustine, following

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Midgley, “Theology,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1475.

the academic philosopher Marcus Terentius Varro (116-26 BCE), theology was not seen as the words of God to human beings, but rather the crude civic cult or bizarre spoofing of such beliefs in the theater or the product of unaided human reason—that is, what philosophers say about divine things.<sup>2</sup>

Given the enormous influence of St. Augustine on the Roman Catholic Church and in different ways on the Protestant Reformation, Christians have been anxious to fashion rational proofs where God is pictured as an unembodied, simple, utterly impassive First Thing that caused, moved, and determined everything, including time and space.<sup>3</sup> Latter-day Saints clearly challenge this theological first principle of classical theism. One can trace this rejection of the theological impulse to the founding event of the Restoration of the Gospel. When Joseph Smith went into the Sacred Grove and asked which church he should join, he was told that he should join none of them.

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

Among other crucial differences, God is not to be understood by the Saints as a First Thing that created everything, including both time and space, out of nothing. Classical Christian theism presumes an infinite qualitative difference between the

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2 Louis Midgley, “The Utility of Faith Reconsidered,” in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002), 141-144.

3 The usual formula is “without body, parts, and passions.”

Absolute, Infinite, Unconditioned creator and all merely finite, existing things. For the Saints, God and other divine beings are still encountered from time to time by seers and prophets.

The scriptures are presented in narrative and dramatic form rather than as theological treatises. They tell stories instead of analyzing logical proofs. The narrative form is necessary because it relays to us those events that mark God's peculiar dealings with his children as well as the covenants they enter into as they wander on the path to return to Heavenly Father. But these narratives are not just stories. They convey hope to us as we see God reaching out to prophets and apostles, providing forgiveness as we repent. Through these stories we see how God acts and how revelation is given to us as a community of believers.

### Competing Stories

In assessing the primary difference between the faith of the Saints and that of the other versions of Christianity, Lutheran historian Martin E. Marty argues that the Latter-day Saint version of Christian faith is deeply “rooted in narrative,” whereas Protestant theologies tend to “combine the language of the Hebrew scriptures with mainly Greek philosophical concepts as filtered through academic experiences in Western Europe, most notably Germany.”<sup>4</sup> I believe he has identified a difference that makes a difference.

Marty also argues that the existence of the faith of Latter-day Saints, which is both constituted by and consists of stories—that is, historical accounts or narratives—should remind other Christians (despite the long tradition of creeds, confessions,

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4 Martin E. Marty, “Foreword,” to a collection of essays edited by Donald W. Musser and David L. Paulsen, entitled *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), p. vii. Something similar, he pointed out, is true for Roman Catholic theology, except that its European geographical location is different.

catechisms, catalogs of dogma, frozen abstractions, and dogmatic and systematic theologies) that their own faith is also “born of story and stories.”<sup>5</sup> Christian faith is generally, despite the heavy hand of classical theism, still necessarily rooted in a master narrative in which God once became human to reconcile his estranged children to himself.

### **An Essential Historical Grounding and Content**

Even the most careful efforts to set out the core of the Christian faith in the tight formulas of creeds and confessions (thereby shutting the door to further divine special revelations) have necessarily been tied to accounts of historical events. Such singular historical detail as “under Pontius Pilate” is, for example, present in the so-called Apostles’ Creed as well as the amended version of the Nicene Creed promulgated at the First Council of Constantinople in 381.

Why is this so? Even the great ecumenical creeds and confessions would be empty and pointless without the crucial historical foundation—that is, some version of the story of God becoming a mortal and then winning a stunning victory over the death of the body (and the soul) when he rose from the dead after an unjust, vicious death. Of course, this key, essential story—the master narrative—also includes a network of stories reaching back into the past and, for Latter-day Saints, into an even deeper past prior to the peopling of the earth.

Without the crucial founding events as more than merely legends, tall tales, or wishful thinking, Christian faith in all its varieties has little or no meaning other than as a bit of nostalgia or sentimentality that offers no genuine hope. Latter-day Saints are thus not alone in both wanting and needing the founding and sustaining stories to be simply true. This is also the reason

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5 Marty, “Foreword,” p. vii.

history is always the point of attack for secular critics of all versions of Christian faith (as well as its most attractive feature).

Elsewhere Professor Marty argues that individuals also live by stories.<sup>6</sup> Our memory of who and what we are is our own story. In addition, our identity (or struggle for a stable identity) necessarily involves a bundle of shifting and sometimes hastily contrived and often even deceitful, conflicting, and competing stories. Put another way, our own stories involve various degrees of self-deception as we manage appearances for various, essentially selfish reasons. Much of this is described as sin in our prophetic warnings. From my perspective, our task while here on probation is, through genuine repentance and unfeigned faith (and only through the refining work of the Holy Spirit) to have our story eventually fit snugly within the larger story found in our scriptures, consonant with the terms of the covenant we have made with God.

According to Professor Marty, most Christians in much the same way also “live by story. They see God’s activity in the events, words, works, circumstances, and effects of Jesus Christ and tell the story of his death and resurrection as constitutive of the faith that forms their community.”<sup>7</sup> Christian faith thus comes in various large, competing varieties, each of which privileges its own special version of the common founding story and supporting stories.<sup>8</sup>

Again, according to Professor Marty, standing behind Jewish communal identity is the story of “how this God chose Israel and covenanted with the nation. This was a moral God, whose judgments were to fall on Egypt and Assyria,” though divine judgments often “fell most strongly on the chosen and

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6 See Martin E. Marty, “We Might Know What to Do and How to Do It: On the Usefulness of the Religious Past,” *FARMS Review* 21/1 (2009): 27-44. Subsequently cited as “On the Usefulness of the Religious Past.”

7 Marty, “On the Usefulness of the Religious Past,” 34.

8 For details, see Louis Midgley, “Telling the Larger ‘Church History’ Story,” *Mormon Studies Review* 23/1 (2011): 157-171.

covenanted people.”<sup>9</sup> This story and the vehicles through which it is preserved (even for many who now tend to explain away the very idea of God “as a projection, an illusion, an invention to fill social needs,”<sup>10</sup> lifting explanations from Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx and their many disciples) still provide a foil against which individuals form and reform their Jewish and Christian identities. Something like this also holds true for both Shi’ite and Sunni Muslims who live by and for their own competing versions of their founding story, which likewise has biblical roots.

In each case, history and sacred books with historical origins and contents ground the faith of often vastly different peoples. To grasp what these peoples believe and why they do so, one must enter sympathetically into their story and stories.

Throughout Latter-day Saint history there have been some Latter-day Saints who insist we must produce a “real” theology, one that can compete with the theologies of traditional Christianity. They search the scriptures, looking for isolated passages to be used in theological speculation. One example of this approach is the attempt to portray the faith of the Saints as a materialist theology. Here key passages from the Doctrine and Covenants are used to underwrite a doctrine of materialism in spite of the narrow and elliptical nature of these passages. But there is another form this theological approach takes. It looks to contemporary scholarship for methods and frameworks within which to cast the faith of the Saints. The aim of such speculation is to provide theological common ground for an exchange of views between our faith and that of other Christian sects, but such ecumenical theology risks sacrificing what makes the Restored Gospel unique—that the heavens are again opened and God speaks to His children through prophets today.

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9 Marty, “On the Usefulness of the Religious Past,” 33.

10 Marty, “On the Usefulness of the Religious Past,” 33.

## Some Personal Background

My first real encounter with what is now commonly known as theology came when I studied in great detail the writings of then-famous German-American theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965), whose religious socialist views led to his being the first non-Jewish university professor fired by Adolf Hitler and who then shifted to the Union Theological Seminary in New York. Tillich published at least four hundred books and essays and delivered hundreds of lectures and sermons. He became a popular figure in American intellectual life. His crowning work was a massive, three-volume *Systematic Theology*.

Even as a university student in Germany, Tillich had begun to argue that Christianity would be false if it rested on the truth of stories about Jesus of Nazareth and not on what he called concern about the meanings that such stories have very imperfectly come to suggest. The reason, he claimed, is that God is Being-Itself and not an existing being alongside other beings. It is flatly false for Tillich if faith (understood as concern) rests to any degree on persons and events in human history.<sup>11</sup> His views were attractive to those who were looking for reasons to brush aside all divine special revelations and hence the vast network of stories upon which Christian faith rests.

Tillich's radically secularized understanding of Christian faith can be contrasted with that of Karl Barth (1886-1968), the even-more-famous Swiss-German scholar who managed to blunt the then-dominant continental version of liberal or cultural Protestantism and who revived a version of Protestant orthodoxy before and after World War II. Barth set out in four million words what he called *Church Dogmatics*. This work argued that the death and resurrection of an historical Jesus

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11 For details, see Louis Midgley, "Religion and Ultimate Concern: An Encounter with Paul Tillich's Theology," *Dialogue* 1/2 (1966): 55-71.

was central to authentic Christian faith but suffered from being muddled together with some alien philosophy in efforts to fashion a theological system—and to engage with the very long and controversial history of Christianity. Whereas Barth saw the Bible as containing the Word of God for those moved by the Holy Spirit, Tillich saw it as merely the words of muddled humans about divine things. This distinction clearly manifests an ambiguity in the word “theology.” Does that label or its adjective “theological” identify God’s words to human beings or merely what humans have fashioned for various reasons about divine things?

Put more bluntly: do human beings merely invent the God(s) to suit their own private interests, needs, or passions, or to serve some political purpose? An affirmative response to these questions clearly makes theology a strictly earthbound and merely human invention in much the same way that religion has often been seen as a self-administered narcotic to ease for a time the utter meaninglessness and suffering in an otherwise forlorn, disconsolate world. Much of what is written about religion—including some, but not all, of what goes by the name of religious studies—dances close to the rim of this abyss, though still striving to keep an academic straight face.

### **Some Possible LDS Kinds of Theology**

Whatever the jaded history of the term “theology,” we are for better or worse stuck with it just as we are with the word “religion.” Can we fashion our own, special understanding of theology by looking at how Protestants who were contemporaries of Joseph Smith, following in the footsteps of the Reformers, were busy hammering out and then preaching the contents of sophisticated dogmatic theologies?

Protestants tended to fashion theologies presumably derived from the Bible, understood as the thoroughly sufficient, final, infallible, inerrant Word of God. From the Bible alone it



was and still is believed possible to set out a compendium of authoritative theology. However, the community of Saints had its roots in much different soil.

Those early Saints saw the Book of Mormon as a sign the heavens were again open and that God could and would reveal more, thereby moving us beyond sectarian controversy over the Bible. Hence they were pleased when Joseph the Seer provided them with additional histories of ancient covenant peoples. They were open to living oracles and to further evidence of a genuinely passionate divine care for human beings. This interest in additional sacred history does not seem to have been a casual matter for the first Saints. Instead the opening of the heavens through revelations to Joseph Smith constituted their new community. This also helps explain why, under very difficult circumstances, much effort was made by the first Saints to record, preserve, and publish their own history for future generations.

This literature is, of course, filled with details of follies and failures but also of God's providential care for his covenant people. It thus contains talk about God and reflections on his dealings with human beings. In that sense, of course, even though it consists of historical texts, it could be seen as a kind of theology. It both records and reflects on divine special revelations, but it differs from traditional theologies in some crucial ways. If one insists on using the word "theology" (except perhaps in the case of the Lectures on Faith, which have a Protestant sectarian form and substance), what I am identifying is not typical of sectarian dogmatic theology; it is neither an inclusive, tight system nor cast in the categories of some philosophical culture. Instead, it is a kind of narrative theology in which the teachings have a story-like structure as well as an historical setting or are largely historical. I have no objections to efforts to mine this literature if that mining is both carefully done and sensitive to the circumstances, including

time and place, in which it was recorded. In my lifetime I have witnessed huge advances in writing about the Latter-day Saint past, which pleases me.

But there is also another kind of necessary LDS theology. The Saints are admonished in our scriptures to defend their faith by giving their best reasons—that is by testifying—and they have responded more or less as they felt comfortable (or inclined) in what is clearly a necessary and mandated apologetic endeavor—that is, in a defense of the faith and the Saints.<sup>12</sup> Providing the best explanations of and reasons for the faith of the Saints is a necessary endeavor.

### **The Dangerous Longing for Order and Certainty**

Latter-day Saints should see the dangers inherent in attempts to fashion a systematic theology grounded on a currently fashionable brand of philosophy. I see no need to tidy up and improve on the historical accounts of God's merciful care for human beings found in our scriptures. But what of those who eschew such systems and yet for various reasons engage in the kind of sophisticated hairsplitting that goes into fashioning tight catalogues of beliefs similar to traditional Protestant and Roman Catholic dogmatic theology? Do we become and remain faithful Latter-day Saints by having books on the shelf containing dogmatic answers to all our questions?

Neither our scriptures nor certainly our history constitute tight systems in either of these ways. Instead they are mostly narratives in which we can, if we care to, begin to enter the charmed world of earlier encounters with divine things as we each struggle as best we can to grasp all the metaphors used to

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12 See D&C 123, where the Saints are told to collect the criticisms of their faith and to prepare responses because otherwise the honest in heart may not be able to find the truth they are prepared to receive. The primary meaning of the Greek *apologia* is defense, as in a court of law, for a position and against false charges.

set out genuine encounters with God. Among other things we find in both our scriptures and ritual lives covenants grounded in theophanies and hence codes or commandments we agree to obey. Our scriptures are packed with historical illustrations of the consequences of a covenant people turning away from and ceasing to remember and keep their covenants. Faithful obedience is what God seems to desire, not a demonstration of our ability to order or speculate about divine things. Our task is to remember and hence faithfully submit to the terms of the covenants we have made. Our words and deeds must match, and hence our own story and the stories found in our scriptures must, I believe, mesh together into faithful obedience expressed as faith, hope, and love.

One inadequately articulated but controlling assumption held by some of the Saints is that our scriptures should be flattened out, harmonized, and woven into a dogmatic system—despite the fact that these scriptural texts consist largely of historical accounts, sometimes written over long periods in sometimes vastly different cultures and languages by unknown authors, and redacted and preserved in various ways. Some may even feel a need to fashion more satisfactory explanations of matters mentioned in our scripture. I am satisfied with the host of narratives packed with wonderful and yet also imprecise and perplexing metaphors which are found in our scripture. This creates a kind of openness I have come to relish. I also find no pain in a huge number of questions for which I have no answer. I am more and more focused on what can be said about the one known as Jesus of Nazareth and his reconciling and redeeming endeavors, especially his victory over death in all its ugly forms.

The effort to fashion a dogmatic theology when we are confronted with narratives and hence histories of different and often little-understood places and peoples may not take the ambiguity of the past with sufficient seriousness, nor does it

deal with historical events in their own terms and settings. In addition the scriptures are sometimes turned into a resource book for figuring out a series of pat answers to questions neither asked nor answered in those texts—or answers sometimes quite contrary to the meaning found in the scriptures about questions we think necessary to get sorted out lest our relationship with divine things be less than it should be.

I have to admit admiring the intellectual gifts that yield both dogmatic and systematic theologies, but as a believer I don't wish to live by displays of mere human ingenuity. Instead I put my trust in the master narrative about the victory of Jesus of Nazareth over death—a narrative that is supported by a network of amazing stories of his mercy and providential care for those who love him.

### Looking at the Generative Events

The fledgling Church of Christ began with the recovery of the Book of Mormon, which is a long, detailed, tragic history of a previously unknown covenant people guided by God to somewhere in America. Its prophetic tradition is set out primarily by Mormon, for whom the book is named. He was, of course, the principal editor, redactor, and author of the Book of Mormon, but the final charge in this book, as a people came to a crashing end, is in the last words of the lonely Moroni, the son of Mormon. He made this bittersweet history available to Joseph Smith—and hence to us here and now.

Even before its publication, the Book of Mormon was controversial.<sup>13</sup> Joseph was pictured as a mere juggler and his endeavor portrayed as fraudulent or the work of insanity

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13 The plates came with “interpreters” (two seer stones) that were used by Joseph Smith to “see,” in some sense of the word, the English words that he dictated to various scribes.

or even demons.<sup>14</sup> It amused and angered those impacted by Enlightenment skepticism about divine things, especially by what was considered superstition and humbug. It also challenged and annoyed sectarian preachers. It remains controversial to this day. This can be seen in both secular and sectarian versions of anti-Mormonism. It must be defended but cannot be proven true by ordinary scholarly endeavors.

The Book of Mormon, along with the eventual recovery by Joseph Smith of other ancient texts, resulted in a radical difference between the faith of Latter-day Saints and that of sectarian Christians, who objected to the audacious enlargement of the canon of sacred scripture by an unlearned farm boy. In addition to the Bible, the faith of Latter-day Saints is thus grounded in substantial additional historical texts, some of which are canonized. In addition, a host of other textual materials provide the context of divine special revelations to the one often known to his first followers as Joseph the Seer.

### **The Power of Stories**

Under Joseph Stalin the Soviet regime sought to secularize society and erase the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church. In spite of whatever secularizing efforts took place, Stalin's efforts to erase Russian Orthodoxy in the old Soviet Union failed. Here we have powerful evidence of the holding power of stories. An important aspect of what maintains faith in the face of secularizing forces is a rich combination of artifacts and stories, including related texts, that keep alive or make faith possible especially in the face of radical persecution.<sup>15</sup>

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14 See "19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon (1829-1944)," a searchable digital collection of everything published during Joseph Smith's lifetime on the Book of Mormon, available through the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University. See <http://lib.byu.edu/digital/bompublications/>.

15 In 1949 it is estimated that there were less than four million Christians in China. But today, despite efforts to purge Christianity from China beginning in 1966, there are perhaps as many as a hundred million Chinese Christians. See

For Latter-day Saints the shared story is how Joseph Smith came to be a Seer and Translator and then Revelator and Prophet, presiding over a new community with Priesthood keys and so forth. That story helps form the grounds of the faith of the Saints, which also includes more than the story of messengers from another world, metal plates, seer stones, and a 500-page book, ending a few short years later in a lynching in Carthage, Illinois. This story and the larger network of stories puts the Saints in touch with God here and now and also in our imaginations in the deep past and the remote future. This is not theology in the traditional sense, nor is it merely traditional secular history. It is instead primarily or essentially another larger story (and stories) beginning with a council and war in heaven prior to our mortal probation. There, after this world was organized and readied, Adam (understood here as each member of humankind) made the choice to undergo a difficult and demanding probation, with an understanding that the needed sanctification and redemption would be available. (We also would need scolding, comfort, and direction.) In this story, one of those in the heavenly council ended up tending this place from a distance, and eventually he was born as a mortal being who walked and taught and ate. He was killed, then seen again after being stone cold dead for three days; he even turned up somewhere in America. And this story also includes references to remnants of Israel in other places, to other worlds, and to a future beyond the mess we currently experience here below.

In discussing whether or not there should be a Mormon theology, it is important to remember the account of the First Vision. In many ways it sets out the challenge that we face as Latter-day Saints. Our task is to take up the narratives in the scriptures and share them with others, extending the scope of scriptural stories. Doing this we give people hope and make

them part of an ongoing story in which they join with God in changing lives. Now, this emphasis on sharing stories runs contrary to the desire of people who call for a dogmatic Mormon theology, who view the Restored Gospel more in terms of a graduate seminar on systematic theology, or who see Mormonism as a belief system that ties together all the disparate doctrines one encounters in Latter-day scriptures.

For those who want tidy beliefs, loose ends harmonized and nailed down, such stories may seem the wrong way to go. Hence the effort to turn messy stories into theology and to invent or discover answers to all the questions these stories don't seem to answer. Instead, I am pleased to have a store of stories from several parts of the world over long periods of time. I don't long for a finished Mormon doctrine. I rather like the incompleteness, the unfinished character of stories such as those found in our scriptures and elsewhere. I am neither offended nor troubled by their messiness or openness.

Our founding story invites and demands that we enter the same world occupied by Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon—a world pulsing with powers both good and evil, one in which we struggle to keep commandments and find favor in God's sight, where sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in our souls. These stories are rough, unpolished, and unfinished. They are set out in the worldview, languages, and metaphors of those who experienced and crafted them. I believe these stories invite each of us to live in a world filled with wonders, with very real temptations and dangers but also with genuine hope.

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# LIMHI'S DISCOURSE: PROXIMITY AND DISTANCE IN TEACHING

*Loren Blake Spendlove*

*Abstract: The author introduces a syntactic technique known as "enallage"—an intentional substitution of one grammatical form for another. This technique can be used to create distance or proximity between the speaker, the audience, and the message. The author demonstrates how king Limhi skillfully used this technique to teach his people the consequences of sin and the power of deliverance through repentance.*

"Enallage," derived from the Greek word meaning "interchange," is an intentional substitution of one grammatical form for another, such as changing pronouns from the singular to the plural or vice versa. This intentional substitution can also involve different combinations of switching the form of personal address. For example, enallage can include switching from second-person to third-person address or other variations.

Scholarly articles have demonstrated the possible existence of enallage in the scriptures.<sup>1</sup> David Bokovoy skillfully illustrated how enallage has been used by authors in the Bible and the Book of Mormon to provide "a poetic articulation of

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1 Kevin L. Barney, "Enallage in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1997): 113–47; Kevin L. Barney, "Further Light on Enallage," *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, retrieved from <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/books/?bookid=98&chapid=1044>.

a progression from distance to proximity.”<sup>2</sup> In his article, he demonstrated how Nephi used this technique to draw his audience into a feeling of proximity in his discourse about and with the Lord. Nephi first created a sense of distance by referring to the Lord in the third person:

*My God* hath been my support; *he* hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness; and *he* hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep. (2 Nephi 2:20; italics added in this and succeeding scriptural passages)

After talking *about* the Lord in the third person, Nephi shifted and began to talk directly to the Lord:

Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord, and say: O *Lord*, I will praise *thee* forever; yea, my soul will rejoice in *thee*, my God, and the rock of my salvation. (2 Nephi 2:30)

The effect of this switch in person is to help personalize Nephi’s message of praise to the Lord. Nephi’s relationship with the Lord seems to become more intimate and personal to us, his intended audience.

A similar and even more dramatic effect was achieved by the prophet Nathan when speaking with King David about his dealings with Uriah and Bathsheba. Following the death of Uriah, Nathan, during an audience with David, told a story of “two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor” (2 Samuel 12:1). The rich man stole the poor man’s only lamb without justification or recompense. Upon hearing this story, “David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man,” and

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2 David E. Bokovoy, “From Distance to Proximity: A Poetic Function of Enallage in the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000): 60–63.

David pronounced the dire punishment that awaited the rich man (2 Samuel 12:5).

At this point, Nathan personalized the message for David by declaring, “Thou art the man” (2 Samuel 12:7). The effect must have been truly dramatic as David saw himself in the role of the rich man, with Uriah as the poor man and Bathsheba as the lamb. Telling the story about the two men in the third person helped create the distance that David needed in order to gain the proper perspective. Changing to the second person drove the message home to David’s heart.

A similar example of this type of syntactic technique is found in chapter seven of Mosiah in the Book of Mormon. Limhi and his people were in bondage to the Lamanites in the land of Nephi. Prior to their escape to the land of Zarahemla, Limhi called his people together and addressed them. He began his discourse by speaking directly to his people and referring to them using either the second-person plural pronouns “ye” and “you” or the first-person plural “we”:

O ye, my people, lift up *your* heads and be comforted; for behold, the time is at hand, or is not far distant, when *we* shall no longer be in subjection to *our* enemies, notwithstanding our many strugglings, which have been in vain; yet I trust there remaineth an effectual struggle to be made. Therefore, lift up *your* heads, and rejoice, and put *your* trust in God. (Mosiah 7:18–19)

In verse 20, Limhi identified the cause of his people’s bondage:

And again, that same God has brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem, and has kept and preserved his people even until now; and behold, it is because of our iniquities and abominations that he has brought us into bondage. (Mosiah 7:20)

Limhi was very clear; our iniquities and abominations caused our bondage. In verses 22 through 24, Limhi lamented the effects that this bondage brought upon them:

And behold, we at this time do pay tribute to the king of the Lamanites, to the amount of one half of our corn, and our barley, and even all our grain of every kind, and one half of the increase of our flocks and our herds; and even one half of all we have or possess the king of the Lamanites doth exact of us, or our lives. And now, is not this grievous to be borne? And is not this, our affliction, great? Now behold, how great reason we have to mourn. Yea, I say unto you, great are the reasons which we have to mourn; for behold how many of our brethren have been slain, and their blood has been spilt in vain, and all because of iniquity. (Mosiah 7:22–24)

Up to this point in his discourse, Limhi had been consistent in addressing his people in the first or second person. However, beginning with verse 25, he made a dramatic departure from this rhetorical pattern by switching to the third person. He stopped referring to his people as “ye” or “we” and began referring to them as “they”:

For if this people had not fallen into transgression the Lord would not have suffered that this great evil should come upon them. But behold, they would not hearken unto his words; but there arose contentions among them, even so much that they did shed blood among themselves. And a prophet of the Lord have they slain; yea, a chosen man of God, who told them of their wickedness and abominations, and prophesied of many things which are to come, yea, even the coming of Christ. (Mosiah 7:25–26)

This shift to the third person helped create distance between Limhi's people and their actions. It allowed his people to view, perhaps a little more objectively, the severity of their crimes, including the murder of the prophet Abinadi. In verse 28, Limhi continued by saying:

And now, because he [Abinadi] said this, they did put him to death; and many more things did they do which brought down the wrath of God upon them. Therefore, who wondereth that they are in bondage, and that they are smitten with sore afflictions? (Mosiah 7:28)

It is striking that it is no longer "we" that are in bondage and afflicted, but "they" and "them." In verses 29 through 31, Limhi pronounced the woes that would come upon the Lord's people if "they" transgressed against God.

Similar to his dramatic shift to the third person beginning in verse 25, Limhi finished his discourse by reverting back to the second-person plural when referring to his people:

And now, behold, the promise of the Lord is fulfilled, and ye are smitten and afflicted. But if ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, if ye do this, he will, according to his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage. (Mosiah 7:32–33)

Just as shifting to the third person created distance between his people and their actions, Limhi's switch back to the second person in the final verses helped his people get a personal look at their dire situation and recognize a possible solution to their bondage. As was the case with Nathan's message to David, Limhi's use of this syntactic technique helped communicate his message of repentance and deliverance with even more power to the hearts of his people.

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## OF TOLERANCE AND INTOLERANCE

*John Gee*

*Review of D. A. Carson. The Intolerance of Tolerance. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2012. 186 pp. with indices of names, subjects and scriptures. \$24.00 (hardback), \$16.00 (paperback).*

In graduate school I was disheartened to find that while the school promoted tolerance as the highest virtue, such tolerance was more often honored in the breach. Tolerance was used as an excuse for hatred and bigotry. This is because it is simply impossible to tolerate everything. One cannot tolerate both childhood innocence and pedophilia (to take an extreme example). One must choose what one will tolerate. In some cases the choice to tolerate some things will unavoidably and perhaps unintentionally cause us to cease to tolerate others.

D. A. Carson explores this seeming paradox in his book *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, although he takes a different line of reasoning. Carson distinguishes between two definitions of tolerance that he says are confused and conflicted.

Carson claims that under the older understanding of tolerance “a person might be judged tolerant if, while holding strong views, he or she insisted that others had the right to dissent from those views and argue their own cases.”<sup>1</sup> The older understanding was based on three assumptions: “(1) there is objective truth out there, and it is our duty to pursue that truth;

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1 D. A. Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 6.

(2) the various parties in a dispute think that they know what the truth of the matter is, even though they disagree sharply, each party thinking the other is wrong; (3) nevertheless they hold that the best chance of uncovering the truth of the matter, or the best chance of persuading most people with reason and not with coercion, is by the unhindered exchange of ideas, no matter how wrong-headed some of those ideas seem.”<sup>2</sup> As a result, “the older view of tolerance held either that truth is objective and can be known, and that the best way to uncover it is bold tolerance of those who disagree, since sooner or later the truth will win out; or that while truth can be known in some domains, it probably cannot be known in other domains, and that the wisest and least malignant course in such cases is benign tolerance grounded in the superior knowledge that recognizes our limitations.”<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the newer understanding of tolerance assumes “that there is no one view that is exclusively true.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, “we must be tolerant, not because we cannot distinguish the right path from the wrong path, but because all paths are equally right.”<sup>5</sup> Then “intolerance is no longer a refusal to allow contrary opinions to say their piece in public, but must be understood to be any questioning or contradicting the view that all opinions are equal in value, that all world views have equal worth, that all stances are equally valid. To question such postmodern axioms is by definition intolerant. For such questioning there is no tolerance whatsoever, for it is classed as intolerance and must therefore be condemned. It has become the supreme vice.”<sup>6</sup>

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2 Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, 6-7.

3 Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, 11.

4 Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, 11.

5 Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, 11.

6 Carson, *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, 12.



A consequence of this newer understanding of tolerance is that any questioning of the coherence or logic of the position of someone holding this view is considered intolerance and will not be tolerated.

Carson discusses the history of tolerance, notes the inconsistency, if not blatant hypocrisy of advocates of the new tolerance, and explores how tolerance becomes a pretext for the persecution of Christians. It is a thoughtful and thought-provoking work.

Many universities have compulsory freshman reading of works designed to help them become more tolerant. Carson's work should be on those required lists, but probably will not. After all, his views would likely not be tolerated.

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# CAN A MAN SEE GOD?

## 1 TIMOTHY 6:16 IN LIGHT OF ANCIENT AND MODERN REVELATION

*James Stutz*

*Abstract: Joseph Smith's First Vision is a favorite target of critics of the LDS Church. Evangelical critics in particular, such as Matt Slick of the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, seek to discredit the First Vision on biblical grounds. This article explores biblical theophanies and argues that Joseph's vision fits squarely with the experience of ancient prophets, especially those who are given the rare blessing of piercing the veil of light and glory within which God dwells, the Hebrew kabod.*

"I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun..." –Joseph Smith Jr.<sup>1</sup>

One of the perennial points of conflict between Evangelical and Mormon theology is whether mortal man is capable of seeing God the Father. The vision of God, otherwise known as a *theophany*, is the centerpiece of Mormonism's origin story. In 1820 Joseph Smith entered a grove of trees to inquire of God through prayer which of all the churches he should join. The answer to his prayer came in the form of a visitation from God the Father and Jesus Christ. Joseph Smith's "First Vision," as it has come to be called, forms the foundation of Mormonism's claim to be the "only true and living church" (Doctrine & Covenants 1:30). The importance of Joseph Smith's First Vision to Latter-day Saint theology renders the First Vision a natural target for critics of the restored church.

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1 Joseph Smith—History 1:16

The First Vision also exists as an assault on traditional Christian teachings about the nature of God the Father, who, in their view, is immaterial and without physical form. Joseph described God the Father and Jesus Christ in his vision as “two personages” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17), separate, distinct, and visible. The First Vision directly challenges the traditional notion of God the Father, affirming that he has material form, in which light can reflect off his person and be seen by mortal eyes. This bold doctrinal claim is understandably met with criticism from ardent Evangelical defenders, who seek to show from the Bible that the vision of God the Father is not possible.

One representative example is evangelical apologist Matt Slick, the president and founder of the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry (CARM).<sup>2</sup> CARM is primarily an Internet-based organization, also featuring a weekly radio broadcast and active message board. On his website Slick lays out an argument from the New Testament for why Joseph Smith could not have seen God the Father and concludes that “since [Joseph Smith’s] first vision is foundational in Mormonism, without it, Mormonism cannot be true.”<sup>3</sup> Slick’s argument against the First Vision centers on his interpretation of 1 Timothy 6:16.<sup>4</sup> Speaking of God the Father, the passage reads:

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.<sup>5</sup>

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2 <http://carm.org/>

3 Matt Slick, “Can the Father be seen?” at the CARM website, at <http://carm.org/can-father-be-seen> (accessed November 7, 2012).

4 1 Timothy is traditionally ascribed to Paul the Apostle, though modern scholars now recognize that this “pastoral” epistle is pseudepigraphal. For purposes of homogeneity in conversation between Mormonism and Evangelical Christianity (especially, in this case, between Matt Slick and myself), I will continue to refer to the writer as “Paul.”

5 All Bible passages quoted are from the King James Version.

This passage has been utilized by Slick in at least three different venues: an article on CARM.org,<sup>6</sup> during interaction with Mormons in the CARM chat room,<sup>7</sup> and in a YouTube video in which he proselytizes to LDS youth outside the rededication of the Boise Idaho temple.<sup>8</sup> In his interaction with LDS youth at the temple, Slick quotes 1 Timothy 6:16 and argues that it prohibits anyone, including Joseph Smith, from the ability to see God the Father:

In 1 Timothy 6:16 Paul the apostle says that the Father, speaking of God as the Father, “dwells in unapproachable light who no man has seen nor can he be seen.” So the Bible—Paul the Apostle—says that God cannot be seen. Joseph Smith said he saw the Father... if Paul says you can’t see the Father, [but] Joseph Smith says you can, whose [version is] true?

For Slick, this passage rejects the possibility that Joseph Smith could have seen God the Father because “God cannot be seen.” Elsewhere Slick establishes that the individual being considered in this passage is God the Father, not Christ.<sup>9</sup> Slick is correct on this point because it would not make sense for Paul to claim that Christ cannot be seen because Paul himself has seen Christ (1 Corinthians 15:8).

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6 Slick, “Can the Father be seen?”

7 Experienced by the author circa 2010. Also, for a representative chat-room conversation between Slick and an unknown Mormon named “Alex” see Matt Slick, “Did Joseph Smith see God the Father”, <http://carm.org/did-joseph-smith-see-god-father>.

8 carmvideos, “Boise, Idaho Temple rededication with Matt Slick and others” YouTube video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkYSQoPf0ts&feature=plcp>.

9 Slick, “Can the Father be seen?”

### “Who Only Hath Immortality...”

1 Timothy 6:16 follows a series of instructions to Timothy to be godly and remain faithful to the gospel. Paul concludes his exhortations to Timothy with a parenthetical aside extolling the greatness of God and proclaiming God’s transcendence over mortal man. Specifically, God is set apart from man because God the Father alone “hath immortality” and dwells in “light which no man can approach unto,” and therefore “no man hath seen nor can see” him. Paul’s description here of God’s nature and qualities should be interpreted as poetic doxology, a genre of writing defined as liturgical expression of praise.<sup>10</sup> It is questionable whether Paul meant this to be interpreted as a technically precise theological guide to God’s characteristics (although a biblical inerrantist will see it that way, no doubt). At any rate, Trinitarian critics of Mormonism who wish to employ 1 Timothy 6:16 will first need to explain why the passage incorrectly describes God the Father as the only person who “hath immortality”.

The English word “immortality” in this passage is a translation of the Greek *athanasia*, which simply refers to a condition wherein death or extinction is not possible. There are clearly other individuals within mainstream Christian (and Mormon) theology who possess immortality. Jesus himself was raised from the dead into immortality, never to die again, as Paul well knew. Elsewhere Paul himself notes that mortal men will also be resurrected into immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53-55). So why does Paul describe God the Father as unique in this aspect? One could counter that resurrection into immortality, for Christ or anyone else, is accomplished and sustained by the power of God the Father, and it is in this sense that God

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10 James L. Bailey and Lyle D. Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament: A Handbook* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 74, available online at <http://tinyurl.com/mhgtg3y> (accessed Aug 11, 2013).

the Father is the only person who truly “hath immortality.” Unfortunately for this argument the Holy Ghost is still a person who is immortal, never to die, and who, according to Matt Slick and all Christians, is “eternal.”<sup>11</sup> Traditional Christians who endorse the Athanasian Creed affirm that the Holy Ghost is equally uncreated and infinite with the other members of the Trinity. It is therefore not wise to look to Paul’s doxological eruption of praise as a technical theological guide: God the Father, frankly, is not the only person who “hath immortality.”

### “Dwelling in the Light”

Paul next describes God the Father as dwelling “in the light which no man can approach unto.” The motif of God dwelling behind a cloak of light, smoke, cloud, or fire that hides him from the eyes of mortal men is found throughout the Bible, both Old and New Testaments. The Hebrew word often used for this shroud of light or cloud is “kabod” (“doxa” in the Greek Septuagint), often translated as “glory.”<sup>12</sup> The *kabod* of God emanates from him and simultaneously represents his presence as well as protects unworthy mortal eyes from beholding him. Referring to God’s presence among Israel in the wilderness following the exile, the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* suggests that:

Yahweh is present only in the “pillar of cloud” in the tent of meeting. The cloud indicates God’s presence while at the same time concealing God’s radiance... Thus “cloud” and “fire” symbolize God’s being and

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11 Slick briefly describes the nature of the Holy Ghost on his website. Matt Slick, “The Holy Spirit,” <http://carm.org/holy-spirit>.

12 William J. Hamblin, “‘I Have Revealed Your Name’: The Hidden Temple in John 17,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 1 (2012): 74-75

presence, while at the same time concealing God's nature.<sup>13</sup>

Notable examples of this phenomenon in the Old Testament include the aforementioned pillar of smoke and fire that accompanied the wandering Israelites (Exodus 13:21-22, 19:18, 33:9), the "clouds" and "fire" that surround and emanate from God (Psalm 97:2), and the cloud that filled the temple, equated with the "glory of God" (1 Kings 8:10-11). Ezekiel also describes the "fire" and "brightness" of God (Ezekiel 1:4, 26-28). In each instance God's physical presence is manifest by the *kabod*, but his physical form is simultaneously hidden.

The *kabod* of God is frequently understood to be a protection and a shield for mortal man because it was believed that a man or woman would face death were he or she to see the face of God. Upon seeing the burning bush (itself a shroud of fire), Moses hides his face because he is afraid to look upon God (Exodus 3:6). God explicitly stated to Moses in Exodus 33:20-23 that Moses cannot see God's face and live; therefore when God appears to Moses his "glory" (*kabod*) will pass by, and God's hand "will cover thee," protecting Moses from death. The father of Samson, on seeing an angel of God, appears to be momentarily confused and fears that his death is imminent because he thinks he has seen God (Judges 13:21-23). In Exodus

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13 David N. Freedman, Mainz B. E. Willoughby, "ānān" in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* XI, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001), 256, available online at <http://tinyurl.com/b9ctulr> (accessed Feb 3, 2013). Cf. Gerhard Kittel, "doxa" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 178-81, <http://tinyurl.com/bkqt55b> (accessed Feb 3, 2013); Roger Cook, "God's 'Glory': More Evidence for the Anthropomorphic Nature of God in the Bible", *FairMormon*, <http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/publications/gods-glory-more-evidence-for-the-anthropomorphic-nature-of-god-in-the-bible> (accessed November 11, 2013).



19 God instructs Moses to keep the people away from God's *kabod* for their own protection:

18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly... 20 And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. 21 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. (Exodus 19:18-21)

In the New Testament the *kabod* of God is frequently described in terms of light, such as the “bright cloud” at Christ’s transfiguration that accompanied the light that emanated from Christ himself (Matthew 17:1-8), the “rainbow” of John’s vision of God (Revelation 4:3), and, most relevantly, the “light” described by Paul (Acts 22:6, 1 Timothy 6:16). In 1 Timothy 6:16, immediately after referring to the unapproachable light that God dwells in, Paul notes that “no man hath seen nor can see” God the Father. The connection between these two statements is obvious: No man has seen nor can see God the Father because God dwells in light (God’s *kabod*) that is unapproachable by fallen, mortal humans. On this point evangelical author and theologian Gordon F. Fee agrees:

Him no one has seen or can see (cf. “invisible” in 1:17). These clauses reinforce his dwelling in unapproachable light and reflect a common OT theme (Exod. 33:20; cf. 19:21). The emphasis in these last two items is not the Greek one, that God is unknowable, but the Jewish

one, that God is so infinitely holy that sinful humanity can never see him and live (cf. Isaiah 6:1-5).<sup>14</sup>

The reason God is unseen by mortal men is that men are not worthy to behold his face. Rather than describing an immaterial God who is inherently unable to be seen by physical eyes, Paul is describing a God who theoretically can be seen but who is presently not seen. This is an important distinction. By way of analogy, a rock deep within the mantle of the Earth is presently unable to be seen by mortal eyes (the technology does not exist to retrieve it), but it is not inherently or metaphysically unable to be seen. The explanation for man's inability to see God the Father does not lie in God's non-physical nature but in God's location behind a veil of glory impenetrable by mortal human eyes. Relative to humans, God is invisible only in practice, not in absolute reality.

### **"...Which No Man Can Approach Unto."**

Is it possible for God to strengthen or transfigure a person such that he or she could penetrate the *kabod* of God and be sustained in his presence? There are important instances in the scriptures in which this exact thing has taken place. This special, sacred blessing comes to some of those chosen by God to do his work, Moses being one prominent example. As mentioned above, Moses is warned that he cannot see God's face and live, and yet on occasion God makes an exception to the rule for Moses and his associates. In Exodus 24:9-11 the author expressly states that Moses and the elders accompanying him "saw the God of Israel" and that God did not punish them for it. In Exodus 33:7-11 the general method by which Moses received God's words and then relayed them to Israel is given.

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14 Gordon F. Fee, 1 & 2 *Timothy, Titus*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), 5-6 of ch. 17, available online at <http://tinyurl.com/akbc6d3> (accessed Feb 3, 2013).

Moses would enter the tabernacle to commune with God, and the *kabod* of God in the form of a cloudy pillar would cover the tabernacle, simultaneously announcing and shielding the presence of God from Israel. Inside the tabernacle Moses, as the agent of God, was privileged to speak to God “face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (see also Deuteronomy 34:10). According to Fabry,

Moses spoke with Yahweh “face to face” (Numbers 14:14; Exodus 33:11). In these passages Yahweh removed the concealing cloud, which actually represents an element protecting the partner in dialogue with God: when Moses came down from Sinai, his face reflected the radiance of the *kabod* (Exodus 4:29-35). All the Israelites were allowed to see the cloud and fire, but only Moses was allowed to look on Yahweh without his “veil.”<sup>15</sup>

This mode of communication is spelled out in such an explicit manner precisely because it was special and unusual. The general rule is that men do not speak to God face to face, but Moses was privileged to do exactly that. Later in the same chapter this privilege of visual contact with the Lord’s face is revoked (Exodus 33:19-23). It is a unique privilege reserved for rare and special occasions.

The patriarch Jacob was another who was blessed to see beyond the *kabod* of God (Genesis 32:30). After a nighttime encounter with God, Jacob calls the place of his vision “Peniel,” because, in his words, “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” The special mention that his life was preserved after seeing God is testament to the fact that this was an exception to the general rule. The prophet Isaiah sees God in vision and fears for himself, shouting, “Woe is me! for I am undone...for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:1-7) Isaiah’s fear is calmed by a seraphim who declares Isaiah to be clean and holy, rendering him able to sustain the sight

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15 Henz-Josef Fabry, “*ānān*” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* X1, 256, online at <http://tinyurl.com/b9ctulr>.

of God. The author of Hebrews noted that Moses' faith was strengthened because he saw "him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27). This is an especially interesting comment, suggesting that God's invisibility is only invisibility in practice, not in reality, and that exceptions exist to the rule.

The Book of Mormon contains a well-known example of a mortal man being privileged to see beyond the *kabod* of the Lord and gaze upon his physical form. The Brother of Jared sees the pre-incarnate, physical form of Jesus Christ in the spirit<sup>16</sup> because "never has man come before [the Lord] with such exceeding faith" (Ether 3:9-16). In this moment "the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared," a reference to the removal of the Lord's *kabod* and the strengthening or momentary transfiguration of Jared's physical body and mind so that he could endure the experience. Father Lehi likewise sees the *kabod* of God in the form of a pillar of fire and is later privileged to see beyond the *kabod* to see God sitting on his throne (1 Nephi 1:5-8). In the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith describes a vision of Jesus that he shared with Oliver Cowdery in which the "veil was taken from [their] minds" and Jesus appears in light "above the brightness of the sun" (D&C 110:1-3).

Most important to the present discussion, in Joseph Smith's retelling of his First Vision experience he variously refers to a "pillar of fire" or "pillar of light,"<sup>17</sup> "pillar of flame,"<sup>18</sup> "pillar of

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16 Latter-day Saints believe that all spirit is physical matter. See Doctrine & Covenants 131:7-8.

17 Dean C. Jessee, "The Earliest Documented Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," in *Opening The Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations 1820-1844*, ed. John W. Welch with Erick B. Carlson, (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 5. In the 1832 account, Joseph initially wrote "pillar of fire" but scratched out the word "fire" and replaced it with "light," thus rendering it "pillar of light." This may reflect the difficulty that many prophets seem to have in describing heavenly scenes with limited human vocabulary.

18 Jessee, "The Earliest Documented Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," 8.

light... above the brightness of the sun,”<sup>19</sup> and “brilliant light.”<sup>20</sup> The fire and light is equivalent to the ancient Hebrew notion of God’s *kabod*, or glory. In a fascinating secondhand account by Joseph’s friend Orson Pratt we receive further insight into Joseph’s experience with the *kabod* of God:

And, while thus pouring out his soul, anxiously desiring an answer from God, he, at length, saw a very bright and glorious light in the heavens above; which, at first, seemed to be at a considerable distance. He continued praying, while the light appeared to be gradually descending toward him; and, as it drew nearer, it increased in brightness, and magnitude, so that, by the time that it reached the tops of the trees, the whole wilderness, for some distance round, was illuminated in a most glorious and brilliant manner. He expected to have seen the leaves and boughs of the trees consumed, as soon as the light came in contact with them; but, perceiving that it did not produce that effect, he was encouraged with the hopes of being able to endure its presence. It continued descending, slowly, until it rested upon the earth, and he was enveloped in the midst of it. When it first came upon him, it produced a peculiar sensation throughout his whole system; and immediately, his mind was caught away, from the natural object with which he was surrounded; and he was enwrapped in a heavenly vision, and saw two glorious personages, who exactly resembled each other in their features or likeness.<sup>21</sup>

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19 Jesse, “The Earliest Documented Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” 14.

20 Jesse, “The Earliest Documented Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” 18.

21 Jesse, “The Earliest Documented Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” 21.

From Orson Pratt's account we receive several interesting details. Joseph's surprise that the light did not consume the "leaves and boughs" echoes the surprise that Moses felt upon encountering the burning bush that similarly "was not consumed" (Exodus 3:2-3). Pratt may have intended this parallel to be made by his readers. We also learn from this account that Joseph experienced a "peculiar sensation throughout his whole system" just at the moment that the light, or *kabod*, of God fell upon him. Pratt must have learned of this unusual detail from Joseph Smith himself. It is tempting to suppose that this describes the moment in which Joseph's physical body is transfigured so that he can endure the sight of God. The experience of Joseph Smith is similar to that of Moses and other ancient prophets singled out to see beyond the otherwise "unapproachable light" of God's glory. The natural man, in his fallen mortal state, is forbidden and protected from seeing God's physical form by the *kabod* of God, but this is a general rule which, like most rules, has proven exceptions. Paul's words should be read in light of this.

### John 6:46

Returning to the aforementioned YouTube video, on facing Slick's criticism of Joseph Smith based on his interpretation of 1 Timothy 6:16, the LDS teens faithfully call upon their seminary training by citing Old Testament visions of God as evidence that God can in fact be seen. Matt Slick is prepared with a reply:

Jesus [said], "not that any man has seen the Father" [in] John 6:46, so they are seeing the pre-incarnate Jesus, never the Father.

Before addressing Slick's conclusion that Old Testament theophanies are of Christ, a brief look at his use of John 6:46 is necessary. The passage indeed has Jesus saying "Not that any man has seen the Father..." but Slick fails to quote the rest of

the passage, which reads, "...save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father." By consciously omitting the latter half of the passage, Slick appears to be subverting the true intention of Jesus's teaching, which is that he which is "of God" is privileged to see God the Father. Some Evangelicals may contest this point by arguing that the reference to "he which is of God" is a reference to only Jesus Christ. However, the Bible refers to other individuals as being "of God" as well (cf. 1 Samuel 2:27, 9:6-10, John 8:47, 1 Timothy 6:11, 2 Timothy 3:17, Titus 1:7, 1 John 5:19). Furthermore, according to the dominant Christology espoused by mainstream Christians, Jesus' nature is "fully man and fully God," otherwise known as the *Hypostatic Union*.<sup>22</sup> If Jesus is "fully man," and yet is capable of seeing God the Father (according to John 6:46), then it is not wise to argue that a man, by definition, cannot see God the Father.

