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QUESTIONING: THE DIVINE PLAN

Daniel C. Peterson

Some critics of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, chiefly of the secular variety, claim that Latter-day Saints are mind-controlled robots who are forbidden to think for themselves. I collected an example of this claim nearly twenty years ago that will serve to represent many other such expressions before and since.

On 3 March 1997, a caller named Laurie (or something similar) phoned in to a program on Salt Lake City's television station KUTV (Channel 2) called "Take Two." The host, Rod Decker, had been discussing past disagreements among the General Authorities with his two guests, D. Michael Quinn and Marvin Hill. Speaking with obvious irony, she wanted to know how such disagreements could possibly occur, since Mormonism forbids unregulated individual opinion:

Laurie: "Mormon scripture itself discourages independent thought when it states that, and I quote, 'The thinking has already *been* done,' and when independent thought —"

Rod Decker: "All right. I'll ask him that, okay? We've heard that. 'When the Church leaders speak, the thinking has been done.'"¹

To my frustration, neither Mr. Decker, Dr. Quinn, nor Dr. Hill challenged the substance of the quoted passage, nor did anyone ask the caller for a scriptural reference.

The source for the statement in question is actually a June 1945 ward teachers' message, and it doesn't occur in any Latter-day Saint scriptural book. Since its first appearance seventy years ago, however, it has become quite popular among certain critics of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Back in the early 1980s, for example, in an article addressed to intellectually inclined religious skeptics, George D.

1 I cite my own transcription of the exchange.

Smith, the owner of Signature Books, cited the statement as evidence of the true nature of Mormonism.²

In 1986, in response to such claims, a private 1945 repudiation of the statement by George Albert Smith was published in the Mormon-oriented journal *Dialogue*.³ Since, at the time of his repudiation, George Albert Smith was the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, some of us fondly hoped that his forceful rejection of the statement would euthanize it. After all, as the June 1945 ward teachers' message itself explains, "When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. ... When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy."

But such hopes were naïve. Probably no other ward teachers' message from the 1940s is remembered today. This one, however, lives on. Despite the 1986 *Dialogue* article, for example, one critic used it to criticize the church during an address to the 1991 annual meeting of the Mormon History Association.⁴ And a simple search on the key words from the statement will easily find scores of sites where it's still used to reveal the alleged truth about Mormonism.

In that light, I would like to submit a few brief words in favor of thinking and questioning.

The restoration of the Gospel in the latter days began with earnest questions. Consider, for instance, the canonized statement from Joseph Smith about the circumstances leading to his First Vision:

In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these

2 George D. Smith, "Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon," *Free Inquiry* 4 (Winter 1983/84): 27.

3 The full text of the ward teaching message, as well as that of a letter of concerned inquiry that it inspired from Rev. J. Raymond Cope and the important reply of President George Albert Smith, can be found in "A 1945 Perspective," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19/1 (1986): 35–9. For a different (and, since they were career anti-Mormons, predictably hostile) viewpoint on the exchange between Rev. Cope and Pres. Smith, see Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Mormon Purge* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1993), 56. In a remarkable passage, the Tanners effectively contended that Pres. Smith's statement, in which he refused to assume the role of a religious dictator, must be rejected. Why? Because, they contended, he and his successors and colleagues actually want to be religious dictators and, thus, deny that anybody ever has a right to reject or even question their statements.

4 Edward H. Ashment, "Canon and the Historian," a paper presented at the 26th annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, 1 June 1991, page 10.

parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?

While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at length came to the determination to “ask of God,” concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture.

So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt.⁵

We all know the spectacular, even world-transforming, answer that Joseph Smith received when he went into that grove of trees near his home with some questions and a desire for wisdom. It was, certainly, a far bigger answer than he had anticipated.

And the public portion of his prophetic ministry, effectively the rest of his life, also began with questions:

On the evening of the above-mentioned twenty-first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me, that I might know of my state and standing before him.⁶

There followed the appearance of Moroni and the recovery of the Book of Mormon, which is the founding and distinctive text of the restored church.

The importance of asking questions and the assurances that God will answer them runs like a *leitmotif* throughout the Book of Mormon.

5 Joseph Smith-History 1:10–11, 13–14.

6 Joseph Smith-History 1:29.

Nephi, for example, tries to encourage his rebellious and disobedient older brothers to ask:

For he truly spake many great things unto them, which were hard to be understood, save a man should inquire of the Lord; and they being hard in their hearts, therefore they did not look unto the Lord as they ought. ...

And I [Nephi] said unto them: Have ye inquired of the Lord?⁷

In counseling his son Corianton, the prophet Alma recalls his own questioning, which had led him to deeper doctrinal understanding:

Behold, [the Lord] bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead. But behold, my son, the resurrection is not yet. Now, I unfold unto you a mystery; nevertheless, there are many mysteries which are kept, that no one knoweth them save God himself. But I show unto you one thing which I have inquired diligently of God that I might know — that is concerning the resurrection. ...

Therefore, there is a time appointed unto men that they shall rise from the dead; and there is a space between the time of death and the resurrection. And now, concerning this space of time, what cometh of the souls of men is the thing which I have inquired diligently of the Lord to know; and this is the thing of which I do know.⁸

A letter of the prophet Mormon, preserved and cited by his son Moroni, recounts how that late Nephite leader, troubled by disputes concerning the baptism of very young children, had gone to the Lord in prayer with questions on the subject:

For immediately after I had learned these things of you I inquired of the Lord concerning the matter. And the word of the Lord came to me by the power of the Holy Ghost.⁹

The entire missionary program of the Church of Jesus Christ is, in fact, predicated upon the necessity of seekers asking and of God granting light in response:

⁷ 1 Nephi 15:3, 8.

⁸ Alma 40:3, 9.

⁹ Moroni 8:7.

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.¹⁰

“Ask,” said the Savior in his Sermon on the Mount, “and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”¹¹

The story of the brother of Jared, recounted in the book of Ether in the Book of Mormon, provides an especially instructive case of asking questions. In preparation for the approaching transoceanic voyage, the Jaredites, under his direction, have constructed special seafaring vessels. But they’re so tightly sealed that he wonders how the passengers traveling in them will be able to have any light. “Behold, O Lord, wilt thou suffer that we shall cross this great water in darkness?”¹²

But the Lord doesn’t respond with a simple answer. Instead, he replies with a question of his own (“What will ye that I should do that ye may have light in your vessels?”), offering a pair of possible solutions to the problem but pointing out their impracticability.¹³ The situation, the Lord indicates, is really quite difficult, in view of the nature of the boats and the voyage they’re about to undertake. “Therefore,” he asks again, “what will ye that I should prepare for you that ye may have light when ye are swallowed up in the depths of the sea?”¹⁴

If the brother of Jared was expecting merely to ask a question and receive a simple answer in response, he was surely disappointed. Instead, the Lord has encouraged him to give his own thought to the problem and to return with his own proposed solution to it. And that, of course, is exactly what he does (as recorded in the following chapter), and it leads to one of the most remarkable theophanies in all of scripture. It’s yet another illustration of the principle that “out of small things” (in this

10 Moroni 10:4–5.

11 Matthew 7:7.

12 Ether 2:22.

13 See Ether 2:23.

14 See Ether 2:24–25.

case, an inquiry about interior lighting for some boats, and a proposal involving a few rocks) “proceedeth that which is great.”¹⁵

The Lord doesn’t intend for us to be marionettes. He has no intention of being our puppeteer:

Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves.¹⁶

In an April 1829 revelation given to Oliver Cowdery through Joseph Smith at Harmony, Pennsylvania, the Lord offers a commentary on the general principle that seems to be involved here. Oliver had sought to be included in the process of retrieving the Book of Mormon, not merely as a scribe but as, himself, a translator. But he expected the translation to simply be handed to him, apparently without significant effort on his part. “Behold,” the Lord gently chided him,

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

But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.¹⁷

Perhaps, in its own way, Doctrine and Covenants 88, the wonderful revelation given at Kirtland, Ohio, through the Prophet Joseph Smith at the very end of 1832 and the beginning of 1833, also provides some insight into this principle:

And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.¹⁸

In other words, questions about the Gospel aren’t to be posed in a purely secular and academic way, though conventional tools of careful

15 Doctrine and Covenants 64:33.

16 Doctrine and Covenants 58:28.

17 Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–8.

18 Doctrine and Covenants 88:118.

reading, gathering information, thought, and analysis are often both relevant and appropriate. Nor are they to be asked in a merely passive manner, expecting the Lord to do our work for us while we simply sit back and wait (preferably not too long).

A few more examples of righteous and appropriate questioning may be helpful:

When Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were ordained to the Aaronic priesthood under the hands of the resurrected John the Baptist, this significant event — marking the return of divine priesthood authority to the earth, presaging the imminent restoration of the Melchizedek priesthood, and permitting the first divinely authorized baptisms in many centuries — came in response to questions that arose from their translation of the Book of Mormon and from a desire for greater understanding: “We ... went into the woods,” Joseph Smith later wrote, “to pray and inquire of the Lord respecting baptism for the remission of sins, that we found mentioned in the translation of the plates.”¹⁹

According to the note that precedes it in the published scripture text, Section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants records

A vision given to Joseph Smith the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon, at Hiram, Ohio, February 16, 1832. Prefacing the record of this vision, Joseph Smith’s history states: “Upon my return from Amherst conference, I resumed the translation of the Scriptures. From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of man had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled. It appeared self-evident from what truths were left, that if God rewarded every one according to the deeds done in the body the term ‘Heaven,’ as intended for the Saints’ eternal home, must include more kingdoms than one. Accordingly, ... while translating St. John’s Gospel, myself and Elder Rigdon saw the following vision.” At the time this vision was given, the Prophet was translating John 5:29.

Plainly, Joseph and Sidney had been intensively involved with a studious reading of the New Testament, which prepared them for the reception of a remarkable revelation:

19 Joseph Smith-History 1:68. See, altogether, JS-H 1:68–73 and Doctrine and Covenants 13.

By the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God.²⁰

The revelation on celestial and plural marriage, too, came about because of questions occasioned by study. (Time and time again, and perhaps never more clearly than in this case, Joseph Smith's prophetic ministry illustrates the rule, "Be careful what you ask for!")

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired of my hand to know and understand wherein I, the Lord, justified my servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also Moses, David and Solomon, my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine of their having many wives and concubines —

Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter.²¹

Doctrine and Covenants 119, which provides the financial basis for the church, is a

Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Far West, Missouri, July 8, 1838, in answer to his supplication: "O Lord! Show unto thy servants how much thou requirest of the properties of thy people for a tithing."²²

Many of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, along with many of the Prophet's insights incorporated into the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, apparently came in response to his wondering questions. Sometimes, though, they left him still wondering:

I was once praying very earnestly to know the time of the coming of the Son of Man, when I heard a voice repeat the following:

Joseph, my son, if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years old, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man; therefore let this suffice, and trouble me no more on this matter.

20 Doctrine and Covenants 76:12.

21 Doctrine and Covenants 132:1-2.

22 From the explanatory preface immediately preceding Doctrine and Covenants 119.

I was left thus, without being able to decide whether this coming referred to the beginning of the millennium or to some previous appearing, or whether I should die and thus see his face.

I believe the coming of the Son of Man will not be any sooner than that time.²³

Many more such examples could be given of questioning by church leaders and the answers that have come in response, but I cite just one in passing: The historic revelation that came to President Spencer W. Kimball in June 1978, extending the blessings of ordination to the priesthood to all worthy male members of the Church of Jesus Christ, came after a lengthy period of study and reflection. In other words, of questions.²⁴

The Interpreter Foundation is fundamentally committed to the faithful asking of questions and, to the best of our ability, to answering them. This is no merely academic exercise, an indulgence in curiosity for the sake of curiosity. It's an attempt to comply with the scriptural admonition to "feast upon the words of Christ."²⁵ Not merely to sample them, but to "feast" upon them.

Interpreter's approach is only one of several appropriate ways to do so, but it is, we believe, a legitimate way, consistent with scriptural examples and the historic experiences of modern prophets.

And if thou wilt inquire, thou shalt know mysteries which are great and marvelous; therefore thou shalt exercise thy gift, that thou mayest find out mysteries, that thou mayest bring many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, convince them of the error of their ways.²⁶

Daniel C. Peterson (*Ph.D., University of California at Los Angeles*) is a professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University and is the founder of the University's Middle Eastern Texts Initiative, for which he served as editor-in-chief until mid-August 2013. He has

23 Doctrine and Covenants 130:14–17.

24 See, e.g., Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2005), 195–224.

25 2 Nephi 32:3.

26 Doctrine and Covenants 6:11.

published and spoken extensively on both Islamic and Mormon subjects. Formerly chairman of the board of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) and an officer, editor, and author for its successor organization, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, his professional work as an Arabist focuses on the Qur'an and on Islamic philosophical theology. He is the author, among other things, of a biography entitled Muhammad: Prophet of God (Eerdmans, 2007).

THREE STREAMS OF GRATITUDE FOR JESUS

Mitt Romney

Note from the editors: *In remembrance of the Easter celebration of Jesus' victory over death, we are pleased to offer this specially written contribution from Mitt Romney.*

Three streams of gratitude for Jesus have arisen during my lifetime. The first crested when as a child, fearing polio or tornadoes or intruders, I learned that "Jesus loves me." Not only did "the Bible tell me so," but also my mother and my Bishop. I felt Jesus looking down on me, protecting me, caring for me, answering my prayers. As life progressed, I came to learn that Jesus would not always intervene to shield me from the trials and travails of life, but I knew that He loved me and cared.

As a young man, it was the felicity of His gospel that grew in my heart. I was poised to make choices that would determine my mortal happiness. He had taught that love, family, friends, and service were the real currency of joy. With faith in that gospel, I married, raised children, nourished friendships, and endeavored to serve. And so the wealth in my heart grew beyond my imagining.

Now, approaching my autumn years, it is His victory over death that most captivates me. For sixty or so years of Easter Sundays, I have sung "He is Risen," but for most of those years, I somehow felt that there was no real end in sight to my earth-bound life. Now, however, His condescension to live in mortality, to carry my sins, and then to rise to immortality is no longer just a chapter of doctrine, it is a gift of such magnitude that I cannot find sufficient words to express my gratitude. From the dark of never-ending nothingness, of eternal blindness, and of infinite absence from my family, He opens my eyes, my mind, and my heart. That He rose from the dead is His greatest gift of all.

Mitt Romney graduated from Brigham Young University in English, earned degrees from Harvard Business School and Harvard Law School, served as chief executive officer of Bain & Company, and then co-founded and led Bain Capital. After leading the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, he was elected Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In 2012, he was nominated by the Republican Party for the presidency of the United States of America.

A WELCOME INTRODUCTION

Gregory L. Smith

Review of Brian C. Hales and Laura H. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015, 198 pages + index.

Introduction¹

Brian C. Hales has established himself as an authority on Latter-day Saint plural marriage. Following his initial award-winning work on “fundamentalist” plural marriage,² Hales produced an impressive and exhaustive three-volume history of Joseph Smith’s polygamy and its attendant theology.³ (Throughout the review, when referring to this longer work, I will denominate it *JSP*.)

The study of plural marriage has long been hampered by difficult-to-access primary sources and a secondary literature that of necessity quoted only excerpts, often of the more sensationalistic variety. It

1 In the interests of disclosure, readers should know that Brian Hales and I have collaborated on a review of a work on plural marriage (Brian C. Hales and Gregory L. Smith, “A Response to Grant Palmer’s ‘Sexual Allegations against Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Polygamy in Nauvoo,’” 12 [2014]: 183–236, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/a-response-to-grant-palmers-sexual-allegations-against-joseph-smith-and-the-beginnings-of-polygamy-in-nauvoo/>). Our shared interest in the topic has led us independently to similar conclusions, and Brian has persuaded me on several points. I also consider him and his wife Laura to be friends.

2 Brian C. Hales and J. Max Anderson, *The Priesthood of Modern Polygamy: A LDS Perspective* (Northwest Publishing, 1992); Brian C. Hales, *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: The Generations after the Manifesto* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2006) [winner of the John Whitmer History Association award for Best Book]; *Setting the Record Straight: Mormon Fundamentalism* (Millennial Press, 2012).

3 Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2013).

is probably safe to say that no author has approached the topic with absolute neutrality or anything like it, and some treatments have been discouragingly partisan.⁴

Hales' three-volume work addresses this challenge by aiming to cite or quote from every known document discussing Joseph Smith's plural marriages. As a further gift to the historical community and interested lay readers, Hales has made digital scans of all his primary source material available for free online.⁵ Even if they reject his conclusions, future authors must necessarily confront the data which Hales and his research assistant, Don Bradley, have amassed.

As often happens, efforts to resolve one problem have created another. Rather than being hungry for primary source data, today's beginners may feel they drown in it. Non-historians, especially interested members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, may find 1500-page tomes filled with footnotes (or thousands of digitally scanned documents) overwhelming. Hales and his wife, Laura H., have together authored a short work (fewer than 200 pages main text) — a primer on Joseph Smith's plural marriages. (I will label this shorter work by its subtitle, *Toward a Better Understanding* — *TaBU*.)

Theology First

In *JSP*, Hales wisely treated the history of plural marriage first, reserving his reconstruction of Joseph's marital theology for the third and final volume. Since we know relatively little about how Joseph understood his plural marriages, this is wise, since conclusions about his theology will necessarily be more speculative and inferential. In *TaBU*, the authors take the opposite approach. I initially found this jarring, since in my own research and teaching, I've opted for the "history first" approach. As I proceeded further, however, I began to appreciate their wisdom — in a work targeted at the polygamy novice, this helps ground the reader. Concepts which align with common LDS ideas regarding sealings are

4 The classic example would be Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945). A more modern incarnation of the same thesis, marred by similar flaws and a poorly-disguised agenda, is George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy: "...but we called it celestial marriage"* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008). For a review of the latter, see my "George D. Smith's *Nauvoo Polygamy*," *FARMS Review* 20/2 (2008): 37–123, <http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1431&index=4>.

5 Brian C. Hales, "Mormon Polygamy Documents: A Research Database," <http://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/> (accessed 28 March 2015).

introduced, and differences from current practice can also be explained. This has the effect, I think, of easing the reader from familiar territory into the more unfamiliar realm of early LDS marriage and sealing doctrines and practice. Readers should remember that Hales has elsewhere spelled out the *reasons* for his conclusions in *JSP* — *TaBU* is the executive summary.

TaBU's approach also differs from the standard historical format by interfacing more directly with the reader's expectations, fears, and experience as they confront the material. The authors write sympathetically

From a mortal standpoint, the practice [of polygamy] does not seem to be fair because polygamy expands a man's emotional and sexual opportunities as a husband as it simultaneously diminishes a woman's emotional and sexual opportunities as a wife. We might speculate that in the celestial kingdom plural wives will not feel any different from monogamous wives because Heavenly Father is a just God, but those details have not been revealed (xvi).

I suspect that the insight here derives in good measure from Laura, who has not yet had Brian's lengthy immersion in this material (though I heard him express similar ideas prior to their marriage). As a relative newcomer to the historical matter, she can probably better empathize with the reactions of those who encounter such details for the first time, and that dynamic has not been neglected in *TaBU*.

This is not to charge Brian with a lack of sympathy but simply to highlight what I've noticed in myself — prolonged engagement with these ideas can cause us to forget how foreign some of the concepts were and are. Authors are well advised to retain their appreciation for this fact while not erring in the opposite direction to play up sensationalistic, presentist, or voyeuristic elements for polemical purposes. Retaining a sense of the alien culture of plural marriage helps engage modern audiences more effectively and perhaps helps ensure that one is not unwittingly smoothing out the rough edges.

If the past is a foreign country where they do things differently, the plural marriage past is almost guaranteed to provoke some initial culture shock. The Haleses seem to realize this, advising the reader early on:

It is important to maintain a clear perspective, realizing these stories, though outside our realm of experience and maybe understanding, are essentially historical minutia in relation

to the significance of the gospel. ... If clarity is lost, rereading or taking a break may be helpful. ...

Doubt is not the enemy of faith any more than faith is the remedy for doubt. The genuine antidote for doubt is more knowledge, which is gained through the continual search for truth no matter its source — spiritual or secular (x–xi).

But, while acknowledging that the material can be challenging, *TaBU* is no neutral recital — the authors approach their task as believers in Joseph Smith and the Church he founded:

Ronald Esplin ... related, “I hope you will understand the point that our work [on the Joseph Smith Papers Project] is not designed to defend Joseph Smith so much as to understand him ... [I]f we will do that, understand him, he will come off just fine. Since he is who he said he was, his life and works can withstand scrutiny. There is no need to distort the historical record, but a great need ... to understand it.” ...

[Haleses continue] Studying the actual history rather than relying on sensational sound bites can be one of the tools to help better contextualize Joseph’s actions even if it doesn’t completely explain the controversial practice of polygamy (xi)

TaBU also wisely warns of the deficiencies in many previous treatments:

Since Latter-day Saint authors have written little about Joseph Smith’s polygamy in the past century, most of the books and articles currently available have been authored by writers who do not believe his revelations and teachings. This absence of belief has unavoidably influenced their assumptions and deductions, and some publications carry overt anti-Mormon messages. Joseph is ultimately portrayed as a fraud, adulterer, and hypocrite, but it is questionable whether that description is due to historical documentation or author bias (xvi–xvii).

Polyandry

One of the more contentious of Hales’ conclusions in *JSP* is the claim that sexual polyandry did not occur in Joseph Smith’s plural marriages.

Here, I sympathize both with Hales' critics and with Hales himself. Let me explain.

I initially believed that sexual polyandry best explained the historical data. The "poster child" for this perspective was Sylvia Sessions Lyon, whose sealing to Joseph in 1842 seemed to clearly precede her separation from her civil husband. Since Sylvia's daughter is the best candidate for a child conceived by Joseph in plurality, this marriage has consequently been treated as the paradigmatic case for polyandry. If one such marriage included marital intimacy, ran the argument, it was reasonable to presume that the others either did or could have.

This reasoning struck me as sound, and for several years I accepted a model of full sexual polyandry. Over time, however, as I puzzled over the other data, I began (with, I confess, some reluctance) to wonder if non-conjugal relationships weren't a much better explanation for the other spotty data. I hesitated to draw that conclusion, however, because of the Sylvia Lyon case. Its cogency seemed sufficient to outweigh my other niggling suspicions.

Hales' and Don Bradley's discovery of a second affidavit for Sylvia altered the calculus considerably.⁶ Neither affidavit was signed, but crucially the newly discovered document dates their marriage to 1843 — one year later. Significantly, nothing about the documents allows us to privilege one affidavit over the other, and so the later date must be regarded as at least as plausible as the earlier one (*TaBU*, 71–73).

This might seem a small difference of interest only to pedants, but in context it can be revolutionary. Suddenly, Sylvia's marriage could no longer be regarded as paradigmatic, since it is entirely possible that her sexual relationship with Joseph *followed* her separation/divorce from her husband. Thus, Hales and Bradley succeeded in pushing me (with some foot dragging) to favor a non-sexual polyandrous model, which seemed to explain other data points more parsimoniously. Hales' later discussion of the Temple Lot testimony, and the telling absence of all three living polyandrous wives from those proceedings, increased, despite their availability, my confidence in this historical reconstruction (*JSP*, 1:403–407, 2:298; *TaBU*, xv).

Thus, I share the Haleses' view that Joseph likely did not practice sexual polyandry. That said, I still prefer to phrase that conclusion a bit more tentatively than they do. I think non-sexuality is the best read of the data — and, I think that many others have so long assumed the truth

6 Brian C. Hales, "The Joseph Smith-Sylvia Sessions Plural Sealing: Polyandry or Polygyny?," *Mormon Historical Studies* 9/1 (Spring 2008): 41–57.

of sexual polyandry that they are unwilling or unable to truly reassess the matter from scratch. Still, painfully aware of how my own confidence on this point has been shaken by a single document's discovery, I think it wise to emphasize to interested Church members and others that this conclusion still has some uncertainty to it. There is no question that non-sexual polyandry is less threatening to modern sensibilities (as well as Nauvoo-era ones, as *TaBU*, 26 observes). Apologists must therefore avoid embracing what appears to be an advantage too enthusiastically, lest their premature ardor backfire if sexual polyandry is later shown to be the correct interpretation. (I think the current article available on lds.org strikes the right balance; it cites Hales' *JSP* repeatedly but does not press the no-sexuality thesis quite as definitively.⁷)

The Haleses' reading insists heavily upon their conclusion that sexual polyandry would have been adulterous (13, 25–27; compare *JSP* 1:377–390). I strongly suspect that they are right — but if we insist too much upon this point and are wrong, the doubts they hope to alleviate could be worsened. On the other hand, one could argue that there is no reason to soft-pedal one's conclusions if one is quite confident, and we could play the counterfactual historical game forever — “But what if a document shown to be Joseph's appeared wherein he confesses nefarious motives for plural marriage?” A historical reconstruction cannot forever remain hostage to hypothetical non-extant documents.

There is, then, no ideal solution to this dilemma — it is simply an area about which readers and teachers should be aware. Perhaps the best solution is to present the evidence and one's best conclusion, and then use it as a case study for understanding both the practice and limitations of history. My own experience suggests that it nicely illustrates:

- the necessity of reevaluating our opinions when new data appears;
- the degree to which the survival or destruction of a single piece of evidence can radically alter how we reconstruct an historical event;
- the risk of persisting in old conclusions when new data is available (anything written about polyandry prior to 2008 is now hopelessly dated, and Hales strengthened

7 “Gospel Topics: Plural Marriage in Kirtland and Nauvoo,” footnotes 29–33 and accompanying main text, <https://www.lds.org/topics/plural-marriage-in-kirtland-and-nauvoo> (accessed 29 March 2015).

his case in 2013 with *JSP* — yet, old treatments will continue to influence how people see this matter);

- the lack of certainty which we must often tolerate in historical matters;
- the inevitable role of the historian's hopes, biases, and agenda in his or her assessment of evidence.

No student or member would be ill-served by internalizing such lessons.

Emma Smith

Of all the characters in the plural marriage drama, Emma Smith usually stirs the most sympathy. I suspect that modern readers — especially women — readily identify with her pain and experience.

TaBU does not slight Emma's challenges, or the difficulties that her case presents for the modern reader:

Looking back at Joseph's choices in dealing with the introduction of plural marriage to Emma, it is certainly possible that his actions were less than perfect. Given the complexity of what he was commanded to do, it was inevitable that mistakes could be made and feelings could be deeply wounded. And the paucity of evidentiary details allows readers to reconstruct the story in multiple ways depending on their own views on whether or not Joseph believed this was something he was commanded to do. Richard L. Bushman observed: "Polygamy is an interesting thing because it serves as a Rorschach test. People project onto Joseph Smith and polygamists their own sense about human nature."¹³ Those who are willing to accept that Joseph Smith was trying to best fulfill God's commandments could give Joseph the benefit of the doubt in this instance, while cynics of the divine origin of polygamy will likely draw different conclusions.

Most readers, even those who esteem Joseph Smith as a true prophet, may experience some discomfort with these events. Polygamy is difficult to accept. Polygamy behind a wife's back is even harder to understand. The key component — to acknowledge that God commanded Joseph to practice plural marriage — requires faith. For many observers, seeing his

conduct as justified and righteous is difficult. For others who do not possess this faith, it may not be possible (*TaBU*, 77).

This frank admission of the difficulties will resonate, I think, with readers troubled by plural marriage. The authors also see Emma's challenge as unique and unprecedented:

doubtless these were incredibly difficult times for Emma who struggled with her personal distaste for the sexual implications of plural marriage and her sincere desires to follow her husband/prophet's counsel. ...

As the first (and for most of their marriage, only) wife of the Prophet, Emma Smith's pathway through polygamy was different from that experienced by other plural wives. Having conceived children with Joseph, she knew of her husband's virility and hormonal drives. Accepting plural marriage as a divine decree, untainted by Joseph's libido, almost certainly demanded a different kind of faith than that required of any other plural wife. All other pluralists could hold the Prophet and his teachings responsible. Another heart-wrenching struggle would likely have been learning that Joseph had secretly married plural wives. Some of Emma's emotions may have resembled the feelings of a woman who just learned her husband was cheating on her. Sentiments of betrayal and distrust may have initially engulfed her. Working past those emotions to see her husband's actions as divinely commanded and therefore honorable and even virtuous would undoubtedly have been difficult. ... Doubtless, Emma Smith's polygamy-related trials were great and unfathomable for most (*TaBU*, 78, 89).

This is, I think, a charitable and historically responsible reading of Emma's experience. Emma's reputation in LDS circles was long marred by her continued insistence that Joseph had never taught plural marriage, and the perception that she had abandoned the Church founded by her martyred husband. Happily, more recent LDS writing has been more understanding.⁸

8 See, for example, Wendy C. Top "'A Deep Sorrow in Her Heart' — Emma Hale Smith," in *Heroines of the Restoration*, edited by Barbara B. Smith and Blythe Darlyn Thatcher (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), 17–34 and Gracia N. Jones, "My

At times, some writers have succumbed too readily to their sympathy for Emma (or their own revulsion regarding plural marriage) and treated Joseph unfairly. Richard Lloyd Anderson observed of this error in the opposite direction:

Yet the “poor Emma” theme is overworked, not only in sentimental semi-fiction, but even in the long biography of her, *Mormon Enigma*, wherein Emma is too often ennobled at the expense of Joseph. After all, the great question is *why* she endured 17 years of constant adjustment and danger at the Prophet’s side. The answer is that she obviously shared his spiritual commitments in order to share his persecutions.⁹

TaBU’s approach avoids both extremes.

Biographical Sketches

Following a hundred pages of theology and historical reconstruction, the second hundred pages of *TaBU* provides short biographical essays of each of Joseph’s plural wives. Each runs only a few pages and provides a good thumbnail sketch of the circumstances under which the wife encountered plurality, a short summary of her life following the martyrdom, and an assessment of her attitude toward Joseph and the Church at the end of her life. I particularly like the fact that good-sized chunks of their personal accounts are included — too often in previous works, small snippets were repeatedly quoted (with one secondary source perhaps copying from an earlier) to prove a particular point. The overall thrust of the larger textual unit was thus often not well conveyed.

In this section the authors include further details regarding issues which may trouble some readers. For example, the first section’s historical account includes a brief mention of the age of Joseph’s wives (x, 70–71), but a more detailed examination of marriages to young women is found in the biographical entries for Helen Mar Kimball (130–134) and (briefly) Nancy Winchester (157–158). This has the effect of breaking the information into more digestible chunks. While such a format is an advantage for beginners, readers may be unaware that

Great-Great-Grandmother, Emma Hale Smith,” *Ensign* (Aug 1992): 30, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1992/08/my-great-great-grandmother-emma-hale-smith>.

9 Richard Lloyd Anderson, “The Religious Dimension of Emma’s Letters to Joseph,” in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, The Man*, edited by Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993), 117, emphasis in original.

more information is to follow. I fear, then, that some reading the first section of the book may feel this issue has been shortchanged or that the authors aren't dealing with their concern in enough detail. Notice that more information was coming might have been helpful.

This is part of a broader dilemma that haunts the book — how much of the vast collection amassed by Hales is adequate to tell the story? When does more information become less, as the reader drowns in footnotes and the clash of various pieces of data? This points to my only significant complaint about the book — I dearly wish that each section included a cross reference to Hales' *JSP*. That would allow interested readers to be pointed quickly to the more exhaustive treatment already available. The chapter endnotes are well-furnished with citations to the primary literature — but again, I think it would have increased the book's usefulness as a beginner's guide if as many of the endnotes as possible concluded with the phrase, *For further detail, see Hales, Joseph Smith's Polygamy, p. X*. But, for every additional note or cross reference, potential complexity and clutter increases too — readers will likely differ on whether this tradeoff would have been worth it.

Advice to Joseph

The authors conclude their roughly hundred-page review of the theology and history by observing that “[i]f it were possible to return to Joseph Smith's day and offer him some advice, observers with the benefit of historical hindsight might make at least five recommendations” (*TaBU*, 99). They highlight the decisions which have arguably caused modern readers the most difficulty: the marriage to Fanny Alger without informing Emma, polyandry, sealings to younger wives, and the sheer number of plural wives. They also recommend to Joseph, “limit ... your involvement in politics. Letting someone else be the mayor of Nauvoo may insulate you from liability in dealing with the *Nauvoo Expositor*” (100).

This is an interesting exercise, and I cannot resist the temptation to play along. I think they are right to point out the difficulties of Joseph's combination of civil and religious authority — something which bothered nearby non-Mormons enormously.

More than anything, however, I would be inclined to advise Joseph simply to keep better records. Hales' massive collection of documents serves, in some ways, to underline how much we still lack. So much of what Joseph was attempting remains opaque to us. We have only D&C 132 in his own words, and this was written down relatively late with the

express intent of convincing Emma Smith. Polyandry might be a non-issue if we had a clear-cut articulation of Joseph's understanding of these relationships, especially if it matched the Haleses' reconstruction. A frank description of the degree to which relationships were consummated with younger brides might allay other concerns.

More than anything, I would like to know precisely what Emma knew and when she knew it. Joseph labored so patiently with men such as Hyrum Smith and the Twelve that I cannot but think that he would have made similar efforts to discuss these ideas with Emma, perhaps even prior to Fanny Alger. (There are some interesting similarities between Fanny and the case of the Partridge sisters. In both cases, the plural wives were well-known to Emma and had provided live-in household help to the Smiths. In both cases, Emma insisted that the girls leave the home after the marriages. We presume that she did not know of Fanny's involvement with Joseph, but Emma approved the Partridge marriages, only to withdraw her consent later and order the sisters to leave her home. One could speculate that Emma likewise initially gave reluctant consent to Fanny — as she did to the Partridges and Lawrences — only to have a quick change of heart. Emma could well have wielded the secrecy and novelty of plural marriage to persuade Oliver Cowdery that Joseph's behavior was simply adulterous.) Emma's later denials that Joseph ever practiced or taught plural marriage blur events even further.

A precise account of the three angelic commands to practice plural marriage might make the type and number of marriages more understandable (*TaBU*, 151). Even a contemporary account of precisely how Joseph introduced, explained, and taught plural marriage to others would be invaluable. In later recitals, we are told *that* Joseph explained the doctrine, but we are rarely told much about *how* he explained it. A transcription of a sermon or two on the subject might solve a host of puzzles. The culture of secrecy so necessary to Joseph's safety in Nauvoo ironically compromises the safety of his good reputation in the modern age.

Conclusion

Most of the problems against which Joseph is warned, then, are problems precisely because we lack adequate information. For the believer, perhaps this should not be surprising. The historical record provides, as the authors demonstrate, ample grounds for both faith and skepticism, but it is to faith and conviction that they ultimately appeal:

Truth seekers may encounter details that are uncomfortable when studying early polygamy, but that discomfiture need not displace other truths and beliefs — truths that witness of Joseph’s prophetic mantle. In the arithmetic of eternity, Joseph Smith accomplished extraordinary things. He brought forth the Book of Mormon, recorded remarkable revelations like the Book of Moses and the Book of Abraham, received revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, and preached teachings that revealed the broad expanse of eternity. He also restored ordinances that allow the constant companionship of the Holy Spirit to testify concerning everlasting truth. He had the courage to follow the Lord’s command in the face of great trials, relentless persecution, and constant public scrutiny. In the words of John Taylor: “He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people” (100).

With this book, such uncomfortable truth seekers are now better equipped with knowledgeable guides who are also allies — rather than antagonists — in the search for truth coupled to faith. My only substantial regret is the lack of cross references to the more detailed *JSP*.

TaBU is warmly recommended for anyone who wants to learn more about Joseph’s plural marriages but particularly to those just venturing into its sometimes choppy waters. Were I not vulnerable to the sin of envy, I’d wish I had written it.

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PROVIDING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING FOR ALL CONCERNING THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH SMITH'S POLYGAMY

Suzanne Long Foster

Review of Brian C. Hales and Laura H. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015, 198 pages + index.

I grew up in a family that discussed Joseph Smith's polygamy relatively openly. Don't get me wrong; it wasn't a topic brought up while we were eating dinner, but when we talked about our genealogy it was almost inevitably mentioned. This is because I am descended by blood through Brigham Young, but my sealing lines are through Joseph Smith. I am a descendent of Emily Partridge, and her children were considered to be Joseph Smith's even though they were born many years after the martyrdom. I am sure when I was really young, I didn't understand the reasoning behind that, but by the time I was a teenager I was well aware Joseph Smith was a polygamist.

Then I got married to a man who loves studying and writing about Church history, and I learned a great deal more about the history of polygamy and how it was lived both in the past and even in the present. I have absorbed a lot of information over the years of discussions, lectures, and papers.

That being said, however, I would not consider myself an expert about Joseph Smith's polygamy and the way it started and developed. I never had problems with it, but didn't really know very much about the details. This book, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Towards a Better Understanding* by Brian and Laura Hales, is an interesting read which explains in clear and easy language a great deal about the first few years of polygamy in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I appreciated the way the book was laid out in a very straightforward manner, allowing me as a reader to follow the process by which Joseph started practicing plural marriage and how he lived it through the rest of

his life. It was very interesting to me to see the steps he followed, how he revealed it to those he was close to, and how he required repeated visits by angelic messengers to actually get the process fully implemented.

The preface and introduction to the book do a very good job of bringing any readers, no matter how little they know about Joseph Smith's involvement with polygamy, into the book by discussing well-known parts of his life and other scriptural accounts of commandments which were difficult to follow. The preface and introduction make fairly clear that the book is geared toward members of the Church who need, well, a better understanding of the particular topic of polygamy but are generally believers. Because I am a believing member, the tone and language of these two sections of the book were welcoming. I felt very comfortable forging ahead into the text of the book, knowing it is directed toward members like myself.

The first chapter of the book jumps right into the topic by discussing the reasons behind polygamy's introduction in fairly good detail, based on Joseph Smith's revelation now known as Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The first three listed reasons are explored in more detail, with supporting evidence from the scriptures and other historical sources. The fourth reason listed in this chapter is actually not discussed until Chapter 2 because it is complex and requires a lot of undergirding to explain thoroughly.

Within chapter 2, a great many complicated and uniquely Mormon doctrines are discussed in detail, all for the purpose of explaining the fourth reason polygamy was instituted. These topics include a discussion of eternal marriage and the necessity for both men and women to be sealed in an eternal marriage in order to be exalted. These principles are already familiar to most members of the church, but having them explained here clearly and tying them to the reasons for polygamy are very useful.

Chapter 3 then discusses the fact that Joseph was commanded by God to practice polygamy and why sometimes it is commanded and sometimes it is not. Several different circumstances for the commandment are discussed and historical details given about when it was and was not in effect. Quite a bit of detail is presented about the first and the second manifesto and how the Church members and the leadership dealt with the ending of the polygamous system. Placing the process of ending this period of allowed polygamous marriages within the historical context of other times when polygamy was and was not allowed made it much more understandable to me.

Chapter 4 then discusses three different types of marriage sealings: time only, eternity only, and time and eternity sealings. Each of these three are discussed quite thoroughly as to when they might be appropriate and when they were actually performed in Joseph Smith's lifetime. There is also a small section in this chapter discussing polyandry and why it is never commanded or even allowed.

It is only when the reader gets to Chapter 5 that the actual history of Joseph Smith's polygamy is addressed. Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 address different periods in the history of polygamy during Joseph Smith's lifetime and what events precipitated the changes between these periods. Of course, each marriage is described carefully with as much information as is known. For me, this was a very interesting part of the book. Maybe it's just my non-historical mind, but I never really understood the progression and changes in the polygamous system. Seeing the various stages laid out this clearly and understanding what earthly and spiritual events brought these stages into being were fascinating. I was easily able to follow the "story" and understood the happenings much more by the time I finished it. Of course, reading the history of Joseph's marriages to the Partridge sisters, Emily and Eliza, was particularly poignant for me.

Chapter 10 discusses the troubling history of John C. Bennett and what he did or did not see and understand about polygamous marriages in Nauvoo. This was an eye-opening chapter for me, although others who are more historically astute may already know most of the information. I learned a great deal about Bennett's life and how his accusations against Joseph Smith caused upheaval in the Church and a huge problem with anti-Mormon rhetoric. Because many of his accusations are still bantered about within anti-Mormon circles today, it is useful to understand the truth and the lies behind them.

Chapter 11 discusses the practice of polygamy in Nauvoo. This chapter addresses many difficult and problematic topics that many members worry about. For example, the chapter spends quite a bit of time on the children fathered by Joseph Smith with women other than Emma and why there were so few, if any. The controversy of Joseph's extremely young wives is also covered. There is also a section of this chapter that covers the subject of the Church leaders denying polygamy was happening when it clearly actually was. Many members are extremely troubled by these various topics when they read about them in anti-Mormon literature or on ex-Mormon websites, and it causes great upheaval in their testimonies. Seeing each of these addressed rationally

and within the context of the entire history of the movement makes the topics more understandable and less frightening.

Chapters 12 and 13 both address Emma Smith and her difficulty in accepting plural marriage and her wide swings between acceptance and abhorrence. They discuss her treatment of the wives, which vacillated for various reasons, her approval of some marriages, and they even address the oft-quoted story about her pushing Eliza R. Snow down the stairs, causing a miscarriage of the baby she was supposedly carrying.

The photos in this last section helped me to visualize the setting where this was supposed to have taken place. Again, for me this was a very informative and useful chapter and is likely to be for others, too. I was well aware of the troubles Emma had with polygamy — indeed most members probably are, but it was good to see the entire story listed in a coherent timeline. Some explanations for Emma's changes of heart are presented, although there is little first-hand evidence. Most of the quotes are actually from the Prophet's plural wives who gave their histories years later, so her true motivations are only theorized. Despite that, it gives a fairly sympathetic picture of a woman caught in a very difficult situation.

Chapter 14 discusses the last days before the martyrdom and how the Law brothers and their infamous article in the *Nauvoo Expositor* about polygamy brought about the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. As a reader, I was interested to see how polygamy, the source of so much trouble during Joseph Smith's life, was part of the cause of his death as well. Again, I was aware of the *Expositor* situation, but it was worthwhile to see it in the context of the entire history of Nauvoo polygamy. Chapter 15 discusses briefly how the church handled the care of Joseph's polygamous wives but does not further address how polygamy continued for the next sixty years. That is, instead, the topic for other books.

This chapter also includes a retrospective look at Joseph's experience of polygamy and a section of "historical hindsight" and "recommendations." This short section lists several things that the Haleses apparently wish Joseph Smith had done differently in his implementation of polygamy to make it easier for Church members to accept. It is true that people today have problems with some aspects of polygamy, but we are often remarkably incapable of looking back at people in the past and understanding that they lived by different societal rules than we do now. That process will undoubtedly continue, and years from now, our descendants will surely look at some of the things we

do and think we were being primitive and unrefined. Joseph Smith had no obligation to live his life in order to make our lives easier somehow. He only had to justify himself to God. And, if a reader has a testimony that he was a true prophet until he was killed in Carthage, that reader can be assured that he did so. If, on the other hand, the reader has no such conviction, anything Joseph did or did not do to “soften” polygamy somehow and make it more palatable to our modern sensibilities is wasted in any case. Disgusting as a non-believer might find polygamy, Joseph’s audacity in stating that he spoke with God and Jesus Christ and establishing the only true church of God on earth is certainly even more egregious.

The next section of the book leaves the history altogether and instead provides a listing of every woman Joseph Smith is thought to have married and a substantial biographical sketch. This is a fascinating section with many first-person histories, even including pictures. Of course, most of the pictures were from the wives’ later years, so it is sometimes hard to imagine them young so many years before when they were married to the prophet. Oddly, the women are listed in alphabetical order by their first name. This is quite a strange way to do it, but it does work, once the reader realizes this is what was done. I enjoyed reading the histories and found the one about Emily Partridge, my direct ancestor, to be accurate and thorough.

In conclusion, I can say that I enjoyed this book and found it very helpful. I am not sure how much new information I actually learned because I was already quite familiar with the topic of Joseph Smith’s polygamy. However, the book did help to place a lot of the information into a coherent timeline that allowed me to understand the relationships between events more clearly than I have before. I found the book to be faith-affirming and a further testimony of Joseph Smith’s life as a prophet of God. I would recommend it for those struggling with the topic as well as those who want to know more so they can be prepared for questions from others.

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and did that for about 18 years. Most recently, she has been doing freelance writing as well as writing her own stories and working on a novel. She has also done a great deal of editing for her husband's articles, books, and presentations in Mormon History. Even though she does not have any formal training in history, she enjoys studying different historical subjects that interest her.

AN EASIER WAY TO UNDERSTANDING JOSEPH SMITH'S POLYGAMY

Craig L. Foster

Review of Brian C. Hales and Laura H. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015, 198 pages + index.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' history of plural marriage can be difficult and uncomfortable for even the most stalwart of modern members. Because of the Internet and easy access to both accurate and inaccurate information, accidental discovery and/or inadequate teachings about the Church's history and relationship to plural marriage have caused crises of faith which have alienated members of the Church and, in many cases, led to their eventual departure from the faith. Anti-Mormons and critics of the Church are constantly pushing and picking at members' faith in order to plant seeds of doubt and to destroy members' testimonies. Plural marriage has proven to be a prime weapon because knowing only a little of the truth can be devastating.¹

This is particularly the case when confronted with Joseph Smith's polygamy. I am reminded of an experience I had almost thirty years ago. I commuted on the bus between Provo and Salt Lake City and enjoyed visiting with other regular commuters, all of whom were active members of the Church. During a conversation regarding Mormon history, I mentioned in passing that Joseph Smith had plural wives. One woman got an angry look on her face and exclaimed, "He did not! Brigham Young might have done that, but Joseph Smith never would."²

1 Craig L. Foster, "Separated but not Divorced: The LDS Church's Uncomfortable Relationship with its Polygamous Past," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10 (2014): 68.

2 Ibid., 61-62.

In 2013 Brian Hales published a remarkable three volume work about Joseph Smith's introduction and practice of Latter-day Saint plural marriage. This in-depth study addressed all known controversial and difficult aspects of Joseph Smith's polygamy, placing them within doctrinal, historical, and social context. *Joseph Smith's Polygamy* will probably stand for years as the most comprehensive study of Joseph Smith's association with and influence on plural marriage.

In spite of the treasure-trove of information contained in the volumes, there is one major problem with Hales' three-volume work. And that is, it is three volumes. For most members of the Church, the thought of wading through three volumes is daunting, to say the least. Thus the more approachable, less intimidating *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding* is a welcome addition to the available literature on Joseph Smith and plural marriage that is bound to be beneficial to Latter-day Saints seeking better understanding on this topic.

This book is an enjoyable read for experts and novices alike. The text flows well and is able to walk that fine line between being understandable for the layman but not insulting the intelligence of those who are more knowledgeable on the subject. Furthermore — and of extreme importance for the mission of this book — it does not hold back on the difficult issues or present an unrealistically sanitized version of the prophet Joseph Smith. Equally important for those trying to gain a real understanding of Smith as both a man and a prophet, the book also does not maliciously fill its pages with innuendo and sensationalistic descriptions of Joseph Smith's polygamy.

The book's prologue and introduction lay the groundwork for Brian and Laura Hales's discussion and explanation of the topic. They observe that plural marriage, particularly as it dealt with the Prophet, is an "often misrepresented aspect of Joseph's life [that] may be less familiar to Church members."³ Even more importantly, they recognize the fallibility of all men, including prophets of God.

During the implementation process, things didn't always turn out as the Prophet or we may have wished. The Lord commanded the practice, but [H]e didn't micromanage its execution any more than he instructed the Brother of Jared from the Book of Mormon regarding the best manner to

3 Brian C. Hales and Laura H. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015), ix.

provide light in the barges built to convey his people across the sea.⁴

Plural marriage was the “hardest trial” Joseph Smith and “the Saints would ever have to test their faith.”⁵ The authors give examples throughout the book of early Church members being shocked and disconcerted to their very core at the prospect that plural marriage was to be practiced once again. The principle was naturally most difficult for Joseph Smith’s wife Emma. But even as other women and men received spiritual confirmation that this was truly of God, so did Emma receive her confirmation.

The principle of plural marriage is right, but I am like other women, I am naturally jealous hearted and can talk back to Joseph as long as any wife can talk back to her husband, but what I want to say to you is this. You heard me finding fault with the principle. I want to say that that principle is right, it is from our Father in Heaven.⁶

Reassuring to the reader is the authors’ declaration that “Asking questions does not necessarily equate with having a crisis or displaying a lack of faith.”⁷ Indeed, asking difficult questions is exactly what the authors did. They examined all available documents regarding Joseph Smith’s polygamy and did not shy away from what was potentially uncomfortable or unpleasant and ultimately found peace and comfort in their understanding of Joseph Smith and plural marriage.

In this book, we have done our best to fit together the puzzle pieces of the early practice of polygamy in the Church. Because of poor documentation, there are gaps and holes that leave the picture incomplete. Admittedly, like all historians, we are not biasfree in this process. Nevertheless, our examination of the historical record has reinforced our convictions that Joseph was a virtuous man and a true prophet of the living God.⁸

And with that reassurance, they invite the reader on a journey of discovery in what for many will be *terra incognita*.

4 Ibid., ix.

5 Ibid., x.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., xvii.

The book itself is divided into fifteen chapters that discuss the doctrinal and historical reasons for practicing plural marriage, what exactly involved the New and Everlasting Covenant, the different interpretations of marriage, sealings and relationships, as well as a detailed discussion of the fitful introduction of plural marriage, the difficulties caused by practicing the principle, and Smith's martyrdom and the aftermath. The second part of the book includes over seventy pages of biographical essays of Joseph Smith's known plural wives.

Happily, in the course of their book, the Haleses not only take on and clarify some of the most controversial and challenging aspects of Mormon polygamy, they also shatter some of the more annoyingly erroneous ideas and folklore that arise even among Church members. For example, the authors discount the idea that the primary reason for plural marriage was to "multiply and replenish the earth," stating that it was just one of the reasons for the practice.⁹ It would have been even better if they had specifically mentioned the misconception that polygamy was practiced to make up for all of the Mormon men killed by mobs or who died crossing the plains to Utah.

Another fallacy shot down by the Haleses is the ridiculous notion that polyandry or a plurality of husbands was, will, or should be practiced by the Church.¹⁰ Early Mormon leaders condemned polyandry. Apostle George A. Smith taught that "a plurality of husbands is wrong." Orson Pratt explained, "As a plurality of husbands, would not facilitate the increase of posterity, such a principle never was tolerated in scripture." And Joseph F. Smith wrote in 1889, "Polyandry is wrong, physiologically, morally, and from a scriptural point of order. It is nowhere sanctioned in the Bible, nor by the law of God or nature and has no affinity with Mormon' plural marriage."¹¹

Because critics of Joseph Smith, both within and without the Church, have placed such emphasis on Joseph Smith's so-called polyandrous marriages, the authors discussed this in detail and made reference in several parts of the book:

Of all the details regarding Joseph Smith's controversial practice of plural marriage, it seems none is more commonly mentioned than his sealings to legally married women. Without understanding the theological principles underlying

9 Ibid., 5.

10 Ibid., 12-13.

11 Ibid., 25-26.

this practice, including the need for an eternal spouse to be exalted, eternalityonly sealings, and the repeated explicit condemnation of a plurality of husbands, some may mistakenly conclude that the Prophet engaged in sexual polyandry.¹²

There were a few places within the text where the authors actually could have gone further or added additional documentation to help explain the point they were making. For example, while discussing whether or not Eliza R. Snow really had been impregnated by Joseph Smith, they write, “there is no persuasive evidence supporting that Eliza was pregnant at any time in her life.”¹³ They could have bolstered their argument if they had included the comment by Lorenzo Snow, “My sister Eliza R. Snow, was just as good a woman as any Latter-day Saint woman that ever lived, and she lived in an unmarried state until after she was beyond the condition of raising a family. She was sealed to Joseph Smith, the Prophet; but she had no children to bear her name among the children of men.”¹⁴

Also, as with any work of this nature, authors and readers are not always going to agree on everything. For example, as a reader and reviewer, I was uncomfortable with some recommendations given by the authors:

If it were possible to return to Joseph Smith’s day and offer him some advice, observers with the benefit of historical hindsight might make at least five recommendations:

1. Carefully consider marrying Fanny Alger without telling Emma. If possible, convince the angel that Emma needs to be involved from the start.
2. Carefully consider being sealed to fourteen-year-old plural wives even if the marriages are not consummated. It might generate accusations of pedophilia a hundred years later.

12 Ibid., 29.

13 Ibid., 75.

14 *Millennial Star*, 31 August 1899, 547-48. This comment by Snow was also included in *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow*, Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012, 130-131. Inexplicably, in the lesson manual the part about Eliza R. Snow being sealed to Joseph Smith was replaced by ellipses.

3. Carefully consider being sealed to legally married women even if for eternity only. Encouraging those women to be sealed to their civil husbands, if worthy, may be a better choice.
4. Carefully consider the number of plural wives you marry. Even if Old Testament patriarchs had dozens of plural wives, limiting the number of your wives, whether the marriages are for eternity only or time and eternity, might be more easily understood by onlookers years later.
5. Carefully consider limiting your involvement in politics. Letting someone else be the mayor of Nauvoo may insulate you from liability in dealing with the *Nauvoo Expositor*.¹⁵

After carefully reading these suggestions, I was left with mixed thoughts and emotions. I could certainly understand our desire, with twenty-first century hindsight and understanding, to realize how it would have been much better if Joseph Smith had immediately been up front and told Emma Smith about the revelation on plural marriage and his marriage to Fanny Alger. Emotionally, I can also understand the sentiment with some of the other suggestions. But these recommendations were also bothersome to me for several reasons.

First of all, these recommendations seemed to me to be almost an unspoken acknowledgment of a degree of turpitude on the part of Joseph Smith. That these suggestions were perhaps a silent surrender in spite of the previous pages filled with excellent information and analysis showing Smith to be a man of God rather than some oversexed, lascivious womanizer. These recommendations appeared to be a sort of wishful “if we could only do it all over.” Thus for me, these suggestions awkwardly and unpleasantly stood out from an otherwise inspiring defense of the prophet Joseph Smith.

Another troublesome point was this recommendation: “If possible, convince the angel that Emma needs to be involved from the start.” Having never had an angelic visitation, I don’t know personally how it would be, but I can certainly imagine. So to me, this helpful statement seemed to be a little unrealistic. For that matter, how do we know Joseph Smith didn’t broach the subject with Emma at one point or another? As the Haleses correctly noted, we have very little documentation of early

15 *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding*, 99-100.

plural marriage. We have even less information regarding the quiet, intimate conversations between Joseph and Emma Smith.

Third, and along the same line of discussion, how do we know that Joseph Smith didn't try to talk at least some of the married women he took as eternal wives into being sealed to their husbands instead of him?

Fourth, it was suggested Joseph should carefully consider the number of plural wives to marry because fewer marriages might be more easily understood by onlookers years later. Perhaps I'm being a little too simplistic or naïve, but I like to believe that Joseph Smith was inspired to select the specific women whom he married. Who are we to feel we are in a position to tell him whom he should or should not have married?

Fifth, while fourteen was on the younger side to get married, given Joseph Smith's time and place, such marriages were not unheard of and certainly were not considered pedophilic. Research has shown this to be the case.¹⁶ As would be expected, the thought of girls in their early to mid-teens getting married in America today rightfully causes shudders. I remember during a discussion about Joseph Smith's marriages to teen brides, I was asked if I would be okay with one of my daughters marrying at age fourteen. I naturally said no. But then I added that such a comparison was like comparing apples to oranges, given that life expectancy was now higher, societal conditions had changed, and that during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries childhood had been pushed back and prolonged to a greater degree than in any other time in history.

It's easy for people to project their own worldview and values onto those of another place and time. But that should not be done. Nor should we as members of the Church apologize now for what would have been considered normal and respectable in another time. Critics are going to find fault no matter what, and while one potential criticism would be silenced, others most certainly would arise. If Joseph Smith had not married at least one and probably two fourteen-year-olds, the critics would have complained about the seventeen- or eighteen-year-olds he married. For that matter, given the way the average age at marriage has risen in the past few decades, thirty years from now it will probably be much higher and no doubt there will be a portion of our population who will look askance at any marriages that occur before age twenty-one,

16 Craig L. Foster, David Keller, and Gregory L. Smith, "The Age of Joseph Smith's Plural Wives in Social and Demographic Context," in Newell G. Bringham and Craig L. Foster, *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy* (Independence, Missouri: John Whitmer Books, 2010), 152-183.

twenty-two, or maybe even twenty-five.¹⁷ So should we then be concerned about the outside world and the fact that social morés and perceptions are going to change and what was once acceptable and accepted are no longer? A decade or so from now same-sex marriage will no doubt be much more prevalent and widely accepted. Should we reflect the world's definition of what is and is not acceptable and thus be uncomfortable with and apologize for the fact that Joseph Smith or Brigham Young didn't marry a few husbands along with their wives?

Overall, and in comparison to the book as a whole, my criticisms are small and few. Thus, these minor quibbles notwithstanding, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding* is an excellent and essential volume that will not only answer questions and offer solace to "truth seekers [who] may encounter details that are uncomfortable when studying early polygamy" but will also be a useful and interesting volume for those who have spent years studying the subject. I wholeheartedly recommend this book to all.

Craig L. Foster earned an MA and MLIS at Brigham Young University. He is also an accredited genealogist and works as a research consultant at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. He has published articles about different aspects of Mormon history. He is the author of two books, co-author of another, and co-editor of a three-volume series discussing the history and theology of plural marriage. Foster is also on the editorial board of the John Whitmer Historical Association Journal.

17 As an example, a couple of years ago a friend of mine from Ireland was shocked when I mentioned that one of my daughters was getting married at age twenty. He kept repeating how that was much too young to get married and that they should wait until she was older.

REDISCOVERING THE FIRST VISION

Neal Rappleye

Review of: Matthew B. Christensen, The First Vision: A Harmonization of Ten Accounts from the Sacred Grove (Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort Inc., 2014). 51 pp., no index. \$14.99.

The First Vision: A Harmonization of Ten Accounts from the Sacred Grove is a small book, richly illustrated, which provides even the most diligent students of the vision with a fresh and rewarding experience. Boasting a back dust jacket endorsement from none other than Richard Bushman — the dean of Joseph Smith scholars in the early twenty-first century¹ — this small, stylishly designed book is, in my opinion, the *best* way to introduce Latter-day Saints to the various accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision.

Christensen begins with an introduction wherein he explains himself and what he is doing. Christensen is wholly aware that he is not following the conventions of historical scholarship and is clear that what he produces is not intended to be taken as an actual historical document or be treated like the reconstruction of an event that a professional historian might produce. Instead, Christensen is producing a tool for the faithful to use in getting closer to the founding vision upon which their faith is rooted, to help them get a fuller and more complete view of what Joseph Smith experienced. Christensen also introduces and gives some background of each of the ten accounts he used (five first-hand, five second-hand, all from Joseph Smith's lifetime).