### Sensus Plenior

Slick's broader argument is that all visions of God in the Old Testament were actually visions of the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. He reasons that because the New Testament doesn't allow for man to see God the Father, the logical conclusion is that all Old Testament theophanies are visions of the Son, not of the Father. Of course, the relevant Old Testament pericopes do not specify that the God being seen is the pre-incarnate Christ. Slick's conclusion that it is the pre-incarnate Christ is only possible by reading it through the lens of other scripture, in this case Slick's reading of the New Testament.

This basic method is a common one throughout all of Christianity. Interpreting a passage of scripture through the

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22 The "Hypostatic Union" is a formulation of Christ's nature dating back to the early centuries of Christianity, which affirms that humanity and divinity are simultaneously present in the person of Jesus Christ. Latter-day Saints agree with this basic concept but for different reasons. Mainstream Christians generally believe that humanity and divinity are mutually exclusive.

lens of earlier or later scripture is an important part of the Judeo-Christian hermeneutical tradition historically referred to as *sensus plenior*, or “fuller sense.” It rests on the belief that the deeper, fuller meaning of a passage of scripture can sometimes be revealed only by contextualizing it with other passages of scripture composed separately, even if by different authors widely separated by time and space.

The first generation of Christian writers canonized this method by seeing prophecies of Jesus Christ in the writings of Hebrew prophets. Latter-day Saints are not an exception to this tradition; passages of LDS scripture are regularly interpreted in light of other passages of scripture. A relevant example of this LDS practice is that most Latter-day Saints would likely agree with Slick that the theophanies of the Old Testament are primarily of the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ. They arrive at this conclusion by reinterpreting Old Testament events in light of modern LDS revelations (most notably 3 Nephi 15:5). Latter-day Saints have no theological issue with Slick’s claim that Old Testament theophanies are generally of God the Son, not God the Father.

At first glance this may appear to undermine LDS arguments that appeal to Old Testament theophanies to demonstrate that God the Father can be seen. However, as has been argued above, biblical warnings about man’s inability to see members of the Godhead are due to God’s *kabod*, which both represents God’s presence and hides him from sinful eyes. Whether it is God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost, the visual inaccessibility by mortals to the members of the Godhead is due to the glory that emanates from them, an impenetrable barrier to mortal eyes except in those cases in which God chooses otherwise.

The principle of *sensus plenior* is another tool for Latter-day Saints to contextualize 1 Timothy 6:16 and similar passages. In the Doctrine and Covenants the following insight is provided:



“For no man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except quickened by the Spirit of God” (D&C 67:11). In the Pearl of Great Price Moses has a marvelous vision of God the Father and his many creations. The aftereffects of this experience are illuminating:

And the presence of God withdrew from Moses, that his glory was not upon Moses; and Moses was left unto himself. And as he was left unto himself, he fell unto the Earth. And it came to pass that it was for the space of many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man; and he said unto himself: Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing...But now my own eyes have beheld God; but not my natural, but my spiritual eyes, for my natural eyes could not have beheld; for I should have withered and died in his presence; but his glory was upon me; and I beheld his face, for I was transfigured before him. (Moses 1:9-11)

In this passage, Moses sees the face of God and lives to tell about it because God’s glory was upon him, and he was transfigured. Moses’s reference to “spiritual eyes” contrasts with “natural eyes,” or in other words the eyes of the “natural man” left to his own devices without the strengthening and protection of God’s power. These modern-day scriptures comport very well with the biblical teaching that man cannot see God unless quickened or protected from God’s *kabod*. Following in the long Judeo-Christian tradition of *sensus plenior*, Latter-day Saints can easily understand how the words in 1 Timothy 6:16 do not contradict Joseph Smith’s First Vision. The same principle can be applied to John 1:18, which notes that “no man hath seen God at any time.” Taken together with the entirety of scripture, ancient and modern, this passage clearly is referring to “unaided” man. Latter-day Saints argue, therefore, that Joseph Smith was transfigured, or quickened, by

God's glory such that he was able to view the face of God the Father while in the flesh.

It is not anticipated that non-Mormons interested in this issue will accept the validity of interpreting biblical passages through the lens of modern LDS scripture that they do not accept as inspired or holy. Jews, for example, would likewise reject Matt Slick's claim that all Old Testament theophanies are of the pre-mortal God the Son, a claim he arrives at only by reading the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament. Nonetheless, non-Mormons must accept the basic logic of the practice: within the framework of a particular religious tradition (in this case, Latter-day Saint), it is wholly consistent to interpret scripture with other scripture that is a part of that tradition.

## Conclusion

God the Father dwells behind a curtain or veil of unapproachable light and glory (*kabod*), which is not penetrable by the eyes of unaided mortal man. Only in rare instances of grace is a mortal strengthened by God's power to the point that he or she can pass through this barrier and endure the vision of God. Paul's doxological description of God's transcendence over man in 1 Timothy 6:16 should be interpreted in that context. God is capable of revealing his physical self to man. Such was the case with Moses and other ancient prophets, and such was the case with Joseph Smith.

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# THE COWDERY CONUNDRUM: OLIVER'S ABORTED ATTEMPT TO DESCRIBE JOSEPH SMITH'S FIRST VISION IN 1834 AND 1835

*Roger Nicholson*

*Abstract: In 1834, Oliver Cowdery began publishing a history of the Church in installments in the pages of the Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate. The first installment talks of the religious excitement and events that ultimately led to Joseph Smith's First Vision at age 14. However, in the subsequent installment published two months later, Oliver claims that he made a mistake, correcting Joseph's age from 14 to 17 and failing to make any direct mention of the First Vision. Oliver instead tells the story of Moroni's visit, thus making it appear that the religious excitement led to Moroni's visit.*

*This curious account has been misunderstood by some to be evidence that the "first" vision that Joseph claimed was actually that of the angel Moroni and that Joseph invented the story of the First Vision of the Father and Son at a later time. However, Joseph wrote an account of his First Vision in 1832 in which he stated that he saw the Lord, and there is substantial evidence that Oliver had this document in his possession at the time that he wrote his history of the Church. This essay demonstrates the correlations between Joseph Smith's 1832 First Vision account, Oliver's 1834/1835 account, and Joseph's 1835 journal entry on the same subject. It is clear that not only did Oliver have Joseph's history in his possession but that he used Joseph's 1832 account as a basis for his own account. This essay also shows that Oliver knew of the First Vision and attempted to obliquely refer to the event several times in his second installment before continuing with his narrative of Moroni's visit.*

## Joseph's Early Writings about the First Vision

Joseph Smith made his first known attempt to write a history of the Church in 1832. Some of the account was written in Joseph's own hand and the rest by Frederick G. Williams. Joseph's history describes his first vision, Moroni's visit, the loss of the 116 pages of manuscript, and the arrival of Oliver Cowdery. Joseph never completed it beyond that point, and it was never published during his lifetime.

A few years later, in 1835, Joseph produced an account of his First Vision in his journal. He told about how he described the vision to a visitor, a non-Mormon stranger, who had stopped by his home. This is the second known account of the vision written in the first person. Neither the 1832 account nor the 1835 account appear to have received any public circulation. The formal account of the vision would not be written until 1838. This is the account contained in the Pearl of Great Price.

Between 1832 and 1835, Oliver Cowdery, as editor of the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* (hereafter *Messenger and Advocate*), determined that he would write an account of the history of the Church and publish it in installments. This account is both curious and confusing because the first and second installments describe clearly recognizable events leading up to Joseph's First Vision and Moroni's visit, but they do not mention the actual visit of the Father and Son. Taken together, the first two installments seem to imply that Joseph's "first" vision was that of Moroni. For example, the Wikipedia article, "First Vision," summarizes the Cowdery account as follows:

Therefore, according to Cowdery, the religious confusion led Smith to pray in his bedroom, late on the night of September 23, 1823, after the others had gone to sleep, to know which of the competing denominations was correct and whether "a Supreme

being did exist.” In response, an angel appeared and granted him forgiveness of his sins. The remainder of the story roughly parallels Smith’s later description of a visit by an angel in 1823 who told him about the Golden Plates. Thus, Cowdery’s account, containing a single vision, differs from Smith’s 1832 account, which contains two separate visions, one in 1821 prompted by religious confusion (the First Vision) and a separate one regarding the plates on September 22, 1822.<sup>1</sup>

This summary, of course, is not consistent with the story of the First Vision and Moroni’s visit as two distinct events that Joseph described only two years earlier, nor does it match the account that he told in late 1835, less than a year after Oliver’s account was published. What, then, are we to make of Oliver’s convoluted account? Does it really describe a “single vision” as the Wikipedia article claims?

Oliver’s account does indeed raise some questions. Was Oliver unaware of Joseph’s First Vision? Was Oliver in possession of Joseph’s 1832 history? If so, why did Oliver not include the vision in his own history? The answers to these questions may be deduced by examining and comparing Joseph’s 1832 history with Oliver’s 1834/1835 history and with Joseph’s subsequent 1835 journal entry.

### Oliver Cowdery’s 1834 History of the Church

In October 1834, Oliver Cowdery, as the editor of the first issue of the *Messenger and Advocate*, talked of the periodical’s intent to document the history of the Church. “We have thought that

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1 *Wikipedia*, s.v. “First Vision,” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Vision](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Vision) as of 27 October 2013. Wikipedia articles are often modified, and this text is subject to change. The date “1821” referred to with respect to Joseph’s 1832 account is based upon the insertion by Frederick G. Williams of the phrase “in the 16th year of my age,” thus indicating that Joseph was 15 years of age rather than 14. Joseph, however, later corrects his age to 14 in his 1835 journal entry.

a full history of the rise of the church of the Latter Day Saints, and the most interesting parts of its progress, to the present time, would be worthy the perusal of the Saints.”<sup>2</sup> In order to ensure its accuracy, Oliver went on to assure his readers that “our brother J. SMITH jr. has offered to assist us. Indeed, there are many items connected with the fore part of this subject that render his labor indispensable. With his labor and with authentic documents now in our possession, we hope to render this a pleasing and agreeable narrative, well worth the examination and perusal of the Saints.”<sup>3</sup>

What might these “authentic documents” now in the possession of Cowdery have consisted of? One document that we know existed at that time is Joseph’s 1832 attempt at writing the history of the Church, which includes the first known description of his First Vision. It would have made perfect sense for Joseph to give Oliver this document.

Surprisingly, it appears that Joseph was unaware of Oliver’s intent to publicly document the history of the Church in the pages of the *Messenger and Advocate* until he read Oliver’s statement in the October issue of his intention to do so. In a letter from Joseph to Oliver, which was included in the December 1834 issue of the *Messenger and Advocate*, Joseph is clearly interested in accuracy.

BROTHER O. Cowdery:

Having learned from the first No. of the *Messenger and Advocate*, that you were, not only about to “give a history of the rise and progress of the church of the Latter Day Saints;” but, that said “history would necessarily embrace my life and character,” I have been

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2 Introduction of Oliver Cowdery to W.W. Phelps, in *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate*, 1/1 (Oct. 1834), 13. [http://en.fairmormon.org/Messenger\\_and\\_Advocate/1/1](http://en.fairmormon.org/Messenger_and_Advocate/1/1). Hereafter this source will be abbreviated to *Messenger and Advocate*.

3 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/1 (Oct. 1834), 13.

induced to give you the time and place of my birth; as I have learned that many of the opposers of those principles which I have held forth to the world, profess a personal acquaintance with me, though when in my presence, represent me to be another person in age, education, and stature, from what I am.<sup>4</sup>

Joseph was clearly concerned that accurate information be provided about his early life, and specifically that he be accurately represented regarding his “age, education, and stature.” Joseph provides this information in his 1832 history, and his spelling and lack of punctuation seems to underscore the point. Joseph notes that his family,

being in indigent circumstances were obliged to labour hard for the support of a large Family having nine children and as it required their exertions of all that were able to render any assistance for the support of the Family therefore we were deprived of the bennift of an education suffice it to say I was nearly instructtid in reading and writing and the ground <rules> of Arithmatic which const[it]uted my whole literary acquirements.<sup>5</sup>

It is therefore highly likely that Joseph provided Oliver with his 1832 history to use as a basis for publishing his new history. Oliver, as Joseph’s scribe, had plenty of experience rewriting and expanding upon Joseph’s words.

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4 Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery, in *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/3 (Dec. 1834), 40, [http://en.fairmormon.org/Messenger\\_and\\_Advocate/1/3](http://en.fairmormon.org/Messenger_and_Advocate/1/3).

5 Joseph Smith, “A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr,” *History*, [ca. summer 1832]; handwriting of Frederick G. Williams and Joseph Smith; six pages; in Joseph Smith Letterbook 1, Joseph Smith Collection, Church History Library, 2. Original spelling retained.

### Oliver's First Installment: Events Leading Up to the Vision

When Oliver Cowdery published his first installment of the history of the Church in the December 1834 issue of the *Messenger and Advocate*, he appeared to be relating a story that is very familiar to all Latter-day Saints today. Oliver writes his history in the form of a series of letters to W. W. Phelps. He begins by stating,

You will recollect that I informed you, in my letter published in the first No. of the *Messenger and Advocate*, that this history would necessarily embrace the life and character of our esteemed friend and brother, J. Smith JR. one of the presidents of this church, and for information on that part of the subject, I refer you to his communication of the same, published in this paper. I shall, therefore, pass over that, till I come to the 15th year of his life.<sup>6</sup>

Notice that Oliver has clearly established Joseph's age as fourteen. In his 1832 history, Joseph says that "from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart," and that he approached the Lord in prayer "in the 16th year of my age." The phrase "the 16th year of my age" was added between the lines of Joseph's handwriting by Frederick G. Williams *after* the account had been written, as an afterthought. Why would Oliver establish Joseph's age as fourteen rather than fifteen if he possessed the 1832 document? Joseph's letter to Oliver showed that he was quite obviously interested in correcting any inaccuracies regarding his early life. Thus Joseph stated, "I have been induced to give you the time and place of my birth." Joseph appears to have corrected his age.

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<sup>6</sup> Oliver Cowdery to W.W. Phelps, in *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/3 (Dec. 1834), 42.



Oliver's account continues, "There was a great awakening, or excitement raised on the subject of religion, and much enquiry for the word of life. Large additions were made to the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches." Oliver describes the religious fervor that gripped the region:

[A] general struggle was made by the leading characters of the different sects, for proselytes. Then strife seemed to take the place of that apparent union and harmony which had previously characterized the moves and exhortations of the old professors, and a cry—I am right—you are wrong—was introduced in their stead.<sup>7</sup>

This, of course, is the familiar story leading up to the First Vision. Joseph wrote in his 1832 account that

my intimate acquaintance with those of different denominations led me to marvel exceedingly for I discovered that they did not adorn their profession by a holy walk and Godly conversation.<sup>8</sup>

Oliver next describes the effect of the religious fervor on Joseph's family:

In this general strife for followers, his mother, one sister, and two of his natural brothers, were persuaded to unite with the Presbyterians. This gave opportunity for further reflection; and as will be seen in the sequel, laid a foundation, or was one means of laying a foundation for the attestation of the truths, or professions of truth, contained in that record called the word of God.<sup>9</sup>

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7 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/3 (Dec. 1834), 42.

8 Smith, "A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr," 2. Spelling has been modernized. Original spelling: "my intimate acquaintance with those of differant denominations led me to marvel exceedingly for I discovered that <they did not adorn> instead of adorning their profession by a holy walk and Godly conversation."

9 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/3 (Dec. 1834), 42.

Again, this is completely consistent with the events leading up to the First Vision. The “sequel” that Oliver refers to is the next installment of this history in the *Messenger and Advocate*, and he is alluding to a forthcoming description of a *foundational event* in the history of the Church.

Joseph’s 1832 history does not state that his family members joined the Presbyterians, though there is a possible, aborted attempt to do so. In the 1832 history, Joseph originally writes that he:

could find none that would believe the heavenly vision  
nevertheless I pondered these things in my heart about  
that time my mother and ....”<sup>10</sup>

Without completing the sentence, Joseph crosses out the phrase “about that time my mother and,” and replaces it with the phrase “but after many days I fell into transgression.” What was Joseph about to say about his family? Since Oliver was very specific about Joseph’s family members uniting with the Presbyterians, he had to have obtained the information from Joseph. Could the aborted phrase have been intended to refer to “about that time” that his mother and other family members were persuaded to unite with the Presbyterians? It would certainly fit into the narrative.

Oliver continues his history by stating that the profession of godliness should have a “benign influence upon the heart.”

After strong solicitations to unite with one of those  
different societies, and seeing the apparent proselyting  
disposition manifested with equal warmth from

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10 Smith, “A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr,” 3-4. Spelling has been modernized. Original spelling: “and my soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great Joy and the Lord was with me but could find none that would believe the hevnlly vision nevertheless I pondered these things in my heart ~~about that time my mother and~~ but after many days I fell into transgressions and sinned in many things.”

each, his mind was led to more seriously contemplate the importance of a move of this kind.... To profess godliness without its benign influence upon the heart, was a thing so foreign from his feelings, that his spirit was not at rest day nor night.<sup>11</sup>

Compare this to Joseph's 1832 account, in which he talks of the influence that a belief in God should have upon the heart.

When I considered upon these things my heart exclaimed well hath the wise man said it is a fool that saith in his heart there is no God. My heart exclaimed all these bear testimony and bespeak an omnipotent and omnipresent power a being who maketh Laws and decreeth and bindeth all things in their bounds who filleth Eternity who was and is and will be from all Eternity to Eternity.<sup>12</sup>

Oliver then discusses the effect of the religious contention upon Joseph's mind, noting that Joseph feared that "serious consequences" would result if he did not resolve this issue.

To unite with a society professing to be built upon the only sure foundation, and that profession be a vain one, was calculated, in its very nature, the more it was contemplated, the more to arouse the mind to the serious consequences of moving hastily, in a course fraught with eternal realities.<sup>13</sup>

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11 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/3 (Dec. 1834), 43.

12 Smith, "A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr," 3. Spelling has been modernized. Original spelling: "when I considered upon these things my heart exclaimed well hath the wise man said ~~the~~ <it is a> fool <that> saith in his heart there is no God my heart exclaimed all all these bear testimony and bespeak an omnipotent and omnipreasant power a being who makith Laws and decreeth and bindeth all things in their bounds who filleth Eternity who was and is and will be from all Eternity to Eternity."

13 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/3 (Dec. 1834), 43.

Joseph's 1832 account talks of his mind being "distressed" because he was "convicted" of his sins.

[M]y mind became exceedingly distressed for I became convicted of my sins, and by searching the scriptures I found that mankind did not come unto the Lord, but that they had apostatized from the true and living faith, and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament and I felt to mourn for my own sins and for the sins of the world.<sup>14</sup>

Oliver provides this conclusion in preparation for the next installment:

In this situation where could he go? If he went to one he was told they were right, and all others were wrong—If to another, the same was heard from those: All professed to be the true church; and if not they were certainly hypocritical.... [A] proof from some source was wanting to settle the mind and give peace to the agitated bosom. It is not frequent that the *minds* of men are exercised with proper determination relative to obtaining a certainty of the things of God.<sup>15</sup>

Latter-day Saints who are familiar with the account of events leading up to Joseph's First Vision as they are described in the Pearl of Great Price will clearly recognize Oliver's story so far. Oliver has quite accurately and thoroughly described the

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14 Smith, "A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr," 2. Spelling has been modernized. Original spelling: "my mind become exceedingly distressed for I become convicted of my sins and by searching the scriptures I found that ~~mand~~ <mankind> did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and living faith and there was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the new testament and I felt to mourn for my own sins and for the sins of the world."

15 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/3 (Dec. 1834), 43.

events in Joseph's life that led him to call upon God, the details of which are entirely consistent with Joseph's 1832 description as well as matching detail of Joseph's later descriptions of the events leading up to the First Vision. Oliver is clearly priming his readers for the next installment, which the present-day reader might assume will reveal the actual details of Joseph's First Vision.

This was not, however, to be the case.

### Oliver's Second Installment: An Abrupt Change in Direction

When Oliver published his second installment two months later, in February 1835, he did a very curious thing — *he skips over the description of the actual First Vision*. Oliver even “corrects” Joseph's age from fourteen to seventeen, then proceeds to tell the story of Moroni's visit. The story of Moroni's visit is, of course, also included in Joseph's 1832 account.

Oliver begins the February 1835 installment with an apology and a statement that “it was not my wish to be understood that I could not give the leading items of every important occurrence.”

In my last, published in the 3d No. of the Advocate I apologized for the brief manner in which I should be obliged to give, in many instances, the history of this church. Since then yours of Christmas has been received. It was not my wish to be understood that I could not give the leading items of every important occurrence, at least so far as would effect my duty to my fellowmen, in such as contained important information upon the subject of doctrine, and as would render it intelligibly plain; but as there are, in a great house, many vessels, so in the history of a work of this magnitude, many items which would be interesting to those who follow, are forgotten. In fact, I deem every manifestation of the

Holy Spirit, dictating the hearts of the saints in the way of righteousness, to be of importance, and this is one reason why I plead an apology.<sup>16</sup>

Joseph no doubt recognized Oliver's detailed description of the events leading up to Joseph's 1832 description of his vision. During the intervening eight weeks, did Joseph indicate to Oliver that he was not ready to publish the details of his theophany? Something happened that caused Oliver to change his approach, for after he apologized for his apparent haste in documenting the history, he wrote:

You will recollect that I mentioned the time of a religious excitement, in Palmyra and vicinity to have been in the 15th year of our brother J. Smith Jr's, age—that was an error in the type—it should have been in the 17th.—You will please remember this correction, as it will be necessary for the full understanding of what will follow in time. This would bring the date down to the year 1823.<sup>17</sup>

The claimed “error in type” allowed Oliver to skip from Joseph's history at age 14 to age 16, although in 1823, Joseph would have actually been 17. He skipped over Joseph's 1832 account of seeing the Lord, and moves straight to Joseph's vision of Moroni.

Not only does Oliver skip the First Vision, but he also now seems to feel it necessary to *minimize the importance* of the religious excitement that he so thoroughly described in his first installment, stating,

I do not deem it to be necessary to write further on the subject of this excitement. It is doubted by many

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16 Oliver Cowdery to W.W. Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/5 (Feb. 1835), 77-78, [http://en.fairmormon.org/Messenger\\_and\\_Advocate/1/5](http://en.fairmormon.org/Messenger_and_Advocate/1/5).

17 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/5 (Feb. 1835), 78.

whether any real or essential good ever resulted from such excitements, while others advocate their propriety with warmth.<sup>18</sup>

After taking great pains to describe the religious excitement leading up to the significant *foundational event* alluded to in the previous installment, Oliver is now *diminishing* its importance before he continues his story. Oliver appears to be doing what we would today call “damage control.”

Yet, before fully proceeding with a description of Moroni’s visit, Oliver apparently feels that he cannot ignore the event completely and obliquely continues to describe events related to the First Vision, only now describing something that *has already occurred in the past*.

Oliver remarks on Joseph’s desire to know if a “Supreme being” existed during the period of religious excitement, stating,

And it is only necessary for me to say, that while this excitement continued, he continued to call upon the Lord in secret for a full manifestation of divine approbation, and for, to him, the all important information, if a Supreme being did exist, to have an assurance that he was accepted of him.<sup>19</sup>

Oliver then alludes to the First Vision by saying,

This, most assuredly, was correct—it was right. The Lord has said, long since, and his word remains steadfast, that for him who knocks it shall be opened, & whosoever will, may come and partake of the waters of life freely.<sup>20</sup>

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18 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/5 (Feb. 1835), 78.

19 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/5 (Feb. 1835), 78.

20 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/5 (Feb. 1835), 78.

Oliver is saying that something of significance happened in Joseph's life *prior* to the events that Oliver would be describing next, and he assures the reader that "this, most assuredly, was correct." Joseph asked, and the Lord answered.

### "With a Joy Unspeakable"

Still not satisfied that he has adequately covered the period of the vision, Oliver continues to elaborate:

The Lord never said—"Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," to turn a deaf ear to those who were weary, when they call upon him. He never said, by the mouth of the prophet—"Ho, every one that thirsts, come ye to the waters," without passing it as a firm decree, at the same time, that he that should after come, should be filled with a joy unspeakable.<sup>21</sup>

Note Oliver's use of the phrase "with a joy unspeakable" in association with Joseph receiving knowledge from the Lord. In his November 1835 journal entry, Joseph actually uses Oliver's words in his 1835 First Vision description, in which he states, "a pillar of fire appeared above my head, it presently rested down upon me, *and filled me with joy unspeakable.*"<sup>22</sup>

Not only did Joseph associate the phrase with the First Vision in his 1835 account, but he uses the word *joy* only a single time in his 1832 history, and it too is associated only

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21 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/5 (Feb. 1835), 78.

22 Joseph Smith, Jr., "Sketch Book for the use of Joseph Smith, jr.," *Journal*, Sept. 1835–Apr. 1836; handwriting of Warren Parrish, an unidentified scribe, Sylvester Smith, Frederick G. Williams, Warren Cowdery, Joseph Smith, and Oliver Cowdery; 195 pages; Joseph Smith Collection, Church History Library, 25. Spelling modernized. Original spelling: "a pillar of fire appeared above my head, it presently rested down upon my <me> head, and filled me with joy unspeakable...." <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-1835-1836?dm=image-and-text&zm=zoom-inner&tm=expanded&p=25&s=undefined&sm=none>.



with the description of the First Vision. Upon concluding his description of the First Vision, Joseph states that “my soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoice with great Joy and the Lord was with me.”<sup>23</sup> The phrase “joy unspeakable” is never associated with Moroni’s visit in any of these accounts. Clearly, Joseph associated such joy with the experience of the First Vision.

Oliver continues with yet another example:

Neither did he manifest by the Spirit to John upon the isle—“Let him that is athirst, come,” and command him to send the same abroad, under any other consideration, than that “whosoever would, might take the water of life freely,” to the remotest ages of time, or while there was a sinner upon his footstool.<sup>24</sup>

Here Oliver is talking about a manifestation “by the Spirit” to the apostle John when he sought guidance from the Lord. Oliver is referring to the vision that John had of Jesus Christ on the Isle of Patmos. Once again, Oliver is indicating that *the Lord responds* to those who seek guidance. This is yet another allusion to Joseph’s First Vision experience.

Finally, after what appears to be an extended effort to do his best to describe the importance of the First Vision without actually giving any details about the vision itself, Oliver states, “But to proceed with my narrative....”<sup>25</sup> Oliver then proceeds to describe the visit of Moroni to Joseph Smith, which continues to correlate with Joseph’s 1832 history. Joseph writes,

I fell into transgressions and sinned in many things which brought a wound upon my soul and there were many things which transpired that cannot be

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23 Smith, “A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr,” 3.

24 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/5 (Feb. 1835), 78.

25 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/5 (Feb. 1835), 78.

written and my Fathers family have suffered many persecutions and afflictions and it came to pass when I was seventeen years of age I called again upon the Lord and he shewed unto me a heavenly vision for behold an angel of the Lord came and stood before me.<sup>26</sup>

According to the 1832 history, Joseph once again, several years after having received a forgiveness of his sins during the First Vision, felt a need to seek a forgiveness of his sins. Oliver writes,

On the evening of the 21st of September, 1823, previous to retiring to rest, our brother's mind was unusually wrought up on the subject which had so long agitated his mind—his heart was drawn out in fervent prayer, and his whole soul was so lost to every thing of a temporal nature, that earth, to him, had lost its claims, and all he desired was to be prepared in heart to commune with some kind messenger who could communicate to him the desired information of his acceptance with God.... While continuing in prayer for a manifestation in some way that his sins were forgiven; endeavoring to exercise faith in the scriptures, on a sudden a light like that of day, only of a purer and far more glorious appearance and brightness, burst into the room.<sup>27</sup>

Joseph's 1832 account also acknowledges that Moroni conveyed a forgiveness of sins, noting that "he said the Lord had forgiven me my sins and he revealed unto me that in the Town of

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26 Smith, "A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr," 4. Spelling has been modernized. Original spelling: "I fell into transgressions and sinned in many things which brought a wound upon my soul and there were many things which transpired that cannot be written and my Fathers family have suffered many persicutions and afflictions and it came to pass when I was seventeen years of age I called again upon the Lord and he shewed unto me a heavenly vision for behold an angel of the Lord came and stood before me...."

27 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/5 (Feb. 1835), 78-79.

Manchester Ontario County N.Y. there was plates of gold upon which there was engravings.”<sup>28</sup> Oliver said that the angel “then proceeded and gave a general account of the promises made to the fathers, and also gave a history of the aborigines of this country, and said they were literal descendants of Abraham.”<sup>29</sup>

### Why Did Oliver Not Mention the First Vision?

There is a substantial correlation between Oliver’s history and Joseph’s 1832 history, indicating that Oliver had it in his possession. The 1832 history most definitely describes the First Vision. Why, then, did Oliver give such an accurate description leading up to the First Vision and then not mention the vision itself? It seems, based upon his efforts to avoid describing the vision in the second installment, that he understood the importance of the event but was not allowed to describe it specifically. One possibility is that Joseph saw where Oliver was going with the first installment of the story and then decided that he was not ready to have Oliver introduce the story of his First Vision publicly. At this time, the story of Moroni’s visit and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon was already well known among Church membership. It would be expected that this event be included. There is clearly no reason for him to have skipped such an important foundational event in the prophet’s life unless the Prophet requested it of him. By 1835 Joseph was clearly relating the story of the First Vision to others, but the story of the First Vision would not become formally published until several years later.

Prior to the discovery of Joseph’s 1832 history and 1835 journal entries, Oliver’s unusual 1834/1835 account had been used by critics as evidence that Joseph made up the story of the First Vision, since, when the two installments are considered

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28 Smith, “A History of the life of Joseph Smith Jr,” 4. Original spelling retained.

29 Cowdery to Phelps, *Messenger and Advocate*, 1/5 (Feb. 1835), 80.

together, it appears that Oliver is relating the religious excitement to Moroni's visit. It has been claimed that Joseph did not solidify the details of the First Vision story until 1838 in order to establish himself more firmly as prophet during a Church leadership crisis in Kirtland. However, a careful look at Oliver's history in conjunction with Joseph's 1832 and 1835 accounts shows that Oliver was quite consistent with the details. Oliver, it appears, knew more than he was allowed to write about at the time.

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## MĀORI LATTER-DAY SAINT FAITH: SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS

*Louis Midgley*

Review of Marjorie Newton, *Tiki and Temple: The Mormon Mission in New Zealand, 1854–1958* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2012), xv + 328 pp. (including a glossary of Māori words, three appendices, bibliography, two maps, twenty-nine illustrations and a photography register, and index). \$29.95 (paperback).

*Abstract: Marjorie Newton's widely acclaimed Tiki and Temple<sup>1</sup> is a history of the first century of Latter-day Saint missionary endeavors in Aotearoa/New Zealand. She tells the remarkable story of what, beginning in 1881, rapidly became essentially a Māori version of the faith of Latter-day Saints. Her fine work sets the stage for a much closer look at the deeper reasons some Māori became faithful Latter-day Saints. It turns out that Māori seers (and hence their own prophetic tradition) was, for them, commensurate with the divine special revelations brought to them by LDS missionaries. Among other things, the arcane lore taught in special schools to an elite group among the Māori is now receiving close attention by Latter-day Saint scholars.*

I have argued elsewhere that Marjorie Newton's history of the first century of Latter-day Saint missionary endeavors in

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1 Marjorie Newton has received several awards for her book, and it has also been reviewed favorably.

New Zealand<sup>2</sup> is exemplary.<sup>3</sup> *Tiki and Temple* is a fine book—one that I highly recommend. I also agree with Elder Glen L. Rudd, who knows the Church of Jesus Christ in New Zealand very well, that *Tiki and Temple* is genuinely faith-affirming. One reason is that its author “gives the reader a picture of the Lord’s purposes in sending the gospel to New Zealand, a country of great natural beauty and a country blessed with spiritual giants, Maori prophets, priesthood leaders, and dedicated missionaries who diligently and constantly battled against the many problems they encountered as they fulfilled the missions assigned to them by the Lord” (Foreword, p. 46).

The story of Māori<sup>4</sup> joining the Church in large numbers has, of course, been told and retold<sup>5</sup> and sometimes embellished,

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2 Whenever I mention New Zealand, I also have in mind *Aotearoa*, which is its official Māori name.

3 See Louis Midgley, “Comments on the History of Mormon Maori Faith,” Association of Mormon Letters, posted 26 July 2013 at [http://www.forums.mormonletters.org/yaf\\_postsm2657\\_Newton-Tiki-and-Temple-The-Mormon-Mission-in-New-Zealand-18541958-reviewed-by-Louis.aspx](http://www.forums.mormonletters.org/yaf_postsm2657_Newton-Tiki-and-Temple-The-Mormon-Mission-in-New-Zealand-18541958-reviewed-by-Louis.aspx); and Midgley, Review of *Tiki and Temple* by Marjorie Newton, *Journal of Mormon History* 40/1 (2014): 253–56.

4 Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the indigenous peoples of New Zealand had only tribal identities. They offered the word *māori*—which means normal, usual, or ordinary—to the Europeans looking for a name that embraced all the *iwi* (tribes), thereby for the first time creating their own single identity. The same word is found in the Cook Islands, and cognates are found in the Society Islands and elsewhere in eastern Polynesia, but the names given to those peoples most often came from that of the major island in a group or string of islands, whose names were sometimes given to those places by Europeans. Examples are the Cook Islands and the Marquesas Islands. The names for the indigenous peoples in the Pacific were sometimes thrust upon them by the first Europeans to “discover” them.

5 In two attempts to explain how the older Māori I knew in 1950–52 read the Book of Mormon, I have made a stab at doing some of this myself. See Louis Midgley, “A Singular Reading: The Māori and the Book of Mormon,” in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 245–76; and Midgley, “A Māori View of the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 4–11.

but it has also been discounted or explained away. Some of what has been written about these events has been excellent. For this and other reasons, Newton graciously acknowledges what she describes as the “fine work” of others on the history of the Church of Jesus Christ in New Zealand (p. xii).<sup>6</sup> She also modestly grants that, “as an Australian,” she might be deficient in her grasp of, among other things, “Maori culture” (p. xiv). She hopes “that one day a Maori historian will produce a scholarly history of Mormonism in New Zealand that will remedy any omissions and defects” that her accounts may have (p. xiv). I fully agree that Māori scholars are best situated to provide an explanation of the faith of Māori Saints. And there is, fortunately, increased interest in recovering and preserving the crucial memory of what made the Church of Jesus Christ essentially Māori during much of its first century in New Zealand.

Those who know me well will testify that I am fond of the peoples of the South Pacific and obsessed with the Māori and New Zealand. But in important ways, I remain an interested outsider. I will, however, set out some of what seem to me to be the grounds, dynamics, and deeper dimensions of the faith of Māori Saints. I will sketch some of what I believe are the reasons for the truly remarkable faith and faithfulness of Māori Saints that supplement (or go beyond) what one can find in *Tiki and Temple*.

First, there are good reasons to see the old Māori prophetic tradition (mentioned by Elder Rudd in the passage I quoted at the beginning of this essay) as both roughly commensurate with what they embraced when they became Latter-day Saints

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6 Newton specifically mentions R. Lanier Britsch's *Unto the Islands of the Sea: A History of the Latter-day Saints in the Pacific* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 253–345 and Brian W. Hunt's *Zion in New Zealand: A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand, 1854-1977* (Temple View: Church College of New Zealand, 1977).

and also as part what led them to become Latter-day Saints. Put another way, those first Māori to become Latter-day Saints were engaged in what I consider a providential joining of two prophetic traditions.

### Something Long Anticipated

Although focused primarily on the events beginning in December 1882 that led to an essentially Māori version of LDS faith, Newton's account begins in 1854, when the initial missionary efforts were somewhat ephemeral and focused only on the *Pākehā* (a person of European descent).<sup>7</sup> Those first LDS missionary endeavors in New Zealand followed the method used successfully in England of renting halls and holding public meetings. In New Zealand, doing this was mostly ineffective in converting the independent, mostly indifferent, and sometimes hostile *Pākehā*. These intermittent endeavors also included gathering a few Saints who had been converted elsewhere, baptizing a few among their families or friends, and then occasionally sending them to Zion in Utah.

Newton sets the stage for the story she tells by skillfully identifying an interest in the Māori among some of the Saints long before efforts were made to convert them (see pp. 1–6). For example, in 1832—long before 6 February 1840, when the famous (or infamous) Treaty of Waitangi<sup>8</sup> brought New Zealand under the Crown—W. W. Phelps, impressed by a description of the Māori he happened to notice, proclaimed that “the Lord will not forget them” (p. 1). In 1854, a few LDS

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7 I have defined key Māori words parenthetically.

8 For those puzzled by some details in *Tiki and Temple*, an Internet search will supply the needed information. For example, one can easily access detailed accounts of the Treaty of Waitangi and its contentious subsequent history. Or, if one wonders how the Saints living in Maromaku—a tiny, entirely LDS community in the Northland—could have fashioned a chapel from one large log, a search for the word *kauri* will provide information about this kingly tree of the diverse hardwood forests of New Zealand.



missionaries began to labor in New Zealand. But a genuine effort to take the gospel to the Māori began only in 1881. This fact has annoyed me. Why did those first LDS missionaries not go immediately to the Māori? Had not Joseph Smith sent Addison Pratt (and his three associates, one of whom passed away on the long voyage) in 1843 to preach the gospel to the indigenous peoples of the South Pacific?<sup>9</sup> Did they not have immediate and lasting success? This was the first real non-English-speaking LDS missionary endeavor. Newton mentions that, when passing between Australia and New Zealand, for a brief moment Addison Pratt had a hankering to stop in New Zealand and later wrote to Joseph Smith recommending that missionaries be sent there (see pp. 2–3 for details).

Newton deftly explains the difficulties those first LDS missionaries faced in New Zealand as well as some of the circumstances among the Māori that seem to have impeded (and even prevented) the long-hoped-for effort to bring the restored gospel to them (see pp. 22–24). In addition, I believe that LDS missionary endeavors with the Māori benefitted from the remarkable growth in literacy among a people who, prior to the arrival of the *Pākehā*, had no written language, hence their subsequent familiarity with and love of biblical narratives made available in their own language. LDS efforts to proselytize among the Māori, especially given the few LDS missionaries called to New Zealand for short assignments, depended upon earlier efforts by Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Anglican missionaries to establish their versions of Christianity among the Māori. These Christian missionaries were among the first British to settle in areas in which the Māori

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9 This heroic adventure took Pratt and his companions from Nauvoo to New Bedford, Massachusetts, then by ship across the south Atlantic, around Africa, east through the Indian Ocean, then between Australia and New Zealand and northeast to Tubuai in the Australs, Tahiti in the Society Islands, and elsewhere in French Polynesia.

were concentrated. They had to learn Māori. Words had to be found or fashioned in Māori to convey their message and to make available portions of the Bible. The impressive immediate result of those early sectarian missionary endeavors was that for a while (and until the surge of *Pākehā* settlers swamped the Māori), most Christians in New Zealand were Māori. In addition, with the arrival of the *Pākehā*, for reasons that I will not go into, the Māori population began to decline. The faith of Māori Christians was not focused on dogmatic theology, but on biblical stories which seemed to them to describe their own situation and to convey hope in the face of the enormous changes and challenges resulting from both the arrival of the *Pākehā* and the dynamic of tribal hostilities.

After the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, the *Pākehā* began to gobble up Māori land—that is, often stealing it. The result was a series of wars between some Māori and the Crown<sup>10</sup> over what were considered insults and the theft of their lands. The Māori witnessed those who had brought them the biblical message become apologists for *Pākehā* greed. Only when these wars eventually subsided was the door opened for LDS missionaries. Where previous LDS missionaries, including mission presidents, had depended almost entirely upon the largess of the few generous *Pākehā* Saints, beginning in 1882 most LDS missionaries in New Zealand lived among Māori and depended primarily upon them for their sustenance. This took place only when armed hostilities had ceased, the Māori had lost confidence in the *Pākehā* preachers, and after they had become somewhat familiar with the Bible.

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10 And their Māori allies, who sided with the Crown in an effort to avoid having their own lands confiscated or to settle old rivalries within and between tribes.

## The Beginnings

When LDS missionaries eventually adopted a mode of teaching that entailed major cultural accommodations to Māori ways, they had remarkable success. The result has been described as an intercultural exchange, which I believe involved, among other things, the subtle melding of two commensurate prophetic traditions. The initial breakthrough began on 5 April 1881, when William J. McDonnel was called by William M. Bromley, the New Zealand mission president, to serve as a missionary to the Māori. McDonnel had joined the Church in New Zealand and served as branch president in Auckland, where he operated the dry dock at the bottom of Hobson Street. When called as a missionary, he went to work learning the Māori language. On 18 October 1881, McDonnel baptized Ngataki, a Māori he had met while working at the graver dock in Auckland. Ngataki was the first Māori baptized in New Zealand. Other than this one baptism, all efforts to proselytize the Māori proved fruitless until 24 December 1882, when McDonnel and two companions met one prepared by an encounter with the apostle Peter to hear his message. McDonnel had journeyed to Cambridge, a provincial town southeast of Hamilton, to visit Thomas Cox, who had recently moved there from Auckland. Cox had previously despised McDonnel, even mounting a petition to have him removed as branch president. Despite this, McDonnel and President Bromley decided to spend Christmas with Cox.

Bromley's fine diary<sup>11</sup> provides a nicely written, contemporary account of a remarkable encounter that he, Cox, and McDonnel had on 24 December 1882 with Hari Teimana, who indicated that he recognized Bromley and his

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11 For details, see Bromley's diary, now available as *None Shall Excel Thee: The Life and Journals of William Michael Bromley*, ed. Fred Bromley Hodson (n.p.: privately printed, 1990). I rely entirely upon Bromley's account and not on the later supporting reminiscences of William McDonnel and Thomas Cox.

associates. Teimana told McDonnel in Māori that the apostle Peter had recently visited him. Dressed in distinctive white clothing, Peter had shown him the three Latter-day Saints. Upon recognizing them, Teimana accepted their authority and then their message.<sup>12</sup> On Christmas Day, the first of a series of baptisms took place, as well as the healing of the relationship between McDonnel and Cox.

As this account illustrates, it was often not an agonizing, difficult decision for Māori to accept Joseph Smith as a seer and to recognize both the message and authority of LDS missionaries. Unlike the Christian world generally, for some Māori the heavens were not closed by either dogma or habit. In addition, some Māori were prepared by special divine revelations for the arrival and message of LDS missionaries. Even in 1950 the Māori, I soon discovered, were not influenced as I had been by powerful elements of Enlightenment skepticism about divine things; they lived in a world where wonders are possible. Hence Newton correctly reports that “many Mormon families have told of visions received by their ancestors, guiding them to accept Mormonism” (p. 43).

I first heard accounts of these visions in 1950 in the area around the Bay of Islands north of Auckland. I assumed that they had all been recorded by earlier LDS missionaries, if not by the Māori Saints themselves. I was wrong on both counts. The Māori Saints were still accustomed to the habits of the older oral culture and usually did not record events.<sup>13</sup> I am not aware of a collection of these stories. I now regret that I did not make it my business to record the stories I heard. My attention was

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12 Bromley’s version of the encounter with the apostle Peter depended upon what Teimana told McDonnel, the only one of the three who could communicate with Teimana in Māori.

13 The habits of the old oral culture lingered in 1950. In 1985 when, with my wife, I started returning to New Zealand, I found that those I knew in 1950 could remember my stories better than I could. In their much detailed, more accurate versions, I was not a heroic figure but more of a brash and bookish comic figure.

primarily focused on what now seem to be rather trivial, but pressing, mundane things: the weather, food, transportation, and other similar matters. Even though I loved the stories I heard, unfortunately I followed in the footsteps of previous LDS missionaries and did not record them.

As that initial encounter of McDonnell, Bromley, and Cox with Hari Teimana illustrates, the Māori who became Latter-day Saints often lived in an enchanted, and—for me and some other LDS missionaries—an enchanting world. From the moment I knew that there was such a thing as an LDS mission, I expected to serve in New Zealand, and I did so in 1950–52. This was almost seven decades after the Māori began to join the Church. Over six decades later, I am still taken with those people and that place. Much like others who have served missions in New Zealand, my faith is anchored in part in the work of the Holy Spirit I have witnessed among the peoples in that land. I found in 1950 that the Māori were often strikingly open to the divine. Their test, they would point out to me, was moral or practical: it was not whether the restored gospel is true, which even non-LDS Māori would tell me was for them obvious, but whether they were really determined to remain genuinely faithful to the covenants with God required by the message LDS missionaries brought to them.

When I first arrived in New Zealand in 1950, I lived in the area in and around the wonderful Bay of Islands, where, at Waitangi, what the Māori tend to see as a compact between two peoples had been set in place. The Māori enjoyed pointing out that the Christian missionaries, whom at first they had trusted, had taught them to close their eyes and pray, but when they opened their eyes, the land was gone. Beginning in 1882, when such grievances were fresh in the minds of the Māori, LDS missionaries seem to have sided with them over the deeds flowing from *Pākehā* greed. Unlike the *Pākehā*, they saw the missionaries as equals who lived with them, loved them, and

made no claim on their lands. In addition, much like the Māori, the missionaries were the object of oppression, legal restrictions, and sectarian derision.

The Māori Saints I met at that time were, in their own way, at least as “Mormon” as I was, and their conversion stories were often far more dramatic than those of my English ancestors. For these and other reasons, if there was cultural imperialism, it was not due to missionaries from the Wasatch Front imposing something foreign on the Māori. They clearly owned their faith. LDS missionaries (including mission presidents) have often been enthralled by the best in the Māori world. In addition, my experience has been that Māori Saints often feel that their faith enhances and deepens their Māori identity, which otherwise is transformed, eroded, and degraded under the sometimes demonic influences of the now-dominant sensual and increasingly highly secularized host culture.

Despite efforts to proselytize *Pākehā* and increasingly rapid changes in the situation of the Māori—some of which have clearly not been good—the Church of Jesus Christ in New Zealand in 1950 consisted primarily of Māori Saints, who most often worshiped in tiny rural branches. Māori were just beginning to surge into Auckland and Wellington, soon followed by Tongans and Samoans. In 1950, there was one LDS branch in Auckland. There are now ten stakes. In 1950, there were two Māori Saints who had university training. Now university training is common. The changes clearly have been enormous.

When my wife and I began to return to New Zealand in 1985, I was at first a bit disappointed at some of the changes that had taken place in the Church. My attachment to the Saints in New Zealand was partly frozen in memories of what amounted to a community of mostly Māori Saints. Much (but not all) of that, of course, has now changed, as my Māori friends explained, “for the better.” One of the changes has been in the

variety within LDS congregations. Virtually every Sunday in 1999 and 2000, my wife and I, while directing the Lorne Street Institute in Auckland for the Seminary and Institute System, heard favorable comments about the diverse ethnic makeup of LDS congregations. My first mission president had sought to overcome the stereotype that the Church of Jesus Christ in New Zealand was Māori. This soon happened but not by its becoming *Pākehā*. LDS congregations in New Zealand are now packed with Pacific Islanders and other nationalities and ethnic groups in addition to Māori. But this is not the story Newton tells, as her account covers the first century, when the Church in New Zealand was essentially Māori, not the story of the subsequent six decades.

### Māori Seers

Perhaps the incidents best known about the history of the Church of Jesus Christ in New Zealand are the accounts of LDS missionaries finding Māori who had been readied by their own prophets to accept them and their message. When we refer to Māori prophets, which Elder Rudd did in the passage I quoted at the beginning of this essay, we tend to reduce the strangeness of a people originally with no written language who, with the arrival of the *Pākehā*, still depended upon subtle mnemonic devices and a cast of experts to keep the memory of both human and divine things alive and who believed that knowledge of divine things could be revealed directly to human beings.

Drawing upon the work of Lanier Britsch and Brian Hunt (see p. 42 n. 5), Newton briefly mentions several Māori prophets—Paora Potangaroa, Tawhiao, Toaro Pakahia, Apiata Kuikainga, and Arama Toiroa (p. 42)—who, Māori Saints both then and now believe, prepared them for LDS missionaries and their message. The Māori themselves presented these stories to me as brute fact, and I have known them for over six decades. I am now more astonished and puzzled by what I began to

learn in 1950 than when I first encountered it. Though these stories have been told and retold, there is more to be learned about Māori prophets. For several reasons, Latter-day Saint Māori scholars are in the best position to recover valuable information and set out new insights on this and other closely related topics.<sup>14</sup> As passionate as I am about the world of Māori Saints, I operate only on its surface like an interested tourist struggling to take it all in.

There are, I believe, important bits of information that help open for us the world of Māori prophets. For instance, the Māori word *poropiti* (prophet) is actually a loan word—the English word “prophet” spelled in the Māori alphabet. The genuine Māori word is *matakite*—that is, seer.<sup>15</sup> *Kite* means to see and perceive, to find or discover, and to recognize. It also means a prophetic utterance or prophecy. And *mata* is a medium of communication with a spirit, also a spell or charm. Hence, a *matakite* is a seer—one who foresees an event—but also the vision itself. In addition, the word *matatuhi* also means seer or augur. The word *tuhi* has come to mean both the action of writing and something that is written, but its primitive

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14 For an example of a Māori scholar adding what is known about Māori prophets, see Robert Joseph, “Intercultural Exchange, Matakite Māori and the Mormon Church,” in *Mana Māori and Christianity*, ed. Hugh Morrison, Lachy Paterson, Brett Knowles, and Murray Rae (Wellington, New Zealand: Huia Publishers, 2012), 43–72. I am hoping that a version of this essay will be made available by the Interpreter Foundation because it is difficult to access outside New Zealand. See Dr. Joseph’s contribution to Professor Daniel C. Peterson’s *Mormon Scholars Testify*, at <http://mormonscholarstestify.org/955/robert-joseph>, for his academic credentials and his Māori style.

15 In this essay, unless otherwise noted, I rely upon Herbert W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*, 7th ed. (Wellington, New Zealand: A. R. Shearer, Government Printer, 1975), for my understanding of crucial Māori words (though I will not cite individual entries in this dictionary). This remarkable dictionary was first published in 1844 in Paihia in the Bay of Islands, near where the Waitangi Treaty was signed. The definitions are both drawn from and illustrated by very early Māori usage. Hence they tend to predate the changes that have taken place in Māori since the arrival of English.



meaning is to delineate or draw, to point at, and to glow or shine.

Latter-day Saints should keep in mind that Joseph Smith was a seer before (and then in addition to) becoming a prophet authorized to speak for God. He also used the two stones known in the Book of Mormon as interpreters (see Mosiah 8:13; 28:13–16, 20)<sup>16</sup> as well as his own seer stone, to see the text of the Book of Mormon, which he dictated to scribes. He also used his seer stone to receive further instruction from God, including many early sections of the Book of Covenants and Commandments, which we know as the Doctrine and Covenants.

There is also a place in Māori lore for *whatu kura* (seer stones), two of which have names.<sup>17</sup> Seer stones had an important place in the initiation into the arcane Māori mysteries. This is not, however, the place to go into detail other than to assert that, from within the horizon of Māori tradition, both seers and seer stones are not problematic.

### An Esoteric Māori Cult

What I learned in 1950 from some older Māori Saints was that when LDS missionaries arrived with their message, the Māori were already aware of a premortal life and a council in heaven where the sons of Io te Matua—the Māori name for their high god—considered the peopling of the earth, at which time a war broke out that goes on even now here below, also a way back to the glory of Io's heaven and so forth. They attributed this knowledge to their own seers, whose teachings fit securely within the world view of specially trained *tohunga* (experts) whose task it was to keep alive the memory of an esoteric cult fully known only to an elite group of initiates.

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<sup>16</sup> These passages state that a king thought that a seer was greater than a prophet (see Mosiah 8:15) and was instructed that a seer is also a revelator and a prophet (see Mosiah 8:16).

<sup>17</sup> *Hukatai*, which means sea spray, and *Rehutai*, which means sea foam.

When the *Pākehā* arrived in New Zealand, the Māori relied upon, among other things, rigorous memorization of vast amounts of genealogy and other closely related lore to keep alive their knowledge of divine things as well as a host of more mundane information and skills. Even though they rapidly became literate, the oral transmission of information was still very much in place in 1950. Of course, attention had to be given, even—or especially—within the community of Saints, to mastering English and the ways of the *Pākehā*. Inevitably, this has tended to supplant, if not erode, the authority and the knowledge of the old oral traditions. Some of the old lore was recorded. Neither the old lore nor its impact on the faith of Māori Saints has disappeared. And, as I will demonstrate, serious efforts are being made to recover and teach it.

For me, the very best portion of Newton's fine book is the new and important information she provides (see pp. 171–73) on Hoani Te Whatahoro Jury (1841–1921). He assisted in the translation of the Book of Mormon into Māori and then joined the Church (pp. 52–53). Church leaders in Salt Lake City were aware of Te Whatahoro and even commissioned his portrait, which was first hung in the Salt Lake Temple, then in the Manti Temple, and eventually in the library at BYU–Hawaii (p. 171, including n. 62).

There is, however, more to Te Whatahoro's story. Beginning at age twenty-two (between 1863 and 1865), long before any Latter-day Saint had influenced any Māori, he was the scribe for Moihī Te Matorohunga (c.1800–1884) and Nepia Pohuhu (d. 1882), who dictated to him the esoteric teachings of Ngati Kahunganu (p. 171).<sup>18</sup> Newton sees the Te Whatahoro manuscripts as “sacred genealogy,” which in part they are, but they also contain the understanding of divine and human things—what might be called the esoteric religion—taught in

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18 A Māori *iwi* (tribe) located on the east coast of the North Island.

a *whare wānanga* (house of learning or college, also known as *wharekura*) to an elite group of Māori. Te Whatahoro enhanced these manuscripts and eventually donated them to the Church. Clearly recognizing their importance, Church leaders made an effort to send them to the Church Archive in Salt Lake City (pp. 171–72). The New Zealand government blocked this effort, and they were instead preserved in a fireproof vault in the little LDS meetinghouse at Scotia Place on Queen Street in Auckland. These manuscripts were loaned to Maui Pomare, a famous Māori scholar, and were never returned. Presumably they were lost or deliberately destroyed. However, a copy was retained by Te Whatahoro, and they were published in both Māori and English under the title *The Lore of the Whare Wananga* by S. Percy Smith, an important early amateur ethnologist.<sup>19</sup> The story Newton tells of the Te Whatahoro manuscripts includes much new and valuable information. But she does not give attention to the actual contents of those manuscripts, nor does she sense why the Church's general leaders wished to honor Te Whatahoro and even pay his way to Salt Lake City so that he could receive his LDS temple endowment. (Unfortunately, he was too frail to make the trip.)

I believe that Te Whatahoro's manuscripts, along with other similar and related materials, are part of the larger matrix of elements that may help to explain why those early LDS missionaries saw whole Māori villages join the Church. To sort out this matter, however, must be the work of Māori

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19 For the English translation of the most important of these manuscripts, see H. T. Whatahoro, *The Lore or the Whare-Wananga, or Teachings of the Maori College on Religion, Cosmogony, and History*, trans. S. Percy Smith (San Bernardino, CA: Forgotten Books, 2008). This is an exact reprint of the 1913 original issued by the Polynesian Cultural Society. It is also available in electronic form at [ForgottenBooks.org](http://ForgottenBooks.org).

scholars.<sup>20</sup> It seems that the higher celestial elements of what was taught in various *wānanga* were known to an initiated elite group, but not in detail by most Māori.

Māori Saints are often aware of the Māori high god known as Io, and of related accounts of the creation of the world, a premortal existence, a great council in the highest heaven, a war that began there in the deep past and continues on earth to this day, an ascent back to the glory of the tenth (or twelfth) heaven and to the presence of Io, and so forth.<sup>21</sup> These and similar and related teachings were once transmitted to some select Māori in *wānanga*. It was from within this world of esoteric knowledge that Māori seers tended to operate. How much and in what way the Io cult influenced those first Māori to become Latter-day Saints is, however, still to be determined.

What is clear is that when LDS missionaries encountered Māori, some of whom had been prepared by seers for the restored gospel, they had remarkable success. When those early missionaries were able to convert Māori who were aware of elements of the Io cult, many others soon became Latter-day Saints as well. The reason is that initiates in the Io cult had what the Māori call *mana*, understood as “the enduring, indestructible power of the gods.”<sup>22</sup> What I learned in October

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20 I suspect that the first generation of Māori Saints were prying out of credulous and unsophisticated LDS missionaries such things as the LDS belief in a war in heaven and a pathway back to a celestial world for those true and faithful, much of which was similar to their own esoteric lore. Despite the flaws and faults of LDS missionaries, and even perhaps because of their lack of sophistication, the Māori saw signs of *mana* (spiritual power) among at least some missionaries. I benefitted from such generosity.

21 When Io is designated as *te matua* (the parent), *te hunga* (the sacred), and so forth, these supplements to Io’s name seem to me to describe his attributes.

22 In this instance, for the primitive and most basic meaning of *mana*, I rely on Cleve Barlow’s *Tikanga Whakaaro: Key Concepts in Māori Culture* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1998), 61, which can be called *mana tapu*, which understanding differs from that found in Williams, *Dictionary of the Maori Language*, where that crucial word is defined merely as “authority, control,” and then as “influence, prestige,” which it clearly is.

1950 in conversations with an old Māori at Waikare in the south end of the Bay of Islands was that even before LDS missionaries arrived, the Māori were aware of a premortal life and a grand council in heaven in which the sons of Io te Matua considered the peopling of the earth, at which time a war broke out that goes on even now here below. These and other similar or related teachings were known to an elite group of specially trained *tohunga*.

In addition, since there were disagreements both between and within *iwi* about the details of the Io cult, I believe there was also a longing or perhaps even an expectation that messengers would turn up to help sort things out. It is in this larger context that the words of Arama Toiroa (whom I see as the leading figure) and other Māori seers were understood by the Māori who first encountered LDS missionaries. It is from a passion for recovery of the genuine ancient lore that a Māori version of their encounter with Mormon things is even now beginning to take shape.

That there were Māori *matakite* is not challenged, nor is it denied that there were *wānanga* in which arcane lore was transmitted to future generations. However, some have insisted that, despite the solid evidence that the Io cult was taught in various *wānanga* in at least three *iwi*, Io was unknown prior to the arrival of Christian missionaries. In addition, some Māori—especially those who have been recolonized by *Pākehā* ways of understanding the world, who are hostile to any version of Christian faith and/or who have come to see Māori things through an essentially secular lens—now insist that the Io cult was a post-European invention by Māori seeking to fashion a past that would rival what is found in the Bible. What can be said with confidence is that the Māori did not borrow from sectarian Christian missionaries what was taught in *wānanga*. It is, instead, Latter-day Saints who see parallels and similarities between their own faith and hidden Māori lore. What I have

yet to see is the argument that somehow in the 1860s, LDS missionaries had managed to introduce the substance of the Io cult to some Māori, who then cast those teachings in the Māori language and thereby made it their own.

### Some Steps Forward

There is an increasing interest in traditional Māori lore and learning among Latter-day Saints which I see as salutary. This began late in the 1990s, when Herewini Jones, a truly gifted teacher, began holding *wānanga* for Māori with an interest in understanding the original links between Māori *matakite* and the restored gospel. The remarkable instruction given by Herewini Jones was fully endorsed and encouraged by Richard Hunter, President of the Auckland Mission from 1998 through 1999. It was also frequently utilized by Paul Mendenhall, who is fluent in Māori and who replaced President Hunter in 1999.

This public instruction in the arcane lore and related *whakapapa* (genealogy) demonstrates its links to LDS teachings. By 1998, the *wānanga* held by Herewini Jones became a primary vehicle in effecting new conversions and deepening the faith of the Saints as well as drawing lapsed Saints back into full fellowship. This endeavor made it possible for Māori to see that the very best in their esoteric lore and *tikanga* (governing rule, habit, controlling authority, the straight and right way) as essentially commensurate with the narrative upon which a solid faith in God can be grounded. From my perspective, this kind of instruction edifies and deepens faith. It has also opened the door for other LDS Māori scholars to probe the role played by the arcane teachings traditionally given in *wānanga* in the growth of the Church of Jesus Christ among the Māori as well as the place those teaching have for the faith of Māori Saints. Some of what Newton hopes will happen is actually beginning to take place.

In her bibliography (see p. 279), Newton mentions the late Cleve Barlow's *Tikanga Whakaaro*.<sup>23</sup> Dr. Barlow told me in 1999 that he was one of the last three Māori to actually receive instruction in a traditional *whare wānanga*<sup>24</sup> and that the instruction he received matched LDS teachings better than the one recorded by Te Whatahoro. Should he publish his version? If he did not, he realized, the last living link with the important instruction he had undergone, elements of which he saw as agreeable with his own LDS faith, would disappear. Phillip Lambert, an LDS Māori scholar, has recently informed me that when Dr. Barlow eventually moved from Auckland to Hamilton, he began giving instruction in his own *wānanga*, presumably in an effort to pass on his own knowledge of the ancient lore forming the core of the old Io cult.

### Some Concluding Remarks

On two occasions in October of 1950, I spent several days in Waikare, a very obscure place at the south end of the wonderful Bay of Islands. I engaged mostly in conversations with an aged *tohunga* with a remarkable command of the genealogy of the *Ngati Hine hapū* (subtribe) of the *Nga Puhi iwi*. He described some of the instructions he underwent in what I now believe was a *whare wānanga*, and he even wrote down some things for me. These conversations were the first time I had encountered someone with such a remarkable command of genealogy. He also introduced me to the related cosmogony and cosmology

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23 Cleve Barlow's useful *Tikanga Whakaaro* was first published by Oxford University Press in 1991 and reprinted in 1992, 1993, 1994 (with corrections), 1996, and 1998.

24 Professor Barlow was initiated into a *Nga Puhi* version of Māori arcane lore. Recently, supplementing the *Te Whatahoro* lore, a version of the *Tainui wānanga* has been published. See Pei Te Hurinui Jones, *He Tuhi Mārei-kura: A Treasury of Sacred Writings: A Māori Account of the Creation, Based on the Priestly Lore of the Tainui People* (Hamilton, New Zealand: Aka and Associates, 2013), with a companion volume entirely in Māori.

that included, among other things, a belief in a war in heaven which has spilled over into this world, a stairway back to the highest heaven, and so forth. I believe he indicated that his instruction had taken place at Waiomio, a little-known place just south of Kawakawa at the approach to the Bay of Islands. Recently I have learned from Jason Hartley that there was a *wānanga* at Waiomio which ceased to function in the 1930s. It had been shifted from further north to that place to avoid detection by the government, which was then striving to stamp out such institutions.<sup>25</sup>

I now regret that I did not record the contents of those conversations that took place in Waikare in October 1950 as well as other conversations I had with other Māori Saints. I wrongly assumed that several generations of missionaries had heard and recorded these things. I was busy urging the Saints to pay close attention to the Book of Mormon, not to gamble or drink beer, and that sort of thing. Looking back, I can now see that Māori I was teaching were also instructing me on how they read the Book of Mormon<sup>26</sup> and how their own prophetic tradition grounded and buttressed their understanding and affection for both the message it contained and the community of Saints it engendered. Those who have ministered among the Māori are often captivated by them and their ways. Matters of the heart have had a truly lasting impact on LDS missionaries, as they made portions of the Māori world their own. Such has been my own experience.

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25 For those who might care to enter this charmed world, I recommend Jason Hartley's account of some encounters here and now with divine things. See his *Ngā Mahi: The Pathway of the Stars: A Story of Truth, a Message to Awaken, a Gift from the Past* (n.p.: privately printed, 2010). This book can be ordered at [www.ngamahi.com](http://www.ngamahi.com).

26 I have described the eventual fruit of these constant enlightening conversations about the Book of Mormon in two essays cited in note 5, above.



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# THE CHRISTMAS QUEST

*Hugh Nibley*

*Introduction: The following article from Hugh Nibley, written more than half a century ago, is a timely reminder of the contrast between empty holiday exuberance and the prospect of authentic Christmas cheer that can be provided only by the good news of “a real Savior who has really spoken with men.”*

*This article originally appeared in Millennial Star 112/1 (January 1950), 4-5. It was reprinted in Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others, and the Temple, edited by Stephen D. Ricks. The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 17 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2008), 121-124. Footnotes below have been added by Interpreter.*

Long before the Christian Church was ever heard of, people throughout the world celebrated one great festival that far overshadowed all other social activities in importance. That was the great Year Rite, the celebration of the creation of the world and the dramatization of a plan for overcoming the bondage of death. It took place at the turn of the year when the sun, having reached its lowest point on the meridian, was found on a joyful day to be miraculously mounting again in its course; it was a day of promise and reassurance, heralding a new creation and a new age. Everywhere the great year festival was regarded as the birthday of the whole human race and was a time of divination and prophecy, marked by a feast of abundance in which all gave and received gifts as an earnest hope of good things to come.

There is plenty of evidence in the early Christian writings that Christ was born not at the solstice but in the spring, early

in April.<sup>1</sup> Much has been written on the shifting of his birthday celebration to make it coincide with the day of Sol Invictus, a late Romanized version of an oriental midwinter rite.<sup>2</sup> In other parts of the world, people had no difficulty identifying the Lord's birthday with the greatest of popular festivals. When Pope Zacharias rebuked the Germans on the Rhine for their pagan festival at midwinter, Boniface could answer him back, that if he objected to heathen feasts and games, all he had to do was look around him at Rome, where he would see the same feasting, drinking, and games on the same ancient holy days to celebrate the same blessed event—he was referring, of course, to the Saturnalia, the great prehistoric festival of the Romans. Our own Yule, carols, lights, greenery, gifts, and games are evidence enough that a northern Christmas is no importation from the East in Christian times but something far older.

Now, there is no law of the mind that requires all men everywhere to put just one peculiar interpretation on the descent and return of the sun in its course. This complex and specialized festival, which follows so closely the same elaborate pattern in Babylonia, Egypt, Iceland, and Rome, is now recognized to be no spontaneous invention of untutored minds but the remnant of a single tradition ultimately traceable to one common lost source.<sup>3</sup> The essential feature of this great world

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1 For differing views about the dating of Jesus' birth, see Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "Dating the Birth of Jesus Christ," *BYU Studies*, 49:4 (2010), 4-38; Lincoln H. Blumell and Thomas A. Wayment, "When Was Jesus Born? A Response to a Recent Proposal," *BYU Studies*, 51:3 (2012), 53-81.

2 Though the idea that the date of Christmas was deliberately shifted to match Sol Invictus is commonly accepted, it has been challenged vigorously by some scholars. See, e.g., S. Hijmans, "Sol Invictus, the Winter Solstice, and the Origins of Christmas," *Mouseion: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada* 3:3 (2003), 377-398.

3 Nibley made archaic year-rites the subject of his dissertation (Hugh W. Nibley, "The Roman games as a survival of an archaic year-cult." Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1938). He distilled much of the material from his dissertation into a trilogy of articles published in the *Western Political Quarterly* and reprinted in *The Ancient State: The Rulers and the Ruled*,

festival everywhere is that it aims, if but for a few short days, to recapture the freedom, love, equality, abundance, joy, and light of a Golden Age, a dimly remembered but blessed time in the beginning when all creatures lived together in innocence without fear or enmity, when the heavens poured forth ceaseless bounty, and all men were brothers under the loving rule of the King and Creator of all. Is it at all surprising that the Christian world's celebration of the Savior's birth should fall easily and naturally into the pattern of the older rites? In the end they are really the same thing—both are recollections of forgotten dispensations of the Gospel; both are attempts to recall an age of lost innocence and lost blessings.

Lost? Who can doubt it? There is a nostalgic sadness about Christmas, as there is about the Middle Ages, with their everlasting quest of something that has been lost. Christmas is a small light in a great darkness; it is evidence of things not seen. It is not the real thing but the expression of a wish, for like the great year rites of the ancients, it merely dramatizes what once was and what men feel they can still hope for. A brief, brave show of generosity and cheer is our assurance that earth can be fair, and we gladly join with all mankind in the gesture. In so doing we would remind the world that Christmas is both a demonstration of man's capacity for enjoying good and sharing it and of his helplessness to supply it from his own resources. The great blessings we seek at Christmas are not of our own making (the everyday world is our handiwork) but must come from another world, even as Father Christmas comes to the children as a visitor from afar. The painful fact that Christmas has an end and "all things return to their former state" is an adequate commentary on the actual state of things. The world,

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edited by Stephen D. Ricks, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 10 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1991), 1-147). While many of the specific criticisms of research in this tradition are well deserved, no better explanation yet has been attempted for the evidence as a whole.

which denies revelation, once a year has a moment of lucidity in which men are permitted to hope; then it returns to its old disastrous routine—but because of Christmas that routine can never be the same. For men have allowed themselves to be caught off guard, for a brief moment they have let down the barriers and shown where their hearts really lie; Scrooge the man of business can never go back again after his Christmas fling—however ashamed he may be of it in the cold light of day, it is too late to deny that he has shown Scrooge the man of the world to be but a mask and an illusion.

So the Latter-day Saints have always been the greatest advocates of the Christmas spirit; nay, they have shocked and alarmed the world by insisting on recognizing as a real power, what the world prefers to regard as a pretty sentiment. Where the seasonal and formal aspect of Christmas is everything, it becomes a hollow mockery. If men really want what they say they do, we have it, but faced with accepting a real Savior who has really spoken with men, they draw back, nervous and ill at ease. In the end lights, tinsel, and sentimentality are safer, but a sense of possibilities still rankles, so to that we shall continue to appeal. For by celebrating Christmas the world serves notice that it is still looking for the Gospel.<sup>4</sup>

*Hugh Nibley was one of the most gifted and prolific scholars in the LDS Church. He graduated summa cum laude from UCLA and completed his PhD as a University Fellow at UC Berkeley. He taught at Claremont College in California before serving in military intelligence in World War II. From 1946 until his death in 2005, he was associated with and taught at Brigham Young University.*

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4 Hence the value of sharing the Gospel at Christmastime. See President Henry B. Eyring, “Family and Friends Forever,” *Ensign* 43:12 (December), 4-5.

# THE SCALE OF CREATION IN SPACE AND TIME

*John S. Lewis*

*Abstract: The accounts of creation in Genesis, Moses, and Abraham as well as in higher endowments of knowledge given to the faithful are based on visions in which the seer lacked the vocabulary to describe and the knowledge to interpret what he saw and hence was obliged to record his experiences in the imprecise language available to him. Modern attempts to explain accounts of these visions frequently make use of concepts and terminology that are completely at odds with the understanding of ancient peoples: they project anachronistic concepts that the original seer would not have recognized. This article reviews several aspects of the creation stories in scripture for the purpose of distinguishing anachronistic modern reinterpretations from the content of the original vision.*

*This essay derives from a presentation made at the 2013 Interpreter Symposium on Science and Religion: Cosmos, Earth, and Man on November 9, 2013. Details on the event, including links to videos, are available at [www.mormoninterpreter.com](http://www.mormoninterpreter.com). An expanded version of the symposium proceedings will be published in hardcopy and digital formats.*

## **The Extent of Creation**

Genesis is often read as a description of the origin of the Universe rather than the Earth. But ancient views of the cosmos had no concept of anything remotely similar to our modern sense of the word “Universe.” In the ancient world

the general concept was that Earth was the center of creation. The heavens were the night sky as seen by the naked eye from Earth's surface, tacitly assuming it to be a local and Earth-fixed phenomenon. The cosmos so imagined by most philosophers may have been mere thousands of kilometers in diameter, although Archimedes suggested a size of about two light years. The cosmos (Greek: *ὁ κόσμος*; "order") was an intimate spherical volume centered on Earth and containing the Sun, Moon, and known planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn). These seven bodies were generally pictured as much smaller than Earth and very close. They were all assumed to travel around Earth, which was fixed and immobile at the center of the Kosmos. This set of seven *wandering* heavenly bodies, collectively called "planets" (Greek: *οἱ πλάνητες ἀστέρες*; "wandering stars") was regarded as complete and final, since seven was a mystical number symbolic of perfection. Similarly, 3½ was regarded as a broken number symbolic of disaster, as in Revelation. In Latin, each such planet was referred to as *stella errans*, "wandering star," or "unruly star," with no concept that Earth and the planets were bodies of similar nature. The earth (lower case) was literally the ground on which we stood, in classical thought the sole fixed base in all creation. Earth (capitalized) is a modern concept that recognizes our planet as yet another member of a family of related bodies, a fellow-wanderer in the Sun's family, not the center of all creation. It embodies the Copernican notion of Earth as an eighth wanderer.

The seven planets of antiquity wandered in complex and largely unpredictable (unruly; rule-less) patterns across the sky. There was no room for planetary satellites (moons), asteroids, etc. Meteors, comets, or meteorites in this conception must not be real material bodies, but signs sent by God. Further, the seven heavenly bodies must be perfect, featureless celestial spheres, not composed of gross matter. It was implicit that the creation of this tiny Earth-centered cosmos was a single



creative event or episode. Our present understanding of the vastness of the Universe is a product of twentieth century astronomical research, completely alien to the ancient mind. Indeed, the Universe as now understood is vastly larger than any astronomer of the year 1900 could have imagined. Since all ancient creation concepts were Earth-centered and local, they were stories of the creation of Earth. Everything else was either incidental or non-physical. Earth was not so much the center of creation as the only material body in creation.

These conceptions persisted for millennia. There is a wonderful (but sadly undocumented) tradition that Thomas Jefferson, no mean natural philosopher himself, upon reading of the 1807 fall of the Weston, Connecticut, meteorite in Silliman's *American Journal of Science*, responded, "I would find it easier to believe that two Yankee professors would lie, than that stones should fall from the sky."<sup>1</sup> As late as the mid-1800s meteorites were often assumed to be volcanic debris.

The cosmos thus pictured did not even include the stars. Until the seventeenth century it was nearly universally accepted that the surface of the cosmic bubble, the black "dome of heaven," was close to Earth and enclosed all creation. This "firmament" was a solid (firm) dome surrounding our little cosmos. The stars were often described as pinholes in the firmament that admitted light from the celestial realms above into our tiny universe. The Latin word *firmamentum* conveyed no sense of vast spaces and countless other Suns and worlds. It meant a support, framework, or prop—a strong,

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1 "Ursula Marvin of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics reports that the closest remark recorded from Jefferson on the subject is as follows: 'We certainly are not to deny what we cannot account for.... It may be very difficult to explain how the stone you possess came into the position in which it was found. But is it easier to explain how it got into the clouds from whence it is supposed to have fallen? The actual fact, however, is the thing to be established'" (Linda T. Elkins-Tanton, *Asteroids, Meteorites, and Comets* (New York City, New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 24).

solid structural element. The dome of the sky was just that, a dome. To the ancients, therefore, the heavens were just the local envelope that surrounded Earth and its seven celestial companions. The scriptural account of creation was a narration of the creation of Earth and, implicitly, its seven accompanying wanderers. Calling it an account of the creation of the Universe is a historical absurdity.

If we were to define “Universe” as meaning *everything that exists*, the Hebrews and Greeks would have pictured it as referring at least to Earth, and possibly to the realm of the seven wanderers (the part of the Solar System known to them), so that their understanding of the word “Universe” would have reflected a wildly different concept of the scale of material existence than that familiar to us. The heavens, what can be seen by the unaided eye from Earth’s surface, would correspond rather closely to their understanding of what “Universe” must mean. This was the general view of antiquity. This was the model adopted by Aristotle and passed by him down through the Middle Ages: a cozy, Earth-centered creation in which Earth itself was the only true material object. Aristotle, arguing that Earth was the center, and that “all things tend toward the center,” concluded that other gravitating bodies were impossible because “there cannot be more than one center.”<sup>2</sup> There were no other stars, no other Earths. Scripture, interpreted in this manner, seemed to make Creation synonymous with the creation of Earth.

This conception had not been shared by all the Greeks. Some imagined the stars to be other Suns, each with a cosmos of its own, packed together like a barrel full of bubbles. But Aristotle argued that such bubbles had to be spherical (since, according to Plato, the sphere was a perfect shape, and everything in the heavens was by definition celestial and therefore perfect). Spheres, however, cannot be packed together so as to fill space.

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2 Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, Book 1, Part 8.

Therefore if there were other *κοσμοι*, there would have to be voids in the interstices between the bubbles. But this was impossible under Aristotle's principle that "nature abhors a void," and thus it was impossible for the stars to be other suns with their own families of planets. Note that all these governing principles (perfection of spheres, mystical numbers, abhorrence of voids) were nothing more than the wisdom of men, not based upon observations of the Universe and not even in principle testable or verifiable. The authority of a Plato or Aristotle took precedence over observation. Aristotle's writings, adopted and taught by the Church, shaped interpretations of scripture for centuries to come: our understanding of sacred texts was made to conform to pagan philosophy.

### The Age of Earth

Eighteenth and nineteenth century authorities typically take the word "day" in Genesis to be literally one modern Earth day, even though such days did not exist until day four of the creation, and the Hebrew word יום (*yōm*) was used both literally and figuratively, as in English. It is well known that such a constrained time scale is ruled out by every available method of dating astronomical and geological history.

The antiquity of Earth was a subject of active debate in the early nineteenth century. Some adherents of a conservative interpretation of scripture ignored or sought to explain away the overwhelming evidence from geology. The more liberal scientific interpretations of geological history suggested an age of 100,000 to millions of years for Earth. Almost alone, W. W. Phelps, Joseph Smith's Book of Abraham scribe, offered a vastly larger perspective. In the *Times and Seasons*, a letter from Phelps to the Prophet's brother William states:

That eternity, agreeable to the records found in the catacombs of Egypt, has been going on in this system

(not the world)<sup>3</sup> almost 2555 millions of years; and to know that deists, geologists and others are trying to prove that matter must have existed hundreds of thousands of years:—it almost tempts the flesh to fly to God, or muster faith like Enoch to be translated and see and know as we are seen and known!<sup>4</sup>

Lacking any explanation of what was meant by “this system” and “the world,” it is difficult to compare these numbers to much more precise ages of specific events determined by science. The nineteenth-century usage of “world” encompassed everything from *planet* to *Creation*, whereas the word “system” in an astronomical context suggests the Solar System.

The relationship between *human time* and *God’s time* is hinted at in several places in scripture. The Bible offers only a single explanation when Peter writes:

But, beloved, be not ignorant of one thing, that *one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* (2 Peter 3:8, emphasis added)

This certainly cautions us regarding the figurative nature of this measure of time, and suggests that God’s time is enormously flexible compared to our Earthly time. But both of the statements in 2 Peter 3:8 cannot simultaneously be literally true.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has also commented that the *days* of creation are figurative, and not to be taken literally. In the June 1982 *Ensign* he wrote, “What is a day? It is a specified time period; it is an age, an eon, a division of eternity.”<sup>5</sup> We

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3 “The phrase ‘(not the world)’ was added to the 1844 article as originally published. It is not known who added the phrase — Phelps, the editor, or someone else” (E. R. Paul, *Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 190 n. 47).

4 W. W. Phelps, “The Answer,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (December 1844): 758.

5 Bruce R. McConkie, “Christ and the Creation,” *Ensign* (June 1982), 11.

commend this statement to those Church members who believe that Elder McConkie advocated a one-week duration for the creation.

Considering that Doctrine and Covenants 77:6 refers to "... this earth during the seven thousand years of its continuance, or its temporal existence," what led Phelps to speak of Earth as 2,555 million years old? The answer appears to be straightforward. Though 7000 Earth years is in conflict with all physical, chemical, genetic, archaeological, and linguistic evidence, 7000 years of God is not ruled out. The arithmetic is easy. One day of God is 1000 years of man, and therefore in Joseph Smith's reckoning, a day of God is  $365 \times 1000$  days of man. The 2.555 billion years in question therefore corresponds to  $2,555,000,000/365,000$  years of God, which is 7000 years of God for *each day* of Earth's existence. A more careful calculation, using the true average length of the year including leap years (365.257 days) gives 2,556,799,000 Earth years. Clearly Joseph Smith did not intend the "7000 years" of Earth's age to refer to Earth years.

The same number surfaces again in Elder McConkie's address, "The Seven Deadly Heresies," delivered at BYU in 1980. He refers to God as "an infinite and eternal being who has presided in our universe for almost 2,555,000,000 years,"<sup>6</sup> but without any indication of the source or significance of that number.

In the Book of Abraham (5:13), after a discussion of the creation of Earth in which the stages are called "times" instead of days, we find "Now I, Abraham, saw that it was after the Lord's time... for as yet the Gods had not appointed unto Adam his reckoning." This may have been the scriptural basis for Phelps's calculation.

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6 Bruce R. McConkie, "The Seven Deadly Heresies," in *1980 Devotional Speeches of the Year* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1980), 75.

## Creation as an Ongoing Process

The creation of Earth is explicitly described in LDS scripture as a process of bringing order to chaotic matter, not as the creation of matter *ex nihilo*. This is in perfect accord with the scientific evidence regarding the creation of Earth. It also places the origin of matter in the distant past, not as a part of the events surrounding Earth's formation, a conclusion also in accord with scientific studies of the origin of the elements starting 13.7 billion years ago.

LDS scripture, beginning with the Book of Moses, portrays creation as diachronic: spread out over time. Many worlds came into existence before Earth existed, and many no longer exist; creation continues to the present.<sup>7</sup> In LDS doctrine, there are governing laws “irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundation of the world,”<sup>8</sup> on the basis of which laws worlds come into being, age, and die. Life on earlier worlds is a natural consequence of this view.

President Snow's couplet saying that God once lived in mortality on a world similar to ours requires that generations of planets pre-existed Earth. The laws of nature, on which the formation, evolution, and death of worlds over lifetimes of billions of years are predicated, must have been in existence long before the formation of our planet.

Thus the origins of the Universe and of Earth were widely separated events. The origin of Earth and the rest of the Solar System 4.55 billion years ago occurred in the context of a collapsing interstellar cloud, just as we see today in the Orion Nebula and elsewhere, accompanied by the simultaneous formation of thousands to millions of other stars and planetary systems in a starburst. The role of stars in the Earth Creation story is variously represented by the different scriptural

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7 See Moses 1:33-38.

8 D&C 130:20.

sources. Genesis says that on the fourth day “he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.”<sup>9</sup> The Book of Moses says “the stars also were made even according to my word. And I, God, set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.”<sup>10</sup> The Book of Abraham likewise has the Sun, Moon, and stars “organized” in the “expanse of heaven” on the fourth “day.”<sup>11</sup> We are also told in another place that “he caused the stars also to appear.” Is it just that the stars became visible from the vantage point of Earth’s surface on the fourth day, or were they created after Earth was already old enough to have life? Interestingly, the astronomical evidence favors most stars being far older than Earth, but the starburst associated with the origin of the Solar System would also have formed thousands to millions of nearby stars in the same creative episode, some forming a little earlier than the Sun, and some a little later.

LDS scriptures conform well to our reading of Genesis as the story of the creation of Earth. The extension of this scripture to the Universe and its origin is inconsistent with science and is an anachronistic misreading of the story, inserting the concept and word Universe where scriptures do not. Creation was going on for billions of years before the creation of Earth and continues today. Earth is indeed billions of years old, as Joseph Smith was one of the very first to say.

The visions recounted in scripture, viewed as attempts to convey the seer’s experiences without access to modern terminology, are remarkably informative and deserving of study. We would do well to try to picture what the seer saw, and to be cautious in our interpretation of those visions in terms of concepts alien to the seer’s conceptual framework.

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9 Genesis 1:16-17.

10 Moses 2:16.

11 Abraham 4:14-15.

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# ENOCH AND NOAH ON STEROIDS

*Bryan Buchanan*

*Review of Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, In God's Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014), 590 pp. (full color interior includes footnotes; endnotes; three excursus sections; annotated bibliography on Enoch and the Flood; comprehensive reference list; thumbnail index of one hundred and eleven illustrations and photographs; and indexes of scriptures referenced, modern prophets quoted, and topics discussed). \$49.99 (hardcover).*

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If one were to poll readers of Mormon books to find: 1. the largest and 2. the most aesthetically pleasing titles published in the last few years, I think *In God's Image and Likeness: Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Book of Moses* by Jeffrey Bradshaw (published 2010) would win on the aggregate score. The attractive tome was absolutely packed to the gills, immediately changing the face of Book of Moses studies. What was not immediately apparent, however, was that the commentary only covered part of Moses (at the bookstore where I work, when we informed people of this, the most common reaction was, "What more could he possibly have to say on Moses!?!") (Turns out, quite a lot.) Now, with the assistance of David J. Larsen, Bradshaw has completed the

extensive commentary with the recently-published *In God's Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah and the Tower of Babel*.

The Preface, short as it is, reveals important elements of the commentary to follow. The authors are candid in saying that they “love and revere the Word of God — in both its written and unwritten forms,” and, therefore, this “means that [they] cannot regard it ‘objectively.’”<sup>1</sup> However, lest that scare off some readers who might dismiss Bradshaw’s perspective at that point, he adds, “Of course, I do not believe that the scriptures, as we have them, are complete, perfect, and infallible. Indeed, in one sense I think it is fair to say that the scriptures are no more complete, perfect, or infallible than the people who study them.”<sup>2</sup> Having greatly enjoyed his first volume, I was pleased to see a similar “thoughtful faith” approach in the second.

The Introduction makes it clear that the authors will draw on biblical scholarship heavily, and it is up-to-date and top-notch scholarship at that. For the Enoch materials, they are familiar with the research of George Nickelsburg, the current authority in that field. They turn to Ronald Hendel, leading voice in discussions on Genesis, David Carr, who is a well-respected authority on the Hebrew Bible, and so on. As Bradshaw and Larsen wade through the perspectives of all these authors, they maintain that the text should be taken literally, though they draw a distinction between what ancient societies would mean by that and how that differs from a modern, clinical understanding requiring precise details.

One of the most important sections of the introduction comes under the heading: “Does the Book of Moses Restore the ‘Original’ Version of Genesis?” Obviously aware that a large percentage of Mormons likely hold this view, the authors flatly

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1 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God's Image and Likeness 2: Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014), xix. Hereafter referred to as IGIL 2.

2 Bradshaw and Larsen, IGIL 2, xix.

state, “We think it fruitless to rely on JST Genesis as a means for uncovering a Moses *Urtext*.”<sup>3</sup> And, then, the key statement: “Mormons understand that the primary intent of modern revelation is for divine guidance to latter-day readers, not to provide precise matches to texts from other times.”<sup>4</sup> Many Mormons, yes, but there are plenty who do not, and some of these even write books. Many unfortunate lines of research have attempted to do just what Bradshaw and Larsen counsel against.

One minor quibble with a point toward the end of the introduction—he cites a statement from Grant McMurray, former president of the Community of Christ, on the value of the JST. While the authors use the excerpt as an example of someone who doesn’t properly respect it, I think McMurray’s ultimate point is that the JST is not a viable candidate for an “official” version. Utah Mormons, while undoubtedly seeing the JST as a more valuable resource, do not themselves use it as the approved version either and are (again, admittedly to a lesser degree) somewhat unsure as to its ultimate status.

This follow-up volume follows the structure of the first: each pericope begins with an introduction followed by the scriptural text and traditional verse-by-verse commentary (within the larger section, the authors usually break it down to 3-5 verses at a time). Following this—the bulk of each chapter—come “Gleanings,” which are extended quotations from prophets/apostles as well as writers such as Hugh Nibley and Hyrum Andrus. Finally, in addition to footnotes—and thankfully in such a large work!—endnotes covering both introduction and commentary provide additional information at the end of each chapter. No one need fear that the authors will make unsubstantiated claims. The footnotes are copious but are almost exclusively citations for the wealth of sources

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3 Bradshaw and Larsen, IGIL 2, 16.

4 Bradshaw and Larsen, IGIL 2, 16.

both ancient and modern, Mormon and otherwise employed in the narrative. Endnotes are truly notes—here the authors will survey at length (some entries run to nearly a page) the findings of scholars and usually weigh in with their opinion.

What I found so enjoyable in *In God's Image*, vol. 1 was the way that so many sources, both Mormon and otherwise (particularly the latter) were woven together in the commentary. Many authors do this—so often, though, it feels like a writer is just throwing things at the reader. I came away from my first experience with Bradshaw's writing feeling that he had familiarized himself with the various texts adequately and used them responsibly. I get the same impression here. I also enjoy his careful eye to textual studies available for Moses. The first page of commentary gives a good sample of what the reader can expect: discussion of points made in the verse-by-verse from Richard Draper et al. in their commentary, a thought from Ronald Hendel, and a discussion of Oliver Cowdery's editing of the OT<sub>1</sub> manuscript (taken from the critical edition of the JST texts).

Anyone who has read many commentaries knows the difference between walking away from a book feeling unsatisfied, thinking the author was just rehashing, and being pleasantly surprised at the depth of research. For me, the authors produced the latter in spades. The second volume is a worthy companion to an impressive first book—both content and appearance are at the same level. Once again, numerous works of art are used—not only to create a very appealing book but to enhance the analysis.

For a restoration scripture, the book of Moses has not received much attention by authors, and Bradshaw and Larsen have done much to rectify that problem. *In God's Image and Likeness 2* is an excellent resource—like the first volume, I wouldn't be surprised if hardcover copies sell out quickly and appreciate in value. Finished books were not yet ready at the

time of writing,<sup>5</sup> so I will hope in advance that the material quality is of the same caliber of the first volume. For such a well-crafted book in terms of writing and organization, it is only fitting.

*Bryan Buchanan works at Benchmark Books in Salt Lake City in order to alleviate his separation anxiety from his own library at home.*

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5 Books are available for pre-order on Amazon.com and are scheduled for availability in select bookstores by early February 2014.



# HAGAR IN LDS SCRIPTURE AND THOUGHT

*Andrew C. Smith*

*Abstract: LDS discourse vis-à-vis Hagar has changed through the years since the foundation of the Church. Her story has been considered and utilized in a number of ways, the most prominent being as a defense of plural marriage. This paper traces the LDS usages of Hagar's story as well as proposing a new allegorical interpretation of her place within the Abrahamic drama through literary connections in the Hebrew Bible combined with Restoration scripture.*

The scriptures tell the stories of many men and women throughout history that are meant to give us guidance and direction, to help us better understand our relationship to God. Ecclesiastical leaders of the past and the present have asked and continually ask us to read the scriptures daily, and the Savior has even commanded us to search them diligently.<sup>1</sup> In turn, then, we are meant to find meaning in the scriptures that, conveyed to us via the Holy Ghost, is supposed to give us greater hope, knowledge, and understanding of the mercy of God and His eternal plan for his children as well as gaining greater knowledge and testimony of the Savior.

How we, as humans seeking the divine, use and approach scripture and the human characters found therein is of utmost

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1 For example, see John 5:39, Alma 33:2, Mormon 8:23, Jacob 4:6, 3 Nephi 23:1–2. Also see, Thomas S. Monson, “Come All Ye Sons of God,” *Ensign* (May 2013): 66–67, and Robert D. Hales, “Holy Scriptures: The Power of God unto Our Salvation,” *Ensign* (November 2006): 24–27.

importance in this sense. The figure of Hagar in the Abrahamic scriptural traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) is one human character who stands as a common thread between those religious approaches. However, the views of Hagar and how she is read and used by those respective religious communities is vastly different. While her story is largely similar, interpretation of her position varies exceedingly. Her position as the second wife of Abraham assures her a preeminent position in religious historiography.

In Judaism and Christianity, she is largely eclipsed by the preeminence given to Sarah and the inheritance due to Isaac, as the firstborn of the first wife. Within Judaism, she is generally set aside in exegetical works and largely disappears within the shadow of Sarah, becoming, as one academic put it, superficially seen as a “throw-away character.”<sup>2</sup> Yet in some later Jewish traditions, Hagar is said to have later fully converted to the covenant religion of Abraham, and taken a new name, Keturah (which most consider to be Abraham’s third wife), and is reunited with Abraham after Sarah’s death.<sup>3</sup>

In the broader Christian context, Hagar’s position is largely seen only through the lens of Paul’s usage of her and Sarah, as the wives of Abraham, as metaphors for bondage and freedom, symbolizing servitude to the former, Mosaic Law, and the freedom from law found in Christ. In that context, Hagar’s position, while perhaps being seen historically as righteous, is still viewed as lesser. This downplay of her position within the spiritual drama that was Abraham’s life removes her from

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2 Cynthia Gordon, “Hagar: A Throw-Away Character Among the Matriarchs?” in Kent H. Richards, ed., *Society of Biblical Literature 1985 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), 271-277.

3 See, Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1918), 1:298. For additional Jewish interpretations, see Jacob Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis, a New American Translation*, (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985), II:145-156, 243-258.



any type of primary role. Potentially, it could even be said to portray her pejoratively. In modern times, feminist and black Christian interpretations have contributed to a resurgence in respect and analysis of her character and position within the Abrahamic drama, being seen as strength in the face of patriarchal/cultural oppressiveness and a rallying cry for the redemption and salvation of slaves, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

Within Islam, though, the tradition remains that while she was removed from Abraham's immediate vicinity at the behest of his first wife Sarah, her role was not diminished. Indeed, the claim can be made that within Islamic discourse, the tables are turned opposite of Judaism, and Hagar is she who is lifted up, while Sarah diminishes within her shadow. Hagar is established as a (if not *the*) Mother of the monotheistic community, her story figures prominently in the annual *Hajj* ceremony, and her efforts and experience with Abraham are held up as an intentional and integral part of God's divine plan for mankind.<sup>5</sup> To be sure, there is a measure of identity construction at hand here, with those drawing their lines back to Abraham (whether Christian, Jewish, or Muslim) privileging their own line of descent. Similarly, boundary maintenance between the communities is reinforced as Muslims identify themselves with someone downplayed by the Christians as a means of firm differentiation and vice versa.

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4 For an introduction and overview into these types of hermeneutics, see Phyllis Trible, "Ominous Beginnings for a Promise of Blessing," and Delores S. Williams, "Hagar in African American Biblical Appropriation," in *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives* ed. Phyllis Trible and Letty Russell (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 22–69 and 171–84, respectively. See also, Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984).

5 For additional information on the Islamic view of Hagar, see Barbara F. Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation*, (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) and Riffat Hassan, "Islamic Hagar and Her Family" in Trible and Russell, *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*, 149–67.

In all of these traditions, it is important to note that Hagar never stands on her own. She is generally viewed as one of the characters defined largely by their positions vis-à-vis the “main characters” of the narrative; they are those “whose histories have little or no intrinsic significance. They appear briefly to provide conflict, present a negative model, or simply to move the narrative forward.”<sup>6</sup> Hagar is always viewed and analyzed in light of her relationship with someone else: Abraham, Sarah, or her son, Ishmael. While the text of the Bible may predispose us to this type of analytical pairing, it is odd and potentially intentionally ironic that this is the case with a woman whose main stories in the biblical text involve her by herself in the wilderness. The way she is viewed at large by Judaism and Christianity is all the more surprising in view of the fact that she is a pivotal character not only as Abraham’s wife, but also, as the current text of the Bible states, she is visited not only by angels but may have been the recipient of a visit from deity.<sup>7</sup>

This paper will address Hagar specifically within the LDS context. This will be done first by analyzing her presence in the LDS standard works. Second, an analysis of her presence in greater LDS discourse will be achieved through a historiographic approach: viewing how she is seen and her story used through time by Church leaders and publications. To this end, Hagar will be examined by tracing her through various other LDS writings: the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, the Journal of Discourses and General Conference addresses, Church publications, as well as scholarly and devotional literature produced by LDS academics and authors. Lastly, this paper will introduce some further analysis of Hagar

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6 Gordon, “Hagar: A Throw-Away Character Among the Matriarchs?” 271.