After the introduction comes Christensen's "harmonization." Here, Christensen takes the ten accounts he introduced earlier and produces

1 Bushman's biography of the prophet, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005) is widely viewed as the best and most comprehensive treatment of the prophet to date.

and amalgamated account, incorporating parts of all ten accounts into one synthesized whole. Christensen smooths out each account, updating grammar and punctuation, and substitutes first-person pronouns when using second-hand accounts for the purpose of readability, especially for his target audience of lay Latter-day Saints. He also color-codes the text with a key at the bottom of each page so the reader can easily and quickly see which account any given portion comes from. Lest one mistakenly think that by doing all this Christensen obscures the differences the accounts contain, it should be noted that he often uses the endnotes to mention and discuss some of the key differences in the various accounts.

Being familiar with the different accounts, I found many of Christensen's choices interesting. I couldn't help but think about how I might have merged the accounts differently. Sometimes Christensen seemed so determined to include as much as possible that the account begins to feel redundant, and I often felt that some things could have been left out. To his credit, however, there were some cases where I felt his insistence on pulling together *all* ten accounts was very rewarding. In particular, the recounting of the Father's and Son's appearance — the vision proper — I felt was very well put together, with Christensen adeptly piecing parts of each account together in a way that vastly enriched the traditional description of their appearance in a pillar of light. He also skillfully wove together every word attributed to the divine visitors in the various accounts, thus providing a full and complete picture of the message given to Joseph Smith that day, as he understood and related it to others.

There are also some places where Christensen omits things I would have included. For instance, I was disappointed that Christensen didn't include Joseph's explanation, found in the 1832 account, that his search began "at about the age of twelve years," and continued, "from the age of twelve years to fifteen."² Few people realize that Joseph spent *years* searching and pondering before he had his vision, and I think getting a sense for how long Joseph was grappling with his deep questions is important for better understanding, relating to, and learning from Joseph Smith and his visionary experience. Including these age markers thus could have improved Christensen's synthesis of the accounts.

2 Joseph Smith, "History, circa Summer 1832," online at <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-circa-summer-1832> (accessed March 4, 2015). For convenience, I have opted to simply use the editorial title applied to this document by the editors of the Joseph Smith Papers project.

On balance, however, I thought Christensen did a nice job and that the account which emerges serves to enrich the experience for the reader, making it possible to better grasp the fullness of Joseph's experience. I would recommend it as an ideal way to get introduced to the various accounts of the First Vision, particularly for parents with adolescents, who I believe should be introduced to the different accounts and other historical issues in settings and formats that foster faith.

This, however, should not be mistaken as a way to fully come to know the various accounts, both the ways they can enhance our understanding of Joseph Smith, of God and Christ and of the vision and the challenges that surround the accounts. This is a good *introduction*, meaning a great place to *start* learning about the different accounts but not necessarily where it should end. Those interested in further pursuing Joseph Smith's vision and the narratives he told about it should also seek out contextual studies which seek to illuminate both the setting of the event itself and the context of the documents which tell us about it.

There have been several such studies over the years, the most recent being Steven C. Harper's book, *Joseph Smith's First Vision: A Guide to the Historical Accounts*, published in 2012.³ Harper also helped compile and edit, with Samuel Alonzo Dodge, *Exploring the First Vision*, a recent anthology of the seminal articles and essays on the First Vision from the past forty-plus years.⁴ Harper's book is short yet thorough, summarizing the past scholarship and making a few original contributions. It would be a good next step after Christensen's harmonization, and it makes for easy reading that I am confident even teenagers could handle. Many of the papers in the volume coedited with Dodge are heavier, more technical reading, and get into the nitty-gritty details of historical reconstruction, interpretation, and even the controversies that have surrounded the accounts.⁵ This is not to suggest that they are unreadable or too technical for the average member of the Church but rather to simply suggest that they provide a level of depth that may not be to everyone's interests.

Studies like those by Harper and Bushman certainly provide important context and understanding that can't be gained through harmonizations like Christensen's. But even those with a savvy awareness

3 Steven C. Harper, *Joseph Smith's First Vision: A Guide to the Historical Accounts* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 2012).

4 Samuel Alonzo Dodge and Steven C. Harper, eds., *Exploring the First Vision* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2012).

5 For a full review of this volume, see Neal Rappleye, "Trusting Joseph," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 75–83.

of the different accounts and intimate familiarity with the secondary literature can have a rich and rewarding — and even a *spiritual* — experience encountering the vision as Christensen has presented it. As such, I would heartily recommend this little volume to any Latter-day Saint wanting to get a new and fresh perspective on the First Vision — which should be *all* of us.

An earlier version of this review appeared on the FairMormon Blog.

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SAY NOW SHIBBOLETH, OR MAYBE CUMORAH

Loren Blake Spendlove

Abstract: The Deseret Alphabet represents a bold but failed attempt by 19th century LDS Church leaders to revolutionize English language orthography. As 21st century members of the LDS Church, we can benefit from this less than successful experiment by studying the 1869 Deseret Alphabet Book of Mormon and learning how early church members most likely pronounced Book of Mormon names.

Geographic regions, cultural influences, family associations, and the passage of time are some of the many factors that affect our way of speaking, including the way we pronounce specific words and phrases. An outstanding example of differences in pronunciation, owing to its harsh conclusion, is found in the book of Judges. After Jephthah and the men of Gilead fought with and defeated the Ammonites, “the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went northward, and said unto Jephthah, wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go with thee? We will burn thine house upon thee with fire” (Judges 12:1). This insolent behavior by the men of Ephraim led to a war with the men of Gilead and resulted in heavy losses among the Ephraimites. After the battle, as the Ephraimite survivors tried to escape back to their own lands,

the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan:

and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand (Judges 12:5–6).

The Ephraimites were unable to say the word shibboleth (שבולת) correctly, pronouncing it without the *sh* sound (stemming from the letter shin, ש) at the beginning of the word.¹ This peculiarity of speech among the Ephraimites led to many of them being slaughtered while trying to cross the Jordan River.

We do not know how Nephi, Alma, Mormon or other historical characters from the Book of Mormon pronounced names of people and places during their time, but we do have an achievable way of knowing how early members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints likely pronounced them. However, for most contemporary readers of the Book of Mormon, this knowledge has been essentially locked away in an obscure, mid-nineteenth century script known as the Deseret Alphabet (DA). The objective of this article is to provide the reader with the key to unlock this heretofore ciphered knowledge.

Brief History of the Deseret Alphabet

The Deseret Alphabet (DA) was championed by Brigham Young as a way of helping immigrants learn how to read and properly pronounce words in the English language. Speaking of the DA, President Young boldly declared:

The advantages of this alphabet will soon be realized, especially by foreigners. Brethren who come here knowing nothing of the English language will find its acquisition greatly facilitated by means of this alphabet, by which all the sounds of the language can be represented and expressed with the greatest ease. As this is the grand difficulty foreigners experience in learning the English language, they will find a knowledge of this alphabet will greatly facilitate their efforts in acquiring at least a partial English education. It will also be very advantageous to our children. It will be the means of introducing uniformity in our orthography, and the years that are now required to learn to read and spell can be devoted to other studies.²

1 Stephen D. Ricks, “Lehi and Local Color,” *FARMS Review of Books* 21/2 (2009): 174.

2 Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 12:298 (8 October 1868).

Unfortunately, Brigham Young's hopes for the DA would not be realized, as its use died out with the passing of the prophet himself. Hubert H. Bancroft observed that "within a few years [of its introduction to the public] the alphabet fell into disuse, and is now remembered only as a curiosity."³ Larry Wintersteen wrote that:

This new alphabet appears not to have met the needs of the people nor did it interest them. Its use and development was hindered by temple building, farming, settling, new doctrine, and possibly little faith in following their prophet, president and leader. The Deseret Alphabet died with Brigham Young in 1877, yet it appears to have been a noble experiment towards a spelling reform. Perhaps it would have worked under different situations and different environment.⁴

Although the idea of the DA was the brainchild of Brigham Young, its primary creator appears to have been George Darling Watt, an early convert to the Church in the British Isles. In October 1853, the Board of Regents of the Deseret University, now the University of Utah, appointed Parley P. Pratt, Heber C. Kimball, and George D. Watt to "a committee to prepare a small school-book in characters founded on some new system of orthography, whereby the spelling and pronunciation of the English language might be made uniform and easily acquired."⁵ Fifteen months after the committee was formed, the *Deseret News* heralded the creation of the DA by announcing that "after many fruitless attempts to render the common alphabet of the day subservient to their purpose, they found it expedient to invent an entirely new and original set of characters."⁶ This pronouncement marked the birth of the DA.

While not a language in itself, the Deseret Alphabet was created as an alternative method of phonetically spelling English words using a unique set of characters. Stanley B. Kimball, a descendent of Heber C. Kimball, observed that "no one knows the origin of [the Deseret Alphabet's] strange characters, but certainly Watt's knowledge of phonography was

3 Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah, 1540–1886* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1889), 714.

4 Larry Ray Wintersteen, "A History of the Deseret Alphabet" (Master's Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1970), abstract.

5 Bancroft, *History of Utah, 1540–1886*, 712.

6 "The New Alphabet," *Deseret News*, 19 January 1854, 2.

DESERET ALPHABET.									
Long	Short								
ə	e	+	U	woo	q	g	6	z	
3	a	↓	Y	ye	Q	k	D	esh	
ə	ah	↓	Y	h	Q	ga	s	zhe	
Q	au	w	7	p	p	f	4	ur	
Q	o	↑	g	b	e	v	l	l	
Q	oo	q	q	t	L	eth	7	m	
h	i	g	d	8	the	4	n		
ə	ow	c	che	s	s	n	eng		

Figure 1. Deseret News Deseret Alphabet Pronunciation Guide

fundamental.”⁷ The first public appearance of the DA was on the front page of the *Deseret News* on Wednesday, February 16, 1859. Along with a brief introduction to the alphabet, the newspaper printed the first fifteen verses of the fifth chapter of Matthew in the DA, along with a pronunciation guide (Figure 1) that went through only minor modifications in later years. The opening paragraph in the 1859 *Deseret News* article gave a less than glowing endorsement of the new alphabet:

We present to the people the Deseret Alphabet, but have not adopted any rules to bind the taste, judgment or preference of any. Such as it is you have it, and we are sanguine that the more it is practised and the more intimately the people become acquainted with it, the more useful and beneficial it will appear.”⁸

According to Wintersteen, “the *Deseret News* carried brief articles in the Deseret Alphabet until May, 1860. At that time they were discontinued without comment. Four years later, May, 1864, they reappeared running for only six months.”⁹ Shortly after the 1859 introductory article appeared in the *Deseret News*, the *New York Herald* newspaper published an editorial entitled “The New Mormon Alphabet.” The article expressed that “the Mormons are a ‘very peculiar people’” and that the Deseret Alphabet “is calculated to make the faithful still more peculiar than anything that distinguishes them from other mortals.”¹⁰ The *Quincy Daily Whig* was even more disparaging of the new alphabet when it printed the following:

7 Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 203.

8 No title, *Deseret News*, 16 February 1859, 1.

9 Wintersteen, “A History of the Deseret Alphabet,” 33.

10 “The New Mormon Alphabet,” *New York Herald*, 6 April 1859.

It seems to be the determination of the Mormons to alienate and, as far as possible, disconnect themselves from American language as well as society. Their social system is now the abhorrence of every civilized nation on the face of the globe, and unless the strongest measures are used, they will entirely divorce themselves from our laws, and their present intention is, to forget, if possible, the English language itself.¹¹

It was not until 1868 that any books were printed in the DA. The first of these books was called *The Deseret First Book by the Regents of the Deseret University* (ሃ ልጽፅዋላ ሥዋጽገ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ዩ ሃፅፅላላ ገጽ ሃ ልጽፅዋላ ሃተፀላፀፀዋጽገጥ). This was a brief, 36-page elementary school primer with forty-nine short “lessons” and some multiplication tables at the back. This was followed in the same year by *The Deseret Second Book* – a longer, seventy-two page primer with fifty-three lessons and additional multiplication tables at the back of the book. Ten thousand copies of each of these books were printed.¹²

The Deseret Alphabet and the Book of Mormon

During 1869, 8,000 copies of Part 1 (ገፅዋገ I) of the Book of Mormon in the DA were printed.¹³ Part 1 was composed of the books of 1 Nephi through the Words of Mormon — what we would call the small plates of Nephi today. In late 1869, 500 copies of the complete Book of Mormon were printed, making it one of the rarest editions ever published.¹⁴ Both Part 1 and the complete Book of Mormon were set from the 1852 Liverpool edition (the Third European Edition) and were published in New York by Russell Brothers for the Deseret University. As such, the DA Book of Mormon was one of three editions published in New York during the nineteenth century, including the 1830 Palmyra and 1858 Wright editions.

Although only four books in the DA were ever printed during the nineteenth century, it appears that the intent was to print additional books. *The Improvement Era* reported that:

11 “Mormon Alphabet,” *The Quincy Daily Whig*, 25 August 1857, 2.

12 Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer*, 203.

13 Kenneth R. Beesley, “Typesetting the Deseret Alphabet with LATEX and METAFONT,” *TeX, XML, and Digital Typography: International Conference on TEX, XML, and Digital Typography, Held Jointly with the 25th Annual Meeting of the TEX Users Group, TUG 2004* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2004), 109.

14 Beesley, “Typesetting the Deseret Alphabet,” 109.

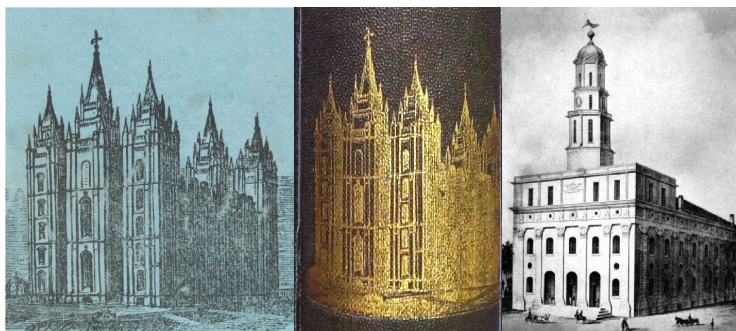


Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

From a storage area of the Church Historian's Office in May 1967, a package of papers was unwrapped and found to be manuscript copies in the Deseret Alphabet of the Bible, the Doctrine and Covenants, *Deseret Phonetic Speller*, and the *Catechism* by John Jaques. The papers, ready for the printer, had lain undisturbed for so long that their very existence had been forgotten.¹⁵

Interestingly, with the completion of the Salt Lake Temple still more than two decades away, all four books published in the DA showed an etching of the temple with a weather vane rather than the iconic upright Angel Moroni, which was placed on the temple spire in 1892 (see Figures 2 and 3). The weather vane in the drawings appears to be visually similar to the one placed on top of the clock tower of the original Nauvoo temple (see Figure 4).¹⁶

Modifications to the Deseret Alphabet

By the late 1860s, the shape of the DA characters had gone through some minor modifications. The most significant change was that the character for the *long a*¹⁷ sound (3 in 1859) was flipped horizontally to be ϵ in 1868. More than likely this change was made so that the *long a* character would not be confused with the number 3. All four published books displayed

15 Albert L. Zobell, Jr., "Deseret Alphabet Manuscript Found," *Improvement Era*, July 1967, 11.

16 Figure 2 is from the cover of Part 1 of the DA Book of Mormon. Figure 3 is from the spine of the complete DA Book of Mormon. Figure 4 was taken from James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1912), Plate 2.

17 As identified by the Deseret News in Figure 1.

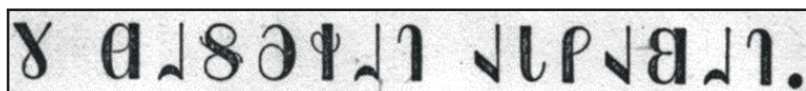


Figure 5. Top of Deseret Alphabet Pronunciation Guide

the same pronunciation guide, with one exception — the spelling, and thus pronunciation, of the word *alphabet* in the title. In the two 1858 primers the word was spelled ᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃ (āĭ-fā-bēt¹⁸ or /ælfæbet/ in International Phonetic Alphabet [IPA]), while in the two books printed in 1869 (Part 1 and the complete Book of Mormon) the spelling was ᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃ (āĭ-fā-bēt or /ælfæbet/ in IPA). Interestingly, in John Walker's *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary*, the pronunciation of *alphabet* is also rendered āĭ-fā-bēt, in line with the 1869 DA method.¹⁹

A Modern Revival

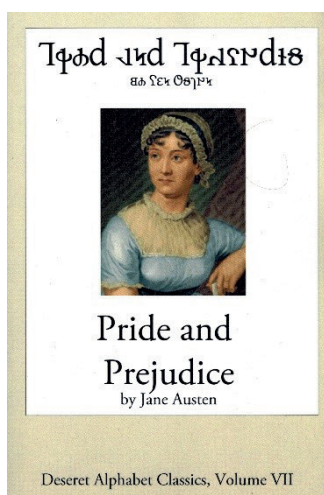


Figure 6

In the last two decades, there has been a modest resurgence of interest in the DA. A new collection of books (Deseret Alphabet Classics) has been published. With nearly thirty books in the collection, including Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, and Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*, readers can enjoy many classic works in the DA script. Numerous blogs and discussion forums have also sprung up on the Internet for those interested in learning and discussing the Deseret Alphabet. In addition, a very useful website has been created that allows users to translate normal Latin text into the DA.²⁰ Multiple free DA fonts can be

downloaded from the Internet and used in Microsoft Word and Excel, including the DeseretBee, HoneyBee and ZarahemlaBee fonts.²¹ I have

18 I show the pronunciation using the current Book of Mormon Pronunciation Guide method and IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet).

19 John Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language* (New York: Alsop, Brannan and Alsop, 1808), s.v. "alphabet."

20 Deseret Alphabet Translator, <http://www.2deseret.com/>

21 Sans Serif Bee font Page, http://copper.chem.ucla.edu/~jericks/Sans_Serif.html

used the HoneyBee font to present DA characters in this article. The fictitious Republic of Molossia, “a sovereign, independent nation, located in and completely surrounded by territory of the United States,” has adopted “the Deseret Alphabet as an alternate English writing method” for its people.²² The website’s non-LDS creators present information in both Latin and DA script. John H. Jenkins, the publisher of the Deseret Alphabet Classics, has even published the LDS triple combination (Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price) in the DA and has made it freely available for download as a PDF file.²³

With this renewed interest in the DA, changes have been made to the DA characters to make them somewhat easier to read and write. Below is a chart of DA characters from 1859 to the present. In the column labeled 2015 in Figure 7, five of the sounds are shown with two distinct characters, separated by a forward slash (/). The first character is the modern uppercase preference, while the second character is preferred for lowercase use. For lowercase use, the loop has been replaced by a dot above the character for the sounds *au*, *ow* and *g*. The use of the dot above the character makes it easier to read, especially when the font size is small.

The Deseret Alphabet and the Pronunciation Guide

Mary Jane Woodger, in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, wrote an informative article on how the Book of Mormon Pronunciation Guide (PG) was developed over the last century. Concerning the involvement of the DA in this process, she wrote:

One early attempt at harmonizing pronunciation may have taken place during the publication of the Book of Mormon in the Deseret Alphabet (1852–1869). When Brigham Young, Orson Pratt, and other pioneers developed the phonetic Deseret Alphabet they had the means available to represent how they were pronouncing the Nephite names. Their pronunciation would surely have differed little from that of Joseph Smith. This major undertaking of examining Book of Mormon proper names in mid-nineteenth-century pronunciation as recorded in the Deseret Alphabet has yet to be done. Though there is nothing concrete in this speculation,

22 Republic of Molossia, <http://www.molossia.org/>

23 <http://www.deseretalphabet.org/Files?action=AttachFile&do=view&target=Triple.pdf>

1859	1869	2015	Sound	1859	1869	2015	Sound	1859	1869	2015	Sound
			<u>e</u> at				ow <u>l</u>				f
			a <u>t</u> e				w <u>oo</u>				v
			a <u>r</u> t				y <u>e</u>				th <u>i</u> gh
			a <u>u</u> gh <u>t</u>				h				th <u>y</u>
			oa <u>t</u>				p				s
			oo <u>z</u> e				b				z
			i <u>t</u>				t				f <u>l</u> esh
			s <u>e</u> t				d				vi <u>s</u> ion
			a <u>t</u>				ch				r
			no <u>t</u>				j				l
			cu <u>t</u>				k				m
			bo <u>o</u> k				g				n
			i <u>c</u> e								si <u>n</u> g

Figure 7. A comparison of font styles for DA characters

such an unfulfilled possibility is worthy of mention because the *Deseret Alphabet edition of the Book of Mormon* represents the only attempt made by church leaders in the 1800s at setting a consistent pronunciation for Nephite proper names. (emphasis added)²⁴

Indeed, the first published guide to pronunciation of Book of Mormon names, the *Pronouncing Vocabulary*, was not accomplished until the 1920 LDS edition of the Book of Mormon. This *Pronouncing Vocabulary* contained 284 names, as compared to the 343 found in the current PG. This difference is due to the *Pronouncing Vocabulary* containing “mostly proper names of Book of Mormon origin, with [only] some Biblical names included.”²⁵

While several histories of the DA have been written over the years, surprisingly little research has been conducted into the relationship between the DA and the pronunciation of Book of Mormon names, perhaps because of the difficulty in learning the DA script. In 2000,

24 Mary Jane Woodger, “How the Guide to English Pronunciation of Book of Mormon Names Came About,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000), 54.

25 The Book of Mormon, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1920), 531.

Frederick M. Huchel published a short article in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* in which eighteen names from the DA Book of Mormon were compared to PG names from the LDS edition of the Book of Mormon.²⁶ While the effort was commendable, the article was riddled with errors, most likely because neither the author nor the editors fully understood the DA script. The Journal reissued a corrected version of the article, but even then, errors persisted. For example, the word Deseret was correctly written ᐃᐣᓃᓃᓃᓃ in the DA script, but the pronunciation was incorrectly rendered as dēs-ē-rēt (/disrēt/ in IPA) by the author in both the original and corrected versions of the article. The correct pronunciation should have been written dēs-ē-rēt (/dēsirēt/ in IPA) based on the DA spelling. Even the pronunciation from the Book of Mormon PG was incorrectly written by the author as dēz'-a-rēt (/dizərēt/ in IPA) rather than dēz-a-rēt' (/dēzərēt/ in IPA) as rendered in the PG. This article by Huchel was the only attempt at serious academic research that I was able to locate.

I compared the PG found in the current (2013) LDS edition of the Book of Mormon to the names in the 1869 DA version. During this process, I was able to identify and record the DA spelling, and thus the pronunciation of each proper noun. In addition, I found nineteen Book of Mormon names that are absent from the current PG. Most of these are biblical names, but some are unique Book of Mormon words. For example, among the many names that the Nephites used for their monetary values, as identified in Alma Chapter 11, the *senine* and *limnah* are both found in the PG, but the *seon* and *leah* are not. *Egyptian* is listed, but not *Arabian*. And strangely, *Gomorrah* is present, but not *Sodom*. A complete list of these missing names is given at the end of the Appendix.

I do not propose that the DA pronunciation is the ultimate standard by which Book of Mormon names should be judged. In fact, it is almost certain that those pronunciations do not accurately reflect how the names were originally spoken in their native dialects. As Woodger reasoned about the 1981 PG, the same can be said for the DA pronunciation:

We can concur with Daniel Ludlow, who served as the secretary to the Scripture Publication Committee, that we are “ninety-nine percent sure that we do not pronounce such names as Lehi and Nephi correctly” (that is, as they themselves did). . . . In following the [pronunciation] guide we can be assured that

26 Fredrick M. Huchel, “The Deseret Alphabet as an Aid in Pronouncing Book of Mormon Names,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000), 58–59, 79.

if we are wrong in pronouncing Book of Mormon names, we will at least all be wrong together.²⁷

Woodger added that the committee that developed the 1981 PG was given four general guidelines to follow, with uniformity among the members as the principal objective:

1. Do not try to relate Book of Mormon names with Hebrew or Egyptian names.
2. Do not try to think of how the Nephites might have pronounced their own names.
3. Simplify where possible.
4. The main objective should be uniformity.²⁸

Limitations and Peculiarities of the Deseret Alphabet

Although the creators of the DA dreamed of it as a perfect overhaul of the English spelling system, it was not without its flaws and peculiar aspects. One of these flaws is the absence of the mid-central vowel sound, or *schwa*, written as /ə/ in IPA. Although the *short u* sound (u in the PG, ʌ in IPA, and identified as a *short o* in Figure 1) was available in the DA (ʻ), it was not the same as, and could not adequately replace the schwa sound. The second vowel in the word *alphabet* (/ælfəbet/ in IPA) is a schwa sound. As noted earlier, in the two 1868 DA primers the second vowel of the word *alphabet* was written as a *long a* (ā in the PG, /e/ in IPA, and Ǝ in the DA), while in 1869 it was changed and written as a *short ah* (ă in the PG, /æ/ in IPA, and ʌ in the DA), possibly to agree with Walker or other pronouncing dictionaries of the time. This highlights the confusion caused by not having a character for the schwa sound in the DA.

The omission of the schwa character also poses problems for modern readers when trying to pronounce DA Book of Mormon words. The name Alma, for instance, is /ælmə/ in IPA and ăl'ma in the PG. Both methods display the word with an unstressed final schwa sound. However, the DA spelling of the word is ʌLʌʌ, which when spelled phonetically would be /æɫ-mæ/ in IPA or ăl-mă using the PG method. Not only is this spelling

27 Woodger, “How the Guide to English Pronunciation of Book of Mormon Names Came About,” 57.

28 Woodger, “How the Guide to English Pronunciation of Book of Mormon Names Came About,” 56.

awkward, but it is also probably not how the early members of the Church pronounced the name. More than likely they pronounced Alma the same way that we do today, with a schwa sound at the end of the word.

The absence of the schwa character in the DA script is understandable because it was not an officially recognized vowel sound in the English language at the time, and the word itself did not enter the English lexicon until 1895, well after the development of the DA.²⁹ The word *schwa* came into the English language from German, but its root is “from Hebrew šəwā’, probably from Syriac (nuqzē) šwayyā.”³⁰ Even though the word is a recent addition to the English language, the schwa sound itself has been a part of the spoken language for close to a thousand years:

Towards the end of the Old English period, i.e., after the beginning of the eleventh century, more and more graphemic differences begin to disappear, a fact suggesting progressive neutralization of phonemes occurring in this position. ... Thus English sees the advent of the schwa, the reduced, mid, central, murmured, mixed, indeterminate, colorless vowel, whose “neutrality” has been branded, by one school of language historians, as a defect responsible for some of the most drastic grammatical changes in the history of the language, the decrease of the number of distinctive inflexions in Middle English.³¹

Another apparent oddity of the DA, at least for modern American English speakers, is the presence of these three separate DA characters: *ð* as in art, *θ* as in aught, and *ɹ* as in not . Today, many Americans would pronounce the vowels in all three of the words — *art*, *ought* and *not* — the same way. Of the 363 names that appear in the DA Book of Mormon, ninety-one, or twenty-five percent of them, contain one of these three DA characters (*ð*, *θ* and *ɹ*). Of those ninety-one occurrences, the DA character *ð* is used sixty-nine percent of the time, *ɹ* is used twenty percent of the time, and *θ* is only used eleven percent of the time. Interestingly, though, *ð* was used almost exclusively as the final sound in a word. Of its sixty-three occurrences, sixty-one of those are final sounds. For

29 *Oxford English Dictionary*, retrieved from: www.oed.com. s.v. “schwa.”

30 *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 1560, s.v. “schwa.”

31 Donka Minkova, *The History of Final Vowels in English: The Sound of Muting* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991), 89.

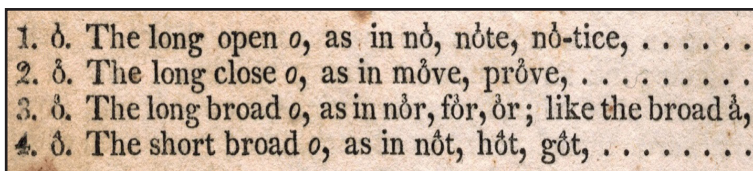


Figure 8

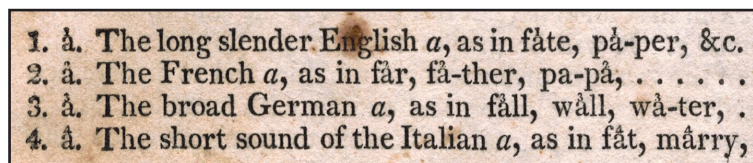


Figure 9

example, *Aha*, *Elijah*, *Isaiah*, *Nephihah*, *Zarahemla* and *Zemnarihah* are all words that end with ϑ in the DA. Today, most Americans would end three of those names (*Aha*, *Nephihah* and *Zemnarihah*) with an *ah* sound (ä in the PG, /a/ in IPA, and described as a *short au* sound in the DA). The other three names (*Elijah*, *Isaiah* and *Zarahemla*) are usually pronounced with a schwa sound at the end of the word. So, did the early Church members say those words in the same way as we do today, or is the DA an accurate representation of how they actually spoke?

Unlike the character ϑ , with only one exception ∇ and ϑ are never used as final sounds in DA Book of Mormon names. The use of the character ∇ in DA names appears to be very straightforward. It is used in names such as *Agosh*, *Com*, *John*, *Josh*, *Nimrod* and *Omni* — all names that we would expect to have the DA *short au* sound.

ϑ , on the other hand is more complicated. Although rarely used in DA names, it is found in the names *Calno*, *Cohor* (second o), *Jordan*, *Korihor* (second o), *Mormon* (first o) and *Nehor*. For convention, I will refer to the character ϑ as an *open o* sound. In Tables 1 and 2 it is represented by the symbol \dot{O} (an O with a dot above it), which is the same symbol that is often used in the modern DA script. Very often this character appears together with the letter *r*, although not always. The pronunciation was neither a DA *long o* (as in *open*), nor a DA *short au* (as in *not*). The DA Pronunciation Guide (Figure 1) identifies it as a *long au* (as in *aught*).

John Walker, in his *Critical Pronouncing Dictionary*, identified four distinct sounds for the letter *a* (see Figure 8), and four for the letter *o* (see figure 9). Interestingly, Walker observed that “the long broad *o*, as in *nor*, *for*, *or*” was “like the broad *a*,” that is, “the broad German *a*, as in

fall, wall, wa-ter.”³² This suggests that the *o* in *nor*, *for* and *or* would have been pronounced much like the *a* in *fall*, *wall* and *water*, which appears to agree with the DA pronunciation.

Kenneth R. Beesley explained that because many of the early members of the Church spoke British or New England dialects of English, these three sounds in the DA (Ø, ʌ and Θ) would have been pronounced distinctly from each other. Beesley wrote:

The original name for the Deseret Ø letter, which is /a/ in IPA, was “ah”, using a common convention in English romanization whereby “ah” represents an unrounded low-back vowel. Most English speakers use this vowel in the words *father*, *bah* and *hah*. In England, and in much of New England, this vowel is distinct from the first vowel in *bother*, represented in Deseret Alphabet as ʌ or in IPA as /ɒ/, which is a rounded low-back vowel; thus for these speakers the words *father* and *bother* do not rhyme. But the rounded /ɒ/ has collapsed into unrounded /a/ in General American English, so the words do rhyme for most Americans. Similarly, the Deseret Θ letter, IPA /ɔ/, represents a mid-low back rounded vowel that has also collapsed into /a/ for many American speakers. It can still be heard quite distinctly in the speech of many New Yorkers, Philadelphians, and New Englanders in general.³³

An interesting discussion among experts in the field of linguistics has been occurring for at least the last eighty years regarding a so-called “card-cord merger” in Utah. As linguist David Bowie explained it,

English speakers along the Wasatch Front of Utah exhibit a variable linguistic feature that can at least loosely be described as /ɔɪ/ merging into /aɪ/, so that the word *cord* is produced as *card*—thus, what is referred to as Utah’s CARD-CORD merger. It was first mentioned in any sort of scholarly writing by Pardoe (1935) and has been the subject of a slow but steady stream of study ever since. Even though there is evidence that the feature was extant in the mid- to late-nineteenth century [at the time that the DA was developed] among the initial generations of English-speaking natives of the region, it does

32 Walker, *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary*, from an unnumbered introductory page entitled “A Table.”

33 Beesley, “Typesetting the Deseret Alphabet,” 98.

names in Table 1 were selected because their DA pronunciation differs markedly from the modern pronunciation as presented in the current Book of Mormon PG. The pronunciation key for these names in Table 1 is found in Table 2. I will discuss here only a few of the differences in pronunciation, but the reader is invited to study the names more thoroughly.

As noted in Table 1, the *Cu* in *Cumorah* in the DA script is pronounced like the first *cu* in *cucumber*. The same is true for the *Cu* in *Cumeni*. In contrast, in the current Book of Mormon PG, the *Mu* in *Muloki* is pronounced *myū* (as in *music*), while in the DA it is pronounced *mu* (as in *mud*). The PG pronunciation of *Deseret* is *děz-a-rět*, with a *z* sound in the first syllable, and a schwa sound in the middle syllable. In the DA it is *děs-ē-rět*, with an *s* sound in the first syllable, and a *long e* in the middle syllable. Finally, the first syllable in *Mormon* in the PG is *mōr* (as in *more*), while in the DA it is *mōr*. In the prior section, we saw that this *open o* sound (ö) was pronounced like “the broad German *a*, as in *fall*, *wall*, *wa-ter*.” Pronounced this way, the phonetic spelling of the first syllable of *Mormon* could be written as *mär* rather than *mōr* (using the PG method).

Table 2³⁶

a	about (schwa)	ē	eat, mete, me	ou	about
ă	ask, pat, map	er	permit	u	jump
ā	able, bake, way	ī	it, him, mirror	ū	rule, boot, two
ä	alms, father, call	ī	idle, fine, deny	ù	book, look, put
ě	ebb, met, second	ō	over, bone, know	ò	open o (unused)

On a final note, the DA script does not provide any hints on how to separate words into syllables. Therefore, to separate the DA names into syllables in Tables 1 and the table in the Appendix, I followed a set of standard syllabication rules.³⁷

36 This is the same key provided with the current Book of Mormon PG, with the addition of the symbols ù and ò.

37 “Pasco County Schools Syllabication Rules,” Last Modified March 14, 2015, <https://pasco.instructure.com/courses/846/files/690596/>

Summary

Although not successful as a revolution in English language orthography, the DA was a brave attempt to simplify our often-complicated English writing system. However, as modern readers of the Book of Mormon, we can benefit from the pronunciation information coded into DA script by its creators. Indeed, the DA Book of Mormon can help us open a window into how the early members of the Church most likely pronounced Book of Mormon names. This is, perhaps, the greatest benefit that can come from studying Brigham Young’s less than successful writing experiment.

Loren Spendlove (MBA, California State University, Fullerton and PhD, University of Wyoming) has worked in many fields over the last thirty years, including academics and corporate financial management. Currently, he and his wife design and manufacture consumer goods. A student of languages, his research interests center on linguistics and etymology.

Appendix

The table below contains a complete list of Book of Mormon names. A pronunciation guide follows. The # column indicates the number of variances between standard English and Deseret Alphabet Pronunciation.

Book of Mormon Pronunciation Guide			Deseret Alphabet Book of Mormon	
Spelling	Pronunciation	#	Pronunciation	Spelling
Aaron	ēr'an	1	ār-un	Ḙ᠞᠞᠞᠞
Abel	ā'bul	1	ā-bēl	Ḙ᠘᠞᠞
Abinadi	a-bīn'a-dī	2	āb-īn-ād-ī	᠘᠘᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞
Abinadom	a-bīn'a-dum	2	ā-bīn-ād-um	Ḙ᠘᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞
Abish	ā'bīsh	0	ā-bīsh	Ḙ᠘᠞᠞᠞
Ablom	āb'lum	1	āb-lun	᠘᠘᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞
Abraham	ā'bra-hām	1	ā-brā-hām	Ḙ᠘᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞
Adam	ād'um	0	ād-um	᠘᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞
Agosh	ā'gāsh	0	ā-gāsh	Ḙ᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞᠞
Aha	ā'hā	0	ā-hā	Ḙ᠞᠞᠞᠞

Ahah	ā'hā	0	ā-hā	Ἐῤῥῶ
Ahaz	ā'hāz	0	ā-hāz	Ἐῤῥῶ
Aiath	ī'uth	1	ā-ī-uth	Ἰᾱῖθ
Akish	ā'kīsh	0	ā-kīsh	Ἐῤῥῶ
Alma	āl'ma	1	āl-mā	Ἰᾱῖθ
Alpha	āl'fa	1	āl-fā	Ἰᾱῖθ
Amaleki	a-māl'a-kī	2	ām-āl-ē-kī	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Amalekite	a-māl'a-kīt	2	ām-āl-ē-kīt	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Amalickiah	a-māl'a-kī'a	2	ām-āl-ī-kī-ā	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Amalickiahite	a-māl'a-kī'a-īt	2	ām-āl-ī-kī-ā-īt	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Amaron	a-mā'rān	2	ām-ā-run	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Amgid	ām'gīd	0	ām-gīd	Ἰᾱῖθ
Aminadab	a-mīn'a-dāb	2	ā-mīn-ā-dāb	Ἐῤῥῶᾱῖθ
Aminadi	a-mīn'a-dī	2	ām-īn-ā-dī	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Amlici	ām'lī-sī	0	ām-lī-sī	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Amlicite	ām'lī-sīt	0	ām-lī-sīt	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Ammah	ām'mā	0	ām-ā	Ἰᾱῖθ
Ammaron	ām'a-rān	2	ām-ā-run	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Ammon	ām'un	0	ām-un	Ἰᾱῖθ
Ammonihah	ām-a-nī'hā	0	ām-un-ī-hā	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Ammonihahite	ām-a-nī'hā-īt	0	ām-un-ī-hā-īt	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Ammonite	ām'a-nīt	0	ām-un-īt	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Ammoron	ām'ōr-ān	1	ām-ōr-un	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Amnigaddah	ām-nī-gād'ā	0	ām-nī-gād-ā	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Amnihu	ām-nī'hū	1	ām-nī-hīū	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Amnor	ām'nōr	1	ām-nur	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Amoron	a-mōr'ān	2	ām-ō-run	Ἰᾱῖθᾱῖθ
Amos	ā'mus	0	ā-mus	Ἐῤῥῶ

Amoz	ā'muz	1	ā-mus	ᐱᐃᐅᐅ
Amulek	ām'yū-lĕk	1	ām-yŭ-lĕk	ᐱᐃᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Amulon	ām'yū-lān	2	ām-yŭ-lun	ᐱᐃᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Amulonites	ām'ya-lān'īts	2	ām-yŭ-lun-īts	ᐱᐃᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ ᐱᐅᐅ
Anathoth	ān'a-tōth	2	ān-ā-thāth	ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Angola	ān-gō'la	1	ān-gō-lā	ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Ani–Anti	ān'ī-ān'tī	0	ān-ī-ān-tī	ᐱᐅᐅ–ᐱᐅᐅᐅ
Anti–Nephi–Lehi	ān'tī-nē'fī-lē'hī	0	ān-tī-nē-fī-lē-hī	ᐱᐅᐅᐅ–ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅ– ᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Anti–Nephi– Lehies	ān'tī-nē'fī-lē'hīz	0	ān-tī-nē-fī-lē- hīz	ᐱᐅᐅᐅ–ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅ– ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Antiomno	ān-tē-ām'nō	1	ān-tī-ām-nō	ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Antion	ān'tē-ān	2	ān-tī-un	ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Antionah	ān-tē-ān'a	2	ān-tī-ō-nā	ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Antionum	ān-tē-ō'num	1	ān-tī-ō-num	ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Antiparah	ān-tī-pār'a	2	ān-tī-pā-rā	ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Antipas	ān'tī-pās	1	ān-tī-pus	ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Antipus	ān'tī-pus	0	ān-tī-pus	ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Antum	ān'tum	0	ān-tum	ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Archeantus	ār-kē-ān'tus	0	ār-kē-ān-tus	ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Arpad	ār'pād	0	ār-pād	ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Assyria	a-sīr'ē-a	2	ā-sīr-ī-ā	ᐱᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Babylon	bāb'ī-lān	1	bāb-ī-lun	ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Bashan	bā'shān	1	bā-shun	ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Benjamin	bēn'ja-mīn	1	bēn-jā-mīn	ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Bethabara	bēth-āb'a-ra	2	bēth-āb-ā-rā	ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Boaz	bō'āz	0	bō-āz	ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Bountiful	boun'tī-ful	1	boun-tī-fūl	ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ
Cain	kān	0	kān	ᐅᐅᐅᐅ

Calno	kāl'nō	1	kāl-nò	𐤀𐤋𐤏𐤍
Carchemish	kār-kēm'ish	1	kār-shē-mīsh	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤔𐤍𐤕𐤍
Cezoram	sē-zōr'um	0	sē-zōr-um	𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Chaldeans	kāl-dē'unz	0	kāl-dē-unz	𐤀𐤋𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Chaldees	kāl-dēz'	0	kāl-dēz	𐤀𐤋𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Chemish	kēm'ish	2	shēm-ish	𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Cherubim	chēr'a-bīm	1	chēr-ū-bīm	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Cohor	kō'hōr	1	kō-hòr	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Com	kōm	1	kām	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤍
Comnor	kōm'nōr	2	kām-nur	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Corianton	kōr-ē-ān'tun	1	kōr-ī-ān-tun	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Coriantor	kōr-ē-ān'tōr	2	kōr-ī-ān-tur	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Coriantum	kōr-ē-ān'tum	1	kōr-ī-ān-tum	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Coriantumr	kōr-ē-ān'ta-mer	1	kōr-ī-ān-tum-er	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Corihor	kōr'ī-hōr	2	kōr-ī-hòr	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Corom	kōr'um	0	kōr-um	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Cumeni	kū'ma-nī	2	kīū-mē-nī	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Cumenihah	kū-ma-nī'hā	2	kām-ē-nī-hā	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍 ²
Cumom	kū'mum	2	kum-ām	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Cumorah	ka-mōr'a	2	kīū-mōr-ā	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Curelom	kū-rē'lum	2	kīūr-lām	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Deseret	dēz-a-rēt'	2	dēs-ē-rēt	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Desolation	dēs-ō-lā'shun	0	dēs-ō-lā-shun	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Edom	ē'dum	0	ē-dum	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Egypt	ē'jīpt	0	ē-jīpt	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Egyptian	ē-jīp'shun	0	ē-jīp-shun	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Elam	ē'lum	0	ē-lum	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍
Elijah	ē-lī'ja	1	ē-lī-jā	𐤀𐤕𐤕𐤕𐤍

Emer	ē'mer	1	ē-mēr	ဓာမ်
Emron	ēm'rān	1	ēm-run	အာဗုဏ
Enos	ē'nus	0	ē-nus	ဓာဗုဒ္ဓ
Ephah	ē'fā	1	ēf-ā	အာဓ
Ephraim	ē'frēm or ē'frum	2	ē-frā-īm	ဓာဗုဏ်ဒဿ
Esrom	ēz'rum	1	ēs-rum	အာဗုဗုဒ္ဓ
Ethem	ē'thum	1	ē-thēm	ဓာဗုဒ္ဓ
Ether	ē'ther	1	ē-thēr	ဓာဗုဏ်
Eve	ēv	0	ēv	ဓာဗ
Ezias	ē-zī'us	0	ē-zī-us	ဓာဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Ezrom	ēz'rum	0	ēz-rum	အာဗုဗုဒ္ဓ
Gad	gād	0	gād	ဂဗုဒ္ဓ
Gadiandi	gād-ē-ān'dī	1	gād-ī-ān-dī	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Gadianon	gād-ē-ān'tun	1	gād-ī-ān-tun	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Gadiomnah	gād-ē-ām'na	2	gād-ī-ām-nā	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Gallim	gāl'īm	0	gāl-īm	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Gazelem	ga-zā'līm	2	gāz-ē-lēm	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Geba	gē'ba	1	gē-bā	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Gebim	gē'bīm	0	gē-bīm	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Gibeah	gīb'ē-a	1	gīb-ē-ā	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Gid	gīd	0	gīd	ဂဗုဒ္ဓ
Giddianhi	gīd-ē-ān'hī	1	gīd-ī-ān-hī	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Giddonah	gīd-dō'nā	0	gīd-ō-nā	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Gideon	gīd'ē-un	0	gīd-ē-un	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Gidgiddonah	gīd-gīd-dō'nā	1	gīd-gīd-ō-nā	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Gidgiddoni	gīd-gīd-dō'nī	0	gīd-gīd-ō-nī	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ
Gilead	gīl'ē-ud	0	gīl-ē-ud	ဂဗုဒ္ဓဗုဒ္ဓ

Gilgah	gīl'gä	0	gīl-gä	ດິເລອ
Gilgal	gīl'gäl	1	gīl-gul and gīl-gäl	ດິເລຣ and ດິເລລ ³
Gim gimno	gīm-gīm'nō	2	jīm-jīm-nō	ຈິງຈິງນອ
Gomorra	ga-mōr'a	2	gō-mär-ä	ດອງຣາ
Hagoth	hā'gäth	0	hā-gäth	ຮາອາ
Hamath	hā'muth	1, 0	hā-mäth and hā-muth	ຮາມາ and ຮາມາ ⁴
Hearthom	hē-är'thum	2	her-thum	ຮາຮາ
Helam	hē'lum	0	hē-lum	ຮາລາ
Helaman	hē'la-mun	1	hē-lā-mun	ຮາເລມາ
Helem	hē'lēm	0	hē-lēm	ຮາເລມ
Helorum	hē-lōr'um	1	hē-lōr-um	ຮາເລຣາ
Hem	hēm	0	hēm	ຮາ
Hermounts	her'mounts	0	her-mounts	ຮາຮາຮາ
Heshlon	hēsh'lān	1	hēsh-lun	ຮາເລນ
Heth	hēth	0	hēth	ຮາ
Himni	hīm'nī	0	hīm-nī	ຮາມີ
Horeb	hōr'ēb	0	hōr-ēb	ຮາຮາ
Immanuel	īm-mān'yū-ēl	1	īm-ān-yīū-ēl	ຮາມາມາ
Irreantum	ī-rē-ān'tum	0	īr-ē-ān-tum	ຮາຮາຮາ
Isaac	ī'zīk	1	ī-zuk	ຮາຮາ
Isabel	īz'a-bēl	2	īs-ā-bēl	ຮາຮາ
Isaiah	ī-zā'a	2	ī-zā-yä	ຮາຮາ
Ishmael	īsh'mul or īsh'mēl	2	īsh-mā-ēl	ຮາມາ
Ishmaelite	īsh'mul-īt or īsh'mēl-īt	2	īsh-mā-ēl-īt	ຮາມາມາ
Israel	īz'rēl or īz'rul	2	īz-rā-ēl	ຮາຮາ

Israelite	īz' rēl-īt or īz' rul-īt	2	īz-rā-ēl-īt	Ἰσραηλιται
Jacob	jā' kub	0	jā-kub	Ἰακωβ
Jacobite	jā' kub-īt	0	jā-kub-īt	Ἰακωβιται
Jacobugath	jā' ka-bū' gāth	1	jā-kub-īū-gāth	Ἰακωβιθ
Jacom	jā' kum	0	jā-kum	Ἰακωμ
Jared	jēr' ud	2	jār-ēd	Ἰερὰ
Jaredite	jēr' a-dīt	2	jār-ēd-īt	Ἰερὰιται
Jarom	jēr' um	1	jār-um	Ἰερὼμ
Jashon	jā' shān	1	jā-shun	Ἰασων
Jeberechiah	jēb-a-ra-kī' a	2	jē-bēr-ē-kī-ā	Ἰεβεραχ
Jehovah	jē-hō' va	1	jē-hō-vā	Ἰεϋωα
Jeneum	jēn' ē-um	1	jo-nē-um	Ἰονεὺμ ⁵
Jeremiah	jēr-a-mī' a	2	jēr-ē-mī-ā	Ἰερὰμ
Jershon	jēr' shān	2	jer-shun	Ἰερων
Jerusalem	ja-rū' sa-lēm	2	jē-rū-sā-lēm	Ἰερουσαλὴμ
Jesse	jēs' ē	1	jē-sī	Ἰησὴ
Jew	jū	1	jīū	Ἰουδαῖος
John	jān	0	jān	Ἰωάννης
Jonas	jō' nus	0	jō-nus	Ἰωνᾶς
Jordan	jōr' dun	1	jōr-dun	Ἰορδάνης
Joseph	jō' zēf	0	jō-zēf	Ἰωσὴφ
Josephite	jō' zēf-īt	0	jō-zēf-īt	Ἰωσὴφιται
Josh	jāsh	0	jāsh	Ἰωσὴ
Joshua	jāsh' ū-wa	2	jāsh-īū-ā	Ἰωσὴφ
Jotham	jō' thum	0	jō-thum	Ἰωθὰμ
Judah	jū' da	2	jīū-dā	Ἰουδαῖος
Judea	jū-dē' a	2	jīū-dē-ā	Ἰουδαῖος

Luram	lūr'um	1	līū-rum	ԼԻՈՒՐՉ
Madmenah	măd-měn'á	2	măd-mē-nă	ՄԱԺՄԵՆԱԾ
Mahah	mā'hă	0	mā-hă	ՄԵԿԾ
Maher-shalal-hash-baz	mă'her-shăl-ăl-hăsh'băz	2	mā-hěr-shăl-ul-hăsh-băz	ՄԵԿԻՄԻՇԼԼԱԼՀԱՏԲԱԶ
Malachi	măl'a-kī	1	măl-ă-kī	ՄԱԼԱԽԻ
Manasseh	ma-năs'á	2	măn-ă-sě	ՄԱՆԱՏԷ
Manti	măn'tī	0	măn-tī	ՄԱՆԻ
Mary	mě'rē	2	mār-ī	ՄԵՐԻ
Mathoni	ma-thō'nī	1	mă-thō-nī	ՄԱԹՈՆԻ
Mathonihah	măth-ō-nī'hă	0	mă-thō-nī-hă	ՄԱԹՈՆԻԿԻ
Medes	mēdz	0	mēdz	ՄԵԺԵ
Melchizedek	měl-kīz'a-dīk	2	měl-chīz-ē-děk	ՄԵԼԽԻԶԵԺԵԿ
Melek	mē'lěk	0	mē-lěk	ՄԵԼԵԿ
Michmash	mīk'măsh	0	mīk-măsh	ՄԻԽՄԱՏ
Middoni	mīd-dō'nī	0	mīd-ō-nī	ՄԻԺՈՆԻ
Midian	mīd'ē-un	1	mīd-ī-un	ՄԻԺԻԱՆ
Migron	mī'grăn	2	mīg-run	ՄԻԳՐՈՆ
Minon	mī'năn	1	mī-nun	ՄԻՆՈՆ
Moab	mō'ăb	0	mō-ăb	ՄՈԱԲ
Mocum	mō'kum	0	mō-kum	ՄՈԽՐՉ
Moriancumer	mōr-ē-ăn'ka-mer	2	mōr-ī-ăn-kīū-měr	ՄՈՐԻԱՆԽՈՒՄԵՐ
Morianton	mōr-ē-ăn'tun	1	mōr-ī-ăn-tun	ՄՈՐԻԱՆԻՄ
Moriantum	mōr-ē-ăn'tum	1	mōr-ī-ăn-tum	ՄՈՐԻԱՆԻՄ
Mormon	mōr'mun	1	mōr-mun	ՄՈՐՄՈՆ
Moron	mōr'un	0	mōr-un	ՄՈՐԱՆ
Moroni	mō-rō'nī	0	mōr-ō-nī	ՄՈՐՈՆԻ
Moronihah	mō-rō-nī'hă	0	mōr-ō-nī-hă	ՄՈՐՈՆԻԿԻ

Moses	mō'zus	2	mō-zēz	ጠፍፋፍ
Mosiah	mō-sī'a or mō-zī'a	1, 2	mō-sī-ä	ጠፍፋፍ
Mulek	myū'lēk	2, 1	mīū-luk and mīū-lēk	ጠፍፋፍ and ጠፍፋፍ ⁶
Muloki	myū'la-kī	2	mul-ō-kī	ጠፍፋፍ
Nahom	nā'hum	0	nā-hum	ከፍፋፍ
Naphtali	nāf'ta-lī	1	nāf-tā-lī	ከፍፋፍ
Nazareth	nāz'a-rēth	1	nāz-ä-rēth	ከፍፋፍ
Neas	nē'ās	2	nē-āz	ከፍፋፍ
Nehor	nē'hōr	1	nē-hōr	ከፍፋፍ
Nephi	nē'fī	0	nē-fī	ከፍፋፍ
Nephihah	nē-fī'hä	0	nē-fī-hä	ከፍፋፍ
Nephite	nē'fīt	0	nē-fīt	ከፍፋፍ
Neum	nē'um	0	nē-um	ከፍፋፍ
Nimrah	nīm'rā	0	nīm-rä	ከፍፋፍ
Nimrod	nīm'rād	0	nīm-rād	ከፍፋፍ
Noah	nō'a	1	nō-ä	ከፍፋፍ
Ogath	ō'gāth	0	ō-gāth	ጠፍፋፍ
Omega	ō-mā'ga	1	ō-mā-gä	ጠፍፋፍ
Omer	ō'mer	1	ō-mēr	ጠፍፋፍ
Omner	ām'ner	1	ām-nēr	ፈፍፋፍ
Omni	ām'nī	0	ām-nī	ፈፍፋፍ
Onidah	ō-nī'da	1	ō-nī-dä	ጠፍፋፍ
Onihah	ō-nī'hä	0	ō-nī-hä	ጠፍፋፍ
Onti	än'tī	0	än-tī	ፈፍፋፍ
Ophir	ō'fer	0	ō-fer	ጠፍፋፍ
Oreb	ōr'ēb	0	ōr-ēb	ጠፍፋፍ
Orihah	ō-rī'hä	0	ō-rī-hä	ጠፍፋፍ

Paanchi	pā-ān'kī	0	pā-ān-kī	ປາເຈດ
Pachus	pā'kus	1	pāk-us	ປາດຸສ
Pacumeni	pā-kyū'mēn-ī	2	pāk-īū-mē-nī	ປາດມັງວອນ
Pagag	pā'gäg	1	pā-gäg	ປາຄາດ
Pahoran	pa-hōr'un	1	pā-hōr-un	ປາຮອຣຸນ
Palestina	pāl-a-stī'na	2	pāl-ē-stī-nä	ປາເລສຕີນາ
Pathros	pā'thrōs	1	pā-thrus	ປາທຣອສ
Pekah	pē'kā	0	pē-kä	ປອຄາ
Pharaoh	fā'rō or-fē'rō	0, 1	fā-rō	ຟາຣອ
Philistine	fīl'a-stēn	2	fīl-ī-stīn	ຟິລິສຕິນ
Rabbanah	ra-bān'a	2	rāb-ā-nä	ຣາບບານາ
Rahab	rā'hāb	0	rā-hāb	ຣາຮາບ
Ramah	rā'mā	1	rā-mä	ຣາມາ
Ramath	rā'muth	0	rā-muth	ຣາມາທ
Rameumptom	rām-ē-ump'tum	0	rām-ē-ump-tum	ຣາມອຸມຕອມ
Remaliah	rēm-a-lī'a	2	rēm-ā-lī-ä	ຣາມາເລຍາ
Rezin	rē'zīn	0	rē-zīn	ຣອຊິນ
Riplah	rīp'lā	0	rīp-lä	ຣິປລາ
Riplakish	rīp-lā'kīsh	1	rīp-lä-kīsh	ຣິປລາດິຊ
Ripliancum	rīp-lē-ān'kum	1	rīp-lī-ān-kum	ຣິປລິນຄຸມ
Salem	sā'lēm	0	sā-lēm	ສາເລມ
Sam	sām	0	sām	ສາມ
Samaria	sa-mēr'ē-a	2	sām-ā-rī-ä	ສາມາຣິຍາ
Samuel	sām'yū-ēl	1	sām-yīū-ēl	ສາມຢູເອລ
Sarah	sēr'a	2	sār-ä	ສາຣາ
Sariah	sa-rī'a	2	sā-rī-ä	ສາຣາຍາ
Saul	sāl	1	sōl	ສອລ
Seantum	sē-ān'tum	0	sē-ān-tum	ສອນທານຸມ

Shurr	sher	0	sher	ՏԻՐ
Sidom	sī'dum	0	sī-dum	ՏԻԹԻՉ
Sidon	sī'dun	0	sī-dun	ՏԻԹԻԿ
Sinai	sī'nī	2	sī-nā-ī	ՏԻԿԵԻ
Sinim	sī'nīm	0	sī-nīm	ՏԻԿԻՉ
Siron	sī'run	0	sī-run	ՏԻՐԻԿ
Syria	sīr'ē-a	2	sīr-ī-ä	ՏԻՐԻԹ
Tarshish	tār'shīsh	0	tār-shīsh	ԴԹԻԻԾ
Teancum	tē-ān'kum	0	tē-ān-kum	ԴԵՆԹԻՉ
Teomner	tē-ām'ner	1	tē-ām-nēr	ԴԵՆԿԻՐ
Thummim	thum'īm		Word not used in the body of the Book of Mormon	
Timothy	tīm'a-thē	2	tīm-ō-thī	ԴԻՉԹԻ
Tubaloth	tū'ba-lāth	2	tū-bā-luth	ԴԻԹԵԼԻԼ
Uriah	yū-rī'a	2	yū-rī-ä	ՎԻԹԻԹ
Urim	yūr'īm		Word not used in the body of the Book of Mormon	
Uzziah	yū-zī'a	2	u-zī-ä	ԻՇԹ
Zarahemla	zēr-a-hēm'la	2	zār-ä-hēm-lä	ՅԵՐԿԻԼԵԼ
Zebulun	zēb'yū-lun	1	zēb-yū-lun	ՅԵԿԻԼՈՒԿ
Zechariah	zēk'a-rī'a	2	zēk-ä-rī-ä	ՅԵԿԻՐԹ
Zedekiah	zēd'a-kī'a	2	zēd-ē-kī-ä	ՅԵԹԵԿԹ
Zeezrom	zē-ēz'rum	0	zē-ēz-rum	ՅԵԼԵՐԻՉ
Zemnarihah	zēm-na-rī'hä	1	zēm-nā-rī-hä	ՅԵՆԻԿԻԿԹ
Zenephi	zēn'a-fī	1	zē-nē-fī	ՅԵՆԹԻ
Zeniff	zē'nīf	0	zē-nīf	ՅԵՆԻՐ
Zenock	zē'nuk	0	zē-nuk	ՅԵՆԻԾ
Zenos	zē'nus	0	zē-nus	ՅԵՆԻՅ
Zerahemnah	zēr-a-hēm'nä	2	zēr-ä-hēm-nä	ՅԵՐԿԻԼԵԹ

Zeram	zē'rum	0	zē-rum	ᠵᠡᠷᠠᠮ
Zerin	zē'rīn	0	zē-rīn	ᠵᠡᠷᠢᠨ
Ziff	zīf	0	zīf	ᠵᠢᠫ
Zion	zī'un	0	zī-un	ᠵᠢᠨ
Zoram	zō'rum	0	zōr-um	ᠵᠣᠷᠠᠮ
Zoramite	zōr'um-īt	0	zōr-um-īt	ᠵᠣᠷᠠᠮᠢᠲᠡ

Names and terms in the Book of Mormon, but not in the current Pronunciation Guide:				
Arabian			ā-rā-bī-un	ᠠᠷᠠᠪᠢᠨ
Assyrian			ā-sīr-ī-un	ᠠᠰᠢᠷᠢᠨ
Cush			kush	ᠬᠤᠰ
Damascus			dā-mā-skus	ᠳᠠᠮᠠᠰᠠᠰᠤᠰ
David			dā-vīd	ᠳᠡᠸᠠᠳ
Eden			ē-dēn	ᠡᠳᠡᠨ
Galilee			gāl-ī-lē	ᠭᠠᠯᠢᠯᠡ
Gentile			jēn-tīl	ᠵᠡᠨᠲᠢᠯ
Hebrew			hē-brū	ᠬᠡᠪᠷᠠ
Jesus			jē-zus	ᠵᠡᠰᠤᠰ
Leah			lē-ā	ᠯᠡᠶᠠ
Lucifer			līū-sī-fēr	ᠯᠢᠦᠰᠢᠫᠡᠷ
Mammon			mām-un	ᠮᠠᠮᠤᠨ
Nob			nāb	ᠨᠠᠪ
Seon			sē-un	ᠰᠡᠨ
Shublons			shub-lunz	ᠰᠠᠪᠯᠠᠨᠵᠢ ⁸
Sion ⁹			zī-un	ᠵᠢᠨ
Sodom			sād-um	ᠰᠠᠳᠤᠮ
Solomon			sāl-ō-mun	ᠰᠠᠯᠠᠭᠤᠮᠤᠨ
Tabaal			tā-bē-ul	ᠲᠠᠪᠡᠭᠤᠯ

Pronunciation Guide Key:				
a	about		ī	idle, fine, deny
ǎ	ask, pat, map		ō	over, bone, know
ā	able, bake, way		ou	about
ä	alms, father, call		u	jump
ě	ebb, met, second		ū	rule, boot, two
ē	eat, mete, me		ù	book, look, put
er	permit		ò	<i>open O - little used today</i>
ĩ	it, him, mirror		<i>û and ô are not in the current PG</i>	

Appendix Notes

1. Ablom in the 1852 Book of Mormon. DA spelling is an apparent error.
2. Camenihah in the 1852 Book of Mormon. This spelling was replicated in the DA Book of Mormon.
3. Two variant spellings in the DA Book of Mormon.
4. Two variant spellings in the DA Book of Mormon.
5. Joneam in the 1852 Book of Mormon. Skousen (*The Earliest Text*) indicates that Joneum, rather than Jeneum, is the earliest spelling, agreeing with the DA pronunciation, but differing from the 1852 spelling.
6. Two variant spellings in the DA BoM.
7. Shimnilon in the 1852 Book of Mormon. This spelling was replicated in the DA Book of Mormon.
8. A variant spelling of shiblons in the 1830 and 1852 Book of Mormon “Now an antion of gold is equal to three shublons.” Alma 11:18 (Alma 8:8 in 1952 and DA Book of Mormon). This spelling was replicated in the DA Book of Mormon.
9. Sion is an error that first appeared in the 1852 Book of Mormon. It is Zion in all prior editions. This error was not corrected until the 1920 edition. I have included this word in the list since the DA Book of Mormon was set from the 1852 edition.