7 See Thijs Booij, “Hagar’s Words in Genesis XVI 13B,” *Vetus Testamentum*, 30/1 (1980): 1–7. And Nicholas Wyatt, “The Meaning of El Roi and the Mythological Dimensions of Gen 16,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* (SJOT) 8/1 (1994): 141–51.

and her story from the Hebrew Bible that should be considered in addition to latter-day revelation when viewing her character. The conclusion of this paper is that Hagar, as a covenantal wife of Abraham and an allegorical symbol, should be held in greater esteem among Latter-day Saints due to the further light and knowledge of the Restoration, which can lend to a reading of her as integral in an allegorical reading of Abraham's spiritual drama as a means of teaching the salvific drama of Jesus Christ in addition to her place in fulfilling the covenant promises of the Lord to Abraham.

### **Hagar in the LDS Standard Works**

In the standard works (or canon) of the LDS tradition, Hagar appears in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Doctrine & Covenants. There is no mention of her in the Book of Mormon or the Pearl of Great Price. By far the majority of the material about her is concentrated in Genesis (16:1–20, 21:9–21, 25:12).<sup>8</sup> Her position in the New Testament and the Doctrine & Covenants is more incidental. As mentioned above, in Galatians 4:22–31, Paul uses Hagar in a metaphorical allegorization of Abraham's sons, Isaac and Ishmael. In the Doctrine & Covenants, Hagar appears only in 132:34–35, 64–65 as part of the discussion of polygamy within the New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage.

In this section we will review these scriptural sections, with particular emphasis on the Genesis accounts (as they form the bulk of what we know of Hagar and are the foundation for that found in the other sections), with exegetical analysis and important aspects noted. Although this paper is mainly concerned with LDS interpretations and views of Hagar, some non-LDS academic sources will be considered to cast initial light

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8 The last reference, Genesis 25:12, mentions Hagar only as the mother of Ishmael, whose descendants are being recounted. This is retained here only for completeness in describing her appearance in the scriptural record.

on some of the biblical allusions, literary aspects, and meanings of the story. Footnotes will be used to provide important words in the original Hebrew for the Genesis sections. As the KJV is the standard English version used by the Church, it is used here for the biblical passages.

### Analysis of Genesis 16:1–16

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid,<sup>9</sup> an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain<sup>10</sup> children by her. And Abram hearkened<sup>11</sup> to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.<sup>12</sup> And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.<sup>13</sup> And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was

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9 Heb: *šipḥāh*, meaning maid, maid servant, or female slave. This is the main word used to describe Hagar in this passages. If another word is used, it will be noted.

10 Heb: *'ibbāneh*, literally meaning "I will build up." Here and in Genesis 30:3 this is used by childless women to obtain children through the use of their female slaves/maids. It may also be a deliberate word play on the *ben*, son

11 Heb: *wayyišma'*, meaning, "And he listened."

12 Heb: *wattēten 'ōtāh lə'aḥrām 'išāh lōw lə'iššāh*, "And the woman [Sarai] gave her to Abram to be for him a wife." The word for wife and woman are the same. Some give an alternate translation of "concubine" based on cognates from Akkadian. See E.A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible: Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 116–17.

13 Heb: *wattēqal gəḥirtāh bə'ēnehā*, "And her mistress became trifling in her eyes." This comes from a root meaning "light," "slight." Literally, she begins making light of her mistress. The same word is used by Sarai in verse 5.

despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee.<sup>14</sup> And when Sarai dealt hardly with her,<sup>15</sup> she fled from her face. And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face<sup>16</sup> of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit<sup>17</sup> thyself under her hands. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly,<sup>18</sup> that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael;<sup>19</sup> because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.<sup>20</sup> And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest

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14 Heb: *hattōwḥ bə'ênāyik*, literally, "what is good in your eyes."

15 Heb: *wattə'annehā śāray*, "And Sarai afflicted her." The verb here can mean "to humble, mishandle, or afflict."

16 Heb: *mippānē*, "from the face." Face is used idiomatically also to mean "presence."

17 Heb: *wahit'annī*, "and humble yourself." The verb can mean "humble yourself" (thus "submit"), but also "to be afflicted." It is the same root of the verb used in verse 6, describing what Sarai did to her. Interestingly, this root (*Ayn-Nun-Nun*) is very close to the root for "well," "spring," or "eye" (*Ayn-Waw-Nun*), another word used in this passage both literally (verses 7) and thematically (connected with the act of "seeing").

18 Heb: *harbah 'arbeh*, "I will multiply exceedingly."

19 Heb: *yiśmā'el*, literally, "God will hear" or "God hears."

20 Heb: *ānāyēk*, "your affliction." The same root as verses 6 and 9. See notes 15 and 17.

me:<sup>21</sup> for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?<sup>22</sup> Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi;<sup>23</sup> behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered. And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael. And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram. (Genesis 16:1–16)

Some of the more important aspects of this story, as presented in the Biblical text, stand out immediately. Hagar's status is unequivocally displayed: she is a slave, and she belongs to Sarai. Sarai gives her to Abram, as she is Sarai's property. Hagar does not belong to Abram. In the past, many have seen in this a reference to the Code of Hammurabi wherein a certain type of priestess, who was able to marry but not allowed to have children, would give a slave to her husband in order to provide him with a son and an heir. However, this ruling, while paralleling the case of Sarai and Hagar in many ways, in actuality would not have been applicable. As E. A. Speiser writes, "These provisions are restricted to certain priestesses for whom motherhood was ruled out. No such limitations applied to Sarah."<sup>24</sup>

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21 Heb: *'ēl ro'î*, "God of seeing" or "God who sees." This term has engendered much discussion, as it is uncertain as to what exactly its form is and the meaning the words should be given. See Wyatt, "Meaning of El Roi," 143. Some have seen this as another ancient cultic name for God, similar to *El Shaddai*, etc. Speiser notes: "MT is pointed defectively...perhaps on purpose, to leave the reader a choice between this, i.e., 'God of seeing,' one whom is permitted to see, and the *ro'î* of the last clause, 'one who sees me.' The explanatory gloss that follows is hopeless as it now stands." Speiser, *Genesis*, 118.

22 Heb: *hāgam hālōm rā'îṭi 'ahărē rō'î*, the best rendering of this is "Would I have gone here indeed searching for him that watches me?" or "Would I have gone here indeed looking for him that looks after me?" See Booi, "Hagar's Words," 7.

23 Heb: *bə'ēr lahay rō'î*, "The well of the living one who sees me."

24 Speiser, *Genesis*, 120..

However, Speiser points out the case is even better matched by the social laws of the Hurrians, (“a society whose customs the patriarchs knew intimately and followed often”<sup>25</sup>) as found in the Nuzi texts, where a case study shows that “in this socially prominent lay family, the husband may not marry again if his wife has children. But if the union proves to be childless, the wife is required to provide a concubine, but would then have all the legal rights to the offspring.”<sup>26</sup> This would explain verse 2 of this pericope, where Sarai hoped to “obtain children by [Hagar].” This may also act as evidence against a common reading of these verses that Sarai was, through her own intellect, attempting to force the fulfillment of promises Abram had already received.<sup>27</sup> Significantly, this will also play into the next section with Hagar as a freed slave (by virtue of her marriage to Abraham).

Thematically, this section is dominated by the theme of seeing or sight, with many uses and wordplays on the words for seeing and eyes. Note the uses of such sight words as “behold” (v. 2), “see” or “saw” (vv. 4, 5, 13, 14), eyes (vv. 4, 5, 6,) and the corresponding wordplay with the words for fountain or spring and affliction (vv. 6, 7, 9).<sup>28</sup> This theme culminates in Hagar naming the God, El Ro’i, (a name that is filled with ambiguity and problematic issues deriving from its defective vowel<sup>29</sup>) and the place name that denotes the spot, Beer-Lahai-Roi, “the Well of the Living One who Sees Me.” This theme will also be prominent in the next story of Hagar (Genesis 21:9–21).<sup>30</sup>

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25 Speiser, *Genesis*, 121.

26 Speiser, *Genesis*, 120–121.

27 See Genesis 12:1–3. Though it should be noted, that these promises do not detail the effect of the promises with regard to Abraham’s offspring, as do the promises in Genesis 17:1–8.

28 See notes 15, 17, and 20

29 See note 21.

30 Jewish legend adds an additional element of sight, attributing the Evil Eye to Sarah, by which she afflicts Hagar (inducing a miscarriage of her first child) and Ishmael. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 239, 264.

The theme of sight is also paralleled by the theme of hearing, with the name of Ishmael being given by the angel and Abram hearkening/listening (literally, hearing) the voice of his wife. This theme will also carry over into the next section.

Thus, in this section Hagar does important things and receives important promises and visits. She is the first freed slave in the Bible. She becomes one of the elect few to directly receive the promise of innumerable posterity as well as an annunciation of the birth of a son by an angel. She is the first and only woman in scripture to name God. While the Hebrew text is somewhat ambiguous on her visitor (it could be an angel or it could be the Lord himself<sup>31</sup>), the LXX is much clearer, rendering vv. 13–14 as: “And she called the name of the Lord God who spoke to her, Thou art God who seest me; for she said, For I have openly seen him that appeared to me. Therefore she called the well, The well of him whom I have openly seen.” In the LXX, a theophany is much more clearly stated.

### Analysis of Genesis 21:9–21

And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.<sup>32</sup> Wherefore

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31 Speiser notes, “*Yahweh’s angel*. The Hebrew noun meant originally ‘messenger,’ exactly as its Greek equivalent, *angelos*. In association with a divine term, the noun refers to a manifestation of the Deity, but not necessarily a separate being. In the present chapter, for instance, the angel is later identified with Yahweh himself (vs. 13). For one reason or another, an angel is interposed, in human form as a rule, to avoid direct contact between Yahweh and mortals.” Speiser, *Genesis*, 118.

32 Hebrew: *māṣaḥēq*, “laughing” or “mocking.” This is a usage of the verb from which Isaac’s name derives (see Genesis 18:12–15, 21:1–7). This verb can have connotations of both rejoicing and mocking, especially when modified by a preposition, as in “laughing at” someone (in Hebrew, with *b-*). However, the preposition is missing here in the Hebrew: “From some of the ancient versions, the original text appears to have included, ‘with her son Isaac,’ which is lacking in the M[asoretic] T[ext], perhaps through haplography.” Speiser, *Genesis*, 155. Because of this, all manner of conclusions have been read into the text, from simple good-natured fun, to rough play, mocking, and even sexual deviancy. The



she said unto Abraham, Cast out<sup>33</sup> this bondwoman<sup>34</sup> and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight<sup>35</sup> because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight<sup>36</sup> because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman;<sup>37</sup> in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken<sup>38</sup> unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman<sup>39</sup> will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away:<sup>40</sup> and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-

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LXX retains the older reading, with the relevant passage saying that Ishmael was seen "sporting with Isaac her [Sarah's] son." Ginzberg reports the Jewish legend that this "sport" or "mocking" involved Ishmael aiming a bow and arrow at Isaac in jest. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 264. The Genesis Rabbah traditions link the word with the trilogy of the worst possible sins: fornication, idolatry, and murder. See Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah*, 253.

33 Hebrew: *gārêš*, "drive out," as an imperative.

34 Hebrew: *hā'āmāh*, "female slave." A different word than that used in the previous section and one with a potentially more pejorative meaning. Used again in the next line of this verse.

35 Hebrew: *bə'ênē*, literally "in his eyes."

36 Hebrew: *bə'ênē*, literally "in his eyes."

37 Hebrew: *'āmāteḳā*, "your maid/female slave." The same word as in verse 10.

38 Hebrew: *šəma'*, "listen," imperative.

39 Hebrew: *hā'āmāh*, "female slave." The same word as in verse 10 and 12.

40 Hebrew: *wayšalləḥehā*, "and sent her away." Note that this is a different verb than what Sarah asked him to do in verse 10. See note 29. It is also noteworthy that the LXX makes it clear that Ishmael is an infant and rides upon her shoulder: "And Abram rose up in the morning and took loaves and a skin of water, and gave them to Agar, and he put the child on her shoulder, and sent her away, and she having departed wandered in the wilderness near the well of the oath." (vs. 14) In some Jewish legends, Sarah, by means of the Evil Eye, makes Ishmael sick, thus accounting for him needing to be carried. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 264.

sheba. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.<sup>41</sup> And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard<sup>42</sup> the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes,<sup>43</sup> and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt. (Genesis 21:9–21)

As can be seen, the themes of sight (vv. 9, 11, 12, 16, 19) and hearing (vv. 12, 17) continue throughout this section, with the culmination in God opening the eyes of Hagar to see life-saving water.

Comparing this section to the previous (Genesis 16: 1–16) also shows a shift in terminology and address. In the first section one word for female slave or maid (*šip̄hāh*) is used to describe Hagar until she is married to Abram, at which point she is described as a wife or concubine (*ʾiššāh*).<sup>44</sup> In the

41 Hebrew: *wattēbək*, “and she wept.”

42 Hebrew: *šāmaʿ*, “has heard.” Note that God heard the voice of Ishmael, not Hagar. This is then another reference to His name, “God hears” or “God will hear.”

43 Hebrew: *wayyip̄qah*, “and he opened.”

44 There is no scholarly consensus on which of these should be adopted. For a summation of the two positions, argued by Speiser (concubine) and Von Rad (wife), see Tammi J. Schneider, *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 106–107.

second section another word (*'āmāh*), again meaning female slave, is used. At this point, though, this is from the mouth of Sarah, when she is flustered over the “mocking” of her son and commanding Abraham to drive Hagar and her son out so that he will not inherit with Isaac. This may be an indication that this second word is more of an oppressive or pejorative term.<sup>45</sup> However, a comparison of the usage of both words throughout the rest of the Hebrew Bible does not fully support that conclusion.<sup>46</sup>

What is clear, though, is that Abram/Abraham and Sarai/Sarah never use Hagar's name nor speak to her directly. Indeed, God and His messenger are the only ones in these stories who speak to her directly and use her name when doing so (Genesis 16:8, 21:17). What is also clear is that Sarah witnesses something between Ishmael and Isaac that pushes her, on the basis of inheritance issues,<sup>47</sup> to demand Abraham to send Hagar and her child elsewhere.<sup>48</sup> The text does make clear that God commands Abraham to follow the will of his wife Sarah in dismissing Hagar, changing Abraham's view.<sup>49</sup> Hagar is dismissed into the wilderness, becomes the first character

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45 Phyllis Trible reads it as such. See Trible, *Texts*, 30, note 9.

46 See Schneider, *Mothers*, 108.

47 Jewish legend states that Ishmael was insisting that he should receive a double portion of the inheritance. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 263.

48 It should be noted that the two texts are contradictory about the age of Ishmael. If they are to be taken in strict chronology, Ishmael should be in his teenage years when he and his mother are pushed out. If that is the case, it is highly unlikely that she carries him (something perhaps implied in Genesis 21:14) or that she would cast him as a babe under a bush (Genesis 21:15). Jewish legend has accounted for this by attributing the Evil Eye to Sarah, which makes Ishmael sick and in need of being carried. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 264. The terminology used with reference to Ishmael is also of interest: sometimes he is referred to as a *yeled* (child) and sometimes as a *na'ar* (youth).

49 The Islamic narrative is more explicit about the command of God, but also more compassionate as Abraham leads Hagar and her son to the place where he leaves them, instead of just driving them out of his camp. See Sahih al-Bukhari 3364, Vol. 4, Book 55, Hadith 583 and Hadith 584.

in the Bible to weep, and yet subsequently experiences another visit of a divine being and is saved by the actions of the deity.

### Analysis of Genesis 25:12

Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham: (Genesis 25:12)

In this the final reference to Hagar in the Hebrew Bible, we see again the identification of her as Egyptian. This has been a constant theme and her constant identifier throughout her time on screen. With this theme comes a dramatic look forward in time to the Exodus of Israel out of Egypt yet set as a distinct reversal: an Egyptian slave leaving the oppression or affliction suffered in the home of Abraham and Sarah, rather than Israelite slaves leaving the oppression suffered in Egypt.<sup>50</sup>

### Analysis of Galatians 4:22-31

For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is [Hagar]. For this [Hagar] is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and

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50 There are some direct literary connections between the two: Sarai afflicts Hagar (*nh*), which is used for the Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 1:11, 12 and Deuteronomy 26:6); Hagar flees (*brh*, Genesis 16:6) just as the Israelites will flee from Pharaoh (Exodus 14:5); Sarah asks for her to be cast/driven out (*grš*), as the Israelites will be cast/driven out (Exodus 12:39).

cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.<sup>51</sup> (Galatians 4:22–31)

Paul's use of Hagar and Sarah as an allegory set the tenor for Christian understanding of Hagar. Hagar and Sarah are portrayed respectively as symbols or figures of the Jewish law/Torah (or the synagogue), and the Gentile Christian church. However, it is important to understand the context in which Paul uses this allegory: this portion is part of an extended argument that Paul is using against certain Jewish Christians or Judaizing Gentiles who are arguing for all converts to Christianity (including Gentiles) to conform to portions of the Torah, in particular the Law of Circumcision. Thus, the use of Hagar and Sarah is a veiled criticism of the two camps in the early Christian community: "The two women no longer represent themselves but are used figuratively to represent Paul's hidden meaning in his argument against other Jewish Christians who are trying to influence the gathered assembly," writes Letty M. Russell.<sup>52</sup> Paul's hermeneutic for interpreting the story of Hagar and Sarah is thus deeply tied to the political, socio-religious conflicts of his own day.

Yet, this interpretive viewpoint would be imprinted on the Christian view as it became foundational with regard to Hagar

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51 King James Version

52 Letty M. Russell, "Twists and Turns in Paul's Allegory," in Tribble and Russell, *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*, 72.

and Sarah for the nascent Christian community. Letty Russell notes that Hagar, in Paul's usage, is rejected doubly, becoming even more of a pariah: "Paul doubles Hagar's rejection through the use of allegory. In Genesis she is a foreigner, a slave, and a threat to Sarah. In Galatians she is all of these and also a Jewish Christian opponent, a slave to the Jewish law, and a threat to Gentile Christian freedom in Christ."<sup>53</sup> This becomes the standard allegorical view adopted by most of the Patristic fathers. As one academic, Elizabeth A. Clark, writes:

This figurative reading of Sarah and Hagar became central to the interpretations of postbiblical Christian writers, both because it encouraged 'spiritual' readings of the Hebrew Bible in general and because it removed Hagar and Sarah from their particularized, local context in ancient Israelite history, thereby enabling their use as symbols in a larger Christian discourse.<sup>54</sup>

This viewpoint, as derived from a limited allegory meant as rhetorical ammunition in the war of words and opinions of the early Christian community, has been enshrined in the general Christian mindset.

It seems almost to go without saying that the literal adoption of an allegorical interpretation can be a faulty foundation upon which to judge the allegorized individual and also a problematic foundation for the subsequent uses to which the allegory is adapted, especially as it is divorced from

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53 Russell, "Twists," 72.

54 Elizabeth A. Clark, "Interpretive Fate amid the Church Fathers," in Tribble and Russell, *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*, 128. For more specific instances, see St. Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Andrew Cain, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2010), 183–92; and Eric Plumer, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Notes*, (New York: Oxford, 2003), 193–99.

its original context and moorings.<sup>55</sup> This does a disservice to the individual, Hagar, in that it presents her as one dimensional and without humanity, emphasizing one reading of her and her characteristics and diminishing any other aspects of her story.<sup>56</sup> The LDS view of Hagar has certainly been influenced by Paul's use of her in Galatians. For instance, the current LDS Bible Dictionary notes "Paul uses the story as an allegory to show the difference between the two covenants, the one a covenant of bondage and the other one of freedom (Galatians 4:24)."<sup>57</sup>

### Analysis of Doctrine & Covenants 132:34–35, 64–65

God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because

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55 This section of scripture has been used as justification for driving out many opponents from the Christian fold, as well as for anti-Jewish interpretation and persecution. See Russell, "Twists" and Clark, "Interpretive Fate," in Tribble and Russell, *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*..

56 One is reminded of a similar lesson taught in April 2010 General Conference by Elder Gregory A. Schwitzer of the Seventy, dealing with a similar one-dimensional reading of Martha: "Many Sunday lessons have been taught using this story which have cast Martha in a lesser position in terms of her faith. Yet there is another story of this great woman Martha, which gives us a deeper view of her understanding and testimony. It happened when the Savior arrived to raise her brother Lazarus from the dead. On this occasion it was Martha whom we find going to Jesus 'as soon as she heard' He was coming. As she meets Him, she says that she knows that 'whatsoever [He would] ask of God, God [would] give [Him].' ...How often has Martha been misjudged as being a person who cared more for the deeds of doing than for the Spirit? However, her testimony in the trial of her brother's death clearly shows the depth of her understanding and faith. Many a sister has often heard the first story and wondered if she were a Mary or a Martha, yet the truth lies in knowing the whole person and in using good judgment. By knowing more about Martha, we find she was actually a person of deep spiritual character who had a bold and daring testimony of the Savior's mission and His divine power over life. A misjudgment of Martha may have caused us not to know the true nature of this wonderful woman," Gregory A. Schwitzer, "Developing Good Judgment and Not Judging Others," at <http://www.lds.org/general-conference/2010/04/developing-good-judgment-and-not-judging-others?lang=eng>, accessed 18 June 2013.

57 LDS Bible Dictionary, "Hagar."

this was the law; and from Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling, among other things, the promises. Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it.

And again, verily, verily, I say unto you, if any man have a wife, who holds the keys of this power, and he teaches unto her the law of my priesthood, as pertaining to these things, then shall she believe and administer unto him, or she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord your God; for I will destroy her; for I will magnify my name upon all those who receive and abide in my law. Therefore, it shall be lawful in me, if she receive not this law, for him to receive all things whatsoever I, the Lord his God, will give unto him, because she did not believe and administer unto him according to my word; and she then becomes the transgressor; and he is exempt from the law of Sarah, who administered unto Abraham according to the law when I commanded Abraham to take Hagar to wife. (Doctrine & Covenants 132:34–35, 64–65)

Recorded in Nauvoo in 1843, Doctrine & Covenants 132 constitutes the basis in LDS scripture for ideas of celestial marriage or the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.<sup>58</sup> This section contains much that is beyond the scope of this paper, thus the remarks here will be limited only to Hagar's position in relation to LDS thought on these issues.

With the recording of this revelation, the issue of plural marriage, as described in this section, was associated strongly

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58 The new 2013 edition heading recognizes that some of the principles described may have been known by Joseph Smith as early as 1831. As this paper is only concerned with Hagar's specific use in the section, it can be assumed that this is dated to 1843.



with the practice of Abraham, particularly in the person of Hagar. It is notable that this section reinforces the biblical reading that Abraham did not do wrongly in taking Hagar as a wife. It also strongly states that the reason Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham was twofold: first, because God commanded it, and second, because it was law.<sup>59</sup> This stands in contradistinction to some interpretations that see the giving of Hagar to Abraham as Sarah attempting to fulfill promises on her own.

Hagar is thus linked heavily in LDS scriptures with a commandment of God to practice polygamy. She is the precedent for action based on the command of God. It should be noted that the LDS practice of polygamy did not take its mandate from God's command for Abraham to practice it, but used that as an example of when God had commanded it, and claimed that God had commanded it through a modern prophet in the latter days as well. This stands as the beginning of the use of Hagar as defense against attacks on the Church by other Christians on the issue of polygamy.<sup>60</sup>

It should be noted that in these verses Hagar is still treated as a third-party object. She is the object here, never acting on her own, but is something that is to be passed along. It is also important that in this section, the use of Hagar seems to not be informed by the allegorical usage of Paul. The verses also leave open the possibility of other aspects of the story not recorded here: "and from Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling, among other things, the promises" (D&C 132:34). The phrase *among other things* tells us that there was more going on in the Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar drama than

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59 It could be argued that these are the same thing. However, it is interesting that they can be read separately, thus potentially showing inspiration on the part of Joseph Smith as to the socio-legal circumstances of Abraham within the context of the Hurrian society, as portrayed in the Nuzi texts.

60 See footnotes 72 and 73 herein.

the command to take an additional wife or the fulfilling of the promise of extended posterity.

### LDS Uses and Views of Hagar: A Historiographic Approach

Joseph Smith's inspired translation of the Bible, while not considered canon or part of the LDS Standard Works, does give some insights on how Joseph Smith approached the Hagar story.<sup>61</sup> It introduces some small, yet significant, changes to the stories of Hagar as recorded in the Bible. In addition to many minor changes, the significant changes include the following:

- JST Genesis 16:14 (KJV 16:13) relates that "she called the name of the angel of the Lord," rather than the name of the Lord. In this way, Joseph changes her experience from a full theophany or vision of God, to a lesser theophany (if it could be called that) of an angelic visitation.
- JST Genesis 16:15–16 (KJV 16:13) replaces the troublesome sentence in the Hebrew that she utters with "And he spake unto her, saying, Knowest thou that God seest thee? And she said, I know that God seest me, for I have also here looked after him." This removes some of the major issues that scholars have been forced to deal with in this section of corrupted or ambiguous Hebrew, as well as describing her in a dialectic with the angel, which shows her to have strength of mind and will, and not just be a passive recipient.
- JST Genesis 16:17–18 (KJV 16:14) rearranges the structure from the KJV and states "And there was a well between

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61 There are differing opinions about the nature of the JST. For a brief introduction, see Kevin Barney, "Joseph Smith Translation and Ancient Texts of the Bible," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19/3 (1987): 85–102. For a more in-depth analysis, see Robert J. Matthews, "A Plainer Translation" *Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible—A History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1975); Kent P. Jackson, Robert J. Matthews, and Scott H. Faulring, eds., *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2004).

Kadesh and Bered, near where Hagar saw the angel. And the name of the angel was Beer-la-hai-roi; wherefore the well was called Beer-la-hai-roi for a memorial.” In this case, the name of the angel is given as “The Well of the Living One who Sees Me.”

- JST Genesis 21:12 (KJV 21:14) rewords and changes the view of Abraham sending Hagar and her son away: “And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, and she took the child, and he sent her away.” This removes the image of Hagar with the bottle of water “on her shoulder” from the traditional narrative and says that she actively took the child (Ishmael), rather than having him also placed on her shoulder. This may indicate influence of the literal chronology on Joseph, as it is illogical for the teenage Ishmael to be placed on her back.
- JST Genesis 21:18–19 (KJV 21:21) again changes order and emphasis, saying “and he [Ishmael] dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, he and his mother. And he took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.” The phrase “he and his mother” gives added emphasis that Hagar is there with him, but then Ishmael himself takes a wife out of Egypt, a change from the biblical story in which “his mother took him a wife out of Egypt.”

The changes seen in the JST are significant in that (if the JST is considered an authentic source) they could alter many of the notions about Hagar in the LDS community. Joseph apparently felt that Hagar had not seen the Lord but rather an angel and thus shifted the relevant passages to reflect that understanding, even if it left the angel with a fairly awkward name. This potentially decreases the prestige and importance that could be ascribed to Hagar from one of the few “pure in heart” (Matthew 5:8) who had seen God to a recipient of heavenly messengers (even so, a decidedly honored and important position).

Similarly, Joseph introduced changes to the commonly held interpretive views of Abraham sending her away and her life in Paran with Ishmael. These changes affect the way the story, and thus the reader's view, of Hagar is understood. She exerts her power by taking the child herself when she leaves, and she is added as a specific element in the story of her son in Paran but loses some characterizations of strength and power (not carrying the jug of water, not choosing the wife of her son, etc.). In general though, Joseph's approach to Hagar in the JST continues to show her as a multidimensional character with both strengths and weaknesses in the same manner that the largely contextual story of the Hebrew Bible does.

The larger contextual story as presented in Genesis is lost throughout much of the rest of LDS historical views of Hagar. She becomes a much flatter character as, in general, her story and her character are used only in limited ways. The usages of Hagar can be placed generally into four categories: (1) as a defense of polygamy, (2) as an example of angelic ministration, (3) as an example of blessings on account of righteousness, and (4) as connected to comparison with other religions. However, it should not be assumed that these are exclusionary categories: individual instances that invoke Hagar as scriptural character could be classified simultaneously in any of them. First, the most prominent way Hagar and her story are used in LDS views is in the defense of polygamy and LDS doctrines of marriage. This usage of the scriptural story dominates her presence in Mormon thought, even though it is largely confined to the nineteenth century as will be shown below.

While the defense of polygamy is by far the most prevalent usage Hagar has been put to, there are other instances in which she will appear in Mormon thought and publications. A second more limited or less prevalent use of Hagar is as an example, usually in a list of many other scriptural individuals, of a person who received an angelic visitation. This is used largely in the

context of preaching focused on the continuation of heavenly visitation and revelation in the present day. In the third category, an even rarer use includes Hagar being portrayed, almost always in connection with Abraham and Sarah as an example of the blessings of righteousness including the overcoming of extreme tests or trials (such as Sarah's barrenness) through faith. The fourth category includes discussion of Hagar in connection with other religions (Judaism or Islam). There are also a number of other miscellaneous usages that do not fit in any of these categories that will be noted.

In the following sections, we will cover the usage of Hagar in various LDS outlets through history, using the *Journal of Discourses*, General Conference addresses, and other Church publications: the *Contributor*, which became the *Improvement Era*, and the *Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*.

### Hagar in LDS Discourse in the 1800s

In the *Journal of Discourses*, consisting of twenty-six volumes of addresses given by leaders of the Church in the Utah territory (Deseret) between 1851 and 1886, Hagar appears by name in seven distinct discourses, which fall into the first and third categories.<sup>62</sup> Two of these instances have her being used in a general way (category three): Jedediah Grant in 1853 uses her as one example among many in his dealing with "uniformity,"<sup>63</sup> and Erastus Snow in 1882 expounds upon Sarah's voluntarily

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62 The analysis here only deals with those times when Hagar's name is used by the publication. There may be other times that she is referred to yet not named. This analysis is meant to be representative of the ways and means Hagar is used in LDS discourse, not as a comprehensive listing of every instance she is named and referred to.

63 Jedediah Grant, "Uniformity" (August 7, 1853) in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:342–49.

giving Hagar to Abraham, an example of faith and righteousness in the challenge of her barrenness.<sup>64</sup>

The other five discourses that invoke Hagar by name involve the defense of LDS marriage doctrines and specifically the practice of polygamy. These discourses were given by Orson Pratt (who gave two of them, in 1852 and 1874),<sup>65</sup> Orson Hyde (1874),<sup>66</sup> Charles C. Rich (1877),<sup>67</sup> and Charles W. Penrose (1884).<sup>68</sup> A few example segments from these discourses are given here to illustrate the general usage of Hagar in the defense of plural marriage.

#### Orson Pratt, 1852:

Why not look upon Abraham's blessings as your own, for the Lord blessed him with a promise of seed as numerous as the sand upon the seashore; so will you be blessed, or else you will not inherit the blessings of Abraham. How did Abraham manage to get a foundation laid for this mighty kingdom? Was he to accomplish it all through one wife? No, Sarah gave a certain woman to him whose name was Hagar, and by her a seed was to be raised up unto him. Is this all? No. We read of his wife Keturah, and also of a plurality of wives and concubines, which he had, from whom he raised up many sons. Here then, was a foundation

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64 Erastus Snow, "The Marriage Question" (February 26, 1882) in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:224–34.

65 Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage" (August 29, 1852) in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:53–66, and "God's Ancient People Polygamists" (October 7, 1874) in *Journal of Discourses*, 17:214–29.

66 Orson Hyde, "Living Faith in God" (February 8, 1874) in *Journal of Discourses*, 17:4–14.

67 Charles C. Rich, "Expectations Deferred" (November 11, 1877) in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:161–68.

68 Charles W. Penrose, "Religious Liberty Guaranteed by the Constitution" (July 26, 1884), in *Journal of Discourses*, 25:218–30.

laid for the fulfilment [sic] of the great and grand promise concerning the multiplicity of his seed. It would have been rather a slow process, if Abraham had been confined to one wife, like some of those narrow, contracted nations of modern Christianity.<sup>69</sup>

**Orson Pratt, 1874:**

[In the millennium] Old Father Abraham will come up with his several wives, namely Sarah, Hagar and Keturah and some others mentioned in Genesis; and besides these all the holy prophets will be here on the earth. I do not think there will be any legislation against polygamy.

By and by they will build a polygamous city.<sup>70</sup>

**Orson Hyde, 1874:**

I was once conversing with a Presbyterian minister on the subject of polygamy. Said I to him—"My dear sir, where do you expect to go when you die?" He said—"To some good place, I hope." "To heaven, I suppose?" "Yes," said he, "I hope to go there." Said I—"Right into Abraham's bosom." Well, he said, figuratively, that was correct. Said I, "If you go right into Abraham's bosom there will be on one side Sarai and on the other Hagar, and if you make a deadshot right into Abraham's bosom how do you expect to dodge polygamy? If you get into Abraham's bosom you get into a curious

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69 Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," 60..

70 Orson Pratt, "God's Ancient People Polygamists," 228.

place.” By this time his argument was exhausted and our conversation closed.<sup>71</sup>

In these representative examples, it is clear that Hagar is important mainly for being the plural wife of Abraham and for giving him posterity. The conversation of Orson Hyde with an unnamed Christian minister gives a typical example of the apologetic usages of Hagar for LDS doctrines of plural marriage in the face of opposition from other Christians. She is expressly not important, in any of these examples, because of her own righteousness, the visitation of an angel, or the promises she receives from God. She is reduced to being a subordinate of Abraham and Sarah, albeit one who is useful for defending LDS marriage practices.

This usage is mirrored in other Church publications of the period. For example, in the *Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star* (the Church's official publication in Great Britain from 1840 to 1970) during the nineteenth century, Hagar the wife of Abraham is mentioned by name in thirty-three articles. Of those, twenty fall into the defense of plural marriage category, three are in reference to her angelic visitation, four are in reference to blessings of righteousness of Abraham and Sarah, seven are in the last category related to other religions, and three outliers fall into none of those categories, consisting mainly of incidental references.<sup>72</sup>

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71 Orson Hyde, “Living Faith in God,” 11.

72 It should be remembered that these are not exclusive categories, so there is some overlap between some of them, mainly between defending polygamy and connections with other religions (i.e., describing something normative in other religious contexts to defend it in the LDS context). In the defense of polygamy category (vol:no): 13:19, 20, and 21 (1851); 15:1, 7 (1853); 16:21 (1854); 18:22 (1856); 21:46 (1859); 27:47 (1865); 28:17 (1866); 29:31 (1867); 31:7 (1869); 32:9 (1870); 37:47 (1875); 45:30 (1883); 47:2, 46 (1885); 48:39 (1886); 49:13 (1887); 52:42 (1890). Angelic Visitation: 5:11 (1845); 38:28 (1977); 43:20 (1881); Blessings of Righteousness and Obedience: 15:38 (1853); 20:20 (1858); 49:25 (1887); 60:43 (1898). Other Religions: 13:19, 20, and 21 (1851); 18:20 (1856); 23:5 (1861); 29:31



In the *Contributor*, a journal representing the Mutual Improvement Association of the Church from 1879 to 1896, Hagar is mentioned by name only four times: twice in connection with defense of plural marriage, once incidentally while talking of Abraham, and once while recounting the history of the Middle Ages and Islam.<sup>73</sup> In 1896, this journal was followed by the *Improvement Era* (1896–1970), wherein Hagar is used only once, as a defense of polygamy even after the Manifesto before the turn of the century (in 1898).<sup>74</sup>

In general then, we can see that Hagar's main use within LDS discourse through the nineteenth century was the defense of plural marriage. Other uses existed, but it is clear that in the minds of the Saints in those days, Hagar was largely to be considered in connection with polygamy. This is very likely caused by the fact that her only appearance in latter-day revelation is to be found in such a connection, in Doctrine and Covenants 132.

### Hagar in LDS Discourse in the 1900s

The prevalence and usage of Hagar in LDS discourse after the turn of the century and perhaps more particularly after the Manifesto of 1890 changed considerably. With the removal of institutional support of plural marriage in the Church, the uses that Latter-day Saints had for Hagar shifted from being dominated by scriptural or theological defense of the institution of plural marriage (with a few other minor scriptural uses and incidental references) to being dominated by the incidental references.

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(1867); 57:28 (1895). Incidental References: 33:47 (1871); 49:40 (1887); 50:23 (1888).

73 The *Contributor*, Plural marriage defense: 3:2 (August 1882), 3:6 (December 1884). In connection with Abraham: 4:12 (September 1883). In connection with history: 14:10 (August 1893). There is one more incidental reference to a rock formation in a cave named after Hagar in 4:8 (February 1887).

74 *Improvement Era* 1/7 (May 1898).

From the turn of the century until 1970 (when it was succeeded by the *Ensign*), the *Improvement Era* mentions Hagar by name in only eighteen different pieces. None of these are explicit defenses of polygamy. There is one that discusses her in the context of angels and a couple that discuss her in the context of other religions.<sup>75</sup> There are only three that could be considered theologically important as discussing her in the context of blessings of righteousness and obedience.<sup>76</sup> LDS academic mentions of Hagar find their beginnings here, with a few articles by Hugh Nibley (that would later appear in his books).<sup>77</sup> As this specific discourse will be considered on its own below, it is sufficient here to note that they do have a place in the general LDS discourse as found in the general publications of the Church.

The majority of mentions of Hagar in this publication through 1970 are incidental at best: a brief mention of Hagar while discussing Abraham's servant or Ishmael<sup>78</sup> or using her as a simile: "Like Hagar, he couldn't watch his son die."<sup>79</sup> Others are even more minor: her name used in a scriptural crossword puzzle or her name appearing in advertisements for films depicting stories from Genesis.<sup>80</sup> What these mentions of Hagar tell us is that while she did have a place in Mormon thought, it was no longer as important or vital as it had been.

In the *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, from 1900 to 1970, the presentation of Hagar is again a story of decreasing importance. There are ten articles that use her by name. Most are

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75 Angelic visitation: *Improvement Era* 47/4 (April 1944). Other religions: 11/12 (October 1908), 16/11 (September 1913).

76 *Improvement Era* 39/5 (May 1936), 50/1 (January 1947), and 56:12 (December 1953). The last of these is a specific question about Egyptian lineage and the ban on Priesthood presented to Joseph Fielding Smith.

77 *Improvement Era* 72/4 (April 1969) and 73/4 (April 1970).

78 See *Improvement Era* 13/7 (May 1910) and 41/11 (November 1938).

79 *Improvement Era* 42/10, 632.

80 *Improvement Era* 45/10, 670 (October 1942), and 56/1, 2, and 3 (January, February and March 1953).

incidental, discussing different meanings of names or naming practices in the Old Testament, scriptural connections with Egypt, or a discussion of Biblical ethics.<sup>81</sup> The most incidental is her position as one of the wrong answers in a couple of scriptural multiple-choice quizzes.<sup>82</sup> There is one discussion of her as a recipient of angelic visitation.<sup>83</sup> Importantly, three instances refer to lesson materials that utilize her as a righteous example or model of obedience to authority and earnest service.<sup>84</sup> In contrast to the thirty-three articles that mention her name in this publication from 1840 to 1900, the ten that appear from 1900 to 1970 is a distinct drop.<sup>85</sup>

In the *Ensign*, which began its run as the premier Church publication in 1970, Hagar is depicted very similarly up to the present. Mentions of her are largely confined to incidental remarks included within the framework of describing or analyzing Abraham. These mentions include a simple chart showing the lineage from Abraham,<sup>86</sup> discussions of his descendants<sup>87</sup> and inheritance issues,<sup>88</sup> descriptions of places

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81 On names and naming: *Millennial Star* 63/12 (21 March 1901) 178, and 77/31 (22 June 1911), 399; on Egypt connections, 83/33 (18 August 1921), 523; on biblical ethics, 35/10 (8 March 1923), 145.

82 *Millennial Star*, 110/3 (March 1948), 79 and 116/4 (April 1954), 104.

83 *Millennial Star* 82/16 (15 April 1920), 253.

84 *Millennial Star*, 70/41 (8 October 1908), 656 and 73/25 (22 June 1911), 399; and 94/8 (25 February 1932), 126.

85 It should be noted that the *Millennial Star* produced a startling amount of material in this period. Until April 1943, when it shifted to a monthly publication, the journal produced a weekly magazine consisting of hundreds of pages of written materials.

86 See Edward J. Brandt, "The Families of Abraham and Israel," *Ensign*, May 1973.

87 See E.L.V. Richardson, "What is a Jew?" *Ensign*, May 1972; and Daniel H. Ludlow, "Of the House of Israel," *Ensign*, January 1991.

88 See Daniel H. Ludlow, "I Have a Question: What Laws Governed the Inheritance of Birthright in the Old Testament?," *Ensign*, September 1980.

he lived,<sup>89</sup> or artwork associated with him.<sup>90</sup> Sometimes these incidental mentions occur in the context of praising Sarah.<sup>91</sup> Continuing the trend of discussing Hagar in the context of other religions, the *Ensign* provided important articles that use her as a bridge to understanding the beliefs of others, particularly Muslims, or other geographic areas.<sup>92</sup>

In addition to this continuation of former usages, in the *Ensign* during the last quarter of the 1900s, another image or examination began to occur with greater frequency. Hagar was lifted up as a woman of strength whose experience could be likened unto us personally. In 1978, Maureen Ebert Leavitt, in an article called “Privacy and a Sense of Self,” held up Hagar as one among many illustrations from the scriptures of those who in solitude have achieved extremely sacred experiences: “Many sacred experiences have occurred in solitude. Samuel was alone when the Lord called to him. Hagar was comforted by an angel in the desert—and Jacob wrestled there with a heavenly messenger.”<sup>93</sup>

In the Relief Society General Meeting of October 1995, Aileen H. Clyde, then second counselor in the Relief Society, turned to Hagar in her address to the Relief Society, the first time Hagar was mentioned by name in a general meeting of the Church in over a hundred years. She says “When I think

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89 See Jay M. Todd, “Some Dwellings Sites of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” *Ensign*, March 1973.

90 See the collections of art published as “Abraham: Father of the Faithful,” *Ensign*, February 2006 and “She Shall Be Called Woman: Women of the Old Testament,” *Ensign*, September 2006. It is interesting, that whereas the second of these compilations is meant to portray the women themselves, the piece of artwork devoted to Hagar is the same as that used in the Abraham-oriented collection published earlier.

91 See Carol Rollins, “Sarah’s Trial,” *Ensign*, March 1977.

92 See John Tvedtnes, “Who is an Arab?” *Ensign*, April 1974; James Mayfield, “Ishmael, Our Brother,” *Ensign*, June 1979; and Thomas and Judith Parker, “Blessed Be Egypt My People,” *Ensign*, September 1983.

93 Maureen Ebert Leavitt, “Privacy and a Sense of Self,” *Ensign*, August 1978.

of lifesaving water and of wells, I also think of Hagar (see Genesis. 21:14–20). Hers is a complicated family story,” and then recounts her story as recounted in Genesis. She continues saying,

We, like Hagar, are required to see “a well of water.” We, like the woman at the well, must ask of the Lord: “Give me this water, that I thirst not” (John 4:15). This is the purpose of Relief Society. It teaches us as daughters of God how to see and how to ask for that which we need of the Lord so that we need not thirst again.<sup>94</sup>

The move from an understanding of Hagar as theologically important solely for her position as a plural wife, through periods of disregard, to a member of the Relief Society General Presidency’s holding her up as an example of righteousness, outside of her relationship to Abraham and Sarah, to be emulated by all the women of the Relief Society is a profound shift.<sup>95</sup>

In these publications can be seen that the typical nineteenth-century description of a largely unidimensional Hagar used mainly in defense of plural marriage was flattened even further, into near obscurity, converted into just one more scriptural character that can be mentioned incidentally from time to time. This change is very likely the result of Hagar’s being so connected in the LDS psyche with polygamy that when plural marriage was stopped, there was very little need to mention her. Perceptions of Hagar began to change in the last quarter of the twentieth century as more scholarly attention was being paid to the scriptures in general and as the rise of the

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94 Aileen H. Clyde, “What is Relief Society For?” *Ensign*, November 1995.

95 Hagar is mentioned again, albeit again in an incidental manner, in October 2007 General Conference by Elder Spencer J. Condie. See Spencer J. Condie, “Claim the Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” *Ensign*, November 2007.

global church engendered discussions of commonalities with other regions and religions, particularly Islam.

### LDS Academic and Devotional Literature

The LDS academic community provides an interesting discourse in which standard scholarly approaches to texts (scriptural or otherwise) can be applied in conjunction with the ideas and knowledge derived from modern revelation. Devotional literature (in many ways largely based on academic works) utilizes scriptural stories in ways meant to promote faith and personal application. In some instances there is much overlap between the two approaches, largely under the label apologetics; fully separating the two in modern LDS discourse can be difficult. In both there are pitfalls similar to standard theological approaches in dealing with characters: it is easy to fall into the trap of reading the characters in only one way, unidimensionally, or casting them in negative lights due to “allegiance” to other characters. For instance, one academic notes that because of the concept of Abraham and Sarah as ideal covenant spouses, there is a “temptation...to paint [Hagar] as the nemesis, the intruder, the foreigner to faith.”<sup>96</sup> It is also possible to read too much into one source in light of another and make incorrect assumptions of primacy, influence, or meaning.

Surveying some of the LDS academic approaches to Hagar, we can see that many of the older assumptions and accepted teachings about Hagar are in some cases retained but are largely

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96 Camille Fronk Olson, *Women in the Old Testament*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2009), 29. “The simple fact that two women seemingly in competition for the same blessings from opposing angles appear in the same story is enough to invite serious debate and unfair comparisons. A common argument contends that because Sarah and Hagar disagreed at times and were dissimilar in many ways, they were the complete opposite of each other. Therefore, the argument concludes, one of them was righteous and loved by God, whereas the other made bad choices and was spiritually rejected.”

examined thoughtfully and carefully to create images of a real person with strengths and flaws rather than simply a form character meant to push plot or provide conflict.<sup>97</sup> In many ways, LDS academic and devotional literature in the latter half of the twentieth century and in the early twenty-first century retain the lens of viewing Hagar vis-à-vis her relationship with Abraham and Sarah. In general, it is impossible not to do so. Hagar's story is so heavily intertwined with her relationship with Abraham that removing her from that context would reduce her to almost nothing. How one views that context, though, will color Hagar.

Hugh Nibley used the character of Hagar in a number of different ways. In one work, he appropriated her as an identifying marker where the drama of Abraham unfolded.<sup>98</sup> However, his main discussion of Hagar exists in his article "The Sacrifice of Sarah."<sup>99</sup> As the title of this article suggests, Hagar is discussed only within the context of her subordinate relationship with Sarah. As the second wife, this lesser position is largely accepted as fact and is something Hagar seems to have had issues dealing with. However, Nibley takes it further, seeing Hagar's involvement with Abraham and Sarah within the context of other patriarchal narratives in which a conscious attempt is made to break up righteous couples: "More conspicuous is the repeated recurrence of a ritual love triangle in which a third party threatens to break up a devoted couple. Such is the story of Hagar, who sought to supplant Sarah in

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97 I will not try here to overview every academic, scholarly, or devotional piece written by members of the LDS community that may mention Hagar. What will be presented covers the major contributors and those that focus on her specifically to paint in broad brushstrokes the predominant views and understandings of Hagar.

98 Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2000), 229–30.

99 Hugh Nibley, "The Sacrifice of Sarah," *Improvement Era* 37/4 (April 1970), 79–95. This is later included as chapter 8 in Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1981).

Abraham's household and was turned out into the desert to perish of thirst."<sup>100</sup> In this manner, Nibley portrays her as a threat to Abraham and Sarah, a trial to be overcome by them. He does not state, however, if this is because God placed her as such or not. However, Nibley also portrays her as having a crisis similar to Abraham and Sarah:

So here, to cut it short, we have Hagar praying for deliverance from a heat death, visited by an angel, and promised the same blessing in her hour of crisis as was given to Sarah and Abraham in theirs. There is a difference, of course: by "despising" and taunting her afflicted mistress and then by deserting her, Hagar had *not* been true and faithful, and the angel sternly ordered her back to the path of duty whereas the promises given to her offspring are heavy with qualifications and limitations. The issue is as ever one of authority for, as Josephus puts it, Hagar sought precedence over Sarah, and the angel told her to return to her "rulers" (*despotas*) or else she would perish, but if she obeyed she would bear a son who would rule in that desert land. She too founded a royal line.<sup>101</sup>

Nibley here deftly follows through with the standard identifier of Hagar as a test of the righteousness of Abraham and Sarah. As seen above, throughout much of LDS history, she has been seen in this light: Sarah is given the test of giving Hagar to her husband, and when she does so obediently, the Lord blesses her with children for righteously passing the test. Yet Nibley goes beyond that to point to another layer of importance for the character. She is a normal human being, flawed with pride and desiring authority, yet is able to humble herself and submit to her duty as enumerated to her by an angel. Her obedience

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100 Nibley, *Abraham*, 357.

101 Nibley, *Abraham*, 358. Emphasis in original.



to that duty enables her to gain the same blessings promised to Abraham and to be the head of a royal line.

Works of LDS devotional literature fall on both sides of the line vis-à-vis presenting Hagar in positive, multidimensional, or negative, unidimensional light. Carol Cornwall Madsen speaks of Hagar only as defined against Sarah, as the covenant wife of Abraham.<sup>102</sup>

Sarah willingly gave Abraham her handmaid Hagar so that Sarah might “obtain children by her,” thereby providing Abraham with posterity but also removing her reproach and securing her own status through the son that would be accounted hers through her maidservant. The contempt Hagar unexpectedly demonstrated toward Sarah after conceiving, however, set in motion the unfortunate events that resulted in Hagar’s eventual exile and the fulfillment of the covenant through Sarah and her son Isaac. Sarah was to be the mother of promise, her son, Isaac, heir to the birthright. Hagar was outside the chosen lineage and Sarah’s gift of her servant would not satisfy the terms of the covenant.<sup>103</sup>

This presentation of Hagar seems to insinuate that if Hagar had not sinned by her contempt, she would still have held a place in the covenant by being the birthmother of the child of the covenant. Thus her hardship under Sarah’s hands and her exile are “unfortunate” but seemingly what she deserved, and the Lord provided miraculously for Isaac to be born and the covenant to continue. Yet this is contradicted by Madsen’s

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102 Carol Cornwall Madsen, “Mothers in Israel: Sarah’s Legacy,” in *Women of Wisdom and Knowledge: Talks Selected from the BYU Women’s Conferences*, ed. Marie Cornwall and Susan Howe (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1990), 179–201.

103 Madsen, “Sarah’s Legacy,” 181–82.

declaration that Hagar was outside the correct lineage and thus could never have “satisfied” the covenant. This portrayal of Hagar is negative by not seeing her as part of a covenant (despite the promises she receives from the angel/Lord). It is also unidimensional in that it portrays her as a complete foil to Sarah: Sarah must be righteous, thus Hagar is not.

S. Michael Wilcox, in his book *Daughters of God: Scriptural Portraits*, also presents Hagar and Sarah as distinctly intertwined foils.<sup>104</sup> However, while Hagar is noted negatively for having “wrongly assumed a superior attitude to her mistress,” she is also portrayed very positively as a model of repentance and humility after having been dealt with harshly by Sarah.<sup>105</sup> Similarly, Wilcox strongly asserts the scriptural position that God was aware of and watched over Hagar in her needs, something he applies to modern audiences. This portrayal is largely positive and multidimensional. Hagar is seen as a righteous, albeit flawed person who is given assurances by the Lord through heavenly ministration:

Hagar learned that the Lord was watching over her. He knew why she had fled; he knew her thoughts and desires. Before he sent her back, the Lord assured her [of her blessings]...When Hagar and Ishmael were sent away after the birth of Isaac, the Lord once again saw the plight of Hagar and took care of her, and he reaffirmed that Ishmael would be made a great nation.<sup>106</sup>

While Wilcox is generally positive, he does not deal with Hagar as the second or subordinate wife, nor the issues of priesthood lineage and inheritance. He is more concerned with understanding her as an example of righteous behavior.

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104 S. Michael Wilcox, *Daughters of God: Scriptural Portraits*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1998).

105 Wilcox, *Daughters*, 29.

106 Wilcox, *Daughters*, 31.

In the last few years, the subordinate position of Hagar has in some ways even been called into question. Janet C. Hovorka, in her article “Sarah and Hagar: Ancient Women of the Abrahamic Covenant,” points out that virtually identical covenants seem to have been made between Abraham, each of his wives, and the Lord.<sup>107</sup> She states,

Scripture gives much more information about Sarah than Hagar. And what is available about Hagar is tightly focused on three events—the conception of Ishmael, the fleeing from Sarah, and the banishment (Genesis 16, 21). It is therefore more difficult to ascertain the extent of her involvement in the covenant. However, a careful examination of the biblical text shows that Hagar enjoyed many of the same aspects of the Abrahamic covenant that Sarah and Abraham did.<sup>108</sup>

In the article, Hovorka details the stipulations, blessings, and tokens or signs associated with making that covenant which occurred in the stories of Sarah and Hagar. Even with the lack of information about Hagar specifically, it is shown that she abides by the stipulations (obedience and sacrifice) and is given promises of the exact three blessings typically known for Abraham and Sarah, blessings of posterity, land for them to inherit, and the presence of God with them. She ends the article with an application of these types of covenants in the LDS experience: through the rite of temple marriage. She explains,

Modern Latter-day Saints believe the Abrahamic covenant is passed on in a temple marriage. The requirements of obedience are similar to those for

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<sup>107</sup> Janet C. Hovorka, “Sarah and Hagar: Ancient Women of the Abrahamic Covenant,” in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian Hauglid (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 147–66.

<sup>108</sup> Hovorka, “Sarah and Hagar,” 157.

Abraham's covenant. The blessings promised are explicitly the same. The sealing ceremony name changes are tokens of the covenant and associated with LDS temple marriages.<sup>109</sup>

This approach diverges from standard LDS (and general Judeo-Christian) understanding of the story wherein Hagar, while being a wife of Abraham, is seen still as subordinate to Sarah as the first wife. This traditional line of thinking is heavily steeped in the idea that the covenant was passed through Sarah to Isaac, Jacob, and the rest of the children of Israel, whereas Hagar and her descendants, although included in Abraham's posterity, are not included in the promises of priesthood lineage from Abraham. The idea that Hagar also had equal portion with the Abrahamic covenant (albeit in an individual covenant with Abraham and the Lord without involving Sarah) as Hovorka describes has important considerations within LDS discourse, as it reinforces and fits well with the ideas and doctrines of plural marriage as described in Doctrine and Covenants 132.

Camille Fronk Olson also comments on the relationship of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar as it relates to LDS concepts of eternal marriage and how we view Hagar in general. While retaining the traditional lesser status of Hagar, she stresses how important Hagar is as a model who should not be compared unfairly with Sarah: "Although Hagar did not receive the high calling in the covenant that Sarai was given, Hagar's importance to God and that of her unborn son are attested in the Genesis narrative."<sup>110</sup> It is important to note the use of the term "calling," a conspicuously Mormon usage meaning a responsibility, position, or stewardship one is given by revelation from the Lord. Olson's view is acknowledged as heavily influenced by the Pauline view that Hagar represented the lesser law:

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109 Hovorka, "Sarah and Hagar," 165.

110 Olson, *Women*, 38.

Centuries later, the apostle Paul drew on this symbolism to teach the restrictiveness of the law of Moses in contrast to the Lord's higher law. In the allegory, Hagar and her descendants represented the lesser law while Sarah and her descendants symbolized the law of Christ (Galatians 4:21–31). Both the higher law and the law of Moses came from God, but the higher law promises something greater. Ishmael's descendants, although great, would need to come to Isaac's descendants for the promises of the covenant and the Savior's greatest blessings.<sup>111</sup>

Despite this, Olson readily states that Hagar in the eternities enjoys all the blessings of exaltation, even though she was of a lesser "calling" in this life. She states "Hagar's eternal destiny is likewise taught in modern scripture. Revelation to the Prophet Joseph indicates that all the wives of the patriarchs will enjoy the blessings of exaltation with their husbands," as found in Doctrine and Covenants 132:37.<sup>112</sup> Likewise, while she retains the traditional status arrangement, she does acknowledge that "knowing that God willed Hagar to be included in this marriage trio and that she must have therefore believed in Abram's God directs us to consider her with equal acceptance."<sup>113</sup> This is why the concept of a "calling" becomes important; in Church doctrine and discourse, all callings are considered equal as part of the "body of Christ," and thus, while Hagar's calling was

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111 Olson, *Women*, 43–44.

112 Olson, *Women*, 44. She specifically notes that the mention of "concubines" that Abraham received covers Hagar as well as Keturah (and Bilhah and Zilpah later), who are received into their exaltation. She defines a concubine as "a legal wife who was elevated from servant status by her marriage. Her increased status did not, however, equal that of the chief wife, who was always a free woman." Olson, *Women*, 37.

113 Olson, *Women*, 37.

of lesser outward importance, it was still an equally valid and important calling for her.<sup>114</sup>

In the last few decades, contemporary academic discourse coupled with Church growth has contributed to another shift in the view of Hagar. While still recognizing her role as a plural wife, the traditional view of her as subordinate to Sarah in spiritual and covenantal matters is slowly changing to a more equal but different role.

### **Continuing the Discussion: Hagar's Place in Light of the Restored Gospel**

The preceding discussion has highlighted the changes that have occurred over time in the ways that the LDS community has viewed Hagar and utilized her in religious discourse. A major determinative factor that has been shown to this point is that according to LDS scripture, Hagar was made the wife of Abraham because of the commandment of God. Opposed to the rest of the Judeo-Christian community that relies solely upon the account in Genesis (where the text attributes the idea and action to Sarah, although Abraham is commanded by God to hearken to her), the Doctrine and Covenants makes clear that perhaps in conjunction with contemporary law, God commanded Hagar to be taken as a wife: "God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife. And why did she do it? Because this was the law; and from Hagar sprang many people. This, therefore, was fulfilling, among other things, the promises. Was Abraham, therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you, Nay; for I, the Lord, commanded it." (D&C 132:34–35).

This places a significant conundrum in LDS discourse as regarding Hagar--the Lord does not give commands such as this lightly, so what was the purpose for Hagar to marry

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114 See 1 Corinthians 12.

Abraham? The verses just cited give the answer that part of the reason was the posterity whom she would provide for Abraham that fulfilled “among other things” the promises given to him and her regarding their offspring. But what were the “other things” that were accomplished by Hagar’s marrying Abraham and the subsequent actions and reactions leading to the eventual banishment of Hagar and her son? To provide a few potential answer to this question (assuredly there are many), we will return to the Genesis account and examine specific literary connections at play between the Hagar narratives and the Adam and Eve narrative in Genesis 3 as well as in other sections of the LDS standard works.

The connections between the Hagar stories (and her relationship with Abraham and Sarah) and the characters and actions of Eve and Adam in the Garden are too many and too distinct to have been placed in the Hebrew Bible text accidentally.<sup>115</sup> Indeed, it is apparent that the author of the Genesis account distinctly wanted his audience to recall the occurrences in the Garden of Eden, a few chapters previous to the events related to Hagar. Reviewing the general Hagar stories in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 16:1–16, 21:9–21) yields a number of interesting connections to the Garden pericope (Genesis 3).

In Genesis 3:6 and 16:3, there occurs an exact replication of verbs. In the Garden, the woman “took (*wetiqah*) of the fruit of it [the tree] and she ate, and she gave (*wetiten*) also to her man.” In the later context, “Sarai, the wife of Avram, took (*wetiqah*) the Egyptian Hagar, her handmaid...and she gave (*wetiten*) her to Avram.” In this case, Hagar is presented, via an exact replication of the words used in the Garden, in the position of the forbidden fruit, the article/entity that once taken or used will fundamentally change the relationships of those involved

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115 Some of the parallels pointed out here are also discussed in Phyllis Tribble, “Ominous Beginnings for a Promise of Blessing” in Tribble and Russell, *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children*, 33–69.

with each other (and potentially with deity). This seems to indicate that the author is wanting to portray the marriage of Hagar and Abraham as the beginning of a new age or initiating a change in the ways and means of God's dealings with man and the way that mankind should view themselves vis-à-vis deity.

In Genesis 3:17 and 16:2 another literary parallel occurs. In the Garden scenario, the Lord describes Adam's action to him: "because you listened (*šama'ta*) to the voice (*leqol*) of your wife/woman." Similarly, "Avram listened (*weyišma'*) to the voice (*leqol*) of Sarai." While the verbs are not exactly replicated (but still involve the same words), the recreation of the scene with Avram as Adam listening or hearkening to the voice of his wife in taking the fruit/Hagar is strikingly similar enough to stand as direct allusion. This again places Adam following Eve in taking the fruit in juxtaposition to Abraham marrying Hagar.

In Genesis 3:16 and 16:10, both Eve and Hagar are extended similar promises of great, multitudinous descendants. To Eve, the Lord says, "I will indeed multiply (*harbah 'arbeh*) your sorrow and your conception." While to Hagar, the messenger of the Lord says, "I will indeed multiply (*harbah 'arbeh*) your seed that it shall not be numbered for multitude." With the exact words used to begin the promises and the functional equivalence between "conception" and "seed," it stands to reason that the promise to Hagar is meant to echo that made to Eve. This is strengthened by the addition of Hagar's being told to submit herself to the afflictions of Sarai (Genesis 16:6, 9), paralleling the multiplication of Eve's sorrow.<sup>116</sup> It is also of note that Abraham is the only other character in the Bible to receive directly such a promise with the same words (*harbah*

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<sup>116</sup> It is very intriguing to read Mosiah 3:19 in light of Hagar's story. Based on the theme of submission as well as the location at the temple and King Benjamin's understanding of covenant in Christ, it may well be that the story of Hagar informed his thinking.



*'arbeh*) in Genesis 22:17, which is generally then also accepted as a promise to Sarah also.

In both stories, in Genesis 3:23–24 and 21:10, 14, at the point of expulsion an interesting verbal usage occurs. The Lord both sent (*wayšalḥehu*) and drove (*waygareš*) Adam and Eve out of the Garden. Similarly (and perhaps tellingly), Sarah commands Abraham to drive out (*gereš*) Hagar and her son, but Abraham sends (*wayšalḥeha*) Hagar away. In this manner, the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael is meant to be viewed as another expulsion from a state similar to the Garden of Eden, implying that Abraham and Sarah remain there. Hagar literally and figuratively goes into the wilderness of affliction.

A final connection between Eve and Hagar is found in Genesis 3:7 and 21:19: both have their eyes opened. The eyes of Adam and Eve after eating of the fruit “were opened” (*watipaqahnah*) and God opened (*wayipqah*) Hagar’s eyes in her moment of need. In the Hagar narratives this represents the culmination of the themes of sight mentioned above, the point when God plays an explicit role in her salvation. In the Adam and Eve narrative (especially that found in LDS temples), this is also the point where God steps in to participate in the salvation of Adam and Eve via a covenantal relationship, rebuking Satan, clothing them in coats of skins, and preventing them from eating of the Tree of Life and voiding the proposed plan of salvation.<sup>117</sup> This theme of having eyes opened is also replicated in the Garden story found in the Book of Moses: “She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and also gave unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they had been naked” (Moses 4:12–13). Later Adam declares, “Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened,

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117 See Alma 12:21–24 and 42:3–5.

and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God” (Moses 5:10).

From these references, it is clear that the author of the Hagar passages wanted to draw attention back to the earlier story of Adam and Eve in the Garden. What is also strikingly emphasized, most especially by the parallel promises, the opening of eyes, and the expulsion at the hands of Abraham, is the relationship of Hagar to Eve. It is plain that the author of this story wanted Hagar to be seen as a parallel to the great mother figure, even if her general status within the family of Abraham in the Genesis narrative was more vague.<sup>118</sup> What are we to make of these literary connections? From a standard Jewish or Christian standpoint, it could be hard to understand them. However, the restored Gospel, with a more detailed understanding of the Plan of Salvation, can give a different perspective, which sheds additional light on the situation.

With the influence of LDS doctrines of eternal marriage and the Abrahamic covenant, it is clear that one reason the connection is made is precisely because the inauguration of the Abrahamic covenant, as expressed in the New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage, did represent a new era of God’s dealings with mankind. This is precisely why Abraham holds the status that he does as the head of the Abrahamic faiths. Viewing Hagar as a necessary covenantal portion of this new era, rather than simply a human attempt to provide progeny, is not the hallmark of Jewish or Christian understandings. It does, however, exhibit itself in Islamic understandings where Hagar is seen as the spiritual ancestress of all Muslims who participated fully in Abraham’s attempt to establish the spiritual re-creation of monotheism (which is paralleled with the physical creation of Adam and Eve).<sup>119</sup> But this doesn’t

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118 Schneider, *Mothers*, 107.

119 See Stowasser, *Women*, and Hassan, “Islamic Hagar” for more in-depth detail on Hagar in Islamic discourse.

fully answer the question, leaving one wondering why eternal marriage with Sarah alone was not enough.

Additional insight may be gleaned from other prophetic books of the Old Testament. Many of the prophets of the Old Testament undertook what have become known as prophetic action oracles, specific actions that were commanded by the Lord in order to give a sign, image, or symbol of that which the Lord would accomplish among the children of Israel. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Zechariah, and Zedekiah as well as Abraham and Moses undertook prophetic action of this type.<sup>120</sup> Donald Parry states that the prophets' "unconventional action, gesture, movement, or posture of itself may not have had an immediate practical purpose but had symbolic meaning or metaphoric application. The future action was the typological fulfillment of the first, original action."<sup>121</sup> Similarly, he also makes the point that "two themes constantly recur in the nonverbal prophecies—the theme of God's judgment against an individual, community, or nation and the theme of the mission, attributes, goals, or atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ."<sup>122</sup>

In many cases, it was the prophet himself who stood as a symbol, as was told to Ezekiel: "I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel" (Ezek 12:6). However, in some instances, the symbol was to be accomplished by the example of the prophet and his family. For instance, Hosea was commanded to take a harlot to wife as a sign for Israel, and the children conceived in this union were also signs.<sup>123</sup> Isaiah ben Amoz was

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120 For a concise overview of prophetic action oracles as well as a listing of Biblical examples, see Donald W. Parry, "Symbolic Action as Prophecy in the Old Testament" in *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Old Testament*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2005), 337–55. Parry mentions Abraham in conjunction with the Sacrifice of Isaac but not in the way that I do here.

121 Parry, "Symbolic Action," 337.

122 Parry, "Symbolic Action," 341.

123 See Hosea 1:1–11.

also considered such and recorded “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion” (Isaiah 8:18).

Abraham, in addition to being provided posterity, achieved similar purposes when he was commanded to marry Hagar. One non-LDS academic, speaking about the relationship of Ishmael and Isaac, states

Certainly the story has made of Ishmael a mere shadow of Isaac, but he remains his brother, and in this narrative he clearly acts as alter ego of Isaac, bearing as it were the negative qualities with which Isaac would otherwise be burdened. The echo in this exegesis of Leviticus 16 is no accident, for the sacrificial victims of the rites of yom kippur, taken respectively to the altar and the wilderness, are precisely balanced by the fates of Ishmael and Isaac, a point emphasized by the doublet of the Ishmael story in Genesis 21,8–21 and its proximity to the sacrifice of Isaac in chapter 22. Indeed, Ishmael is in every respect a scapegoat.<sup>124</sup>

Thus it is clear that the life of Abraham and his sons dramatizes what would become the central ritual of atonement in the Israelite temple theology. While one son is set to be sacrificed, the other is driven into the wilderness. While most commentaries concentrate upon the allegorical meaning of Isaac’s sacrifice, it is, in some ways incomplete without discussing also Ishmael.

Nephi tells us that the Law of Moses was meant to be understood as a symbol of the coming of the Lord and his atoning sacrifice.

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124 Wyatt, “The Meaning of El Roi,” 149

And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. For, for this end was the law given; wherefore the law hath become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith; yet we keep the law because of the commandments. And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins. Wherefore, we speak concerning the law that our children may know the deadness of the law; and they, by knowing the deadness of the law, may look forward unto that life which is in Christ, and know for what end the law was given. (2 Nephi 25:24–27)

Considered in this way the rituals of the Day of Atonement must be seen as pointing to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Understanding the goat that is to be slaughtered as a type of Christ is simple, but what are we to make of the goat that literally bears the sins of the people into the wilderness? Historically the answers have ranged from a symbol of Christ to a symbol of Satan. The debate of what the scapegoat represents has been contested for nearly the entire history of Christianity.<sup>125</sup> Analysis of the Yom Kippur rituals without considering the stories of Abraham and Isaac and Abraham and Ishmael as the etiology of the rituals is also incomplete.

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125 For a brief overview of some of the pertinent points of the debate, see James L. Carroll, "An Expanded View of the Israelite Scapegoat," *Selections from the Religious Education Student Symposium 2005* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2005), 1–15. Also available online at <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/selections-2005-religious-education-student-symposium/expanded-view-israelite-scapegoat>. Carroll posits that from an LDS perspective the two goats are best understood as symbols of physical and spiritual death.

It is not my intent to attempt a definitive reading here. However, an alternate reading of the family of Abraham based on the factors discussed above could be as an extended allegory or a multivalent symbol or sign of the parentage and roles of Jesus Christ and provide reasonable answers for why Hagar, as a second wife, was commanded to marry Abraham. Considering the parallels pointed out above with the Garden narrative, it would make sense to consider Abraham and Sarah as a divine couple—Heavenly Father and Mother—that remains in a heavenly setting while sending their “perfect,” miraculous, or divine son to be sacrificed, an “infinite and eternal sacrifice” (Alma 34:10). However, Hagar, as the expelled mortal woman, would provide the physical body for a mortal son to be raised in a fallen wilderness without the physical presence of his father.

This view of Hagar as part of this multivalent symbol would also account for the literary comparison of Hagar to the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. In this manner, she represents the changes in the relationship of deity with mankind through the Fall brought about by Adam and Eve as well as looking forward to the changes in that relationship wrought by the Atonement of Christ. The heavy connections between Hagar and Eve, seen through the lens of the Restored Gospel, can be explained as Hagar stands as a symbol of the woman whose seed will bruise or crush the head of the serpent.<sup>126</sup> Thus Hagar can also stand as a type and shadow of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the woman of Revelation forced into the wilderness.<sup>127</sup> It is significant that in the standard works only two individuals are commanded of the Lord to marry a specific other person, Hagar and Joseph, the husband of Mary.<sup>128</sup>

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126 See Genesis 3:14–15.

127 See Revelation 12:1–6.

128 See Matthew 1:20–25. In verse 24, the KJV relates that Joseph “did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him” which may be interpreted in more modern usage as meaning ‘was asked.’ Other translations relate that he was com-

In this way the Lord, by means of Abraham and his family, provided symbolic action to illustrate or foreshadow the dual nature of Christ as both of divine parentage as well as of a human mother. Such a position could only be accomplished by one who was obedient and true to her covenants, who had had her eyes opened to the glory of the Lord. Hagar's marriage to Abraham as a second wife was thus necessary. Abraham and Sarah's eternal marriage alone would not be enough to reflect the effects and symbolism of the New and Everlasting Marriage Covenant in concert with the Atonement of Christ. Similarly then, Hagar and Sarah can be construed as equals, albeit with differing roles, Sarah representing an infinitely more powerful divine Mother while Hagar represents the fallible, human mother. Yet each is equally necessary in the Plan of Salvation as the Mother of the Son of God, one by spirit, the other by flesh.

Such an allegorical and spiritualized reading of the Abrahamic drama is possible only in the context of the Restored Gospel. It necessitates the knowledge of the eternal marriage covenant as well as the revealed knowledge of a Mother in Heaven. Other religious traditions without such doctrines cannot understand in such a way the literary and symbolic stories of Hagar and by extension Abraham and Sarah. Similarly, such a reading can be accomplished only when the LDS audience moves away from unidimensional understandings of Hagar, either by viewing her as a one-dimensional, unfaithful counterpoint to Sarah's righteousness or accepting as literal the allegorical rendering of Paul to a multivalent and multi-dimensional reading of Hagar. While acknowledging her faults (and the faults of Abraham and Sarah), this reading allows Hagar (and Abraham and Sarah) to play an integral part or fill an important calling in the dramatizing of the Eternal Plan even while being imperfect human beings.

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manded to do so, according to the Greek, *prosetaxen* (προσέταξεν) from *prostassó* (προστάσσω), meaning 'to command

## Conclusion

Hagar is a complex character within the standard works of the LDS tradition. However, throughout much of the history of the Church and its members, her character has been flattened in various ways to achieve limited goals and usages. As has been shown generally from the establishment of the Church in 1830, LDS views of Hagar have shifted depending upon how and for what she was utilized, congruent with the needs and understandings of the members at those times. During the nineteenth century in LDS discourse, the issue of plural marriage dominated the depiction and usage of Hagar, although other uses can be found. Following the Manifesto and through the middle of the twentieth century, Hagar in many ways fell out of common usage within LDS discourse, probably due mainly to her distinct association with plural marriage in the minds of Latter-day Saints. She continued to appear in Church publications, however, due to other roles unrelated to her distinct status as the second wife of Abraham (i.e., as recipient of heavenly visitations, mother of Ishmael, etc.). The increase in academic discourse, Church expansion worldwide, and greater interest in women in the scriptures prompted by feminist readings (all of which have played a role in enhancing ideals of egalitarianism in the Church and members' understanding of the Gospel) have led to a shift in understanding of her place within Abraham's household. She is steadily being granted a role more equal to that of Sarah as a covenant wife of Abraham, albeit with a different "calling" or role.

Such a characterization of Hagar and the household of Abraham opens up new vistas of allegorical interpretation, allowing LDS interpretation to see Hagar and Sarah as representative symbols not only of the standard ideas of old versus new law or gentile versus promised lineage but also as signs of a Heavenly Mother and a mortal mother for Jesus



Christ and his salvific role as Redeemer. This rendering also gives meaning to some of the “other things” that the marriage of Hagar to Abraham accomplished beyond simply the granting of the promised posterity.

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## HELP FOR THE TROUBLED “YOUNG MORMON”

*Stephen O. Smoot*

*Review of Adam S. Miller, Letters to a Young Mormon. Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2014. 78 pp. \$9.95.*

Adam S. Miller has recently made a name for himself in Mormon intellectual circles by publishing a number of books in theology and philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Miller, who holds a PhD in philosophy from Villanova University and is currently a professor of philosophy at Collin College in McKinney, Texas, adds to his list of publications with a new book published by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. This new book, *Letters to a Young Mormon*,<sup>2</sup> is a short volume of some 80 pages that includes Miller’s ruminations on the following topics: agency (9-12),<sup>3</sup> work (13-16), sin (17-23), faith (25-29), scripture (31-35), prayer (37-41), history (43-49), science (51-56), hunger (57-60), sex (61-66), temples (67-71), and eternal life (73-78).

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1 See Adam S. Miller, *Badiou, Marion and St Paul: Immanent Grace* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2008); *Rube Goldberg Machines: Essays in Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2012); *Speculative Grace: Bruno Latour and Object-Oriented Theology* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013). For a review of Miller’s work on Mormon theology, see Robert F. Smith, “Adam Miller’s New Hermeneutic?” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 6 (2013): 1-7.

2 Adam S. Miller, *Letters to a Young Mormon* (Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2014).

3 All of the in-text page citations are from *Letters to a Young Mormon*.

The book itself is something of an oddity. It consists of a series of letters—each just a few pages long—from Miller (“A.”) and his anonymous, hypothetical (and presumably troubled) young Mormon correspondent (“S.”). What makes the book an oddity is that it seems to be an attempt to synthesize a number of different stylistic approaches. It is part homily, part personal/anecdotal reflection, part theological exposition, part philosophical expounding, and part practical advice. Because Miller is writing to “a young Mormon” (I like to imagine Miller writing to a young Mormon either about to leave on or just returning from his or her mission), the book never becomes a scholarly treatise on any of the subjects being addressed. Although it isn’t thoroughly scholarly, *Letters to a Young Mormon* is also not the sort of ubiquitous, fluffy, and often vacuous “self help” book that is all too common in American (including Mormon) bookstores. The book strikes a good balance. It is engaging and intellectually stimulating but not overwhelming. As such, it performs well what it sets out to accomplish.

Although there are many parts of *Letters to a Young Mormon* that I considered discussing in this review (as there are many parts of the book that I enjoyed), I shall focus my attention on just two topics. Miller’s views on the importance of science and how scientific knowledge converges with the scriptures (51–56) are refreshingly pragmatic and inviting. Miller does not hash out the finer points of this or that scientific theory and how it may converge with the scriptures but rather expresses his positive attitude toward both spiritual and scientific routes to knowledge while encouraging S. to be open-minded about the marvelous things science has revealed. “God is prying open our eyes and ears,” Miller writes to S. after listing many truly remarkable scientific wonders. “Who has ears to hear it? God speaks both scripture and science. Listen for his voice”

(52). Miller thus understands science as one of God's ways of communicating with us.

As with scriptural knowledge, Miller believes that God imparts scientific knowledge according to our capacity and willingness to receive it. "As a rule," Miller writes as he cites Doctrine and Covenants 1:24, "God works with whatever small knowledge we've already got" (52). Miller offers Genesis 1 and ancient Israelite cosmology as an example.

The Hebrews, as was common for their time and place, thought that the world was basically a giant snow globe. When God wanted to reveal his hand in the creation of their world, he borrowed and repurposed the common-sense cosmology they already had. He wasn't worried about its inaccuracies, he was worried about showing *his* hand at work in shaping their world as *they* knew it. (53, emphasis in original.)

Miller's view of the creation account in Genesis actually accords very nicely with what other Mormon and non-Mormon scriptural commentators have said on the topic. For example, in 1931 Elder James E. Talmage implored Latter-day Saints to "not try to wrest the scriptures in an attempt to explain away what we can not explain. The opening chapters of Genesis, and scriptures related thereto, were never intended as a text-book of geology, archaeology, earth-science or man-science.... We do not show reverence for the scriptures when we misapply them through faulty interpretation."<sup>4</sup>

More recently the evangelical biblical scholar John H. Walton has written two books on biblical cosmology that convincingly argue that modern readers should not expect

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4 James E. Talmage, "The Earth and Man," address delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Utah, 9 August 1931. Originally published in the *Deseret News*, Church Section, 21 November 1931, 7–8. My thanks to Mike Parker for alerting me to this source.

Israelite cosmology to fully accord with modern scientific cosmology, as biblical cosmology is not primarily concerned with reporting a scientific understanding of the universe.<sup>5</sup> This is not to say, Miller notes, that the biblical depiction of creation is a worthless Iron Age fable, but rather to stress that a better understanding of Genesis 1—including an understanding that doesn't myopically focus on how to smash square pegs into round holes by attempting to (awkwardly) force Genesis 1 to accord with modern science—may help us better discern the spiritual truths being conveyed in the text.<sup>6</sup>

The world given to us is not the world given to [the ancient Israelites]. We have two worlds here. But though our worlds diverge, it is the same God peeping through. Believing that the God of their world is just as surely the God of ours doesn't commit us to believing in their version of the world. Rather, it commits us to believing in a God whose grace is full enough to fill them both. (54)

Similarly, Miller's thoughts on the importance of history (43-49) were also some of my favorite. As a student of history myself, I read with great interest Miller's attempt to instill S. with a sense of the importance of knowing our immediate and distant past. Miller's chapter on history has two main points that are both insightful and timely. First, Miller urges S. not to slip into the "false comfort in consoling ourselves with the idea that, while our days are evil, the world was once good" (46). Using Nephi's lament over the wickedness of his own day, and his desire to go back to the "good old days" of his forefathers

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5 John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2009); *Genesis 1 As Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2011).

6 Compare my comments here with John S. Lewis, "The Scale of Creation in Space and Time," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 8 (2014): 71–80.

(Helaman 7), Miller admonishes S. that such “modest comfort slips easily into excuse or recrimination” (46). We should not, in other words, romanticize the past.

Nor should we try to cover up the imperfections and flaws of our historic heroes, which brings us to Miller’s second point in this chapter. The admonition to be honest about history, according to Miller, “applies to our own church history as much as it does to stories from places long ago and far away” (47).

It’s a false dilemma to claim that either God works through practically flawless people or God doesn’t work at all. The gospel isn’t a celebration of God’s power to work with flawless people. The gospel is a celebration of God’s willingness to work today, in our world, in our lives, with people who clearly aren’t. To demand that church leaders, past and present, show us only a mask of angelic pseudo-perfection is to deny the gospel’s most basic claim: that God’s grace works through our weakness. We need prophets, not idols. (47)

I say this approach to history (especially to our own LDS history) is timely because of President Dieter F. Uchtdorf’s recent remarks during the October 2013 General Conference of the Church. President Uchtdorf commented, “To be perfectly frank, there have been times when members or leaders in the Church have simply made mistakes. There may have been things said or done that were not in harmony with our values, principles, or doctrine.” President Uchtdorf then explained, “I suppose the Church would be perfect only if it were run by perfect beings. God is perfect, and His doctrine is pure. But He works through us—His imperfect children—and imperfect people make mistakes.”<sup>7</sup>

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7 Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Come, Join With Us,” *Ensign* (November 2013), 22. Incidentally, lest there be any unnecessary hype, this is not the first time a General Authority has expressed this sentiment. See the comments assem-

Not to belabor the point, but the Church's recent series of articles addressing sensitive issues related to Mormon history is likewise good indication that Miller's thoughts on how to tactfully and productively engage our history, especially the controversial aspects of our history, should be welcomed by members of the Church.<sup>8</sup> I believe this is especially true for younger members of the Church (like Miller's young correspondent) who are widely exposed on the Internet to information (of varying degrees of quality, mind you) about the Church's history.

Although I think Miller had many insightful things to say in *Letters to a Young Mormon*, there are a few things that Miller says in his book that left me confused. For example, his chapter on sex (an obviously very personal and touchy subject), while frank and mature, is somewhat confusing.

Listen, practice prayer, and let your hunger teach you. When you are alone and feel, as you often will, a growing hunger for sex, don't always run away. Don't automatically distract yourself from it or automatically lose yourself in it. Rather, try doing the one thing we're often most afraid to do: pay direct attention to the hunger itself. Just watch. Acknowledge the hunger's weight, autonomy, and reality. Notice that there is a difference between the images, fears, and fantasies that

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bled by Gregory L. Smith, "Prophets and fallibility," online at <http://seesangelsinthearchitecture.wordpress.com/2013/10/12/prophets-and-fallibility/> (accessed January 2, 2014).

8 See "First Vision Accounts," online at <http://www.lds.org/topics/first-vision-accounts?lang=eng> (accessed January 2, 2014); "Race and the Priesthood," online at <http://www.lds.org/topics/race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng> (accessed January 2, 2014); "Are Mormons Christian?" online at <http://www.lds.org/topics/christians?lang=eng> (accessed January 2, 2014); "Plural Marriage and Families in Early Utah," online at <http://www.lds.org/topics/plural-marriage-and-families-in-early-utah?lang=eng> (accessed January 2, 2014); "Book of Mormon Translation," online at <http://www.lds.org/topics/book-of-mormon-translation?lang=eng> (accessed January 2, 2014).



fuel the hunger and the physical sensations proper to the hunger itself.... Don't pour fuel on the fire by entertaining your fantasies, but don't try to put out the fire either. Just watch the flames as they burn, on their own, back down to coals. (65)

What, I wonder, is the average young, hormonal, teenage Mormon to make of this counsel? It is certainly well articulated and thoughtful but also terribly vague. At least it is to me. What does Miller mean by "just watch.... don't pour fuel on the fire by entertaining your fantasies, but don't try to put out the fire either"? Does he mean do not act on sexual impulses but neither pretend they do not exist, as doing so can easily lead to unhealthy behavior? If so, I think this is wise counsel, but the way Miller says it here is confusing.

The other instance of something that I thought was confusing is in Miller's chapter on science. Drawing an analogy between unearthing the truths of human biological history and Mormon history, Miller speaks of the "hard and often uncomfortable work" of "own[ing] up to the prickly aspects of our history," including "seer stones, racism, and polygamy" (55). Does Miller think that Joseph Smith's use of a seer stone in the translation of the Book of Mormon and the early Mormon practice of plural marriage is comparably as unfortunate as the regrettable racism of past Church members? Or does he think that we need to "own" these aspects of our history in the sense that they are facts we shouldn't ignore? Miller says that "we can't afford to play games whitewashing Brigham Young" (55). I agree with this sentiment and hope that this is what Miller meant, but again, he isn't very clear.

But these two examples of problematic aspects of *Letters to a Young Mormon* do not drastically detract from the overall quality of Miller's book. I would recommend *Letters to a Young Mormon* to any young Latter-day Saint who is interested in a thoughtful and engaging monologue on Mormon life and belief.

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# “UNTIL THE HEART BETRAYS”: LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE STORIES WE TELL

*Neal Rappleye*

Review of Adam S. Miller. *Letters to a Young Mormon*. Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2014. 78 pp. \$9.95.

On their 1993 album *Edge of Thorns*, hard rock group Savatage included a piano ballad about a person and a letter:

Someone got themselves a letter,  
in the mail the other day  
It's already worn and tattered,  
and I guess it gives away  
All the things we keep inside,  
all the things that really matter  
The face puts on its best disguise,  
and all is well ... until the heart betrays<sup>1</sup>

Adam S. Miller's new book is composed of a series of "letters" which, like the one in the song, contain both "the things we [tend to] keep inside," and "the things that really matter." Like the song, Miller talks about the disguises we wear—though he calls them our "stories," which is his way of labeling self-justifications or self-deceptions for our deeds and hence way of living. And he talks about how our hearts should "betray" our

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1 Savatage, "All That I Bleed," *Edge of Thorns* (New York: Atlantic Records, 1993), track 10—ellipses included to represent the dramatic pause in the song, not the omission of material.

rationalizing stories and turn to God, who sees us and loves us for what we can be or who we potentially are all along.

“Like everyone,” he writes to his young friend, “you have a story you want your life to tell” (p. 17). This “story” becomes a self-imposed standard we feel we must live up to, and as such it haunts us. “This narration follows you around like a shadow. It mimes you, measures you, sometimes mocks you, and pretends, in its flat, black simplicity, to be the truth about you” (p. 18). We tend to think, or at least we try to convince ourselves, that this is the same story everyone else sees us living. As such, we often live in fear of what happens when we fail to live up to this “story” we have fashioned. Miller talks about how we may even give God “a starring role” as the one who can make our story come true, “with some cajoling and obedience” on our part (p. 19).

Of course, life isn’t a story, and so we naturally fail to measure up. When this happens, unhealthy guilt and shame try to force us into making life fit the story anyway; we rationalize, justify, and engage in self-deception. Miller tells us that with God it is different: “As the heavens are higher than the earth, God’s work in your life is bigger than the story you’d like that life to tell” (p. 17). Miller lectures his young and troubled Mormon in the following way:

Jesus is not asking you to tell a better story or live your story more successfully, he’s asking you to lose that story. “Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39 NRSV). Hell is when your story succeeds, not when it fails. Your suffocating story is the problem, not the solution. Surrender it and find your life. Your story is heavy and hard to bear. “Come to me,” Jesus says, “all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon

you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30 NRSV). Put down the millstone of your story and take up the yoke of life instead... Let his life manifest itself in yours rather than trying to impose your story on the life he gives. (p. 21.)

But how do we abandon our deceptive, rationalizing stories, including our visions of grandeur or our narratives of self-deprecation, and let God into our lives? This is a question that Miller never explicitly asks, but it seems to me it is one constantly being probed throughout the book, which consists of chapters on faith (pp. 25-29), scripture (pp. 31-35), prayer (pp. 37-41), history (pp. 43-49), science (pp. 51-56) and so on—all of which explore in some way or other how to stay true to the life and work God has for us rather than fabricate and then capitulate to the stories we try to impose upon ourselves.

One story that can be told—we can tell it to ourselves, or others may try to convince us of it—pits science and religion against each other. But Miller urges young Latter-day Saints to embrace what is found in the sciences as “revelations.” He suggests that they “are among the most commanding God has ever given” (pp. 55-56).<sup>2</sup>

Miller holds that another false story we tell ourselves might be that the Mormon past is filled with heroes of epic proportion, veritable giants among men, “quasi-angels” (p. 46) who did no wrong and always accomplished great things with an eye single

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2 Certainly Latter-day Saints struggle with the current findings of several sciences. The Interpreter Foundation’s recent symposium on *Science and Mormonism: Cosmos, Earth, and Man*, held on November 9, 2013 in Provo, Utah, provided answers to those who feel a need to see a harmony between faith and scientific endeavors. The proceedings of this conference are being prepared for publication. The videos are available online at <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/events/2013-symposium-science-mormonism-cosmos-earth-man/conference-videos/> (accessed January 3, 2014).

to the glory of God. As with the story we might tell about our own lives, this is a story that eventually fails, and when it does it can generate a crisis. But also like the stories we tell about our lives, God's work is bigger than these stories. Miller argues that

It's a false dilemma to claim that either God works through practically flawless people or God doesn't work at all. The gospel isn't a celebration of God's power to work with flawless people. The gospel is a celebration of God's willingness to work today, in our world, in our lives, with people who clearly aren't [flawless?]. To demand that church leaders, past and present, show us only a mask of angelic pseudo-perfection is to deny the gospel's most basic claim: that God's grace works through our weakness. We need prophets, not idols. (p. 47, brackets mine.)

Miller argues that if we are going to reject the stories we and others tell about ourselves and about the world, we are going to need to know something of the stories God has told us about ourselves and his relationship to us. Here Miller believes our scriptures come in. How can this happen? Careful study of our scriptures makes it possible for us to "put down our stories and take up theirs" (p. 32). Miller urges his young correspondent to "Get close to the scriptures.... God is in there" (p. 31). Our scriptures tell us about such things as the restoration and the revelation of new scripture. As Miller explains it, Joseph Smith "always expected more revelations, and 'translation' was one vital name for the hard work of receiving them" (p. 32). But "translation" for Miller is not merely the task of the prophet or scholar, nor is it merely the transferring of the text from one language to another. Translation for Miller is "a way, day by day, of holding life open for God's word" (p. 32), which is his way of adopting and modifying the metaphor used by Joseph Smith to identify the process of reading and interpreting what

we have read in ways most applicable to our lives, and as such it is pictured as a crucial task for everyone. Miller can be read as saying that we must make our own stories match the stories found in our scriptures. He argues that

Joseph produced, as God required, the first public translations of the scriptures we now share. But that work, open-ended all along, is unfinished. Now the task is ours. When you read the scriptures, don't just lay your eyes like stones on the pages. Roll up your sleeves and translate them again.... Word by word, line by line, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, God wants the whole thing translated once more, and this time he wants it translated into your native tongue, inflected by your native concerns, and written in your native flesh. (pp. 32–33.)

Miller's "translation" is something like Nephi's "likening" (see 1 Nephi 19:23; 2 Nephi 6:5; 11:8). In this sense it involves, among other things, prayer, study, meditation, and also consultation of the "best books." These are all part of what is necessary to successfully re-translate the scriptures by making them the ground for our own stories. It is something that will require faith. "You'll have to trust that the books can withstand your scrutiny and you'll have to trust that God, despite their antiquity, can be contemporary in them" (p. 34). What Miller means by "faith" is to "practice faithfully attending to the difficult, disturbing, and resistant truths God sets knocking at your door" (p. 27) and to trust "that the life God offers you doesn't need your stories to dress it up," hence "trust God enough to let your stories die" (p. 25).

Miller explains that like all translation, this will not be an easy task. It will take work, and drawing on D&C 88:118, he stresses the importance of using the "best books" to help us in our efforts to believe, understand, and thereby be able to

“translate” the scriptures anew so that we have the life offered by God. He tells his young Mormon that

Your ability to translate with power will depend on your faith and it will be amplified by your familiarity with the world’s best books. . . . The more familiar you are with Israelite histories, Near Eastern [and also, I believe, Mesoamerican] archaeologies, and secular biblical scholarship, the richer your translations will be rendered. Don’t be afraid of scripture, and don’t be afraid of these other books. . . . Doubtless, the world’s best books have their flaws, but this just means that they too must be translated. You’ll need to translate *them* so that they can contribute to your own translations. (p. 34, brackets mine)

But in this process, there are inherent dangers: how can we be sure that when we “translate” the scriptures; we don’t read our false, rationalizing story into them? How can we be sure we are not fooling ourselves, or soothing our consciences by making the scriptures say what we want them to say? Miller answers:

You’ll know you’ve done it right if, as a result of the work, you repent. “Say nothing but repentance unto this generation,” the Lord told Oliver Cowdery when he came to help Joseph translate the Book of Mormon (D&C 6:9). This is your charge too: translate nothing but repentance. When you’re reading them right, the scriptures will bring you up short. They’ll call you into question. They’ll challenge your stories and deflate your pretensions. They’ll show you how you’ve been wrong, and they’ll show you how to make things right (pp. 33–34).

The proper scripture study will not reinforce the old self-deceptive stories you have been telling. Instead, it will assist you to “lay down your stories and, minute by minute, day by day, give your life back to him,” i.e., God (pp. 17–18).



Miller's book is not perfect. The chapter on "hunger," for example (pp. 57–60), is confusing. He works with clever metaphors, but sometimes they are unclear. He carries his "hunger" metaphor over into the chapter on sex (pp. 61–66), creating some ambiguity where most parents of "young Mormons" would insist that blunt clarity is preferable. For parents who have open and frank discussions with their adolescent children, such ambiguity is easily remedied, but books like Miller's cannot do the talking for them. Nonetheless, concerned parents may want to find a different book to help them deal with this particular issue.

Another point where the ambiguity is a concern is the chapter on eternal life (pp. 73–78). Whereas I liked the idea that eternal life is "a certain *way* of being alive" (p. 75), it is never clear in the chapter if Miller genuinely believes in a life after death. While this may not be a concern for most readers, for any "young Mormon" struggling to believe, the lack of explicit reaffirmation in a hereafter could be disconcerting.

A recent press release from the Maxwell Institute indicates that a new *Living Faith* series, of which this is the initial book, "will commend and defend the faith more explicitly than our other [current Maxwell Institute] publications, while still maintaining the highest academic standards."<sup>3</sup> Defending the faith is an admirable aim, part of our temple covenants, and something our leaders have admonished us to do. We sometimes call doing this "apologetics," and Miller's little book can be read as his effort to do such.

At the beginning of the first "letter," he makes a straightforward declaration: "I don't know" (p. 9). Presumably, young S., as Miller refers to his hypothetical correspondent, has asked him some tough questions. Miller then makes an

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3 "Announcing the 'Living Faith' book series," *Maxwell Institute Blog*, January 3, 2014, <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/living-faith-books/> (accessed January 3, 2014), brackets mine.

important point: “But it’s also true that even if I knew what to say and how to say it, you’d still have to work out the answers yourself” (p. 9). In defending the faith, we often provide answers to questions that are frankly quite peripheral and tangential to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is not to suggest that scholars should cease seeking to provide answers to all the tough questions people are bound to ask—such endeavors are both necessary and important. In so doing, however, we are generally treating symptoms, not the problem itself. But what more can we do? A Latter-day Saint must come to his or her own faith. Miller indicates that the working out of answers is ultimately a personal journey, and only the individual (along with God) can do it. The well-worked-out answers of others can be valuable aids in that process, which justifies Miller’s effort to provide a little guidance to the “working out” process. Others, such as Mike Ash,<sup>4</sup> have provided some guidance for this often difficult process of sorting out issues that arise, and Miller’s book makes an excellent addition to such tools and resources.

Overall, Miller’s book is quite good; it is an easy, subtle, and enjoyable read, which is ideal for a book targeting youth. Miller is also very articulate; some passages are quite quotable. For those interested, it could provide good fodder for sacrament meeting talks, devotional addresses, Family Home Evening lessons, and so on.