WHY THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY (AND NOT WEBSTER'S 1828)

Stanford Carmack

In order to properly consider possible meaning in the Book of Mormon (BofM), we must use the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). Royal Skousen opened the door to this approach,¹ but unfortunately many have resisted accepting it as valid or have not understood the advantages inherent in it. The usual method of consulting Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* has serious drawbacks. First, that approach is based on the incorrect assumption that the English language of the text is Joseph Smith's own language or what he knew from reading the King James Bible (KJB). That incorrect assumption leads us to wrongly believe that nonbiblical lexical meaning in the BofM is to be sought in 1820s American English, or even perhaps from Smith making mistakes in his attempt to imitate biblical language (which is a canard). Second, by using Webster's 1828 dictionary we can easily be led astray and form inaccurate judgments about old usage and we can miss possible meaning in the text.

Let us consider the second point and a concrete example related to usage. To begin with, the OED definitively tells us that the pronoun *ye* was used to address both a single person and more than one person, and in both subject position and object position, starting in Middle English and continuing on into the Early Modern English era (EModE). *Ye* was a versatile pronoun.² The OED has a very helpful entry on this point.³

1 Royal Skousen, "The Archaic Vocabulary of the Book of Mormon," *Insights: A Window on the Ancient World* 25 (2005), 2–6.

2 But by the end of the 16th century (16c), *you* had become dominant in subject position.

3 *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. on CD-ROM, v.4 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), *ye*, *pers. pron. 2nd pers. nom. (obj.), pl. (sing.)*.

Webster's 1828 has nothing on this. Here is one example taken from the Early English Books Online database (EEBO):⁴

1507 Walter Hilton *Scala perfectionis*

If **thou** loue moche god, **ye** lyketh for to thynke vpon hym moche

If **thou** love much God, **ye** liketh to think upon him much

where *like* = 'feel inclined to'

Note the close switch from *thou* to *ye*, even though it refers to the same person,⁵ as we see in various places in the BofM (see, for example, 1 Nephi 17:19 and Jacob 7:6). Note the third-person singular inflection after *ye*, as we see in Helaman 13:21; 13:34 and elsewhere (see Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* [New Haven, CT: Yale UP 2009]). This 1507 example is representative of many others that are found in the English textual record. Here is another example from Tyndale:

1573 John Foxe, ed. *The vvhole workes of W. Tyndall* (d. 1536) [EEBO]

... if **thou** vowe to go and visite the poore, ... it is wel done, and a sacrifice that sauoureth well, **ye** wil happily say, that **ye** will go to this or that place ...

... if **ye** abyde in me, and my wordes also abyde in **you**, then aske what **ye** wyll and **ye** shall haue it. If **thou** beleue in Christe and hast⁶ the promises whiche God hath made **thee** in **thine** hart, then go on pilgrimage ...

The entry for the word *ye* in Webster's 1828 states that it is the nominative plural of the second person, nothing more. The dictionary misses that *ye* was frequently used for **singular** address in EModE. We have just seen examples of this, and it can rather easily be found in Shakespeare. The OED points this out with several relevant examples. The KJB itself slides almost imperceptibly and frequently between *ye/you* and *thou/thee* in passages such as Deuteronomy 13:1–5 and Matthew 6:1–9, to give just two examples.⁷ Webster's 1828 also misses that *ye* was frequently used as a grammatical **object** during the early modern era, including by Shakespeare. The BofM has this usage (e.g. Alma 14:19

4 Chadwyck-Healey <eebo.chadwyck.com>.

5 Modern edited versions have *thou likest* instead of *ye lyketh*. See, for example, Rev. J. B. Dalgairns, ed., *The Scale (or Ladder) of Perfection* (Westminster: Art and Book Company, 1908), 126.

6 Note the subjunctive variation ("if thou believe ... and hast") as we see in the BofM at, for example, Mosiah 26:29, Helaman 13:26, and Moroni 7:44.

7 These can often be ascribed to the underlying Hebrew and Greek (either wholly or in part), complicating the issue. In some biblical cases, justifying the pronominal switching in English as a move between singular and plural referents makes for a strained analysis.

and Mormon 3:22), and the OED points this out with several relevant examples.

Misleading views, such as the one that Webster's 1828 provides us with, have led some to blithely make inaccurate pronouncements on this aspect of BofM grammar. Some even go so far as to claim, without sufficient analysis or expertise, that there is a massive misuse of archaic personal pronouns in the text. Yet it is the unknowing critics who have been mistaken.⁸ It is simply that there was a massive amount of variation in EModE, and the BofM is a text that has a complex mixture of unexpurgated language from the EModE period and beyond. While Webster's 1828 sheds no light on the matter, the OED elucidates this issue.

Let me also say at this point that it is wrongheaded to propose Moroni as translator in order to account for "errors" in the text.⁹ He

8. Not addressed here, but important, is the use of *thou* with plural referents. This is seen quite a few times in the *Earliest Text* (the most egregious instances have been edited out) and will be thoroughly addressed in the forthcoming volume 3 of the critical text project.

Here I would like to note that all serious readers of the King James Bible implicitly know that *thou is* (generally) a singular pronoun. So this is not a mistake that one can reasonably expect Joseph Smith would have made. Many other assumed mistakes are much more likely than this one. But we also note that the King James Bible at times clearly goes against this general stricture: "and say unto Zion, **Thou art** my people" (Isaiah 51:16); "I will say to them which were not my people, **Thou art** my people; and they shall say, *Thou art* my God" (Hosea 2:23). In Isaiah and Hosea *thou* is used with a general plural referent, and in the latter the text makes a close switch back to a singular referent. See also the frequent switching in Deuteronomy 13:1–5 and Matthew 6:1–9. In these verses *thou* and related forms (thee, thy, thine) can very reasonably be viewed as applying to general plural referents.

The sometimes expansive Book of Mormon usage of second-person singular pronouns with **specific** plural referents could be ascribed in isolation to Joseph Smith making mistakes in attempting to follow biblical usage. However, because there is so much language in the *Earliest Text* that Smith could not have known, it is most reasonable to think that he simply received the words that he dictated. And these words included the use of *thou*, etc. applied rather liberally in places to certain plural referents, perhaps for a strengthening effect (as in 1 Nephi 7:8 and Mosiah 12:30—see Joseph Wright, *The English Dialect Dictionary*, Vol. 6 [Oxford: Henry Frowde, 1905], 101).

9 See Roger Terry, "What Shall We Do with *Thou*? Modern Mormonism's Unruly Usage of Archaic English Pronouns," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 47.3 (2014), 56. There is good material in this article, but there are also problems with his analysis vis-à-vis the BofM. The main one is the view that the BofM is full of grammatical errors. That misleading view was promulgated right

may have been involved in the divine translation effort, but to employ him as an explanatory device in order to account for putative errors is misguided. The English-language text is too complex, diverse, and even well-formed to ascribe it to a non-native translation effort. Again, as I have stated in an earlier paper,¹⁰ the BofM is not full of grammatical errors. Rather, it is full of EModE — some of it is typical and pedestrian, some of it is elegant and sophisticated, and some of it is, to our limited or uninformed way of thinking, objectionable and ungrammatical. The BofM also contains touches of modern English and late Middle English. It is not a monolithic text, and we are just beginning to learn about its English language. (A striking example of late Middle English is provided at the end of this short study.) I have certainly come to realize that it is not the text of the BofM that is full of errors, but rather our judgments in relation to its grammar.

Let us now consider an example that shows the shortcomings of Webster's 1828 in relation to meaning in the BofM:

Moroni 1:1

I had **supposed** to not have written more, but I have not as yet perished.

What is the meaning of *suppose* in Moroni 1:1? There are a few possibilities. One that I favor in this context is 'incline (or tend) to think,' with the implication of a mistaken belief (see OED definition 8).

Webster's 1828 tells us that *suppose* can mean, among other things, 'believe,' 'imagine,' or 'think.' The OED has these senses (*sense* is its favored term for 'meaning'), but it also has several additional meanings that are possibly relevant and that are not found in Webster's 1828, including 'expect.' The OED states that this sense of the verb *suppose*

after its publication, perpetuated by many, including influential church leaders and scholars, and has now been re-asserted, which is a regrettable circumstance because it is inaccurate from the point of view of EModE, which is the language of the book. I also disagree with the author's tendency to consider KJB variation to be well-formed syntax while ascribing BofM variation to grammatical errors. I also note the following regarding Terry's article: *has/hath* variation in the BofM (9.5% *has*) matches the variation found in the textual record of the late 1600s (Shakespeare employed *has* 16.5% of the time); the BofM's partially levelled past-participial system is also a match with this time period; as shown above, Tyndale employed close *ye ~ thou* alternation in his independent writing, as other contemporary authors did, and just as the BofM does; *needs* is an adverb, not a verb, so it never carried *-th* inflection.

10 Stanford Carmack, "A Look at Some 'Nonstandard' Book of Mormon Grammar," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 11 (2014), 216ff.

is obsolete, providing examples to the year 1760.¹¹ Because Webster's 1828 does not have the meaning 'expect,' this is good evidence that it was truly obsolete by the 1820s.¹² In this way Webster's 1828 is useful. But because *suppose* in Moroni 1:1 **could** convey a notion of 'expect,' and since the sense is not found in Webster's 1828, we find that this reference dictionary is inadequate in relation to BofM textual meaning and usage, just as we have seen is the case with the personal pronoun *ye*. Moreover, the BofM phrase *it supposeth me*, as discussed below, amply demonstrates the inadequacy of Webster's 1828 dictionary and the superiority of the OED in relation to BofM meaning and syntax.

The phrasing *had supposed to* and *had supposed that* is found mainly in the first half of the EModE era. In fact, 95% of the instances that I have located in that period are from before the year 1600. In addition, there are relatively few examples of this wording to be found in the much more extensive textual record of the 1700s and early 1800s. Thus it is reasonable on that basis alone to seek older meaning in this case.

Here is an OED quotation from the influential printer/publisher William Caxton:

1474 CAXTON *Chesse* III. iii. (1883) 100

He was ryght seeke And ... men **supposid** hym to dye.

'He was very¹³ sick and men **expected** him to die'

This is from one of the earliest books printed in English. In this example, as in Moroni 1:1, *suppose* is used with a following infinitive with a **future** orientation. The OED tells us that *suppose* with the meaning 'expect' was always used with a complement referring to the future. So in that way the meaning is a good fit with Moroni 1:1. The following excerpts taken from EEBO are very similar syntactically to Moroni 1:1:¹⁴

1474 when she approached unto her enemies and *had supposed to have distressed* them, she found them arrayed and ranged

11 OED **suppose**, v. †4 = 'expect.' The dictionary states that the verb with this sense is often combined grammatically with an infinitive "referring to the future." The BofM context is the pluperfect of *suppose* followed by an infinitival verb phrase used in an anterior **future** context.

12 Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* [Volume 2, London: 1756], from which Webster borrowed heavily, does not have 'expect' either. (Volume 1 was published in 1755.)

13 OED **right**, *adv.* 9b.

14 Accidentals regularized; alternate senses for *suppose* such as 'intend' are possible (see OED definition 5).

in good ordinance of battle | **1474** he took leave of King Affer and the Egyptians, and *had supposed to have departed* thence | **1474** I *had supposed to have remained* and continued a stable virgin | **1477** the realm of Myrmidon which he *had supposed to have enjoyed* | **1485** And of that of which the ass *had supposed to have had* grace, honor, and profit, he had shame and damage | **1492** I made by the virtue of some enchantments die suddenly the espouse, whom he *had supposed to have enjoyed*.

This evidence points to suppose = ‘expect.’ But we must duly consider other possibilities such as ‘believe,’ ‘imagine,’ and ‘think.’

Let me state at the outset of the following brief semantic analysis that such argumentation can be exceedingly difficult. I do not lay claim to any special insight on the matter. I can only do my best to argue based on examples, syntax, and the authority of the OED. With that said, we note that Moroni 1:1 involves infinitival complementation after the verb *suppose*, which is used in the pluperfect. In addition, the understood tense of the complement *to not have written more* is the anterior future, or the future in the past. We have seen several examples of this, from the beginning of the EModE era. But we note that the other meanings under consideration — ‘believe, imagine, think’ — can also be used with future complementation. However, ‘imagine’ and ‘think’ also semantically work with complementation that has a present-tense orientation, while ‘believe’ and especially ‘expect,’ with its clear future anticipation, do not, as in these rewritings for Moroni 1:1:¹⁵

I **imagine** I won’t write anything else *right now* (*imagine* = ‘have in mind; entertain an idea’).

I **think** I won’t write anything else *right now* (*think* = ‘have in the mind’).

? I **believe** I won’t write anything else *right now* (*believe* = ‘have a belief’).

?? I **expect** I won’t write anything else *right now* (where *expect* ≠ ‘think, imagine’).

These same verbs are all grammatical with the future orientation of Moroni 1:1:

I **imagine** I won’t write anything else *in the future*.

15 In these expressions I have put Moroni 1:1 language in the present tense, with *more* = ‘something more/else’; thus I use present-day English ‘not...anything else’ (cf. Moroni 1:4).

I **think** I won't write anything else *in the future*.

I **believe** I won't write anything else *in the future*.

I **expect** I won't write anything else *in the future*.

If we use infinitival complementation, only the phrasing with *expect* is felicitous in present-day English:

? I **imagine** to not write anything else in the future.

? I **think** to not write anything else in the future (where *think* ≠ 'intend, design, purpose' as in 2 Nephi 5:3: "Our younger brother thinketh to rule over us").

? I **believe** to not write anything else in the future.

I **expect** to not write anything else in the future.

Syntactically (both historically and contemporaneously), and with its obligatory future orientation, *suppose* = 'expect' fits the context well: Moroni had not expected to have engraved¹⁶ again because he thought he would be dead before he had another opportunity to do so. Relying on Webster's 1828, we miss this possibility. Yet as indicated, the others are possible in present-day English with finite complementation, and 'tend to think' (implying mistaken belief), is semantically a good fit: Moroni had mistakenly thought that he would not have had an opportunity to engrave again.

How about the split infinitive? Skousen discusses this passage, noting that the wording was transposed to *not to have* by the 1830 typesetter (matching Moroni 1:4), and that "[t]he idea that split infinitives are somehow wrong in English is a complete artificiality."¹⁷ The linguist Jespersen observed: "The name [split infinitive] is misleading, for the preposition *to* no more belongs to the infinitive as a necessary part of it, than the definite article belongs to the substantive, and no one would think of calling 'the good man' a split substantive."¹⁸ Here is a 16c example that is similar to the split-infinitive syntax of Moroni 1:1:

1551 Anne Cooke Bacon tr. (Ital. orig. by Bernardino Ochino, d. 1564) [EEBO]
[God] is not also compelled of hys perfecte goodnes, mercie and charitie, **to not haue created** the worlde, ...

16 OED **write**, v. 1b = 'engrave.'

17 Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, 6 parts (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU, 2004–09), 3890.

18 Otto Jespersen, *Essentials of English Grammar* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1933), 345. See the following for several interesting and insightful quotes: David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 195.

■ ■ ■

In further support of the assertions made at the beginning of this paper in favor of using the OED, I make the following observations:

- The BofM is full of King James English whose meaning obligatorily derives from the 1500s (since much KJB language derives from 16th-century translations, especially Tyndale's).
- The BofM has quite a few instances of older, **nonbiblical** meaning, including:

counsel = 'ask counsel of, consult,' used in Alma 37:37; 39:10; this sense is not in Webster's 1828, and the last OED quote is dated 1547.¹⁹

depart = 'divide,' used **intransitively** in Helaman 8:11; this sense is not in Webster's 1828, and the last OED quote is dated 1577.²⁰

scatter = 'separate from the main body (without dispersal),' as used in the BofM's TITLE PAGE; this sense is not in Webster's 1828, and the last OED quote is dated 1661.²¹

choice = 'sound judgment' or 'discernment,' used as an abstract noun in 1 Nephi 7:15.²²

- Past-tense syntax with *did* matches only mid to late 1500s usage.
- Complementation with the verbs *command*, *cause*, *suffer* matches only the late 1400s and the 1500s.²³

19 See Royal Skousen, "The Original Text of the Book of Mormon and its Publication by Yale University Press," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 7 (2013), 90–91.

20 See Skousen, "The Original Text," 91.

21 OED **scatter**, v. †2d. Some usage is found in the 1700s in Google books, but it was obsolete by the 1800s.

22 This sense of *choice* is actually in Webster's 1828, via Johnson 1755, who quotes only Francis Bacon writing in 1625; the last OED quote is poetic (probably archaic) from Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). So in the absence of specific evidence to the contrary, we can take this to be a sense that was obsolete by the 19c. Webster's entry is unreliable here — echoing Johnson with variation, quoting early 17c Bacon; it appears there was obsolescence in meaning by the 19c.

23 See Stanford Carmack, "What Command Syntax Tells Us About Book of Mormon Authorship," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 13 (2015), 212–16.

- Syntax like *Nephi's brethren rebelleth* (in the prefaces to 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi) corresponds to 1500s usage; it is not in the KJB and was obsolete in the 1800s.

In view of the foregoing observations and evidence, I assert the following:

- There is undeniably substantial evidence in the BofM of EModE meaning and syntax that was inaccessible to Smith and scribe.
- Smith could not have known the obsolete meaning of some of these words except from context because semantic shifts are unpredictable and unknowable to anyone in the absence of specific philological study.
- The **pervasive** EModE syntax as well as the existence of obsolete, inaccessible (nonbiblical) meaning in the text mean that Smith must have received specific words from the Lord **throughout** the translation.
- Therefore, the wording of the BofM did not come from Smith's mind; he dictated specific words that were given to him.
- God was in charge of the translation of the English-language text of the BofM; no mortal translated it.
- Smith translated the BofM in the sense of being the person on earth integrally involved in *conveying* Christ's words from the divine realm to our earthly sphere; Smith was **not** the translator in the conventional sense of the term.
- Much of the literature devoted to difficult or interesting meaning in the BofM wrongly assumes that word choice derives from Smith's mind; that means that in many cases the approach and even some of the conclusions, as far as meaning is concerned, have been wrong.
- It is time to stop referring to Webster's 1828 dictionary when seeking English-language meaning in the BofM; while many old senses persisted into the 1820s, a considerable number did not; only the OED covers virtually all the range of usage found in the BofM.

■ ■ ■

The final section of this paper addresses the old phraseology *it supposeth me*, found four times in the BofM (twice in one verse). The language

was objected to as contrived by Edward Spencer one century ago.²⁴ This curious syntax is found in a lengthy late 14c poem written by a contemporary of Chaucer.²⁵ The OED calls the construction inverted, and notes the status as *rare*⁻¹ (discussed below):

1390 GOWER *Confessio Amantis* ("The Lover's Confession") book 5, lines 22–23

Bot al to lytel **him supposeth**, Thogh he mihte al the world pourchace.

'But it seemed all too small to him, though he could buy the whole world.'

Both the dictionary and a website with margin notes,²⁶ from which I have made the above rendering, indicate a meaning of 'seem' for *suppose* in this construction. The OED status *rare*⁻¹ indicates "that only *one* ... actual instance of the use of the word in context is known."²⁷

This 33,000-line poem was **printed** for the first time by Caxton in 1483, and it was reprinted in 1532, 1544, and 1554.²⁸ We also find it in the second volume of a 21-volume collection of English poetry published in 1810,²⁹ and in a three-volume work published in 1857.³⁰

24 Edward B. T. Spencer, "Notes on the Book of Mormon," *The Methodist Review*, Ed. William V. Kelley, Vol. 87 — 5th series, Vol. 21 (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1905), 36.

25 The webpage <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confessio_Amantis> provides background. This quote is relevant and instructive (emphasis added): "While not of immense importance as a source for later works, the *Confessio* is nonetheless significant in its own right as **one of the earliest poems written in a form of English that is clearly recognizable as a direct precursor to the modern standard**, and, above all, as one of the handful of works that established the foundations of literary prestige on which modern English literature is built." Accessed October 2014.

26 John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, Vol. 3, ed. Russell A. Peck with Latin translations by Andrew Galloway (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute, 2004) [Robbins Library Digital Projects, TEAMS Middle English Texts Series] <<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/peck-gower-confessio-amantis-book-5>>. Accessed January 2015.

27 OED § **General explanations**. Caxton's *me supposeth* in *Polychronicon* (1480, 1482) does not have modern English *me*, but the Middle English indefinite pronoun *me* (< OE *man*), meaning 'one.' So although *me supposeth* appears to be the same syntax as *him supposeth*, it is not. In Caxton's *Polychronicon* it means 'one supposes.' See Churchill Babington, ed., *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis together with the English Translations of John Trevisa and of an Unknown Writer of the Fifteenth Century* (London: Longmans, Green, 1865–69), 1:lxiv; 1:111; 2:167.

28 Reinhold Pauli, ed., *Confessio Amantis of John Gower*, 3 vols. (London: Bell and Daldy, 1857), 1:xli–xliii.

29 Alexander Chalmers, ed., *The Works of the English Poets, from Chaucer to Cowper*, 21 vols. (London: Printed for J. Johnson et al., 1810) 2:123.

30 Pauli, *Confessio Amantis of John Gower*.

But al to lytel hym supposeth
Though he myght al the world purchace

1483

But all to littel hym supposeth,
Though he might all the worlde purchase.

1810

The phrase *it supposeth me* is similar to *methought* in *methought I saw* (1 Nephi 8:4; Alma 36:22),³¹ a phrase used twice by Milton in *Paradise Lost* (London: 1667) [book 7, line 1099; book 10, line 152]:

Mine eyes he clos'd, but op'n left the Cell
Of Fancie my internal light, by which
Abstract as in a transe methought I saw,
Though sleeping, where I lay, and saw the shape
Still glorious before whom awake I stood ;

Ev'n to the Seat of God. For since I faught
By Prayer th' offended Deitie to appease,
Kneel'd and before him humbl'd all my heart,
Methought I saw him placable and mild,
Bending his care ; perfwation in me grew
That I was heard with favour ; peace returnd

Methought conveys 'it seemed to me,' deriving from the Old English verb *þyncan* = 'seem,' distinct from OE *þencan* = 'think' (whence modern English *think*).

The following OED quotation has the old verb *think* = 'seem' used similarly to *supposeth me* — in both sense and syntax:

1530 TINDALE *Pract. Prelates* I vij

The maryage of the brother with the sister is not so
greuouse agenst the lawe of nature (**thinketh me**) as the
degrees aboue rehersed.

The OED indicates under the etymology section of [**think**, *v.*²] that *him thought* and *he thought* were practically equivalent, that there was no difference of import between *me thinks* and *I think*. By extension, *it supposeth me* is practically equivalent to *I suppose*, with no difference in import between them. We have already discussed a variety of meanings of *suppose*; additional ones mentioned in the OED are 'intend,' 'assume as true,' 'take for granted,' and 'suspect.' According to the OED, John Gower used *supposeth* elsewhere in his poem *Confessio Amantis* with senses of 'imagine' and 'suspect.'

Here are the relevant Book of Mormon passages, with some possible alternate senses for the phrase *it supposeth me* given in brackets:

Jacob 2:7–8 ['I believe/imagine']

And also it grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech
concerning you before your wives and your children,
many of whose feelings are exceeding tender and chaste and delicate

31 See the excellent discussion in Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants*, 159–60.

before God, which thing is pleasing unto God.
 And **it supposeth me** that they have come up hither
 to hear the pleasing word of God,
 yea, the word which healeth the wounded soul.

Words of Mormon 1:2 ['I expect' (future complementation: *he will witness*)]

And it is many hundred years after the coming of Christ
 that I deliver these records into the hands of my son.
 And **it supposeth me** that he will witness the entire destruction of
 my people.
 But may God grant that he may survive them,
 that he may write somewhat concerning them
 and somewhat concerning Christ,
 that perhaps some day it may profit them.

Alma 54:11 ['I suspect']

But behold, **it supposeth me** that I talk to you concerning these
 things in vain,
 or **it supposeth me** that thou art a child of hell.³²

Could Joseph Smith have known about this inverted syntax? I suppose he could have seen it, had he spent time reading Middle English poetry. Was it accessible to him? No. This grammatical structure is exceedingly rare, the embodiment of obsolete usage. Had he ever seen it, he hardly would have recognized it and been able to transform it:

«ADVERBIAL»	«DATIVE»	«VERB»	
all too little	him	supposeth	=>
«EXPLETIVE»	«VERB»	«DATIVE»	«ADVERBIAL»
it	supposeth	him	all too little

Yet the text employs inverted syntax with *suppose* appropriately and consistently four times. The implications are evident:

- The Lord revealed a concrete form of expression (words) to Joseph Smith.

³² There are dozens of instances of the phrase *child of hell* in the EEBO database, including this one:

1648 William Fenner *Wilfull impenitency, the Grossest Selfe-Murder*
 Thou art yet a **child of hell**, an heire of damnation, wilfull in thy
 sinnes to this houre.

- The Book of Mormon contains some Early Modern English language whose syntax is independent of the King James Bible (it even has some transformed late Middle English syntax).
- The text itself reveals its divine origins.

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PSALM 82 IN CONTEMPORARY LATTER-DAY SAINT TRADITION

Daniel O. McClellan

The nature and function of Psalm 82 has long been a subject of debate within biblical scholarship.¹ The text is rather brief and has no real significant textual instabilities,² but it stands out within the Hebrew Bible

1 K. Budde, "Ps. 82:6f," *JBL* 40.1/2 (1921): 39–42; J. Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," *HUCA* 14.1 (1939): 29–126; H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Council of Yahweh," *JTS* 45 (1944): 155; Roger T. O'Callaghan, "A Note on the Canaanite Background of Psalm 82," *CBQ* 15 (1953): 311–14; Otto Eissfeldt, "El and Yahweh," *JSS* 1.1 (1956): 29–30; A. Gonzalez, "Le Psaume LXXXII," *VT* 13.3 (1963): 293–309; Gerald Cooke, "The Sons of (the) God(s)," *ZaW* 35.1 (1964): 29–34; James S. Ackerman, "An Exegetical Study of Psalm 82" (ThD diss., Harvard University, 1966); Matitiah Tsevat, "God and the Gods in Assembly: An Interpretation of Psalm 82," *HUCA* 40 (1969): 123–37; Hans-Winfried Jüngling, *Der Tod der Götter: Eine Untersuchung zum Psalm 82* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1969); Cyrus H. Gordon, "History of Religion in Psalm 82," in G. A. Tuttle, ed., *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies: Essays in Honor of William Sanford LaSor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 129–31; Patrick D. Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 120–24; Heribret Niehr, "Götter oder Menschen — eine falsche Alternative: Bemerkungen zu Ps 82," *ZaW* 99.1 (1987): 94–98; Lowell K. Handy, "Sounds, Words and Meanings in Psalm 82," *JSOT* 47.1 (1990): 51–66; Simon B. Parker, "The Beginning of the Reign of God: Psalm 82 as Myth and Liturgy," *RevBib* 102.4 (1995): 532–59; Yair Zakovitch, "Psalm 82 and Biblical Exegesis," in Chaim Cohen, et al., eds., *Sefer Moshe: The Moshe Weinfeld Jubilee Volume* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 213–28; Michael Heiser, "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature" (PhD diss., Univ. of Wisconsin — Madison, 2004), 74–89 (<http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu>); Michael Heiser, "Are Yahweh and El Distinct Deities in Deut. 32:8–9 and Psalm 82?" *Hiphil* 3 [hiphil.org/index.php/hiphil/article/view/29] (2006), accessed 3/5/2015; Robert P. Gordon, "The Gods Must Die: A Theme in Isaiah and Beyond," in M. n. van der Meer, et al., eds., *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honour of Arie van der Kooij on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 53–55; David Frankel, "El as the Speaking Voice in Psalm 82:6–8," *JHS* 10 [jhsonline.org/Articles/article_144.pdf] (2010), accessed 3/5/2015; James M. Trotter, "Death of the אֱלֹהִים in Psalm 82," *JBL* 131.2 (2012): 221–39; Brent A. Strawn, "The Poetics of Psalm 82: Three Critical Notes along with a Plea for the Poetic," *RevBib* 121.1 (2014): 21–46; Ellen White, *Yahweh's Council: Its Structure and Membership* (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 24–33.

2 Although note the LXX variant for MT's בַּעֲדֵת־אֵל ("in the divine council/assembly of El/God") in v. 1: ἐν συνάγωγῃ θεῶν, "in the assembly of the gods," perhaps indicating עֲדַת־אֱלִים in the source text (see R. B. Salters, "Psalm 82,1 and the Septuagint," *ZaW* 103.2 [1991]: 225–39).

as a text particularly steeped in mythological imagery. Precritical exegetes understood the gods of the narrative to be human judges, but subsequent textual discoveries and concomitant lexicographical advances, combined with more critical methodologies, have largely undermined that reading.³ A divine assembly setting has become widely accepted since the middle of the twentieth century,⁴ and more contemporary scholarship focuses on the psalm's possible distinction between YHWH and El,⁵ its literary form, and its historical contextualization.⁶

3 On the weakness of the traditional reading, see C. Gordon, "אלהים in its Reputed Meaning of Rulers, Judges," *JBL* 54 (1935): 139–44; Cooke, "The Sons of [the] God(s)," 22–47; and Tsevat, "God and the Gods in Assembly," 123–37; cf. Anne E. Draffkorn, "Ilāni/Elohim," *JBL* 76.3 (1957): 216–24. The traditional reading has been defended by Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The History of Israelite Religion*, 4 vols. (Tel Aviv: Bialik and Dvir, 1937–56), 2.707–08, n. 90; and Y. M. Grintz, "Between Ugarit and Qumran (Deut 32:8–9, 43)," in *Studies in Early Biblical Ethnology and History* (Jerusalem: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuchas, 1969), 253–54, n. 41; cf. J. Robert Vannoy, "The Use of the Word *hā'lohîm* in Exodus 21:6 and 22:7, 8," in J. H. Skilton, et al., eds., *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974), 225–41.

4 Other divine assembly texts in the Hebrew Bible are 1 Kgs 22:19–23; Jer 23:18, 22; Job 1:6–12; 2:1–6; Zech 3:1–5; Isa 6:1–13; 40:13–14; Amos 3:7, 13 (see David Bokovoy, "שמעו והעידו בבית יעקב," Invoking the Council as Witnesses in Amos 3:13," *JBL* 127.1 [2008]: 37–51); Dan 7:9–14. On the divine council type-scene, see David M. Fleming, "The Divine Council as Type Scene in the Hebrew Bible" (PhD Diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989); Min Suc Kee, "The Heavenly Council and Its Type-Scene," *JSOT* 31.3 (2007): 259–73. On the divine council in general, see H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Council of Yahweh," *JTS* 45 (1944): 151–57; Edwin C. Kingsbury, "The Prophets and the Council of Yahweh," *JBL* 83.3 (1964): 279–86; E. Theodore Mullen, *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980); Robert P. Gordon, "Standing in the Council: When Prophets Encounter God," in Robert P. Gordon, ed., *The God of Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), 190–204.

5 The view that YHWH and El are distinguished in the psalm is promoted by Budde, "Ps. 82:6f," 41–42; Otto Eissfeldt, "El and Yahweh," *JSS* 1.1 (1956): 29–30; Parker, "The Beginning of the Reign of God," 532–59; Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 48; Klaus Koch, "Ugaritic Polytheism and Hebrew Monotheism in Isaiah 40–55," in R. P. Gordon, ed., *The God of Israel* (Univ. of Cambridge Oriental Publications 64; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), 227; and Frankel, "El as the Speaking Voice in Psalm 82:6–8," 3–6. Against these, see Tzevat, "God and the Gods in Assembly," 127–29; Heiser, "Are Yahweh and El Distinct Deities in Deut. 32:8–9 and Psalm 82?"; Peter Machinist, "How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise: A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring," in B. Pongratz-Leisten, ed., *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 195–203.

6 It is becoming more common for scholars to deny the possibility of ever situating the psalm within a historical framework (e.g., Miller, *Interpreting the Psalms*, 122;

The enigmatic reference to Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34 has also been a subject of debate for the last fifty years,⁷ particularly among conservative Christian scholars who prioritize the univocality of scripture and thus utilize their reading of John 10 as an interpretive lens through which Psalm 82 may be filtered.⁸ Latter-day Saint treatments of the psalm have run the spectrum of interpretive possibilities since the days of Joseph Smith, but a traditional harmonizing hermeneutic related to that conservative Christian habit undergirds the majority of these approaches.

This paper will discuss these LDS approaches to Psalm 82, both devotional and academic, and interact with some recent publications that have examined the intersection of those approaches with critical scholarship. In contrast to the traditional LDS approach, I will not seek to harmonize Psalm 82 with John 10 but will highlight what I believe can be garnered from the texts by understanding John 10 precisely as a *reinterpretation* of Psalm 82. Several aspects of the early Christian hermeneutic will be illuminated along the way, which I hope will help us to better understand our own view of scripture and its relationship to our tradition.

Psalm 82:6 and the Church

References to Psalm 82 within the curricula and literature produced by the Church are limited to verse 6, which reads in the KJV, “I have

Machinist, “When Gods Die,” 236–37).

7 James A. Emerton, “The Interpretation of Ps lxxxii in John x,” *JTS* 11 (1960): 329–32; James S. Ackerman, “The Rabbinic Interpretation of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John,” *HTR* 59.2 (1966): 186–91; Anthony Hanson, “John’s Citation of Psalm LXXXII Reconsidered,” *NTS* 13 (1966): 363–67; Jerome H. Neyrey, “‘I Said: You Are Gods’: Psalm 82:6 and John 10,” *JBL* 108.4 (1989): 647–63; Mark D. Nispel, “Christian Deification and the Early Testimonia,” *VC* 53 (1999): 289–304; Carl Mosser, “The Earliest Patristic Interpretations of Psalm 82, Jewish Antecedents, and the Origin of Christian Deification,” *JTS* 56 (2005): 30–74; Michael Heiser, “Jesus’s Quotation of Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34: A Different View of John’s Theological Strategy,” Paper presented at the Pacific Northwest Regional Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, May 13, 2011, Spokane, WA (<http://www.michaelsheiser.com/TheNakedBible/SBL%20Psalm%2082%20in%20John%2010%20paper.pdf>).

8 The use of the term *filtered* is not incidental. By using “scripture to interpret scripture,” conservative exegetes can hierarchize texts and use majority readings of certain texts to overrule theologically problematic readings of others.

said, ‘Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.’”⁹ This approach isolates v. 6 as a sort of proof-text for the Latter-day Saint notion that humanity shares a genetic link with divinity and primarily the concept that each human being is a child of God.¹⁰ These references are also almost exclusively mediated by quotations of John 10 and Jesus’s defense of his claim to divinity. For instance, in a 2012 BYU Campus Education Week talk entitled “Our Identity and Our Destiny,” Elder Tad R. Callister summarized the story in John 10 of Jesus’s confrontation with a group of accusatory Jews, quoting both John 10:34 and Psalm 82:6, and concluding, “The Savior was merely reaffirming a basic gospel teaching that all men are children of God, and thus all might become like Him.”¹¹ We see the same use of the psalm in the very first lesson of the *Nursery Manual*: “Tell the children that they have mothers and fathers on earth who love them. Tell them that they also have a Heavenly Father who knows and loves them. Open the Bible to Psalm 82:6 and read, ‘All of you are children of [God].’”¹²

The rest of Psalm 82 is quite condemnatory of these children of the Most High, however; so v. 6 operates independently in all instances. A look in the LDS Scripture Citation Index (<http://scriptures.byu.edu/>) shows only seven total references to Psalm 82, and most of them actually explicitly quote the text in John.¹³ A secondary traditional use of Psalm 82 has to do with defending the notion of a plurality of gods. This is more common among lay members of the Church in apologetic interactions with non-members, but there is an instance of Boyd K. Packer’s appealing in this manner to the psalm in a General Conference address.¹⁴ The Church’s use of the psalm thus avoids directly engaging many of the complexities of the psalm’s interpretation as a whole and instead decontextualizes the sixth verse and situates it within a Latter-day Saint soteriological framework.

9 אני־אמרתי אתם אלהים ובני עליין כלכם. Quotations from the Bible will be from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.

10 Secondarily, the text is used in support of the theological principle of eternal progression.

11 Tad R. Callister, “Our Identity and Our Destiny,” *Brigham Young University 2012–2013 Speeches* (2013): 3–4 (<https://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=2060>).

12 *Behold Your Little Ones: Nursery Manual* (2008), 8 (<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1984/10/the-pattern-of-our-parentage?lang=eng>).

13 The index lists twenty-one references to John 10:34–36.

14 Boyd K. Packer, “The Pattern of Our Parentage,” *Conference Report* (1984): 68 (<https://www.lds.org/manual/behold-your-little-ones-nursery-manual/lesson-1-i-am-a-child-of-god?lang=eng>).

Psalm 82 and the Academy

The more recent academic approaches to Psalm 82 are informed by almost a century of advances in biblical scholarship that have significantly altered that field's landscape. Many of these advances bear directly on our understanding of Psalm 82. The discoveries in the twentieth century of the Ugaritic texts,¹⁵ the Dead Sea Scrolls,¹⁶ and a number of other textual and material witnesses to early Israelite and Jewish belief and practice¹⁷ have compelled scholars to drastically qualify and sometimes even outright reject the concept of monotheism in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁸ Additionally, some scholars have argued that YHWH and El were separate deities in early Israelite belief, with El being the father of the second-tier deity YHWH.¹⁹ This hierarchy is reflected in the specific way divine council imagery is used in Psalm 82, according to these scholars.

15 Mark S. Smith, *Untold Stories: The Bible and Ugaritic Studies in the Twentieth Century* (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson, 2001); Mark S. Smith, "Recent Study of Israelite Religion in Light of the Ugaritic Texts," in K. Lawson Younger, ed., *Ugarit at Seventy-Five* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 1–23.

16 John J. Collins, "Powers in Heaven: God, Gods, and Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in J. J. Collins and R. A. Kugler, eds., *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 9–28.

17 For example, inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qôm contain praise and thanks directed to "YHWH and his *asherah*." See William G. Dever, *Did God Have A Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2005), 197–208; Richard Hess, "Asherah or Asheratah?" *Or* 65 (1996): 209–19; Judith Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), 84–187; J. Emerton, "Yahweh and His Asherah: The Goddess or Her Symbol" *VT* 49.3 (1999): 315–37.

18 See, particularly, Peter Hayman, "Monotheism — A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42.1 (1991): 1–15 (https://rdtwot.files.wordpress.com/2010/07/hayman_monotheism-a-misused-word-in-jewish-studies_jjs_42-1.pdf); Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*; R. W. L. Moberly, "How Appropriate is 'Monotheism' as a Category for Biblical Interpretation?" in L. T. Stuckenbruck and W. E. Sproston North, eds., *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 216–34; Bob Becking, "The Boundaries of Israelite Monotheism," in A.-M. Korte and M. de Haardt, eds., *The Boundaries of Monotheism: Interdisciplinary Explorations Into the Foundations of Western Monotheism* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 9–27.

19 See note 4 above. I follow Machinist in acknowledging the likely distinction of the two deities in early Israelite thought but rejecting the likelihood that Psalm 82 consciously preserves that distinction. Rather, the author seems to employ an archaic judgment motif without concern for the implications of the literary conventions vis-à-vis YHWH's relationship to the head of the council. While

This notion is obviously attractive to a religious community that understands Elohim (Hebrew אֱלֹהִים) to be God the Father, and YHWH to be Elohim's son, the premortal Jesus. Psalm 82 is also widely recognized as one of the Hebrew Bible's clear witnesses to the divine council, which was a focus of Joseph Smith's cosmogony and soteriology.²⁰ Many academically minded Latter-day Saints have explored in great detail the points of contact between the critical academic perspective and the Latter-day Saint worldview, and some view the modern scholarly consensus as a vindication of Joseph Smith's teachings.²¹

Latter-day Saint Engagement with the Academy

Daniel Peterson's 2000 article on Psalm 82 is the most thorough analysis produced to date on the text by a Latter-day Saint. He evaluates several different readings of Psalm 82 and John 10, discussing the distinction of YHWH and El, the divine council, the deified dead in early Israelite religion, deification in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity, the nature of worship, and a number of other issues related to the interpretation of our two texts. Ultimately, the interpretation he prefers hinges on the axiomatic idea that Christ's interpretation, whatever its exact nature, is the original and correct interpretation. He asks, "Is there any way of maintaining the interpretation of Psalm 82 that modern scholarship has largely and (I think) convincingly settled on, without

Machinist believes there is not enough data to situate the text historically, I have argued that the psalm's placement within the Psalms of Asaph indicates an exilic context for its primary compositional phase (Daniel O. McClellan, "Psalm 82 in the Psalms of Asaph," Paper presented at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, November 19, 2011, San Francisco, CA [<https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/6259597/Psalm%2082%20in%20the%20Psalms%20of%20Asaph.pdf>]).

20 See, particularly, Kevin Barney, "Examining Six Key Concepts in Joseph Smith's Understanding of Genesis 1:1," *BYU Studies* 39.3 (2000): 107–24 (<https://ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/BYUStudies/article/viewFile/6692/6341>); David Bokovoy, "'Ye Really Are Gods': A Response to Michael Heiser concerning the LDS Use of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John," *FARMS Review* 19.1 (2007): 269–70; Bokovoy, "Joseph Smith and the Biblical Council of Gods," Paper presented at the 2010 FAIR Conference (<http://www.fairmormon.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/2010-David-Bokovoy.pdf>).

21 For example, Bokovoy, "'Ye Really Are Gods,'" 267–68.

accusing the Savior of misuse of the passage? It seems to me that there may well be such a possibility.”²²

Peterson accomplishes this reconciliation of the “human” reading of John 10 with the “divine” reading of Psalm 82 via the premortal council in heaven from the third chapter of the Book of Abraham.²³ The scene there is strikingly similar to biblical occurrences of the divine council type-scene. From Peterson’s article: “We have God standing in the midst of premortal spirits who are appointed to be rulers, in a scene that is really a textbook instance of the motif of the divine assembly. These are premortal human beings. Can they truly be called ‘gods’ in any sense? ... Yes, they can.”²⁴ His harmonization, of course, departs significantly from the traditional Christian position in proposing that the division between the human and the divine was in both texts quite porous. From his conclusion: “only if the genus ‘gods’ and the genus ‘humans’ overlap can the Savior’s application of Psalm 82 to mortal human beings be a legitimate one.”

The most significant response to Peterson’s article comes from a paper entitled, “You’ve Seen One *Elohim*, You’ve Seen Them All? Mormonism’s Apologetic Use of Psalm 82,” presented by evangelical scholar Michael Heiser at the 2006 national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS). The paper was later published in a 2007 edition of *The FARMS Review*,²⁵ and Heiser traded thoughts with LDS scholar David Bokovoy on Mormonism’s use of Psalm 82. Heiser’s main criticisms of the academic Mormon position focused on (1) the distinction of YHWH and El, (2) the species-uniqueness of YHWH, and (3) Jesus’s use of Psalm 82:6. Regarding the first concern, Heiser is critical of the modern academic consensus regarding an archaic distinction between YHWH and El, arguing primarily that it rests upon a series of unwarranted

22 Daniel Peterson, “‘Ye are Gods’: Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind,” in Stephen D. Ricks, et al., eds., *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson* (Provo: FARMS, 2000) (<http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1091&index=17>).

23 Michael Heiser comments, “Mormonism rescues Jesus from being in error by appealing to material in the Book of Abraham that resolves the tension” (Heiser, “You’ve Seen One *Elohim*, You’ve Seen Them All? A Critique of Mormonism’s use of Psalm 82,” *FARMS Review* 19.1 [2007]: 262, n. 72).

24 Peterson, “‘Ye are Gods,’” 541–42.

25 Heiser, “You’ve Seen One *Elohim*, You’ve Seen Them All?” 221–66.

assumptions regarding the development of Israelite ideology.²⁶ Latter-day Saints, he insists, rely too heavily on the conclusions of Mark Smith, Simon Parker, and Margaret Barker regarding the original distinction between YHWH and El. Psalm 82 hardly serves as a vindication of that unique Latter-day Saint position.

Regarding the second concern: While Heiser promotes the need to acknowledge the Hebrew Bible's recognition of other gods, he also promotes understanding the word for "god," *elohim*, as a locative designation rather than an ontological one.²⁷ In other words, an *elohim* is just a being that inhabits the spiritual dimension as opposed to our temporal one. YHWH falls into this category but is of utterly unique ontology within it and is therefore to be distinguished from the other *elohim*. In Heiser's opinion, this challenges the LDS view of God and humanity's shared divine nature. Not only is YHWH of an entirely different species from humanity, he's an entirely different species from all other gods.

Lastly, Heiser understands John 10:34–36 to read Psalm 82 not as a reference to humans, but as a reference to gods. He only briefly addresses this in his *FARMS Review* articles, but he has provided a fuller discussion in a paper presented in 2011 at the Pacific Northwest regional meeting of the SBL.²⁸ There Heiser rejects the traditional understanding of John's use of Psalm 82 on three main grounds: (1) The defense of Jesus's divinity is too weak in light of John's consistent appeal to a high christology, (2) The violent reaction to Jesus's claim doesn't make sense with that reading, and (3) It is an eisegetic and inappropriate reading of Psalm 82.

26 Heiser asserts a series of eight propositions with which he points out most Latter-day Saints would agree and most Evangelicals would disagree, as well as a series of eight propositions with which most Evangelicals would agree and most Latter-day Saints would disagree. His criticisms of the Latter-day Saint position rest on the notion that the other gods of Israelite belief constitute the same "species" as YHWH. Heiser has argued for years that conservative Christians have nothing to fear from acknowledging the Hebrew Bible's unquestionable recognition of the existence and efficacy of other gods, but that YHWH is "species-unique" (Michael Heiser, "Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an Assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible," *BBR* 18.1 [2008]: 1–30; "Does Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible Demonstrate an Evolution from Polytheism to Monotheism in Israelite Religion?" *JESOT* 1.1 [2012]: 1–24).

27 "Ēlōhîm is a 'plane of reality' term — it denotes a being's primary or proper (but not necessarily exclusive) 'place of residence'" (Heiser, "You've Seen One *Elohim*, You've Seen Them All?" 242, n. 39). Heiser has a book forthcoming on the topic of the nature of deity in the Hebrew Bible entitled *Unseen Realm*.

28 Heiser, "Jesus's Quotation of Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34." See note 6.

For Heiser, Jesus understands the verse to refer to the very members of the divine council understood by modern scholars to be in view. We will return to these concerns following a review of David Bokovoy's rejoinder to Heiser.

Bokovoy is selective in his response to Heiser's essay, but he broadly supports the conclusions of Simon Parker, Mark Smith, and Margaret Barker. These are not critical to Peterson's case for the conceptual link between Psalm 82's divine council and Mormonism's notion of a premortal council in heaven, though, which is the fulcrum on which his case pivots. The thematic points of contact between council scenes in ancient Near Eastern literature like *Enuma Elish* and the books of Moses and Abraham provide a compelling defense for the imposition of interpretive lenses drawn from the Latter-day Saint canon on their reading of Psalm 82.

Bokovoy also suggests that Heiser misses the mark a bit in highlighting areas of disagreement between LDS ideology and the academic perspective on the ancient Israelite conceptualization of YHWH and his relationship to the divine council. In the LDS worldview, our modern dispensation represents a far fuller revelation of eternal truths than available to ancient Israelites. In other words, disagreement is to be expected. Peterson's claim is not that Psalm 82 reflects modern Mormon ideology inerrantly or *in toto*, but rather that the perspective of critical scholars on the divine council can be comfortably situated within Mormonism's broad and nonsystematic worldview.

The central portions of Bokovoy's response defend Peterson's arguments by critically examining the nature and function of the divine council and humanity's relationship to it, appealing to wider academic consensus over and against Heiser's own criticisms. Drawing upon texts and traditions from all over the ancient Near East, Bokovoy emphasizes the blurred and porous boundaries that separate humanity from the gods in the biblical and cognate literature. This theomorphic view of humanity extends down to the appeal to Psalm 82 found in John 10, which undercuts Heiser's insistence that Jesus appeals to the psalm as a reference to gods and not to humans.²⁹

29 Heiser's response largely reiterates arguments made previously (Michael Heiser, "Israel's Divine Council, Mormonism, and Evangelicalism: Clarifying the Issues and Directions for Future Study," *FARMS Review* 19.1 [2007]: 315–23.). He dedicates the bulk of the response to responding to issues with the distinction of YHWH and El and YHWH as species-unique.

A Non-Harmonizing Perspective

A concern ostensibly undergirding the arguments of Peterson and Heiser is the harmonizing of Jesus's interpretation of Psalm 82 with the modern academic position on the Psalm. Bokovoy's paper hints at the possibility of other interpretations of Jesus's appeal, but he is defending Peterson's remarks and so focuses primarily on the strengths of that position. My concern in this section is to examine Psalm 82 and John 10 without a view to harmonizing them. I will look first at Psalm 82 itself and then use Second Temple Jewish religious developments to move toward John 10. I will respond to Peterson, Bokovoy, and Heiser, and then discuss what we can learn from seeing Jesus's reading as a reinterpretation.

Psalm 82

To begin, I do not think Psalm 82 distinguishes YHWH from Elyon. The evidence is firmly in favor of seeing these deities as separate within the Israelite pantheon until around the beginning of the monarchy,³⁰ but it is very unlikely that Psalm 82 is that old, and there only appears to be one active deity within the psalm. If one insists on their separation in this psalm, they compound its interpretive difficulties, as Machinist discusses in his essay.³¹ While it is plausible the psalm appropriates an older divine council motif in which YHWH operates as a subordinate, in its current state there is little reason to try to understand more than one authoritative deity as being in view. As will be discussed below, the lateness of the composition also mitigates that reading.

Next, divine council imagery does not seem to be the central literary feature of the psalm. It is the setting, but the rhetorical point of the psalm is communicated through a unique style of lament. Elsewhere in the Psalms of Asaph we find the psalmist engaging in what has been called a "God-lament," where he bemoans his situation and asks God how long he will allow the situation to continue.³² He then issues a series of imperatives and jussives that will correct the state of affairs and concludes with some manner of petition.

30 Unfortunately, space does not permit a full response to Heiser's concerns with this conclusion. See note 4 above and bibliographical information available in those sources for more.

31 Machinist, "When Gods Die," 195–203.

32 See Craig Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 37–40.

Two of the clearest examples of this type of lament are other Psalms of Asaph, namely Psalms 74 and 79, which are reacting to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple at the hands of the Babylonians.³³ Both psalms ask “how long” injustice is to reign and then issue a series of imperatives, jussives, and negative jussives in an effort to compel God to act. This style is particularly emphatic in Psalm 74:

(1) O God, why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture? (2) Remember your congregation, which you acquired long ago, which you redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage. Remember Mount Zion, where you came to dwell . . . (10) How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever? (11) Why do you hold back your hand; why do you keep your hand in your bosom? . . . (18) Remember this, O LORD, how the enemy scoffs, and an impious people reviles your name. (19) Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild animals; do not forget the life of your poor forever. (20) Have regard for your covenant, for the dark places of the land are full of the haunts of violence. (21) Do not let the downtrodden be put to shame; let the poor and needy praise your name. (22) Rise up, O God, plead your cause; remember how the impious scoff at you all day long. (23) Do not forget the clamor of your foes, the uproar of your adversaries that goes up continually.

After defending the poor and the needy, Psalm 74:22 calls upon God to rise up and plead his cause. The concern in these laments is generally for the maintenance of justice and order. God is presented as withholding or somehow delaying that justice, and the psalmist begs for deliverance against the enemy.

These elements are also found in Psalm 82, although in a slightly altered form. It is YHWH who asks the gods of the nations, “How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?” The series of imperatives show the same concern for justice and order: “Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” The group identified here and in Psalm 74 as the poor, the needy, and the orphans are just synecdoche for any victims of social injustice, which was a very common convention in the ancient Near

33 See, particularly, Ps 74:4–7.

East.³⁴ The complaint is not that these groups specifically are being victimized, but that justice as a whole is being neglected. The result in Psalm 82 of this negligence is that the masses walk around in darkness without knowledge or understanding, and the foundations of the earth are shaken (v. 5).

The climactic petition in Psalm 82 cannot be addressed by the complainant to the gods of the nations, so the psalmist himself petitions for God to rise up and correct the injustices committed by those gods. He does this by vacating their stewardships over the several nations of the earth and appropriating them for himself. According to this reading, Psalm 82 is a “*gods-lament*” put into the mouth of YHWH on behalf of the suffering Israelites. In Psalm 74:21–22 the psalmist asks YHWH to protect the poor and needy, and to rise up to plead his case. In Psalm 82 YHWH rises up (נָצַב, “to stand”) to plead his case in the divine council (v. 1), calling upon the gods to protect the poor and the needy. Psalm 82 thus functions as a response to, and fulfillment of, Psalm 74. Psalm 82 indicts the gods for their failure to maintain the proper order and calls upon YHWH to take direct control of the governance of those nations. In Psalm 79 the nations do not know YHWH and they invade his inheritance (an allusion to Deut 32:8–9 where YHWH receives Israel as his inheritance). Psalm 82 renegotiates that inheritance: YHWH will take over direct rule of the nations. The concluding verse of the Psalms of Asaph, Ps 83:18, declares the new state of affairs: “Let them [the nations] know that you alone, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth.”

34 They are stock characters that represent ideal victims associated with conventional conceptions of social justice. See Morris Silver, “Prophets and Markets Revisited,” in K. D. Irani and Morris Silver, eds., *Social Justice in the Ancient World* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 182–83 (italics in original): “The Ancient Near East designated victims by terms more or less conventionally translated as ‘orphan,’ ‘widow,’ ‘poor person,’ and ‘peasant.’ The referents are much less real-world social groupings than intellectual constructs. That is, the terms refer to the *ideal victim*.” An excellent example of the rhetorical use of these groups is the epilogue to Hammurabi’s laws, which asserts that the laws were erected “in order that the mighty not wrong the weak, to provide just ways for the waif and the widow” (“The Laws of Hammurabi,” translated by Martha Roth [COS 2.131: 336, 351]). Of course, there is not a single law in his collection that actually provides for the widow or the orphan. Their provision arises out of the general cosmic order, which is maintained by Hammurabi’s righteous administration.

Second Temple Jewish Perspectives on the Gods

This would date the psalm to the late exilic period, well after the destruction of the temple. While this puts the psalm chronologically closer to John's own composition than most LDS scholars have in the past, there are still significant ideological barriers that separate John's reading from the original purpose of the psalm. Most importantly, the Second Temple Jewish view of the gods changed quite significantly between the late exilic period and the end of the first century CE. The combination of Hellenization and the explosion of Jewish literary compositions during the time period catalyzed a great deal of theological development. The gods of the nations appear to have become conflated with angels in order to confine them to an inferior and contingent taxonomy. The earliest clear evidence of this conflation comes from the Septuagint, and later from other apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature, and at Qumran.³⁵ In all these corpora, texts originally referring to gods are translated, quoted, or alluded to in explicit reference to angels.