The letters in this book do not, of course, contain “*all* the things that really matter,” but those who want a little extra guidance (which can be all of us, at times) may find their copy “already worn and tattered” as they frequently read and reflect on Miller’s words while they endeavor to figure out, with God’s help, “what it means to live in a way that refuses to abandon

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4 Michael R. Ash, *Shaken Faith Syndrome: Strengthening One’s Testimony in the Face of Criticism and Doubt*, 2nd edition (Redding, CA: FAIRMormon, 2013). Part 1 offers useful guidance for navigating a faith crisis, while Part 2 then provides some answers to difficult issues.

either life or Mormonism” (unnumbered page in front matter, would be p. 7, emphasis added).

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# BOOK OF MORMON MINIMALISTS AND THE NHM INSCRIPTIONS: A RESPONSE TO DAN VOGEL

*Neal Rappleye and Stephen O. Smoot*

*Abstract: Biblical “minimalists” have sought to undermine or de-emphasize the significance of the Tel Dan inscription attesting to the existence of the “house of David.” Similarly, those who might be called Book of Mormon “minimalists” such as Dan Vogel have marshaled evidence to try to make the NHM inscriptions from south Arabia, corresponding to the Book of Mormon Nahom, seem as irrelevant as possible. We show why the NHM inscriptions still stand as impressive evidence for the historicity of the Book of Mormon*

The debate over the historicity of the Hebrew Bible’s depiction of the Davidic monarchy reignited over an important archaeological discovery that surfaced in northern Israel in 1993–94. The so-called Tel Dan inscription, a basalt stele written in Aramaic and dating to the ninth century BCE, was highly significant in that it was the earliest non-biblical attestation of *bytdwd*, or the “house of David.” The significance of this discovery lies in the fact that it challenges the arguments of biblical “minimalists,” or scholars who assign minimal value to the historical reliability of the Hebrew Bible, who wish to relegate the biblical depiction of the Davidic kingdom to myth.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A translation of the Tel Dan inscription can be found in Alan Millard, “The Tel Dan Stele,” in *The Context of Scripture: Volume II, Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*, ed. William W. Hallo (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 161–62. For commentary on the significance of the Tel Dan stele, see generally Carol Meyers, “Kinship and Kingship: The Early Monarchy,” in *The Oxford*

Yosef Garfinkel, writing in the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, has summarized how this discovery undermines the minimalist argument by noting that the inscription “is clear evidence that David was indeed a historical figure and the founding father of a dynasty.... There was a David. He was a king. And he founded a dynasty.”<sup>2</sup> What’s more, Garfinkel observes that “the minimalists reacted in panic, leading to a number of suggestions that now seem ridiculous.”<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, says Garfinkel, “[minimalist] arguments... can be classified as displaying ‘paradigm-collapse trauma,’ that is, literary compilations of groundless arguments, masquerading as scientific writing through footnotes, references and publication in professional journals.”<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps Garfinkel is somewhat exaggerating the significance of the Tel Dan inscription and its evidentiary weight against minimalist arguments. While significant, the Tel Dan inscription cannot be seen as *proof*, per se, of the historicity of David’s dynasty, though it is compelling evidence for such. Significant scholarly debate still revolves around the importance of the Tel Dan inscription. Most scholars would concede that the discovery offers evidence for the historicity of

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*History of the Biblical World*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York, N. Y.: Oxford University Press, 1998), 175; Edward F. Campbell Jr., “A Land Divided: Judah and Israel from the Death of Solomon to the Fall of Samaria,” in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 225; William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know it? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 128–29, 166–67; Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 36–37; Siegfried H. Horn and P. Kyle McCarter Jr., “The Divided Monarchy: The Kingdoms of Judah and Israel,” in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*, 3rd ed., ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, D. C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2011), 152.

2 Yosef Garfinkel, “The Birth & Death of Biblical Minimalism,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 37/3 (May/June 2011): 47.

3 Garfinkel, “The Birth & Death of Biblical Minimalism,” 47.

4 Garfinkel, “The Birth & Death of Biblical Minimalism,” 47.

the Davidic kingdom, and that “attempts to avoid any possible reference to an historical David... stem... from a form of scepticism at odds with all known ancient practices.”<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of one’s conclusions about the Tel Dan inscription’s significance, Garfinkel’s comments about the minimalist reaction to the Tel Dan inscription calls to mind a similar attitude of those who might be called Book of Mormon minimalists—that is, scholars who assign little to no historical value to the Book of Mormon. One sees this attitude in the reaction of some scholars to the NHM altar discoveries, which have been hailed by others as the first archaeological attestation of a Book of Mormon toponym besides Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 16:34).<sup>6</sup> Dan Vogel, a biographer of Joseph Smith, exemplifies this minimalist reaction in his 2004 account of the Prophet’s life. Vogel, who has usually proven to be one of Joseph Smith’s more informed critics, dismisses the significance of the NHM

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5 Millard, “Tel Dan Stele,” 162 n. 11.

6 See S. Kent Brown, “‘The Place that Was Called Nahom’: New Light from Ancient Yemen,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 66–68; Warren P. Aston, “Newly Found Altars from Nahom,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10/2 (2001): 56–61; Terryl Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (New York, N. Y.: Oxford University Press, 2002), 120–21; S. Kent Brown, “New Light from Arabia on Lehi’s Trail,” in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002), 81–83; Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York, N. Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 93; S. Kent Brown and Peter Johnson, eds., *Journey of Faith: From Jerusalem to the Promised Land* (Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2006), 105; Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 1:286–89; Stephen D. Ricks, “On Lehi’s Trail: Nahom, Ishmael’s Burial Place,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 20/1 (2011): 66–68; Robert F. Smith, “Nahom,” in *The Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, online at <https://onomia.lib.byu.edu/onomia/index.php/NAHOM> (accessed October 19, 2013); John A. Tvedtnes, “Names of People: Book of Mormon,” in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, 4 vols., ed. Geoffrey Khan (Leiden/Boston: E.J. Brill, 2013), 2:787.

inscription for the Book of Mormon's historicity on five grounds.

(1) What need was there for a compass if Lehi followed a well-known route? (2) The Book of Mormon does not mention contact with outsiders, but rather implies that contact was avoided. (3) It is unlikely that migrant Jews would be anxious to bury their dead in a heathen cemetery. (4) There is no evidence dating the Arabian NHM before A.D. 600, let alone 600 B.C. (5) The pronunciation of NHM is unknown and may not be related to Nahom at all.<sup>7</sup>

We will argue for the weakness of Vogel's five objections, which parallel the sort of reaction that biblical minimalists exhibited over the Tel Dan inscription discovery.

**(1) "What need was there for a compass if Lehi followed a well-known route?"**

Here Vogel seems to be referring not to the correlation of Nahom, per se, but rather the popular notion that Lehi was following the Frankincense Trail, which leads generally south-southeast, the direction Lehi's party traveled (see 1 Nephi 16:13–14, 33). It then turns eastward around the Nihm tribal territory, where the altars were found, which is also consistent with where Nephi reports they changed course and "did travel nearly eastward" (1 Nephi 17:1).<sup>8</sup>

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7 Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 2004), 609 n. 17. For a previously published brief rejoinder to Vogel, see Robert Boylan, "On Not Understanding the Book of Mormon," *FARMS Review* 22/1 (2010): 183–85. Our response here will differ somewhat from Boylan's rejoinder. Also see Stephen D. Ricks, "Some Notes on Book of Mormon Names," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 157–58, which only responds to one (number 4) of Vogel's objections. To our knowledge, these are the only responses to Vogel's objections yet published.

8 This has been a widely held view among Latter-day Saint scholars and researchers for nearly 40 years. See Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, "In



Asking why a compass was necessary seems akin to asking why one needs a GPS when traveling in an unfamiliar city—after all, it has well-known, clearly marked roads (and even helpful road signs for direction). The mere presence of roads, however, does not eliminate the need for navigation. Lehi was in unfamiliar territory, and the Liahona lead him and his family to where the Lord wanted them to go. While Lehi may have known *of* the Frankincense Trail, there is no reason to assume he had previously traveled it before and thus would have *known* the route.

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Search of Lehi's Trail—Part 1: The Preparation," *Ensign* (September 1976): 44; Eugene England, "Through the Arabian Desert to a Bountiful Land: Could Joseph Smith Have Known the Way?" in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982; reprint FARMS, 1996), 150; Paul R. Cheesmen, "Lehi's Journeys," in *First Nephi: The Doctrinal Foundation*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Study Center, 1989; reprint Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 244; Warren P. Aston and Michaela J. Aston, Stephen D. Ricks, and John W. Welch "Lehi's Trail and Nahom Revisited," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: A Decade of New Research*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 47–50; Warren P. Aston and Michaela Knoth Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi: New Evidence of Lehi's Journey across Arabia to Bountiful* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1994), 4–6, 30; Noel B. Reynolds, "Lehi's Arabian Journey Updated," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 381–82; Brown, "New Light from Arabia," 83–85; George Potter and Richard Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness: 81 New, Documented Evidences That the Book of Mormon is a True History* (Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, 2003), 53–72; S. Kent Brown, *Voices from the Dust: Book of Mormon Insights* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2004), 31–32; Warren P. Aston, "Across Arabia with Lehi and Sariah: 'Truth Shall Spring out of the Earth,'" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15/2 (2006): 12–13; George Potter and Richard Wellington, "Lehi's Trail: From the Valley of Lemuel to Nephi's Harbor," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15/2 (2006): 26–43; David A. LeFevre, "We Did Again Take Our Journey," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15/2 (2006): 61; Daniel B. McKinley, "The Brightening Light on the Journey of Lehi and Sariah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15/2 (2006): 78; Gardner, *Second Witness*, 1:276. For the eastward turn in the route, see Aston and Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, 22; Brown, "New Light From Arabia," 88–90; S. Kent Brown, "New Light: Nahom and the 'Eastward' Turn," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/ 1 (2003): 111–12.

Vogel's argument seems to assume that Lehi was a caravaneer who would have therefore frequently traveled this way. This idea was made popular by Hugh Nibley,<sup>9</sup> but has more recently fallen out of favor.<sup>10</sup> In light of more recent evidence, it seems more likely that Lehi was a metalworker.<sup>11</sup> This has some interesting implications when it comes to travel routes and the use of the Liahona. When traveling from Jerusalem to the Red Sea, and then a short three-day stint to get to the Valley of Lemuel, Lehi and his family apparently didn't need the Liahona. Jeffrey R. Chadwick offers this explanation:

Why did Lehi and Nephi seem to have readily known the way from Jerusalem to the Red Sea (Gulf of Eilat) and back without the aid of the Liahona, which they later needed in Arabia? The fact that copper ore was mined in several locations near the Gulf of Eilat and in northern Sinai... could suggest that Lehi and Nephi had traveled to the region several times over the years to obtain copper supplies and knew the route well

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9 See Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert/The World of the Jaredites/There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 36; Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 77.

10 Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 59–61 make a strong argument as to why Lehi was probably not a caravaneer.

11 See John A. Tvedtnes, "Was Lehi a Caravaneer?," in *The Most Correct Book: Insights from a Book of Mormon Scholar* (Springville, Utah: Horizon, 2003), 78–97; Jeffery R. Chadwick, "Lehi's House at Jerusalem and the Land of his Inheritance," in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2004), 113–17. Also see Gardner, *Second Witness*, 1:78–80. In Vogel's defense, the Potter and Wellington critique was published in 2003, and Chadwick's argument for Lehi as a metalworker was published in 2004, making it difficult for Vogel to have taken notice in time to include it in his own volume published in 2004. But Tvedtnes's book was first published in 1999, and the relevant chapter has been available as a FARMS preliminary report since 1984.

prior to their permanent departure from Jerusalem in 1 Nephi 2.<sup>12</sup>

If Chadwick is correct, then Lehi and his family would have probably been in unfamiliar territory once they traveled past that point into the Arabian deserts—which explains the sudden appearance of the Liahona.

LDS researchers have frequently noted that the roads and trails are not clearly marked along the route. S. Kent Brown explains, “It is not really possible to speak of a single trail. At times this trail was only a few yards wide when it traversed mountain passes. At others, it was several miles across. In places the trail split into two or more branches that, at a point farther on, would reunite into one main road.”<sup>13</sup> After not only researching but also traveling along the trail, Lynn and Hope Hilton made this same point back in 1976.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Warren and Michaela Aston also both researched and traveled to the area, and made a similar observation in 1994.<sup>15</sup> Most recently, after both research and travel, George Potter and Richard Wellington made the same point in 2003, as a response to the very question of needing the Liahona:

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12 Chadwick, “Lehi’s House,” 117.

13 Brown, “New Light from Arabia,” 83. Cf. Brown, *Voices from the Dust*, 32: “One should not think of a narrow roadway or single trail, for at points the inland trade route grew to be several miles wide, running between wells through valleys or across wide stretches of desert.”

14 Hilton and Hilton, “In Search of Lehi’s Trail,” 1:44: “We should note that the term trail is apt to be misleading. It does not refer to well-defined, relatively narrow paths or roadways, but to more general routes that follow through this valley, that canyon, etc. The width of the route varied with geography, ranging from a half mile to a dozen miles wide.”

15 Aston and Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, 4: “In most places the ‘trail’ actually was a general area rather than a specific, defined track, and it varied according to local politics, taxes, and so on.” It is worth noting that Vogel cites this source as he describes the association of NHM with Nahom, and as such should be aware of the ill-defined nature of the trail. See Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 609 n. 17.

One might ask, “If they traveled along a trail why did they need the Liahona to show them the way? They could have just walked along the road.” One needs to understand that the Frankincense Trail was not a road in the sense that we are used to. There was no delineated trail along which to walk. It was simply a general course that would take one to the next caravan halt and water. . . . Lehi would have needed a guide, and for those times that the family was traveling alone, the Liahona was capable of taking a guide’s place.<sup>16</sup>

There are a number of reasons Lehi may have needed navigation despite following a “trail.” While interaction with some people would have been necessary and inevitable (see below), the Liahona may have helped the group avoid marauders and others who would have been hostile toward Lehi and his family. Besides simply getting them from water hole to water hole, the Liahona may have helped guide them to where there would have been the most available game for hunting (see 1 Nephi 16:30–32). Lastly, the group’s final destination (Bountiful) was not necessarily where the trail would ultimately lead; thus, they needed navigation to find it.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, questioning why the Liahona was necessary misses the point entirely. As noted, navigational aids are necessary with or without roads and trails, and for a number of reasons. The Frankincense Trail is significant not because it provided Lehi and his family with a means to navigate the region, but rather because its existence shows that travel through the arid desert in the direction claimed by the text is

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16 Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 59.

17 If Khor Kharfot is Bountiful, as proposed by Warren P. Aston, “Arabian Bountiful Discovered? Evidence for Nephi’s Bountiful,” *Journal of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 4–11, it would have been away from the main roads, and conceivably would have required some guidance from the Lord (via the Liahona) for Lehi and his family to find.

completely possible. It means that absolute necessities, such as water and food, were available. Although they have never been to Arabia, Ed J. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen capture the importance of this quite well:

Imagine struggling to survive in the midst of an immense and hostile desert environment reflecting an ominous sameness in all directions. We are heeding the directive of God to attain a promised land of safety—but how far away and in which direction? Our provisions are strictly limited. Where do we turn meanwhile for nourishment and water?<sup>18</sup>

Survival in the desert is not a given, and “Lehi could not have carved out a route for himself without water.”<sup>19</sup> The trail provided the necessary means for water and nourishment, as Potter and Wellington, who have traveled the course, explain, “The course of the Frankincense Trail can be explained in one word—*water*, the most precious commodity of all to the desert traveler.”<sup>20</sup>

In wondering why travelers along a trail would need navigation, Vogel has completely missed the significance of that trail. “Even in the most stable of times,” Brown reports, “trudging off into the bowels of the Arabian desert invited a swarm of troubles, what with... a lack of water, food, and fuel.”<sup>21</sup> The Frankincense Trail provided for those needs. If Joseph Smith did make this up, then he coincidentally sent his group packing off into the only direction where long-term travel was possible in what one party has called “the most hellish terrain

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18 Ed J. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen, *Commentaries and Insights on the Book of Mormon*, 2 vol. (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communication, 2007), 1:78.

19 Hilton and Hilton, “In Search of Lehi’s Trail,” 1:44.

20 Potter and Wellington, “Lehi’s Trail,” 28.

21 Brown, *Voices From the Dust*, 27.

and climate on earth.”<sup>22</sup> Vogel’s minimalist approach fails to interact with these realities of desert travel. He needs to explain how Joseph Smith knew where to have the group travel, and when to turn eastward toward the interior of the desert.

**(2) “The Book of Mormon does not mention contact with outsiders, but rather implies that contact was avoided.”**

Without any actual references to the Book of Mormon, it is hard to know what Vogel means by saying it “implies that contact was avoided.” We assume that Vogel has in mind the statement in 1 Nephi 17:12 that “the Lord had not hitherto suffered that we should make much fire, as we journeyed in the wilderness.”

It is certainly true that more than a few LDS scholars and researchers have read into this passage the implication that they were trying to avoid contact.<sup>23</sup> Notice, however, that this is not mentioned until *after* they have passed through Nahom, and several scholars have suggested that the conditions of the area east of the Nihm territory explain why they would want to avoid contact. For instance, Aston suggests that only after Nahom are they traveling in less populated areas, and hence as a small group would be more vulnerable to desert marauders.<sup>24</sup> Brown, meanwhile, reasons that it is because they are now traveling in hostile territory, where contact might be dangerous

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22 Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 53.

23 See Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, 63–64; Brown, “New Light from Arabia,” 92; Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 118; Aston, “Across Arabia with Lehi and Sariah,” 12; S. Kent Brown, “Refining the Spotlight on Lehi and Sariah,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15/2 (2006): 55.

24 Aston, “Across Arabia with Lehi and Sariah,” 12: “The Lord’s instruction not to ‘make much fire’ (1 Nephi 17:12) is highly significant. In well-traveled areas the making of fire would not have presented a problem, and perhaps the group needed to conserve fuel resources. They now ate their meat raw (see 17:2), probably spiced as many Arabs still do; camel’s milk would have helped them cope with reduced availability of water. All this paints a clear picture of survival in a region away from other people.”

or detrimental.<sup>25</sup> In either case, the actual implication is that they had greater contact with others during earlier parts of the journey.

What's more, although it is certainly common, that is not the *only* interpretation of 1 Nephi 17:12. It can also simply be read as meaning that burning fires simply had not been necessary. Jeffrey R. Chadwick responds to both Aston and Brown on this matter:

Nor do I think that the avoidance of fire was at the Lord's command. Though Aston suggests it was "the Lord's *instruction* not to 'make much fire'" and Brown mentions "the *commandment* that Nephi's party not make fire," this language is not in the text of 1 Nephi itself. What Nephi specifically wrote is that "the Lord had not hitherto *suffered* that we should make much fire, as we journeyed in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 17:12). While the term *suffered* could be understood as *allowed* or *permitted*, in the context of the passage it could also be understood as Nephi attributing to the Lord the fact that, for practical reasons, they had simply not made much fire on their journey.

There are three quite practical reasons why Lehi's group would not have made much fire. (1) The availability of firewood or other fuel was not consistent, and in some areas where few trees and shrubs grew, kindling would have been largely absent. (2) The party would often

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25 Brown, "Refining the Spotlight on Lehi and Sariah," 55: "The commandment that Nephi's party not make fire also implies that the family was traveling through areas at least lightly peopled by others who were hostile (see 1 Nephi 17:12)." For a full discussion of the hostile tribal territories Lehi's family would have traveled through on this leg of the journey, see S. Kent Brown, "A Case for Lehi's Bondage in Arabia," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 205–217.

have traveled at night, particularly in the hot months, which means that their resting hours were during the daylight, when no fire would be needed for visibility. (3) They cooked very little of their food, animal meat or otherwise, which seems obvious from the Lord's promise: "I will make thy food become sweet, that ye cook it not" (1 Nephi 17:12).<sup>26</sup>

So 1 Nephi 17:12 need not necessarily imply anything about avoiding contact with others. Of course, none of this may matter since there is no telling whether Vogel has 1 Nephi 17:12 in mind or not. However, we are unaware of any other passage that potentially "implies" any kind of effort to avoid contact with others, and Vogel needs to do more than just make an assertion here.

On the other hand, almost everyone who has commented on Nahom has pointed out that the use of the passive voice in 1 Nephi 16:34—in contrast with all other place names in 1 Nephi, which are actively given by Lehi and company—implies that it was a pre-existent place name, which naturally implies there were people there.<sup>27</sup> S. Kent Brown makes note of this, and other facts which suggest Lehi was traveling among others.

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26 Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "An Archaeologist's View," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15/2 (2006): 74.

27 This view has so frequently been articulated that it seems impossible that Vogel was unaware of it when he published his biography. See the following examples, most of which pre-date 2004: Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, 79; Matthew Roper, *Review of Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* By Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4/1 (1992): 215 n.169; Aston, "Arabian Bountiful Discovered?," 7; Brown, "The Place that Was Called Nahom," 67; Aston, "Newly Found Altars from Nahom," 60; Brown, "New Light from Arabia," 81; Daniel C. Peterson, "Editor's Introduction: Not So Easily Dismissed—Some Facts for Which Counterexplanations of the Book of Mormon Will Need to Account," *FARMS Review* 17/2 (2005): xxvi; Aston, "Across Arabia with Lehi and Sariah," 14; Boylan, "On Not Understanding the Book of Mormon," 184. This list is far from comprehensive.



The expression “the place which was called Nahom” indicates that the family learned the name Nahom from others (1 Nephi 16:34). In addition, when family members were some fourteen hundred miles from home at Nahom, some knew that it was possible to return (1 Nephi 16:36), even though they had run out of food twice (16:17–19, 39). Evidently, family members had met people making the journey from south Arabia to the Mediterranean area. Further, the Lord’s commandment to Lehi about not taking more than one wife, if Lehi received it in Arabia, may point to unsavory interaction there (see Jacob 2:23–24). Moreover, Doctrine and Covenants 33:8 hints that Nephi may have preached to people in Arabia, although the reference may be to preaching to members of his own traveling party.<sup>28</sup>

Vogel ignores these and other reasons given by LDS scholars for implying interaction with others and provides a truly minimalist reading: what is not explicitly mentioned in the text is simply not there at all.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, Aston, Brown,

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28 S. Kent Brown, “Jerusalem Connections to Arabia in 600 BC,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, 641–42, n. 6; cf. Brown, “New Light from Arabia,” 99 n. 6. D&C 33:8 reads, “Open your mouths and they shall be filled, and you shall become even as Nephi of old, who journeyed from Jerusalem in the wilderness.”

29 While it is true that there is no explicit mention of interaction with others in the text of 1 Nephi, this shouldn’t come as too much of a surprise, as ordinary, unremarkable, and day-to-day occurrences are usually not mentioned when retelling a story unless they are crucial to the plot. If we were to tell you that we went on a road trip to California, would you assume that there was never anyone else on the road simply because we never talked about the other vehicles, or mentioned talking to anybody when we stopped for gas or food? Something so natural and inconsequential like this is so unimportant to the story that it is not at all inappropriate to simply assume that it would likely go unstated. If making a fire or interaction with other people was typical, then Nephi would have had no need to mention it. On the other hand, the command to make less fire and avoid contact (assuming that is the correct interpretation) would have marked a change in “typical” practice, and thus would have merited being mentioned (cf. 1 Nephi 17:12). Our thanks to Craig Foster for bringing this point to our attention.

and Chadwick each provide readings that realistically situate the text in real time and space. Vogel needs to engage these arguments if he wishes to assert that the record implies that Nephi and his family avoided contact with others.

**(3) “It is unlikely that migrant Jews would be anxious to bury their dead in a heathen cemetery.”**

Our first objection to this claim is that the Book of Mormon says nothing about Ishmael being buried in a “heathen cemetery.” It simply reports that Ishmael died and was “buried in the place which was called Nahom” (1 Nephi 16:34). It is likely that Vogel is referring to the burial grounds at Nihm, which Aston has suggested may be where the families of Lehi and Ishmael buried the latter.<sup>30</sup> Aston does note that the local people “were pagans, in the true sense of the word,”<sup>31</sup> but would that in any way be problematic?

Vogel’s argument rests on an assumption that is left unsupported by any evidence. Is there any biblical stipulation against the burying of Israelite dead in a “heathen cemetery”? The Law of Moses, as far as we can tell, offers no such proscription, and announces only ritual impurity for those who come in contact with a corpse (see Numbers 19:16; Deuteronomy 21:22–23). Is there any evidence that ancient Israelites were opposed to the idea of burying their dead in foreign cemeteries?

In truth, expatriated Jews like Lehi and his family had no choice but to bury their dead in the cemeteries of foreign lands. Joseph Modrzejewski has called attention to the presence of cemeteries in Ptolemaic Alexandria and Leontopolis

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30 See Aston and Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, 19–20; Aston, “Across Arabia,” 15. Aston could, of course, be wrong, but that would not be an indictment on the Book of Mormon itself, nor would it invalidate the otherwise harmonious data that suggests a correlation between Nahom and the Nihm tribal territory

31 Aston and Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, 19.

that served as the final resting place of Jews and pagans alike,<sup>32</sup> and Leonard Victor Rutgers shows the widespread presence of communal Jewish-Christian-Pagan cemeteries during the Roman Era.<sup>33</sup> What's more, besides evidently not being averse to burying their dead in foreign cemeteries, pious Jews were also not averse to syncretizing some of the "heathen" burial practices and beliefs of their neighbors.<sup>34</sup> The evidence discussed above is, admittedly, from a later period, but this is only natural, as "most of our knowledge of Israelite and early Jewish burial practices derives from the Second Temple period and later."<sup>35</sup>

We must therefore reject Vogel's assumption, as archaeological evidence contradicts it. If Lehi and his family were as pious as Nephi depicts them as being, to not have buried Ishmael, in a "heathen cemetery" or otherwise, would have been a grave theological and cultural offense, as the ancient Israelites considered it "a horrifying indignity" to leave "a corpse unburied."<sup>36</sup> What would be suspicious is if the Book of Mormon did not report on Ishmael's burial at this pivotal point in Nephi's narrative.

**(4) "There is no evidence dating the Arabian NHM before A.D. 600, let alone 600 B.C."**

Here Vogel is simply wrong. The non-Mormon archaeologist Burkhard Vogt of the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institute*, who is

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32 Joseph Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian*, trans. Robert Cornman (Philadelphia, Penn.: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 77–78, 91, 129–33.

33 Leonard Victor Rutgers, *The Hidden Heritage of Diaspora Judaism* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 82–91, esp. 88–89.

34 Pieter W. van der Horst, "Jewish Funerary Inscriptions—Most Are in Greek," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 18/5 (September/October 1992): 46–57; Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 369.

35 "Burial," in *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period*, ed. Jacob Neusner (New York, N. Y.: Macmillan, 1996), 103.

36 "Burial," in *The New Encyclopedia of Judaism*, ed. Geoffrey Widoger (New York, N. Y.: New York University Press, 1989), 143.

likely totally unaware of the significance of the NHM altars for the historicity of the Book of Mormon, wrote in 1997 that the altars are an “archaic type dating from the 7th to 6th centuries before Christ.”<sup>37</sup> Vogel was either unaware of this source or unable to read the French when he asserted in 2004 that there is no evidence for “dating the Arabian NHM before A.D. 600.” We can perhaps forgive Vogel for overlooking Vogt, who published his findings with a foreign press and in a foreign language, but we cannot easily pardon him for overlooking the English sources published before his book, including one that he cites himself (!),<sup>38</sup> that also discuss the NHM altars as pre-dating 600 BCE.<sup>39</sup>

But the situation has only become worse for Vogel since his 2004 assertion, as Aston has recently documented additional inscriptional evidence placing the NHM toponym before 600 BCE.<sup>40</sup> Although more work on the dating of this inscriptional

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37 Burkhard Vogt, “Les temples de Ma’rib,” in *Yémen: au pays de la reine de Saba* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), 144. Our thanks to Stephen D. Ricks for alerting us to this source and to Gregory L. Smith for the translation from the French.

38 Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 609 n. 17, cites Brown’s 1999 article published in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, which discusses “an inscribed altar that [Vogt and his team] date to the seventh or sixth centuries B.C., generally the time of Lehi and his family.” (Brown, “The Place that Was Called Nahom,” 68.) It is informative that when mentioning the association of NHM with Nahom, Vogel appeals to Aston and Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, published before the altars were discovered (and which traces the name back to documents from about 600 CE. See Aston and Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, 17). Then, when first mentioning the altars, he cites Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 120–21, where the dating of the altars is not provided. Since Vogel is aware of at least one source that includes the dating (Brown), it is hard not to conclude that this was a deliberate attempt to avoid sources that undermine his argument on the dating of NHM.

39 “Book of Mormon Linked to Site in Yemen,” *Ensign* (February 2001), 79; Aston, “Newly Found Altars from Nahom,” 56–61, 71, esp. 59–60; Brown, “New Light from Arabia,” 81–82; Brown, “Nahom and the ‘Eastward’ Turn,” 111–12, 120. Note that all of these were published before 2004.

40 Warren P. Aston, “A History of NaHoM,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51/2 (2012): 79–98.

evidence needs to be done, there is no real controversy over the dating of the NHM altars, which easily predate Lehi. Only minimalists like Vogel object to the dating—albeit on ideological, not scholarly, grounds.

**(5) “The pronunciation of NHM is unknown and may not be related to Nahom at all.”**

The tribe and territory of NHM still exist in the area today, and local pronunciations range from “Neh-hem”<sup>41</sup> to “Nä-hum,”<sup>42</sup> and the name has been translated in a variety of ways, including Naham and Nahm.<sup>43</sup> There is no reason “Nahom” should be considered beyond the pale. When written, Semitic languages do not need to include vowels, so the altars simply have NHM (in South Arabian), and Nephi’s record would have been no different.<sup>44</sup> As such, no closer correlation in name could be asked for. As S. Kent Brown puts it, “Such discoveries demonstrate as firmly as possible by archaeological means the existence of the tribal name NHM in that part of Arabia in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., the general dates assigned to

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41 Aston and Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, 16.

42 Aston, Aston, Welch, and Ricks, “Lehi’s Trail and Nahom Revisited,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 48.

43 See Aston and Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, 80 n. 20. Cf. Aston, “A History of NaHoM,” 80: “In other languages, including English, the name is transliterated with vowels added. This results in variants such as Nehem, Nihm, Nahm and Nehm, but the consonants—and therefore the essential name—remain the same.” Vogel is evidently aware of this, as he writes, “Some Latter-day Saint writers have associated Nahom with NHM (variously Nehhm, Nehem, Nihm, Nahm) in southwestern Saudi Arabia, a remote place in the highlands of Yemen that has an ancient cemetery nearby.” (Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 609 n. 17.) Given the diversity of possible translations, surely Vogel can figure out that Nahom is no less an acceptable translation than any other.

44 The phenomenon of fixing vowel points to the Hebrew of the books of the Old Testament was accomplished many centuries after the original composition of the texts. Hebrew inscriptions from the time of Nephi, such as those found etched on countless ostraca, lack any vowel points. See generally Dana M. Pike, “Israelite Inscriptions from the Time of Jeremiah and Lehi,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, 193–244.

the carving of the altars by the excavators.”<sup>45</sup> But Vogel adds a more specific objection here that deserves additional response.

“This last point deserves further comment,” Vogel insists as he raises this objection to rebut the theory of S. Kent Brown, who, according to Vogel, “associate[s] Smith’s Nahom with a Hebrew root meaning ‘to comfort, console, to be sorry,’ which they believe refers to Ishmael’s death and burial, although the place was named before Lehi’s arrival.”<sup>46</sup> Brown’s specific argument, per Vogel’s citation, is that

in Hebrew, the combination of these three consonants [NHM] points to a root word that can mean “comfort” or “compassion.” (The meanings are different in the Old South Arabian language.) The reason Nephi mentioned this name while remaining silent about any other place names encountered on their trip (with the possible exception of Shazer) was likely because he considered that the existing name of the spot, “comfort” in his language, was evidence of the hand of the Lord over them, although Ishmael’s own family (including Nephi’s wife) seems not to have been at all positive (see 1 Nephi 16:35).<sup>47</sup>

The Hebrew root in question is נחם (*nḥm*). As a Niphal verb it means “to be sorry, to console oneself,” and as a Piel verb it means “to comfort, console.” In its nominal form the root means “comfort” or “sorrow.”<sup>48</sup> Vogel argues that Brown’s

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45 Brown, “Nahom and the ‘Eastward’ Turn,” 112.

46 Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 609 n. 17, citing Brown, “The Place that Was Called Nahom,” 67.

47 Compare Brown’s comments here with Brown, “New Light from Arabia,” 81–83. Brown is not alone in making this argument. See Alan Goff, “Mourning, Consolation, and Repentance at Nahom,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1991), 92–99.

48 F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, *The Brown–Driver–Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, rep. ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2010), s.v. נחם;

association between Nahom in 1 Nephi 16:34 and the root *nḥm* is untenable because “the *NHM* on the altars and on an eighteenth-century map are written with a soft *h* whereas the root for consolation in Hebrew is written with a hard *h*.”<sup>49</sup> Vogel does not offer any sources for his assertion that “an eighteenth-century map” renders *NHM* with a soft *h*. We must turn, therefore, to James Gee, who has compiled a number of maps from the 18th century that do mark the presence of the *Nehem/Nehhm* region of south Arabia.<sup>50</sup>

The issue with the maps aside, the real problem with Vogel’s argument is his assumption that because the Book of Mormon is a modern text originally composed in English, the soft *h* in *Nahom* therefore rules out Brown’s intriguing suggestion of a word play on the name with the Hebrew root *nḥm*, which Vogel correctly notes is not spelled with an aspirated *ḥ* (*hê*) but rather with the guttural *ḥ* (*hêt*). This argument, however, only works insofar as one accepts Vogel’s assumption that the Book of Mormon is modern. If in fact the underlying text of the Book of Mormon was the product of Hebrew-speaking Israelites of the 6th century BCE, then there is no good reason to rule out the likelihood of Brown’s proposal, but good reason to accept it.

If in fact the Book of Mormon’s *Nahom* was originally written, or at least pronounced, with a *hêt*, the question then arises as to why Joseph Smith rendered *Nahom* with a soft *h* and not a guttural *h* in his translation. The answer is actually quite simple. English lacks a guttural *h*. The closest vocalization English has that is comparable to the Hebrew guttural *hêt* is a velar “ch” or “k” (as in the “ch” in “chaos” or the “k” in

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See also Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), S.V. נחם.

49 Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 609 n. 17. Vogel personally has no training in Semitic languages, and bases this argument on a personal communication between him and David P. Wright of Brandeis University.

50 James Gee, “The *Nahom* Maps,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 17/1–2 (2008): 40–57.

“king”). A problem still remains for English speakers though, as Thomas Lambdin, in his prestigious Hebrew grammar, straightforwardly notes that there is “no Eng[lish] equivalent” for the Hebrew letter *hêt*.<sup>51</sup>

As such, English translators, with no other recourse, are obliged to render the Hebrew *hêt* with a soft *h*. (Academic transliterations, such as those recommended by the *SBL Handbook of Style*, at least extend us the courtesy of transliterating a *hêt* with “*h*,” so as to distinguish between it and *hê*.<sup>52</sup>) Accordingly, there is no shortage of Hebrew words spelled with a *hêt* that, as standard practice, are transliterated with a soft “*h*” in English. Words like Messiah (Hebrew משיח), and Hittite (Hebrew חתי), and names including (Mt.) Horeb (Hebrew חורב), Nahum (Hebrew נחום), Haggai (Hebrew חגי) and Noah (Hebrew נח) all feature a *hêt* that is simply rendered with a soft “*h*” in English.

Of course, Brown is not oblivious to the fact that *Nahom* and the root *nĥm* are vocalized differently. “In Arabic and in Old South Arabian,” Brown writes, “the letter *h* in *Nihm* represents a soft aspiration, whereas the *h* in the Hebrew word *Nahom* is the letter *het* and carries a stronger, rasping sound.”<sup>53</sup> All Brown is saying is that “it is reasonable that when the party of Lehi heard the Arabian name *Nihm* (however it was then pronounced), the term *Nahom* came to their minds.”<sup>54</sup> More

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51 Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (Upper Saddle River, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1971), xvi.

52 Patrick H. Alexander et al., ed., *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 26. In some instances one can render the *hêt* with “*ch*” (such as in the word Chanukah/Hanukkah), but this is usually done in the transliteration of certain Hebrew words into Roman letters rather than rendering the English equivalent of the word itself.

53 Brown, “New Light from Arabia,” 113 n. 69.

54 Brown, “New Light from Arabia,” 82. Compare Brown’s remarks with Kevin Barney, “A More Responsible Critique,” *FARMS Review* 15/1 (2003): 131–32 n. 56; Ricks, “On Lehi’s Trail,” 67; Tvedtnes, “Names of People: Book of Mormon,” 787. Other critics have criticized the connection between *Nahom*



recently, Stephen D. Ricks similarly wrote, “these etymologies [of the Hebrew *nḥm*] are not reflected in the geographic name *Nehem* because both contain the dotted *h*, not the simple *h*. Still, it is possible that the name *Nahom* served as the basis of a play on words by Lehi’s party that Nephi recorded.”<sup>55</sup>

The wordplay suggested by Brown, Ricks, and others is reasonable. Such wordplays are common in Semitic and ancient Near Eastern texts, especially on proper nouns.<sup>56</sup> And words need not look or sound exactly alike in order to evoke such plays on words. In fact, Gary A. Rendsburg suggests a similar bilingual wordplay in Genesis on the name Ham (*Ḥām*), where the Hebrew name is played off of the Egyptian biconsonantal noun *ḥm*, which can mean either “majesty” or “slave.”<sup>57</sup> As Rendsburg points out, Ham is the progenitor of “the extent of the Egyptian Empire during the New Kingdom”<sup>58</sup> in Genesis

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and *Nehem* on the grounds that the vowels in the two names are different. On this accusation, see Matthew Roper, “Unanswered Mormon Scholars,” *FARMS Review of Books* 9/1 (1997): 117.

55 Ricks, “On Lehi’s Trail,” 67, brackets added. Also see the online article by John A. Tvedtnes, “The Language of the Book of Mormon,” at Book of Mormon Research, [http://bookofmormonresearch.org/book\\_of\\_mormon\\_articles/book\\_of\\_mormon\\_4](http://bookofmormonresearch.org/book_of_mormon_articles/book_of_mormon_4) (accessed November 12, 2013).

56 See Scott B. Noegel, ed., *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature* (Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 2000) in general, but especially the chapter by Gary A. Rendsburg, “Word Play in Biblical Hebrew: An Eclectic Collection,” 137–62. For further reading on the topic, consult Scott B. Noegel, “Bibliography on ‘Wordplay’ in the Hebrew Bible and Other Ancient Near Eastern Texts,” 42-pages, online at <http://faculty.washington.edu/snoegel/Wordplay-Bibliography.pdf> (accessed November 10, 2013).

57 Alan Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, rep. ed. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 2007), 581; Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1962), 169. Lest there is any confusion by the reader, it should be remembered that the dotted ḥ (*h*) uniliteral in Egyptian is not vocalized the same as the letter *ḥêt* in Hebrew. In Egyptian ḥ is vocalized as a soft or aspirated h. There are two other ḥ uniliterals in Egyptian that are vocalized like the Hebrew *ḥêt*, but they are transliterated as “ḥ” and “ḥ.” See James P. Allen, *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 14–15, 19.

58 Rendsburg, “Word Play in Biblical Hebrew,” 143.

10:6, making Ham (symbolizing Egypt) the “majesty” or ruler of those territories. Likewise, in Genesis 9:20–27 Ham’s son, Canaan (*Kěna’an*)<sup>59</sup> becomes a slave (*‘ebed*) to Ham’s brothers because Ham saw Noah naked.<sup>60</sup> This is interesting in light of the wordplay suggested for the Book of Mormon between the Hebrew *nĥm* and the South Arabian place name *NHM* not only because both are bilingual, but also because Rendsburg’s suggested wordplay also involves different *h* phonemes (i.e., the *h*’s sound different in the two words being compared). Rendsburg explains:

True, the *h* of both Egyptian words, “majesty” and “slave,” is a voiceless pharyngeal /ħ/, whereas the *h* of the Hebrew *Ĥām* “Ham” represents a voiceless velar or voiceless uvular, that is, Semitic /ħ/ (a point that can be determined by the Septuagint transcription of the proper name as Χᾰμ)... But this issue does not militate against the overall conclusion that *Ĥām* “Ham” and *Kěna’an* “Canaan” work together in the pericope to produce the desired effect.<sup>61</sup>

But even if we suppose that Vogel is right, and the idea of a wordplay between Nahom and *nĥm* is untenable, there is still the matter of the Book of Mormon correctly placing an archaeologically verified toponym at the right place and during the right time in south Arabia, which is something that Vogel does not account for in his arguments against the Book of Mormon.

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59 This name, according to Rendsburg, is meant to make a play on the root *kn*’, “be low, be humble, be subdued.” See Rendsburg, “Word Play in Biblical Hebrew,” 144. See also Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, s.v. כנע.

60 See Rendsburg, “Word Play in Biblical Hebrew,” 143–45 for the full discussion of this wordplay.

61 Rendsburg, “Word Play in Biblical Hebrew,” 144–45, also see pp. 149–50.

## Does the Bible provide a simpler explanation?

After raising his five objections, Vogel concludes, “It seems simpler to suggest that Smith’s Nahom is a variant of Naham (1 Chronicles 4:19), Nehum (Nehum 7:7), or Nahum (Nehum 1:1).”<sup>62</sup> Once again, though, Vogel’s suggestion reflects a minimalist reading, which merely accounts for the presence of the word in the text. The connection between Nahom and the Nihm tribal territory, however, is much more intricate and complex than this. Both Nahom in the Book of Mormon and Nihm in Southern Arabia match in the following interlocking details:

1. Both are places with a Semitic name based on the tri-consonantal root NHM.
2. Both pre-date 600 BCE (implied in 1 Nephi 16:34).<sup>63</sup>
3. Both are places for the burial of the dead (1 Nephi 16:34).<sup>64</sup>
4. Both are at the southern end of a travel route moving south-southeast (1 Nephi 16:13–14, 33), which subsequently turns toward the east from that point (1 Nephi 17:1).<sup>65</sup>
5. Both have “bountiful” lands, consistent in 12 particular details, approximately east of its location (1 Nephi 17:4).<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 609 n. 17.

<sup>63</sup> See Aston, “A History of NaHoM,” 85–87.

<sup>64</sup> See Aston and Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, 19–20.

<sup>65</sup> See Brown, “Nahom and the ‘Eastward’ Turn,” 111–12.

<sup>66</sup> See Aston, “Arabian Bountiful Discovered?” 4–11. In arguing for a different location for Bountiful, Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 124–34 provide a similar set of 12 criteria. Wm. Revell Phillips, “Mughsayl: Another Candidate for Land Bountiful,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16/2 (2007): 48–59 argues for yet another candidate, using Aston’s same 12 criteria. Warren P. Aston, “Identifying Our Best Candidate for Nephi’s Bountiful,” *Journal of Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17/1–2 (2008): 58–64 evaluates all three proposals and argues that Khor Kharfot, his own candidate, is the best fit. We tend to agree with Aston, but, regardless, all three are “nearly

While the presence of similar names in the Bible might be able to explain the first of these correlations, it simply cannot account for the all the ways the two places correspond. As Daniel C. Peterson once commented, “NHM isn’t just a name. It is a name and a date and a place and a turn in the ancient frankincense trail and a specific relationship to another location.”<sup>67</sup> Suggesting that Joseph Smith simply got the name Nahom from the Bible is an insufficient explanation of the correlation.

### Other Minimalist Arguments

In addition to Vogel’s attempted explanation that the name was just being pilfered from the Bible, others have also attempted to dismiss this evidence in ways that also betray minimalist readings.

Some have suggested that Joseph Smith may have seen one of the 18th century maps already mentioned.<sup>68</sup> There are several problems with this suggestion:

1. There is no evidence that Joseph Smith ever saw one of these maps. One online article counters by saying “there is also no evidence that he *or one of his acquaintances* did not have access to these sources.”<sup>69</sup> Though negative proof can, at times, be informative on a topic, positive claims like this come with a burden of proof. Historians don’t

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eastward” from Nihm. Having more than one specific location within a generally “bountiful” region that is east of Nihm that adequately fit the text is certainly not a problem for the Book of Mormon, though it may be difficult for a minimalist like Vogel to explain.

67 Comment posted to an Internet discussion board on December 7, 2006; quoted in Michael R. Ash, *Shaken Faith Syndrome: Strengthening One’s Testimony in the Face of Criticism and Doubt*, 2nd ed. (Redding, Calif: Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research, 2013), 84.

68 For this attempted explanation, see the argument under the heading “Early References to NHM” in the online article “Nahom,” at MormonThink, <http://mormonthink.com/book-of-mormon-problems.htm#nhm> (accessed November 10, 2013), screenshot in possession of one of the authors.

69 “Early References to NHM,” emphasis in original.

entertain pure speculation simply because there is no evidence that something didn't happen. This tactic, in this context, is fallacious.

2. These maps were not accessible to Joseph Smith. The claim in the online article that "Allegheny College in Meadville Pennsylvania is about 50 miles from Harmony"<sup>70</sup> is simply false. There is a Harmony, Pennsylvania, that is close to 50 miles from Meadville, but the Harmony Township where Joseph Smith did most of the translating of the Book of Mormon is where Oakland, Pennsylvania, is now located.<sup>71</sup> Oakland is approximately 275–325 miles of travel from Allegheny College.<sup>72</sup>
3. These maps have hundreds of toponyms. Why is Nahom the only one that shows up in the Book of Mormon, and how is it that Joseph Smith was so lucky that the one he just happened to pick is the only one that can be traced as far back as Lehi's day?<sup>73</sup>
4. Even these maps give no indication of the eastward turn.<sup>74</sup>
5. The maps do not show the presence of a place fitting the description of Bountiful.<sup>75</sup>
6. These maps could not have informed Joseph Smith that the area would provide suitable burial grounds for a deceased member of the traveling party.

In short, this theory leaves just as much unexplained as Vogel's appeal to the Bible does.

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70 "Early References to NHM."

71 See Brandon S. Plewe, ed., *Mapping Mormonism: An Atlas of Latter-day Saint History* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2012), 21.

72 Distance estimates derived using Google Maps and exploring alternate routes. Though available roads/routes in the 19th century may not have been the same, it is unlikely the distances were substantially different.

73 See Aston, "A History of NaHoM," 93.

74 See Brown, "Nahom and the 'Eastward' Turn," 112; Brown, "New Light from Arabia," 73, 89.

75 See Aston, "A History of NaHoM," 90.

Others have tried to diminish the significance of the correlation by suggesting that NHM is a very common name. This has been done in two ways. The first is by suggesting that there are several locations along the Arabian Peninsula that have the root NHM in their toponym, and insinuating that LDS scholars have been all over the map proposing these different NHM's as Nahom.<sup>76</sup> This argument is flat out wrong. Writing in 1976, the Hiltons did not identify any toponyms with the root NHM. A couple years later, Ross T. Christensen first noticed one of the 18th century maps and observed, "Nehhm is only a little south of the route drawn by the Hiltons [in 1976]."<sup>77</sup> In other words, though they were a bit farther to the north, the Hiltons had us already looking in the right general area. All proposals since then have been that the Arabian Nihm/Nehem is the Book of Mormon Nahom. Warren P. Aston, who has presented on his findings on the NHM tribe/territory in an academic conference at Cambridge University,<sup>78</sup> has stressed that there is only one place on the whole of the Arabian Peninsula with NHM as a toponym.<sup>79</sup>

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76 See the argument made in bullet 4, under the heading "Critic's Answer #1 – Interpreting the evidence," in the Online article "Nahom," at MormonThink, [http://mormonthink.com/book\\_of\\_mormon\\_problems.htm](http://mormonthink.com/book_of_mormon_problems.htm) nhm (accessed November 10, 2013), screenshot in possession of one of the authors.

77 Ross T. Christensen, "The Place Called Nahom," *Ensign* (August 1978): 73.

78 See Warren P. Aston, "Some Notes on the Tribal Origins of NHM," paper presented at the Seminar for Arabian Studies, July 22, 1995, held at Cambridge University.

79 See Aston and Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, 12; Aston, "A History of NaHoM," 80. Only Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 112–13; cf. Potter and Wellington, "Lehi's Trail," 32 say that there are multiple places called NHM and they identify a mountain, a valley, a hill, and they even differentiate between the cemetery and the Nihm region. But, these are all in the same general area, and as Aston, "Identifying Our Best Candidate for Nephi's Bountiful," 59, 63 n. 2 points out, "it is a mistake to conclude that there are separate places called NHM. They are all simply features of one tribal area—only one south Arabian location has the name NHM." In a footnote, Aston adds, "The bottom line, however, is that the name NHM is found only once in southern Arabia, even

More recently, an attempt has been made to diminish the apparent significance by expanding the search for NHM beyond the Arabian Peninsula to worldwide locations.<sup>80</sup> Chris Johnson explains:

It's three letters... . But what is the significance of the evidence for the Joseph Smith as a prophet-translator? What is the evidence?... So here's the significance: We have NHM in Germany, Austria, Iran, Zimbabwe, Angola, Israel, Canada, and basically everywhere you look you can find those three letters. I'm sure there's a dozen companies named NHM that all around the world as well.... NHM happened to be some of the most common letters. So the significance of NHM is lacking.<sup>81</sup>

The insinuation is that such names are so common that NHM/Nahom is lacking in statistical significance, or, in other words, this kind of match could just be random chance. This

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though a mountain, a valley, and a hill within the area also have NHM in their name, formal or otherwise. The site of Provo offers a useful analogy: even though people speak of Provo Canyon, the Provo River, Provo city, and the Provo cemetery, for example, there is still only one place called Provo, not several.”

80 Chris Johnson, “How the Book of Mormon Destroyed Mormonism,” paper presented at Life After Mormonism: 2013 Ex-Mormon Foundation Conference, held October 19, 2013; online video at <http://buggingmos.wordpress.com/2013/10/25/chris-johnson-how-the-book-of-mormon-destroyed-mormonism/> (accessed December 27, 2013); comments on Nahom at approx. 6:53–8:05 in the video. For a response to the main point of Johnson’s presentation, see Benjamin L. McGuire, “The Late War Against the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 7 (2013): 323–55, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/the-late-war-against-the-book-of-mormon/> (accessed December 27, 2013).

81 Johnson, “How the Book of Mormon Destroyed Mormonism,” based on the transcript done by Jeff Lindsay, “The Significance of Nahom: Just Three Letters?” *Mormanity: A Mormon Blog*, but not just for *Mormons*, December 12, 2013 at <http://mormanity.blogspot.com/2013/12/the-significance-of-nahom-just-three.html> (accessed December 27, 2013); punctuation slightly altered, and ellipses represents our omission of material.

argument, like Vogel's, reduces the evidence to just a name in order to make the name seem insignificant.

This isn't simply a matter of how common NHM toponyms are today. The only NHM in the Book of Mormon (Nahom)<sup>82</sup> shows up in a position along a path, in relation to other places, in a narrative set in the early 6th century BCE.<sup>83</sup> It *just happens* to appear in a context that converges in location, date, and descriptive details with the only NHM toponym along the ancient Arabian trail. Johnson needs to show the probability, based on how NHM toponyms were distributed ca. 600 BCE, that one of them would show up in a position, along a path, that could be reasonably interpreted as fitting the narrative in 1 Nephi.<sup>84</sup> Only then would all the appropriate factors have been accounted for, but to do so would also greatly reduce the probability of a random correlation and increase its significance, something Johnson does not want.

## Conclusion

We've looked at Vogel's five points of argumentation on this matter, as well the arguments of some others, and find them wanting. The discovery of the NHM altars remain as, if

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82 See all Book of Mormon names in "Name Index," *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/onoma/index.php/NameIndex>, accessed December 27, 2013. No other name has the consonants NHM in that order and/or without other consonants.

83 Many of the NHM's Johnson has found can't even be confidently traced back to Joseph Smith's time, let alone Lehi's. See Jeff Lindsay, "Noham, That's Not History (Nor Geography, Cartography, or Logic): More on the Recent Attacks on NHM," *Mormanity: A Mormon Blog, but not just for Mormons*, December 21, 2013, at <http://mormanity.blogspot.com/2013/12/noham-thats-not-history-nor-geography.html> (accessed December 27, 2013); cross-posted to the *FairMormon Blog*, December 23, 2013, at <http://www.fairblog.org/2013/12/23/noham-thats-not-history-nor-geography-cartography-or-logic-more-on-the-recent-attacks-on-nhm/> (accessed December 27, 2013).

84 We have silently borrowed some verbiage, and this overall point, from a personal communication from S. Hales Swift to one of the authors, December 28, 2013. We appreciate his help in formulating our arguments on this point.



not more, significant for the historicity of the Book of Mormon as the Tel Dan inscription is for the historicity of the Davidic kingdom recorded in the Hebrew Bible. Book of Mormon minimalists like Vogel will have to try much harder to dismiss this significant evidence for the antiquity of the Book of Mormon. For, as Brant Gardner comments, “the data pointing to the connection between the Book of Mormon Nahom and the now-confirmed location of a tribe (and likely place) called NHM are extremely strong. The description fits, the linguistics fit, the geography fits, and the time frame fits. Outside of Jerusalem, NHM is the most certain connection between the Book of Mormon and known geography and history.”<sup>85</sup>

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85 Gardner, *Second Witness*, 1:289.



# A NOTE ON CHIASMUS IN ABRAHAM 3:22-23

*Julie M. Smith*

Chiasmus, or inverted parallelism, is well-known to most students of Mormon studies;<sup>1</sup> this note explores one instance of it in Abraham 3:22-23:

A Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was;

B and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

C And God saw these souls that they were good,

D and he stood in the midst of them, and he said:

E These I will make my rulers;

D' for he stood among those that were spirits,

C' and he saw that they were good;

B' and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them;

A' thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

Historically, most Mormon scholars with an interest in chiasmus have focused on its apologetic value. I will leave that line of inquiry to those whose interests tend in that direction; my interests are in literary approaches to scripture. In this case, a literary analysis of this structure both heightens and clarifies the meaning of the passage.

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1 See John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 10, no. 1, 1969. See also John W. Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, available at <http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/book/chiasmus-in-antiquity/>.

The A and A' lines emphasize the timing of the passage; the topic here is what was happening in the pre-mortal realm. These lines also hint at a relationship between being “organized” and being “chosen;” this association deserves further consideration and may help elucidate what it means for spirits to be “organized,” especially since both are described with a passive voice.<sup>2</sup>

The B and B' lines introduce the idea of the “noble and great ones” and place Abraham among their number. From a literary perspective, it is interesting that Abraham is apparently unaware of his position among the noble and great ones until near the end of the passage; perhaps the information was presented to Abraham in this manner to make clear that the emphasis should not be on himself but rather on all of the rulers.

The C and C' lines are very virtually identical, with references to God seeing that the souls are good. Both lines echo language from the creation accounts (God, seeing, good) and perhaps at least thematically extend the creation backwards into the pre-mortal realm. These lines might also shed a little light on what it means when the creation accounts describe the various stages of the creation as “good”; the implication in this passage is that they are organized and great.

The D and D' lines, also very similar to each other, are at first perplexing because their references to where God is standing seem rather mundane in comparison to the doctrinal richness of the rest of the passage. But when read on a symbolic level, they position God literally “in the midst” of the souls and affirm his association with them. In this structure, the “noble and great ones”—the “rulers”—are symbolically surrounded by God. This is reminiscent of how Matthew’s Gospel introduces

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2 In NT studies, this is often considered to be a “divine passive,” meaning a passive voice used to avoid mentioning God as the subject out of respect for the name of God.

Jesus as “Emmanuel,” which, as Matthew takes pains to inform us, means “God with us;”<sup>3</sup> that gospel ends with Jesus promising that he will be with them always.<sup>4</sup> The point in both Matthew and Abraham is that the righteous are in a sense surrounded by the divine presence.

The E line calls the careful reader’s attention to the fact that the selection of these noble ones as rulers is the focal point of the passage. This is perhaps the most important result of an analysis of the chiasmic structure because it makes clear that this passage is not primarily about Abraham (despite the references to him at the beginning and the end) but rather about the ruling role of all of the noble and great ones. Because the central line emphasizes God’s action of “making,” the creation themes mentioned previously are re-emphasized. The structure also comments on God’s actions: God’s “making” action is central and is surrounded first by standing in the midst of God’s creations and then surrounded by God’s seeing action. This seeing/standing/making structure posits God as active and involved in creation.

Further, note how the form coheres with the content: the tight and deliberate literary structure of the passage by itself emphasizes the idea of a plan and structure for life of earth. Finally, I note that Abraham 3:22-23 is one of the Scripture Mastery passages, and this otherwise difficult-to-memorize text becomes much easier to remember when the chiasmus is recognized.

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3 See Matthew 1:23.

4 See Matthew 28:20. The phrase is even more compelling in Greek, where the title “I AM” has the words “with you” inserted into the middle of it.

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# A NICKNAME AND A SLAM DUNK: NOTES ON THE BOOK OF MORMON NAMES ZEEZROM AND JERSHON

*Stephen D. Ricks*

## Nicknames and Dysphemisms in the Bible and Ancient Mediterranean

Even in the Bible, nicknames and dysphemisms—expressions whose connotations may be offensive to the hearer—are not rare and were equally so in other parts of the ancient and early medieval world. In 1 Samuel the ungenerous husband of Abigail rudely refused hospitality to the men of David, greatly angering them. David and his men were so incensed at his offense against the laws of hospitality that they intended to punish him for his boorish behavior before they were dissuaded from their plan by Abigail (1 Samuel 25:1-35). Shortly thereafter the husband died suddenly and mysteriously (1 Samuel 25:36-37). To all subsequent history his name was given as “Nabal,” which means either “churl” or “fool,”<sup>1</sup> a rather harsh nickname that might also shade off to a dysphemism.

The Babylonian conqueror of Jerusalem was officially named Nebuchadrezzar, a transliteration of the Hebrew name based on the Babylonian *Nabu kudurri usur*, “Nabu preserve my prince, my boundary.” Among his less grateful subjects he was called—perhaps privately—Nebuchadnezzar, which may be from the Babylonian *Nabu kidanu usur*, “Nabu, preserve the donkey,” quite an unflattering name or nickname.

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<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* tr. M.E. J. Richardson (Leiden/New York: Brill, 1995), 2:663-64.

Because as a small child Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus (AD 12-41) made his way around the Roman military camp, where his father was commanding, in specially designed soldier's sandals (Lat. *caligae*), he was affectionately called Caligula, "little boots."<sup>2</sup> However, calling the emperor by his nickname, originally a term of endearment, would likely have been insulting during the early part of his reign (AD 37-41) and later, after an illness left him mentally unbalanced and borderline insane, may have proved fatal.

Al-Mansur, Abbasid emperor (A.D. 754-775) during the apogee of Arab power, was given the nickname (Arab. *laqab*) Abu Dawaniq, "father of farthings," on account of his thriftiness, which many interpreted as penury and miserliness.<sup>3</sup>

### Zeezrom as a Nickname in the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon proper name Zeezrom may follow a naming pattern parallel to the Hebrew *zeh Sinai*, "he of Sinai" (i.e., God) (cf. Judges 5:5; Psalm 68:8) and may have the meaning "he of the Ezrom." Ezrom/Ezrum is a Nephite word mentioned in Alma 11:6, 12, as a unit of silver measure. As a silver measure (which, in Hebrew, is *kesep*, "silver; money"), it may be the equivalent of money as well, indicating the meaning "he of silver, money," suggesting Zeezrom's early obsession with money or his willingness to resort to bribing Alma and Amulek with money to have them deny their belief in God (Alma 11:22). Happily, however, Zeezrom underwent a powerful conversion, forsook his sins, and became, with Alma and Amulek, fervent missionaries and ardent exponents of the faith.<sup>4</sup>

2 Suetonius Caligula IX; Tacitus, *Annales* I, 41, 69.

3 *History of Tabari: Abbasid Authority Affirmed*, tr. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), xviii.

4 The proper name Sherem may be understood as a dysphemism in the Book of Mormon. Sherem may be related to the Arabic noun *surm*, "anus." John A. Tvedtnes observes that "although an unlikely name for a man, his character would certainly prompt some contemporary readers to think the name was an



## A Book of Mormon “Slam Dunk”: The Proper Name Jershon<sup>5</sup>

When the Lamanites converted by the sons of Mosiah left their homeland to escape persecution, the Nephites allowed them to settle in the land of Jershon. The name, though not found in the Bible, has an authentic Hebrew origin, the root \*YRŠ meaning “to inherit,” with the suffix -ôn that denotes place-names, and may have the meaning “place of inheritance.” Wilhelm Borée, in his important study *Die alten Ortsnamen Palästinas* (*The Ancient Place Names of Palestine*), cites fully 84 ancient Canaanite place names with the ending -ôn in biblical and extrabiblical sources (Egyptian and Mesopotamian writings, the El-Amarna letters, ostraca), including—to cite only a few examples—Ayyalon (Elon) (Joshua 19:42, 43), Eltekon (Joshua 15:58), Ashkelon (Judges 1:18), Gibeon (Joshua 9:3), Gibbethon (Joshua 19:44), and Dishon (Genesis 36:21).

We should understand Jershon in the sense of “place of inheritance” and its Hebrew root *yarash* in the sense of “to inherit” in Alma 27:22 (“and this land Jershon is the land which we will give unto our brethren for an inheritance”), Alma 27:24 (“that they may inherit the land Jershon”), and Alma 35:14 (“they have lands for their inheritance in the land of Jershon”) as plays on words.

Why is the Book of Mormon proper name Jershon a “slam dunk?” Because the name with all its subtle connotations is not something that Joseph Smith would have understood at the time that the Book of Mormon was translated. He began to study Hebrew seriously only while he was living in Kirtland,

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appropriate dysphemism.” From the Book of Mormon Names website at <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/onoma/index.php/SHEREM>. [URL?]

5 In this section I have relied heavily on the study by John A. Tvedtnes and myself, “The Hebrew Origin of Some Book of Mormon Place Names,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 257-58.

Ohio in the 1830's, several years after the publication of the Book of Mormon.<sup>6</sup>

## Conclusion

Austin Farrer, observing C. S. Lewis as an ardent and articulate defender of Christianity, noted that “though argument does not create conviction, lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish”<sup>7</sup> (this quotation was cited on several occasions by Neal A. Maxwell). In the spirit of this quotation, I believe that proper names in the Book of Mormon are arguably ancient. With regard to critics of the Book of Mormon, the question may thus be shifted to, “If the Book of Mormon is not an ancient document, why are there so many features in it—including proper names—that are so arguably ancient?”

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6 The first “slam dunk” was the name Alma, mentioned previously by myself in “Some Notes on Book of Mormon Names,” in *Interpreter* 4(2013): 155-60, esp. 159-60, [full article?] which had connotations (based on the Hebrew noun ‘elem, meaning “young man”) which Joseph Smith would not have known given the current state of his knowledge

7 Austin Farrer, “The Christian Apologist,” in *Light on C. S. Lewis*, ed. Jocelyn Gibb (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1965), 26.

# “IF THERE BE FAULTS, THEY BE FAULTS OF A MAN”<sup>1</sup>

*Robert F. Smith*

Review of John S. Dinger, ed., *Significant Textual Changes in the Book of Mormon: The First Printed Edition Compared to the Manuscripts and to the Subsequent Major LDS English Printed Editions* (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation/Signature Books, 2013); with foreword by Stan Larson; 418pp+ xxxvi; hardbound edition limited to 501 copies; ISBN 978-1-56085-233-9

**I**t has been nearly 40 years since I walked into the BYU office of Stanley R. Larson in the early summer of 1974. Stan had just completed his master’s thesis, and he proudly displayed a hot-off-the-press copy of it on his desk. Stan was justifiably proud, and I could see right away while thumbing through it that this was a very important work that could be utilized as the basis for a critical text of the Book of Mormon. I did not realize then that this would become a part of Ellis T. Rasmussen’s much larger effort to prepare a new edition of LDS Scriptures (I had met Ellis in the Holy Land, and he was later kind enough to show me a mock-up of a page of the planned new edition to see what I thought of it).

Stan eventually went to England to earn his PhD, in the meantime producing a series of fine articles demonstrating the value of his thesis project. I set about gathering data for a small-scale critical text and spent a very fruitful seven

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<sup>1</sup> Mormon 8:17, following the Printer’s Manuscript reading (likewise followed by the RLDS 1908 edition, and by the 1999 *Restored Covenant Edition*).

years in Independence, Missouri, nearly every day utilizing the material available in the Archives of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS, now the Community of Christ), working on that and a variety of other projects. By the time my colleague, John W. “Jack” Welch, established the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) in 1979, I had gathered some excellent data for a modest critical text. He and John L. Sorenson had both encouraged me to establish a dependable text—which is the objective of any good critical text project.

When I moved to Provo, Utah, in 1983, Jack Welch obtained a digital copy of the 1830 Book of Mormon produced by Larry K. Browning, which had been keyed to author by John L. Hilton I and Kenneth D. Jenkins. Jack suggested that I edit it using a large BYU mainframe computer along with new word-processing software that could do footnotes. The Critical Text Project immediately grew into a vastly larger affair than I had foreseen, requiring years of effort, tens of thousands of readings from the various manuscripts and editions, and thousands of references to quotations and allusions to biblical and other relevant writings (Hilton & Jenkins provided a massive computer-generated list of KJV parallels, and I received the valuable help of Grant R. Hardy and Gordon C. Thomasson in finding many additional parallels).

The FARMS *Book of Mormon Critical Text* eventually grew to three volumes, and when the first volume of the first edition was published in 1984, I began regular visits to the BYU office of Royal J. Skousen to discuss improvements for a projected second edition. That much improved edition was completed and published in 1987, at which point I moved to California, and Royal took over the project—breathing extraordinary new life into it.<sup>2</sup>

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2 An excellent account is available in Royal Skousen, “The Book of Mormon Critical Text Project,” in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man*, eds.,

When I recently obtained my copy of this new volume edited by John S. Dinger, I was pleased to see that it contains an authoritative and dependable foreword by Stan Larson.<sup>3</sup> It was a pleasure, as usual, to read his summary of the main issues surrounding textual criticism of the Book of Mormon. Would that Stan had taken a closer look at precisely what editor Dinger had done with this particular effort!

It is a beautifully produced hardbound volume, and Stan's foreword, while not quite worth the price of the volume, is the only useful and dependable part of this book. That is, the book is rife with error and was not designed to be usable or accessible.

At a retail price of \$60 (before taxes and shipping and handling), one might expect to have in hand a volume that includes the chapters and verses of the Book of Mormon familiar to most readers (including the 2004 Doubleday edition), without which it is nearly impossible to find any given word or phrase. Instead, Dinger provides us with the long chapters and unnumbered paragraphs of the 1830 edition. This makes it nearly unusable as a reference work and leaves the 3,143 footnotes in limbo.

Worse, right from the outset, Dinger has more errors than accurate notes to the text. It is so disappointing to find that no substantive peer review was provided by the publisher nor that Stan Larson took a few minutes to check the first few pages. It certainly would have been time well spent, and the publisher might have sent Dinger back to the drawing boards. Because Dinger's volume was merely derivative (not based on original research), one might have expected him to have studied and mastered the Skousen transcripts of the printer's manuscript

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Susan E. Black and Charles D. Tate, 65-75. Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1993.

3 On p. xvii, Signature Books erroneously has "joined" in Alma 62:29, where it should be "join" (as in PMs, 1830, etc.) – apparently a typo.

and original manuscript.<sup>4</sup> He might also have consulted the easily understood footnotes in my *Book of Mormon Critical Text*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Provo: FARMS, 1986-1987). Taken together, those resources could easily have prevented the plethora of errors generated by Dinger.

Some representative examples:

**Mistakenly attributes printer's manuscript (PMs) readings to original manuscript (OMs), where OMs does not exist:**

—pages 5-6 have several notes leading with “OMs” in a section where it does not exist (nn. 10-12,17-18,20), where he clearly intended “PMs,” or “PMs-cor,” as later in the volume. This includes “The first Book of Nephi,” “Chapter 1st,” “three days,” “&C,” “haveing,” “is,” etc.

**Repeatedly fails to attribute changes to OMs-cor (corrected OMs), although he does so sometimes later in the volume (OMs-cor or ~~strike-out~~, nn. 114,207,211,235,425,468,485-486):**

—page 8, nn. 45,54, even though Dinger declares “text absent” in OMs, they are actually present in OMs-cor: “the fountain of” is in OMs-cor; “of God” is in OMs-cor.

—page 11, n. 79, has “&” in OMs, but fails to show OMs-cor “I” (1 Nephi 4:8).

—page 17, n. 141 (1 Nephi 8:34), gives OMs instead of correct OMs-cor.

**Repeatedly misleads by failing to attribute changes to PMs-cor (or perhaps PMs-corc) or to line through replaced readings, although he does so sometimes later in the volume (PMs-cor nn. 188, 192, 226, 228, 266, and lining through at**

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4 Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text*. Provo: FARMS, 2001; Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts*. Provo: FARMS, 2001.

**nn. 22,27,84,86,88-89,91,133,192,205,214, 229,234, or both), perhaps by then beginning to realize the crucial value of such data:**

—pages 6-9, 14, 16-22, 24, nn. 24, 26, 34-36, 41-42, 57, 59, 63, 110, 121, 123, 125-126, 134, 147-152, 158-159, 164-167, 178, 197, including “it,” “is,” “are,” “those,” “said,” “Brothers,” “who,” “thy,” “who,” “may,” etc.

**Misses some changes:**

—page 11 (1 Nephi 4:19), fails to list OMs “own” head, which is dropped in PMs and editions. Has no note on “girted” in OMs PMs 1830; “girded” in OMs-cor 1837, etc. (1 Nephi 4:21).

—page 14 (1 Nephi 6:6), missed OMs “plate,” PMs “plates,” etc., just as he did at 1 Nephi 5:19.

—page 21 (1 Nephi 11:22), fails to note the insertion in OMs above the line “of men,” which would be an example of OMs-cor, if noted.

**Misleads or presents false information in notes:**

—page 7, n. 43, entirely overlooks OMs “beside,” and claims “by the side of” in PMs 1837. In fact PMs has “beside,” and PMs-cor has “by the side of,” thus missing the standard pattern of corrections made to PMs for the 1837 edition.

—page 8, n. 49, only catches half the phrase “that he” which was removed in 1837, bolding and listing only “he.”

—page 9, n. 62, falsely states that the 1852 ed reads “knew” (thus supposedly following the 1840 ed), but the 1852 actually reads “knowing,” and actually follows the 1830 1837 & 1841 eds.

—page 10, n. 70, has PMs “Brother,” which more likely reads “Brethren” (1 Nephi 3:28); not to mention PMs-cor “Brother,” and PMs-corcor “Brothers.”

n. 71, misses OMs “thou shalt” = PMs. It is PMs-cor which has “ye shal” (1 Nephi 3:29).

n. 72, PMs does not have “spake,” but “spoken” (1 Nephi 3:30).

n. 75, has PMs “text absent,” but fails to note PMs-cor “then” (1 Nephi 4:1).

—page 11, n. 81, “to me” (1 Nephi 4:12) is not in OMs or PMs.

—page 12, n. 94, claims falsely that 1852 follows 1830. 1852 follows the 1849 in dropping “had,” thus leaving only “came” (1 Nephi 5:4).

—page 14, n. 108, the 1852 ed does not follow 1840 “ye are,” as he alleges, but has instead “thou art” (1 Nephi 7:8).

—page 16, n. 119, incorrectly has 1849 “methought.” It is hyphenated at line end, so that we do not know if it should have a hyphen (1 Nephi 8:4).

n. 121, has no indication of PMs-cor (1 Nephi 8:7).

—page 18, n. 153, falsely has “should” removed by PMs. Yet OMs PMs 1830 all read the same; PMs-cor included “should,” which was not “removed,” but simply ignored (1 Nephi 10:3).

n. 155, falsely claims that PMs reads “should be” (1 Nephi 10:3). Yet OMs PMs 1830 all actually read the same, and PMs-cor reads “should be,” which is followed by 1837 ed.

### **Employs a faulty 1830 edition text:**

—p. 36, misspells “statutes,” as “statues” in 1 Nephi 17:22, even though it is spelled correctly in OMs, PMs, 1830 and all editions.

—p. 86, drops “and” from the beginning of 2 Nephi 29:9, even though it is in PMs 1830 and all editions (OMs not extant).

—p. 213, leaves out “death” at end of Alma 25:9, even though it is present in PMs 1830 and all other editions (OMs not extant).

—p. 347, misspells “new” as “knew” at the end of 3 Nephi 15:2. The PMs and 1830 read “new.”



Because these were items noticed at random by me, the likelihood that there are many more such errors is quite high. One might need a collating machine to find out exactly how often the input was erroneous. Meanwhile, Royal Skousen's dictum that *such texts should never be keyed in by hand* is proven yet again.

### Other assorted problems and errors:

p. xx, "in a language sometimes described as 'reformed Egyptian'," misses the point that the term comes from the Book of Mormon itself (Mormon 9:32).

pp. xxiv-xxv, xxxii, Dinger neglects to include the 1879 SLC: Deseret News, 6th American edition along with his 1879 Liverpool edition information.

p. xxvi, for the 1911 Chicago edition, Dinger simply said that it "was a reproduction of the 1905 Chicago edition," which is only indirectly true. In fact, the 1911 edition was based on the 9th electrotpe edition produced by Charles W. Penrose in Liverpool in 1909, which was in turn based upon the 1st Chicago edition of 1905.

pp. xxvi-xxviii, Dinger doesn't bother to mention the BYU faculty members who did the actual heavy lifting in producing the 1979 & 1981 new edition of LDS Scriptures (foremost among them Ellis Rasmussen). Likewise, he does not bother to point out that the adoption of some of Stan Larson's recommendations in the 1981 LDS edition of the Book of Mormon took place via Ellis Rasmussen.

pp. xxvii-xxviii, in his "Major Studies of the Textual Changes," Dinger somehow missed the massive and path-breaking *Book of Mormon Critical Text* published by FARMS in two editions (1984-1987) of three volumes each, instead wasting precious space on the false claim that "a significant textual change to the Book of Mormon" was to be found in the 1981 introduction (n. 40). No biblical scholar would be

concerned with an introduction to the King James Version or other version of the Bible. Instead, scholars focus on the canonical text and the variant readings thereof.

p. xxxv, Dinger erroneously lists the books of Enos, Jarom, Omni, and Words of Mormon as having chapters. As for the biblical book of Obadiah, the epistle of Paul to Philemon, the epistles of 2 John, 3 John, and Jude in the KJV, one does not properly insert chapter numbers in a book with no chapters. References in such cases are to the verses only.

p. 7, n. 38, misleads on the complexity of OMs, OMs-cor, and PMs.

p. 10, n. 64 should not have inserted an indicator of missing text (1 Nephi 3:21) because OMs has simply “God,” and should be bolded as an 1830 reading; PMs does make the mistake of “the Lord,” but it is immediately lined out and “God” placed on the line following.

n. 69, bolded wrong word “hard,” instead of “words” (1 Nephi 3:28). However, PMs “things” only tells half the story, since PMs-cor has “words.”

pp. 11, 13, 18, 22-25, etc., frequently and inconsistently notes use of “&” (ampersand) in Ms, even though it seems a waste of space —particularly when he ignores more important variants, such as the deletion of “it came to pass (that)” in many locations (Mosiah 23:3, 5, 6, 24, 24:12, 20, 25, 25:15; Alma 8:27, 30, 10:31, 17:26, 43:19, 35, 42, 55:8; Helaman 2:8; 3 Nephi 11:16, 19:30), yet noting it in many other locations, thus likely skewing some types of statistical calculations addressing that issue —if dependent upon his book for accurate data.

p. 23, n. 222, misrepresents orthography of “pafs” in OMs at 1 Nephi 12:12 as “pafs.”

p. 36, has the misspelling “statues,” where it should be “statutes” in 1 Nephi 17:22. Perhaps a Signature Books typo, but ironic in view of Dinger’s vocation.

p. 60, is a page with 8 footnoted changes (three of them “which” to “who”; 1 “hath” to “have”; and 1 “to” to “unto”), only 2 of which are “significant” items, in the midst of a quotation from Isa 51 —52. Yet misses the difference on that same page of 19th century “rung” for 20th century and KJV “wrung” in 2 Nephi 8:17.

p. 85, Dinger mentions in note 722 (2 Nephi 28:16) that “nought” gets changed in 1879 to “naught,” but doesn’t notice the same phenomenon at 2 Nephi 27:31-32. The rationale for such all-too-common hit-and-miss decisions is not explained, and it might be mentioned in passing that “nought” is KJV style.

It is a worthy objective to provide this important text-critical information in a single volume. So it is a mystery why John Dinger painstakingly prepared and edited an expensive 452-page book without bothering to make it accurate and easily usable. Buyers may rightly be disappointed—and author and publisher be embarrassed—about the lack of professionalism in this enterprise. They will, hopefully, try again—but this time with a heavy dose of peer review.

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# FASHION OR PROOF?

## A CHALLENGE FOR PACIFIC ANTHROPOLOGY

*A. Keith Thompson*

*Abstract: This article is a call to Pacific anthropologists to write the story of the origin of mankind in the Pacific a bit larger and perhaps to look scientifically for additional explanations. Is it possible that the early diffusionists may have gotten some things right, albeit for the wrong reasons?*

At its heart, the human obsession with metaphysical questions such as “Who am I?” and “Where did I come from?” funds anthropology departments at universities. The hope is that the tools of modern science and technology will provide more satisfying answers to these questions than have come from the study of religion and theology. Kerry Howe’s title to one recent book about anthropology in the Pacific points to humanity’s search for meaning through origins. He named it simply *The Quest for Origins*,<sup>1</sup> but in many respects, contemporary Pacific anthropology does disservice to the scientific quest and the gnawing obsession that motivates it. For example, it focuses to the seeming extinction of all else, on the question “Who came first?” The contemporary anthropologist’s vocational need for academic credibility stifles exploration and opinion that digress from the mainstream. However, increased thinking outside the box has the potential to flesh out the answers we seek.

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1 K. R. Howe, *The Quest for Origins* (Penguin Books: Auckland, 2003).

I will further demonstrate this with an analogy from genealogy—not a science, perhaps, but a discipline that proximity vests with much greater certainty when it provides proof. If I were to credit only my convict great-great-grandfather, Charles Talbot, as my ancestor in the Pacific (convicted at the Cambridge Quarter Sessions July 30, 1827; transported to Tasmania on May 2, 1828; and arriving August 25, 1828, on the second convict sailing of the “Woodford”)<sup>2</sup> because he was first, I would miss the contribution made to my character and gene pool by the Mackintoshes, who came from Auldearn near Inverness in Scotland to Oamaru in 1879; the Norrises, who also came to Auckland in the 1880s from England; the Kerkins, who came from Cornwall to Auckland in 1906; and the Hulses, who lived on the Isle of Man in the 1850s and who intermarried with the Kenworthys and the Thompsons from Northhamptonshire in Manchester before the Thompsons came to Wellington in two installments in 1918 and 1919. In addition, my Thompson name comes down the patriarchal side of my family tree even though they were the last to come Down Under. Indeed, even if pure math tells the whole story, Charles Talbot accounts for only 1/32nd, or slightly more than 3% of my genes, but he was first, though I do not carry his name and apparently don’t look much like him.<sup>3</sup>

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2 Meryl Yost, “Tasmanian Convict Ships List – ‘W’ Ships,” accessed November 29, 2007, [http://www.rootsweb.com/~austashs/convicts/conships\\_w.htm](http://www.rootsweb.com/~austashs/convicts/conships_w.htm).

3 An extract from one record of his penal servitude in Tasmania gives the following precise physical description of Charles Talbot: “5 foot 5½ inches tall, dark fresh complexion, small oval head, large bushy whiskers, square upward shaped visage, medium forehead flat in front, dark black eyebrows, gray eyes, long straight downward pointing nose, large mouth, long indent in chin at point with a slightly purple scar on left eyebrow, a mark of the king’s evil under each side of the jaw, and large slightly ruptured scar on the back of the right hand” (Mitchell Library, Sydney, Talbot, Charles, Cambridge Quarter Sessions 30 July 1827 14 years M.L.Ref. A10593 p.396 Ship Woodford (2) Arrived 25 August 1828 Con 18/21).

Another slice of information provides context before I set out my thesis. Contemporary anthropology posits that we do not need to look outside the Pacific for an explanation of the physiological differences that characterize her diverse peoples.<sup>4</sup> These differences can all be explained by internal adaptations. But, as one leading anthropologist friend quipped to me, such logic implies that, “Evolution can occur on a boat ride!”<sup>5</sup> Such humor, of course, does disservice to the notion of a funnel in genetics—meaning that if only the big, fat people survived a seminal canoe voyage, only big, fat people passed on their genes to later generations. The humor is not completely unjustified, since even that simplification ignores any skinny, small genes that the big, fat survivors carried.

To have a meaningful understanding of who the Polynesians are and where they came from, anthropologically speaking, we need to search out more of the story and open our minds to the nuances that do and must exist in the story of the colonization of the Pacific in pre-European times. Understanding a little about evolution, I find very difficult to accept that my native friends in Tarawa, Majuro, Honiara, Lae, Port Vila, Noumea, Salelologa, Vavau, Rotuma, Niue, Aitutaki, and Moorea all come from precisely the same gene stock originating fewer than 5,000 years ago because they all look so different. Given the short time involved, I believe the discredited wave and diffusion theory must tell part of the story, and I have been pleased to discover recently that leading Pacific anthropologists are open to such a possibility, though they have not written much on the subject.<sup>6</sup> However, when

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4 For example, see Howe, *Origins*, 51–52, 61–62.

5 Ben Finney, private conversation, Honolulu, August 23, 2007.

6 Geoff Irwin, personal discussion, March 22, 2007; Kerry Howe, personal discussion, Massey University at Albany, Auckland, May 3, 2007; Ben Finney, personal discussion, Honolulu, August 23, 2007; and Patrick Kirch, personal discussion, Berkeley, California, February 7, 2008. Against the current, John Sorenson has written extensively on this subject with his magnum opus. John

I write of diffusion theory, I do not mean the idea that the whole world was populated from some Aryan headquarters in Europe. When I write of diffusion theory, I mean the peoples of the Pacific did not have just one gene source; the Pacific was colonized by people from diverse places and gene pools. While one source may appear to predominate when we consider only part of the evidence, that source is still not the only source nor necessarily the most interesting source.

My thesis is that there must have been waves of colonization and significant diffusion. In writing that, I realize I might have chosen less loaded labels than *waves* and *diffusion*, as these words and their baggage may close minds that would otherwise have read further, but I think it both honest and useful to admit I am revisiting some old chestnuts, at least in part. Indeed I assert that whereas no one can yet prove beyond reasonable doubt the exact detail of the waves of immigration that the self-contained evolution theorists posit,<sup>7</sup> simple, honest armchair deduction alone makes the case for wave theory, undisputable for the truly objective.

I will begin this argument by discussing what constitutes proof—even in anthropology. Though I could discuss proof in great academic detail,<sup>8</sup> this essay is not the place to do that, and I will try to keep it simple by presenting the different standards of proof that apply in human experience through

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Sorenson and Martin L. Raish, *Pre-Columbian Contact with America across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Provo, Utah: Research Press, 1996). This work documents more than five thousand discrete evidences of pre-Columbian contact between the American continent and the rest of the world, including Polynesia.

7 Theories of Polynesian origins are said to form a continuum—from Terrell's notion of the *Entangled Bank* to Diamond's *Express Train*. Jonathan S. Friedlaender, et al. "The Genetic Structure of Pacific Islanders," *PLoS Genetics* 4/1 (2008): 173, 186.

8 My PhD thesis focuses on one small aspect of the law of evidence. Anthony Keith Thompson, *Religious Confession Privilege at Common Law: A Historical Analysis*, Murdoch University, West Australia, 2007.



analogies from legal practice and discussion of proof standards generally accepted in scholarship. Even more than in the study of history, the discoveries of anthropology can produce only hypotheses. The reason contemporary anthropology has focused on beginnings rather than diffusion has more to do with context, fashion, and contemporary academic credibility than with finding satisfying answers to the underlying gnawing questions identified above (such as “Who am I?” and “Where did I come from?”). I concede, though, that revisionism can also provide a useful foundation for academic research. Finally, I will conclude that wave and diffusion theory are just as deserving of academic respect and future consideration as the arguably simpler self-contained answers to the question of first origins. Indeed, perhaps wave and diffusion theory deserve more contemporary consideration because they have been ignored for the last fifty years.

### What Is Proof?

At its simplest level, proof is the creation of a sense of certainty, but we do not often use the word *proof* in that simplistic way. We recognize that because of human fallibility and deceit, there are many things we cannot know for sure, so we devise probabilistic rules that enable us to work out which facts are most likely to be true.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the *proofart* is most developed in mathematics and in law. So familiar are the proof vocabularies of mathematics and law that we use them out of their home contexts. For example, we routinely identify the margin for error in public opinion polls in mathematical terms, and we

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9 Alex Stein suggests that traditional evidence law rules are founded upon probabilistic theory, which allows judges to apportion risk as they deem fit and should be set aside in favor of more mathematical principles, which can yield more trustworthy results. Alex Stein, *Foundations of Evidence Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

are satisfied beyond doubt of many things in our everyday lives before we take some new direction.

There are essentially three standards of proof in law, which are most easily understood when they are translated into approximate mathematical statements. For instance, an accused person will not normally be convicted unless the court is, say, 99% satisfied of guilt—*beyond reasonable doubt* is the standard legal phrase. In civil cases, a lower standard of proof has been deemed sufficient. The plaintiff must only satisfy the court that the case has been made out *on the balance of probabilities*, which mathematically would constitute 51% proof. To say that a *prima facie* case has been made simply means that a judge has accepted, after a preliminary review of the facts and law, that the criminal charge outlined *could* sustain a guilty verdict once *all* the evidence has been heard. Literally, the Latin phrase *prima facie* means *at first appearance* or *on the face of it* or in other words that on a limited review of the evidence provided by one side of the debate, it is arguable that there is a case to be decided. If the prosecution cannot satisfy this very preliminary standard, they cannot advance the matter. Thus, it is more difficult to suggest what percentage of proof the court has accepted if it decides that a *prima facie* case has been made out.

The following example demonstrates the tentative nature of a *prima facie* case finding. If only 10% of the material likely to be aired at trial were heard during the preliminary review, there could not have been more than 10% proof—perhaps less if that evidence were not tested by cross-examination. Thus, it is fair to state that finding a *prima facie* case against someone is finding no proof at all—regardless of how that result may be portrayed in the popular press. The weighing of the evidence in such preliminary reviews has not really begun and awaits subsequent detailed briefing. In a historical or anthropological context, a *prima facie* case might be translated to mean that

people educated in the field consider that a new suggestion appears to have validity, but they have yet to be convinced.

What standards of proof apply in other contexts? While we do not always think of proof in non-legal areas in such precise statistical ways, normally we can identify the legal paradigm that has become accepted as applicable. For example, historians can establish some facts with absolute precision as the focus of the headlines in every American newspaper on Monday, December 8, 1941. The causes of World War II, however, are much more difficult to pin down. Much ink has been spilt defining those causes, and in the end, we accept the historian's best guess if all the available evidence has been objectively considered. Of course, if new evidence comes to light, there is room for revision of the previous conclusions. In this sense, all historical conclusions are provisional. Historical scholarship is generally satisfied if a matter is proven on the balance of probabilities—in which event we might claim that we are 51% sure.

What standard of proof applies in anthropology? Some will say that because it is a science and increasingly uses the tools of technology, we can state some findings with much more certainty than 51%, and that is true. Despite the occasional criticism of the reliability of radiocarbon dating technology,<sup>10</sup> it is generally accepted that we can determine exactly the age of a given item or a shard of Lapita pottery. But since the contents of the said Lapita pot were likely organic and have vanished, different issues of proof attach to the deductions we make about the person(s) who made the pot, where they lived, how

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10 Atholl Anderson has suggested that many of the earliest dates yielded by radiocarbon dating in the Pacific must be culled in the interests of intellectual rigor, and his findings have been confirmed by the reworking of samples measured at the University of Waikato Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory between 1975 and 1995. Howe, *Origins*, 176. Others have pointed out that Anderson's methodology is itself flawed since his convenient exclusion of the earliest samples yields the later dates of human habitation for which he has always argued.

the pot got to where it was abandoned, whether it was ever traded, how the pot was broken, whether such pots were ever repaired, why the pot was abandoned, and about the artistic inspiration of its crafter and the genetic makeup of all the actors who ever handled it. Obviously it would take a very long bow to answer any of these questions and many others with a degree of certainty approaching even 30%. Perhaps the best we can do in such an anthropological case, even bolstered with archaeological evidence, is make a *prima facie* case.

However, regardless of whether or not we believe we have made a *prima facie* case or even feel optimistic that we may have established our hypothesis on the balance of probabilities, it is objectively self-evident that we do not prove anything of enduring value in anthropology beyond reasonable doubt. Though we may be able one day to prove the date of a Lapita pot's manufacture as well as its demise, those stark facts alone do not provide any enduring satisfaction to an anthropologist.<sup>11</sup> They are altogether too clinical. What we really want to know is what we can reasonably deduce from the clinical facts, and it is the word *reasonably* that identifies the standard of proof accepted in anthropological scholarship. *Reasonable* here is not as in *beyond reasonable doubt*, it is what the reasonably objective person would deduce if these facts were put before him or her. English judges used to capture this sense of what was reasonable by identifying the reasonable man as a fictional man on "the Clapham omnibus."<sup>12</sup> Their idea was to identify an

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11 Howe observes that though we "rely on the 'hard facts' of modern science such as radiocarbon dating, genetics, linguistics... [and] archaeology... [y]et how we interpret Pacific prehistory, what aspects of it we emphasise, still reveals a range of cultural values and pre-occupations." See Howe, *Origins*, 24.

12 The quoted phrase was first coined by L. J. Greer in *Hall v. Brooklands Auto-Racing Club* (1933) 1 KB 205. However, perhaps the earliest formulation of the notion of the reasonable man came from B. Alderson in *Blythe v. Birmingham Waterworks Co.* (1856) 11 Exch., 781, 784. He said: "Negligence is the omission to do something which a reasonable man, guided upon those considerations which ordinarily regulate the conduct of human affairs, would do, or doing something

objective, unbiased *everyman*. In coming to judicial conclusions in civil cases, they would try to work out what an everyman would decide and make it the judges' decision. The literature debating whether there can be such an everyman is legend, but the esoteric concept endures in many forms in our 21st century society. I suggest it is what the *everyperson* would decide that dictates a good conclusion from clinical facts in anthropology. If objective, unbiased *everypersons* had all the relevant, currently known facts before them, how would they consider the Pacific was colonized? I want to suspend consideration of that question until I have identified just how hard it is to find such an unbiased every person.

Geoff Irwin demonstrates that the issue of proof is indeed a live and relevant issue in Pacific anthropology when he writes: "While science must keep an open mind about [the possibility the first settlers of New Zealand arrived before 1350 AD], there is a burden of proof on those who propose [such ideas]."<sup>13</sup> Even though the idea spawned by oral genealogy and taught to generations of New Zealand primary school children has held that the first arrival in New Zealand was at Kupe in 950 AD, Irwin believes that contemporary anthropologists have objectively proven on the balance of probabilities that the first settlement came much later, despite the Kupe tradition. He further states that to reestablish that old idea, the traditionalists must put up some hard evidence.<sup>14</sup>

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which a prudent and reasonable man would not do." Lord MacMillan elaborated that standard in *Glasgow Corporation v. Muir* [1943] A. C. 448, 457 when he said: "The standard of foresight of the reasonable man... eliminates the personal equations and is independent of the idiosyncracies of the particular person whose conduct is in question."

13 Geoff Irwin, "Voyaging and Settlement," in *Vaka Moana, Voyages of the Ancestors: The Discovery and Settlement of the Pacific*, ed. K. R. Howe (Albany, Auckland: David Bateman, 2006), 89.

14 Irwin, "Voyaging and Settlement," 89. Note also that Michael King effectively makes the same argument. Michael King, *History of New Zealand* (Albany, Auckland: Penguin, 2003), 38–47.

The relevance of the standard of proof can be made in a different way from comments that Kerry Howe has made about Thor Heyerdahl's Pacific colonization theories. He states:

Heyerdahl offered the following broad clusters of evidence for his theory. The *Kon-Tiki* expedition itself proved how it was done. The winds and currents drove sailing vessels relentlessly westwards. There were his claims of similarities between eastern Polynesian words and those of South America. He also claimed that "pure" eastern Polynesian blood groups were similar to those of North and South America. He amassed a whole range of archaeological evidence supposedly showing cultural links with both North and South America—the most notable being the Easter Island stonework. He also argued that certain eastern Polynesian plants, including the sweet potato, originated in South America.

While the public adored Heyerdahl, the scholarly community largely ignored him. Few academics have bothered to spend their time trying to refute his mass of claims and his voluminous evidence. For those aware of the issues, he was so wrong as to be not worth taking too seriously.<sup>15</sup>

The outstanding Heyerdahl evidence is summarized below.<sup>16</sup> It is not fair to say that Heyerdahl's mass of evidence was so wrong as to be "not worth taking too seriously,"<sup>17</sup> nor that a reasonable, scholarly posture suggests that there would be no value in reviewing Heyerdahl's evidence more seriously—

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15 Howe, *Origins*, 127–128.

16 Howe, *Origins*, 17–18.

17 Note, however, that this is not Kerry Howe's personal position. He simply reports this has been the verdict of the majority of the academic community.

especially since other scholars are now demonstrating that unquestionable links exist between Polynesia and South America.<sup>18</sup> If the rules of evidence used in legal practice were applied objectively, it is also difficult to claim academic anthropology has the moral high ground or that Heyerdahl has, as Geoff Irwin might say, the onus of proof. That is more especially true when Howe clearly admits there has been no effort to address the bulk of the material that Heyerdahl produced as evidence.

### Context

Kerry Howe, however, has brilliantly explained how the anthropological theories of the past reflect both the preoccupations and even the religious beliefs of those who proposed them. For example, he points out that the question “Where did the Polynesians come from?” betrays an ancient conceit in the questioner who finds it hard to believe that such a feat of discovery might have been achieved by someone other than the questioner.<sup>19</sup> There are other conceits in the question and the discussion that traditionally surrounded it, which Kerry has explained better than I can. More obvious is the predetermination evident in the anthropological answers offered by 19th century Christian missionaries whose Bible told

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18 For example, see Geoff Irwin, “Voyaging and Settlement,” 83; P.J. Matthews, “Plant Trails in Oceania” in *Vaka Moana*, 96; and Ben Finney, “Ocean Sailing Canoes” in *Vaka Moana*, 135. Again, and as mentioned above at footnote 6, John Sorenson at BYU has devoted almost his entire life to the diffusion thesis. While he has not specialized in diffusion to and from Polynesia, most recently with Carl L. Johannessen, a geographer from the University of Oregon, he has demonstrated that a hundred species of plants, many of them cultivars, were present in both the Old and New Worlds before Columbus’s day, and a considerable number of these were shared between the Americas and Polynesia. John L. Sorenson and Carl L. Johannessen, *World Trade and Biological Exchanges before 1492* (New York: iUniverse, 2009). A new, revised edition of this work was published in 2013. The new edition is available from Amazon.com.

19 Howe, *Origins*, 8.

them there were lost tribes of Israel somewhere.<sup>20</sup> But as Kerry says, it is not quite so easy to see where our own blind spots are.<sup>21</sup> We are simply too immersed in them to see. Because of my own immersion, I am sure I do not see them all. Nevertheless, I can identify some perhaps because, in a measure, I am an anthropological outsider.