This seemed to solve the problem of the gods throughout the Hellenistic period, but around the turn of the era we find concern with that interpretation. This is most clear in commentary on Genesis 6:2, 4, where the sons of God inappropriately sire children with human women. Obviously the ability to bear children with humans attests to a view of genetic compatibility, but in the Greco-Roman period, some authors object to that compatibility.³⁶ There were different attempts to consolidate the text with that objection. Philo insisted that in emergency

35 For example, the Hebrew phrase בני אֱלֹהִים, "sons of God," in Deut 32:8 is rendered in all but the earliest Septuagint manuscripts with the Greek ἄγγελοι τοῦ Θεοῦ, "angels of God." See Andy Reimer, "Rescuing the Fallen Angels: The Case of the Disappearing Angels at Qumran," *DSD* 7.3 (2000): 335–40; Darrell D. Hannah, "Guardian Angels and Angelic National Patrons in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity," in F. V. Reiterer, et al., eds., *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings — Origins, Development and Reception* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 413–35; Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 196–97; Daniel O. McClellan, "What Is Deity in LXX Deuteronomy?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, November 22, 2010, Atlanta, GA. This process begins well before the Hellenistic Period, however. On de-deification in the Hebrew tradition of Deuteronomy, see Judith Hadley, "The De-deification of Deities in Deuteronomy," in R. P. Gordon, ed., *The God of Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 157–74.

36 Philip S. Alexander, "The Targumim and Early Exegesis of 'Sons of God' in Genesis 6," *JSS* 23.1 (1972): 60–71.

situations, spirits can transform into a human form that is genetically compatible.³⁷ Some rabbinic authors argued the transformation was not to human form, but to flaming fire that did not burn the women.³⁸ *The Testament of Reuben* insists angels simply appeared during intercourse between human women and their husbands, which resulted in the birth of heroic men.³⁹

While this compatibility was a concern for some, early authors also raised concerns with the idea that angels could sin and rebel against God. Philo expresses this concern, stating it was Moses's custom to refer to demons in terms properly reserved for angels.⁴⁰ Trypho, in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*, explicitly states that it is blasphemous to suggest angels could rebel against God.⁴¹ They had no autonomy to do so. Shortly after, Rabbi Simeon b. Yohai not only translates "sons of God" as "sons of nobles," but curses all who render "sons of God." This reading is also found in the Targumim, in St. Ephrem's *Commentary on Genesis*, and even in Augustine, whose position is similar to that of Trypho. In time, an understanding of the sons of God as humans would dominate the theological landscape.

John 10:34–36

While the notion of genetic compatibility was unlikely to have played a role in the interpretation of Psalm 82:6, opposition to the notion that angels could sin certainly would have influenced its interpretation. Without agency of their own, the angels could hardly be put on trial for neglecting their duties. So to whom did the author of John 10 think the psalm referred? The oblique reference in John 10:34 to "those to whom the word of God came" suggests that whatever the author's interpretation, it was common enough not to require any real specification. The reader is assumed to know. The most common interpretation of the psalm we can detect from anywhere near the time period is its rabbinic interpretation as a reference to the Israelites at Sinai.⁴² According to this reading, upon reception of the law via Moses, the Israelites were freed from the power of the Angel of Death, effectively rendering them immortal. Upon

37 Philo, *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 1.92.

38 *Pirqe d. R. Eliezer* 22.

39 *Test. Reuben* 5:6.

40 Philo, *On Giants* 4.

41 Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 1.79.1.

42 See note 7 above. The relevant rabbinic texts are *Tanḥ. B.* 9; *ʿAbod. Zar.* 5a; *Midr. Rab. Exod* 32:7.

sinning with the golden calf, however, they were again condemned to mortality. The available evidence supports the conclusion that the author of John 10 understood Psalm 82 to refer to the Israelites at Sinai. His interpretation is a theological innovation of the Greco-Roman period that is quite distinct from the psalm's original context.

This is not to say, however, that Jesus's appeal to Psalm 82 had nothing to do with divine nature. According to this reading, the reception of the Word of God, manifested through the Law of Moses, rendered the Israelites immortal. This moved them from the realm of humanity to the realm of divinity. John's own gospel has a similar view of the reception of the word of God. John 1:12 states that Jesus gave all who receive him — the word made flesh — power to become the "sons of God." There is some overlap of natures in view here, and this is not unique to John 10. Later interpreters understood the psalm in much the same way. Origen's soteriology included a brand of divinization, and he understood the word "gods" to refer alternatively to angels and humans, since the latter could be raised to the level of the former.⁴³ Mark Nisipel and Carl Mosser are two scholars who have recently argued along disparate lines that Psalm 82, especially as presented in John, shaped the early Christian notion of *theopoiesis*, or divinization.⁴⁴ While this Patristic view of divinization is obviously not exactly the same as that accepted by Latter-day Saints, it attests to the belief that humanity does have within it the capacity to attain to godhood in some sense. As Bokovoy and Peterson have each shown, this belief was common to Israel, to Second Temple Judaism, and to early Christianity. This reading situates John 10 much more comfortably into the theological consciousness of first-century Judaism as well as the author's own broader soteriology.

Responding to Objections

As noted above, Michael Heiser objects to the "Sinai" reading of John 10.⁴⁵ His third objection — that the Sinai reading is eisegetic — has little to commend it. That it is eisegetic hardly means that John did not understand it that way. It is a theologically motivated presupposition to insist that the author of John could not possibly have appealed to

43 Origen, *Commentary on Exodus*.

44 Nisipel, "Christian Deification and the Early Testimonia"; Mosser, "The Earliest Patristic Interpretations of Psalm 82, Jewish Antecedents, and the Origin of Christian Deification"; Paul M. Collins, *Partaking in Divine Nature: Deification and Communion* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 32–35.

45 Heiser, "Jesus's Quotation of Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34," 7–8.

eisegesis. His second reason — that the Jews' response is inordinate — is also problematic. The Jews are not necessarily just responding to his exegesis of Psalm 82:6. Jesus did, after all, reassert in vv. 36–38 he was claiming to be the Son of God and to be united with him (the claim that irked them in the first place). Heiser's first reason — that such a reading of Psalm 82 is a weak or evasive defense of Jesus's divinity — merits a few comments. One of the primary exegetical problems of John 10:34–36 is precisely how Jesus's response functions as a defense of his claims to divinity.

First, I disagree that the response is weak, and I base this on two details Jesus includes in his response. He takes the time to identify the divine beings as those to whom the word of God came. He then takes the time to identify himself as the one sanctified by God and sent into the world. The implication of Jesus's argument is that if the Israelites are made divine by the reception of God's word, how much more divine is that word itself, anointed, made flesh, and sent into the world. Jesus's identification as the Word of God, the Messiah, and the Son of God are by far the most important to John. It is hardly a weak rhetorical point.

Heiser understands Jesus to be asserting his very ontological identification as God, but this is a Trinitarian reading that I do not find in the text. Throughout John Jesus never identifies himself as God. He identifies himself as the Son of God, and the Jews understand that father/son relationship to imply equality with God. This is not to indicate ontological identification with him, but equality. It should be kept in mind that the epithet "Son of God" had quite a rich literary heritage in the Greco-Roman period of which the gospel authors would have been aware and by which they have been convincingly shown to have been influenced.⁴⁶ In none of those other contexts is the "Son of God" understood to be ontologically identified with God.

We need not understand the accusation of v. 33 to be that Jesus is claiming to be God himself, but just that he is a human claiming to be

46 Jarl Fossum, "Son of God," in D. N. Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 6 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 128–37; J. K. Hoffmeier, "Son of God: From Pharaoh to Israel's Kings to Jesus," *BibRev* 13.3 (1997): 44–49; Jarl Fossum, "Son of God," in K. van der Toorn, et al., eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd Revised Edition (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 788–94; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Jews," *HTR* 92.4 (1999): 393–408; John J. Collins, "The Background of the 'Son of God' Text," *BBR* 7 (1997): 51–61; Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 48–74.

divine. His response is that other humans have been made divine by the reception of the Word. How much more divine is the son of God — that very Word himself? The Jews get upset when Jesus says he and the Father are one, but what did he mean by “one”? John uses the language of oneness elsewhere to refer to a unity of glory. In John 17:22 Christ states that the glory that God gave to Christ has been given to his disciples, that they may be one just as God and Jesus are one. In John 10:38 Jesus exhorts the Jews to believe that the Father is in Jesus and Jesus is in the Father. He does not seem to mean they are one being, though. In John 17:21 Jesus prays, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.” As the Son of God, Christ is unified with God in glory. He shares in God’s glory, and this is unacceptable to the Jews. *This* understanding does relate to the extra-biblical literary background of the “Son of God” epithet.

Jesus’s Message

So this brings us to the final question. If we understand John’s description to be a verbatim account, is Jesus misusing scripture by reinterpreting Psalm 82? I suggest he is not. I believe Jesus is doing what all scripture-based religious communities do, namely reading scripture in a way that makes it applicable to their time. He likens the scriptures to his own day, to paraphrase 1 Nephi 19:23. In John 10, the reference to Psalm 82 refers to foundational narratives in the Jewish community’s shared identity, namely the Exodus and Sinai traditions. Peterson and Bokovoy do the same thing in proposing that Psalm 82 can be ideologically linked with Abraham 3’s council in heaven. This is a Latter-day Saint foundational narrative. When we can tie texts like these to our own communal narrative, we strengthen our community’s identification with sacral past and utilize that past to inform our present experience.⁴⁷ This makes the scriptures a dynamic tool, not just a frozen text.

On a literary level, Jesus’s defense here has a wider rhetorical purpose, as well. Not only does he identify himself as one of the Jews by appealing to a shared understanding of the Psalm’s meaning, but by appealing to that tradition, whereby those who received the word were made divine, the author reminds the reader/listener of a promise made a few verses earlier (John 10:28): “I give to them eternal life, and they shall never

47 Alan Kirk, “Social and Cultural Memory,” in A. Kirk and T. Thatcher, eds., *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 21–22; cf. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. press, 1989), 46.

perish.” John 1:12 is no doubt also in view here: “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.” John’s message is this: The Israelites were briefly made immortal and thus divine by the reception of God’s Word. The Word is now incarnate among you, and he is inviting you to receive him. John 10:34–36 and Jesus’s appeal to Psalm 82 is not just about Jesus’s divinity, it is also about the divinity of those who hear and believe.

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SEEING OURSELVES THROUGH THE EYES OF A FRIENDLY AND THOUGHTFUL EVANGELICAL

Daniel C. Peterson

A review of Richard J. Mouw, Talking with Mormons: An Invitation to Evangelicals. Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012, 99 pages.

Some Latter-day Saints will recall Richard Mouw from the introductory remarks that he offered in November 2004 when the Evangelical Protestant apologist Ravi Zacharias was the featured speaker at a special interfaith meeting in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah. In the course of his remarks, Professor Mouw apologized to Latter-day Saints for the way in which Evangelicals have often treated the Mormon faith. Carrie Moore, of the *Deseret News*, reported about Zacharias's speech on 15 November 2004:

But what many Utahns may remember most distinctly is the sermon that came before it.

Taking the pulpit to speak of the event's historic nature, Fuller Theological Seminary President Richard Mouw addressed a capacity crowd of several thousand, offering a stunningly candid apology to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and noting that "friendship has not come easily between our communities." He dubbed the evening "historic" and apologized that Evangelicals "have often misrepresented the faith and beliefs of the Latter-day Saints."

"Let me state it clearly. We evangelicals have sinned against you," he said, adding both camps have tended to marginalize and simplify the others' beliefs.¹

I was there in the Tabernacle that evening, and to me his apology was, by far, the highlight of the evening. (His own comments on that "Tabernacle Apology" occur on pages 1-4 of *Talking with Mormons*.) A

1 Carrie A. Moore, "Evangelical Preaches at Salt Lake Tabernacle," *Deseret News*, November 14, 2004, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/595105580/Evangelical-preaches-at-Salt-Lake-Tabernacle.html>

number of evangelicals disagreed, though. Which is putting it mildly. Why were they so upset? Because the man offering the apology was not only one of them, but an unusually prominent and credible one of them.

Richard J. Mouw served for twenty years, from 1993 to 2013, as president of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He joined the faculty at Fuller, a highly respected evangelical school, as Professor of Christian Philosophy in 1985, prior to which time he had taught for seventeen years at Calvin College in Michigan. He is still on the faculty of Fuller as Professor of Faith and Public Life.

In my limited personal experience with Professor Mouw, I've found him to be a pleasant and fair-minded gentleman who treats even contentious doctrinal differences with insight, good humor, and respect. I hold him in high esteem. Quite a number of years ago, for example, I was one of five Latter-day Saint scholars who formally debated five well-known Evangelical scholars during a meeting of the Evangelical Philosophical Society in Denver, Colorado. Professor Mouw was an admirably even-handed moderator, and the debate was an enjoyable experience for us (particularly, when, toward the end, a messenger broke in to announce that the BYU football team had just beaten the University of Utah). Only once did one of the Evangelical participants — an internationally esteemed Christian philosopher whose work I admire very much — make a rather disparaging and uncivil remark about Mormon beliefs. I happened to glance at Professor Mouw right then, and he looked back at me and rolled his eyes with quiet exasperation. Coincidentally running into me the next day, he apologized for the lapse of his friend and fellow Evangelical from the politeness and even friendliness that had otherwise characterized the debate.

Mouw describes himself as “a longtime subscriber to *Sunstone*” (59), which is another way of saying that his interest in Mormonism is long-standing and more than merely casual.² His connection with Mormonism began during a cross country trip with his parents when he was just entering adolescence. Pausing with them for a visit to Temple Square in Salt Lake City, he picked up a copy of the pamphlet “Joseph

2 *Sunstone* was born at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, founded by some LDS students there, and has long seemed to enjoy a special status — rather misleadingly so, in my judgment — among non-Mormon scholars of religion who take an interest in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I spent a summer at Princeton University in 1994, for example, and was surprised to see back copies of *Sunstone* on the table in the waiting room of the Department of Religion there, along with only three or four other, more mainstream Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish publications.

Smith Tells His Own Story” and began to read it in the back seat of the family car. He reports that he felt an immediate kinship with that other fourteen year-old’s religious confusion, as his own family was somewhat divided by religion. He states, “It’s no exaggeration to say that I felt like I had discovered a friend” (6). Nonetheless, he hastens to assure his readers, “I was not tempted to believe Joseph Smith’s account of being visited by the divine Persons and angels” (7).

Later, he encountered Mormonism again through the teaching of the late counter-cult writer Walter Martin, for whom he plainly has a lingering respect that I find myself utterly unable to share or even, really, to grasp. He recalls a meeting in New Jersey at which Martin spoke and remembers a frustrated Latter-day Saint in attendance — with whom I strongly identify — who told Martin, “in an anguished tone, ‘You’re not even *trying* to understand!’” Quite surprising to me, he sees his experiences with Joseph Smith’s story and with Mr. Martin as pivotal to his own intellectual autobiography: “I’ve often thought of those two teenage encounters — my reading Joseph Smith’s First Vision account and witnessing the exchange between Walter Martin and the young Mormon — as what really pushed me toward the study of philosophy” (9).

Mouw wrote and published the book that I’m considering here, *Talking with Mormons: An Invitation to Evangelicals*, while he was still serving as president of Fuller Theological Seminary. From his vantage point at an important center of Evangelical Protestant thinking, he was well aware that writing such a book would be a potentially divisive undertaking within his community: “Promoting the idea of friendly dialogue with Mormons isn’t a popular thing to do in the evangelical world,” he observes. “And you really get into trouble if you suggest that we evangelicals haven’t always been fair in our portrayals of what Mormons believe” (41).

Thus, he starts his book off with a disclaimer, and he issues such disclaimers at several points throughout: “Given the somewhat controversial character of the subject matter of this book, I don’t want to implicate friends who might suffer from guilt by association” (vi). “I approach my engagement with Mormonism as a Calvinist,” he explains (x). (His seventeen years at Calvin College, mentioned above, weren’t entirely the product of coincidence.) “I don’t believe that Joseph Smith was a specially anointed prophet of God. I don’t believe that the Book of Mormon is a new divine revelation. And so on” (32).

Still, he felt obliged to write it. “After giving out dozens of sound bites about Mormonism during the buildup to the 2012 presidential election, I decided it was time to write a book on the subject. Mitt Romney has been much in the news” — the book had been completed and long since sent to the press by the time of Governor Romney’s defeat in November — “and journalists have been eager to find someone who was willing to offer some thoughts about how evangelicals might end up voting if their only choice was between President Obama and a Mormon” (viii). Wanting to expand upon the sorts of things he was often being expected to say during quick and inevitably shallow media interviews, he saw his book as a way of “explaining the sound bites” (viii).

“I’m not conscious,” he writes,

of having approached the writing of this short book in a defensive mood. It’s simply that as a teacher I haven’t felt that I’ve been given the opportunity to engage in adequate teaching on the subject. So this book is my effort to take a little more space than I’ve been given elsewhere, to elaborate on a few sentences here and there that have been given public exposure. (ix)

However, if his resolute Calvinism should assure his Evangelical readers that he’s not going soft on the Mormons, that very Calvinism, Mouw says, also motivates him to consider Mormons and Mormonism in a friendly, kind, and irenic way:

I get a lot of help on this from the great Reformation theologian John Calvin. At one point in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin talks about what a political leader — he used the term “civil magistrate” — should be careful of when thinking about going to war against an enemy. Calvin was no pacifist. He believed that leaders, including Christian leaders, sometimes had to resort to warfare in dealing with an obvious evil. But he also knew that this is a very dangerous area spiritually. So he said that when leaders are considering initiating a military attack, they ought first of all to engage in some serious reflection. One thing leaders should do is to check out their own motives: “let them not be carried away with headlong anger, or be seized with hatred, or burn with implacable severity.” And then, Calvin added, they must try as much as possible to “have pity on the common nature in the one whose special fault they are punishing.”

Here's what Calvin was getting at. He was aware of a sinful pattern that keeps getting stirred up in our hearts and that we have to be constantly on guard against: the tendency to put the best possible interpretation on our own motives and the worst possible interpretation on the motives of the people we want to attack. Recognizing the tendency, Calvin is saying that as an important spiritual exercise we should be sure to be very honest about what is going on in our own hearts, and we should be sure we're not missing something good — or at least not as bad as we're inclined to think — in the lives of the people we want to attack. (18–19)³

It's difficult, in this context, not to be reminded of a marvelous passage in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*: "If only," that heroic Russian novelist, anti-Soviet dissident, and thinker (d. 2008) wrote,

it were all so simple! there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

During the life of any heart this line keeps changing place; sometimes it is squeezed one way by exuberant evil and sometimes it shifts to allow enough space for good to flourish.⁴

Mouw also draws on the nineteenth-century Dutch Calvinist theologian Herman Bavinck, and what he and Bavinck have to say is so helpful and relevant — useful even, as will quickly be apparent, beyond the Mormon/Evangelical dialogue — that I think I'll treat it at some length here.

Mouw begins (on page 78) with a quotation from the first volume (*Prolegomena*) of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics*, where Bavinck has been arguing, with specific reference to Muslim thought, that his fellow Calvinists should approach the claims of non-Christian religions with an open mind:

3 On pages 19–29, Mouw makes a similar point by means of a brief exegesis of Psalm 139.

4 Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918–1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, translated by Thomas P. Whitney (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 168 (1:4).

In the past the study of religions was pursued exclusively in the interest of dogmatics and apologetics. The founders of [non-Christian] religions, like Mohammed, were simply considered imposters, enemies of God, and accomplices of the devil. But ever since those religions have become more precisely known, this interpretation has proved to be untenable; it clashed both with history and psychology.

Mouw then observes that Bavinck's comment is manifestly relevant to Mormonism as well. Mohammed, like Joseph Smith, had produced a post-biblical scripture on the basis of alleged inspiration and angelic delivery, and, just as in Joseph's case, mainstream Christianity long contended that Mohammed was either a deliberately deceptive liar or a raving lunatic far out of touch with reality.

In his comments on the subject, Bavinck refused to carry on in that vein. Indeed, he insisted that it's no longer feasible to dismiss Mohammed simply as one of many "imposters, enemies of God, accomplices of the devil" — characterizations that have also been regularly applied by evangelicals to Joseph Smith. Instead, Bavinck was encouraging his readers to attend carefully to the *content* of Mohammed's teachings. And even more important, he suggested that we can expect to find God-given truths in those teachings. (78–79)

I'm reminded here of the great historian of Islam Marshall G. S. Hodgson, who, in his magisterial three-volume work *The Venture of Islam*, argued that any religious movement that has earned the allegiance of large numbers of people over lengthy periods of time must contain soul-satisfying truths. Otherwise, it would not have survived, let alone flourished. Hodgson had Islam foremost in mind, of course, but the principle holds more broadly than that. And surely, by this stage in our history⁵ it should be obvious that Mormonism is no merely ephemeral faith briefly entertained by a few marginal and monochromatic cranks.

Mouw's reflections on Herman Bavinck continue very much in that vein, for, he says,

5 I'm writing this paragraph on the 185th anniversary of the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has a current membership of more than fifteen million people in virtually every nation of the earth and which, earlier this week, announced the construction of new temples in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; Bangkok, Thailand; and Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

if ... we're given an opportunity to study and dialogue with the other group's actual teachings in a leisurely manner, we must wrestle with the question of how those teachings have actually inspired deep commitments in the lives of sane people who sincerely accept the teachings.

The shift here is from an agenda shaped by the question "How do we keep them from taking over our world?" to one that emerges when we ask "What is it about their teachings that speaks to what they understand to be their deepest human needs and yearnings?" When we seriously engage the ideas embodied in another religious perspective, participating in give-and-take dialogue with proponents of that perspective, we must also take seriously their own assessment of the founder(s) of their religious community. By carefully examining Islam as a system of thought, for example, we're also forced to consider carefully the way intelligent Muslims view the character of Mohammed. I want to commend the same sort of approach to the present-day assessment of Joseph Smith's teachings. (80)

And, in fact, Mouw treats Latter-day Saints with considerably more respect than we've been accustomed to receive from many Evangelical Protestant writers. "A dozen years of sustained dialogues with Mormon scholars and church leaders," he says, "have convinced me that the 'cult' label does not apply accurately to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (viii). "It has never felt to me as though I was talking to members of a 'cult'" (x).

"Not," he hastens to add, "that I'm ready to give them a free pass as simply another Christian denomination. I have too many serious theological disagreements with Mormonism to offer that verdict" (viii). "I'm not suggesting that by forming more positive relations all of our differences will magically melt away. That certainly isn't what has happened to me" (43).

Of course, our disagreements with Professor Mouw's theology are precisely as serious as his with ours, and we Latter-day Saints, I think I can truthfully say, harbor absolutely no desire to be seen as "simply another Christian denomination." Our claims are dramatic, and we know it. Indeed, we glory in that fact.

"My main concern in what I've been saying," writes Professor Mouw, "is to invite us to nurture friendlier relations with the Mormon community. I want us to listen carefully to our Mormon neighbors,

without deciding ahead of time what they ‘really’ believe” (43). It’s scarcely coincidental that the subtitle of *Talking with Mormons* is *An Invitation to Evangelicals*.

There are, he says, three big questions about Mormon thought with which he continues to struggle:

- (1) “Are Mormons talking about the same Jesus in which we traditional Christians are putting our trust?” (43)
- (2) Do Mormons adequately respect the authority of the Bible? (43–44)
- (3) And what about Mormonism’s founder, Joseph Smith? (44)

On the first, he reports, “I still have some serious misgivings, but the misgivings do not run quite as deep as they did earlier” (46). He has at least three reasons, he says, for hope or encouragement with regard to whether or not we Latter-day Saints are talking about the same Jesus as traditional, mainstream Christians.

For one thing, he cites Stephen Robinson’s “important observation” that “LDS terminology often seems naïve, imprecise and even sometimes sloppy by Evangelical standards,” partly at least because Mormons “have no professional clergy to keep our theological language finely tuned,” whereas traditional Christians “have had centuries in which to polish and refine their terminology.”⁶ “Given that situation,” Mouw remarks, “we should at least work to be sure we’re understanding each other better. And that has been happening” (47).

Secondly, he says, the disagreements that he has with Latter-day Saints are often not altogether unlike those that he has with theologians who plainly fall within the traditional Christian mainstream. Thus, for instance, “the Mormon insistence [on] the ‘good work’ that we must perform in connection with placing our faith in Christ — well, this is not unlike a claim that I regularly argue about with my friends in the Arminian tradition” (48).

And, finally, he senses that Mormon thinkers and theologians are interpreting some of the “very harsh-sounding LDS claims” in softer ways (48). One of these “harsh-sounding LDS claims” is the Lord’s (or, he would say, Joseph Smith’s) apparent condemnation of the

6 Mouw cites Robinson from Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide?: A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 156.

great ecumenical and other creeds of mainstream Christendom as an “abomination.” (See his discussion on pages 48–54.)

On this latter point, I’m rather sympathetic. I’ve devoted a fair amount of effort, and hope to do still more, to increase (and, in a sense, to modify) Mormon attitudes toward the content of the classical creeds. But I share the Lord’s evaluation of them, and I’m afraid that I can’t see them as the result of calm — let alone inspired — deliberation; I can’t really see how anybody who has read Ramsay Macmullen’s *Voting about God in Early Church Councils* would be able to do that.⁷

Regarding his second “big question,” concerning the authority of the Bible, Mouw acknowledges that Latter-day Saints take a relatively high view of that scripture. “They typically use the word ‘infallible’ in talking about the Bible’s authority as the word of God,” he writes.

But then they add these other books: the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price. And they see these other writings as on a par with the Bible. Isn’t that enough simply to vote them off the Christian island? (44)

To his credit, he doesn’t actually seem to think that it *is* enough to expel us from Christendom. Not entirely and clearly so, anyway. For that reason, I feel somewhat churlish and ungrateful to look this gift horse in the mouth. But, first, I offer a quibble that will make our situation even worse from an Evangelical standpoint: In my experience, at least, it simply isn’t true that we “typically” describe the Bible as “infallible.” Believing Latter-day Saints usually have a high view of biblical historicity that’s roughly comparable to an Evangelical view, but we’re not inerrantists. Not even with regard to the Book of Mormon, which, on its own (inspired and canonical) Title Page, acknowledges the possibility of “faults” within it that it ascribes to “the mistakes of men.” I personally don’t find the notion of scriptural infallibility even remotely plausible, and I can’t see that I would find it of much help or utility even if I did.

But there are more interesting topics for discussion under the rubric of Mormonism’s view of scripture. For example, “In talking about the Mormon view of revelation and authority,” Mouw writes,

one point needs to be made clear at the outset. It isn’t just that the Mormons have more revealed books than the rest of us. They do, of course; but to say that doesn’t get to the heart of the issue. The real point is that books are not where the true

⁷ Ramsay Macmullen, *Voting about God in Early Church Councils* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

authority resides for Mormons. Evangelical Christians often miss this basic point. (61)

The real authority for Latter-day Saints, he correctly observes, resides in the prophetic office.

In this regard, as in certain others, Mormonism aligns better with Catholicism than it does with Evangelical Protestantism. “The Christian faith is not a ‘religion of the book,’ notes the official *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. “Christianity is the religion of the ‘Word’ of God, ‘not a written and mute word, but incarnate and living.’”⁸

A story related at the April 2008 General Conference by President Boyd K. Packer, of the Council of the Twelve, illustrates quite dramatically the claim of the Latter-day Saints on this issue:

In 1976 an area general conference was held in Copenhagen, Denmark. Following the closing session, President Spencer W. Kimball desired to visit the Vor Frue Church, where the Thorvaldsen statues of the *Christus* and of the Twelve Apostles stand. He had visited there some years earlier and wanted all of us to see it, to go there.

To the front of the church, behind the altar, stands the familiar statue of the *Christus* with His arms turned forward and somewhat outstretched, the hands showing the imprint of the nails, and the wound in His side very clearly visible. Along each side stand the statues of the Apostles, Peter at the front to the right and the other Apostles in order.

Most of our group was near the rear of the chapel with the custodian. I stood up front with President Kimball before the statue of Peter with Elder Rex D. Pinegar and Johan Helge Benthin, president of the Copenhagen stake.

In Peter’s hand, depicted in marble, is a set of heavy keys. President Kimball pointed to those keys and explained what they symbolized. Then, in an act I shall never forget, he turned to President Benthin and with unaccustomed firmness pointed his finger at him and said, “I want you to tell everyone in Denmark that I hold the keys! We hold the *real* keys, and we use them every day.”

8 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1994), 31 (Part 1, Article 3, Paragraph 108).

I will never forget that declaration, that testimony from the prophet. The influence was spiritually powerful; the impression was physical in its impact.

We walked to the back of the chapel where the rest of the group was standing. Pointing to the statues, President Kimball said to the kind custodian, “These are the dead Apostles.” Pointing to me, he said, “Here we have the *living* Apostles. Elder Packer is an Apostle. Elder Thomas S. Monson and Elder L. Tom Perry are Apostles, and I am an Apostle. We are the living Apostles.

“You read about the Seventies in the New Testament, and here are two of the living Seventies, Elder Rex D. Pinegar and Elder Robert D. Hales.”

The custodian, who up to that time had shown no emotion, suddenly was in tears.

I felt I had had an experience of a lifetime.⁹

In Mormonism, authoritative teaching comes from revelation to living prophets and apostles, not from books — though, obviously, books can eventually contain records of past revelation.

But surely that was also true of earliest Christianity, as well. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, and Paul had some kind of authority in the primitive Christian movement — whether it derived from priesthood office or closeness to Jesus or some combination of those two and perhaps of other factors — well before they wrote their gospels and epistles, which, in fact, derived their own original status among believers from the status of their (purported) authors. The Christian movement had existed for decades before the Bible came to be, even in part. Christianity predates its scriptures.

Professor Mouw recognizes the problem:

9 Boyd K. Packer, “The Twelve,” April 2008 General Conference, accessed April 6, 2015, <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2008/04/the-twelve?lang=eng>. Significantly, I think, the Visitors’ Center currently being constructed along with a temple outside of Rome will feature marble replicas not only of the *Christus*, which appears in several temple visitors centers elsewhere, but, flanking that statue, of Thorvaldsen’s Twelve Apostles, including Peter with the keys. The implicit challenge to the claimed Petrine authority and keys associated with St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City is too obvious to overlook.

There were times in Old Testament history when godly people had no authoritative book to rely on in understanding the will of God. Noah, Abraham, Moses — none of these had anything like a Bible. God spoke directly to them. Similarly, in the New Testament and the early church, there was much reliance on oral tradition — the memories of what Jesus had taught and done, and later the memories of the teachings of the apostles.

There came a point, though, when these testimonies were written down; and eventually those writings that the church came to see as supremely authoritative became — in the forming of “the canon” — our Bible. Christians became a “people of the Book.” (63)

But it isn’t clear to me that he recognizes — or, at least, that he acknowledges — the implications of that problem: Trust in the living oracles is both chronologically and logically prior to trust in the transmitted written records of their sayings and deeds. Christians became solely a “people of the Book” only many generations into their history; the earliest Christians, by inescapable implication, were not “people of the Book,” not in the sense that he uses the term.

At this point, it might be appropriate to comment upon the term *people of the Book* itself. The phrase occurs in the Qur’an as *‘ahl al-kitāb*, and it’s used to designate non-Muslim adherents of faiths — such as Judaism, Christianity, and Sabianism — that possess a revealed scripture. Significantly, though, only possession of scriptural texts predating the revelation of the Qur’an — texts viewed in Islam as products of divine revelation that have become corrupted — qualifies a group for inclusion as “people of the Book.” The Baha’is, for example, don’t count as a “people of the Book” despite their possession of written scriptures because those scriptures date only to the nineteenth century, and the situation of Middle Eastern Baha’is in recent years has been precarious at best.¹⁰

In Judaism, the equivalent term is *‘am ha-sefer* (also, roughly, “people of the Book”). Apparently borrowed from Islam, it nonetheless refers specifically to the Jewish people and the Torah, or to the Jewish people and their wider canon (including, for example, the Mishnah and the Talmud). Followers of other religions in the Abrahamic tradition (e.g., Christianity and Islam) don’t count for Orthodox Judaism as “people of the Book.”

10 The Ahmadiyya movement, which originated in India under the British Raj toward the end of the nineteenth century, has struggled for acceptance within the broader Islamic community for similar but not precisely identical reasons.

In other words, insistence on status as “people of the Book” was used, whether intentionally or not, to close the door on any claim of subsequent revelation. But this should raise warning flags for a follower of Christ. Already in the New Testament, Jesus alludes to those who venerate dead prophets but decline to allow the possibility of living ones:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.¹¹

The third of Professor Mouw’s big questions concerns the status of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He quotes a stark and fundamental question that the Latter-day Saint historian Richard L. Bushman once posed to Mouw and his fellow Evangelicals during an interfaith dialogue: “Is Joseph Smith *possible* for you?” (72). Or, as Mouw himself restates it, “Are you at least open to the *possibility* that God would raise up someone who might occupy a restored prophetic office?” (73).

He candidly acknowledges that he continues to be unsure about what to do with the founder of Mormonism: “Even while I reject the key claims that Joseph Smith made on his own behalf, ... I still struggle to find some way of explaining him” (75). The choice seems to be, “to put it crudely: *a liar or a lunatic?*” (73, italics in the original). And there’s no easy way out of that disturbingly sharp dichotomy: “I get nervous when

11 Matthew 23:29–35.

some non-Mormon scholars try to find some alternative to the ‘liar or lunatic’ options.” (74)¹²

Nevertheless, he cites Jan Shipps’s declaration that “the mystery of Mormonism cannot be solved until we solve the mystery of Joseph Smith,” and then adds that “I have no delusions about being able to solve the mystery of Joseph Smith here. Indeed, I’m content, in a sense, to live with the mystery” (76). (Later, on that same page, he says in fact that he won’t even try to solve it.)

My own judgment is that “the Prophet puzzle,” as it’s been called, is *intended* to be difficult and to force a choice. The well-attested existence of the golden plates of the Book of Mormon (to say nothing of the other artifacts seen and hefted by multiple witnesses at the origins of Mormonism) leaves no alternative, really, to a choice between deliberate modern fraud or real Nephites. Subjective hallucination on Joseph’s part doesn’t go a long way toward explaining the experiences of the Three and the Eight Witnesses.

Professor Mouw raises an interesting issue that seems worth mentioning at this point. “The very existence of an increasingly expanding Mormon intellectual ‘tent,’” he says,

is a relatively new phenomenon. It’s not unthinkable that there may come a time when the LDS church is faced with the need to establish boundaries in how the faithful are to understand — to make clear sense of — “the pure and simple spirit that had prevailed in the apostolic era.” My hunch is that when that happens, it will be very much like a “Nicene moment” for Mormonism. (59–60)

In other words, he says, a theological tradition will inevitably arise within Mormonism, demanding clearer doctrinal statements, definitions, and distinctions, and perhaps even trained, professional, academic theologians. Perhaps. But the apostolic teaching office, believing Latter-day Saints expect, will still be in place, pending the Second Coming of the Savior, into the foreseeable future, quite unlike the situation in the ancient Christian church after roughly AD 100. There will still be inspiration and prophetic priesthood authority. And we can surely hope that doctrinal issues won’t be “settled” in raucous shouting matches akin to particularly unruly political conventions — as happened at Nicaea and elsewhere.

12 On page 74, he cites Rodney Stark’s attempt to find a way around that either/or dilemma, obviously unimpressed by it.

The description of the last days given late in his life by the prophet Nephi portrays a time of apostasy that Latter-day Saints regard with sadness and dread, not as an ideal to which we aspire:

For it shall come to pass in that day that the churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord, when the one shall say unto the other: Behold, I, I am the Lord's; and the others shall say: I, I am the Lord's; and thus shall every one say that hath built up churches, and not unto the Lord — And they shall contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another, and they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance.¹³

In that light, I would like to comment, before closing, upon a few specific issues raised by Professor Mouw.

One matter that clearly worries him is “the Mormon teaching that humans and the members of the Godhead belong to the same order of being.” For, he says, “this claim flies in the face of the traditional understanding of biblical teaching, that God is God and we are not, and that any effort to close the metaphysical gap runs the clear risk of espousing idolatry” (87). He mentions several times “the essential Jewish and Christian teaching that there’s a vast metaphysical gap between Creator and creature” (83).

Judaism and Christianity have been united in their insistence that the Creator and the creation — including God’s human creatures — are divided by an unbridgeable “being” gap. God is the *totaliter aliter*, the “Wholly Other,” who is in a realm of existence that’s radically distinct from the creation that the triune God called into existence out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) by a sovereign decree (“Let there be... and there was”). (54)

This is undeniably the standard teaching of traditional Judaism and Christianity (and, I might add, of Islam). But is it biblical? (Or even Qur’anic?) I don’t believe it to be. The Bible is silent about “ontology”; Hebrew (like Semitic languages more generally, including Arabic) is quite deficient with regard to a verb *to be*.¹⁴ Furthermore, the Bible says absolutely nothing about God’s being *totaliter aliter*. Nor is the Bible a text about metaphysics. Instead, metaphysical ideas tend to be imposed

13 2 Nephi 28:3–4.

14 For a classic discussion of this issue, see Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970).

upon it. And, for that matter, the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is at best very dubiously biblical.

I'm uncomfortable, also, to read in Professor Mouw's book that Mormons "deny" the Trinity, as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Christian Scientists do (15). This isn't true. As I argue in an article soon to appear here in *Interpreter*, Latter-day Saints deny the ontological Tri-Unity associated with the Council of Nicaea — but strongly affirm a social model of the Trinity that is entirely in harmony with the biblical data and, at least in my perception, rather like the social Trinitarian models that are increasingly advocated among Protestant and Catholic theologians willing to think outside the proverbial Nicene box.

Moreover, I wasn't particularly pleased to see Professor Mouw's enthusiasm for O. Kendall White's 1987 book *Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy* (25), either, and I would vigorously contest his claim that we believe in "a self-perfectible human being, and salvation by works" (27). I regret that years of friendly, substantive interaction with Latter-day Saints haven't already been enough to dissuade him of these (as I see them) misperceptions regarding our beliefs.

But these are matters for further discussion, and the discussions between Evangelicals and Latter-day Saints haven't ended. Indeed, I hope that they will continue, expand, and flourish. I recognize great value in them.

I agree with Professor Mouw, for example, on one of the areas that he identifies as "an important topic for theological discussion between traditional Christians and Mormons." That topic is "What are the basic desires and dilemmas of the human condition? What are the hopes and fears that Jesus came from heaven to address in his redemptive mission?" (57) We're all, both Evangelical Protestants and Latter-day Saints, in the same human existential condition, needing a sense of purpose and meaning, the possibility of redemption, and the hope of life beyond the grave. And there remain, as well, plenty of things to be clarified and discussed in "the unique content of Mormon thought: a continuing post-biblical revelation mediated by a living prophet, divine corporeality, eternal progression, and the like" (73).

I think that we Latter-day Saints can learn a great deal about our own faith and doctrines by trying to see them through the eyes of friendly and informed outsiders, as well, obviously, as understanding the views of others more accurately and sympathetically. Both of these are very worthy goals. And Richard Mouw is one of the friendliest and most theologically competent of such outsiders. He honors us by the

attention he's given to our faith, and we can profit considerably from our interactions with thinkers and scholars of his caliber.

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GETTING CAIN AND GAIN

Matthew L. Bowen

Abstract: The biblical etiology (story of origin) for the name “Cain” associates his name with the Hebrew verb qny/qnh, “to get,” “gain,” “acquire,” “create,” or “procreate” in a positive sense. A fuller form of this etiology, known to us indirectly through the Book of Mormon text and directly through the restored text of the Joseph Smith Translation, creates additional wordplay on “Cain” that associates his name with murder to “get gain.” This fuller narrative is thus also an etiology for organized evil—secret combinations “built up to get power and gain” (Ether 8:22–23; 11:15). The original etiology exerted a tremendous influence on Book of Mormon writers (e.g., Nephi, Jacob, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni) who frequently used allusions to this narrative and sometimes replicated the wordplay on “Cain” and “getting gain.” The fuller narrative seems to have exerted its greatest influence on Mormon and Moroni, who witnessed the destruction of their nation firsthand — destruction catalyzed by Cainitic secret combinations. Moroni, in particular, invokes the Cain etiology in describing the destruction of the Jaredites by secret combinations. The destruction of two nations by Cainitic secret combinations stand as two witnesses and a warning to latter-day Gentiles (and Israel) against building up these societies and allowing them to flourish.

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” — Proverbs 4:7

Etiologies are stories of origins.¹ The biblical account of Cain and Abel offers a story of origin for the name “Cain” (Genesis 4:1) and

1 From Greek *aitia* = “cause.” For a brief discussion of the phenomenon of biblical etiology, see Michael H. Floyd, “Etiology” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon 2007), 2:352. Floyd observes, “As a critical term applied to narrative, etiology refers to stories that

an account of the beginning of murder — homicide and fratricide — in this world. Importantly, Latter-day Saint scripture attests a fuller and evidently earlier version of this narrative² that is, beyond an etiology of “Cain” and murder, an etiology of organized evil — secret societies organized to the end that their participants might “murder and get gain” (Moses 5:31).

In this article I will examine the biblical etiology of the name “Cain” and the fuller version of this etiological narrative, one form of which we have in the Prophet Joseph Smith’s inspired expansion of Genesis 4 (i.e., Moses 5) and the closely-related version which was available to Lehi and Nephi and their posterity on the brass plates. This earlier, fuller etiology not only explains the significance of the name “Cain,” but also associates “Cain” with the origin of “secret combinations” to “murder and **get gain**” (Moses 5:31, 51). I will further suggest that the collocation “get gain” begins as conscious wordplay on the name “Cain.” In other words, the traditional association between “Cain” and “get[ting] gain” constitutes a pejorative Hebraistic pun on “Cain” — a pun on which the longer, extra-biblical form of the narrative turns. This “Cain”/“get gain” wordplay is reiterated throughout the text of the Book of Mormon as a warning to the Gentiles in the latter-day who build up “churches” and “secret combinations” — organizations — that “murder and get gain.”

“I Have Gotten a Man” (Genesis 4:1)

The biblical text explains Eve’s naming of Cain in terms of the semantically rich verb *qny*, which can mean “buy,” “acquire,” or “create”:³ “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare **Cain** [*qayin*], and said, I have **gotten** [*qānîti*] a man from [*et*, with] the Lord” (Genesis 4:1). Eve’s expression, *qānîti*, can not only be understood as “I have gotten,” “I have gained,” or “I have acquired,” but also “I have created.” The emphasis in the use of the verb *qny* here is on “Cain” as the product of divinely-aided “procreation.”⁴ Eve “gained” Cain with the Lord’s help.

tell how something came to be or came to have its definitive characteristics. In Scripture such stories are typically told about names of persons and places, rites and customs, ethnic identities and other natural phenomena.”

2 See James R. Harris, “Cain,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (ed. Daniel H. Ludlow; New York: Macmillan, 1992), 245–246.

3 Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1111–12. Hereafter cited as HALOT.

4 See David Bokovoy, “Did Eve Acquire, Create, or Procreate with Yahweh? A Grammatical and Contextual Reassessment of קָנָה in Genesis 4:1,” *Vetus*

The name “Cain” itself, however, appears to properly derive from the root **qyn* — a root that sounds like, but also may be related to *qny*. The root **qyn* means to “forge” or “work in metal,” a concept related to “create” in the sense of forming or fashioning. Arabic *qayin* to this day denotes “blacksmith.”⁵ This latter sense of **qyn* is corroborated by the description of Cain’s descendant Tubal-cain (*tûbal qayin*) as a metal-worker at the very end of the same pericope: “And Zillah, she also bare **Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron**” (Genesis 4:22).

“Master of This Great Secret”: The Cain-Gain Etiology as Preserved in Moses 5

The Book of Moses (1st Genesis) version of Cain and Abel story also includes Eve’s naming of Cain: “And Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God. And Adam **knew** Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain, and said: **I have gotten a man from the Lord; wherefore he may not reject his words**. But behold, Cain hearkened not, saying: Who is the Lord that I should **know** him?” (Moses 5:16). As in the biblical account, the naming of Cain in the fuller version of the etiological narrative is connected with his being “gotten” (or “gained”) from the Lord, but the latter version also includes Eve’s express wish that since Cain was “gotten” as a divine gift, he would not reject the Lord’s words like his elder siblings, the word “reject” here being used as an antonym to “get.” The same account informs us that Adam and Eve also had older children who, like Cain, “loved Satan more than God” (Moses 5:13, 28).⁶ In other words, Eve named so Cain (*qayin*) in the hope that he would turn out much better than these wayward elder siblings — i.e., that he would maintain a covenant relationship⁷ with the Lord (that is, “know” the Lord), rather than “love” Satan (also in a covenant sense).⁸ Unfortunately, Cain turns out to be the worst of the lot. The Lord forewarns Cain that

Testamentum 63 (2013): 19–35.

5 Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan, 4th ed. (Urbana, IL: Spoken Language Services, 1994), 943.

6 The phrase “loved Satan more than God” is used exclusively of Cain and his older siblings and their offspring (Moses 5:13, 18, 28) one of whom he marries (5:28).

7 Richard D. Draper, S. Kent Brown, and Michael Rhodes, *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse by Verse Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 65.

8 *Ibid.*, 66.

he will be called “Perdition” (Moses 5:24),⁹ a term which denotes “loss,” “destruction,” or “ruin,”¹⁰ and constitutes perhaps the perfect antonym¹¹ to “gotten,” “gained,” or “(pro)created.” The man “gotten” from the Lord or “gained”/“procreated” with the Lord’s help becomes irredeemably lost, destroyed, and ruined for eternity.

Thus, in the fuller etiology for the name “Cain,” the emphasis moves from the “acquisition” of childbirth to the “acquisition” of property through satanic murder, which has its roots in Cain’s rejection of the Lord (just as Eve feared) and Cain’s “love” for Satan: “And **Cain** said: Truly I am Mahan, the **master** of this great secret, that I may murder and **get gain**. Wherefore **Cain** was called **Master** Mahan, and he gloried in his wickedness” (Moses 5:31). In making this declaration, Cain “re-motivates”¹² the meaning of his own name: he is no longer “gotten” from the Lord or “gained”/“procreated” with the Lord’s help (Genesis 4:1; Moses 5), but is now the “master” (“creator,” “possessor,” see below)¹³ of secret murder to “get gain.”

9 Moses 5:23–26: “If thou doest well, thou shalt be accepted. And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door, and Satan desireth to have thee; and except thou shalt hearken unto my commandments, **I will deliver thee up, and it shall be unto thee according to his desire. And thou shalt rule over him; for from this time forth thou shalt be the father of his lies; thou shalt be called Perdition;** for thou wast also before the world. And it shall be said in time to come — That these abominations were had from **Cain**; for **he rejected** the greater counsel which was had from God; and this is a cursing which I will put upon thee, except thou repent. And Cain was wroth, and listened not any more to the voice of the Lord, neither to Abel, his brother, who walked in holiness before the Lord.” The idea of “Cain” as “gotten,” “gained,” or “(pro)created” with the Lord’s help is key to understanding the antonymic language of this passage: Cain will be “deliver[ed] ... up,” but he will be called “Perdition” (loss, destruction, ruin) because he “rejected” the Lord and his counsel (cf. Moses 5:16; 25–26). Having failed to “master” sin, Cain will “rule” over Satan in eternity, making him “master” in only the most tragic and ironic sense.

10 The name-title “Perdition” also occurs in D&C 76:26, 32, 43; John 17:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; and 3 Nephi 27:32.

11 Cf. Mark 8:36 (Matthew 16:26): “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall **gain** the whole world, and **lose** his own soul?”

12 On the phenomenon of name “re-motivation” (versus so-called folk etymology or popular etymology), see Stéphane Gendron, “L’étymologie populaire: Quels enjeux pour l’onomastique?” in *Proceedings of the XIXth International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, Aberdeen, August 4–11, 1996* (2 vols.; ed. W.F.H. Nicolaisen; Aberdeen: Dept. of English, University of Aberdeen, 1998), 1:130–33.

13 Compare Moses 5:25: “And it shall be said in time to come — That **these abominations were had from Cain**; for he rejected the greater counsel which was had from God; and this is a cursing which I will put upon thee, except thou repent.”

Moreover, he assumes another unholy “new” name or title,¹⁴ knighting himself “Mahan” the “master of this great secret.” The “gain” that Cain has in view is the cattle that his brother “keeps”: “And Cain went into the field, and Cain talked with Abel, his brother. And it came to pass that while they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him. And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying: I am free; surely **the flocks** [cf. Heb. *miqneh* = cattle] of my brother falleth into my hands” (Moses 5:32–33). Significantly, one of the most prominent Hebrew terms for cattle is *miqneh*, which derives from the root **qny/qnh*, “to acquire.” Hebrew *qinyān* denoted “personal property, possessions”¹⁵ like Arabic *qunwat* and *qinwat*, “appropriation, acquisition, property in livestock.”¹⁶

Similar terms occur throughout the Semitic languages: Old South Arabic *mḡny* denotes “possession, property”;¹⁷ Akkadian attests the noun *qinitu*, “acquisition, property”¹⁸ from the verb *qanû*, “‘to keep possession’ of a slave, etc.”; “to acquire.”¹⁹ Arabic also attests the verb *qanā* “to acquire, appropriate, make one’s own ... gain ... get, procure, purchase”;²⁰ *qaniya*, “possessor, owner,”²¹ as well as the noun *qain* “blacksmith”²² or “worker in iron.” Additionally, many of the ancient words for money and property are words for cattle. As Hugh Nibley noted a generation ago, “all the oldest words for *money* simply mean flocks; our words ‘fee’ and ‘pecuniary’ mean *flocks*.”²³ Modern English “fee” derives from Old English (Anglo-Saxon) *feoh*, “cattle” (cf. Gothic *faihu*),²⁴ which derives from Proto-Germanic **fehu*, and is cognate with

14 Cain’s “new name” constitutes a parody of the kind of phenomenon — or temple rite — that we see later in Genesis with the “new names” Abram (Abraham); Sarai (Sarah), and Jacob (Israel).

15 HALOT, 1114.

16 Ibid.

17 Joan Copeland Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabeian Dialect* (HSS 25; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 461.

18 *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, ed. Jeremy Black, Andrew George and Nicolas Postgate; SANTAG 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000), 289.

19 Ibid., 284.

20 Wehr, *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 928.

21 Ibid., 929.

22 Ibid., 943.

23 Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 436.

24 Cf. Thomas O. Lambdin, *An Introduction to the Gothic Language* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006) 273: “*faihu* < PG [Proto-Germanic] **fehu* < IE [Indo-European] *peku-* (cattle). Cf. ON [Old Norse] *fé*, AS [Anglo-Saxon] *feoh*, Ger[man]

Latin *pecus*, “cattle,” the latter being the source of our modern English term *pecuniary*. The longer etiology of Moses 5 thus makes Cain’s name virtually synonymous with unholy “acquisition” — to “get gain” by murder and with Satan’s help, instead of the first, more positive notion of “gotten” with the Lord’s help. It also ties his given name and his new name to “possession.”

Cain’s declaration “I am free” indicates that he feels that he has been economically emancipated. He is now “possessor” or “master” of his brother’s livestock which had now “fall[en] into [his] hands” (Moses 5:33). He is also now “free” from the loathsome company of his brother who “walked in holiness before the Lord” and had offered acceptable sacrifice (see also Hebrews 11:4), whereas Cain had lacked the faith to do so. He also evidently deems himself now fully emancipated from the Lord, whom he had already rejected (Moses 5:16; 25–26), and from covenant bonds, i.e., the “religion” that binds him back²⁵ to God and to his father Adam.

Significantly, it is in the context of his supposed total “freedom” that Cain claims the title “master.” Although we cannot be sure what term stands behind what we have in the restored text of the Joseph Smith Translation (Moses 5), “master” is frequently a divine epithet or appellative (see, e.g., Isaiah 1:3).²⁶ While most readers focus on the name “Mahan,” it is interesting to consider the title “master” in terms of another Genesis passage, with the divine epithet *qōnê*, “possessor,” “creator” or “acquirer,” i.e., “master.” In Genesis 14, Melchizedek and Abraham invoke El-Elyon by the unique title *qōnê šāmāyim wā-’āreš*, “possessor” or “master of heaven and earth”:

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high

Vieh; Skr [Sanskrit] *paśu-*, Lat[in] *pecu*. The IE root here is *pek* (to shear), found in Gk [Greek] *πέκτω*, Lat *pecto*.”

25 Although its exact etymological meaning is disputed, the Latin noun *religio* (from the verb *religare*) seems to denote “binding back.” Religion and its attendant *obligations* (from the same root *-lig*), bind us to God and him to us (cf. D&C 82:10–12). Cf. modern English “league”; French *alliance* and German *Bündnis* (“covenant,” “treaty”).

26 Isaiah 1:3 applies the appellatives “owner” (*qōnê*) and “master” (*ba’al*) to Yahweh (the Lord), the God of Israel: “The ox knoweth **his owner** (*qōnêhû*), and the ass **his master’s** [lit., masters’] (*bē’ālāw*) crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.”

God, **possessor of heaven and earth**: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand [i.e., sworn] unto [the Lord,]²⁷ the most high God, the **possessor of heaven and earth**, That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich. (Genesis 14:18–23)

Abraham's oath to the "Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth," that he would not take anything belonging to the kingdom of Sodom stands in strict contradistinction to Cain's oath with Satan (also sworn "by the living God," Moses 5:29).²⁸ The Most High God, the true "possessor" made Abraham rich in "goods" or "possessions." Cain sought to make himself rich — i.e., to "get gain" — by unjust means, especially murder. The king of Sodom's Cainitic value system is evident in his demanding "the persons" (*nepeš*), clearly not for altruistic reasons (see Genesis 13:13; 19:4–5; cf. Moses 5:51). For him, life was property.²⁹ Abraham, on the other hand, had "gotten," (literally "made," *ʾāśû*) or "won" persons/souls (*nepeš*) in Haran (Genesis 12:5; Abraham 2:15) and presumably all throughout his sojourn from Ur of the Chaldees to Canaan and throughout his entire life (cf. Abraham 2:8–15).

According to Abraham 1:1–2, Abram left Ur of the Chaldees for Canaan, in part because he wanted to be "**one who possessed** great knowledge." This knowledge of God, as well as the priesthood that he sought, could only be obtained from this Melchizedek. Abram's (Abraham's) desires stand in stark contrast to Cain's desires for "mastery." Cain had made his brother a kind of sacrifice to Satan — the "god of this world"³⁰ who promises anything in this world for money — as a means of "get[ing] gain" (Moses 5:31). Abraham, had escaped being

27 The Tetragrammaton, *Yhwh*, is missing in the *Vorlagen* of the LXX (Septuagint), from the Syriac Peshitta, and from 1QGenAp (the Genesis Apocryphon).

28 This contrast is particularly evident in the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis, but not in Genesis as it now stands.

29 Hugh Nibley (*Approaching Zion*, 436) called this the "Mahan principle" (see further below).

30 On Satan as the self-styled "god of this world," see 2 Corinthians 4:4; compare the title "prince of this world" in John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; D&C 127:11.

made a sacrifice to “Elk-keener”³¹ (Elkenah)³² or Elkunirsa (*El qn ʾrš*)³³ by his own father because he “sought for the blessings of the fathers” (Abraham 1:2), and his faith was eventually rewarded by being ordained to the Melchizedek priesthood,³⁴ the priesthood of El-Elyon, the true *qōnê šāmayim wā-ʾāreš* (Genesis 14:19–23; Isaiah 11:1–3).

Ziony Zevit connects the biblical Cain etiology of Genesis 4:1 (cf. Moses 5:16) with Genesis 14:17, 22:

The Hebrew word translated [in Genesis 4:1] with “created” is *qānīyṭī* [*qānītī*], from the root *q-n-h* [*qny*]. Words based on this root are usually understood as relating to the control of property and are translated with “gain, acquire, purchase,” or the like. But a cognate verb that occurs in Ugaritic has a significantly different meaning that is appropriate to the context of the Garden story [i.e., including the Cain and Abel story]. Ugaritic *q-n-y*, used often in a divine epithet, *qnyt ilm*, “creatix of the gods” suggest that “create” or “form” is likely in Genesis 4:1, as well as Genesis 14:22b, . . . , “El Elyon, creator of heavens and earth.”³⁵

This has potentially important implications for Cain’s self-identification in Moses 5:31 as “Master” (i.e., “creator,” “possessor”) of a “great secret” that enabled him to “get gain.” If the Genesis text emphasizes that “the Most High God” (El-Elyon) is *qōnê* — “creator” “possessor,” “maker,” i.e., “master” of heaven and earth — it is also conceivable that *qōnê* stands behind the term “master” in Moses 5:31: Cain is the “master” or “possessor” that “gets gain.” It may be also noted that there are intriguing connections here with the Genesis-related Enochic

See also Isaiah 14:12–15 (2 Nephi 24:12–15); Matthew 4:9–10; Luke 4:5–8; Moses 1:12–23.

31 The original reading for “Elkenah” in the earliest Book of Abraham manuscript. See Brian M. Hauglid, *A Textual History of the Book of Abraham: Manuscript and Editions* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2010), 8.

32 See Kevin L. Barney, “On Elkenah as Canaanite El,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19/1 (2010): 22–35.

33 Cf. Baruch Halpern, *From Gods to Gods: The Dynamics of Iron Age Cosmologies* (ed. M. J. Adams; Forschungen zum Alten Testament 63; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 65.

34 D&C 84:14: “Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah.”

35 Ziony Zevit, *What Really Happened in the Garden of Eden?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 189.

literature — God the “Creator” who teaches the secrets of creation and the Watchers (fallen spirits) who give away the divine “secrets.”³⁶ Satan reveals a “secret” whereby Cain can “get gain” or “create” on earth in imitation of God, the true *qōnê* of heaven and earth.

Further support for the above can be found in south Semitic languages. Like Hebrew *qny*, the Ethiopic verb *qanaya* includes the meanings “acquire, [and] buy” but also to “subjugate, dominate, subdue, tame, train, make serve, make toil, reduce to servitude, bring into bondage, force to work.”³⁷ Leslau notes that the active participial form of this verb, *qanāyi*, means “master.”³⁸ Biella suggests that Old South Arabic *mqn*, found in a difficult reading, most plausibly means “lord, master.”³⁹ She connects this term, interestingly, with Genesis 14:17–22.⁴⁰ Moreover, Old South Arabic, *qyn* denotes “administrator” of a god or king or “governor” of a town,⁴¹ which is also close in semantic range to “lord” or “master.”

Helaman’s statement about the initial formation of secret combinations among the Nephites perhaps takes on additional significance in light of the evidence of *qny* (*qōnê*), Moses 5:16, 31 and Genesis 14:17, 22: “And he went unto those that sent him, and they all entered into a covenant, yea, swearing by their **everlasting Maker** [cf. Ug. *qny*, Heb. *qōnê*] that they would tell no man that Kishkumen had murdered Pahoran” (Helaman 1:11; see further below). Similarly, the first Jaredite secret combination sworn in very similar terms “they all sware unto [Akish], by the God of heaven, and also by the heavens, and also by the earth” (Ether 8:14; see further below). The original “secret combination” was, like these, sworn by “the living God” (Moses 5:29).⁴²

36 See, e.g., Andrei A. Orlov, “Secrets of Creation in 2 (Slavonic) Enoch,” *Henoch* 22 (2000): 45–62. Accessible online at <http://marquette.edu/maqom/enochic.html>. Special thanks to my friend David J. Larsen (personal communication) for this insight.

37 Wolf Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge'ez* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 88.

38 Ibid.

39 Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic*, 460.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., 454.

42 Moses 5:29: “And Satan said unto Cain: Swear unto me by thy throat, and if thou tell it thou shalt die; and swear thy brethren by their heads, and **by the living God**, that they tell it not; for if they tell it, they shall surely die; and this that thy father may not know it; and this day I will deliver thy brother Abel into thine hands.”

The wordplay on “Cain” and *qny* is reiterated later in the pericope, as the secret combinations and secret works of darkness proliferate. Lamech, who becomes “master of the great secret” after Cain, finds that things quickly get beyond his “mastery”:

For Lamech having entered into a covenant with Satan, after the manner of **Cain**, wherein he became **Master** Mahan, **master** of that great secret which was administered unto **Cain** by Satan; and Irad, the son of Enoch, having known their secret, began to reveal it unto the sons of Adam; Wherefore Lamech, being angry, slew him, not like unto **Cain**, his brother Abel, for the sake of **getting gain**, but he slew him for the oath’s sake. For, from the days of **Cain**, there was a secret combination, and their works were in the dark, and they knew every man his brother. (Moses 5:49–51)

Here the earlier wordplay on the name “Cain” and “get gain” (Moses 5:31) is reiterated. The reiterated wordplay, however, marks a progression: no longer are Cain’s “great secret,” the attendant “oath” and “secret combination” merely about “getting gain,” they are now just as much about the preservation of the secret combination itself. Again we note an interesting refraction of Irad the son of Enoch the son of Cain’s predicament in the Enoch literature where we find the later, righteous Enoch (from Seth’s lineage) being a legitimate revealer of the true heavenly secrets,⁴³ this in stark contradistinction to Irad’s being a revealer of the unrighteous imitations of heavenly secrets and knowledge of the Book of Moses (JST Genesis).

It is worth noting that the phrase “their works were in the dark” here finds its echo in the phrase “their works are [lit. were] in the dark” (*wěhāyâ bēmaḥēšāk ma’šēhem*) in Isaiah 29:15. Moreover, the phrase “they knew every man his brother” evokes the use of “know” in Genesis 4:1 and Moses 5:16 where the text states that “Adam knew his wife.” Thus

43 See, e.g., Andrei A. Orlov, “Enoch as Expert in the Secrets,” excerpted from idem, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, 107; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebek, 2005), 48–50. Available online at <http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/enochsecrets.html>; idem, “Titles of Enoch-Metatron in 2 Enoch,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 18 (1998): 71–86. Available online at: <http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/titles.html>. Again, special thanks to David J. Larsen (personal communication) for this insight.

Moses 5:51 may also be suggestive of the depraved sexual mores⁴⁴ of the participants in these secret combinations.⁴⁵

Nephite Access to the Fuller Cain-Gain Etiology

In the Book of Mormon, the collocation “secret combination” is used first by Jacob in 2 Nephi 9:9 where he speaks of the devil as “the father of lies ... who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto **secret combinations** of murder and all manner of **secret works** of darkness.” Similarly, Nephi speaks of “secret combinations ... in times of old, according to the combinations of the devil ... the founder of all these things; yea, **the founder** of murder, and works of darkness” (2 Nephi 26:22). Both Jacob and Nephi allude to a version of the Cain and Abel story similar to the account recorded in Moses 5, as well as to Isaiah 29, both of which were among the writings on the plates of brass.⁴⁶

For instance, Nephi additionally juxtaposes a citation of Isaiah 29:15, “...and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark” (2 Nephi 28:9) with a paraphrase from Genesis 4:10 (“And the blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them”). This suggests that Nephi views the formation of apostate churches/organizations in terms of the “Cain” etiology: “For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are **built up to get gain**, and all those who are **built up to get** power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must

44 Draper, Brown, and Rhodes (*Pearl of Great Price*, 76) state that Moses 5:51 “suggest[s] that the secret society formed by the oath-takers encouraged homosexual activity among its members.”

45 The notion that this “secret combination” included sexual perversion is perhaps further intimated in Moses 5:53: “And among the daughters of men these things were not spoken, because that Lamech had spoken the secret unto his wives, and they rebelled against him and declared these things abroad, and had not compassion.” The phrase “had not compassion” suggests the things that Adah and Zillah were “declaring ... abroad” brought tremendous shame upon Lamech. Plus, it is not insignificant that Lamech’s wives, whose family relationships would have suffered from the dark deeds of this “male only” society, exposed this awful secret almost without hesitation and it evidently became taboo for “the daughters of men” to talk about them.

46 See 1 Nephi 5:11; 19:23; cf. 13:23.

be **brought low in the dust** [citing Isaiah 29:4].” (1 Nephi 22:23); “And the Gentiles are lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and have stumbled, because of the greatness of their stumbling block, that they have built up many churches; nevertheless, they put down the power and miracles of God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that **they may get gain** and **grind upon the face of the poor** [quoting Isaiah 3:15]” (2 Nephi 26:20; see also 26:29). Wordplay alluding to the name “Cain” is evident in these descriptions.

Although the semantics of “church” in some instances nearly approach those of “combination” (per above), the term “combination” is probably best understood in terms of Mormon’s explanation that the organizing principle of these secret societies⁴⁷ was to “unite” or “to combine against all righteousness” and to “combine against the people of the Lord” (3 Nephi 6:27–29).⁴⁸ The Hebrew term *qāšar* (“to be in league, conspire against”)⁴⁹ and *qešer* (“alliance, conspiracy”)⁵⁰ derive from a root that denotes “tying” together.⁵¹ Secret combinations begin among the Nephites as the “band” (cf. *qešer*) of Kishkumen [Kishcumen].⁵² Jacob warned many years earlier of “uniting” oneself to “that great and abominable church” (2 Nephi 6:12),⁵³ expresses a similar idea — an idea that not only enlarges upon Isaiah’s descriptions of “Zion” versus works of darkness (Isaiah 29:15), but ultimately harks back to the ancient Zion/secret combination binary evident in Moses 5–8 (cf. Nephi’s use of Genesis 4:10 in 2 Nephi 26:3).

After describing the establishment of Gadianton’s “secret combinations” in Nephite urban areas (Helaman 3:23), Mormon

47 An alternative description used in 3 Nephi 3:9; Ether 9:6; 11:22. Interestingly, “secret society” was the term that Giddianhi used of the Gadianton secret combination of which he was the leader (see further below).

48 Similar collocations occur in Helaman 6:21: “unite with those bands”; Helaman 7:25: “Yea, we be unto you because of that great abomination which has come among you; and **ye have united yourselves unto it**, yea, to that secret band which was established by Gadianton!”; 3 Nephi 3:7 “unite with us”; (cf. D&C 6:34; 122:7; JS-H 1:20).

49 HALOT, 1153–1154.

50 Ibid., 1154.

51 Ibid., 1153–1154.

52 See Helaman 1:12; 2:3–11; 6:18, 24.

53 2 Nephi 6:12: “And blessed are the Gentiles, they of whom the prophet has written; for behold, if it so be that they shall repent and fight not against Zion, and do not unite themselves to that great and abominable church, they shall be saved; for the Lord God will fulfil his covenants which he has made unto his children; and for this cause the prophet has written these things.”

specifically ties the Gadianton robbers with the fuller version of the “Cain” etiology (Helaman 6). This chapter begins on a seemingly positive note, following the mass Lamanite conversions that followed the theophanic events that attended Nephi and Lehi and God’s voice being heard in the Lamanite prison (Helaman 5:20–52). The Lamanites and Nephites were on friendly terms and were able “to buy and to sell, and to **get gain**, according to their desire” (Helaman 6:7). Unfortunately, this prosperity leads quickly to apostasy among the Nephites:

And in the commencement of the sixty and seventh year the people began to grow exceedingly wicked again. For behold, the Lord had blessed them so long with the riches of the world that they had not been stirred up to anger, to wars, nor to bloodshed; therefore they began to set their hearts upon their riches; yea, they began to seek to **get gain** that they might be lifted up one above another; therefore they began to commit secret murders, and to rob and to plunder, that they might **get gain**. (Helaman 6:15–16)

Mormon’s twofold use of the phrase “get gain” constitutes wordplay on the name “Cain” and his mention of “secret murders” recalls the longer “Cain” etiological narrative (Moses 5). That Mormon has the fuller “Cain” etiological narrative in mind is confirmed a few verses later:

Now behold, those secret oaths and covenants did not come forth unto Gadianton from the records which were delivered unto Helaman; but behold, they were put into the heart of Gadianton by that same being who did entice our first parents to partake of the forbidden fruit — Yea, that same being who did plot with **Cain**, that if he would murder his brother Abel it should not be known unto the world. And he did plot with **Cain** and his followers from that time forth. (Helaman 6:26–27)

Mormon matches his repetition of “get gain” in Helaman 6:15–16 with a repetition of the name “Cain.” Mormon infers here that all secret combinations ultimately have their source in the Cain’s first secret combination. However, Mormon is careful to exculpate Helaman₂ from the potential accusation that the concept and practice of secret combinations had come from the Jaredite records in his custody due to any negligence or violation of the charge given to him (Helaman) by his father Alma (Alma 37:27–34). The transmitter of these evil oaths,

covenants and traditions is none other than the “author of all sin” himself, who has the power to “put [them] into the heart of”⁵⁴ persons from any culture (see Ether 8:20).

A major point of Mormon’s abridgment in Helaman is to illustrate how quickly Cainitic secret combinations can usurp political power and overtake an entire society, as Kishkumen and Gadianton’s band did in only a few years:

And seeing the people in a state of such awful wickedness, and those Gadianton robbers filling the judgment-seats — having usurped the power and authority of the land; laying aside the commandments of God, and not in the least aright before him; doing no justice unto the children of men; Condemning the righteous because of their righteousness; letting the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money; and moreover to be held in office at the head of government, to rule and do according to their wills, **that they might get gain and glory of the world**, and, moreover, that they might the more easily commit adultery, and steal, and kill, and do according to their own wills — (Helaman 7:4–5)

Mormon’s use of the phrase “get gain” here not only indicates the primary *raison d’être* of the Gadianton robbers, but again evokes the name and memory of Cain and emphasizes that the evil being perpetrated by the Gadianton robbers stands firmly in the tradition of evil first perpetrated by Cain on his righteous brother Abel. Gadianton justice is no more just than Cain’s original system of murder-for-gain. Both are utterly satanic.

Mormon apparently takes his verbal cue here from his source, the prophecy of Nephi₂, the son of Helaman₃. The phrase “might get gain and praise of the world” (Helaman 7:5) augurs Nephi’s lament:

O, how could you have forgotten your God in the very day that he has delivered you? But behold, it is to **get gain**, to be praised of men, yea, and that ye might **get gold and silver**. And ye have set your hearts upon the riches and the vain things

54 “Put ... into the heart”: Satan is most often the subject of this collocation. See Moses 4:6; John 13:2; Helaman 6:26, 29. Ether 8:17 makes the daughter of Jared and then Jared the subjects of this expression with the end result that Akish established a secret combination among the Jaredites. The unstated, but clear implication is that Satan put it all into the heart of the daughter of Jared, thus setting off a horrific chain of events.

of this world, for the which ye do murder, and plunder, and steal, and bear false witness against your neighbor, and do all manner of iniquity. (Helaman 7:20–21)

The name “Cain” is yet again present in the expressions “get gain” and “get gold and silver.” Nephi’s lament characterizes the problem that will increasingly plague Lamanite and Nephite civilization, but particularly the latter. For Kishkumen and Gadianton’s secret combination, as for Cain’s, the ends (gain, praise/glory of the world, gold, silver, and the vain things of the world) always justify the means (murder, plundering, robbery, bearing false witness, etc.). Nephi’s lament is so plaintive, because of the fatigue of having to so “unwearyingly”⁵⁵ combat the efforts of this group to get a chokehold on the entire society.

In 3 Nephi 2–4, the struggle with Cainitic “secret combinations” becomes a fight for survival for both the Nephites and the Lamanites. The Nephite governor Lachoneus receives a letter from Giddianhi, “governor” of the Gadianton secret combination. Giddianhi’s letter is bald-faced intimidation, an attempt to win the battle without even fighting a battle:

And behold, I am Giddianhi; and I am the governor of this **the secret society of Gadianton**; which society and the works thereof I know to be good⁵⁶ and **they are of ancient date and they have been handed down unto us**. And I write this epistle unto you, Lachoneus, and I hope that ye will deliver up your lands and your possessions, without the shedding of blood, that this my people may **recover** [i.e., acquire, possess, or obtain again] their rights and government, who have dissented away from you because of your wickedness in retaining from them their rights of government, and except ye do this, I will avenge their wrongs. I am Giddianhi. (3 Nephi 3:9–10)

Giddianhi appeals to the antiquity of the “works” and traditions of his society, but notably does not state their ultimate source. However, invoking traditional Lamanites claims regarding the right to rule (rights

55 See Helaman 10:4–5.

56 There may be a rhetorical wordplay on the meaning of the name “Nephi” and “Nephites” here. On similar wordplay on Nephi in the Book of Mormon, see Matthew L. Bowen, “Internal Textual Evidence for the Egyptian Origin of Nephi’s Name,” *Insights* 22/11 (2002): 2; idem, “‘O Ye Fair Ones’: An Additional Note on the Meaning of the Name Nephi,” *Insights* 23/6 (2003): 2–3.

and government/rights of government),⁵⁷ Giddianhi gives himself away with his use of a word rendered here as “recover.” The verb *qny/qnh* — the verb used to explain the name “Cain” in Genesis 4:1 (Moses 5:16) takes on precisely this sense in Isaiah 11:11.⁵⁸ The aim or end of the Gadianton robbers is not simply to “**recover** ... rights and government” but to “**obtain** ... rights to the government”;⁵⁹ in other words, to “**get** power and **gain**” — Cain’s original end, to which he and his successors would use any means necessary, especially the “shedding of blood.” Thus, wittingly or unwittingly, Giddianhi’s words (as presented by Mormon) also appear to play on the name “Cain.”

Following a series of battles in which Giddianhi the “governor” of the Gadianton robbers was killed in battle, and his successor Zemnarihah was hanged from a tree, the Nephite and Lamanite survivors composed this piece of liturgy: “May the Lord preserve his people in righteousness and in holiness of heart, that they may cause to be felled to the earth all who shall seek to slay them because of power and secret combinations, even as this man [Zemnarihah] hath been felled to the earth” (3 Nephi 4:29). And yet within only a few years, Mormon tells us that a man named Jacob formed yet another secret combination to advance his monarchic ambitions over the Nephites: “And they did enter into a covenant one with another, yea, even into that covenant which was given by them of old, which covenant was given and administered by the devil, to combine against all righteousness” (3 Nephi 6:28). Mormon clearly has in mind Cain and the covenant that he entered into with Satan in the beginning (see Moses 5).

The Lord himself foresaw and forewarned that Cainitic secret combinations would destroy the Nephites: “But behold, it sorroweth me because of the fourth generation from this generation, for they are led away captive by him even as was **the son of perdition**; for **they will**

57 See Noel B. Reynolds, “The Political Dimension in the Small Plates,” *BYU Studies* 27 (Fall 1987): 15–37.

58 In Exodus 15:16, the Lord is said to have “purchased” or “acquired” (*qānītā*) his people. Isaiah 11:11, possibly citing this text, says that “the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover [*liqnôt*] the remnant of his people.” Even in the former passage, however, the verb *qny* can be understood in the sense of “recover.” The Lord was “recovering” his people from Egypt according to his covenant with their ancestors.

59 We note the clear similar language in Giddianhi’s stated aim in his epistle to Lachoneus (“may recover their rights and government,” 3 Nephi 3:10) and Ammaron’s stated aim in his letter to Moroni (“to obtain their rights to the government,” Alma 54:24).

sell me for silver and for gold, and for that which moth doth corrupt and which thieves can break through and steal. And in that day will I visit them, even in turning their works upon their own heads.” (3 Nephi 27:32). Jesus’s words allude not only to Judas Iscariot who sold him for thirty pieces of silver (meager “gain”!), but also to Cain who murdered Abel to “get gain.”⁶⁰ Indeed, Mormon reports that by ca. 201 CE, the people had become focused on riches, no longer lived the law of consecration, and “began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to **get gain**, and began to deny the true church of Christ” (4 Nephi 1:26) and within another 50–60 years, the “build[ing] up” of these “churches” becomes the “build[ing] up [again of] the secret oaths and combinations of Gadianon” (4 Nephi 1:41–42). Mormon again evokes the name and legacy of Cain, and the Nephites, like the latter, are destined for destruction.⁶¹

Language from Genesis 4 and the longer “Cain” etiology preserved and restored in Moses 5 is further evident in Moroni’s words to his latter-day audience at the close of his father’s (Mormon’s) records. Moroni emphasized that the record that he was “hid[ing] up ... unto the Lord” no one would be able to “have ... to **get gain**” (Mormon 8:14). He further declared that the record would “come in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness” (Mormon 8:27) and asks, “Why have built up churches unto yourselves to **get gain**?” (Mormon 8:33). The expression “get gain” recalls the name Cain and the first murder to “get gain” (Moses 5:31, 50). Moroni’s additional description of “blood ... cry[ing] unto the Lord” recalls Genesis 4:10 (Moses 5:35); and the expression “secret combinations” and “the work of darkness” recalls the language of the fuller etiology akin to the account in Moses 5 (see especially Moses 5:51–55).

Moroni then issues a warning to latter-day Gentiles using the same language from the longer version of the Cain etiology (cf. Genesis 4, Moses 5):

Yea, why do ye build up **your secret abominations to get gain**, and cause that widows should mourn before the Lord, and

60 Both Satan and Cain stand as archetypal “Perdition” and “sons of perdition” (see D&C 76:25–46; Moses 5:24).

61 As Mormon later reports to his son Moroni, “I fear lest the Spirit hath ceased striving with them; and in this part of the land they are also seeking to put down all power and authority which cometh from God; and they are denying the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 8:28). The Nephites followed the way of Cain and the antediluvians.

also orphans to mourn before the Lord, and also the **blood of their fathers and their husbands to cry unto the Lord from the ground, for vengeance** upon your heads? Behold, the sword of vengeance hangeth over you; and the time soon cometh that he avengeth the **blood of the saints** upon you, for he will not suffer their **cries** any longer. (Mormon 8:40–41)

The phrase “get gain” here again constitutes a literary echo of the name “Cain” in its fuller etiology and the imagery of “blood ... cry[ing] unto the Lord from the ground, for vengeance” recalls Genesis 4:10 (Moses 5:35) almost verbatim. The influence of the “Cain” etiology upon, and its importance to, the writers of the Book of Mormon can scarcely be overstated. However, its importance stems not only from its presence on the brass plates, but also from the fact that it was the Cain narrative and the subsequent narratives detailing “secret combinations” that inspired their use among the Jaredites, a mistake that eventuated in the destruction of that civilization (see Ether 8:18–21), as it also would the destruction of the Nephites (Helaman 2:13–14).

Jaredite Access to the Fuller Cain-Gain Etiology

Alma’s paranetic words to his son Helaman sometime before his death contain instructions that read something like a prelude to the story of the fall of the Jaredite nation that will be told in much greater depth in the Book of Ether:

Therefore ye shall keep these secret plans of their oaths and their covenants from this people, and only their wickedness and their murders and their abominations shall ye make known unto them; and ye shall teach them to abhor such wickedness and abominations and murders; and ye shall also teach them that these people were destroyed on account of their wickedness and abominations and their murders. For behold, **they murdered** all the prophets of the Lord who came among them to declare unto them concerning their iniquities; and **the blood of those whom they murdered did cry unto the Lord their God for vengeance upon those who were their murderers**; and thus the judgments of God did come upon these **workers of darkness and secret combinations**. Yea, and **cursed be the land forever and ever unto those workers of darkness and secret combinations, even unto destruction**, except they repent before they are fully ripe.

And now, my son, remember the words which I have spoken unto you; trust not those secret plans unto this people, but teach them an everlasting hatred against sin and iniquity. (Alma 37:29–32)

Alma's use of the phrase "blood ... did cry unto the Lord their God" evokes Genesis 4:10 as we have seen it recalled previously. The expressions "murder," "workers of darkness," and "secret combinations" further recall the longer etiology of Moses 5. Moreover, Alma's words anticipate the possibility that the secret combinations that destroyed the Jaredites might also destroy the Lamanites. His words, of course, proved prophetic.

When Moroni undertakes to give an account of the Jaredites and their fate, he makes clear from the outset that the Jaredites had an account of the Primeval History similar in content to the account in Genesis 1–11:

And as I suppose that the first part of this record, which speaks concerning the creation of the world, and also of Adam, and an account from that time even to the great tower, and whatsoever things transpired among the children of men until that time, is had among the Jews — Therefore I do not write those things which transpired from the days of Adam until that time; but they are had upon the plates; and whoso findeth them, the same will have power that he may get the full account. But behold, I give not the full account, but a part of the account I give, from the tower down until they were destroyed. (Ether 1:3–5)

Moroni knew, as did his father Mormon, concerning "the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews" (Mormon 7:8).⁶² Moroni's supposition, probably based on his knowledge of the contents of the brass plates, is that the Gentiles would have an account of the Primeval History down to the time of the tower (Genesis 1–11). Consequently, he does not expend time or energy recapitulating this account from the Jaredite record. However, we should not overlook the fact that, according to Moroni, the Jaredites had their own account of the Primeval History. Later evidence from the Book of Ether confirms that this account included details concerning the foundation of secret combinations. Moreover, Moroni — like Alma, his predecessor — is

62 See also 1 Nephi 13:23; 2 Nephi 29:12–14.

reluctant to go into detail about the specific contents of that account. As we will see, some Jaredites who had access to this account did not read it (as we might) as a paranetic warning against the formation of secret combinations — quite the opposite:

Now the daughter of Jared was exceedingly fair. And it came to pass that she did talk with her father, and said unto him: Whereby hath my father so much sorrow? Hath he not read the record which our fathers brought across the great deep? Behold, is there not an account concerning them of old, that they **by their secret plans** did **obtain** [i.e., “gain,” “acquire”] kingdoms and great **glory**? (Ether 8:9).

The daughter of Jared’s use of a term translated “did obtain” subtly recalls the name Cain and the phrase “get gain” as we have seen it used elsewhere.

Although apparently withheld from the Nephite public, at least for a time,⁶³ Moroni presents a fuller story of the origin of the secret combinations that destroyed the Jaredites, written as a paranetic warning to the Gentiles, although he too seems to have embraced Alma’s editorial charge to Helaman to “retain” the most unsavory elements of the account from general readership.⁶⁴ The Jaredites were, of course, themselves Gentiles that had been led to the western hemisphere millennia earlier to inherit the land as a land of promise and whose destruction Moroni uses as a cautionary tale for latter-day Gentiles whom the Lord would lead to the land of promise over the course of future centuries.

Just as secret combinations arose out of a Nephite political dispute (see Helaman 1), Jaredite secret combinations arose amid intrigue and infighting for the throne in the royal family. At the instigation of his daughter (mentioned above), Jared enlists Akish to assassinate Jared’s own father, offering his daughter to Akish as the bounty for this assassination. The daughter of Jared and Akish appealed to known and, even by then, ancient accounts of “secret combinations.” Moroni’s description of these events specifically recall the story of Cain’s murder of Abel in the more detailed ancient version akin to Moses 5:

And it came to pass that Akish gathered in unto the house of Jared all his kinsfolk, and said unto them: Will ye swear unto me that ye will be faithful unto me in the thing which I shall

63 See Alma 37:27–34.

64 See especially Alma 37:27–31.

desire of you? And it came to pass that they all swear unto him, by the God of heaven, and also by the heavens, and also by the earth, and by their heads, that whoso should vary from the assistance which Akish desired should lose his head; and whoso should divulge whatsoever thing Akish made known unto them, the same should lose his life. And it came to pass that thus they did agree with Akish. And Akish did administer unto them the oaths which were given by them of old who also sought power, which had been handed down even from Cain, who was a murderer from the beginning. And they were kept up by the power of the devil to administer these oaths unto the people, to keep them in darkness, to help such as sought power **to gain** power, and to murder, and to plunder, and to lie, and to commit all manner of wickedness and whoredoms. And it was the daughter of Jared who put it into his heart to search up these things of old; and Jared put it into the heart of Akish; wherefore, Akish administered it unto his kindred and friends, leading them away by fair promises to do whatsoever thing he desired. And it came to pass that they formed a secret combination, even as they of old; which combination is most abominable and wicked above all, in the sight of God; For the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man. (Ether 8:13–19)

Moroni's use of wordplay on Cain and "to gain" is evident here and it effectively connects this scene back to the Primeval History as well as the events that led to the destruction of the Nephites that Mormon and Moroni have already recounted. Perhaps Moroni is also invoking the law of witnesses (see Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15): the fact that the Jaredites and Nephites knew the Cain etiology independently of one another and yet both nations adopted the ways of Cain and his followers to their own destruction, serves as a twofold witness and warning to the mighty latter-day gentile nation "raised up" upon the land of promise, of the inevitable fate of those who embrace Cainitic secret combinations.

If we take Moroni at his word, his use of the phrases, "Cain, who was a murderer from the beginning," "them of old"/"these things of old," and "secret combination" leaves no doubt that the Jaredites had their own account of Cain, his followers and their doings, and that it is these very events that he has in mind. Moroni is, however, reluctant to go into

detail about the specifics of this account, either from the brass plates or the Jaredite records:

And now I, Moroni, do not write the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people, and they are had among the Lamanites. And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking, and also the destruction of the people of Nephi. And whatsoever nation shall uphold such **secret combinations, to get power and gain**, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed; *for the Lord will not suffer that the blood of his saints, which shall be shed by them, shall always cry unto him from the ground for vengeance upon them and yet he avenge them not.* (Ether 8:20–22)

Yet again, Moroni uses the collocation “get ... gain,” thus invoking the name “Cain.” For good measure, he uses the phrase “blood ... cry[ing] from the ground” from Genesis 4:10 (Moses 5:35–36). The secret combinations that ultimately destroyed both the Jaredites and the Nephites trace their origin to Cain, Satan, and organizing to “murder and get gain.” Moroni’s point could not be clearer: the path of Cain and secret combinations to “get gain” is a path to individual, collective, and even total national destruction. Mormon and Moroni reiterate this lesson almost ad nauseam in an urgent, almost frantic attempt to get the attention of their latter-day audience. They witnessed firsthand what these combinations did to their society during their own lifetimes.

Moroni, who has seen the latter-day Gentiles, and “know[s] [their] doing,” particularly insists on getting through to this group. Again the wordplay on “Cain” and “get ... gain” are a major focus of his warning:

Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to **get power and gain** — and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be. Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you; or wo be

unto it, because of the **blood of them who have been slain; for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who built it up.** For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people, for it is built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents, yea, even that same liar who hath **caused man to commit murder from the beginning;** who hath hardened the hearts of men that they have murdered the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out from the beginning. (Ether 8:23–25)

The same “secret combinations” that were built up in the beginning of time are to be distinguished little from those that will be (are) built up in the end of time. In fact, the former inform us of the nature of the latter. In other words, their *raison d’être* is just same as Cain’s “secret combination” to “murder and get gain” (Moses 5:31) or to “get power and gain” (Ether 8:22–23). Again, Moroni invokes the language of Genesis 4:10 and the fuller version of the “Cain” etiology from the brass plates to emphasize the nature and source of all secret combinations.

Moroni further highlights the inherent instability of the leadership of these secret combinations and the political power they wield once it has been obtained. No sooner has Omer fled and abdicated (by divine inspiration, Ether 9:1–3) and Jared taken the throne (9:4), then Akish seeks the head and throne of Jared, his father-in-law (9:5). Moroni ominously notes that “so great had been the spreading of this wicked and secret society that it had corrupted the hearts of all the people; therefore Jared was murdered upon his throne, and Akish reigned in his stead” (9:6). Indeed, war immediately breaks out between Jared and his sons over the throne (9:8–12). Not only had the secret combination corrupted all hearts, “the people of Akish were **desirous for gain**, even as Akish was **desirous for power**; wherefore, **the sons of Akish did offer them money**, by which means they drew away the more part of the people after them” (9:11). The ensuing war, which lasts “many years” claims the lives of the entire Jaredite nation, “save it were thirty souls, and they who fled with the house of Omer” (9:12). Moroni thus evokes the name “Cain” again with the term “gain” (cf. Moses 5:31). Just as the Cainitic secret combination before the flood culminated in the near destruction of humanity, the derivative secret combination among the Jaredites destroyed that civilization and not just once!

After a comparatively brief return to righteousness and prosperity — a few generations — the Jaredites and their monarchy begin to decline. Heth, the fourth generation from Omer “began to embrace the secret plans again of old” (Ether 9:26) which swiftly leads to Heth himself “perish[ing] by famine and all his household” except Shez, and “Shez [beginning] to build up again a broken people” (10:1). Prophets came crying repentance, but they were rejected (9:28–29). This is the second near-total destruction of the Jaredite nation due to Cainitic secret combinations.

Later in his translation of the Jaredite record, Moroni makes clear that the final, permanent destruction of the Jaredites also began with the revival of the secret combination that nearly destroyed them twice previously:

And it came to pass that there arose a rebellion among the people, because of that **secret combination** which was built up to **get power and gain**; and there arose a mighty man among them in iniquity, and gave battle unto Moron, in which he did overthrow the half of the kingdom; and he did maintain the half of the kingdom for many years. (Ether 11:15)

Again, the memory and name of Cain are evoked by the collocation “get power and gain” (cf. Ether 8:22–23; Moses 5:31). In response to this development, prophets again come preaching repentance and prophesying of the destruction of the people, including issuing a warning that “the Lord God would send or bring forth another people to possess the land,” but “they did **reject** all the words of the prophets, **because of their secret society and wicked abominations**” (Ether 11:20–22). Just as it was in the beginning with Cain when he “rejected”⁶⁵ the Lord on account of his love of Satan and “murder to get gain,” so it was with the Jaredites. In the end Coriantumr and his people also “**rejected** all the words of Ether” and brought upon themselves the destruction foretold. Coriantumr alone (that we know of) lived to see the prophecy of another people possessing land — the Judahite Mulekites (of the house of Israel). Moroni’s warning to the Gentiles today is expressly this: repent or suffer

65 Moses 5:16, 25–26.

the same fate. The Lord's people will eventually "inherit the earth"⁶⁶ — i.e., "inherit [dispossess] the Gentiles,"⁶⁷ whether the latter repent or not.

Conclusion and Pragmatics: "Awake to a Sense of Your Awful Situation"

There can be little doubt that the references throughout the Book of Mormon to "secret combinations" that enable men to "murder" and "get gain" have a direct reference to Cain whose name is etilogically tied to the verb *qny*, denoting "get," "acquire," "(pro)create." The Nephites on the brass plates and the Jaredites in their records had access to a fuller etiological narrative than the one that currently stands in Genesis 4. That etiological narrative exerted tremendous influence on Nephi, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni who are perhaps most responsible for the contents of the Book of Mormon.

In the repetition of the "Cain" wordplay and the numerous references throughout the Book of Mormon to the "Cain" etiology, we can discern one of Mormon's and Moroni's most urgent messages to people today, particularly the Gentiles. Moroni warns that Cainitic secret combinations "are had among all people"; that they "caused the destruction of [the Jaredites] ... and also the destruction of the people of Nephi"; and that "whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they [i.e., that nation] shall be destroyed" (Ether 8:20–22), this because "precious" to the Lord is the "the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15) and the "blood of his saints, which ... cr[ies] unto him from the ground for vengeance" (Ether 8:22) — i.e., for justice. The way that all churches and organizations are formed and the purposes for which they are formed truly matter.

The description of human society after Cain and before the Flood could just as easily describe or own society: "And the children of men were numerous upon all the face of the land. And in those days Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man's hand was against his own brother, in administering death, because of secret works, seeking for power" (Moses 6:15). The question then becomes: are those combinations "get[ting] above" us (Ether 8:23)? Or have they already "gotten above

66 Psalm 25:11–12; 37:9–11, 22; Matthew 5:5 (3 Nephi 12:5); D&C 56:13–20; D&C 59:1–2 (and *passim*).

67 See also Isaiah 49:8 (1 Nephi 21:8); 54:3 (3 Nephi 22:3). See further Numbers 33:51–52; Deuteronomy 7:17–24; Judges 11:19–24; and especially Micah 4:13; 5:8–9; 3 Nephi 20:15–20; Mormon 5:24.

us”? In describing what he called Cain’s “Mahan principle,” Hugh Nibley gives an appraisal of modern socio-economics that is both sobering and frightening:

The “Mahan principle” is a frank recognition that the world’s economy is based on the exchange of life for property. This is most apparent, of course, in time of war — a Catch-22. Today the biggest business in the world is the selling of deadly weapons by all to all, with the advantage going to the most efficient killing machines. Not long ago it was drugs, but it is all the same in a descending scale of accountability, where none is free from guilt: the hit man, soldier of fortune, weapons dealer, manufacturer, plundering whole species for raw materials, destroying life in both processing them and getting them (by pollution, dangerous work conditions, and so on), and by distributing them (additives, preservatives). The fearful processes of industry shorten and impoverish life at every level, from forced labor to poisonous air and water. This is the world’s economy, for Satan is “the prince of this world.”⁶⁸

All of this brings us back to the “Cain” etiology and the horrific cynicism of Cain’s retort to the Lord: “Am I my brother’s keeper”? The testimony of the Book of Mormon and latter-day prophets⁶⁹ is an unambiguous “yes!”

If we are true “saints,” we ever seek to emulate the Lord, the true possessor/creator of heaven and earth who, as the Good Shepherd, ever seeks to “recover” (*liqnôt*, i.e., reacquire, regain) his people,⁷⁰ like sheep, wherever they are scattered. And he gives us — and has given the latter-day Gentiles — the same responsibility (see 2 Nephi 29:5; D&C 39:11). In the end, it will come down to a simple choice: to gather to Zion (i.e., to gather to the Lord) or to “fight against ... Zion”⁷¹ and unite ourselves to the great and abominable church — i.e., “combine against all righteousness” (3 Nephi 6:28). We can organize, create, and unite the Lord’s way or the way of the world, the way of Cain — the way of

68 Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, 436–437.

69 See, e.g., Dallin H. Oaks, “Brother’s Keeper” in *Conference Report*, Oct. 1986, 25; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 20.

70 Isaiah 11:11; Jacob 6:2; D&C 39:11.

71 Isaiah 29:7–8; 1 Nephi 22:14, 19; 2 Nephi 6:12–13; 27:3. See also 1 Nephi 11:34–36; 14:13; 2 Nephi 25:14; 29:14; Alma 23:7; D&C 121:38.

the adversary. We cannot do both. We need “revelation upon revelation [and] knowledge upon knowledge that [we may] know the mysteries and peaceable things — that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal” (D&C 42:61), not Satan’s counterfeits.

In a sense much truer than Cain’s self-boasted freedom (“I am free!” Moses 5:33), “**men are free** according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27). In view of the fact that Cain and Satan are forever miserable, may we choose the Savior, liberty, and eternal life to our eternal happiness.

Moroni and his predecessors were “commanded to write” what they wrote so “that evil might be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved” (Ether 8:26; cf. 2 Nephi 30:18). Evil will be done away and humanity saved as soon as — and to the degree that — the Gentiles and all the house of Israel give heed to their words of warning.

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“THE GREAT AND TERRIBLE JUDGMENTS OF THE LORD”: DESTRUCTION AND DISASTER IN 3 NEPHI AND THE GEOLOGY OF MESOAMERICA

Neal Rappleye

Review of Jerry D. Grover, Jr., Geology of the Book of Mormon. Vineyard, UT: Self-Published, 2014. 233 pp. +xi, including index and references. \$39.99.

Abstract: Over recent decades, several Latter-day Saint scholars and scientists have offered analysis and comparison to geologic events and the destruction recorded in 3 Nephi 8-9. Jerry Grover makes an important contribution to this literature as he provides background on geologic processes and phenomena, details the geologic features of the Tehuantepec region (Mesoamerica), and applies this information to not only the description of 3 Nephi 8-9, but other incidents in the Book of Mormon likely connected to geologic events. In doing so, Grover yields new insights into the narratives he examines, and adds clarity to geographic details that have been subject to varying interpretations.

The destruction of Nephite and Lamanite lands and cities described in 3 Nephi has been repeatedly subjected to geologic analysis in an effort to better understand the natural disaster(s) described in the text. This type of effort can be seen in literature stretching back several decades. Though earlier examples exist, it seems sufficient here to start with the father of virtually all types of commentary and investigation of the Book of Mormon today — Hugh Nibley. In *Since Cumorah*, first published serially between 1964 and 1966, Nibley compared the descriptions mentioned in 3 Nephi with various descriptions of earthquakes and accompanying phenomena, including volcanic eruptions.¹

Twenty years later, John L. Sorenson and James L. Baer, an anthropologist and a geologist respectively, would each expand on this type of analysis. Sorenson's landmark volume *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* not only includes discussion of the

1 Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book/FARMS, 1988), 231–238.

kind of natural disasters which cause the sorts of destructions 3 Nephi describes, focusing mainly on volcanic eruptions, but also draws on geologic and archaeological evidence to argue that in fact such an event occurred in the right area during or near the right time.² Baer, the first actual geologist (whom I could find) to take a look at this aspect of the Book of Mormon, offered a short note in *Dialogue* in 1986, answering five specific questions about the geology of the catastrophe.³

The 1990s saw a proliferation of geologic studies of the 3 Nephi events. Russell H. Ball offered the formal hypothesis that the destruction was caused by seismic activity and that the three days of darkness were the result a volcanic ash cloud engulfing the land. Ball cited Pliny's description of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius as a comparison to the Book of Mormon account.⁴ John A. Tvedtnes collected and summarized the reports of several earthquakes and volcanic eruptions which allow for comparison to the 3 Nephi account.⁵ John Gee compared the Book of Mormon description to that of the Karnak stele, linked by scholars to the volcanic eruption of Thera ca. 1530 BC.⁶ The most thorough of these studies at this time was that of Bart J. Kowallis, a professor of geology at Brigham Young University. Kowallis provided an in-depth analysis of the text and accounts of volcanic eruptions to argue, fairly persuasively, that a single, explosive volcanic eruption could account for all of the destruction mentioned in 3 Nephi.⁷ Geologist and oceanographer Benjamin R. Jordan wrote a short note adding "liquefaction" to the various phenomena described by Kowallis.⁸

While the idea continued to be repeated in various writings into the 2000s, little was done to push this theory further. A handful of short

2 John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book/FARMS, 1985), 129, 318–323.

3 James L. Baer, "The Third Nephi Disaster: A Geological View," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19/1 (Spring 1986): 129–132.

4 Russell H. Ball, "An Hypothesis concerning the Three Days of Darkness Among the Nephites," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/1 (1993): 107–123.

5 John A. Tvedtnes, "Historical Parallels to the Destruction at the Time of the Crucifixion," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 170–186.

6 John Gee, "Notes and Communications: Another Note on the Three Days of Darkness," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 235–244.

7 Bart J. Kowallis, "In the Thirty and Fourth Year: A Geologist's View of the Great Destruction in 3 Nephi," *BYU Studies* 37/3 (1997–98): 136–190.

8 Benjamin R. Jordan, "Many Great and Notable Cities Were Sunk": Liquefaction in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 38/3 (1999): 119–122.

notes were published on potential avenues of further research,⁹ and Benjamin Jordan added an important article on the potential of ice-cores as evidence for such an eruption, identifying a few possible indications of a major eruption between AD 30–40 within various ice-core samples.¹⁰ For the most part, however, most publications merely repeated or echoed previous publications.

In some cases, these geologic examinations have been used to link the Book of Mormon text to a particular geographical region. Nibley noted, “As is well known, ‘Central America lies in the heavy earthquake belt,’ as well as being both a coastal and a volcanic area — a perfect setup for all the disasters which the Book of Mormon describes so succinctly and so well.”¹¹ Hence Nibley concluded, “[The 3 Nephi account] furnishes convincing evidence that the person who wrote it must have had personal experience of a major Meso-American quake or else have had access to authentic accounts of such.”¹² Sorenson, of course, agreed with this assessment. Baer, too, made this connection, generically: “The west coasts of South and Central America have the geologic features that one would expect to find at the site of such a disaster [as described in 3 Nephi].”¹³ Ball pointed out, “This general area in Mesoamerica is quite active seismically, and large areas are covered by lava flows and volcanic ash.”¹⁴ In a lengthy footnote, Kowallis took it one step further, and speculated as to where in Mesoamerica the eruption took place.

For our purposes in understanding this Book of Mormon event, and using Sorenson’s geography as a guide, I would suspect the eruptive center to have been north of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (in the land northward where destruction was greatest) and probably along the coast where the eruption could generate a tidal wave. However, more geologic and

9 See “Volcanic and Ice Dating in the New World,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10/1 (2001): 75; “When Day Turned to Night,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10/2 (2001): 66–67; Benjamin R. Jordan, “Investigating New World Volcanism at the Time of Christ’s Death,” *Insights* 23/6 (2003): 3–4; Matthew Roper, “A Note on Volcanism and the Book of Mormon,” *Insights* 29/4 (2009): 4.

10 Benjamin R. Jordan, “Volcanic Destruction in the Book of Mormon: Possible Evidence from Ice Cores,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/1 (2003): 78–87.

11 Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 236–237.

12 Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 238.

13 Baer, “The Third Nephi Disaster,” 131.

14. Ball, “An Hypothesis,” 112.

geochronologic information is needed before any further speculations can be made.¹⁵

In his 2013 magnum opus, Sorenson reviewed several archaeological and geological reports that indicated volcanic activity and its effects throughout Mesoamerica around the first century AD.¹⁶

Despite all the ground already covered, Jerry D. Grover Jr., a professional engineer and geologist, provides important new insights as he takes his level of analysis a step further. In his recently published volume *Geology of the Book of Mormon*, Grover does not merely document how geologic and volcanic phenomena compare with the text, nor does he just point to eclectic reports of such phenomena in the archaeological record or simply note that Mesoamerica is an ideal region for these sorts of phenomena. He actually uses what is known geologically about the region to identify the best-fit scenario and flesh out geographical relationships and locations. As such, Grover's book is a must read for anyone interested in either the geology or geography of the Book of Mormon.

Overview

Grover starts off by collecting and printing all the relevant textual descriptions of the 3 Nephi destruction, including prophetic descriptions from the likes of Nephi₁, Zenos, and Samuel the Lamanite (pp. 1–6). Grover then reviews the Sorenson model, which he takes as a starting point for his geologic investigation (pp. 7–17). Grover then provides a simple but useful explanation of the basic geologic principles related to various types of natural disasters. This explanation is done in such a way that someone like me, who understands little of geology, can grasp these important fundamentals. This includes a discussion of the different types of fault lines and the different kinds of earthquakes they cause, the various kinds of volcanoes and volcanic eruptions, and different tools for measuring the magnitude of these geologic events. Grover also details each of the major faults and volcanoes (and eruption data for some) in the region around the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Mesoamerica (pp. 19–49). Next, Grover reviews the different types of hazards caused by volcanic eruptions, including pyroclastic and surge flows, volcanic debris

15 Kowallis, "In the Thirty and Fourth Year," 188, n. 80.

16 John L. Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex: An Ancient American Book* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book and the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2013), 641–649.

slides, Lahars, ash and tephra falls, volcanic earthquakes, tsunamis, and lava flows. If some of those terms seem foreign to you, don't worry; Grover explains each of these phenomena. He also explains earthquake and hurricane hazards and provides a table of the hazards described in 3 Nephi (pp. 51-72). Grover also reviews the timeline of events in 3 Nephi, proceeds to explore various scenarios, and offers a textual analysis of the geography of 3 Nephi (pp. 73-153). From there, Grover provides more specific analysis that I will discuss momentarily.

Throughout the book, Grover generously provides full-color graphs, tables, diagrams, illustrations, and photographs. Overall, the book collects a lot of important and useful information for looking at the geologic events described in the Book of Mormon and thus serves as a sort of source book for the subject that is essential for anyone interested in doing further research in this area.

A Rock-Solid Geographic Model

After Grover provides an overview of the textual descriptions, basic geology, volcanoes and fault lines, and the hazards associated with eruptions and earthquakes, his next task is to determine if the destruction was caused by (1) only a volcano, (2) a volcano and an earthquake, or (3) a volcano, an earthquake, and a hurricane/storm. As pointed out above, Kowallis argued that a volcano alone could account for everything mentioned within the 3 Nephi account. While Kowallis's argument is persuasive, it lacks the important dimension that a geographical context can provide. His use of Sorenson's model to speculate on the location of the volcano does not take the next logical step: what does that model, and the distances of cities affected by the natural disaster reported, tell us about the type of event it must have been?

Grover adds this dimension to his analysis as he considers whether a volcano alone could account for everything in 3 Nephi. Grover's research indicates that "most volcanic-related earthquakes are less than magnitude 2 or 3 and occur less than 10 km beneath a volcano" (p. 77). To that, Grover adds, "Volcanic earthquakes of any tectonic significance are extremely rare. There have been only three volcanic earthquakes with a magnitude of 7 (M_w) measured anywhere on earth in the past century" (p. 78).¹⁷ Based on the modified Mercalli scale, a measure of earthquake intensity, Grover notes that the damage reported in the Book

¹⁷ M_w represents the intensity of an earthquake in "Moment Magnitude Scale" (p. 79).

of Mormon indicates at least a level VIII earthquake. Using a formula designed to convert M_w magnitudes into the Mercalli scale, Grover observes, "When applying the equation to a 7.1 M_w earthquake, which is the biggest observed in a century, Level VIII earthquake damage occurs from the center of the volcano to a distance of 2.3 kilometers. ... It is clear that volcanic earthquake damage is very much limited to the proximity of the volcano itself" (p. 81). Simply by applying the dimension that distances add to the problem, Grover determines that a volcanic earthquake would be insufficient to account for the earthquake damage reported in the text. "In order to account for the destruction described in 3rd Nephi," Grover concludes, "it is clear that a volcano *and* a regional earthquake are indicated" (p. 119). Since earthquakes can commonly trigger volcanic eruptions, it is not surprising that both would have occurred simultaneously (p. 137).

Understanding that both a volcanic eruption and a regional earthquake are required, Grover is able to look at the fault systems and the volcanoes in Mesoamerica to determine the best-fit scenario. Grover determines that, based on the kind of damage described in the Book of Mormon, the loci of seismic activity were probably in a strike-slip fault zone with an active volcano nearby (pp. 139–141) and that it should be located in the land northward, since 3 Nephi 8:12 indicates there was greater damage in the land northward. It just so happens that in Mesoamerica, only one fault system matches these criteria, and it is in Sorenson's (and most other models') land northward, crossing the Isthmus of Tehuantepec partially into the land southward.

The Veracruz fault segment satisfies all the necessary conditions given in the Book of Mormon as the primary earthquake fault system. It is a strike-slip fault, which typically generates surface ruptures, fractures, and subsidence. It is located in the land northward where the worst damage occurred. Part of the fault segment is in the land southward and could cause damage in the land southward. It is located on and adjacent to the coastal plains. It occurs in areas that had significant population at the time. ... It has a major volcano sitting directly on the fault system, the volcano San Martín. (p. 148)

While the dating of volcanic eruptions is difficult and imprecise, the San Martín volcano has several documented eruptive events with date ranges that include the first century AD (p. 39).

From here, Grover begins to analyze the specifics of Sorenson's geography and the events described in the Book of Mormon with the

assumption that a level 8 (at the epicenter) earthquake along the Veracruz fault line and an eruption of the San Martín are the primary causes of the hazards reported in the text. The following points summarize the outcome of Grover's analysis:

- If Zarahemla is at Santa Rosa, in Chiapas, Mexico, then based on its distance from the Veracruz fault line, the earthquake would have been between a level 4 or 5 there, powerful enough to overturn torches, etc., causing the city to burn (pp. 159–160)
- If the city of Moroni was located near the Mecoacan Lagoon, the soil in that region amplifies the intensity of an earthquake; thus it would have been a level 8.6 and highly susceptible to liquefaction (the soil basically becomes liquefied and sinks into the ocean), especially if an earthquake- or volcano-induced tsunami hit the coast at that location (pp. 160–164).
- The city of Moronihah was probably located in the Grijalva (Sidon) River valley, near the level 8 intensity zone, where an earthquake-induced landslide could occur and cover it with a mountain of dirt and debris (see 3 Nephi 8:10). This differs from Sorenson's positioning of Moronihah, but that location was purely speculative and was not based on any textual clues, because none are available (pp. 164–169).
- The cities of Gadiandi, Gadiomnah, Jacob, and Gimgimno are not mentioned anywhere else in the text, so placing them within a geographic context is virtually impossible. Sorenson does little more than suggest that they are in the land northward.¹⁸ Using the description “made hills and valleys in the places thereof” (3 Nephi 9:8), Grover suggests that this “is a perfect description of the uniquely hummocky deposits of many volcanic debris avalanches and some volcanic pyroclastic flows” (p. 178). Such a phenomenon would have occurred within a 26 km radius of the volcano, thus confirming a location in the land northward as the best-fit scenario, and further narrowing the range of possible locations to the area surrounding the San Martín volcano (pp. 178–181).
- If the city of Bountiful was near the modern city of Tonalá, Mexico, on the west side of the Tonalá River, then it would

18 John L. Sorenson, *Mormon's Map* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 118, 119 (map).

have been within the level 8 intensity zone, but it “is located on stable bedrock” (p. 183), which would have reduced the effects of the earthquake. In fact, “this location for Bountiful would have received the lowest intensities of the earthquake anywhere north of the Veracruz fault, as it was the farthest away from the fault before encountering soils and sediments that significantly amplify the earthquake shaking. It would have been the area of least damage in the region where people might logically gather after a large earthquake” (p. 183).

This quick summary does not do justice to Grover’s analysis here, and other cities are included in his analysis. In the case of each city/land mentioned as having been destroyed in 3 Nephi 8–9, Grover carefully analyzes the description of how it was destroyed and its position to the earthquake/volcano (when possible, based on Sorenson’s model, but not all cities mentioned are situated in his overall geography, since they are mentioned only in this one place in the text), then he suggests a best-fit explanation. Throughout this analysis, it is striking how well Sorenson’s model holds up to this thorough geologic test. In only one instance — that of Moronihah, mentioned above — is it necessary to adjust Sorenson’s suggested location to accommodate the best-fit geologic explanation for destruction, and that single case is an instance in which there was little textual data for Sorenson to go on. In multiple instances, Sorenson’s previously identified location also happens to be an ideal location, geologically.

Additional Book of Mormon Events

In addition to providing the most thorough look at the natural disaster recorded and described in 3 Nephi 8–9, Grover extends his analysis to other events recorded in the Book of Mormon that seem, based on the textual description, to involve either earthquakes or volcanic eruptions. These include an apparent volcanic event in the land of Nephi during the mission trip of Nephi and Lehi (see Helaman 5:20–49), an earthquake in Ammonihah (see Alma 14:25–29), and a few Jaredite events that might be linked to geologic activities (see Ether 9:29–35; 10:18–19; 11:5–7). The coverage for these events is less thorough, but much of the groundwork had already been laid in the background provided for the 3 Nephi disasters (pp. 191–210).

Once again, in terms of geologic tests for the geography, the Sorenson model does impressively well. His land of Nephi is located near the

volcano Pacaya, which is “an excellent candidate for the source and cause of the incident at the prison in the Land of Nephi” (p. 196). Overall, “the surrounding geology is highly corroborative” (p. 197). Ammonihah, in Sorenson’s model, is located in “an active earthquake zone” (p. 198), and the underlying geologic formations create the necessary conditions to cause a sonic boom, the likely event behind the “great noise” (Alma 14:29) reported in the text (pp. 200–201).

Grover offers some new insights into the potential cause of the famine, and the dearth and snake infestation that resulted from it (see Ether 9:28–35). For this, Grover points to the climatological effects of volcanic eruptions (p. 205–206): “It has long been recognized that volcanic eruptions affect worldwide climate ... and can cause droughts or significant cooling on a regional scale far from the volcanic eruption” (p. 205). It can also kill off “all the birds for hundreds of miles around” (p. 205). If a distant volcanic event, unobserved by the Jaredite record keepers, were the cause of the dearth, then it just might provide the perfect recipe for a snake infestation. Grover explains:

Snakes often migrate en masse on a seasonal basis, and are known to migrate in search of water in the midst of drought. In 2007, a large migration of venomous brown snakes invaded the city and suburbs of Sydney, Darwin, and other areas of Australia that had been hit by the worst drought in 100 years, biting many people. (p. 208)

This sounds a lot like the event in Ether 9:31. Odds are, the snakes were “looking for water, and perhaps when water and moist habitat were located (perhaps a river?) they stopped” (p. 208). Since rivers stretch across the northern part of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (see the map on p. 204),¹⁹ the dividing line between Sorenson’s land northward and land southward, this once again fits well with Sorenson’s model.

Such droughts need not be caused by volcanic eruptions, but other specifics of the Jaredite snake infestation dovetail nicely with such an explanation.

The description in Ether about the snakes maintaining high population densities blocking or “hedging” passage of a particular area for a period of time might be explained by the lack or reduction of snake predators in conjunction with ample food supply, which may have occurred because of a significant removal of local bird predators as has been documented to

19 This map was originally included as map 11 in Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex*.

occur as a result of volcanic eruption. There would be no competition from birds for the rodent or lizard food supply, and there would be no cap on the venomous snake population from direct predation by snake-eating birds. (p. 208).

A number of bird species in the region once occupied by the Olmec (Jaredite lands, in virtually all Mesoamerican models) prey on snakes (pp. 209–210), and the temporary “decimation of these species would eliminate serious predators on snakes as well as removing competition for snake prey” (p. 210). Later, as these birds of prey reestablished their populations, they would have begun to regulate the snake population, reducing it back down to normal levels, which would seem to fit the narrative in Ether where, eventually, the snakes no longer posed a barrier between the land northward and southward (see Ether 10:19).

The effects of a volcanic eruption on an environment, therefore, carries rather potent explanatory power for an event often mocked as ridiculous or fanciful by modern critics of the text. It is hard to imagine a more perfect geologic, geographic, and ecologic setup for the events described in Ether 9.

Implications for Book of Mormon Geography

Grover’s investigations into the *geology* of the Book of Mormon have implications for the *geography* of the Book of Mormon. This should come as no surprise, since volcanoes and fault lines are inherently part of the landscape. While other writers, as pointed out earlier, have noted some vague geographic implications or requirements created by the geologic analysis, Grover’s in-depth “best-fit” analysis on a city-by-city, disaster-by-disaster basis generates rock-hard criteria that need to be factored into any geographic model of Book of Mormon lands. Grover helpfully outlines the minimum criteria his study yields:

- A volcano in the land northward, active, and with eruptions during the 3 Nephi time frame
- A regional fault system in the land northward with a presence or effect in the land southward capable of generating minimum intensities of Level VIII on the Mercalli intensity scale
- The requirement that the city of Ammonihah be in an area capable of producing an earthquake with a minimum intensity of Level VIII on the Mercalli intensity scale.

- The location of land of Nephi adjacent to a volcano active during the first century BC. (p. 211)

Grover then explains, “Once the basic screening criteria are met, the actual locations of cities and geological occurrences would then need to be evaluated” (p. 211). As discussed above, Sorenson’s model not only meets the minimum criteria but does remarkably well in the fine details. What about other geographic models?

According to Grover, “The active volcano requirement essentially eliminates all Book of Mormon geologic models located in the central and eastern United States, Baja California, and any area in Central America south of Costa Rica from being viable models as a location for the Book of Mormon” (p. 211). While Grover’s analysis points to several hazards best accounted for by the effects of a volcanic eruption rather than an earthquake, the most obvious reason for this is the three days of lingering darkness. Since some have pointed to the eyewitness reports of an 1811 earthquake in the eastern United States, which describe an “awful darkness of the atmosphere”²⁰ in an attempt to explain this feature without a volcano, Grover’s comments on this kind of phenomenon are important:

The mists or vapors of darkness are described as being widespread. The only realistic explanation for this phenomenon is a volcanic ash/tephra cloud disseminated as a result of a volcanic eruption. Occasionally during the initial moments of earthquakes, dust can be generated from shaken buildings or by brief release of sometimes pungent soil gases, but these have never been observed in modern earthquakes to last more than a few hours, and the same is indicated for pre-modern earthquakes by historic anecdote. Earthquake dust has not been observed to inhibit ignition. Volcanic ash distribution has been historically documented to inhibit combustion and last for days at a time. (p. 156)

In addition, the vast distribution of darkness required to cover all or most of the lands northward and southward is not a result of earthquakes but is a result of volcanic eruptions. In fact, it has been documented in an eruption of the very volcano hypothesized by Grover to be the source of the darkness in 3 Nephi: “The 1793 San Martín volcanic eruption is a

20 Letter of Eliza Bryan, March 22, 1816, online at <http://www.hsv.com/genlintr/newmadrd/accnt1.htm> (accessed April 1, 2015).

recent example that shows that with an extensive dispersion of ash most if not all of the Book of Mormon lands could have been subject to the effects of volcanic ash” (p. 157; see the map of its ash cloud dispersion on p. 39).

Since the volcano requirement essentially eliminates all models outside of Mesoamerica, Grover spends no time looking at these models. He does, however, spend some time exploring V. Garth Norman’s (and Kirk Maglby’s, which largely overlaps with Norman’s) model insofar as it differs from Sorenson’s.²¹ The most significant differences are that Norman prefers the Usumancinta River as the Sidon River, thus moving Zarahemla into that basin; and the east sea coast and its cities are moved from the Gulf of Mexico to the eastern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. Since Joseph L. Allen also moves the east seashore to the eastern Yucatan coast, and F. Richard Hauck similarly prefers the Usumancinta River,²² the outcome of this comparison applies broadly to their models as well, at least in terms of general observations though not necessarily in specifics. A short summary of the more salient points of this analysis are as follows:

- Norman’s city of Bountiful “is directly in the center of the Veracruz fault system,” and “would be expected to have maintained a maximum level of destruction” (p. 214). It therefore would not be expected to be a regional gathering place in the months after the destruction, as appears to be the case in 3 Nephi 11.
- Norman’s Ammonihah is “not seismically active,” and no earthquake has ever been measured “within 100 miles of this location” (p. 214). The nearby fault line “show[s] no evidence of any earthquake activity during Book of Mormon times”; “earthquake booms exclusively occur in strike-slip fault regimes and the faults in this location are not strike-slip faults” (p. 215).