Universities are notoriously political places. To make a career in academic anthropology, one must not only be brilliant and passionate about anthropology, but one must also pay the piper.<sup>22</sup> Whereas it is self-evident that universities are houses of new learning, it is proverbial that one cannot afford to be completely original, either. The standard modern academic entry token, the PhD dissertation, is a case in point. While it must be original enough to pass examination, it must also proceed from established reference points and be full of precedential citations of previous authority to have academic credibility. Precedent and originality make strange counterpoint. Surely true originality eschews precedent; the only legitimate reason for a supervisor or examiner to insist on precedent in a thesis is to demonstrate that the candidate adequately understands

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20 Howe, *Origins*, 36–41.

21 Howe, *Origins*, 24, 184.

22 Note the transparency in Peter Capelotti's book *Sea Drift, Rafting Adventures in the Wake of Kon-Tiki*. He says: "Heyerdahl was perhaps inevitably disappointed that his experiment in constructing a primitive raft and transiting across an ocean on it did not inspire more scholarly interest. But he should not have been. The unprecedented attention and acclaim earned by the *Kon-Tiki* expedition were almost guaranteed to make the experiment suspect to scholars. Until the very recent advent of public and cable television documentaries, the general public hardly ever witnessed the bitter infighting of academics who either conducted controversial experiments or, likely as not, sat back and criticized those who did. For the critics especially, Heyerdahl was an interloper: a zoologist bearing an anthropological hypothesis into the highly stratified and segregated world of the academy. He seemed to cross too many conflicting lines of evidence from widely separated prehistoric events taken place across millennia. (Peter Capelotti, *Sea Drift, Rafting Adventures in the Wake of Kon-Tiki* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2001, xvii).



the relevant field of knowledge before embarking on a novelty, but that is not the way it works in practice. Doctoral candidate examiners whose own work is discredited by such originality are legendary for issuing fail or rewrite reports, hence the number of doctorates granted in Western universities does not necessarily represent a burgeoning in the body of human knowledge, but they should.

The study of anthropology really began only in the 19th century, so it was natural that it began its life as a science.<sup>23</sup> But in the early years, it was actually an *armchair* science.<sup>24</sup> When professors finally began to use the scientific method and look for hard evidence, they were retrospectively embarrassed by the naiveté of their predecessors.<sup>25</sup> Rather than sift past work for

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23 Until the 18th century (perhaps beginning with Galileo), the world's thinkers were called philosophers—even those who really developed the tools of empiricism. G.C. Gillispie, *The Edge of Objectivity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 7. Gillispie goes on to say: "In its early days, science was distinct from technology, springing rather from thought and philosophy than from craftsmanship. Nowadays, however, and indeed for the last century and more, science has merged more intimately with technology, so arming it with power. ... The answer [to why Europe created science] lies in Greece. Ultimately science derives from the legacy of Greek philosophy. ... Of all the triumphs of the speculative genius of Greece, the most unexpected, the most truly novel, was precisely its rational concept of the cosmos as an orderly whole working by laws discoverable in thought. The Greek transition from myth to knowledge was the origin of science as of philosophy. Indeed, knowledge of nature formed part of philosophy until they parted company in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century" (Gillispie, *Objectivity*, 8-9).

24 For example, though Edward Tylor, who Kerry Howe calls "a founder of anthropology," (Howe, *Origins*, 43) undertook a field trip to Mexico, he and John George Frazier "derived most of the material for their comparative studies through extensive readings of Classical materials (literature and history of Greece and Rome), the work of the early European folklorists, and reports from missionaries, travelers, and contemporaneous ethnologists." *Wikipedia*, "Anthropology," last modified January 13, 2014, accessed December 15, 2007, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropology>.

25 "Neither Tylor nor Frazer, however, were particularly interested in fieldwork nor were they interested in examining how the cultural elements and institutions fit together. Towards the turn of the century, a number of anthropologists became dissatisfied with this categorization of cultural

its enduring contribution to scientific advancement, the newly enlightened anthropologists simply started again and threw away the old paradigms completely. Therefore, when Kerry Howe concludes his book about the academic quest for the origins of Pacific peoples, he wonders if “any babies have been thrown out in the diffusionist bathwater?”<sup>26</sup> He also suggests in the same paragraph that future anthropologists may well identify contemporary obsession with aboriginal nationalism in the Pacific as a blinker that has obscured objective treatment of the available evidence in the early part of the 21st century. It is certainly academically difficult at present to say anything that suggests the currently dominant strain of aboriginals were not the first here or there because that would dilute their moral claim for various types of compensable wrong.

Now all this is not to say one cannot make an academic career as an anthropological revisionist.<sup>27</sup> To prove they are objective, some universities make a point of appointing token professors who swim against mainstream currents. But like personnel managers in modern corporations, their career

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elements; historical reconstructions also came to seem increasingly speculative. Under the influence of several younger scholars, a new approach came to predominate among British anthropologists, an approach concerned with analyzing how societies held together in the present (synchronic analysis rather than diachronic or historical analysis) and emphasizing long-term (one to several years) immersion fieldwork. Cambridge University financed a multidisciplinary expedition to the Torres Strait Islands in 1898, organized by Alfred Court Haddon and including a physician-anthropologist, W. H. R. Rivers, as well as a linguist, a botanist, and other specialists. The findings of the expedition set new standards for ethnographic description. A decade and a half later, Polish-born anthropology student Bronisław Malinowski (1884–1942) advocated an approach to fieldwork that became standard in the field: getting ‘the native’s point of view’ through participant observation. Theoretically, he advocated a functionalist interpretation, which examined how social institutions functioned to meet individual needs” (Wikipedia, “Anthropology”).

26 Howe, *Origins*, 184.

27 Atholl Anderson at the Australian National University is the anthropologist who currently seems to demonstrate this point best. Howe, *Origins*, 176 and Finney, “Ocean Sailing Canoes,” 132.

paths are normally tangential to the real world at the university concerned. Revisionism may sell a few books to the ladies from Vaucluse, Toorak, and Remuera (and if those ladies are really wealthy, it may endow the occasional chair), but as tokenism, it does not advance the world's general scientific understanding and does not shift the status quo of contemporary academic opinion. That happens only when a few of the most respected mainstreamers take a leap of faith and credit a previously disreputable theory.

Now the sequitur—were the armchair anthropologists of the past completely wrong, or does something remain in their theorizing about diffusion that begs for scientific treatment? Though I have traveled the Pacific as extensively as anyone in the last twenty years, I am not an anthropological fieldworker experienced with brush and trowel. To that extent I am doubtless as naive as my armchair predecessors. But still, it is remarkable what one can learn if one takes the time to simply ponder the old logic alongside the most recently published evidence.

### Waves and Diffusion

Heyerdahl was the most famous diffusion theorist, but he was not the first. Until the 1960s, contemporary anthropology held that the genesis of the Polynesians discovered by Cook and other European explorers lay outside the Pacific, probably somewhere to the west. J.R. Forster, who was Joseph Banks's replacement on Cook's second voyage, was the first to posit that Polynesia had inhabitants before those they found in the late 18th century.<sup>28</sup> However, he did not believe they adapted or evolved in situ. Rather, on the basis of primitive comparative physiological and linguistic analyses, he believed they originated in some part of Asia rather than in either America or Australia.

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28 Howe, *Origins*, 29–31.

Christian missionaries thereafter posited that the Polynesians had Semitic antecedents,<sup>29</sup> and this idea was superseded by post-Darwin scholarship that groped for less religious but conceptually similar Aryan or Caucasian origins.<sup>30</sup> Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*, though flawed, symbolized the next shift in the anthropological academic mainstream.<sup>31</sup> Her belief that differences in these peoples could be explained environmentally brought evolutionary theory fully into the Pacific anthropological equation and dispensed with the need for any waves of inbound migration. Kerry Howe summarizes the "broad orthodoxy"<sup>32</sup> pervasive until the mid-twentieth century as holding that the initial settlement of the western fringes of Oceania was achieved by dark-skinned, Southeast Asian people, but they were later recolonized by lighter skinned people from the same area who proceeded much farther into the area now commonly known as Polynesia. These ideas "reflect a range of Western cultural assumptions, fears and aspirations."<sup>33</sup>

Current thinking holds there was no "Polynesian migration into the Pacific because there were no Polynesians when humans began moving into Oceania. There was, instead, an initial, generalized Austronesian culture that emerged from the Southeast Asian region... [which] experienced a wide range of adaptations... over thousands of years."<sup>34</sup> The idea that the remotest parts of Polynesia could have been populated only by chance drift voyages, most controversially promoted by

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29 Howe, *Origins*, 36–41.

30 Howe, *Origins*, 41–51.

31 Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa. The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* (Canberra, Australia: National University Press, 1983) as cited in Howe, *Origins*, 51.

32 Howe, *Origins*, 59.

33 Howe, *Origins*, 61.

34 Howe, *Origins*, 61.

Andrew Sharp<sup>35</sup> against Sir Peter Buck's more popular idea that the Polynesians were the "Vikings of the Sunrise,"<sup>36</sup> has been discredited<sup>37</sup> in particular by Geoff Irwin and Ben Finney, who demonstrated more convincingly (and popularly) that the colonization was more likely the result of a "deliberate strategy of exploration and settlement."<sup>38</sup>

Philip Houghton's quasi-medical contribution to the environmental argument<sup>39</sup> does not serve that cause particularly well. His suggestion that Polynesians evolved large muscular frames to survive cold voyages of exploration is difficult to accept, implying as it does that the evolution involved occurred within a period of a thousand years at most.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, so implausible does that argument seem that

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35 Andrew Sharp, *Ancient Voyagers in the Pacific* (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1963).

36 Peter H. Buck, *Vikings of the Sunrise* (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1975).

37 There is more about Sharp's work that should have been discredited. For example, he wrote: "On the issue of whether the Polynesians were distributed from Western Polynesia or Eastern Polynesia, in the first place, the records of accidental voyages can throw no light, since some occurred in both directions. The answer is established beyond reasonable doubt by the linguistic research of Dr SH Elbert, who has shown that Western Polynesia was the ancestral speech area of the Eastern Polynesian tongues, and that the Hawaiian and Maori are derived from one or other of the latter" (Sharp, *Vikings*, 72–73). But when one reads the article referred to (Samuel H. Elbert, "Internal Relationships of Polynesian Languages and Dialects," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 9: 147–173), one finds that Elbert assumed the fashionable belief in Polynesian origins in "the Asiatic homeland" was correct (158, 163) and sought to explain all his research against that assumptive background without considering other possibilities. However, Elbert did conclude his article with the rather stark factual observation: Percentages of vocabulary agreement are so low that at least three Polynesian languages must be said to exist: West Polynesian, Kapingamarangi, and East Polynesian (Elbert, "Dialects," 170). Sharp ignored this honesty completely, and the omission suggests that Sharp, as many others, had an agenda.

38 Elbert, "Dialects," 62.

39 Phillip Houghton, *People of the Great Ocean: Aspects of Human Biology of the Early Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

40 While Houghton does not say a thousand years, all the evidence he relies on for Polynesian inhabitation of Remote Oceania anticipates dates little earlier

one might indelicately suggest that the argument would be more convincing if Houghton sided with Heyerdahl and found the ancestors of Polynesian sailors in the high, cold Andes whence Heyerdahl might have been happy to have some of them come.<sup>41</sup> In fact, Houghton even seems to discredit much of the linguistic evidence generally taken to support the environmental thesis when he states:

An immediate example of the fragility of the link between language and people, is given by Oliver, recording in a Bougainville community the almost complete replacement within one generation of one language by another. (Here it happens to record the demise of an Austronesian language.)<sup>42</sup>

Houghton thus seems guilty of the danger Kerry Howe exposes with his implicit charge that good anthropologists must be careful not to let the result they want color their

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than 300 AD, and since the Maori were probably separate and established with large, muscular frames by 1000 years later, this intrepid voyaging, which most distinguishes Polynesians from other Pacific Islanders in Houghton's hypothesis, and the cold of those voyages, which is his evolution mechanism, must have happened within 1000 years if he is correct. Suggs suggested in 1960 that all the differences in Polynesian features could be explained by microevolution or short-term evolution (Robert C. Suggs, *The Island Civilizations of Polynesia* (New York: Mentor Books, 1960), 35–37, 88, 233), but he does not explain how this microevolution could be so time-compressed, save to say that all the right conditions existed for it to happen in Polynesia, namely: "isolation by natural geographical or social boundaries and environmental differences" (Suggs, *Island*, 35).

41 Heyerdahl theorizes that the Polynesian differences from the Melanesians and the Micronesians elsewhere in the Pacific can be accounted for by two different waves of migration. The first of tall, fair-skinned Aryan people, who came from the mountains and coastal areas of what is now Latin America, somewhere between say 100 BC and 300 AD, and another wave of North American Indian people, who came from the Pacific Northwest around 800 AD. See Thor Heyerdahl, *American Indians in the Pacific, The Theory behind the Kon Tiki Expedition* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952).

42 Houghton, *People of the Great Ocean*, 135–136.

objective interpretation of the evidence they find and analyze. From Houghton it seems fair to conclude that the physiological changes he labors hard to explain would be more easily dealt with under some kind of diffusion hypothesis.

Houghton is not the only recent anthropologist to say things that ought to breathe life into a reconsideration of a diffusion element in Pacific colonization. Consider the following statements from several other writers featured in Kerry Howe's magnificent text *Vaka Moana, Voyages of the Ancestors: The Discovery and Settlement of the Pacific*.<sup>43</sup> Geoffrey Irwin states:

It is now generally accepted that no one group of people travelled all the way from Asia to their new Pacific Island home. As they moved they changed, interacted with others, and eventually produced the diverse peoples, biological types, cultures and the many hundreds of languages known throughout the wider Pacific region today. However, there is less agreement about whether Pacific boat technology and navigational methods developed within the region or were imported from outside.<sup>44</sup>

In the first sentence, Irwin may be said to have restated the internal evolutionary theory albeit using diffusion language. Nevertheless, his concession that the maritime technology alone might have been *imported* seems odd in that context. Though his comments are guarded, P. J. Matthews, writing of "Plant Trails in Oceania," says:

Long before the arrival of Europeans, the sweet potato was carried from the Pacific coast of South America to eastern Polynesia. This transfer is believed to have depended on the voyaging abilities of early Polynesians.

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43 Howe, *Discovery and Settlement*.

44 Irwin, "Voyaging and Settlement," 56.

Regardless of how the plant was carried, the fact that the Polynesian name *kumara* is based on an American name for the plant is proof that Polynesian and American people had face-to-face contact. The full extent of contact and travel between the two regions remains unknown.<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, David Penny and Anna Meyer effectively admit that diffusion theory will need to be reexamined in the future when they write:

Most of the evidence in this area comes from the maternally inherited mitochondrial DNA, which shows a close match between Polynesians and the indigenous people of Taiwan, the Formosans. ... Interestingly, Polynesian Y chromosomes DNA does not show such a definite answer. The reasons for this are not entirely clear yet, but one idea is that there could have been later waves of migration, with differences in the way in which males and females moved about.<sup>46</sup>

It may be that Kerry Howe's observations about context are again in evidence here. The only reason Jose Miguel Ramirez-Aliaga has found pre-Hispanic chicken bones in Southern Chile<sup>47</sup> is that he lives in Latin America and was looking for some such evidence of American contact with the Pacific. Penny and Meyer and everyone else respond to the contextual stimuli which hold their interest.

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45 Matthews, "Plant Trails in Oceania," 96.

46 David Penny and Anna Meyer, "DNA and the Settlement of Polynesia" in *Vaka Moana*, 98.

47 E-mail correspondence from Jose Miguel Ramirez-Aliaga to Geoff Irwin, August 8, 2006. See also Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, June 19, 2007, 104/25, accessed December 1, 2007, <https://www.pnas.org/cgi/content/full/104/25/10335>.



Regardless of Heyerdahl's motivation, he is generally dismissed academically as little more than a curiosity, whereas his famous *Kon-Tiki* expedition in 1947 may be seen to have laid the conceptual foundation for later proof that Pacific voyaging and settlements were not accidental.<sup>48</sup> He has no real scientific credibility because he is discounted as a European racist resurrecting the old missionary ideas of Aryan origins for Polynesian people. In particular, Heyerdahl's insistence that there was an early colonization by civilized, fair-skinned people with advanced technology who were killed off later by brown-skinned invaders is dismissed with demonstrations of anachronism and selective science.<sup>49</sup> And there is little doubt that in his later work, Heyerdahl was writing for an audience, but so were some of those who strove mightily to discredit him.

Sitting in my armchair, I admit that I, too, have been entranced by Heyerdahl's adventures, but after recently rereading *American Indians in the Pacific, The Theory behind the Kon-Tiki Expedition*,<sup>50</sup> I doubt that academia has been completely fair to Heyerdahl. Certainly his ego did not require allies, but when one catalogs his evidence for some American connections with the Pacific and Polynesia in particular, a lot remains that has not been answered. Suggs pointed out in the early 1960s that Heyerdahl's treatment of the Easter Island colonization was highly anachronistic.<sup>51</sup> In a very colorful paragraph, he says:

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48 Howe, *Origins*, 112. While Kerry Howe does not credit Heyerdahl in exactly this way, the debate which began when Andrew Sharp sought to rebut Peter Buck's view of the Polynesians as "Vikings of the Sunrise" became much more focused after Heyerdahl seized the public relations high ground following his *Kon-Tiki* expedition in 1947. Howe, *Origins*, 60, 122.

49 Suggs, *Island Civilizations*, 212–224. Suggs also severely criticizes Heyerdahl's methodology when he collected the blood samples which underlie the conclusions he made about the origin of Polynesian blood types (215–216).

50 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*.

51 Suggs, *Island Civilizations*, 224.

Heyerdahl's Peruvians must have availed themselves of that classical device of science fiction, the time machine, for they showed up off Easter Island in A.D. 380, led by a post-A.D. 750 Incan god-hero, with an A.D. 750 Tiahuanaco material culture featuring A.D. 1500 Incan walls, and not one thing characteristic of the Tiahuanaco period in Peru and Bolivia. This is equivalent to saying that America was discovered in the last days of the Roman Empire by King Henry the Eighth, who brought the Ford Falcon to the benighted aborigines.

Though some of Heyerdahl's evidence has been discredited, and very little of it has the durability of the subsequent Lapita discoveries, there is still much in his catalog that raises legitimate questions about balanced assessment by later critics. Consider for example:

- Why Polynesians look more like Madagascans and Northwest American Indians than they do Micronesians and Melanesians. Appearance similarities include stature, nose structure, skin color, beards, and hair color and type.<sup>52</sup>
- Why Polynesians don't use shell money, yet both Micronesians and Melanesians do.<sup>53</sup>
- Why there is no betel nut in Polynesia.<sup>54</sup>
- The spiral design of the Maori and their challenging custom of the extended tongue, which has connections with the Northwest American native but not other peoples of the Pacific.<sup>55</sup>

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52 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 21–28, 83–91.

53 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 47.

54 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 49.

55 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 116, 126.

- Polynesians do not use kites in fishing, which is common elsewhere in the Pacific.<sup>56</sup>
- Hair topknots and particularly reddened hair topknots appear in Polynesia and America but not elsewhere in the Pacific.<sup>57</sup>
- Cutting off a finger as a sign of mourning is a commonality between American and Polynesian natives, but it is not found elsewhere in the Pacific.<sup>58</sup>
- The cannibalistic practices of Maori and Northwest Indians are similar.<sup>59</sup>
- Maori and Northwest Indian traditions have many similarities including culture heroes,<sup>60</sup> sun-binding myths,<sup>61</sup> departed spirit voyages and direction,<sup>62</sup> and ancestral voyages from frozen climes.<sup>63</sup> They also use many virtually identical place names.<sup>64</sup>
- The sweet potato, which is very popular in Polynesia, came from America and has the same name in both places.<sup>65</sup> The same is true of the American hibiscus flower.<sup>66</sup>
- The cotton that is found in Polynesia has American, not Asian antecedents.<sup>67</sup>
- The American bottle gourd, or calabash, is found in Hawaii but not elsewhere in the Pacific.<sup>68</sup>

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56 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 138–139.

57 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 131.

58 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 140.

59 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 144.

60 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 151.

61 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 152.

62 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 152.

63 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 152–153.

64 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 757–763.

65 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 367, 389, 429–439.

66 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 485.

67 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 446–453.

68 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 439–446.

- There are other Andean plants in Hawaii which predate European discovery and are not found elsewhere in the Pacific.<sup>69</sup>
- Yam beans from South America appeared in Tonga and Fiji before European discovery.<sup>70</sup>
- If Polynesian origins are all Asian, why did the Polynesians not use rice in pre-European times? (Note that Heyerdahl speculates as to the reason why maize, too, does not exist in the Pacific.)<sup>71</sup>
- Cane and reed rafts appear in both America and Polynesia (but not elsewhere in the Pacific).<sup>72</sup>
- Both American and Polynesian traditions feature large, navigable freight rafts maneuvered dexterously with centerboards.<sup>73</sup> While double-hulled canoes appear elsewhere in the Pacific, the rafts do not.
- The Maori word *totara* is the same word used by Peruvians to describe the most buoyant wood for watercraft.<sup>74</sup>
- Both the Polynesian and American calendars focus on the *Pleiades*.<sup>75</sup>
- The same flutes and gourd whistles are used in Polynesia as in Peru.<sup>76</sup>
- Maori-Polynesian fighting methods, like the Northwest American Indian peoples feature slings and striking weapons rather than the bow and arrow more familiar in Asia and elsewhere in the Pacific.<sup>77</sup>

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69 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 469–473.

70 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 475.

71 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 488–496.

72 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 516–620.

73 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 538–553.

74 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 582.

75 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 644–649.

76 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 670–680.

77 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 695–697.

- The fishhook types used by the Northwest Americans are more similar to those used in Polynesia than are the fishhooks used elsewhere in the Pacific, which have more Asian affinities.<sup>78</sup>

Most scientists do not give Heyerdahl a fair hearing. Surely some material here bears further scientific investigation. Suggs's treatment of these findings is a good example of the customary unfairness attributed to Heyerdahl's research. While his denigration of Heyerdahl on grounds of anachronism cited above is a good read, it is much more disdainful than it needs to be and endorses the thought that Suggs was writing to an agenda. When that excessive mockery is coupled with the further fact that Suggs disdainfully denies the significance Heyerdahl placed upon the South American origins of the sweet potato or *kumara* (which has been vindicated by later scholarship), we have cause to set Suggs's views to one side as lacking desirable scholarly objectivity.

Nevertheless, it is not necessary to give Heyerdahl all the credit he has soaked up because of his fame and his notoriety. Many others have been prepared to concede more nuanced Pacific history and colonization than the current mainstream. Although Robert Heine-Geldern castigates Heyerdahl for all the culture he traces in Polynesia from America and particularly Peru<sup>79</sup> (Heine-Geldern says a stronger case can be made for those same cultural traits as having come from Asia<sup>80</sup>), he does credit Heyerdahl with resurrecting the Roland Dixon-WJ Thompson theory that the *kumara* was fetched to Polynesia from America by two-way journeys originating in Polynesia.<sup>81</sup> This same point has been given new life by Jose

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78 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki Expedition*, 129, 697–700.

79 Robert Heine-Geldern, "Heyerdahl's Hypothesis of Polynesian Origins: A Criticism," *The Geographical Journal*, October–December 1950, 183–192.

80 Heine-Geldern, *Heyerdahl's Hypothesis*, 183–192. In this respect, Heine-Geldern does not deviate at all from mainstream anthropology.

81 Heine-Geldern, *Heyerdahl's Hypothesis*, 190.

Ramirez's recent discovery of pre-Hispanic chicken bones in Southern Chile, which he says evidence some Hawaiian-Chumash connection.<sup>82</sup> While Robert Langdon was generally seen as a lovable nutter by university anthropologists, most will concede there may indeed be some Spanish DNA in parts of the Pacific for the reasons he states,<sup>83</sup> but they could not concede all that Langdon claimed as consequences of that concession.<sup>84</sup>

However, when one weighs together the work of all the Pacific anthropologists I have cited, it is remarkable how few have addressed the work of John Sorenson. I believe future generations will come to regard Professor Sorenson as one of the giants of anthropological scholarship, on whose shoulders others should have stood much sooner. Whereas he has made no claim to have been a Pacific anthropologist,<sup>85</sup> it is not just his magnum opus referred to above that should have been considered more seriously by the mainstream. He wrote his master's thesis on this very subject in 1952<sup>86</sup> after serving an LDS Church mission in Rarotonga, where he participated in amateur radio contact with Thor Heyerdahl's *Kon-Tiki* raft en route in 1947.<sup>87</sup> His monumental two-volume bibliography titled *Pre-Columbian Contact with America across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography*, first published in 1990 with Martin L. Raish<sup>88</sup> (updated and expanded in 1996),<sup>89</sup> contains abstracts

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82 See note 48.

83 Robert Langdon, *The Lost Caravel* (Sydney: Pacific Publications, 1975).

84 For example, see Howe, *Origins*, 130–132, 144.

85 John Sorenson, personal e-mail correspondence, January 4, 2013. Professor Sorenson is better known to Latter-day Saint scholars because he has challenged and vastly extended the boundaries of Book of Mormon scholarship beginning with his seminal book, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1985).

86 John L. Sorenson, "Evidences of Culture Contacts between Polynesia and the Americas in Pre-Columbian Times," (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1952).

87 John L. Sorenson, personal e-mail correspondence, January 4, 2013.

88 Sorenson and Raish, *Pre-Columbian Contact*, 1996.

89 Sorenson and Raish, *Pre-Columbian Contact*, 1996.

of more than 5,000 books and articles both for and against claimed or actual transoceanic voyaging and constitutes virtually the total relevant literature on the question up to the time of publication. Many of Professor Sorenson's abstracts in that work involve Polynesia, and although he turned 89 years old in 2013, he has a new text on diffusion ready for publication<sup>90</sup> to add to additional work published on this subject matter in 2004,<sup>91</sup> 2006,<sup>92</sup> and 2009.<sup>93</sup>

### Conclusion

The bottom line is that it is unscientific for contemporary anthropologists to perpetuate an understanding of Pacific anthropology that misleads their students and the public (especially the Pacific Island public) into believing that their story is a completely self-contained one of evolutionary Asian origins. On the balance of probabilities, it must be accepted that the story is much more nuanced than that. It is not only possible but likely that both drift and planned voyages from Latin and North America are a part of that story. It is also likely that Robert Langdon's idea that sailors from some lost European caravels may have contributed some of their DNA to the Pacific gene pool as well. Although species including *Homo sapiens* can adapt quickly to their environments, it is difficult to account for all the physiological differences in the Pacific by simple reference to local environments. People simply have not inhabited the area long enough. Certainly there are inter-island

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90 John L. Sorenson, personal e-mail correspondence, January 4, 2013.

91 Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, "Scientific Evidence for Pre-Columbian Transoceanic Voyages to and from the Americas," *Sino-Platonic Papers*, 133, CD-ROM ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania). [www.sino-platonic.org](http://www.sino-platonic.org).

92 Victor H. Mair, ed., *Perspectives on the Global Past*, vol. 2, *Biological Evidence for Pre-Columbian Transoceanic Voyages*, in *Contact and Exchange in the Ancient World* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 238–297.

93 Sorenson and Johannessen, *Exchanges Before 1492*.

environmental differences, but the Houghton suggestion that the Polynesian part of the Pacific Ocean is an essentially cold place, which has biologically required the evolution of some of the largest human bodies in the world's history, does not stack up too convincingly.

This article is thus a call to Pacific anthropologists to write the story a bit larger and perhaps to look scientifically for other possible explanations for the origin of mankind in the region. Would it be so bad if among all they said, they acknowledged that the early diffusionists may have gotten some things right, albeit for the wrong reasons?

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# A BRIEF HISTORY OF CRITICAL TEXT WORK ON THE BOOK OF MORMON

*Royal Skousen*

I begin this brief historical account of alternative work on the critical text of the Book of Mormon by including material that I wrote in an original, longer review of John S. Dinger's *Significant Textual Changes in the Book of Mormon* (Smith-Pettit Foundation: Salt Lake City, Utah, 2013). The final, shorter review appears in *BYU Studies* 53:1 (2014). The *Interpreter* recently published Robert F. Smith's review of Dinger. In these additional comments, I especially concentrate on work done in the 1970s by Stan Larson on the text of the Book of Mormon. In the latter part of this account, I discuss the more recent work of Shirley Heater in producing *The Book of Mormon: Restored Covenant Edition*.

## Critical Text Work Prior to 1988

One issue that I feel Dinger could deal with more justly is his history of previous critical text work on the Book of Mormon, found on pages xxvii-xxix of his introduction. First of all, I myself do not feel that Jerald and Sandra Tanner's 3,913 *Changes in the Book of Mormon* (1965) "deserves special mention." Although it lists all those changes from the 1830 edition to the then-current LDS edition (dating from 1920), most of the differences are insignificant changes involving typos, spelling, and grammatical editing, yet all of them are lumped together with the more important changes. A scholarly study of textual changes must distinguish between the different kinds of change, but since the Tanners' work is polemic and not

scholarly, it pointedly questions why there should be all these changes in the Book of Mormon if God gave the text in the first place. (Of course, they never ask this question of the biblical scriptures, which are definitely not textually invariant—or inerrant.) The assumptions of the Tanners’ book are so naive that it is not worth quoting in textual analysis of the Book of Mormon, much less listing it with the other studies that Dinger mentions. In contrast to the Tanners’ work, I have a paper online that describes in some details all the different kinds of changes that the Book of Mormon text has undergone: namely, “Textual Changes in the Book of Mormon”, <[fairlds.org](http://fairlds.org)>, posted February 2011 (although earlier forms of this paper have been online since 2002). In that paper, I point out, indirectly, that the Tanners undercounted the number by a considerable amount:

Now we come to the big topic that so many people are exercised over: How many changes are there in the Book of Mormon text? I don’t know for sure, and I’ll tell you why it’s hard to count them. In my computerized collation of the two manuscripts and 20 significant editions of the Book of Mormon, I can count the number of places of variation. These are places where there’s a textual variant. The variant itself can involve spelling, punctuation, words missing or added, a grammatical change, and so on. In all, there are about 105,000 places of variation in the computerized collation. For comparison, there are about 270,000 words in the Book of Mormon.

But even this number of variants, 105,000, is misleading. Suppose you have an example where the manuscripts have no punctuation, and the 1830 typesetter put in a semicolon and a later edition made it a colon; then even

later the colon was made a period, but finally it was changed back to a semicolon. All of these changes are listed under one variant; it's a single place of variation, but within that variant there could be 4 or 5 changes. So the real issue, borrowing from Proverbs, is "with all thy counting get understanding".

In that article I list the kinds of changes. First, there are changes in what we call the accidentals: (1) specifying chapters and verses; (2) paragraphing; (3) punctuation; (4) spelling of common English words; and (5) capitalization. Then I list the kinds of textually substantive changes: (1) spelling of names; (2) distinguishing between homophones (such as *rights* versus *rites*); (3) grammatical usage; (4) phraseology; (5) stylistic clarifications; and (6) changes that affect meaning. In my opinion, the second group of changes has the ones we need to count. At the end of the article, I discuss "five chestnuts", a handful of substantive textual changes that anti-Mormons have been complaining about for years. One simply cannot use the Tanners' work as a serious study of textual changes in the Book of Mormon text.

Jeffrey R. Holland's 1966 master's thesis lists some of the major textual changes in the early editions of the Book of Mormon. He has some interesting commentary in some places, but it is all easily recoverable by consulting those printed editions. Holland did not examine the manuscripts in this work, so there is no discussion of the changes that occurred during the earliest transmission of the text (in the manuscripts and in typesetting the 1830 edition). The first work to do that was Stan Larson's 1974 master's thesis, followed by other publications of his that dealt with the text of the Book of Mormon. In particular, Larson discussed the issue of homophones in the text and made a number of suggestions for certain words, most of which was adopted in the 1981 LDS edition.

Dinger, to be sure, refers to my work on the critical text project. And in footnote 41 on page xxvii he lists some other critical text work that has been done, namely, Lamoni Call's 1898 work, James Wardle's 1963 work, and the RLDS church historian Richard P. Howard's work in publications dating from 1969 and 1995. Unfortunately, Dinger fails to list the important precursor to the current critical text project, Robert F. Smith's 1984-87 work, *Book of Mormon Critical Text*, published by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) in three volumes (and in two editions). Indeed, Bob Smith's critical text is the first one ever published on the Book of Mormon! And Dinger surely knows about it since he lists (on page xxxiii) in his bibliography ("Abbreviations and Experts Consulted") an article of mine in which I published 8 pages (56-63) reviewing the FARMS critical text, namely "Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon", *BYU Studies* 30/1 (Winter 1990), 41-69. And I also discuss Smith's critical text on page 8 of Bradford and Coutts' edited work, *Uncovering the Original Text of the Book of Mormon*, also listed on page xxxiii of Dinger's bibliography. One wonders how one could find the works done by Lamoni Call and James Wardle, yet somehow miss FARMS's original project done under Bob Smith. To be sure, there is no reference to Shirley Heater's work (described below), but it is likely that Dinger knew nothing of her work since it is by RLDS researchers.

### **Larson's Foreword to Dinger's 2013 Work**

It is also worth commenting on Stan Larson's foreword in Dinger's critical text and his, Larson's, brief history of the textual criticism of the Book of Mormon. One observation seems immediate: Larson's foreword appears to have been written independently of Dinger's work. First of all, Larson claims that Dinger's book "represents an important step in documenting and tracking the changes in a way that is clear

to the current reader” (page vii). Perhaps it represents an important step – but it’s in the wrong direction, showing us how not to do a critical edition. Larson further claims that Dinger “has succeeded in presenting these changes in an easy-to-follow format” (page vii), which is not even close to being true. One might seriously wonder if Larson even looked over Dinger’s text and actually tried to use it. Larson also adds that this work will “greatly facilitate the appreciation of the Book of Mormon and its textual development and history” (page vii). If anything, Dinger’s system, by omitting variation within the manuscripts and in the early printed editions, obscures (and in some cases, hides) the actual textual history.

Larson also implies that Dinger is careful in that “he does not attempt to suggest reasons for the changes [or] to discuss their possible significance” (page vii). To be sure, commentary on the changes is definitely not expected in a critical edition. That’s because there isn’t room for it. In the appendix to the Yale edition of the Book of Mormon, for instance, I list 719 textually significant changes in the history of the Book of Mormon (see pages 745-789). But I point out, in order to understand these changes listed on 45 pages, one must refer to the 4,060 pages contained in volume 4 of the critical text, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon* (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies: Provo, Utah, 2004-2009). In many respects, the traditional critical text is now outdated. One gets a text (either an eclectic text or a base text) plus an apparatus listing variants, but little else. Typically in an introduction, there will be a brief description of the textual sources and statements about their significance. And I provide that in the Yale edition. But the listing of changes means little except to the scholarly reader, who uses the critical text as a convenient summary. To get the analysis, one has to go elsewhere.

For instance, one can have a copy of the critical text of the Greek New Testament in hand (either the United Bible Societies' *The Greek New Testament* or the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*), but to understand why the editors have chosen a particular reading for this eclectic text, one must go elsewhere. A good beginning is Bruce Metzger's *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, which specifically explains the reasons for the editors' choices in the Greek New Testament critical text. Or there is the more recent and longer work by Philip Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*. A novice cannot just look at the apparatus of the Greek New Testament critical text and really understand why codex B, say, is accepted in one case but not in another.

The same holds for the critical text of the Book of Mormon. This is why I constantly refer readers to the six books in volume 4 of the critical text. Of course, what we need in this modern-day world of computers are online electronic texts where textual variants are listed and then linked to the commentary (as well as photographic images of the textual sources). That day will come, I predict, when scholars and owners of manuscripts and texts will finally see the vision of how to do it all. In the meantime, Larson—in his foreword to Dinger's work—lists about two dozen textual changes in the Book of Mormon and comments on the reasons for the changes and their significance. And I have discussed virtually every one of Dinger's footnoted changes in my own *Analysis of Textual Variants* (ATV), since it can be shown that Dinger derived his changes from what I discussed in ATV.

### Conjectural Emendations in the Text

Larson further notes, seemingly with approval, that Dinger never offers "his own emendations and/or 'correct' readings" (page vii), which indeed many textual critics also avoid in their critical editions. But other critics may decide to supply

some conjectures in the notes, sometimes even in an eclectic text, which in any event are identified as emendations and are often accompanied by the names of those who first proposed them. Yet it is also worth pointing out that many of the changes that scribes, typesetters, and editors have made in the text of the Book of Mormon over the years are, in fact, conjectural emendations, and the numbers are surprisingly high:

Oliver Cowdery made 131 conjectures in O and in P;

John Gilbert, the 1830 typesetter, made 167 conjectures in the 1830 edition;

Joseph Smith made 198 conjectures in his editing for the 1837 edition, and he made 19 more for the 1840 edition;

Orson Pratt made 8 conjectures in the 1849 British edition;

Franklin and Samuel Richards made 17 conjectures in the 1852 British edition;

Orson Pratt made 9 more conjectures in the 1879 edition;

German Ellsworth, the Northern States mission president in Chicago, made 8 conjectures in several editions published from 1905 through 1911;

James Talmage made 130 conjectures in the 1920 edition;

and the 1981 LDS scriptures committee made 10 conjectures.

In fact, this insertion of conjectures into the text holds for virtually any text that has a textual history: it will contain textual emendations that were conjectures when they first

entered the text. So Dinger's footnotes contain emendations and corrected readings that were made earlier in the history of the Book of Mormon text. I have recently discussed this issue at some length because some seem to think that conjectural emendation has never played a role (or should never play a role) in the history of the Book of Mormon text or in the recovery of its original text. As Larson states, Dinger "leaves these tasks to other researchers".

To be sure, I have proposed quite a few emendations to the text in the six parts of volume 4 of the critical text, *Analysis of Textual Variants*. And in volume 4, I provide evidence for making these emendations. And since many of them appear now in the Yale edition of the Book of Mormon (2009), they are part of the textual history and can now be listed as actual variants! For additional discussion, see my recent article "The Original Text of the Book of Mormon and its Publication by Yale University Press", *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, volume 7 (2013), 57-96, available online at <MormonInterpreter.com>, posted on 27 September 2013.

### Engaging in the Scholarly Debate

I will briefly say here that there is often much to disagree with Larson on in his interpretation of the reason and significance for the changes he discusses. I will not go into these differences here because one should go to *Analysis of Textual Variants* to see what I have had to say there. In particular, I discuss all of Larson's own proposals for changes in the text (including conjectural emendations), many of which were adopted in the 1981 LDS edition; in ATV, I identify 22 of his proposals, by name and accompanied by the appropriate bibliographic reference.

I might add here that in some of his commentary in this foreword to Dinger's work, Larson does not fully engage in arguments that I have proposed in ATV. He writes as if those



arguments don't exist. See especially his discussion (on page xi) of the issues regarding the proposal to the change of the name *Benjamin* to *Mosiah* in Mosiah 21:28 and Ether 4:1. There is internal evidence for maintaining the earliest reading in these two passages, namely *Benjamin*. In his foreword, Larson ignores this evidence and dismisses the occurrence of *Benjamin* by simply relying on a quote from Sidney Sperry that the use of the name *Benjamin* in these two passages is "an out-and-out-error". Yet Larson ignores Hugh Nibley's statement in support of *Benjamin*, including a letter that Nibley himself wrote to Larson some years ago (which Larson reproduced in his MA thesis – and which I quote in ATV). Here in his foreword, Larson does not engage in the ongoing scholarly discussion, nor does he mention it. I devote over three pages to this issue in ATV.

In the same exclusionary way, Larson discusses the restoration of various readings in the 1981 LDS edition and implies that in one case he single-handedly took extra measures to make sure that the longer original reading in Alma 32:30 showed up in that edition (see his discussion on pages viii and ix). Yet the RLDS church restored those readings a long time ago in their 1908 edition, and this cannot be passed over in silence. See ATV regarding the dittography in 3 Nephi 22:4 and the visual skip in Alma 32:30, both first noted (and corrected) by RLDS editors.

### Reading the Textual Sources

Larson makes some mistakes in how he interprets the texts. For instance, he says that in O for 1 Nephi 15:36 (discussed on page xiii) the *s* of *seperated* "has to be supplied. In this case, it is not just illegible, it is due to the fact that this part of the leaf is missing." This is not quite correct. The *s* is partially extant. Most of the *s* is there, at the edge of a loose fragment. You can read the *s*. It is not conjectured. This is what (s)eperated, my

transcript of the word in volume 1 of the critical text, actually means: the *s* within the parentheses is still partially extant.

Another example is Larson's description of the textual variant in 2 Nephi 33:4 (discussed on page xiii). He says that all printed editions read "the **words** which I have written in weakness", when in actual fact the 1830 edition reads "the **things** which I have written in weakness" (which is identical to how the printer's manuscript originally read until Joseph Smith emended *things* to *word* in his editing of P for the 1837 edition). In fact, Dinger has this variation correctly recorded on page 90 (here, for once, Dinger distinguishes between the original reading in P and Joseph's correction of it):

the **things**<sup>749</sup> which I have written in weakness

749. PMs: things; PMs-cor: ~~things~~ word; 1837: words.

This kind of mistake only confirms my conclusion that Larson wrote his foreword independently of Dinger's text, and apparently no one checked the details of his foreword before going to press.

### Examining the Actual Manuscripts or Photographs of Them

Larson makes a point of how he discovered errors in the original manuscript, including the visual skip in Alma 32:30: "In 1972, with a magnifying glass in hand, I read the extant leaves of the Original Manuscript" (page viii). In contrast, I discovered in my own work with the original manuscript that it was much easier to find errors in the text by not trying to read the actual manuscript (which is very difficult to read except for the first part of 1 Nephi) but by examining the ultraviolet photographs of the manuscript that were made by Ernst Koehler for the LDS Church between 1949 and 1954. Dean Jessee, in his 1970 article in *BYU Studies* on the original manuscript confirms this assessment of mine: "These photographs offer the best means for reading the text of the manuscript." I always assumed that

Larson would have also used these photographs in his work on O. Maybe we should take his word on this, especially when we consider the large number of newly discovered readings in O that were missed by Larson. It would be helpful in evaluating Larson's work if he provided a more in-depth account of his work on the original manuscript in Salt Lake City (and the work he did later on the printer's manuscript or with the large photocopy of P, called the copyflow, that the RLDS church archivists typically provided to researchers in Independence in those days).

### The Poor Spelling in the Original Manuscript

I feel some need to comment on Larson's evaluation of the original manuscript near the beginning of his foreword: "The Original Manuscript is inferior to the other texts in such non-essentials as spelling, capitalization, and grammar" (page vii). This idea, I believe, was first promoted by Dick Howard in 1969 in the first edition of his *Restoration Scriptures* and repeated in his second edition in 1995. On pages 12-17 of the second edition, Howard argues that the original manuscript (what he prefers to call "the Dictated Manuscript") should be considered "a first draft" and that the printer's manuscript (what he prefers to call "the Emended Manuscript") shows various refinements in the text, thus providing "a more readable, grammatically correct text for the first edition of 1830" (page 12). Howard then provides a three-column comparison between the two manuscripts and the 1830 edition for the text found on page 10 of O (covering 1 Nephi 7:3-17). And he shows how P improves on the numerous mistakes in spelling and capitalization in O. Indeed it does! And that's because here O and P were written by different scribes: O was written by scribe 3 of O, possibly Christian Whitmer, and P was written by Oliver Cowdery. But Oliver was not emending scribe 3's accidentals; instead, he was

using his own accidentals (spellings and punctuation) as he copied the text of O into P.

The problem in making the comparison for this part of the text is that these two scribes show considerable differences in their spelling abilities. Scribe 3 of O was, to be sure, a third-rate speller; Oliver Cowdery was a second-rate speller; and the 1830 typesetter, John Gilbert, was a first-rate speller. Thus we see a steady improvement in spelling and capitalization in going from O to P and then from P to the 1830 edition. If Howard had compared portions of O and P that were both written in Oliver Cowdery's hand (such as virtually anything in the book of Alma), he would have discovered no real difference at all. (He probably chose to compare the text here in 1 Nephi because the leaves of O were much easier to read.) Ultimately, there is no real emendation of the text in going from O to P, in either accidentals or substantives. Oliver's spelling and capitalization is basically the same. And Oliver tends to create incorrect readings and omit words and phrases, so the text actually deteriorates rather than improves. Oliver isn't trying to emend the text; he's just trying to copy it (and he follows his own spelling and capitalization).

There are some words that Oliver Cowdery learned to spell correctly as the 1830 edition was being typeset (Oliver was usually the one who proofed the 1830 signatures against the manuscript), and so for some words his spelling between O and P improved. For instance, when Oliver got to 3 Nephi 12:12 of P, he had finally learned how to spell the word *exceeding*(ly), with the double *e* after the *xc*. Prior to that, Oliver had consistently spelled the word with a single *e* after the *xc*, as *exceding*(ly), in O and also in P up through 3 Nephi 8:21. Having actually learned how to spell a word correctly, Oliver wrote it that way, as we would expect. But in some cases, Oliver had difficulty learning the correct spelling, and he switched back and forth before finally settling in on the correct spelling. For instance,

Oliver wrote three instances of the correct *fought* (in Alma 43-49 of O), then he followed that by seven instances of *faught* in Alma 52-60 of O before switching back to the correct *fought* in O (at Alma 62) and continuing with *fought* into P (at Omni). Then suddenly, when he got to Mosiah 9 in P, Oliver switched back to *faught* (with four instances in a row in Mosiah), but then finally, when he got to Alma 43 in P, he used the standard *fought* all the way to the end (26 times). In each case, Oliver used his current spelling; his only problem was that he had difficulty making up his mind about how to spell *fought*. In no case was he trying to emend the spelling in O.

### The Critical Text Work of Shirley Heater

Beginning in 1985, an independent RLDS researcher, Shirley Heater, worked on producing *The Book of Mormon: Restored Covenant Edition* (RCE), and by 1999 it had been published by the Zarahemla Research Foundation (ZRF) of Independence, Missouri. Heater's book announces itself on its title page as the "Restored Covenant Edition / With text restored to its purity from the Original and Printer's Manuscripts". The grammar is regularized, so the RCE is not technically "the original text" but a grammatically adjusted, reconstructed recension of it. Nonetheless, Heater had published a text based in part on my work. She had consulted with me several times in the 1990s, and early on I had provided her with information about some of the changes in the Book of Mormon text as well as allowing her to use an early version of my transcript of the original manuscript for 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi. (My complete transcriptions for the two Book of Mormon manuscripts were finally published in 2001.)

It soon became apparent that Heater would publish her text of the Book of Mormon before my transcripts would appear, so I decided to hold back on providing access to all of my findings. However, through diligent work on her own she

was able to recover many of the other original readings from various photographs of the original manuscript (in part from a difficult-to-read microfilm version that the LDS Church had earlier provided to some archival libraries). In fact, her 1999 publication of the Book of Mormon shows that she was able to recover about 78 percent of the significant textual changes that have been found from examining the original manuscript or improved photographs of it. A summary of the textual sources for the RCE can be found in the ZRF's 2000 publication, *A Comparison of the Book of Mormon Manuscripts & Editions*, acknowledged as coming from Shirley Heater's work, although there is no mention of my work in that publication. She does acknowledge it, though, in research materials published by ZRF in 1992 under her own name.

Basically, Heater and I were in continual correspondence in the early years of the critical text project, and I provided her with a good number of changes in the text based on my early work on the transcript of the original manuscript. I did not have any problem with what Heater and other researchers might do with my work on the manuscripts, although I wanted my complete transcripts to be published first. As I have said many times, the Book of Mormon is for the whole world. The printer's manuscript is owned by the Community of Christ (formerly the RLDS Church), and clearly they (and others) should be allowed to use the results of my work. In her published research materials, Heater always acknowledged her debt to the Book of Mormon critical text project. I have always intended for the results of my work to be used by the LDS Church, the RLDS Church, and the Bickertonites from the Pittsburgh area (in fact, their scriptures committee visited me a number of times in the 1990s).

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