21 See V. Garth Norman, *Book of Mormon—Mesoamerican Geography: History Study Map* (American Fork, Utah: ARCON/Ancient America Foundation, 2008); Capitan Kirk (Kirk Magleby), “Book of Mormon Model,” at *Book of Mormon Resources*, July 28, 2012 (updated October 2, 2013), online at <http://bookofmormonresources.blogspot.com/2012/07/book-of-mormon-model.html> (accessed April 1, 2015).

22 See Joseph L. Allen and Blake J. Allen, *Exploring the Lands of the Book of Mormon*, rev. ed. (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2011); F. Richard Hauck, *Deciphering the Geography of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1988).

So even if there had been an earthquake, there would be no explanation for the “great noise” (Alma 14:29) reported as having occurred at the time of the earthquake. Magleby’s Ammonihah, to the west of Norman’s, is in an area more seismically active, but it is not intense enough (usually only Level IV on the Mercalli scale) to cause a prison to collapse, and there are still no strike-slip faults (pp. 215–216).

- The location of Moroni on the Yucatan coast is suitable, but only if we hypothesize a second earthquake in the land southward along a different fault line (p. 217). While, when taken in isolation, this still qualifies as a “best-fit” scenario, I think Occam’s Razor applies here. In the bigger picture, adding a second earthquake multiplies hypotheses unnecessarily, since we have in Sorenson’s model a suitable candidate for Moroni without it.
- Norman’s Zarahemla is not “best-fit” but “is reasonably consistent with the geologic conditions,” although Sorenson’s is in a better position geologically (p. 217).
- The location of Moronihah is “near a large group of volcanoes” (p. 217) and hence is “a geological possibility”; however “it would require a second volcano eruption,” which is even less likely than a secondary earthquake. Hence it “provides less probability for the location under the best-fit analysis” (p. 218). Again, Occam’s Razor seems applicable here.
- Stretching the land southward out to the Caribbean coast of the Yucatan also makes it harder for the darkness to be comprehensive in the land southward. Grover admits that “not necessarily ... every square mile” of Book of Mormon lands needs to be covered by darkness (if we grant some hyperbole on the part of the writers); nonetheless, “the description does imply that it is widespread over most of the face of the land” (p. 218). In order that this be the case in Norman’s (and, I would note, also Allen’s) model “necessitates the eruption of volcanoes in the land southward.” This is not only less likely, as mentioned above, but it is also not as consistent with the text, since according to Grover, “no specific and unique volcanic damage of any sort (unlike specific cities in the land northward) is indicated in the land southward” (p. 218).²³

23 I would only briefly add that Hauck’s model compresses the land southward into a small region that is usually the southernmost region in most other models. This sort of setup raises the question whether *any* of his land southward would have

- Large portions of Norman's land southward are not positioned in seismically active areas and thus are unlikely to be susceptible to any of the kinds of damage reported in the text (p. 219). This would also be true of Allen's model.

While some of these issues are more serious than others, generally speaking it is clear that models that shift the east seashore over to the Caribbean coast and position large parts of the population in the Yucatan are less geologically suitable than Sorenson's model.

While geology is only one of many factors to take into consideration when constructing a geography of Book of Mormon lands, it is a fairly important one. Volcanoes and fault lines don't disappear. Having them in the right places and active at the right times (though the data on timing may not always be available or as precise as we would like) is essential to any geography. And being able to account for the most damage reported in 3 Nephi 8–9 without having to multiply disasters is certainly a strength. It is a testament to the suitability and durability of Sorenson's model that 30 years after it was published, it would be found not only geologically viable but exceptionally so, whereas competing models are found to be geologically deficient in important respects.

Conclusion

Regardless of one's preferences on geographic models, Grover's book on geology should be of interest to all students of the Book of Mormon. Grover substantially advances the discussion on geology in the Book of Mormon, its interaction with the geography of the text, and the aid it can be in fleshing out the geography (Grover determined likely regions for 10 cities entirely unplaced by Sorenson). The background information on geology and the geologic features of the Mesoamerican region alone make it an exceptionally useful tool for anyone who wants to study the Book of Mormon in its most likely New World environment. All the richly colored visuals, mentioned earlier, serve to greatly enhance the reading experience. I highly recommend *Geology of the Book of Mormon*.

been covered by an ash cloud generated from a volcanic eruption way up north in the Tuxtla Mountains. It also places all his cities much farther away from the seismic activity of the Veracruz fault, and may require both a second volcano and second earthquake to account for all the hazards mentioned in the text. Once again, Occam's Razor seems applicable here, although more serious analysis of Hauck's model from someone more qualified than I would probably be necessary to come to firmer conclusions.

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FREEMASONRY AND THE ORIGINS OF MODERN TEMPLE ORDINANCES

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Abstract: Joseph Smith taught that the origins of modern temple ordinances go back beyond the foundation of the world.¹ Even for believers, the claim that rites known anciently have been restored through revelation raises complex questions because we know that revelation almost never occurs in a vacuum. Rather, it comes most often through reflection on the impressions of immediate experience, confirmed and elaborated through subsequent study and prayer.² Because Joseph Smith became a Mason not long before he began to introduce others to the Nauvoo endowment, some suppose that Masonry must have been the starting point for his inspiration on temple matters. The real story, however, is not so simple. Though the introduction of Freemasonry in Nauvoo helped prepare the Saints for the endowment — both familiarizing them with elements they would later encounter in the Nauvoo temple and providing a blessing to them in its own right — an analysis of the historical record provides evidence that significant components of priesthood and temple doctrines, authority, and ordinances were revealed to the Prophet during the course of his early ministry, long before he got to Nauvoo. Further, many aspects of Latter-day Saint temple worship are well attested in the Bible and elsewhere in antiquity. In the minds of early Mormons, what seems to have distinguished authentic temple worship from the many scattered remnants that could be found elsewhere was the divine authority of the priesthood through which these ordinances had been restored and could now be administered in their fulness. Coupled with the restoration of the ordinances themselves is the rich flow of modern revelation that clothes them with glorious meanings. Of course, temple ordinances — like all divine communication — must be adapted to different times, cultures, and practical circumstances. Happily, since the time of Joseph Smith, necessary alterations of the ordinances have been directed by the same authority that first restored them in our day.

Joseph Smith's Encounters with Freemasonry

Freemasonry is a fraternal organization that emphasizes the use of formal ritual to teach what has been termed “a beautiful system of

morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.”³ While the historic roots of the movement go back to at least the late 1300s within professional brotherhoods for Christian stonemasons in Scotland and England (operative Masons), the institutions and practices of modern Freemasonry are usually traced to the early eighteenth century — after the organization had opened its doors to others who had become interested in its ideas (speculative Masons).⁴ Despite Freemasonry’s relatively late origins, many of its teachings and ritual components draw on ideas from the Bible, early Christianity, and other ancient sources. As it evolved, the movement was also influenced by the ideals of enlightenment philosophy. In America, Freemasonry enjoyed rapid growth, especially in some periods of the nineteenth century, attracting a large number of citizens from all walks of life.⁵

Joseph Smith’s first encounters with Freemasonry occurred long before he came to Nauvoo. Indeed, it may be said that the Prophet, like many Americans of his era, “grew up around Masonry. His older brother Hyrum ... was a Mason in the 1820s, as were many of the Smiths’ neighbors ... To not be at least dimly aware of Masonry in western New York in the middle-to late-1820s was impossible.”⁶

That said, exactly what Joseph Smith knew about the specifics of the *rituals* of Freemasonry and when he came to know these details is a debated question. A ready source of information about Masonry for the young Prophet would have been the exposés of the anti-Masonic movement, whose epicenter was not far from the Smith home. He must have discussed Masonic ideas and controversies with his contemporaries. Though evidence of Masonic language and ideas in the Book of Mormon and the book of Moses is generally unconvincing, descriptions of some practices from the Kirtland School of the Prophets seem to recall Masonic ritual patterns (e.g., D&C 88:128ff.).⁷

Apart from whatever attraction the Prophet may have had to the rituals of Freemasonry, it seems from current evidence that he took little personal interest in Masonry as an *institution* until the Illinois period.⁸ Joseph Smith’s efforts to establish a Masonic Lodge in Nauvoo seem to have begun in November 1839,⁹ when he became personally acquainted with Judge James Adams. The judge was a prominent citizen of Springfield, Worshipful Master of the Springfield Lodge when it was founded in October 1839, and Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Illinois when it was established — not coincidentally — on April 6, 1840.¹⁰ By at least the fall of 1840, he had been baptized a member of the Church.¹¹ Adams was one of the select group of Mormon Masons who received the endowment when it was first introduced on May 4, 1842.¹²



Figure 1. Rebuilt Nauvoo Masonic Hall. The top floor was reserved specifically for Masonic activities, while the remainder of the building was used for a variety of other community events and gatherings. (Photograph courtesy of Sandi Christensen)

Glen M. Leonard¹³ observes that, through his Masonic friends and family, Joseph Smith “would have understood that Freemasonry held values cherished by religious persons of every faith.” However, this is only part of the picture. Statements by Joseph Smith and early Saints provide evidence of their belief “that the endowment and Freemasonry in part emanated from the same ancient spring” and that at least some similarities could be thought of “as remnants from an ancient original.”¹⁴ Benjamin Johnson, an intimate of the Prophet, said that he was told by him that “Freemasonry, as at present, was the apostate endowments, as sectarian religion was the apostate religion”¹⁵ — and thus, as Terryl Givens sees it, “not to be discarded wholesale.”¹⁶ According to a later statement by Elder Franklin

D. Richards, Joseph Smith “was aware that there were some things about Masonry which had come down from the beginning, and *he desired to know what they were*, hence the lodge” was established in Nauvoo.¹⁷

The Masonic Lodge in Nauvoo

Evidence suggests that Joseph Smith encouraged Nauvoo Masonry at least in part to help those who would later receive temple ordinances. For instance, Joseph Fielding, an endowed member of the Church who joined Freemasonry in Nauvoo, said: “Many have joined the Masonic institution. This seems to have been a stepping stone or preparation for something else, the true origin of Masonry” — i.e., in ancient priesthood ordinances.¹⁸

One aspect of this preparation apparently had to do with the general idea of respecting covenants of confidentiality. For example, Joseph Smith once told the Saints that “the reason we do not have the secrets of the Lord revealed unto us is because we do not keep them.”¹⁹ But as he later observed, “The secret of Masonry is to keep a secret.”²⁰ Joseph may have seen the secret-keeping of Masonry as a tool to prepare the Saints to respect their temple covenants.



Figure 2. *Nauvoo Temple*. (Photograph courtesy of Val Brinkerhoff)

In addition, the rituals of the Lodge enabled Mormon Masons to become familiar with symbols and forms they would later encounter in the Nauvoo temple. These included specific ritual terms, language, handclasps, and gestures as well as larger patterns such as those involving repetition and the use of questions and answers as an aid to teaching. Joseph Smith's own exposure to Masonry no doubt led him to seek further revelation as he prepared to introduce the divine ordinances of Nauvoo temple worship.

Finally, although Freemasonry is not a religion and, in contrast

to Latter-day Saint temple ordinances, does not claim saving power for its rites,²¹ threads relating to biblical themes of exaltation are evident in some Masonic rituals. For example, in the ceremonies of the Royal Arch degree of the York rite, candidates pass through a series of veils and eventually enter into the divine presence.²² In addition, Christian interpretations, like Salem Town's description of the "eighth degree," tell of how the righteous will "be admitted within the veil of God's presence, where they will become kings and priests before the throne of his glory for ever and ever."²³ Such language echoes New Testament teachings.²⁴ Thus, apart from specific ritual language, forms, and symbols, a more general form of resemblance between Mormon temple ritual and certain Masonic degrees might be seen in the views they share about the ultimate potential of humankind.²⁵

That said, none of the many contemporary Mormon Masons who remained faithful to the Prophet following their temple endowment expressed a concern that Joseph Smith had been untrue to his Masonic oaths by incorporating some Masonic elements into the endowment ceremony.²⁶ Moreover, it appears that the oaths made in the Lodge were taken seriously by faithful Mormons, both before and after their endowment.²⁷ Richard L. Bushman observes: "If Joseph thought of Freemasonry as degenerate priesthood, he did nothing to suppress his rival."²⁸ In support of Bushman's claim, it should be noted that interest

in Masonry did not suddenly disappear after the temple endowment was introduced. Rather, it continued in Nauvoo until the departure of the Saints in 1846.²⁹

Significantly, Andrew F. Ehat notes how the contents of a letter from longtime Mason Heber C. Kimball to Parley P. Pratt on 17 June 1842 testify of:³⁰

the Prophet's ease in pointing out the relationship of the endowment to Freemasonry in what might otherwise have been considered a blatant adaptation of Freemasonry[. This] demonstrates the awe and respect Heber Kimball and the others had for what has been a troublesome point to informed ... Latter-day Saints [in more recent times]. These Freemasons who received these blessings in May 1842 completely accepted Joseph Smith's self-characterization as expressed in an 1844 discourse: "Did I build upon another man's foundation, but my own? I have got all the truth [offered by the world] and an independent revelation in the bargain."³¹

Endowed members saw the Nauvoo temple ordinances as something more than what they had experienced as part of Masonic ritual. Hyrum Smith, a longtime Mason, expressed the typical view of the Saints about the superlative nature of the temple blessings when he said: "I cannot make a comparison between the house of God and anything now in existence. Great things are to grow out of that house; there is a great and mighty power to grow out of it; there is an endowment; knowledge is power, we want knowledge."³²

In summary, Freemasonry in Nauvoo was both a stepping-stone to the endowment and a blessing to the Saints in its own right. Its philosophies were preached from the pulpit and helped to promote ideals based on the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man that were dear to Joseph Smith. Its influence could be felt in diverse areas ranging from art and architecture to social and institutional practices. Importantly, Joseph Smith's exposure to Masonic ritual was no doubt a spur to further revelation as the Nauvoo temple ordinances took shape under his prophetic authority. But whatever suggestions may have come to Joseph Smith through his experience with Masonry, what he did with those suggestions through his prophetic gifts was seen by the Saints as transformative, not merely derivative.

Ancient Precedents for Modern Temple Rituals

A notable witness of the transformative nature of temple ordinances in our day was Hugh W. Nibley, a Brigham Young University professor and internationally respected scholar of ancient cultures. Speaking of his own endowment in 1927, he remembered: “I was very serious about it ... And the words of the initiatory [part of the endowment] — I thought those were the most magnificent words I have ever heard spoken.”³³ Admitting that his first visit to the temple had left him “in something of a daze,” his return to the temple after his mission was an overwhelming experience: “At that time I knew it was the real thing. Oh, boy, did I!”³⁴

Nibley’s delight in knowing that the ordinances he received were the “real thing” was not only because he felt and understood the power of the temple personally but also because he recognized that many of the teachings and forms used in modern ordinances resonated with what he already knew about ancient temple worship. Nibley remained a devoted participant and student of the temple throughout his life. His writings drew on his extensive knowledge of the ancient world and illuminated many aspects of restored temple ordinances. Other Latter-day Saint scholars have also made notable contributions to temple studies.³⁵

General Withdrawal of the Higher Priesthood

As mentioned before, Joseph Smith taught that temple ordinances had been available in their fulness to select individuals and families since the time of Adam and Eve.³⁶ However, they often have been administered only in a partial form due to the unreadiness of the covenant people to receive more.³⁷ In times of apostasy, the temple ordinances associated with the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood were almost totally withdrawn from the earth. Intriguingly, Jewish sources allude to things pertaining to Solomon’s Temple that were no longer present in the Second Temple.³⁸

The revelations and translations of Joseph Smith are clear in their witness that earlier forms of such loss also occurred in Moses’ day. At first, the Lord expressed His intent to make the higher ordinances of the holy priesthood available to all of Israel.³⁹ However, because of their rebellion, the higher priesthood, and its associated laws and ordinances, were instead generally withheld from the people.⁴⁰

Some prophets and kings, however, did continue to receive the highest ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood in later Old Testament times.⁴¹ The overall structure and many of the details of kingship rites in Israel can be found in the Bible, and analogous rituals were practiced

elsewhere in the ancient Near East and in Egyptian tradition.⁴² Portions were imperfectly preserved in the teachings and rituals of some strands of second temple Judaism, in the practices of Copts and of Christians with Gnostic leanings, and in the liturgies of Christian Churches.⁴³ Later, Christians with antiquarian interests incorporated and further developed selected aspects of ancient rituals as early Freemasonry took shape.

Although the concept of a “royal priesthood”⁴⁴ expressed in a temple ordinance that confers the fulness of the priesthood might seem strange to many Christians today, the idea is perfectly consistent with ancient religious practices.⁴⁵ For example, Nicolas Wyatt summarizes a wide range of evidence indicating “a broad continuity of culture”⁴⁶ throughout the ancient Near East wherein the candidate for kingship underwent a ritual journey intended to confer a divine status as a son of God⁴⁷ and allowing him “*ex officio*, direct access to the gods. All other priests were strictly deputies”⁴⁸ to the divinely sanctioned priesthood office held by the king.

An Early Example of the Rites of Kingship

One remarkable example of kingship rites comes from the city of Mari in about 1800 BCE.⁴⁹ Among the foremost treasures of Mari is a painting on the palace walls that has come to be known as the “Investiture Panel,” which most scholars take to be a pictorial representation of the ritual in which kingship was renewed. Despite the fact that this ritual took place in Old Babylon, none of its primary themes will be unfamiliar to temple-going Latter-day Saints — nor to careful students of the Bible. Such resemblances may prove interesting for their bearing on the idea that corrupted versions of temple rites sometimes may have derived from authentic originals that predated the Old Testament as we now have it.

Though differing in some details, scholars of Mari are in general agreement that the areas in the ritual complex of the palace have been laid out so as to accommodate a ceremonial progression of the king and his entourage toward its innermost chambers. The sequence of movement from the more public to the most private portions of the palace complex would correspond to a stepwise movement from the outer edges of the Investiture Panel toward its center. Among the depictions of the Panel are what André Parrot called “undeniable biblical affinities” that he says “should neither be disregarded nor minimized.”⁵⁰ Likewise, J. R. Porter, among others, has highlighted several features of the scenes that “strikingly recall details of the Genesis description of the Garden of Eden.”⁵¹

Creation. Although we know little directly about the details of Old Babylonian kingship rituals, it is certain that the later Babylonian New Year *akītu* festival always included a rehearsal of the creation story, *Enuma Elish* (“When on high...”), a story whose theological roots reach back long before the painting of the Mari Investiture Panel. In its broad outlines, this ritual text is an account of how Marduk achieved preeminence among the gods of the heavenly council through his victorious battles against the goddess Ti’amat and her allies, and the subsequent creation of the earth and of mankind as a prelude to the building of Marduk’s temple in Babylon. The epic ends with the conferral upon Marduk of fifty sacred titles, including the higher god Ea’s own name, accompanied with the declaration: “He is indeed even as I.” Seen in this light, one scholar has proposed a better title for *Enuma Elish*: “The Exaltation of Marduk.”

Garden with a Central Tree. Following the king’s ordeal and a recital of the events of the creation, it appears that the royal party would advance through a gardenlike open space. Babylonian gardens in palaces and temples typically featured fragrant trees with edible fruit that represented their concept of Paradise. A tree, either real or artificial, typically took the central position in such gardens, recalling the biblical account of the tree “in the midst” (literally “in the center”) of the Garden of Eden.

Sacrifice, Guardians, and the “Hand” Ceremony. A scene painted on the walls of the garden courtyard has been interpreted as representing the king leading a sacrificial procession into the next room of the ritual complex. Texts from Mari also tell us that the queen furnished sacrifices for the “Lady of the Palace,” presumably meaning Ishtar, the local divinity. As they continued their ritual progression, it appears that the party passed by guardians at the entrance to each of the private chambers. Scholars have noted interesting resemblances between the figures placed at meaningful locations in the Mari investiture panel, the cherubim in the Garden of Eden, and similar representations in the later Israelite tabernacle. They also conclude that at one or more points in the ceremony, the king would have touched or grasped the hand of a statue of Ishtar. The statue itself was not seen as a god, but rather as a physical representation that the god might inhabit during propitious times.

A Second Kind of Tree Supporting a Woven Partition. A second type of tree is depicted in the mural. It appears to have symbolized a doorpost. From archaeological evidence, it seems that a pair of such treelike posts might have provided supporting infrastructure for a partition made of ornamented woven material that screened off the most



Figure 3. *Culminating Rites of Royal Investiture*. Line drawing of a detail from the upper central portion of the Mari Investiture Panel, Tel Hariri, Syria, ca. 1800-1760 BCE (Image courtesy of Oxford University Press)

sacred chamber of the complex. The suggestion of such a screen recalls the *kikkisu*, a woven reed partition ritually used in temples, perhaps similar to the one through which the Mesopotamian flood hero received divine instruction. Ultimately, as one might infer from accounts such as *Enuma Elish*, the king would have passed by the guardians of this final gate and received the god's own name and identity. By way of analogy to the function of the second type of tree in the Mari ritual, one might compare Egyptian, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions alluding to the Tree of Knowledge as a symbol for the veil of the temple sanctuary and the related themes of death and rebirth.

Culminating Rites. In the depiction of the culminating rites shown in Figure 3, the king, accompanied by a guardian with arms raised in the traditional attitude of prayer and worship, comes into the most sacred space of the palace where he would have received royal insignia from the hand of a representation of Ishtar, in the presence of other gods and divinized ancestors. The king's hand is extended to receive these insignia while his arm is raised in a gesture of oath making. As also seen in biblical practice, the solemn nature of the oath was confirmed by touching the throat. Note that the Mesopotamian royal insignia of the rod and the coil as they were depicted here in 1800 BCE, had a basic function of measurement similar to the square and compass in later times.

Summarizing the significance of ancient Babylonian temple ritual for Jews and Christians, John Walton observes, “[A]s much continuity as Christian theologians have developed between the religious ideas of preexilic Israel and those of Christianity, there is probably not as much common ground between them as there is between the religious ideas of Israel and the religious ideas of Babylon.”⁵² In particular, “the ideology of the temple is not noticeably different in Israel than it is in the ancient Near East. The difference is in the god, not in the way the temple functions in relation to the god.”⁵³

Note that in Israelite practice, as witnessed in the examples of David and Solomon, the moment where the individual was actually made a king would not necessarily have been the time of his first anointing.⁵⁴ The culminating anointing of the king corresponding to his definite investiture was, at least sometimes, preceded by a prior princely anointing. LeGrand Baker and Stephen Ricks describe “several incidents in the Old Testament where a prince was first anointed to become king, and later, after he had proven himself, was anointed again — this time as actual king.”⁵⁵ Modern Latter-day Saints can compare this idea to the conditional promises they receive in association with ordinances and blessings, which are to be realized only through their continued faithfulness.

Were Such Rites Ever Intended for Others Besides the King?



Figure 4. *The Exaltation of Resurrected Israel*, Dura Europos Synagogue, ca. 250. (Image courtesy of Yale University Press)

Although there is little indication in the Old Testament that Israelite kingship rituals were given to anyone besides the monarch, there is significant non-scriptural evidence from later times that analogous rites were made available to others. For example, findings at Qumran and Dura Europos suggest that, in at least some strands of Jewish tradition, priesthood rituals were seen as enabling members of the community, not just its ruler, to participate in a form of worship that brought them into the presence of God ritually.⁵⁶ A hint of this tradition is evident in the account of

God’s promise to Israel that, if they kept His covenant, not just a select few but all of them would have the privilege of becoming part of “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”⁵⁷

Going back to the first book of the Bible, some scholars have concluded that the statement that Adam and Eve were created in the “image of God”⁵⁸ means that “each person bears the stamp of royalty.”⁵⁹ Significantly, the promises implied in scripture (like the blessings of modern Latter-day Saint temples) are meant for Adam and Eve alike.⁶⁰ In the New Testament, similar blessings, echoing temple themes and intended for the whole community of the faithful, are given in the book of Revelation.⁶¹ In the most pointed of these statements, the Savior declares: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”⁶²

A Temple Tutorial in the Early Ministry of Joseph Smith

It appears that the Prophet learned much about temple ordinances through personal experiences with heavenly beings and revelations associated with his inspired translation of scripture. His revelations contain many unmistakable references to significant components of priesthood and temple doctrines, authority, and ordinances. Many of these date to the early 1830s, a decade or more before the Prophet began bestowing temple blessings on the Saints in Nauvoo. And given Joseph Smith’s reluctance to share the details of the most sacred events and doctrines publicly,⁶³ it is certainly possible he received specific knowledge about some temple matters even earlier than can be now documented. These matters include: 1) the narrative backbone, clothing, and covenants of the modern temple endowment; 2) the sequence of blessings of the oath and covenant of the priesthood; and 3) priesthood keys and symbols expressed in keywords, names, signs, and tokens.

1. Endowment Narrative, Clothing, and Covenants

Scripture teaches that the greatest blessing one can receive is to enter the presence of God, knowing Him, receiving all that He has, and becoming His son or daughter in the fullest sense of the word.⁶⁴ Note that individuals can enter the presence of God in one of two ways:

1. *in actuality*, through a heavenly ascent or other divine encounter. In such an experience, individuals may be transfigured temporarily in order to receive a vision of eternity, take part in heavenly worship, participate in divine ordinances, or have conferred upon them specific blessings that are made sure by the voice of God Himself.⁶⁵ In addition, followers of Christ look forward to an ultimate

consummation of their aspirations by coming into the presence of the Father after death, there receiving the blessing of a permanent, glorious resurrection;

2. *ritually*, through the ordinances of the Melchizedek priesthood found in the temple. For example, the LDS temple endowment depicts a figurative journey that brings the worshipper step-by-step into the presence of God.⁶⁶

Significantly, the sequence of events described in accounts of heavenly ascent often resembles the same general pattern symbolized in temple ritual, so that reading scriptural accounts of heavenly ascent can help us make sense of temple ritual, and experiencing temple ritual can help us understand how to prepare for an eventual entrance into the presence of God.⁶⁷ No doubt the allusions to priesthood ordinances often found within scriptural accounts of heavenly ascent are meant to serve a teaching purpose for attentive scripture readers. In brief, heavenly ascent can be understood as the “completion or fulfillment” of the “types and images” of earthly temple ritual.⁶⁸

By 1830, Joseph Smith would have been familiar with many accounts of those who had actually encountered God face to face. Indeed, in his First Vision, he had experienced a visit of the Father and the Son while still a boy.⁶⁹ In translating the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith learned the stories of other prophets who had seen the Lord, including the detailed account of how the heavenly veil was removed for the brother of Jared so that he could personally come to know the premortal Jesus Christ.⁷⁰

From the point of view of temple ritual, in contrast to heavenly ascent, the most significant early tutoring that Joseph Smith received came in 1830 and 1831 with his translation of the early chapters of Genesis, canonized in LDS scripture as the book of Moses. The book of Moses makes significant additions to the Bible account that shed additional light on priesthood as well as on temple doctrines and ordinances. Significantly, these additions, mainly dealing with events that occurred after the Fall, also illustrate the same covenants introduced to the Saints more than a decade later in the Nauvoo temple endowment.⁷¹ Following a prologue in chapter 1 that describes a heavenly ascent by Moses, the remainder of the book of Moses provided the central narrative backbone and covenants of the Nauvoo temple endowment — an outline of the way in which the Saints could come into the presence of God ritually.

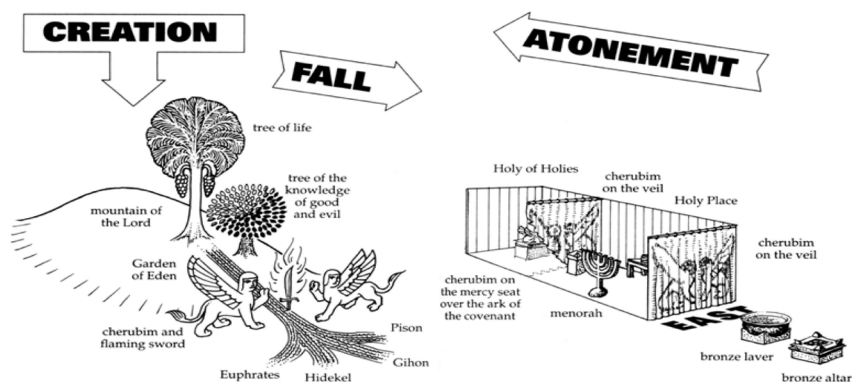


Figure 5. *Sacred Topography of Eden and the Israelite Temple.* (Illustration courtesy of Michael B. Lyon)

Parallels in the layout of the Garden of Eden and Israelite temples.

Unlike the Masonic rituals that Joseph Smith would come to know,⁷² temple rites in the ancient Near East nearly always featured an explicit recital of the events of Creation.⁷³ So it is with the Latter-day Saint temple endowment, which begins with the Creation story.⁷⁴ The endowment continues with an account of the Fall of Adam and Eve⁷⁵ and concludes with the story of their upward journey back to the presence of the Father.⁷⁶

To appreciate how the stories told in the book of Moses relate to the temple, one must first understand how the layout of the Garden of Eden parallels that of Israelite temples. Each major feature of the Garden (e.g., the river, the cherubim, the Tree of Knowledge, the Tree of Life) corresponds to a similar symbol in the Israelite temple (e.g., the bronze laver, the cherubim, the veil,⁷⁷ the menorah⁷⁸).

Moreover, the course taken by the Israelite high priest through the temple can be seen as symbolizing the journey of the Fall of Adam and Eve in reverse (Figure 5). In other words, just as the route of Adam and Eve's departure from Eden led them *eastward* past the cherubim with the flaming swords and out of the sacred garden into the mortal world, so in ancient times the high priest would return *westward* from the mortal world, past the consuming fire, the cleansing water, and the woven images of cherubim on the temple veils — and, finally, back into the presence of God. Likewise, in both the book of Moses and the modern temple endowment, the posterity of Adam and Eve trace the footsteps of their first parents — first as they are sent away from Eden, and later in their subsequent journey of return and reunion.

The story of Adam and Eve's departure from and return to the sacred precincts of Paradise parallels a common three-part pattern in ancient Near Eastern writings: trouble at home, exile abroad, and happy homecoming.⁷⁹ The pattern is as old as the Egyptian story of Sinuhe from 1800 BCE⁸⁰ and can be seen again in scriptural accounts of Israel's apostasy and return⁸¹ as well as in the lives of biblical characters like Jacob.⁸² It can also be found in the Savior's masterful parable of the Prodigal Son.⁸³

This outline appears in modern literature as often as it did in those times.⁸⁴ However, to the ancients it was more than a mere storytelling convention, since it reflected a sequence of events common in widespread ritual practices for priests and kings.⁸⁵ More generally, it is the story of the plan of salvation in miniature as seen from the personal perspective. The life of Jesus Christ Himself also followed a similar pattern, though, unlike any ordinary mortal, He was without sin: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."⁸⁶

Temple clothing. As he translated the Bible in 1830–1833, Joseph Smith would have come across descriptions of temple clothing.⁸⁷ For instance, he would have been familiar with the story of the fig-leaf apron and the coats of skins in the story of Adam and Eve⁸⁸ and the clothing of the temple priests in Exodus 28, which represented the clothing of heavenly beings. It was reported in a late retrospection of an 1833 incident that the Prophet had seen Michael, the Archangel "several times," "clothed in white from head to foot," with a "peculiar cap, ... a white robe, underclothing, and moccasins."⁸⁹ According to Hugh Nibley, the white undergarment represents "the proper preexistent glory of the wearer, while the [outer garment of the high priest] is the priesthood later added to it."⁹⁰ In Israelite temples, the high priest changed his clothing as he moved to areas of the temple that reflected differing degrees of sacredness. These changes in clothing mirror details of the nakedness and clothing worn by Adam and Eve in different parts of their garden sanctuary.⁹¹

Temple covenants. The temple journey of return and reunion is made possible through obedience to covenants, coupled with the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. As an Apostle, Elder Ezra Taft Benson outlined these covenants to a general audience as including "the law of obedience and sacrifice, the law of the gospel, the law of chastity, and the law of consecration."⁹²

Some LDS scholars have conjectured that an ancient book somewhat like the book of Moses may have been used as a foundation for temple narrative in former times.⁹³ For instance, in the book of Moses, the story

The Way of Life	The Way of Death
Obedience (Moses 5:1-6)	Defiance (Moses 5:13-14)
Sacrifice (Moses 5:4-8, 20)	Perversion of Sacrifice (Moses 5:18-19, 21)
The Gospel (Moses 5:58-59; 8:19)	Works of Darkness (Moses 5:29-31, 47-57; 8:26)
Chastity (Moses 6:5-23; 8:13)	Licentiousness (Moses 6:15; 8:14-21)
Consecration (Moses 7:18)	Violence and Corruption (Moses 5:31-33, 50; 6:15; 8:28)
Endless Life (Moses 7:23, 69; 8:27)	Untimely Death (Moses 8:30)

Figure 6. *The Two Ways of Covenant-Keeping and Covenant-Breaking*

congregation to have covenanted to keep all things in common, with all they possess affirmed as belonging to the Lord.⁹⁴

The illustrations of covenant-keeping and covenant-breaking provided in the book of Moses in 1830–1831 correspond to the sequence of covenants that was introduced in the Nauvoo temple more than a decade later, as shown in Figure 6. Significantly, John W. Welch found a similar pattern in his analysis of the Sermon on the Mount, in which the commandments “are not only the same as the main commandments always issued at the temple, but they appear largely in the same order.”⁹⁵

What seems to be deliberate structuring of biblical accounts to highlight a sequence of covenants can also be found in the Hebrew Bible. For example, the eminent Bible scholar David Noel Freedman called attention to a specific pattern of covenant-breaking in the “Primary History” of the Old Testament. He concluded that this section of the biblical record was deliberately structured to reveal a sequence where each of the commandments was broken in specific order one by one.⁹⁶

In summary, Joseph Smith’s translation of the book of Moses, in conjunction with his translation of other portions of the Bible, would have provided an extensive tutorial for the Prophet on temple-relevant stories, clothing, and covenants, long before the Nauvoo era.

2. The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

The temple endowment was only one part of the extended sequence of ordinances of exaltation that were revealed over time to the Prophet. Thus, comparisons of ancient or modern rituals that focus solely on the endowment miss a significant part of the overall picture.

pauses from time to time and weaves in ritual acts like sacrifice; ordinances like baptism, washings, and the gift of the Holy Ghost; and themes relating to covenants like chastity and consecration. Mark Johnson has suggested that if an account of Enoch and his city of Zion was read in an ancient temple context, it would have been natural for members of an attending

	22-23 January 1832 (D&C 84:33-48)	19 January 1841 (D&C 124:39)	4 May 1842 (Documentary History 5:2)
Initiatory	"sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies"	"your anointings and your washings"*	"washings, anointings"
Endowment**	"the sons of Moses and of Aaron"	"your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places wherein you receive conversations"	"endowments, and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days," i.e., Adam
Marriage Sealing	"the seed of Abraham"		
Fulness of the Priesthood	"the church and kingdom"	"your statutes and judgments"	i.e., "the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood"
Election Made Sure; More Sure Word of Prophecy	"the elect of God"		"secure the fulness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the Firstborn"
Second Comforter	"the Father teacheth him"		(a blessing of "the Church of the Firstborn" — D&C 88:3-5)
Receive the Kingdom	"all that my Father hath shall be given unto him"		"abide in the presence of the Elohim in the eternal worlds"
* "and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies" immediately follows these words. ** As used in modern LDS terminology. By way of contrast, Joseph Smith seems to have used the word "endowment" to refer to the entire sequence of ordinances and blessings.			

Figure 7. *Sequence of Blessings of the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*

As Joseph Smith continued his translation of the Old Testament beyond the chapters contained in the book of Moses, he learned of righteous individuals whose experiences provided a further tutorial about temple ordinances and the priesthood as they existed anciently. For example, between December 1830 and June 1831 Joseph Smith translated Old Testament chapters that described the plural marriages of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the New Testament account of the Sadducees' question about marriage in the resurrection.⁹⁷ By at least 1835, Joseph Smith had begun teaching the principle of eternal marriage to others such as William W. Phelps, who was told that he and his wife were "certain to be one in the Lord throughout eternity" if they continued "faithful to the end."⁹⁸

Additional revelations and teachings of Joseph Smith, in conjunction with the ongoing work of Bible translation, elaborated on the stories and significance of righteous individuals such as Melchizedek and Elijah, explaining how the priesthood authority they held related to additional ordinances and blessings that could be given in the temple after one had already received the endowment and been sealed in eternal marriage covenants.⁹⁹ For example, the blessings of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood belong to one who is made a "king and a priest unto God, bearing rule, authority, and dominion under the Father."¹⁰⁰

Correspondingly, worthy women may receive the blessings of becoming queens and priestesses.¹⁰¹ It is fitting for these blessings to be associated with the name of Melchizedek, because he was the great “king of Salem” and “the priest of the most high God,”¹⁰² who gave the priesthood to Abraham.¹⁰³ Later kings of Israel, as well as Jesus Christ Himself, were declared to be part of the “order of Melchizedek,”¹⁰⁴ which was originally called “the Order of the Son of God.”¹⁰⁵ Additional revelatory insights of the Prophet relating to ordinances received after the endowment and marriage sealing are especially evident in the changes he made in his translation of the Gospel of John and the Epistle to the Hebrews.¹⁰⁶

In summary, a search through the translations, revelations, and teachings of Joseph Smith reveals that an outline of ordinances and blessings, including those to be received following the temple endowment, was given to the Prophet early in his ministry. Indeed, by no later than 1835 the Lord had revealed to Joseph Smith doctrines and principles relating to what we now call the ordinances of the initiatory, endowment, eternal marriage, the fulness of the priesthood, and exaltation in the presence of the Father. An examination of the second and third columns of the table shown in Figure 7 reveals that the orderly sequence of these ordinances and blessings was summarized in D&C 124:39 on January 19, 1841, and again in a firsthand description of the events of May 4, 1842,¹⁰⁷ the day the Prophet Joseph Smith began to administer these ordinances in the upper story of the Red Brick Store. Significantly, however, the most complete list of these ordinances and blessings, shown in the leftmost column, was given by revelation in 1832, a decade earlier.¹⁰⁸

3. Priesthood Keys and Symbols¹⁰⁹

When D&C 124 was revealed to the Prophet in 1841, he was told that “the keys of the holy priesthood” had been “kept hid from before the foundation of the world” and that they were soon to be revealed in the “ordinances” of the Nauvoo temple.¹¹⁰ However, at least some of these keys had been introduced to the Prophet long before. For instance, in December 1830, using language that resembled the later 1841 revelation, the Lord could say already to Joseph Smith that He had “given unto him the keys of the mystery of those things which have been sealed, even things which were from the foundation of the world.”¹¹¹ This is temple language.¹¹²

Moreover, D&C 132:19 revealed that as a requirement for entering into “exaltation and glory” within the heavenly temple, the candidate for

eternal life must be able to “pass by the angels, and the gods.” Elaborating details of this requirement, Brigham Young taught that in order to do so the Saints must be “able to give them the *key words, the signs and tokens*, pertaining to the Holy Priesthood.”¹¹³

Keywords and Names. “Keywords” have been associated with temples since very early times. In a temple context, the meaning of the term can be taken literally: the use of the appropriate keyword or words by a qualified worshipper, “unlocks” the gate for access to specific, secured areas of the sacred space.¹¹⁴

That said, whether or not the saving ordinances we perform in this life become effective in eternity depends as much on what we eventually *become* as on what we *know*. This is consistent with Old Testament examples of figures like Abraham, Sarah, and Jacob who received new names only after the Lord had tested their integrity.¹¹⁵ This also explains why names are so closely associated with keywords. Indeed, Joseph Smith taught that “The new name *is* the key word.”¹¹⁶

The importance of qualifying through worthiness and experience to take upon ourselves a sacred name is taught in ordinances like the sacrament, where we learn that we must “always remember” and be “willing to take upon [ourselves] the name of Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁷ Ultimately, however, we must not only be *willing* to take on the name of Jesus Christ but also become fully ready to do so if we are to receive every blessing outlined in the ordinances.¹¹⁸ To take upon oneself the name of Jesus Christ in actuality is to identify with Him to such a degree that we become one with Him in every aspect of saving knowledge and personal character.¹¹⁹

In 1829, Joseph Smith would have encountered this principle as he translated the words of King Benjamin, who understood why those who did not take upon themselves “the name of Christ” through obedience to the end their lives “must be called by some other name.”¹²⁰ The theme of God’s sharing His own name with those who approach the final gate to enter His presence can also be found in the explanations of Facsimile 2 from the book of Abraham that date to sometime between 1835 and 1841.¹²¹ In Figure 7 of that facsimile, God is pictured as “sitting upon his throne, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood.” This concept is also found in Revelation 14:1, where we are told about those who would have the “Father’s name written in their foreheads.”

Signs and Tokens. The use of “signs” and “tokens” as symbols connected with covenants made in temples and used as aids in sacred teaching is

an ancient practice. For example, the raised hand is a long-recognized sign of oath-taking,¹²² and the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle contained various tangible “tokens of the covenant”¹²³ relating to the priesthood, including the golden pot that had manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the law.¹²⁴

By way of analogy to a possible function of the items within the Ark of the Covenant — items that related to the higher priesthood¹²⁵ — consider the Greek Eleusinian Mysteries,¹²⁶ which endured over a period of nearly two thousand years. These rites were said to consist of *legomena* (= things recited), *deiknymena* (= things shown), and *dromena* (= things performed). A sacred casket contained the tokens of the god, which were used to teach initiates about the meaning of the rites. At the culmination of the process, the initiate was examined about his knowledge of these tokens. “Having passed the tests of the tokens and their passwords, ... the initiate would have been admitted to the presence of the god.”¹²⁷

In addition to a physical representation within sacred containers like the Ark of the Covenant, tokens could be expressed in the form of a handclasp, a symbol for unique individuality and joined unity that can be used both in tests of knowledge and identity as well as in acts of recognition and reunion.

Besides their use in tests of knowledge, clasped hands have been a prominent symbol of the marriage relationship since ancient times. This was also a symbol used by the Prophet Joseph Smith by at least 1835. For example, on November 24, 1835, Joseph Smith performed a marriage ceremony “by the authority of the everlasting priesthood.” He requested the bride and groom to “join hands” and then they entered into a “covenant” while the Prophet pronounced “the blessings that the Lord conferred upon Adam and Eve.”¹²⁸

Sacred handclasps were also used in early Christian prayer circles. For example, according to the pseudepigraphal *Acts of John*,¹²⁹ Jesus concluded His final instructions to the apostles with a choral prayer in which “he told [them] to form a circle, holding one another’s hands, and himself stood in the middle.”

The classical priestly posture of prayer with uplifted hands was known in the Old Testament¹³⁰ and continued as a feature of Christian prayer in Joseph Smith’s day. Zebedee Coltrin recorded that at the Kirtland School of the Prophets on January 23, 1833, the participants were to “wash themselves,” “put on clean clothing” — in likeness of the Israelites at Mount Sinai¹³¹ — and then engage “in silent prayer, kneeling, with our hands uplifted each one praying in silence.”¹³² In this instance,

the prayer with uplifted hands was followed by an appearance of the Father and the Son.

The Sacred Embrace. In ancient temple ritual, the gesture of the embrace could be seen as a stronger form of the symbolism represented in the handclasp. Whereas a handclasp can be used as a symbol of an unbreakable bond between two individuals, an embrace is an even more powerful symbol that can signify absolute unity and oneness between them.¹³³

Notably, both the handclasp and the embrace can be used to represent not only mutual love and trust, but also a transfer of life and power from one individual to another. In what Willard Richards called “the sweetest sermon from Joseph he ever heard in his life,”¹³⁴ the Prophet described a vision of the resurrection that included a handclasp and an embrace:¹³⁵

So plain was the vision. I actually saw men, before they had ascended from the tomb, as though they were getting up slowly. They *took each other by the hand*, and it was, “My father and my son, my mother and my daughter, my brother and my sister.” When the voice calls for the dead to arise, suppose I am laid by the side of my father, what would be the first joy of my heart? Where is my father, my mother, my sister? They are by my side. *I embrace them*, and they me.

Joseph Smith’s words about the gesture of embrace in the resurrection recall similar symbolism in the stories of Elijah and Elisha, who each employed a similar ritual gesture as they raised a dead child back to life.¹³⁶ The more detailed account of Elisha reads as follows:¹³⁷

And he [Elisha] went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

Seeing anticipatory symbolism in this story, the *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* specifically adds that the Messiah will be the very “Son of the Widow” whom Elijah raised from the dead. The threefold repetition of the act in the story of Elijah points to a ritual context, perhaps corresponding to a similar Mesopotamian procedure where the healer superimposed his body over that of the patient, head to head, hand to hand, foot to foot.¹³⁸

Those familiar with the Bible will also recall relevant temple symbolism in the story of Jacob. Speaking of Jacob’s dream of the heavenly ladder in Genesis 28, Elder Marion G. Romney said: “Jacob



Figure 8. Jacob Wrestling with the Angel. Chapter House, Salisbury Cathedral, England, 19th-century restoration of a 13th-century original (Photograph courtesy of Matthew B. Brown)

realized that the covenants he made with the Lord were the rungs on the ladder that he himself would have to climb in order to obtain the promised blessings — blessings that would entitle him to enter heaven and associate with the Lord.”¹³⁹ Thus, in what may be a deliberate play on similar teachings in Freemasonry, the Prophet Joseph Smith correlated the “three principal rounds of Jacob’s ladder” with “the telestial, the terrestrial, and the celestial glories or kingdoms.”¹⁴⁰ Later Jacob wrestled (or embraced, as this may also be understood¹⁴¹) an angel who, after a series of questions and answers in a place that Jacob named Peniel (Hebrew “face of God”), gave him a new name.¹⁴²

Detecting True and False Heavenly Messengers. Of course, the keywords, names, signs, and tokens would be of no importance as symbols of authentication unless deception were a real possibility. In addition to their ancient use in sacred forms of prayer and as part of ritual and actual heavenly ascent, a knowledge of

these things was important in detecting evil spirits.

When did Joseph Smith first learn about the keys by which he could distinguish true messengers from false ones? Arguably, on May 15, 1829 when John the Baptist restored the “keys of the ministering of angels” to him and Oliver Cowdery.¹⁴³ During this experience “on the banks of the Susquehanna,” it seems that Satan appeared to deceive the Prophet and thwart the restoration of priesthood authority.¹⁴⁴ As the Prophet later recorded, Michael (or Adam) then came to his aid, “detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light!”¹⁴⁵ “Thus,” according to Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig Ostler, “the right to receive the ministrations of angels and the ability to discern true messengers of God from counterfeits came before the Church was organized.”¹⁴⁶ Significantly, an account of how Moses recognized and successfully commanded Satan to depart by invoking the name of “the Only Begotten” was translated by Joseph Smith about one year after this experience.¹⁴⁷

Bounded Flexibility in Adaptations of Temple Ritual

While, as Joseph Smith taught, the “order of the house of God”¹⁴⁸ must remain unchanged, the Lord has permitted authorized Church leaders to make adaptations of the ordinances to meet the needs of different times, cultures, and practical circumstances. Latter-day Saints understand that the primary intent of temple ordinances is to teach and bless the participants, not to provide precise matches to texts, symbols, and modes of presentation from other times. Because this is so, we would expect to find Joseph Smith’s restored ritual deviating at times from the wording and symbolism of ancient ordinances in the interest of clarity and relevance to modern disciples. Similarly, we would expect various adaptations in the presentation of the ordinances to mirror changes in culture and practical circumstances.

Adaptations in the Wording and Symbolism of Ordinances

D&C 1:24 explicitly recognizes the need for bounded flexibility in adapting divine communication to accommodate mortal limitations, asserting that God always speaks to humans “in their weakness,” choosing a language of revelation that is “after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding.” In this regard, Richard L. Bushman reminds us that:¹⁴⁹

all sorts of cultural baggage of worldly culture, human culture, is loaded into the communications that we’re receiving from God. And there’s always going to be a filter, a screen, that’s going to obscure what God truly is and what He wants to communicate to us, because He’s dependent — He *has* to use the language we can understand....

[Thus,] the vocabulary that the Lord uses to communicate through His prophets is not just “pure” or “biblical” or “religious” vocabulary, but whatever best serves His purpose, including Masonic terminology. [However,] what we must remember is that even though these languages are borrowed and bring cultural baggage with them, we revise that language, we make it our own.¹⁵⁰ It soon assumes a Mormon, or we would say, perhaps, a more godly form because it is used in the context of other revelations and of all the practices that Mormons use. And that is particularly true ... with the temple.

With respect to the temple, Samuel M. Brown¹⁵¹ has argued that Joseph Smith appropriated and “translated” selected elements of Freemasonry into the temple teachings and practices he introduced to the Saints.¹⁵² However, sometimes it may be more accurate to see the process by which revelation came to the Prophet in an inverse fashion. In other words, we might see the revelatory process, at least in some cases, not primarily as a “translation” of elements of Masonic ritual into Mormon temple ordinances, but rather as a “translation” of revealed truths — components of temple ordinances that Joseph Smith had previously encountered in his translation of the Bible and through his personal revelatory experiences — into words and actions that the Saints in Nauvoo could readily understand because their intuitions had already been primed by their exposure to the Bible and to Freemasonry.¹⁵³

It should be no more a surprise to Latter-day Saints if some phrasing of the rites of Freemasonry parallel selected aspects of restored temple ordinances than the idea that wording similar to that of the King James Version was adopted in the English translation of scriptural passages from the Old Testament included on the Book of Mormon plates.¹⁵⁴ In both cases, the use of elements already familiar to the early Saints would have served a pragmatic purpose, favoring their acceptance and understanding of specific aspects of the ancient teachings better than if a whole new and foreign textual or ritual vocabulary had been introduced.

As an instructive instance of change and continuity within the ordinances, note that the current English wording of the baptismal prayer differs from the examples given in the English translation of the Book of Mormon, without compromising its essential elements.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, the specific wordings of LDS ordinances in their non-English translations have been updated periodically when better translations were found — with no loss of efficacy.

Going further, Elder Bruce R. McConkie noted that three different ordinances — baptism, the sacrament, and animal sacrifice — were instituted at different times, using different tangible symbols, and in different types of settings, but all in association with one and the same covenant.¹⁵⁶ Though these three ordinances vary significantly in their expressions of relevant symbolism, each of them “is performed in similitude of the atoning sacrifice by which salvation comes.”¹⁵⁷ What is important in all ordinances, including temple ordinances, is that any adaptations to different times, cultures, and practical circumstances be done under prophetic authority in order to minimize the possibility of changes that alter them in crucial ways.

Adaptations in the Presentation of the Ordinances

With respect to the constrained circumstances under which temple ordinances often have been performed, recall that in the time of the patriarchs and early prophets, they were enacted in open air on the “mountain top”¹⁵⁸ or perhaps at times in a tent dedicated to that purpose.¹⁵⁹ Long after the exodus, when Israel was settled in the land and dwelt in peace, King David grieved that he lived in a palace of cedar while the ark of God humbly languished, as it had since the wanderings of his people in the wilderness, within the curtains of a portable Tabernacle.¹⁶⁰ It was not until the days of Solomon that a permanent and gloriously fitting House of the Lord was finally dedicated¹⁶¹ — only to be destroyed a few centuries later by the Babylonians.

The conditions under which temple work was performed among the early Saints in our day have also varied due to changing circumstances. When the Nauvoo Temple was still under construction, Joseph Smith was prompted to hasten¹⁶² the introduction of the temple ordinances “in an improvised and makeshift way”¹⁶³ to a select few in the attic story of the Red Brick Store. In one account, he is remembered as lamenting: “Brother Brigham, this is not arranged right. But we have done the best we could under the circumstances in which we are placed.”¹⁶⁴ After the death of Joseph Smith, the Saints continued their labors to bring the Nauvoo Temple into a form suitable for the administration of the higher ordinances. However, after only brief use in its hastily completed state, the body of the Church was compelled to leave for the West. Shortly thereafter, the Nauvoo Temple was destroyed by fire and wind. Because the Salt Lake Temple would not be finished for forty years, the Saints in the West began to receive the temple ordinances in a variety of temporary settings, including the top of Ensign Peak, Brigham Young’s office, the Council House, and the Endowment House.¹⁶⁵ Finally, decades after their arrival in Salt Lake City, temples began to dot the landscape in Utah. At last, modern temple ordinances could be carried out in surroundings that equalled their majesty.

The most significant adaptation of the presentation of temple ordinances after that time was the cinematic version of the endowment produced for the Swiss Temple. This development allowed the endowment to be presented “in a single ordinance room and in more than one language with far fewer than the usual number of temple workers.”¹⁶⁶ In retrospect, this adaptation of the endowment to different languages was no more consequential than the gradual accommodation of the film to the sensibilities of today’s Church members, who are accustomed to the techniques and high-quality production values of commercial filmmaking.

In contrast to the bare recitals and repeated conventions of ancient ritual,¹⁶⁷ in which, for example, the creation drama could only be “conveyed by dialogue offstage,”¹⁶⁸ Hugh Nibley has described how the lush visuals, the heightened dramatic portrayals by actors, and the powerful emotional impact of a continuous musical score have enhanced the presentation of the endowment for participants:¹⁶⁹

Today the various steps of creation are made vivid to us by superb cinematographic and sound recordings, showing the astral, geological, and biological wonders described by the actors and the vast reaches of time that the gods called days before time was measured unto man. Along with that, we are regaled by haunting background music that touches the feelings without intruding on the attention of the audience.

Though recognizing the value of these advances, Nibley worried that overuse of sophisticated theatrical components aimed at enriching the sensory and emotional experience sometimes might distract temple-goers from a focus on the rich meaning conveyed in the words and forms that have functioned traditionally as centerpieces of authentic temple ritual. He observed: “The most impressive temple sessions I have attended have been at Manti where [the live performances of] elderly farm people put on a far more intelligent display than the slick professionals”¹⁷⁰ in the films. Note that the live presentation of the endowment continues in both the Manti and Salt Lake Temples.

The advantage of the variety of interpretations experienced in live presentations of the endowment is preserved by the rotation of multiple films in most temples today. For example, in 2014 *The Deseret News* reported that three different films for LDS temple instruction had been released within the previous year. According to the news article: “The script in each of the films is the same. The films are shown in a rotation to provide variety to temple instruction.”¹⁷¹ The similarities and differences between films help temple-goers distinguish essential instruction from cinematic artistry, thus encouraging them to generalize concrete film details to universal application and minimizing the possibility that incidental particulars may be magnified unintentionally into significant doctrinal imperatives. For instance, without some variety in the different film presentations, a given rendition in a specific film of a few measures of moving music at a strategic story juncture or a powerful and highly nuanced expression of emotion — a tear, a glance, a pause, a gesture, or a smile — might overshadow essential verbal clues pointing to the meaning of the temple narrative.

Earthly Ordinances As Reflections of Heavenly Ordinances

Hugh Nibley has described how the instructional approach of the temple endowment provides needed flexibility while affording remarkable stability:¹⁷²

The Mormon endowment ... is frankly a model, a presentation in figurative terms. As such it is flexible and adjustable; for example, it may be presented in more languages than one and in more than one medium of communication. But since it does not attempt to be a picture of reality but only a model or analog to show us how things work, setting forth a pattern of man's life on earth with its fundamental whys and wherefores, it does not need to be changed or adapted greatly through the years; it is a remarkably stable model.

Moreover, consistent with the idea that the temple is a model or analog rather than a picture of reality, is the distinction that Elder John A. Widtsoe made between earthly and heavenly ordinances:¹⁷³

Great eternal truths make up the Gospel plan. All regulations for man's earthly guidance have their eternal spiritual counterparts. The earthly ordinances of the Gospel are themselves only reflections of heavenly ordinances. For instance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and temple work are merely earthly symbols of realities that prevail throughout the universe; but they are symbols of truths that must be recognized if the Great Plan is to be fulfilled. The acceptance of these earthly symbols is part and parcel of correct earth life, but being earthly symbols they are distinctly of the earth and cannot be accepted elsewhere than on earth. In order that absolute fairness may prevail and eternal justice may be satisfied, all men, to attain the fulness of their joy, must accept these earthly ordinances. There is no water baptism in the next estate nor any conferring of the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of earthly hands. The equivalents of these ordinances prevail no doubt in every estate, but only as they are given on this earth can they be made to aid, in their onward progress, those who have dwelt on earth.

The Restoration of Temple Ordinances

Jesus' parable of the householder finds application in the process by which modern temple ordinances came forth. As an "expert scribe"¹⁷⁴ and a "good householder who makes suitable and varied provision for his household,"¹⁷⁵ Joseph Smith restored ancient temple worship by bringing "out of his treasure things new and old"¹⁷⁶ — perhaps better translated as "things that are new and yet old."¹⁷⁷ In other words, as one New Testament scholar observed, the "secrets themselves are not really 'new'; they are 'things hidden since the foundation of the world,'¹⁷⁸ and it is only their revelation which is new."¹⁷⁹

Moreover, the Nauvoo temple ordinances should not be regarded as a new and surprising development so much as the full-fledged blossoming of ideas and priesthood authority that had already budded in Kirtland — or even, arguably, when Joseph Smith experienced his First Vision.¹⁸⁰ As Don Bradley perceptively observes:¹⁸¹

The faith [Joseph Smith] preached at the close of his career undeniably differed from the faith he preached at its opening. Yet eminent Yale literary critic Harold Bloom has asserted that Smith's "religion-making imagination" was of the "*unfolding*" rather than the *evolving* type, that his religious system did not transform so much by the incorporation of others' ideas but by the progressive outworking of his original vision.

To members of the Church who know and love the temple the results of the progressive unfolding of that original vision are palpable. Indeed it might be said that the temple ordinances revealed by the Prophet, like the scripture that came through him, "gave his believing [followers] a sense of what was experientially real, not merely philosophically true."¹⁸² Unlike the allegories of Masonic ritual, which contain beautiful truths while eschewing salvific claims, modern temple ordinances purport a power in the priesthood that imparts sanctity to their simple forms, making earthly symbols holy by connecting them with the living God. In an 1832 revelation, Joseph Smith was told:¹⁸³

And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For

without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

These verses make it clear that for the Prophet, like John the Apostle, “the specific gift of the power of knowing God is ultimately equated with eternal life itself.”¹⁸⁴ However, as Hugh Nibley reminds us, “You comprehend others only to the degree you are like them.”¹⁸⁵ This is the whole purpose of the temple: Through the divine influence that flows into all those who learn and live the truths that are made available through participating in temple ordinances and keeping the associated covenants,¹⁸⁶ the priesthood becomes a channel of personal revelation¹⁸⁷ and a power that enables one to become like God, experiencing “the power of godliness.”

It is my personal witness that the LDS temple ordinances are, as Elder John A. Widtsoe affirmed, “earthly symbols of realities that prevail throughout the universe.”¹⁸⁸ They point to heavenly meanings beyond themselves — meanings that can be revealed through our “minding true things by what their mock’ries be.”¹⁸⁹ The ordinances perform an essential earthly function, providing “the means both of receiving instruction and demonstrating obedience,”¹⁹⁰ helping make us ready, someday, to “behold the face of God,”¹⁹¹ as did Moses. In brief, those who participate in the ordinances of the temple are shown a pattern in ritual of what Moses and others throughout ancient and modern history have experienced in actuality.

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This article is dedicated to Robert W. Peterson, my father-in-law, who left this life on January 19, 2015. Among other callings, he served a mission in the Stockholm Sweden temple with his wife, Lori. Like Heber C. Kimball, he was true to his Masonic brethren and to his brethren in the Church.

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Endnotes

1. For example in 1835, as the Saints prepared to receive the ordinances that would be available to them in the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet stated (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 12 November 1835, p. 91):

The order of the house of God has been, and ever will be, the same, even after Christ comes; and after the termination of the thousand years it will be the same; and we shall finally enter into the celestial kingdom of God, and enjoy it forever.

Compare this statement from 1834: “We all admit that the Gospel has ordinances, and if so, had it not always ordinances, and were not its ordinances always the same?” (ibid., 22 January 1834, pp. 59-60).

Of course, the Nauvoo temple ordinances had not been given to the Saints at the time these statements were made, so it is evident that the Prophet is making a broad claim about the antiquity of saving ordinances here, including the general “order of the house of God,” and not making an assertion about their completeness and exactness in every detail. After the Nauvoo endowment was administered on 4 May 1842, Elder Willard Richards wrote: “In this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days” (ibid., 4 May 1842, p. 237) — asserting both the antiquity of the ordinance and the fact that this order was new to the select group to whom it had been given.

Though the Prophet had revealed “all those plans and principles by which anyone is able to secure the fulness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the Firstborn” (ibid., 4 May 1842, p. 237), none of those who were part of the select group who received temple ordinances on 4 May 1842 had actually received the fulness of the priesthood, for which they would need to be made kings and priests rather than mere candidates (see J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, p. 304 n. 21; J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 53–58). Note that even to be “ordained Kings and Priests” is limited in the sense that it is “all that can be given on earth” (Brigham Young, quoted in Heber C. Kimball Journal, kept by William Clayton, 26 December 1845, Church Archives, as cited in J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, p. 304 n. 21) — further blessings must be obtained as part of heavenly ordinances (J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 53–58).

Further emphasizing the eternal nature of the ordinances and the importance of maintaining their integrity, Joseph Smith said (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 11 June 1843, p. 308; cf. ibid., 1 September 1842, p. 264; ibid., 5 October 1840, pp. 168–173; JST Genesis 14:27–29; D&C 128:5, 18):

Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles. ... If a man gets a fulness of the priesthood of God he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the

commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of God.

Earlier that same year, the Prophet stated (*Teachings*, 22 January 1843, pp. 271–272):

Some say that the kingdom of God was not set up on the earth until the day of Pentecost ... but, I say in the name of the Lord, that the kingdom of God was set up on the earth from the days of Adam to the present time. Whenever there has been a righteous man on earth unto whom God revealed His word and gave power and authority to administer in His name, and where there is a priest of God — a minister who has power and authority from God to administer in the ordinances of the Gospel and officiate in the priesthood of God, there is the kingdom of God. ... Where there is a prophet, a priest, or a righteous man unto whom God gives His oracles, there is the kingdom of God; and where the oracles of God are not, there the kingdom of God is not.

2. R. G. Scott, *To Acquire*; R. G. Scott, *How To Obtain*.
3. What Is Freemasonry?
4. For comprehensive and up-to-date accounts of the history of Freemasonry worldwide, see H. Bogdan et al., *Handbook of Freemasonry*.
5. For a well-crafted account of the history and appeal of Freemasonry in early America, see D. G. Hackett, *That Religion*.
6. S. M. Brown, *In Heaven*, p. 174. Currently published evidence bearing on the question of whether Joseph Smith, Sr. was a Mason is equivocal. However, Greg Kearney (15 May 2015) has seen new evidence that seems to make this a likely possibility.
7. For a brief summary of the literature on this topic, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Keys and Symbols*, in preparation.
8. S. M. Brown, *In Heaven*, p. 178.
9. See K. L. Walgren, *James Adams*, p. 127.
10. S. E. Black, *James Adams*, p. 39; K. L. Walgren, *James Adams*, p. 125–127. After 1841, Adams' participation in Masonic lodges apparently came to an end. "He had thrown his lot with the Mormons and was at [the time of the Grand Lodge meeting in October 1841] attending the Mormon General Conference in Nauvoo" (*ibid.*, p. 127).

11. K. L. Walgren, James Adams, p. 127 writes: "There is some evidence that he may have been baptized as early as December 4, 1836; more likely the rite was performed in the fall of 1840."
12. Ibid., p. 132.
13. G. M. Leonard, *Nauvoo*, pp. 314–315. In one early Masonic self-characterization, the institution was described as being "that Religion in which all men Agree" (J. Anderson, *Constitutions*, p. 48).
14. K. W. Godfrey, *Freemasonry and the Temple*, p. 529. Cf. M. Introvigne, *Freemasonry and New Religious Movements*, p. 312. "The oldest documents, which are usually associated with Freemasonry, are the so-called ... 'Old Charges.' ... The contents of these documents are explicitly Christian" (J. A. M. Snoek et al., *History of Freemasonry*, pp. 14, 15). The history of Masonry as an institution is not currently documented before the late 1300s (A. Prescott, *Old Charges*; J. A. M. Snoek et al., *History of Freemasonry*, p. 14) and (notwithstanding the fantastic claims of best-sellers) the first suggestion of a link between chivalry and Freemasonry does not occur until 1723 (P. Mollier, *Freemasonry and Templarism*, pp. 83–84).

That said, few scholars would disagree that many of Freemasonry's ideas and ritual components drew on ideas from ancient sources, especially early Christianity (see, e.g., M. B. Brown, *Exploring*, pp. 45–55). Indeed in 1766, in one of the earliest exposés of Masonry, Bérage, *Les Plus Secrets Mystères*, p. ix went so far as to say: "the mysteries of Masonry ... are nothing more than those of the Christian religion."

Though Old Testament themes are pervasive in Masonic ritual, it seems clear that they come by way of Christian tradition. As R. J. Van Pelt, *Freemasonry and Judaism*, pp. 189–190 observes: "There is no evidence that the most important Old Testament stories, themes and symbols that found their way into Freemasonry were directly derived from the Tanakh [= the Hebrew Bible]. ... In fact, they are clearly derived from the King James translation of the Bible. Therefore these are all examples of a Christian legacy."

As a result of several factors, Masonry later moved away to a degree from its explicitly Christian roots and welcomed all believers in a higher power. However, in Joseph Smith's time its rituals remained highly Christian in their character.

15. B. F. Johnson, *My Life's Review*, p. 85. Despite the characterization of Johnson of Masonic ritual as an "apostate endowment," it is clear that the early Saints did not see a conflict between participation in

Masonry and participation in temple ordinances. Masonry does not conflict with LDS religious obligations because, strictly speaking, it is not a religion and does not claim salvific power for its rituals.

16. T. L. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel*, p. 39.
17. S. Larson, *Ministry of Meetings*, p. 42, cited in M. B. Brown, *Exploring*, p. 156; M. B. Brown, *Gate*, pp. 307–308 with emphasis added. See *ibid.*, p. 316 for additional comments relating to Richards' reference to lost Masonic knowledge. See D. Bradley, 'Grand Fundamental Principles,' pp. 33–34 for the suggestion that Joseph Smith used his knowledge of Freemasonry — and his belief that Masons had some of the temple ritual — to help him “study ... out in [his] mind” (D&C 9:8) the details of the endowment.
18. Cited in A. F. Ehat, *They Might Have Known*, p. 145. Heber C. Kimball summarized his views as a longtime Mason on the similarities between Masonic and Mormon ritual as follows (Heber C. Kimball to Parley P. Pratt, 17 June 1842, Heber C. Kimball Papers, LDS Church History Library, cited in S. B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball*, p. 85, spelling, grammar, and punctuation standardized):

We have received some precious things through the Prophet on the priesthood that would cause your soul to rejoice. I cannot give them to you on paper, for they are not to be written. So you must come and get them for yourself. We have organized a lodge here of Masons since we obtained a charter. That was in March. Since that [time] there have been nearly two hundred made Masons. Br. Joseph and Sidney [Rigdon] were the first that were received into the Lodge. All of the twelve apostles have become members except Orson Pratt. He hangs back. He will wake up soon. There is a similarity of priesthood [ordinances] in Masonry. Bro. Joseph says Masonry was taken from priesthood but has become degenerated. But many things are perfect.

19. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 19 December 1841, p. 195.
20. *Ibid.*, 15 October 1843, p. 329. Cf. “Letter to Emma,” 31 March 1842.
21. Cf. H. Nibley, *What*, p. 369. Although the rites of Freemasonry are not seen as salvific, the religious element of agreements entered into within Masonry is underscored by the fact that the traditional oath of an Entered Apprentice is made while placing the hand under the Bible (or, when desired, another suitable work of scripture), and with

- the explicit acknowledgement that this is done “in the presence of Almighty God” (see A. de Hoyos et al., *Light on Masonry*, pp. 19–20).
22. It must be observed that the degrees conferred by various Masonic organizations like the York Rite (or American Rite) are not, strictly speaking, part of basic Masonry, the Blue Lodge. They require prior Masonic affiliation in order to qualify for membership and build on the base the Blue Lodge establishes, with further instruction on moral principles. Joseph Smith was not initiated into Royal Arch Masonry, though some of his close associates were.
 23. S. Town, *System of Speculative Masonry*, p. 81.
 24. For example, see Hebrews 6:18–20; Revelation 1:6, 3:21, 5:10.
 25. This confluence of ultimate purpose is consistent with the traditional prayer of lodge opening which concludes with the petition: “when the trials of our probationary state are over, [may we] be admitted into the temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (A. de Hoyos et al., *Light on Masonry*, 16 (236)).
 26. S. B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball*, p. 91 n. 14 argues the same point even with respect to contemporary accounts by non-Mormons and apostates: “[D]uring the Nauvoo period neither apostates, like John C. Bennett and Increase Van Deusen (who were Mormons, Masons, and anti-Mormon writers) nor anti-Mormon Masonic officials ever accused Joseph Smith of stealing Masonic secrets and incorporating them into the endowment ceremony.” In an article in the *Quincy Whig* published on July 16, 1842, Bennett does describe the Nauvoo temple ceremony as “a new degree of masonry, called ‘Order Lodge’” (A. F. Smith, *Saintly Scoundrel*, p. 103) and in his *History of the Saints* claimed that Joseph Smith pretended to have had “revealed to him the *real Master’s word*” (J. C. Bennett, *History of the Saints*, pp. 276), though it will be obvious to students of Mormonism that the brief summaries of temple ritual appearing in Bennett’s publications (which he had never witnessed personally) are full of inaccuracies and outright fictions. In a retrospective account, Ebenezer Robinson, a Mormon Mason in Nauvoo who eventually rejected the Prophet’s temple teachings, describes the introduction of Masonry in Nauvoo (E. Robinson, *Items No. 14*, p. 287), but does not associate this development with his descriptions of the Nauvoo temple nor with the giving of “the keys of the Priesthood, and the endowments with the signs, grips, tokens and garments, such as were given in the Holy Order in Joseph Smith’s life time” (E. Robinson, *Items No. 15*, p. 301). Neither Van Deusen, George W. Harris, nor any other

Nauvoo apostates of which I am aware make explicit mention of any connection between the temple ordinances and Freemasonry. All this is not to say there were not some common or similar elements between their rituals as previously discussed, but rather to highlight the fact that such resemblances were not seen as problematic by contemporary Nauvoo participants and observers.

27. See e.g., M. B. Brown, *Exploring*, p. 157. Cf. a retrospective statement made in Utah by Heber C. Kimball, a counselor to Brigham Young in the First Presidency: "I have been true to my country, to my Masonic brethren, and also to my brethren in this Church" (H. C. Kimball, 7 July 1861, p. 182). He also wrote: "I have been as true as an angel from the heavens to the covenants I made in the lodge at Victor" (cited in J. B. Holzapfel et al., *Woman's View*, p. 80; cf. Helen Mar Whitney, *Scenes in Nauvoo*, p. 26. S. B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball*, p. 91 n. 7 gives the reference for this passage as the Heber C. Kimball, *Journal* 94b, part 2, 5).
28. R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, p. 450.
29. This continuation of Masonic activity was all the more striking in light of the fact that the Grand Lodge censured and withdrew its sanction of the two Mormon Lodges that had been created in Illinois. Note that the Masonic Hall in Nauvoo was dedicated *after* the Grand Lodge took these actions.

In nineteenth-century Utah, Masonry became an essentially non-Mormon institution. Indeed, in 1925, the Grand Lodge of Utah formally prohibited Latter-day Saints from joining, although members of the Church were free to join other lodges outside of Utah. In 1984, the ban was dropped. In 2008, Glen A. Cook, an LDS Mason and a graduate of BYU Law School, became the first Mormon Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Utah (see Most Worshipful Brother).

30. A. F. Ehat, *Ordinances*, pp. 44–45.
31. J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 16 June 1844, p. 382, abbreviations expanded.
32. This statement was made at the General Conference of the Church in April 1844 and later printed in the Church periodical *Times and Seasons*, 5:14, 1 August 1844, p. 596. Cf. H. Nibley, *What*, p. 369: "Among the first to engage in the Latter-day temple work were many members of the Masons ... whose rites present unmistakable parallels to those of the temple. Yet ... those men experienced only an expansion of understanding."
33. B. J. Petersen, *Nibley*, p. 352.

34. Ibid., p. 352.
35. Besides the many scattered articles found elsewhere, a quick sampling of titles of monographs and collections of scholarship dedicated to the topic might include, among others: G. N. Anderson, *Mormonism and the Temple*; L. L. Baker et al., *Who Shall Ascend*; D. L. Belnap, *By Our Rites*; J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes* (2014); J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*; J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Keys and Symbols*; M. B. Brown, *Gate*; M. B. Brown et al., *Throne*; M. B. Brown et al., *Ancient Temple Worship*; M. B. Brown et al., *Symbols*; A. L. Gaskill, *Lost*; A. L. Gaskill, *Sacred Symbols*; W. J. Hamblin et al., *Temple*; W. J. Hamblin et al., *Temple Insights*; G. E. Hansen, Jr. et al., *Sacred Walls*; J. M. Lundquist, *Meeting Place*; J. M. Lundquist, *Temple of Jerusalem*; T. G. Madsen, *Temple: Where Heaven*; H. W. Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*; H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*; D. W. Parry, *Temples*; D. W. Parry et al., *Time and Eternity*; J. W. Welch, *Sermon*; J. W. Welch, *Light*; D. R. Seely et al., *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord*; J. A. Widtsoe, *Temple Worship*; J. E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord*; B. K. Packer, *Holy Temple*; A. F. Ehat, *Ordinances*. A massive temple studies bibliography is also being assembled by contributors from the Academy for Temple Studies (D. W. Bachman et al., *Temple Studies Bibliography*).
36. Joseph Fielding Smith, as an Apostle, taught that “there has never been a moment from the beginning that there were not men on the earth holding the Holy [i.e., Melchizedek] Priesthood” (J. F. Smith, Jr., *Answers*, 2:45).
37. For a brief historical overview of the loss and restoration of the fulness of priesthood ordinances, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 97–107.
38. See, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 658–660.
39. See, e.g., D&C 84:23.
40. See, e.g., JST Exodus 34:1–2; JST Deuteronomy 10:1–2; D&C 84:24–27; J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 5 January 1841, pp. 180–181. See also note by A. F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook in J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, pp. 143–144 n. 5. President Brigham Young stated (B. Young, 29 November 1857, p. 100):

If they had been sanctified and holy, the children of Israel would not have traveled one year with Moses before they would have received their endowments and the Melchizedek Priesthood. But they could not receive them, and never did ... The Lord told Moses that he would show

Himself to the people, but they begged Moses to plead with the Lord not to do so.

41. J. F. Smith, Jr., *Answers*, 1:117–118, 2:45. Joseph Smith taught: “All the prophets had the Melchizedek Priesthood and were ordained by God Himself” (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 5 January 1841, p. 181).
42. See M. B. Brown et al., *Throne*.
43. G. M. Leonard, *Nauvoo*, p. 315. That said, Hugh Nibley asks (H. W. Nibley, *What*, p. 383):

Did Joseph Smith reinvent the temple by putting all the fragments — Jewish, Orthodox, Masonic, Gnostic, Hindu, Egyptian, and so forth — together again? No, that is not how it is done. Very few of the fragments were available in his day, and the job of putting them together was begun ... only in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Even when they are available, those poor fragments do not come together of themselves to make a whole; to this day the scholars who collect them do not know what to make of them. The temple is not to be derived from them, but the other way around. If the temple, as the Latter-day Saints know it, had been introduced at any date later than it was, or at some great center of learning, it could well have been suspect as a human contrivance; but that anything of such fulness, consistency, ingenuity, and perfection could have been brought forth at a single time and place — overnight, as it were — is quite adequate proof of a special dispensation.

44. 1 Peter 2:9.
45. See, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw et al., *Investiture Panel*; D. J. Larsen, *Two high priesthoods?*; M. B. Brown, *Israelite Temple*.
46. N. Wyatt, *Degrees*, p. 192.
47. N. Wyatt, *Hollow Crown*, p. 32.
48. N. Wyatt, *Degrees*, p. 220.
49. For a detailed discussion, see J. M. Bradshaw et al., *Investiture Panel*. For an approachable description of Sumerian temples, which “in their most developed phase, showed structural similarities to later Israelite temples,” see E. J. Wilson, *Inside*. For a discussion of ritual creation accounts in Babylonia and elsewhere in the ancient Near East, see S. D. Ricks, *Liturgy* and E. Jan Wilson, *Inside*, pp. 314–316. For a discussion of the bestowal of the god’s blessing on

the Mesopotamian king, see S. D. Ricks and M. A. Carter, *Temple-Building Motifs*, pp. 170–171 or, more generally, S. D. Ricks and J. J. Sroka, *King*. For a discussion of names, signs, seals, and the ritual enactment of curses signifying the serious nature of covenant violation, see, e.g., H. W. Nibley, *Sacred*, pp. 554–562.

See H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005) for a detailed description of what he called “an Egyptian endowment,” along with summaries of six Jewish and early Christian texts that describe ritual journeys of a similar nature.

50. A. Parrot, *Mari Fabuleuse*, p. 121.
51. J. R. Porter, *Guide*, p. 28.
52. J. H. Walton, *Ancient*, p. 24. Walton continues (*ibid.*, p. 24): “When we think of Old Testament religious concepts such as ritual sacrifice, sanctuaries/sacred space, priests and their role, creation, the nature of sin, communication with deity, and many other areas, we realize that the Babylonians would have found Israelite practice much more comprehensible than we do.”
53. *Ibid.*, p. 129. See also S. D. Ricks and J. J. Sroka, *King*, pp. 244–246.
54. Regarding David, see, e.g., 1 Samuel 16:13 and 2 Samuel 5:3. Regarding Solomon, see, e.g., 1 Kings 1:39 and 1 Chronicles 29:22.
55. L. L. Baker et al., *Who Shall Ascend*, p. 353; and additional discussion on pp. 354–358. Compare J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 519–523.
56. See C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Glory*, pp. 56, 212–13, 476. See also C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Religious Experience*, pp. 132–133; J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 663–675. Regarding the possibility of such forms of worship at Dura Europos, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Ezekiel Mural*.
57. Exodus 19:6. Explains Kugel (J. L. Kugel, *How to Read*, p. 242):

To understand the second half of this promise [i.e., Exodus 19:6], it is essential to know that throughout the ancient Near East, the priests of any given people were the ones who were uniquely privileged to be in touch with their gods. The priests’ job consisted of caring for the god’s house (that is, his temple), offering sacrifices in front of his image, and in general serving him in the place where he was deemed to reside. By saying that Israel would become a kingdom of priests, God seemed to be bypassing this common arrangement. He was saying, in effect: You will *all* be My intimates—just keep the simple rules that make up My covenant with you.

58. Genesis 1:26–27.

59. Sarna's full explanation reads as follows (N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 12. See also R. E. Friedman, *Commentary*, p. 30; N. M. Sarna, *Mists*, p. 51):

The words used here to convey these ideas can be better understood in the light of a phenomenon registered in both Mesopotamia and Egypt where the ruling monarch is described as "the image" or "the likeness" of a god... Without doubt, the terminology employed in Genesis 1:26 is derived from regal vocabulary, which serves to elevate the king above the ordinary run of men. In the Bible this idea has become democratized. All human beings are created "in the image of God"; each person bears the stamp of royalty.

60. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that "what we say for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob we say also for Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel, the wives ... who with them were true and faithful in all things" (B. R. McConkie, *Mothers*, p. 37). President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that "the Lord offers to his daughters every spiritual gift and blessing that can be obtained by his sons" (J. F. Smith, Jr., *Magnifying*, p. 66).
61. See Revelation 2:7, 10–11, 17, 26–28; 3:5, 12, 20–21.
62. Revelation 3:21.
63. See, e.g., R. O. Barney, *Joseph Smith's Visions*; R. Nicholson, *Cowdery Conundrum*. As a specific illustration of the sacred regard in which the Prophet held the temple ordinances, Andrew Ehat reminds us that none of the nine participants who were present when the Nauvoo endowment was first bestowed on 4 May 1842 recorded the events of that day in their personal diaries. In explanation of this fact, Ehat observes (A. F. Ehat, *Who Shall Ascend*, p. 49):

The Prophet Joseph Smith had asked each participant not to record the specifics of what they had heard and seen that day. Six weeks later, in a letter to his fellow apostle Parley P. Pratt, Heber C. Kimball wrote that these favored few had received "some precious things through the Prophet on the priesthood that would cause your soul to rejoice." However, he added, "I cannot give them to you on paper for they are not to be written" (Heber C. Kimball to Parley P. Pratt, 17 June 1842, Heber C. Kimball Papers, LDS Church History Library). They were just too sacred.

64. See, e.g., Psalm 2:7; John 17:3; 1 John 3:1–3; D&C 76:24; 84:19–23, 38; 93:1; 132:24.
65. For more on this topic, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 59–65.
66. J. E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord*, pp. 159–161. Cf. the words of Oliver Cowdery (but attributed to Joseph Smith (see A. F. Ehat, *Who Shall Ascend*, p. 62 n. 11)) in J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 22 January 1834, p. 51. President David O. McKay made the following statement (cited in T. G. Madsen, *House*, p. 282):

I believe there are few, even temple workers, who comprehend the full meaning and power of the temple endowment. Seen for what it is, it is the step-by-step ascent into the Eternal Presence. If our young people could but glimpse it, it would be the most powerful spiritual motivation of their lives.

About the difference between coming into the presence of God through heavenly ascent and through ritual, Andrew F. Ehat writes (A. F. Ehat, *Who Shall Ascend*, pp. 53–54):

As Moses' case demonstrates [see Moses 1], the actual endowment is not a mere representation but is the reality of coming into a heavenly presence and of being instructed in the things of eternity. In temples, we have a staged representation of the step-by-step ascent into the presence of the Eternal while we are yet alive. It is never suggested that we have died when we participate in these blessings. Rather, when we enter the celestial room, we pause to await the promptings and premonitions of the Comforter. And after a period of time, mostly of our own accord, we descend the stairs, and resume the clothing and walk of our earthly existence. But there should have been a change in us as there certainly was with Moses when he was caught up to celestial realms and saw and heard things unlawful to utter.

Evidence from other ancient religions traditions for an analogous relationship between ritual practice on earth and ultimate fulfillment of these symbols after death was noted by Hugh Nibley. In explanation of a handclasp that was used in Manichaean ritual, believers were told that it symbolized the fact that “the right hand was used for bidding farewell to our

heavenly parents upon leaving our primeval home and [was] the greeting with which we shall be received when we return to it” (H. W. Nibley, *Sacred*, p. 557. Cf. J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 884–885). Likewise, the Mandaean, whose history may intersect with disciples of John the Baptist (S. Zinner, *Vines of Joy*), still continue a ritual practice in which the *kushta*, a ceremonial handclasp, is given three times, each one of which, according to Elizabeth Drower, “seems to mark the completion ... of a stage in a ceremony” (E. S. Drower, *Water*, p. 106). At the moment of glorious resurrection, Mandaean scripture records that a final *kushta* will also take place, albeit in the form of an embrace — what the *Ginza* calls the “key of the *kushta* of both arms” (M. Lidzbarski, *Ginza*, LG 1:1, p. 429):

Sitil [= Seth], the son of Adam... was brought to the Watchhouse [where] Silmais, the treasurer, holds the nails of glory in the hand, and carries the key of the *kushta* of both arms. They opened the gate of the treasure house for him, lifted the great veil of safety upward before him, introduced him, and showed him that Vine [i.e., the Tree of Life], its inner glory ... Sitil, son of Adam, spoke: “On this [same] way, the Path and Ascent which I have climbed, truthful, believing, faithful and perfect men should also ascend and come, when they leave their bodies [i.e., at death].”

67. See, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes* (2014), pp. 26–50; J. M. Bradshaw et al., *God’s Image 2*, pp. 82–85.
68. H. W. Nibley, *Apocryphal*, p. 312; cf. pp. 310–311. See also W. W. Isenberg, *Philip*, 85:14–16, p. 159.
69. Joseph Smith — *History* 1:14–20.
70. *Ether* 3:6–28. For a detailed analysis, see M. C. Thomas, *Brother of Jared*.
71. See J. M. Bradshaw, *LDS Book of Enoch*.
72. Brief references to the Creation may be found in the basic rituals of Masonry, but not a full recital of events like as was common in the ancient Near East and is found today in the LDS temple endowment.
73. See, e.g., J. H. Walton, *Ancient*, pp. 123–127; H. W. Nibley, *Meanings and Functions*, pp. 1460–1461; S. D. Ricks, *Liturgy*. For more on the structure and function of the story of Creation found in *Genesis* 1 and arguably used in Israelite temple liturgy, see J. H. Walton, *Lost*

- World; M. S. Smith, *Priestly Vision*. W. P. Brown, *Seven Pillars* provides perspectives on other biblical accounts of creation. See J. H. Walton, *Genesis 1*, pp. 17–22 for a useful table that highlights similarities and differences among creation accounts in the ancient Near East. Cf. W. P. Brown, *Seven Pillars*, pp. 21–32.
74. J. E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord*, p. 83.
 75. Though repositories of Masonic legend sometimes sketch a history of Masonry that goes back to Adam, there are significant limits to the parallels that can be drawn between specific rituals of Masonry and LDS temple ordinances. As Michael Homer rightly asserts, French adoption rituals did include a dramatic portrayal of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (M. W. Homer, *Joseph's Temples*, p. 22, 61, 251–252), a setting that figures in the book of Moses and the LDS temple endowment. However, despite Homer's suggestion of the Prophet's "possible use of adoptive rituals as a model for the endowment" (*ibid.*, p. 252), a cursory reading of the text of the French rites is sufficient evidence to show that the thrust of the ritual is very different from the narrative presented in the LDS temple endowment (see, e.g., the analysis found in J. A. M. Snoek, *Initiating Women*; J. A. M. Snoek, *Freemasonry and Women*). Even if a significant similarity between adoptive rituals and the LDS endowment could be argued, Homer presents no evidence beyond conjecture to support the idea that Joseph Smith or his associates encountered descriptions of the French rituals or English exposés of their equivalents (as given in, e.g., A. de Hoyos et al., *Light on Masonry*, pp. 167–197). A much more plausible source of inspiration for the Prophet is his work on the translation of what later became the book of Moses.
 76. J. E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord*, pp. 83–84. For description of the parallels between the journey of Adam and Eve and the journal of the high priest thorough the temple, see D. W. Parry, *Garden*, pp. 135.
 77. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Tree of Knowledge* for an explanation of how the symbolism of the Tree of Knowledge relates to that of the temple veil.
 78. In most depictions of Jewish temple architecture, the menorah is shown as being *outside* the veil — in contrast to the Tree of Life, which is at the holiest place in the Garden of Eden. However, Margaret Barker cites evidence that, in the first temple, a Tree of Life was symbolized *within* the Holy of Holies (e.g., M. Barker, *Hidden*, pp. 6–7; M. Barker, *Christmas*, pp. 85–86, 140; J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 366–367). Barker concludes that the Menorah (or perhaps a second, different, representation in arboreal form?) was both removed from

the temple and diminished in stature in later Jewish literature as the result of a “very ancient feud” concerning its significance (M. Barker, *Older*, p. 221; see pp. 221–232). Mandaean scripture describes a Tree of Life within the *heavenly* sanctuary as follows: “They... lifted the great veil of safety upward before him, introduced him, and showed him that Vine,” meaning the Tree of Life (M. Lidzbarski, *Ginza*, GL 1:1, p. 429:3–20; cf. E. S. Drower, *Prayerbook*, 49, pp. 45–46).

79. A. Gileadi, *Literary*, p. 12.
80. J. B. Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 18–22; W. W. Hallo et al., *Context*, 1:77–82.
81. J. E. Coleson, *Life Cycle*; A. Gileadi, *Decoded*; S. D. Ricks, *Prophetic*.
82. Genesis, chapters 27–33.
83. Luke 15:11–32.
84. N. Frye, *Secular Scripture*.
85. See e.g., D. E. Callender, *Adam*, pp. 211–218. From a ritual perspective, these three parts correspond to van Gennep’s classic stages of separation (*préliminaire*), transition (*liminaire*), and reintegration (*postliminaire*) (A. van Gennep, *Rites*, pp. 11).
86. John 16:28.
87. For official Church descriptions and photographs of modern LDS temple clothing, see *Sacred Temple Clothing*. For detailed studies of ancient temple clothing, see, e.g., H. W. Nibley, *Vestments*; D. W. Parry, *Ancient Sacred Vestments*; B. T. Ostler, *Clothed*; J. A. Tvedtnes, *Clothing*; S. D. Ricks, *Garment*; M. B. Brown, *Gate*, *passim*.
88. Genesis 3:7, 21; Moses 4:13, 27.
89. H. L. Andrus et al., *They Knew* (2004), p. 48. Tyler stated:

A short time prior to his arrival at my father’s house, my mother, Elizabeth Comins Tyler had a remarkable vision. Lest it might be attributed to the evil one, she related it to no person, except my father, Andrew Tyler, until the Prophet arrived, on his way to Canada, I think. She saw a man sitting upon a white cloud, clothed in white from head to foot. He had a peculiar cap, different from any she had ever seen, with a white robe, underclothing, and moccasins. It was revealed to her that this person was Michael, the Archangel.

The Prophet informed her that she had had a true vision. He had seen the same angel several times. It was Michael, the Archangel.

Other sources verify the circumstances of the reported incident, providing evidence that Daniel Tyler first met Joseph Smith when the Prophet stopped at his father's house in West Springfield, Erie County, Pennsylvania on October 6–8, 1833 — see J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 1:416–418.

90. H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, pp. 489–490.
91. On the changes of clothing by the high priest, see G. A. Anderson, *Perfection*, p. 122. On the changes of clothing by Adam and Eve as they moved to different areas of the Garden of Eden, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 234–240.
92. E. T. Benson, Vision.
93. E.g., J. M. Bradshaw, LDS Book of Enoch; D. Calabro, Joseph Smith and the Architecture of Genesis; M. J. Johnson, Lost Prologue.
94. M. J. Johnson, Lost Prologue, pp. 23–24.
95. J. W. Welch, *Sermon*, p. 373.
96. D. N. Freedman, *Nine* (2000), p. 1.
97. Matthew 22:23–33. See S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, pp. 57–58. The preface to the 1981 LDS edition of D&C 132 states that relevant “doctrines and principles ... had been known by the Prophet since 1831.” For detailed studies, see D. W. Bachman, New Light; D. W. Bachman, *Authorship*. Vestiges of the Prophet's early encounters with these marriage passages in Genesis and Matthew 22 seem to be reflected in some portions of D&C 132:1–40 though, as with many of the other revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, the final form of the revelation clearly reflects continued development of these doctrines over succeeding years.
98. W. W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, May 26, 1835, cited in B. A. Van Orden, Writing to Zion, p. 550. Also in 1835, William W. Phelps mentioned new light he had received from the Prophet on the subject of exaltation and eternal marriage, where those who would become “the sons of God” would dwell in “a kingdom of glory ... where the man is neither without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord” (W. W. Phelps, Letter 8, p. 130. See 1 Corinthians 11:11. For more on this statement by Phelps, see D. W. Bachman, New Light, pp. 28–29. Thanks to Jacob Rennaker for pointing out this reference.

Matthew B. Brown (*Gate*, p. 308), notes that sometime between 2 February and 2 July 1833, Joseph Smith would have translated JST Exodus 34:1–2, which was modified to read as follows (modifications shown in italics): “Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read the names written therein; No one of these shall fail; none shall want

[i.e., lack] *their* mate; for my mouth it hath commanded, and *my* spirit it hath gathered them.”

99. See, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 45–58. References to the fact that Elijah was going to “reveal ... the Priesthood” and the implication that this would involve “the promises made to the fathers” were made by Moroni in his visit to Joseph Smith earlier on 21 September 1823 (D&C 2:1–2).
100. O. Hyde, *Diagram*, p. 23. See also D&C 76:56–59. Cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 27 August 1843, p. 322: “Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings. In fact, that Priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam.” See also J. F. Smith, Jr., *Way 1945*, p. 208.

Because of the sacred nature of the ordinance that confers the fulness of the priesthood, it is generally described only in very general terms (see, e.g., B. R. McConkie, *New Witness*, p. 315). Summarizing the exacting requirements expected of those who receive this final ordinance of the temple, Joseph Smith taught (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 20 January 1844, p. 331):

The question is frequently asked, “Can we not be saved without going through all those ordinances?” I would answer: “No, not the fulness of salvation.” Jesus said, “There are many mansions in my Father’s house, and I will go and prepare a place for you” (see John 14:2). “House” here named should have been translated “kingdom”; and any person who is exalted to the highest mansion has to abide a celestial law, and the whole law, too.

Although other temple ordinances had been administered to selected saints in Nauvoo beginning in 1842, the ordinance conferring the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood was not administered by the Prophet until the final months of 1843. On 6 August 1843, Brigham Young said that “if any in the Church had the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood, he did not know it” (B. Young, 6 August 1843, in J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 5:527). However, on 22 November 1843, he finally received this much-awaited ordinance (R. K. Esplin, *Succession*, p. 315. See also G. M. Leonard, *Nauvoo*, pp. 260–261). In later instructions at the temple, President Young said (Heber C. Kimball Journal, kept by William Clayton, 26 December

1845, Church History Library, brackets added, cited in J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, p. 304 n. 21):

Those who ... come in here [i.e., the Nauvoo Temple] and have received their washing and anointing will [later, if faithful,] be ordained Kings and Priests, and will then have received the fulness of the Priesthood, all that can be given on earth. For Brother Joseph said he had given us all that could be given to man on the earth.

In contrast to the priesthood ordinances discussed previously which are available to all faithful members of the Church in this life, this crowning ordinance of the temple is now almost always reserved as a blessing for the hereafter. Indeed, even if the ordinance could be performed in this life, the realization of the blessings it portends could not be made fully effective in mortality. Emphasizing the anticipatory nature of this ordinance, Brigham Young explained that “a person may be anointed king and priest long before he receives his kingdom” (cited in J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 6 August 1843, 5:527).

101. G. M. Leonard, *Nauvoo*, pp. 260-261; J. Smith, Jr., *Record*, 28 September 1843, p. 416. See also R. K. Esplin, *Succession*, pp. 314-315; J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 27 August 1843, pp. 244-247, 303-307 nn.; W. W. Phelps, cited in S. M. Brown, *Paracletes*, pp. 80-81.
102. Genesis 14:18. See also Hebrews 7:1-10, Alma 13:15-19, and JST Genesis 14:25-40.
103. D&C 84:14.
104. Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6-10, 6:20, 7:1-28, and Alma 13:1-19.
105. See D&C 107:2-4.
106. As with all covenants and ordinances, the Savior set the example for His disciples. The Prophet said (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 11 June 1843, p. 308):

If a man gets a fulness of the priesthood of God he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord.

On changes made to the Gospel of John see, generally, JST John 1:16, 18: “And as many believe on his name shall receive of his fulness. And of his fulness have all we received, even immortality and eternal life through his grace. ... For the law was after a carnal commandment, to the administration of death; but the gospel was

after the power of an endless life, through Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father” (S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, NT 2, p. 443, spelling and punctuation standardized). See also, generally, M. Barker, *King of the Jews*.

A specific example of changes made by Joseph Smith that relate to temple ordinances received subsequent to the endowment and marriage sealing is in the account of the anointing of Jesus in Bethany (JST John 12:7: “Then said Jesus, Let her alone; for she hath preserved this ointment until now, that she might anoint me in token of my burial” (S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, NT 2, p. 463, spelling and punctuation standardized. See also JST Mark 14:8 (ibid., p. 351). See M. Barker, *King of the Jews*, pp. 341-343; J. M. Smith, She Hath Wrought; Journal of Wilford Woodruff, July 22, 1883, in W. Woodruff, *Waiting*, pp. 360-361).

Another example of changes Joseph Smith made to clarify the nature of a particular ordinance has to do with the washing of the feet of Jesus’ apostles (JST John 13:10: “Jesus saith to him, He that has washed his hands and his head, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all. Now this was the custom of the Jews under the law; wherefore, Jesus did this that the law might be fulfilled” (S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, NT 2, p. 465. See M. Barker, *King of the Jews*, pp. 376-381; B. R. McConkie, *NT Commentary*, 1:707-711; B. R. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 4:36-41; J. E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 552-553, 574). Elder Talmage (cf. Elder McConkie) specifically term Jesus’ act an “ordinance of the holy priesthood,” saying that it “was more than mere service for personal comfort, and more than an object-lesson of humility” (J. E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 553; cf. B. R. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 4:36). Specifically, Elder McConkie characterized the Savior’s intent in performing this ordinance for the apostles as being “to seal his friends up unto eternal life in his Father’s kingdom” (B. R. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 4:48).

Consider also the revelations and teachings of Joseph Smith relating to the two Comforters mentioned in John 14 (D&C 130:3; Joseph Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 27 July 1839, pp. 149-151. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 73-79, 93-94; B. R. McConkie, *NT Commentary*, pp. 734-741; B. R. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 4:74-78). It is not unlikely that the Prophet’s understanding of these verses, as with John 12-13, came to him in the course of his Bible translation efforts that occurred sometime between January

and July 1832 (S. H. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, p. 69). Note, however, that the change made to John 12:7 was made on a small piece of paper pinned to the JST manuscript that contained “changes made after the original writing that were to be inserted in the text on the pages to which they were attached” (ibid., p. 73).

- See also the significant changes in JST Hebrews 6:1-9, 7:3, 18-22, 26-27 relating to Melchizedek (ibid., pp. 539-541), also made sometime between January and July 1832. Additionally, in the NT 2 manuscript for Hebrews chapter 5, it was noted that “the seventh and eighth verses of this chapter are a parenthesis alluding to Melchizedek and not to Christ” (ibid., p. 537, spelling standardized).
107. See J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 4 May 1842, p. 237 and J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 4 May 1842, 5:1-2. The account given in these sources is a later expansion by Elder Willard Richards of an entry he made in the daily record he had been assigned to keep for Joseph Smith (J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1841-1843*, pp. 53-54, spelling, grammar, and punctuation standardized):

4 May 1842, Wednesday

... In council in the President's and General Offices with Judge [James] Adams, Hyrum Smith, Newell K. Whitney, William Marks, William Law, George Miller. Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Willard Richards. [illegible] and giving certain instructions concerning the priesthood. [illegible], etc. on the Aaronic Priesthood to the first [illegible] continuing through the day.

Additional background for this entry is given by the editors in a footnote (J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1841-1843*, p. 54 n. 198, with my standardization of spelling, grammar, and punctuation of Richards' statements):

[Willard] Richards, who participated in the events of 4 May 1842, made the brief summary of Joseph Smith's daylong temple instruction in this journal entry and also prepared the following description of the new endowment, which later became part of the Joseph Smith multivolume manuscript history: Joseph Smith instructed those present “in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order

of the Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, and all those plans and principles by which anyone is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the First Born, and come up and abide in the presence of the Eloheim in the eternal worlds. In this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days.” According to Richards, Joseph Smith’s instructions “were of things spiritual, and to be received only by the spiritually minded: and there was nothing made known to these men but what will be made known to all the Saints of the last days, so soon as they are prepared to receive, and a proper place is prepared to communicate them, even to the weakest of the Saints; therefore let the Saints be diligent in building the Temple, and all houses which they have been, or shall hereafter be, commanded of God to build, and wait their time with patience, in all meekness, faith, and perseverance unto the end, knowing assuredly that all these things referred to in this council are always governed by the principles of revelation.”

Andrew Ehat further explains (A. F. Ehat, *Who Shall Ascend*, pp. 50–51):

As with many other diary entries that [Elder Richards] so seamlessly included in the *History of the Church*, he humbly wrote the record as if it contained the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith. When he could find a diary containing information relating to the Prophet Joseph that was found nowhere else, he benignly revised and inserted into the *History* the words of others as if they were the Prophet’s own. He knew Joseph did not have the time to record these things for himself (see D. C. Jessee, *JS History*, pp. 440, 470, 472–473). In fact, Elder Richards kept the personal diary of the Prophet for the last year-and-a-half of his life. But in the case of the endowment, Elder Richards had been an eyewitness of the events. So the words he would choose for this entry would reflect as much the impact of the events on himself as well as the enlarged understanding of the endowment he had

personally gained in the ensuing three years ... [Thus,] Willard Richards' draft for the Prophet's "History" entry for 4 May 1842 is ... actually the most comprehensive statement made by an original participant, providing us Joseph Smith's explanation of the meaning of the endowment.

The journal entry for the next day, 5 May 1842, reads: "Judge [James] Adams left for Springfield. The others continued in Council as the day previous, and Joseph and Hyrum were [illegible]" (J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1841–1843*, p. 54, spelling, grammar, and punctuation standardized). Elder Richards' expansion of this entry published in J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 5:2–3 makes it apparent that "Joseph and Hyrum Smith received their endowment from those who had received it from the Prophet the previous day" (J. Smith, Jr., *Papers 1989–1992*, 2:380 n. 2. Cf. J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1841–1843*, p. 54 n. 199). Ehat explains (A. F. Ehat, *Who Shall Ascend*, p. 61 n. 2,):

Only when new priesthood ordinances and powers were being bestowed would the persons who previously bestowed blessings, in turn, receive them back from them to whom they first administered the blessings. This was in accordance with the pattern established when John the Baptist commanded Joseph Smith to first baptize Oliver Cowdery, and then Oliver Cowdery to baptize Joseph Smith after they had been ordained by this heavenly messenger, 15 May 1829 (see Joseph Smith — History 1:70–72)

108. See D&C 84:33–48. For a detailed study of these verses, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*.
109. For a more detailed discussion of this topic, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Keys and Symbols*.
110. D&C 134:34, 40, 41.
111. D&C 35:18.
112. See M. L. Bowen, *Founded Upon a Rock*, pp. 22–24.
113. B. Young, *Discourses*, p. 416, emphasis added.
114. See, e.g., S. Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 1:180, 1:181 n. 191; J. H. Eaton, *Psalms Commentary*, 118:19–22, p. 405; J. Gee, *Keeper*; J. M. Bradshaw et al., *Investiture Panel*.
115. Genesis 17:5, 15; 32:28.

116. D&C 130:11, emphasis added. For an excellent discussion of the varied usages of the terms “key” and “keyword” by Joseph Smith and his contemporaries, see J. H. Lindquist, *Keywords*.
117. D&C 20:77.
118. See D&C 109:22, 26, 79. See also D. H. Oaks, *Taking Upon Us*; D. A. Bednar, *Name*, p. 98.
119. See, e.g., D. A. Bednar, *Power to Become*, pp. 9–10.
120. Mosiah 5:8, 10, 12.
121. The substance of many of the explanations of this Facsimile can be dated to 1835–1836 (see B. M. Hauglid, *Textual History*, pp. 225–231), although we currently have no specific mention of comments relating to the explanations of Figures 3 and 7 until May 5, 1841 (Report of William I. Appleby in *ibid.*, p. 219). The explanations of Facsimile 2 were first published in the *Times and Seasons* 3/10 (15 March 1842), p. 724 (*ibid.*, p. 222). For translations and commentary on these Figures, see R. D. Draper et al., *Commentary*, pp. 291–292; M. D. Rhodes, *Hypocephalus Translation*; M. D. Rhodes, *Twenty Years*.
122. D. R. Seely, *Raised Hand*; D. Calabro, *Stretch Forth*; D. Calabro, *When You Spread*; D. Calabro, *Understanding*; D. Calabro, *Divine Handclasp*.
123. H. W. Attridge et al., *Hebrews*, p. 236.
124. Hebrews 9:4. Cf. Exodus 25:16.
125. For more about the symbolism of these and other ancient temple objects as they related to the higher priesthood, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 658–660, 679–681.
126. For more on the Eleusinian Mysteries, see *ibid.*, pp. 675–679.
127. T. M. Compton, *Token*. For a shorter version of this study, see T. M. Compton, *Handclasp*.
128. J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals, 1832–1839*, 24 November 1835, pp. 109–110. Two months later, he pronounced upon a couple “the blessings of Abraham Isaac and Jacob and such other blessings as the Lord put into my heart” (20 January 1836, p. 165; cf. 14 January 1836, p. 153).
129. E. Hennecke et al., *Acts of John*, 94.
130. See, for example, Psalm 24:3–4; Job 11:13; Isaiah 1:15–16; Lamentations 3:41.
131. See Exodus 19.
132. M. H. Graffam, *Salt Lake School*, p. 38.
133. See, e.g., T. M. Compton, *Handclasp*; S. D. Ricks, *Sacred Embrace*; J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 464–470; H. W. Nibley, *Message*.

- 2005, pp. 445–452; H. W. Nibley, *Atonement*, pp. 567–568.
 134. *Rhoda Richards Diary*, 16 April 1843, cited in J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, p. 199.
 135. *Joseph Smith Diary by Willard Richards*, 16 April 1843, in *ibid.*, pp. 195–196, spelling and punctuation modernized, emphasis added.
 136. 1 Kings 17:21–22; 2 Kings 4:34–35.
 137. 2 Kings 4:34–35.
 138. On the practice of Mesopotamian healers, see A. Berlin et al., *Jewish*, p. 713 n. 21. On the statement from the Seder Eliyahu Rabbah, see G. Kittel et al., *Dictionary*, 9:527, cited in J. E. Seaich, *Freemasonry*.
 139. M. G. Romney, *Temples*, pp. 239–240.
 140. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 21 May 1843, p. 305.
 141. For an insightful comparison of the “wrestles” of Jacob and Enos, see M. L. Bowen, *And There Wrestled*.
 142. Genesis 32:24–30.
 143. Joseph Smith—History, 1:69; D&C 13:1.
 144. D&C 128:20.
 145. Compare 2 Corinthians 11:14; 2 Nephi 9:9; D&C 129:8; Moses 1:2, 9, 11–25.
 146. J. F. McConkie *et al.*, *Revelations*, p. 1040. Considering the similarity of language used in 2 Nephi 9:9 to describe Satan’s efforts to deceive of Adam and Eve, these same authors conjecture that Adam “came to aid the Prophet . . . on this occasion” “by virtue of his own experience in such things” (*ibid.*, p. 1035).
- As with most other sacred incidents of his early ministry, the Prophet was at first reticent to speak openly about these keys. The earliest record of Joseph Smith’s specific teachings on how to detect true and false messengers comes from notes of a private discourse given to the Twelve Apostles on July 2, 1839 (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 2 July 1839, p. 162). See also J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Wilford Woodruff Diary, 27 June 1839, p. 6; *ibid.*, p. 44; J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 28 April 1842, p. 226; J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 1 May 1842, pp. 119–120; J. Smith, Jr., *Record*, p. 300; D&C 129.
147. See Moses 1. For a detailed commentary on this chapter, including a comparison with the pseudepigraphal *Apocalypse of Abraham*, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes*, pp. 23–50. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 32–81, especially pp. 53–58.
 148. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 12 November 1835, p. 91.
 149. R. L. Bushman, *Response*, 35:59–40:11, cited with permission.
 150. For example, this is consistent with Jason Lindquist’s arguments

about how the idea of “keys” developed in the teachings of Joseph Smith (J. H. Lindquist, *Keywords*, p. 37):

The meaning of a term that would have been familiar to the Mormon prophet and his audience was gradually transformed by a series of recorded revelations and public addresses, with the result that an old word slowly came to express a dense constellation of doctrines original to Mormonism.

151. S. M. Brown, *In Heaven*, pp. 179, 185, 187–188. Compare R. L. Bushman, *Rough Stone*, pp. 449–450.

152. Brown further concludes that after Joseph Smith’s formal induction into Masonry in Nauvoo his “ideas had not changed much, but [in certain instances] the *language* used to describe them had” (S. M. Brown, *In Heaven*, p. 177).

153. As Lindquist puts it (J. H. Lindquist, *Keywords*, p. 36):

[Joseph] Smith regularly found ways to make productive and pedagogic use of the Saints’ “traditions” by harnessing words and concepts already available to his listeners and then gradually modifying them in an effort to better explain complex and original — even radical — doctrines. If the Prophet was correct in the Saints’ tendency to “fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes tht is contrary to their traditions” (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 20 January 1844, p. 331), then introducing the endowment ceremony in wholly unfamiliar terms would have been extremely difficult. [For example, t]he deployment of “key” [in discussing] the temple was one strategy that allowed the Saints to understand the endowment as both an extrapolation of already familiar doctrines and the expression of new truths in a new way.

154. See, e.g., B. A. Gardner, *Gift and Power*, pp. 215–225.

155. Compare Mosiah 18:13; 3 Nephi 11:25; D&C 20:73.

156. See B. R. McConkie, *New Witness*, pp. 294–295.

157. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

158. Joseph Smith taught: “The rich can only get [the keys given in the endowment] in the Temple, the poor may get them on the mountain top as did Moses” (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 1 May 1842, pp. 119–120, spelling, grammar, and punctuation standardized).

159. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Ark and Tent*. For a detailed study of biblical

allusions to temple themes and practices before the Tabernacle was constructed, see L. M. Morales, *Tabernacle Pre-Figured*.

160. 2 Samuel 7:2.

161. See 2 Chronicles, chapter 6.

162. In 1884, President John Taylor related (J. Taylor, 18 May 1884, p. 183):

Joseph Smith, before his death, was much exercised about the completion of the Temple in Nauvoo, and the administering of ordinances therein. In his anxiety and for fear he should not live to see the Temple completed, he prepared a place over what was known as the brick store ... where to a chosen few he administered those ordinances that we now have today associated with endowments, so that if anything should happen to him — which he evidently contemplated — he would feel that he had then fulfilled his mission, that he had conferred upon others all the keys given to him by the manifestations of the power of God.

163. T. G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith*, p. 97.

164. See the journal of L. John Nuttall, vol. 1, 7 February 1877, pp. 18–19, Special Collections, BYU Library, cited in *ibid.*, p. 98. The Prophet continued: “I wish you to take this matter in hand and organize and systematize all these ceremonies.” Then, according to Brigham, “I did so. And each time I got something more [meaning that each time he worked on systematizing he had not only his memory and the records kept by Wilford Woodruff and others but also the light of revelation], so that when we went through the temple at Nauvoo [and without Joseph] I undersood and knew how to place them there. We had our ceremonies pretty correct” (*ibid.*).

165. Richard Cowan writes (R. O. Cowan, *Design*, p. 50. Cf. R. O. Cowan, *Dot*, pp. 63–64):

Because the great temple would not be completed for forty years, temporary facilities needed to be provided where the Saints could receive temple blessings. During the pioneers’ early years in the Salt Lake Valley, these blessings had been given in various places, including the top of Ensign Peak and Brigham Young’s office. By 1852, endowments were being given in the Council House, located on the southwest corner of what are now South Temple and

Main Streets. This facility also accommodated a variety of other ecclesiastical and civic functions, so a separate place was needed where the sacred temple ordinances could be given. The Endowment House, a two-story adobe structure dedicated in 1855, was located in the northwest corner of Temple Square. It continued to bless the Saints until it was torn down in 1889 after other temples were finished in the region and as the Salt Lake Temple itself neared completion.

166. R. O. Cowan, *Dot*, p. 159. On the history of this new development, see *ibid.*, pp. 159–160; R. O. Cowan, *Latter-day Houses of the Lord*, pp. 212–213; R. O. Cowan, *Pivotal Swiss Temple*, pp. 133–135; S. L. Dew, *Hinckley*, pp. 176–184.
167. E.g., “It was long debated among Egyptologists whether the Pyramid Texts were recited by a priest or acted out, following instructions held in the hand or written on the walls. (H. W. Nibley, *Drama*, p. 17).
168. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
169. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
170. H. W. Nibley, *House of Glory*, p. 334.
171. T. Walch, *LDS Church Begins*.
172. H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, p. xxix.
173. J. A. Widtsoe, *Work*, p. 33. Shedding further light on Hugh Nibley’s statement that the endowment “does not attempt to be a picture of reality but only a model or analog to show us how things work” (H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, p. xxix) and Elder Widtsoe’s distinction between earthly and heavenly ordinances is a story Nibley relates that seems to imply that LDS temple ordinances, as essential as they are in this life, must be performed again in a more perfect and final form as part of ordinances available in the next life (H. W. Nibley, *Abraham’s Creation Drama*, from 26:19–27:18; compare with the published version, H. W. Nibley, *Drama*, p. 12):

I readily accept the margin allowed by taste and practicability [in the design of temples and the performance of the work done therein]. While the thing is still building, it’s in the planning stage where alterations are possible. Our temple work, the whole work is still in its planning stage. My grandfather told me when he went through the temple once with Brother Joseph F. Smith, President of the Church — they were very close friends,

they traveled together in the islands and that sort of thing — and President Smith told him, he said, “Charlie, all this work will have to be done again.” You see, this is just a dry run. It’s not working right at all. That didn’t keep me from going to the temple!

Well, this is not the final, real temple, the ideal future temple of the Temple Scroll. Here we do not receive crowns of glory, but only the promise that if we are true and faithful, later, we may be qualified, we may be eligible. But not here. This is a training center, a school for precepts and a showplace for examples (see D&C 109).

174. S. Lachs, *Rabbinic Commentary*, p. 230 n. 52 translates the first part of the KJV Matthew 13:52 phrase “every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven” as “every scribe who is expert” (cf. the late Hebrew *baqi* and compare JST Matthew 13:52: “Every scribe well instructed in the things of the kingdom of heaven” (S. Faulring et al., *Original Manuscripts*, NT 1, pp. 193–194)). Lachs compares this phrase to parallels such as “expert in the inner teachings of the Torah, expert in the mysteries of Torah, expert in medicine, and expert in *halakhah*.”

R. T. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, p. 546 discusses the relevance of this saying to the role of the “apocalyptic scribe,” “because it was a special role of such scribes to understand and interpret dark sayings; parables were their stock-in-trade.” Elder Bruce R. McConkie relates this phrase to the idea that “the Twelve, all the disciples, both male and female ... knew the meanings of the parables, the deep, hidden, glorious meanings of these gems” (B. R. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 2:268).

175. R. T. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, p. 546.

176. Matthew 13:52.

177. W. D. Davies et al., *Gospel According to Matthew*, 2:447 n. 63. The translation recalls a similar paradox in the name and idea of the “New and Everlasting Covenant” (*Gospel Principles* 2009, p. 85). According to Joseph Smith, the origins of this covenant were prior to creation (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 16 May 1841, p. 190). The designation of this covenant as “new” is usually explained in terms of it having been revealed “anew” in each dispensation.

178. Matthew 13:35.

179. R. T. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, p. 546. Fittingly, as applications of this saying, Joseph Smith gave “the Book of Mormon,” “the covenants

given to the Latter-day Saints,” and “the translation of the Bible — thus bringing forth out of the heart things new and old” (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, December 1835, p. 102).

180. Don Bradley has argued that the First Vision was Joseph Smith’s initiation as a seer and constituted a kind of heavenly endowment (D. Bradley, Unpublished Manuscript).

Acknowledging that the earliest extant account of the First Vision does not appear to modern readers to be anything like an endowment experience, Bradley writes:

Smith’s vision looks like a typical conversion vision of Jesus (insofar as a Christophany can be typical — that is, it shares a common pattern) when the account from his most “Protestant” phase is used and is set only in the context of revivalism. Yet there is no reason to limit analysis only to that account and that context. All accounts, and not only the earliest, provide evidence for the character of the original experience. Indeed, literary scholars Neal Lambert and Richard Cracroft (Literary Form) have argued from their comparison of the respectively constrained and free-flowing styles of the 1832 and 1838 accounts that the former attempts to contain the new wine of Smith’s theophany in an old wineskin of narrative convention. While the 1838 telling, in which the experience is both a conversion and a prophetic calling, is straightforward and natural, the 1832 account seems formal and forced, as if young Smith’s experience was ready to burst the old wineskin or had been shoehorned into a revivalistic conversion narrative five sizes too small.

Noting that “latter-day revelation gives us the fuller account and meaning of what actually took place on the Mount” where Moses came into the presence of the Lord (Moses 1), Elder Alvin R. Dyer saw a similarity between the heavenly ascent of Moses and that of Joseph Smith in the First Vision (A. R. Dyer, *Meaning*, p. 12). For a detailed description of allusions to ordinances in the first chapter of the book of Moses, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Moses Temple Themes* (2014), pp. 26–50.

181. D. Bradley, Unpublished Manuscript.
182. K. Flake, *Translating Time*, p. 525. Of course, this does not mean that other kinds of knowledge gained in the temple are not just as vital. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 1–5, 11–18.

183. D&C 84:19–22.
184. S. E. Robinson et al., *D&C Commentary*, 3:31–32. See John 17:3.
185. H. W. Nibley, *Unrolling*, p. 165. Cf. 1 John 3:2. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, p. 35.
186. Elder D. Todd Christofferson, in L. T. Perry et al., *Gospel Answers*.
187. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, October 1840, p. 167.
188. J. A. Widtsoe, *Work*, p. 33.
189. W. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 4:Prologue:53, p. 955. In other words, “representing to yourself the truth of what we imitate so badly” (*ibid.*, p. 955 n. 53). Nibley often used this line from Shakespeare to describe the limitations of our mortal efforts to represent the sublime scenes and themes of temple drama (e.g., H. W. Nibley, *Drama*, p. 11) — especially in light of his view that the earthly temple ordinances are not “a picture of reality but only a model or analog to show us how things work” (H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, p. xxix).

In the context of the play, Shakespeare’s narrator implores the audience to forgive his feeble efforts to represent the glories of the battle of Agincourt “with four or five most vile and ragged foils ... in brawl ridiculous” (W. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 4:Prologue:50–51, p. 955), reminding them of the impossibility of cramming the “vasty fields of France” (W. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Prologue:12, p. 935) into the confines of their small stage.

190. H. W. Nibley, *Treasures*, p. 178. With respect to the purpose of the ordinances as a means of demonstrating obedience, President Brigham Young explained (B. Young, 23 October 1853, pp. 3, 4):

Will the bread administered in this ordinance [of the sacrament] add life to you? Will the wine add life to you? Yes; if you are hungry and faint, it will sustain the natural strength of the body. But suppose you have just eaten and drunk till you are full, so as not to require another particle of food to sustain the natural body ... In what consists [then] the benefit we derive from this ordinance? It is in obeying the commands of the Lord. When we obey the commandments of our Heavenly Father, if we have a correct understanding of the ordinances of the House of God, we receive all the promises attached to the obedience rendered to His commandments. ...

It is the same in this as it is in the ordinance of baptism for the remission of sins. Has water, in itself, any virtue

to wash away sin? Certainly not, ... but keeping the
commandments of God will cleanse away the stain of sin.

191. D&C 84:23.

A MORMON THEODICY: JACOB AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Val Larsen

Abstract: Lehi's son Jacob was troubled by a great theological mystery of his and our day — the problem of evil. If God is both all good and all-powerful, how is it possible for the world to be so full of human and natural evils? Jacob was able to elicit from the Lord responses to the question of why He permits evil to flourish in this world. The Lord elucidates the perennial problem of evil for Jacob and us in three distinct genres and at three different levels of abstraction: at a metaphysical level in a philosophical patriarchal blessing, at a concrete level in the history of the emerging Nephite political economy, and in the Allegory of the Olive Tree.

In the Gospel, as in all human existence, there are mysteries, unresolved conundrums that puzzle the mind and trouble the spirit. These conundrums, Joseph Smith taught, lead to revelation. Thus, among the many legacies Joseph bequeathed to humanity is a hermeneutical principle that has great utility for interpreting scripture. "I have a key," he wrote, "by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer?"¹ Being himself a prophet who received many revelations, Joseph understood that revelation generally comes as the answer to a question in the mind of the prophet who writes it. The more profound the question posed by the prophet, the more consequential the revelation he receives.

This hermeneutical principle can help us understand Lehi's son Jacob. Throughout his life Jacob was troubled by a great theological mystery of his and our day — *the problem of evil*. If God is both all good and all-powerful, how is it possible for the world to be so full of human and natural evils? Why has God not exercised his power to alleviate, or better yet, eliminate the suffering that everywhere surrounds us?²

1 *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 5:261.

2 For a recent summary of the problem and efforts to address it, see Michael Tooley, "The Problem of Evil", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring

While the problem of evil troubled Jacob, he did not formulate it precisely as a modern skeptic would. For Jacob, the goodness of God was an indubitable first premise because he had a profound personal knowledge of God's goodness that was rooted in his personal salvation (2 Nephi 2:2–4). Thus, the problem of evil was for him the problem of *apostasy*, the decision to stand aloof from or rebel against the Lord Jesus Christ — which is the true root of all evil.

Because his experiences and character primed him to seek answers, Jacob was able to elicit from the Lord both explicit and implicit responses to the question of why God permits evil to flourish in this world. Through Jacob, the Lord elucidates the perennial problem of evil in three distinct genres and at three different levels of abstraction: at a metaphysical level in a philosophical patriarchal blessing, at a concrete level in the history of the unfolding Nephite political economy and Jacob's response to it, and in the Allegory of the Olive Tree.

Modern Christian and Latter-day Saint Dimensions of the Problem

In addition to addressing Jacob's own concerns in the material that comes to us through Jacob, the Lord also addresses the problem of evil as it presents itself to Mormons and other Christians in our time. For the believing Christian, the problem of evil has an extra dimension: more terrible than the specter of human sin or natural disaster is the ultimate evil — to live without God and Christ. Since the core purpose of this life is to know and be redeemed by Christ and thus return to live with God, why has God permitted the majority of human beings through the majority of human history to live their lives having never heard of Christ, their Redeemer? This mystery is less acute for Latter-day Saints than for other Christians because they have temples in which the dead who never heard of Christ may be baptized by proxy and receive all ordinances necessary to return to God's presence. But precisely because they themselves so richly enjoy the blessings of the fullness of the gospel, thoughtful Mormons must remain troubled to think that so many fellow sons and daughters of God have had to live their earthly lives without hearing of and knowing the Savior and the fullness of his gospel.

For the believing Mormon, this first mystery poses a second question. Latter-day Saints live with the assurance that the fullness of

the gospel will never again be taken from the earth.³ This assurance deepens the mystery of so many people living their lives without hearing of Christ. Absent the divine guarantee that humanity will never again lose the gospel, one might more plausibly argue that people have not known Christ because, for one reason or another, God is unable to keep the fullness of the gospel on the earth. But if he was not able to do so in the past, why is he able to do so now? Through Jacob, we receive answers to these questions.

Biographical Foundations

Jacob's intense interest in this theme flowed out of his experience and his character, and it was focused by the evolving political economy of the emerging Nephite nation in his day. The foundation of Jacob's concern with the problem of evil was probably his personal biography. It is possible that the timing of Jacob's birth may have predisposed him to take a special interest in apostasy and the problem of evil. Lehi tells Jacob and Joseph that they were born "in the days of my tribulation in the wilderness," "yea, in the days of my greatest sorrow did thy mother bear thee" (2 Nephi 2:1, 3:1). If Lehi is speaking about a specific time rather than generically about his eight years in Arabia, the moment he alludes to is probably when Nephi broke his bow, and all whom Lehi had led out of Jerusalem were on the verge of starvation. In that moment, Lehi "was truly chastened because of his murmuring against the Lord, insomuch that he was brought down into the depths of sorrow" (1 Nephi 16:25). Lehi's uncharacteristic and temporary lapse into murmuring against the Lord might be more easily understood if among those who were starving was his pregnant wife Sariah or young, possibly newborn sons. Jacob might have been predisposed to take a special interest in the problem of apostasy if he grew up understanding that the one faithless moment of his father's life was occasioned by his own birth.

What we know for certain is that Jacob "suffered afflictions and much sorrow because of the rudeness" of his apostate brothers, Laman and Lemuel (2 Nephi 2:1). Nephi specifically mentions Jacob's suffering while he, Nephi, was cruelly bound by ropes on the high seas (1 Nephi 18:19). And years later, the breach within the family caused by the apostasy of Laman and Lemuel still deeply troubles Jacob. He sorrowfully reports that while "many means were devised to reclaim and restore the Lamanites,"

3 D&C 13:1; Henry B. Eyring, "The True and Living Church," *Ensign*, May 2008, 20 – 24.

all were met with “an eternal hatred against us, their brethren” (Jacob 7:24). Though he is writing at the end of his long life,⁴ their hatred still stings. He continues to mourn the loss of family ties that apostasy and violence imposed upon him in his youth (Jacob 7:26–27).

Jacob’s preoccupation with the problem of evil was rooted not only in his experiences but also in his character. His character was marked by a strong tendency to perceive clearly the sinfulness of acts committed by others and then to suffer pangs of conscience for those sins. He bore in some measure the burden not only of his own but of others’ sins as well (2 Nephi 6:3; Jacob 1:5; 2:2; 4:18). This partly explains why he was so keenly troubled by the problem of evil.

Patriarchal Blessing

The first of the three genres that provide insight into the problem of evil is a patriarchal blessing. Although he died while Jacob was young, Lehi nevertheless seems to have understood how Jacob’s character and experiences had affected him, especially how deeply troubled his son was by the problem of evil and its specific manifestation, apostasy. It is surely no accident that the greatest philosophical discussion in all scripture on the nature and necessity of evil comes as a patriarchal blessing, as a doctrinal legacy and gift from his earthly and divine fathers to young Jacob whose “soul abhorreth sin” (2 Nephi 9:49).⁵

In this blessing, Lehi posits the metaphysical primacy of agency. At the core of his or her being, each person is an agent who is fundamentally constituted by the capacity to choose. From this premise, it follows that there must be “opposition in all things,” live alternatives for the agents to choose, because an agent without choices “must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility” (2 Nephi 2:11). And from the premise of agents without choices, without law and sin, righteousness and happiness, punishment and misery, Lehi proceeds with a *reductio ad absurdum* argument to a consequent: “if these things are not there is no God. And if there is no God we are not, neither the earth; for there

4 Enos 1:25 suggests that Jacob was probably at least 90 years old when he died and that Enos, born when Jacob was an old man, also lived a long life.

5 Pritchett demonstrates that in pronouncing his blessing on Jacob, Lehi drew together various ideas about the fall and freedom and War in Heaven that were part of preexilic Hebrew thought (Bruce M. Pritchett, Jr, “Lehi’s Theology of the Fall in Its Preexilic/Exilic Context,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 3 (2) [1994], 49–83.)

could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away” (2 Nephi 2:13).

*Quod est demonstratum.*⁶ Since all things have not vanished away, human agents must be able to choose between good and evil. Through philosophical reasoning, Lehi shows young Jacob that, for anything to exist, the evil that so troubles him must also exist. Thus, analyzed metaphysically, the absolute non-existence of the *evil* that makes choice possible is the ultimate *EVIL*. A good God must make evil an option for humanity. If that evil is then chosen, moral blame must be imputed, not to God but, rather, to the human agent who chooses it.

Having posited the metaphysical primacy of agency as a first principle, Lehi adds another critically important dimension of a valid theodicy by laying foundations of a second doctrine — the co-creation of the world — that is implicit in the principle of agency and in his teachings. He suggests that while God himself played the essential and primary role in the creation, he did not play the only role. Being independent agents who would act for themselves, human beings would inevitably shape the world in which they lived. The experiences each person would have in a world full of agents would necessarily be affected by the choices that person and those other agents freely made. Thus, what Jacob experienced would be determined not just by God but also by Nephi, Lehi and Sariah, and many others, including Laman and Lemuel.

Lehi implicitly develops this idea by discussing Adam and Eve. God underscored humanity’s role as co-creators by making Adam and Eve decide whether they would continue to live in his presence as innocent, immortal beings or leave and enter “a state of probation” as mortals in a lonesome and dreary world, a world where they could grow emotionally and spiritually and experience depths of sorrow and joy they could not experience in the garden. Lehi expressed this idea to Jacob as follows:

And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the Garden of

6 Though deeply insightful and doctrinally illuminating, Lehi’s argument is not logically valid by modern standards. It has unstated and unproven premises, e.g., that God is a certain kind of being — a loving father who is just and seeks to optimize the happiness of his children. But the canon of self-evident truths was different in Lehi’s time than it is in ours and the standards of logical proof less rigorous. When Lehi formulated it, the argument probably was valid. As Welch notes, life without the law was unthinkable, and the existence of the law was inherently bound up with the existence of God (John W. Welch, *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon*, Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, [2008], 12–13).

Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. But behold ... Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. (2 Nephi 2:22–25)

Lehi implies that when Eve chose to leave the Garden of Eden and when Adam chose to go with her, they created by their choice a new world for themselves that would test and develop their capacities, permitting them to “be as God, knowing good and evil” (2 Nephi 2:18).⁷

To make more fully explicit the implications of the blessing Lehi gave Jacob, it is helpful to supplement what he said with modern revelation. While Lehi knew something of the War in Heaven and its importance (2 Nephi 2:1–18) and while he fully understood that “all [intelligence] is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself ... otherwise there is no existence,” he may or may not have understood that the essence of each human being is uncreated and coeval with God (D&C 93:29–30).⁸ He may or may not have known that all God’s children dwelt with him as preexistent beings or understood the full magnitude of the role Adam had played in the creation and still plays in the governance of

7 Adam was so deeply devoted to the Lord that he was determined to keep all of God’s commandments. While this kind of perfect obedience is desirable and consistent with the exercise of agency, it can obscure the fact that the human and divine wills are distinct. It is, perhaps, a tribute to Adam’s faithfulness that the Lord placed him in a situation where he could not simply act as God had commanded but would, rather, be compelled to make a critically important independent judgment about what course his life would take. Thus, God commanded Adam that he should not partake of the forbidden fruit and that he should remain with Eve (Moses 4:18) and multiply and replenish the earth (Moses 2:28). Adam logically chose to keep the first commandment and to leave the second not yet kept but also not rejected. God had not commanded that he multiply and replenish *now*. Once Eve wisely partook of the forbidden fruit (Moses 5:11) — and thus ensured her ejection from the garden — Adam was forced to choose which commandment he would violate. He could not avoid violating one of the two, and God had given him no guidance on which he should transgress. He was, therefore, compelled to choose as he judged best.

8 The doctrine had been understood and taught by Abraham (Abraham 3:18–22), but there is no clear evidence that Lehi understood it.

the world. But these doctrines, which are now known are fully consistent with and reinforce the arguments that constitute Lehi's theodicy.

Adam and Eve's voluntary co-creation of a fallen world where they would experience and suffer from moral and natural evils absolved God not only of their sins and sufferings but of the sins and sufferings of all his other children as well. This is true because the decision Adam and Eve made to leave the Garden of Eden was emblematic of the decision we all made to leave our garden-like preexistent state and enter a state of probation in this lone and dreary world.⁹

The condition of Adam and Eve in the Garden was very much like their condition in the preexistence where they were also innocent, unable to have children, and walked and talked with God. As by partaking of the forbidden fruit in the garden they created a new fallen world for themselves that would be critically shaped by their subsequent choices, so we all likewise chose to leave our preexistent garden-like state and, thus, likewise had a hand in placing ourselves amid the moral and natural evils that now surround us. It was not an original sin of Adam and Eve but rather a considered decision to leave the garden that made it possible for us to come to earth. And our fate was determined not by their well-considered decision but by the well-considered decision we each made that mirrored and reaffirmed theirs.

Lehi's implication that humanity has a role as co-creators of the fallen world is further developed not only by our understanding of the life we lived and decisions we made in the preexistence but also by our understanding of the magnitude of the role Adam was assigned in creating and governing the world. Though God surely had the power to do the job himself, he directed Adam to lead his angels, namely us, and to join the battle that drove Satan from heaven (Revelation 12:7). Under the direction of God, Adam joined with Christ to create the universe and world in which we dwell. And it is Adam who, at the end of days, will again marshal the hosts of heaven (those who have kept their second estate) to drive Satan from this world and reestablish Christ upon his rightful throne (D&C 88:112–115). In short, to signify his desire that other intelligences participate with him in the creation of this world, God visibly enlisted Adam — who as the first man embodies or leads the rest of humanity — to carry out many of the tasks incident to the execution of the divine plan. In doing this, he makes it clear that he wants us to add

9 Terryl L. Givens, *When Souls Had Wings: Pre-Mortal Existence in Western Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 94, 107.

to his glory by voluntarily offering up our own distinctive will, insight, and talents to support and mark the great project he has set before us.¹⁰

With respect to Lehi's insight that human agency is a metaphysical first principle that binds even God, this is true precisely because the essence of each being, the locus of choice, is uncreated and coeval with God (D&C 93:29). What he did not and cannot create, God cannot completely control or fully change. He is, therefore, not morally responsible for the choices we make and the evil we do.¹¹ And since he

10 Lehi indicates that God created opposition, choice, "to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man" (2 Nephi 2:15). Those purposes are defined by Moses: "this is my work and my glory — to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39).

11 The doctrine, understood by Abraham and revealed by Joseph Smith, that the essence of human beings, the locus of agency, is uncreated by God is an essential element in an adequate theodicy. The principle of free agency alone is not sufficient. The God of the philosophers, which became the God of orthodox Christianity, is a being outside of time and space who foreknows all and creates all *ex nihilo*. See Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, "Craftsman or Creator? An Examination of Creation and a Defense of *Creatio ex nihilo*," in *New Mormon Challenge*, ed. Francis Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, 95–152, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002. This orthodox Christian God necessarily knows what every being will freely choose before he creates it. It is in his power to create only that subset of beings who will freely choose to do what is right. If he creates beings who he foreknows will freely choose to do monstrously evil acts, he cannot escape responsibility for those acts. He had the option of not creating these entirely contingent evil beings. For a detailed discussion of these issues, see David L. Paulsen and Blake T. Ostler, "Sin, Suffering, and Soul-Making: Joseph Smith on the Problem of Evil," in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks, 237–284, Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002.

There are some indications that the LDS God, though in time, also foreknows what his children will freely choose (Isaiah 46:10; Abraham 2:8). But his choices are more constrained than those of the orthodox God of the philosophers. The existence of other beings is not contingent on the LDS God. His only choice is to give other pre-existing beings an opportunity to develop their capacities or to not give them that opportunity. The moral issue thus becomes whether it is better to leave a being who will choose to do evil undeveloped or enable it to progress to the point where its substantially evil nature will become apparent. We know little about the precise condition of intelligences that God has not yet clothed with spirit bodies. But it is entirely possible that, on balance, these beings are better off after experiencing earth life than they were before, even if they do not keep their second estate. If that is true, God should facilitate their further development in spite of the fact that he knows they will choose to do much evil. Leaving them and the evil they will do entirely unactualized may be a morally inferior option.

cannot directly affect our will, he must affect us — if we will respond — by changing the context in which we make decisions, by transforming the sphere in which we are placed to act for ourselves.¹²

And that brings us to the final pillar of Lehi's theodicy. In their sole, self-determining essence, all of God's children who chose to enter the fallen world — save one — were destined to be cut off from God because of their inherent weaknesses. All but Christ would sin, bringing evil into their own and others' lives and, thus, would disqualify themselves to reenter God's presence (2 Nephi 2:5). Justice would claim them — the natural law that evil consequences follow from evil acts, that we are what our actions have made or manifested us to be. As Jacob would later say, the natural law that is justice dictates "that they who are righteous shall be righteous still and they who are filthy shall be filthy still" (2 Nephi 9:16), a statement that loses all its cheer when one adds what Jacob knew and the Psalmist said, "there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalms 14:3). Left unto themselves, all those autonomous, uncreated intelligences shall be filthy still and, thus, justly damned.

There is only one escape from the hell we have created for ourselves by our choices — the God whom some try to blame for the world's evils. Thus Lehi tells Jacob, "Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth. Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered" (2 Nephi 2:6–7). Christ changes the sphere in which humanity acts by loving them enough to suffer the pains of their just punishment. Those who are able to respond to this new fact, this act of extraordinary love, with a broken heart and contrite spirit are born again as new, better beings, as beings who have "no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" (Mosiah 5:2) and who are, thus, worthy to reenter God's presence. So far from being responsible for the world's evils, Jehovah is the one, the only one, who makes it possible for his fellow uncreated intelligences to purge evil from their souls.

The Emergence of the Nephite Natural State

But let us turn now from a metaphysical discussion of the problem of evil in general to a discussion of the more specific evil that is apparent to thoughtful Christians. If Christ alone can save us and if the core purpose

12 Val Larsen, "Restoration: A Theological Poem in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 10, 239–256.

of this life is to know and be redeemed by him, why has God permitted most of humanity to live their lives having never heard of Christ, their Redeemer? Jacob answers this question with a history of the emergence of the natural state among the Nephites and with the Allegory of the Olive Tree.

That God does intervene in human affairs to create a people who know him is apparent in the account of the Lehiite exodus from Jerusalem and from his explicit statement: “thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph” (Jacob 2:25). Through miracles, God led this people, and through Lehi and Nephi’s dreams and visions, he established a clear understanding of the essential saving role of Christ. It is difficult to imagine a more forceful intervention that would leave space for the doubt and faith that agency requires. And yet, by the end of the journey, half of this blessed people have utterly rejected the doctrine of Christ and the prophetic leadership established by God. Jacob then shows us that the other half is only slightly more faithful to the revelation that they have received.

While Nephi still led them, the people who took his name seem to have remained religiously observant. But the death of Nephi confronts Jacob with a personally and politically difficult problem because the new king brings the nation to the brink of apostasy. The king, probably Nephi’s oldest son,¹³ would have been for Jacob more brother than nephew. Raised together by Nephi, they would have been intimately acquainted with each other. And both were consecrated by Nephi and given authority to lead the people in their respective sacred and secular spheres.¹⁴

But as Jacob and the king seek to fulfill their charges to lead the people in matters sacred and secular, a conflict arises. Jacob, who

13 Brant Gardner, “Jacob 1,” *Book of Mormon: Multi-Dimensional Commentary*, <http://frontpage2000.nmia.com/~nahualli/LDStops/Jacob/Jacob1.htm> (accessed 24 September 2008).

14 Nephi foresaw the dangers of monarchy (the natural state) and tried to convince his people to have no king, but he quickly gave up when he saw they were unprepared to accept an alternative mode of governance (2 Nephi 5:18–19). He gave his people the king they demanded (2 Nephi 5: 18); however, he protected them, at least temporarily, by splitting his spiritual and secular power through the consecration of both a successor king and independent priests. In the episode here discussed, Jacob uses social power derived from his consecration by Nephi to check the wanton power of the king.

seems to have a low opinion of the new king, diplomatically tries to depersonalize the conflict by not explicitly condemning the monarch, by calling his intimate acquaintance simply “a man” (Jacob 1:9) and “the second king” (Jacob 1:15).¹⁵ But he incorporates in his narrative a strong implicit statement of his own faithfulness to the charge Nephi had given him and implicit criticism of the new king’s dereliction of duty.

Just before he mentions Nephi’s death (Jacob 1:12), Jacob affirms that he stands in Nephi’s place and implies that the good Nephi has done is in danger of being undone by his successor. He connects himself with Nephi by echoing Nephi’s words. Nephi had written, “For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ and be reconciled to God” (2 Nephi 25:23). Jacob echoes, “Wherefore we labored diligently among our people, that we might persuade them to come unto Christ, and partake of the goodness of God” but then, hinting at danger, continues, “lest by any means he should swear in his wrath they should not enter in, as in the provocation in the days of temptation while the children of Israel were in the wilderness. Wherefore, we would to God that we could persuade all men not to rebel against God” (Jacob 1:7–8). This allusion to apostasy during Moses’ great exodus suggests that the new Nephite exodus is likewise in danger.¹⁶ Jacob then again affirms his own faithfulness, “wherefore, I

15 As Welch notes in discussing the trial of Abinadi, law and custom made it dangerous to accuse the king of doing evil. Welch, *Legal Cases*, 159–160.

16 The Promised Land has a dual reference. The ultimate Promised Land is Heaven. Earthly promised lands remain promised only to the extent that we live in them as nearly as possible according to a celestial law. Nephi has brought his people to a promised land, the Land of Nephi, where they have lived under his direction “after the manner of happiness” (2 Nephi 5:27). If Jacob were thinking only about a geographical location, his people are already in the Promised Land and won’t be forced out of it until 400 years later in the time of Mosiah. The Land of Nephi remains in their minds the Promised Land even after they are forced out of it. That is why Zeniff tries to return and it is why people always “go up” to the Land of Nephi just as people always “go up” to Jerusalem in the Bible. Jacob makes a double point when he likens his people to the Hebrews “in the provocation in the days of temptation.” Because they are indulging in wickedness, Jacob’s people cast into doubt whether they will ever enter the archetypal Promised Land, Heaven. Their wickedness also raises questions about whether they will remain in the Land of Nephi and/or whether the Land of Nephi will remain a blessed land. A number of scholars have commented on the exodus motif in the Book of Mormon. See Bruce J. Boehm, “Wanderers in the Promised Land: A Study of the Exodus Motif in the Book of Mormon and Holy Bible,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 3 (1) [1994], 187–203, one of many works that treat this theme.

Jacob, take it upon me to fulfill the commandment of my brother Nephi.” Turning to his secular counterpart, Jacob notes in 1:9 that the new king was anointed by Nephi and, as the narrative resumes in 1:15, that the people began to be wicked under his leadership.

Jacob clearly indicates that the new king has not magnified his office as Jacob and Joseph have. The king, who is at its pinnacle, allows a malignant status hierarchy to develop in which some Nephites dominate others and seize the usual worldly rewards of illicit sex, money, and power. Noting repeatedly and portentously that previous kings created similar problems, Jacob reports, “the people of Nephi, under the reign of the second king, began to grow hard in their hearts, and indulge themselves somewhat in wicked practices, such as like unto David of old desiring many wives and concubines, and also Solomon, his son. Yea, and they also began to search much gold and silver, and began to be lifted up somewhat in pride” (Jacob 1:15–16; cf. Jacob 2:23–24; Mosiah 11:1–2).

In the sermon that follows, Jacob notes that the wealthy exploit and persecute the poor because they think they are better than their poor brethren (Jacob 2:13–20). He again mentions the sexual incontinence of kings David and Solomon (Jacob 2:24) and then condemns his own people, “for ye have done these things which ye ought not to have done. . . . Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives and lost the confidence of your children” (Jacob 2:34–35). He commends the Lamanites who, unlike the Nephites, “have not forgotten the commandment of the Lord, which was given unto our fathers — that they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none” (Jacob 3:5).¹⁷

17 Jacob seems to base his critique of the king on the Kingship Code in Deuteronomy (17:14–20), a text the Nephites had (1 Nephi 5:11). Ironically, Sherem — perhaps at the instigation of the resentful second king — later uses Deuteronomy to challenge Jacob and to critique the doctrine of Christ (John W. Welch, “Sherem’s Accusations Against Jacob,” *Insights*, 11/1 [1999]). A. Keith Thompson persuasively argues that Sherem was a son or grandson of Zoram, a scribe who knew the Brass Plates well but who may have rejected the doctrine of Christ (“Who was Sherem?” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 14 (2015), 1–15. On the anti-Christian aspects of Deuteronomy, see Kevin Christensen (2004), “The Deuteronomist De-Christianizing of the Old Testament,” *The FARMS Review* 16 (2). While Jacob seems to triumph in his encounter with Sherem (Jacob 7:15–20), textual evidence suggests that it was Sherem’s teachings, not Jacob’s, that the Nephites adopted during the subsequent four hundred years. After Enos, Christ disappears from the text until the time when King Benjamin and Abinadi separately restore the knowledge of the Savior that seems to have been lost. (See John L. Clark, “Painting Out the Messiah: The Theology of Dissidents,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*,

Combining considerable textual evidence with some limited reading between the lines, Brant Gardner plausibly suggests that the Nephite nation has grown by intermingling with surrounding populations and that the king seeks to cement his position through dynastic plural marriages and concubinage.¹⁸ Thus, the king and his principal supporters permit surrounding pagan allies to “lead away captive the daughters of [the Nephites]” (Jacob 2:33) while they themselves take plural wives and concubines from among the daughters of the surrounding pagan peoples.

Whether other peoples are involved or only the Nephites themselves, marriage and concubinage are governed by law, so in this small population, polygynous marriages could not occur without the consent and probably not without the participation of the king, the sovereign who is charged to establish and enforce law. It is, thus, apparent that the king has wrongly permitted himself and powerful friends to violate God’s laws by engaging in an illicit accumulation of wealth, wives, and concubines. He has facilitated the emergence of invidious social strata based on wealth, power, and inappropriate sexual unions.

Were he not already temperamentally depressed, the Sisyphean task Jacob has undertaken in speaking against these malignant practices might well depress him. For in his effort to combat among his people the rise of sexual privilege and pride rooted in economic differences and class-consciousness, Jacob has set himself against a nearly universal pattern in human social development. As Nobel Prize winning economist Douglass North and his colleagues have demonstrated, when populations increase, virtually all human societies transition from being a *primitive*

4/2 (2002): 16–27; Gary L. Sturgess, “The Book of Mosiah: Thoughts about Its Structure, Purposes, Themes, and Authorship,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 4/2 (1995): 107–35.) Thus, Noah and his priests know nothing of Christ and, like Sherem, deny that there are any grounds for believing in him. The conflict between Jacob and the second king may help explain the embrace of Sherem’s theological conservatism. Like Deuteronomy (13:1–5), Sherem was suspicious of prophecy and prophets (Jacob 7:7). His views thus eliminated an independent source of power that could challenge the authority of the king as Jacob did. Jacob’s appointment by Nephi gave him independent status. Subsequent kings, like Noah, appear to have appointed priests who were, in their view, properly subordinate to royal authority.

18 Brant Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Volume 2, Second Nephi – Jacob*, (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 484–499. See also John L. Sorenson, “When Lehi’s Party Arrived in the Land, Did They Find Others There?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 1 (1) [1992], 1–34.

state to being a *natural state*.¹⁹ Jacob's Nephite civilization appears to be undergoing the usual transition with the usual attendant economic gains and social evils. In their transition from a small, egalitarian group with a righteous first king to a larger, socially stratified group with a wicked second king, the Nephites seem to be anticipating the pattern that will be replicated and more fully described in the subsequent reigns of Zeniff and Noah who establish a similar community in similar circumstances (Mosiah 9–11).

North's primitive state is characterized by limited group size that facilitates personal connections between all group members and by a lack of economic specialization. With loose ties among some individuals, primitive states may govern groups as large as 500, but this comparatively intimate and non-hierarchical form of social organization will rarely be found among groups larger than that number. Usually when the group size exceeds 150 and almost inevitably when it exceeds 500, a natural state will emerge.²⁰

19 Douglass, C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: Conceptual Framework for Understanding Recorded Human History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast, "The Natural State and the Political Economy of Non-Development," (<http://www.international.ucla.edu/cms/files/PERG.North.pdf>), 2005. North et al. define the natural state as follows: "A *natural state* is a specific way of structuring political and economic systems so that the economic rents created by limited entry are available to secure credible commitments among politically powerful groups. Potential rivals in a natural state stop fighting (or fight less) when the economic rents they enjoy depend on the continued existence of the state and of social order. Natural states limit economic entry to create rents and then use those rents to credibly commit powerful groups to support the state. In other words, natural states use the economic system as a tool to solidify the stability of the ruling coalition" (pp. 3–4). Such a state is typically led by a king or dictator who is supported by nobles or elite apparatchiks who are permitted to exploit the common people in exchange for supporting the leader.

20 The magnitude of the primitive state seems to be a function of the size of the neocortex. Thus, primates with larger brains have larger social circles than those with smaller brains. A regression that uses the neocortex size of various primates as an independent variable and normal social group size as a dependent variable yields a group size value for humans of 148, usually rounded to 150 and known as *Dunbar's number*. Much social science research supports Dunbar's prediction that fully integrated social networks in which all group members know well and are well known by other group members will rarely exceed 150 members. Robert Ian McDonald Dunbar, "Neocortex Size as a Constraint on Group Size in Primates," *Journal of Human Evolution*, 22 (1992): 469–493; R. A. Hill and R. I. M. Dunbar, "Social Network Size in Humans," *Human Nature*, 14/1 (2003): 53–72.

Nephi (and Zeniff) appear to have governed in the mode of the primitive state, fostering a rough equality among group members, although very clearly being themselves the loved and admired first among equals.²¹ But by the time their successors are anointed, both Nephite groups have evidently become too large to be governed as a primitive state. Jacob says that his people “began to be numerous” (Jacob 3:13). A transition in one form or another to the natural state is probably inevitable. The economic and social changes that Jacob focuses on in his sermon indicate that the transition to the natural state has begun. For the Zeniff group, these changes, which occur at the accession of Noah, the second king, are well documented and explicitly described (Mosiah 11:1–6).

The natural state has the same foundation as the primitive state — intimate personal relationships. But the relationships pertinent to maintaining power are confined to those between a small group of power elites: e.g., the king and key supporters who are usually skilled at using violence. To preserve loyalty among these key supporters, the king confers upon them special social status and economic rights that others lack (Mosiah 11:3–4). The outsized financial returns that the privileged elites receive make them loyal to the king. All others are reduced to subsistence because the elites expropriate any excess wealth ordinary people produce. Having so much to lose if violence breaks out among them, the elites preserve peace through social exchange and, in particular, through intermarriage. The social changes that Jacob reprehends and that Noah exhibits are precisely those that undergird the emergence of a natural state: the social and economic stratification of the populace that pairs a proud elite with pronounced suffering among the poor who are reduced to subsistence, and the coupling of sex with power that leads to the instrumental use of women and children.

The ubiquitous rise of the natural state may substantially explain the mysterious fact that most human beings have lived their lives without having or even hearing of the true gospel of Jesus Christ. As is indicated by Jacob (and later Abinadi’s) obvious discomfort with the ideology and practices that sustain the Nephites’ emerging natural state, Christ’s true gospel meshes poorly with this mode of social organization. A natural state is scarcely conceivable if it is widely believed that “the one being is as precious in [God’s] sight as the other” (Jacob 2:21) and that it is the

21 Val Larsen, “Killing Laban: The Birth of Sovereignty in the Nephite Constitutional Order,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 16/1 (2007): 38–39.

obligation of the well-off not to expropriate but to increase the wealth of the poor (Jacob 2:17).

The king and other elites are the moral Achilles heel of the natural state. Adulation being poison, even the purest (David) and wisest (Solomon) of kings are apt to be corrupted by unconstrained power. Then, using their power to control what is said and done within the kingdom, corrupt kings (e.g., Noah) will generally suppress the teaching of the true gospel of Christ that plainly “speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be” (Jacob 4:13). They promote in its place a sophisticated false gospel that looks “beyond the mark,” that has been co-opted by and supports the actions of the king and the authority of the state and that must be farmed out to religious specialists who can better understand its subtle complexities (Jacob 4:14; Mosiah 11:4–7, 11, 14). Thus, the apostasy of the morally vulnerable few who head the state can lead to the truth being lost to all who dwell in the kingdom.²²

This social dynamic makes it difficult to recover a people who are slipping into apostasy and makes it impossible to carry out an enduring restoration of the gospel. To recover the people of the natural state for God, one must first recover its king — as Mosiah₂’s son Ammon demonstrated, not an impossible task, but an extraordinarily difficult one. An enduring restoration where the natural state governs is impossible because it would require that successive generations of kings and associated elites consistently resist the outsized temptations inherent in their high social positions. That requirement cannot be met by fallen humanity. Alma₁ who saw the problem up close in the court of Noah (and in the life of Alma₂ and the sons of Mosiah) concluded that a natural state headed by a king is incompatible with the gospel (Mosiah 23:6–13). He therefore refused to be king and helped persuade Mosiah₂ to end the Nephite monarchy in the land of Zarahemla.

22 If the natural state is incompatible with Christianity, how does one account for Christendom? Clearly, conflict with the state put early Christianity on the ropes. Persecution made it impossible to maintain a normal leadership structure. Christianity may not have survived and certainly would not have flourished if it had not been adopted by Constantine as the state religion. But once adopted, it was put in a different kind of peril as the emperor forced the creation of a new orthodoxy in the great councils — the very point at which, in the Latter-day Saint understanding, the ancient Church became officially apostate.

The Allegory of the Olive Tree

In addition to his metaphysical patriarchal blessing and his concrete account of the rise of the natural state among his people, we receive through Jacob Zenos' Allegory of the Olive Tree. This narrative is an allegorical history of the house of Israel, but it is also a theodicy. And Jacob's high estimation of this allegory probably derives from the facts that it speaks to his moral concern — the problem of evil — and that the central, most poignant evil it focuses on is the apostasy of his own Nephite people.

Jacob sets up the allegory by asking the question about God's power that is the key to the problem of evil. However, he frames it not as a skeptic would but as a believer would: "By the power of [God's] word man came upon the face of the earth. ... Wherefore, if God being able to speak ... and man was created, O then, why not able to command ... the workmanship of his hands upon the face of the [earth], according to his will and pleasure?" (Jacob 4:9). Given God's great knowledge and power, how is it possible for human beings to disobey his commands and do evil?

The immediate answer — previously touched upon by Lehi — is that human beings are independent agents who can freely choose to act contrary to God's will and, thus, as co-creators, introduce evil and suffering into the world. But that is not a sufficient answer for Jacob. The fact that opposition exists and humanity can disobey God does not mean that they should or will. Logic, prudence, and self-interest all dictate that humanity obey God's commands. For redeemed and sin-abhorring Jacob, their failure to do so is a profound mystery.

That mystery is highlighted in the Allegory of the Olive Tree. In effect, Jacob (using Zenos) gives us the obverse of and, perhaps, a rejoinder to the Book of Job, which is a biblical treatment of the problem of evil. In Job, the reality of human suffering is dramatized in exquisite detail. Why God permits this suffering remains a mystery. God, rather than answering Job's question about why he must suffer, poses from the midst of a tornado his own questions: Do you know how the world was created? Can you control the weather? Can you create a whale? Intimidated by Jehovah's overwhelming power and unanswerable questions, Job humbly accepts the implicit message that God's doings and humanity's sufferings are an unfathomable mystery for man.

The Allegory of the Olive Tree takes the opposite tack. It describes at almost tedious length and in great detail how God repeatedly strives to save humanity and how he suffers greatly when they will not be saved.

Instead of being the purposes and acts of God and suffering of man, as in Job, here the unanswerable mystery is why humanity so consistently refuses to be saved.

The principal figures or elements in the allegory are the vineyard, the Lord of the vineyard, his chief servant, other servants, an olive root, tame and wild branches, tame and wild fruit, pruning, grafting, digging, and dunging. These figures and elements sometimes have multiple meanings. The vineyard appears to represent the world and the different parts of the vineyard represent various historical periods in various geographical locations. The Lord of the vineyard sometimes seems to be God the Father, sometimes Christ. The chief servant sometimes seems to be Christ, sometimes a human servant of God. The root of the tree is probably the richest symbol, representing Christ and the atonement (as Madsen has argued),²³ the scriptural tradition (as Riddle and Hoskisson have argued),²⁴ the Holy Ghost (as Parry has argued),²⁵ or more broadly, all divine/gospel influences and powers that operate in the world.²⁶ The branches are human cultures, the tame ones being human cultures that have (or have had) the gospel, and the wild ones being Gentile cultures that don't. The tops of the branches are the social and political elites within those cultures. The fruit is human souls. The pruning, grafting, digging, and dunging are the painful and messy things that God must do to give human cultures their best chance of flourishing and producing good fruit or saved souls.²⁷

23 Truman G. Madsen, "The Olive Press: A Symbol of Christ," in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5*, eds. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 1–10.

24 Paul Y. Hoskisson, "The Allegory of the Olive in Jacob," in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5*, eds. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 70–104.

25 Donald W. Parry, "Ritual Anointing with Olive Oil in Ancient Israelite Religion," in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5*, eds. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 262–289.

26 There is also an intriguing possibility that the root might represent Mother in Heaven. See Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 9/2 (2000): 16–25, 80–81 and Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, Volume 1, *The Lady of the Temple*, (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012).

27 In developing an adequate theodicy, accounting for natural evil is a more difficult challenge than accounting for moral evil. While moral evils may be laid to the account of the free agents who choose them (with the caveat in footnote 11), human beings do not control storms, earthquakes, and other damaging natural events. Only God has the power to minimize or eliminate the suffering these events cause. It is nevertheless arguable that the existence of natural evil is a function of

Dead center in the allegory²⁸ and immediately following a statement that all the Lord's efforts have failed ("the first and the second and also the last ... had all become corrupt" [Jacob 5:39]), Zenos writes his most important verse, "And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard wept, and said unto the servant: 'What could I have done more for my vineyard?'" (Jacob 5:41).²⁹ It is God, not humanity, the allegory tells us, who is both the principal champion of good and the principal victim of evil. The great length of the allegory is essential to its argument: the magnitude of God's effort to save his children is extensively and redundantly illustrated and yet, time after time, they turn from him and are lost, to their and, more poignantly, his great sorrow.

Following verse 41, the allegory gives more detail on the "last" and most disappointing failure mentioned in verse 39. It is the Nephite civilization that has been planted in the part of the vineyard "which was choice unto me above all other parts of the land" (Jacob 5:42–46). Having emphasized at the crucial midpoint that it is the Nephites who have most disappointed him (and having thus explained Jacob's keen interest in the allegory), the Lord reiterates: "But what could I have done more in my vineyard? Have I slackened my hand, that I have not nourished it? Nay, I have nourished it, and I have digged about it, and I have pruned it, and I have dunged it; and I have stretched forth mine hand almost all the day long. ... I have done all. What could I have done more for my vineyard?" (Jacob 5:47, 49).

These verses at the heart of the allegory are by themselves an adequate theodicy. They absolve God of any responsibility for evil in the world by forcefully stating that he has done all that he could possibly do to bring

the existence of human moral evil. Natural evil seems to be an essential disruptor of the pride cycle. Absent the ever-looming threat of natural disaster and other misfortunes, human beings would be less humbly mindful of God and more contumaciously wicked. The increase in human suffering caused by moral evil that would occur were there no natural evils to keep human beings mindful of God and their own mortality is probably greater than the suffering natural evils cause. Thus, natural evil — the pruning, digging, and dunging in the Allegory of the Olive Tree — may be necessary in order to minimize the overall level of suffering that will occur in a fallen world. And it must be somewhat randomly distributed to preserve agency.

28 In this very long chapter, 9,942 characters precede and 9,986 characters follow verse 41, so the length of the sections before and after the verse differs by less than one tenth of one percent. Verse 41 is, effectively, dead center in the middle of the allegory.

29 Terryl and Fiona Givens provide an extended reflection on the importance of God weeping in *The God Who Weeps*, (Salt Lake City: Ensign Peak, 2012).

good into the lives of his children. Whatever the cause of evil may be, it is not a failure of God to fully exercise his powers to prevent it.³⁰

But this central section does more than just absolve God. It also explains who is responsible for the existence of evil in the world. In verse 47, the Lord of the vineyard asks,

Who is it that has corrupted my vineyard? And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: Is it not the loftiness of thy vineyard—have not the branches thereof overcome the roots which are good? And because the branches have overcome the roots thereof, behold they grew faster than the strength of the roots, taking strength unto themselves. Behold, I say, is not this the cause that the trees of thy vineyard have become corrupted? (Jacob 5:47–48)

It is humanity, not God, which is the source of evil in the world. The Lord asks *who*; the servant replies with a *what* that symbolizes *who*, for the branches of the tree represent human cultures. The more human cultures grow, the further removed the tops of the branches are from the gospel root. The more the branches take strength unto themselves, the more they influence the quality of the fruit, independent of the gospel root. And as Jacob has well illustrated and as King Noah will still more explicitly illustrate, the elites of the society — the loftiest parts of the branches — are those who most take strength to themselves and inevitably corrupt all the fruit of the tree.

Toward the end of the allegory, a passage offers further insight into why God cannot do more to save his children. The Lord of the vineyard commands: “ye shall not clear away the bad thereof all at once, lest the roots thereof should be too strong for the graft, and the [branches and root] shall perish. ... Wherefore ye shall clear away the bad according as the good shall grow, that the root and the top may be equal in strength” (Jacob 5:65–66). The mystery in this passage is how the root — which symbolizes the full array of gospel influences in the world — can be too strong. The answer to this mystery is found in the doctrine of co-creation.

The good fruit that God wants — properly saved souls — must be the combined product of the gospel and of human cultures that express and reflect the distinctive individuality and group preferences

30 Terry and Fiona Givens aptly describe this Mormon God as one who “will extend the maximum mercy He can, and impose the minimum justice He must,” “who prevents all the pain He can, assumes all the suffering He can, and weeps over the misery He can neither prevent nor assume.” *The God Who Weeps*, 18, 25.

of the intelligences who pass through this world. The richness of God's universe can be added upon only if the intelligences God has organized are permitted to participate as co-creators of the world in which they live and of the beings they become. If constraints on the expression of the human will were to become too powerful — even constraints which forced behavior into channels less damaging in the short run to self or others — the exaltation of souls would cease and the glory of God would be diminished.

God's scope for action extends only to the point where it impinges negatively upon the agency of the autonomous beings who are his spirit children. Human beings cannot be sanctified without the atonement that God has provided, but neither can God save them against their will. Thus, he cannot permit his gospel root to wholly determine the worth of the fruit.³¹

As he sets up the Allegory of the Olive Tree in chapter 4, Jacob includes anticipatory echoes of phrases that Zenos will use in the allegory, e.g., “according to his will and pleasure” (Jacob 4:9; 5:14), “first fruits” (Jacob 4:11), and “seek not to counsel the Lord” (Jacob 4:10; 5:22). Jacob here anticipates the corrupting effects of the lofty branches in his discussion of how the Jewish elites look beyond the mark, equating themselves with God by supplanting his plain truth with unsearchable mysteries of their own device (Jacob 4:8, 14). In mentioning these phrases and parallels, Jacob frames and comments upon the action in the allegory.

Especially ironic is Jacob's injunction: “Brethren, seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand” (Jacob 4:10). This passage anticipates and highlights the following passage in the allegory: “And

31 The great flaw in the plan Satan offered in the pre-existence was that it did not permit the full flowering of the human will and, therefore, could not facilitate the exaltation of the human soul. In the traditional interpretation of the plan, Satan would have ensured righteous behavior by creating a perfect correlation between pleasure and righteousness, pain and wickedness. He would, thus, have made human beings the equivalent of rats in a maze. He would have stripped all moral content from human choices and actions. To avoid the rat in the maze problem, the natural evils discussed in footnote 27 must be, in some measure, random, falling alike on the righteous and the wicked (Matthew 5:45). An alternative and probably more persuasive reading of Satan's plan suggests that he would have destroyed agency with Nehor's popular doctrine (Alma 1:4), by guaranteeing that all human beings returned to heaven regardless of what they chose to do. If all choices lead to the same end, agency is destroyed. See Greg Wright, *Satan's War on Free Agency*, Orem, UT: Granite Publishing, 2003, and Terryl Givens, “Agency and Atonement,” *Meridian Magazine*, Wednesday, March 9, 2011.

it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: How comest thou hither to plant this ... tree? For behold, it was the poorest spot in all the land of thy vineyard. And the Lord of the vineyard said unto him: Counsel me not” (Jacob 5:21–22).

In these verses, the servant poses the problem of evil in the traditional way, indicating, as Job did, that God has done less than he could or should have done to limit human suffering. In the Allegory of the Olive Tree as in the Book of Job, the Lord’s reply — “counsel me not” — indicates that this question or charge is not legitimate. The mirrored phrase Jacob gives us in his setup for the allegory — “seek not to counsel the Lord, but to take counsel from his hand” — implicitly tells us why. Human beings should not counsel the Lord (invalidly accuse God of being responsible for the world’s evil) as the servant does in the allegory but rather should receive counsel from him (keep his commandments, recognizing that they themselves are responsible for the existence of evil in the world because it arises when they don’t do God’s will). The great mystery that is the problem of evil lies not in the failure of God to exercise his power to eliminate evil but in humanity’s inexplicable misuse of its decisive power to choose. The mystery is why human beings willfully choose to make themselves and others miserable.

The Mystery of the Enduring Restoration

While the problem of evil in general and the specifically Christian formulation of the problem may be substantially resolved by the principles discussed above, these limits on God’s power would seem to deepen the Mormon mystery of the enduring restoration. If the agency inherent in human ontology and the consequent principle of co-creation limit the scope of divine action, making it impossible for God to prevent apostasy from the fullness of the gospel, how is it possible for God to give his modern church the assurance that the gospel will never again be taken from the earth? Or expressed otherwise, how is it possible for the Church to survive in this extended historical period when it has not been able to do so in former times? Through Jacob, we receive an answer to these questions as well.

And the answer is that in our day, something new has emerged: an enduring, fruitful equilibrium between the gospel root and the human cultural branches in their power to shape souls. The emergence of that equilibrium is reflected in the Allegory of the Olive Tree by the repeated occurrence of the word *equal* in the section that treats our day. This word does not appear earlier in the allegory, but as attention turns to the last

days it becomes a prominent theme. The first mention is connected with verse 65, where, as previously discussed, the Lord takes care to preserve strength in the branches that they not be overcome by the root. He does this so “that the root and the top may be equal in strength” (Jacob 5:66). The theme of equilibrium between branches and root is mentioned again in verse 73: “and they did keep the root and the top thereof equal.” Verse 74 then indicates that not only the roots and branches, but also “the fruits were equal.” Thus, this final dispensation is characterized by a new emphasis on equality between fruits, equality between individual human souls.

Since God is always active and does not change as history unfolds, the emergence of this new equilibrium between root and branch and new equality between individuals must be attributed to a change in human consciousness and social practice. Through hard historical experience, large numbers of human beings appear at long last to have discovered for themselves the truth Jacob taught, that “one being is as precious ... as the other” (Jacob 2:21). And having in some measure embraced this truth in their economic and political lives, humanity has begun to reap the benefits that always follow when one of God’s truths is accepted and lived.

In his sweeping analysis of the development of the state, North discusses this historical transition from the *natural state*, with its rigid political and economic status hierarchies, to the *open access state* that more fully embodies the principle of equality. This transition requires the emergence of the rule of law, the creation of perpetual organizations (preeminently the impersonal state) which can make commitments that extend beyond the life of any individual, and the existence of many autonomous and competing organizations — James Madison’s factions³² — that have a shared interest in limiting the use of state power.

As these and other conditions are met, open political and economic competition among groups and individuals ensues. Power is temporarily acquired in the political or economic marketplace but is not secure. Unlike kings within the natural state, the factions that temporarily

32 James Madison, “Federalist 10,” “[Having a great] number of citizens and extent of territory ... renders factious combinations less to be dreaded.... Extend the sphere, and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens; or if such a common motive exists, it will be more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strength, and to act in unison with each other.”

seize power in the open access state cannot suppress competing ideas and beliefs because custom and law forbid it and because suppression threatens the interests of a broad base of competing factions. Thus, incompatible ideologies and lifestyles can peacefully coexist and seek adherents. Good can flourish alongside evil, as they do, for example, on the prototypically open access Internet, where vile pornography is separated by a mere mouse click from familysearch.org.

The political and economic gains that arise when a society transitions from being a natural state to being an open access state are extraordinarily large. These gains arise for a variety of reasons but are primarily attributable to domestic peace and the more efficient use of human and natural resources that occurs when all are permitted to participate equally in economic life, as they are not in the natural state. These gains are so large that they create a powerful disincentive for any society to abandon open access and return to the straightened, cramped mode of living that characterizes closed access systems such as the natural state.

The magnitude of these gains makes plausible Francis Fukuyama's claim that with the rise of democratic capitalism, we have come to "the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution."³³ Democratic capitalism, in Fukuyama's reading, is a capacious concept, encompassing everything from anarcho-capitalism to mild forms of socialism, societies even more widely separated on the political and economic spectrum than Hong Kong and Sweden. But while the elasticity of the concept is substantial, it is not infinite. So history may have ended, not in the sense that there is no succession of events, even very important events, but in the sense that no new social system outside that broad spectrum may viably compete with democratic capitalism to be an alternative *telos* or ideal type that can inspire a revolution in the forms of national, social, and economic life. Democratic capitalism may gradually but inexorably spread. For an indefinite period — the extent of which is known only by God (Matthew 24:36) — the "last man"³⁴ may mark time through the "last days" until

33 Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, Summer (1989): 3–18; *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, NY: The Free Press, 1992. Fukuyama does not imply that all political and economic systems will be identical. As noted in the text, the capacious term "democratic capitalism" includes a wide spectrum of possible social systems.

34 Fukuyama describes the "last man" as an "individual, free and cognizant of his own self-worth, [who] recognizes every other individual for those same qualities" (*The End of History and the Last Man*, 300). The advent of the "last man"

the Savior returns and inaugurates under his divine governance a new, more perfect social order.

If history has indeed come to an end in Fukuyama's sense, the Lord may be able to give an assurance that the gospel will never again be taken from the earth, an assurance he could not give when natural states were everywhere regnant. No matter how free a reign evil may have in the world, the Church may continue to flourish, gathering the elect out of a fallen world, protected by a firm societal commitment to mutual recognition and toleration of even unpopular beliefs and practices that is rooted in the economic gains and social dynamics of the open access state.

A Final Formulation of the Problem of Evil

From the Allegory of the Olive Tree, where God seems to take care to nurture the balance and equality that characterize the open access state, and from revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants that indicate God took a hand in establishing the open access Constitution of the United States "that every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him" (D&C 101:77–80), we may conclude that God views the open access state as a desirable setting for developing the capacities and revealing the preferences of his children. Thus, channeling Job and the servant in the Allegory of the Olive Tree, we may ask why God has not fostered an earlier emergence of the open access state.

While Jacob does not answer this question, the Book of Mormon does. And the answer it gives is that an open access state cannot be successfully created if its human co-creators have not yet had the requisite historical experiences and have not yet developed the requisite worldview. The importance of meeting preconditions is apparent in Mosiah₂'s failed effort to reorganize his kingdom on open access principles.

Mosiah₂ fully understood the problems inherent in the natural state. In King Noah, he had a fresh and clear example of how a wicked king can cause his people to be wicked (Mosiah 29:16–18). And in the lives of his own sons, he had a fresh and clear example of how adulation and high status can corrupt even the best of souls (Mosiah 27:8). Finally, in the

may bring history to an end, for *history* in the sense Hegel, Kojève, and Fukuyama use the term is driven by the struggle to achieve recognition from others. When the equal dignity of all human beings becomes an element of common sense, the struggle to achieve recognition can no longer drive the major changes in society that constitute *history*.

account he had just translated of the endless apostasies and conspiracies of the Jaredite kings, he could clearly see that the fullness of the gospel cannot endure upon the earth when people are governed by kings in a natural state (Mosiah 28:11–18).

So Mosiah₂ attempted to organize an open access state among his people “that every man should have an *equal* chance throughout the land” (Mosiah 29:38, emphasis added). But while the people accepted and rejoiced in their king’s counsel, they did not have the habits of mind necessary for establishing a successful open access state.³⁵ Mosiah₂ had earlier dispersed power by recognizing Alma₁ as the people’s High Priest. When allowed to pick their own ruler, the people again concentrate power by appointing Alma₂, their new High Priest (and son of Alma₁, the previous High Priest) to be head of both church and state.³⁶ The advocates of royal rule soon rebel and attempt to reestablish the monarchy.³⁷ Those who do not rebel give Nephiah life tenure as Chief Judge, then support the hereditary succession of Nephiah’s son Pahoran and of Pahoran’s sons to the judgeship. As Pahoran’s sons contend for the now hereditary judgeship and begin to kill each other with the aid of clients who specialize in violence, the natural state is once again fully established among the Nephites.

The evidence is clear that kings and prophets and God himself cannot establish an open access state among a people if the people themselves, the co-creators of that state, have not developed through historical experience the worldview and social practices that permit the state to flourish. It is evident, too, that God ushered in the last dispensation, the enduring restoration, at the earliest possible moment in human history, indeed, so early in the nascent unfolding of the American open access

35 Daniel C. Peterson, “Authority in the Book of Mosiah,” *FARMS Review*, 18/1 (2006): 183–84.

36 While the appointment of Alma as head of both church and state was not consistent with the dispersal of power that characterizes open access states, Alma, like other Book of Mormon prophets, practices open access governance, allowing other religious and political views to be expressed if the expression is peaceful. Jacob is an especially good example. His encounter with Sherem is a case study in the kind of ideological conflict we can expect to encounter in our open access society. Given free reign among the saints that open access governance ensures, Satan leads people astray using religious conservatives such as Sherem who deny the possibility of continuing revelation and professors of naturalistic hedonism such as Korihor.

37 Val Larsen, “In His Footsteps: Ammon₁ and Ammon₂,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 3 (2012), 85 – 113.

state that it cost Joseph Smith his life at the hands of an intolerant, not yet fully American mob.³⁸

Conclusion

Jacob was an exceptionally Christlike person. While still young,³⁹ he apparently saw the Savior face to face and had his calling and election made sure (2 Nephi 2:3–4). During the remainder of his life, he vicariously suffered the sins of others, feeling their spiritual peril much more deeply than they themselves did and striving with all the energy of his soul to redeem them from their sins by bringing them to the Savior. Bearing this burden of others' sins, he suffered sorrow throughout his life, sorrow that may have been deepened by foreknowledge that in the near term the practices of the king and theology of Sherem would prevail⁴⁰ and that in the longer term, as the Allegory of the Olive Tree quite clearly indicates, the Nephites would reject the gospel and be destroyed (Jacob 5:42–46). The overwhelmingly negative valence of Jacob's words as he concludes his sermon — “will ye reject these words ... and make a mock of the great plan of redemption ... [and] stand with shame and awful guilt before the bar of God ... which bar striketh the wicked with awful dread and fear. Amen.” (Jacob 6:8–13) — suggest he has limited hope that his people will turn from their evil ways and avoid being “hewn down and cast into the fire” (Jacob 5:46).

Though they may have alleviated his suffering, the profound patriarchal blessing, the Allegory of the Olive Tree, and other revelations Jacob received could not fully relieve his anguish. At the end of his long life, he penned one of the most poignant sentences in all scripture:

38 Citizens of Missouri and Illinois felt justified in taking lives and violently expelling the Mormons from their states as an act of popular sovereignty. Protection of minority rights — an essential characteristic of an open access state — was not yet fully established in culture and law. See Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, New York: NY: Vintage Books, 2007, 222–225, 551–552.

39 See Sorenson on Jacob's likely age. Jacob. John L. Sorenson, “The Composition of Lehi's Family,” in John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Bok and FARMS, 1990), 2:174–96.

40 John L. Clark, “Painting Out the Messiah: The Theology of Dissidents,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 4/2 (2002): 16–27; Gary L. Sturgess, “The Book of Mosiah: Thoughts about Its Structure, Purposes, Themes, and Authorship,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, 4/2 (1995): 107–35.

“I conclude this record ... by saying that the time passed away with us, and also our lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream, we being a lonesome and solemn people, wanderers, cast out from Jerusalem, born in tribulation, in a wilderness, and hated of our brethren, which caused wars and contentions; wherefore, we did mourn out our days. (Jacob 7:26)⁴¹

But perhaps because he himself suffered so much sorrow, Jacob was able to leave, as his legacy to us, profound insights into the nature and causes of evil and a profound testament to the goodness of the God who has done or will do all that can be done to save us from the sorrow of sin.

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41 In part, Jacob's bleak assessment must represent temperamental anhedonia, not just a negative objective reality. His bleakness distinguishes him from his father and brother. Thus, he has none of Lehi's joy in having "obtained a land of promise" (1 Nephi 5:5) or Nephi's pleasure in creating a place where his people might live "after the manner of happiness" (2 Nephi 5:27).